

80 employee recognition ideas

Free ideas first, then small-cost, time, team and remote ideas. Tick the ones to try.

Everyday thanks

- ☐ **Weekly thank-you note.** Each manager writes 1 specific thank-you a week and sends it directly to the person.
- ☐ **Start-of-meeting thanks.** The first 2 minutes of the team meeting go to naming 1 thing someone did well.
- ☐ **Thank-you card.** A handwritten card from the manager, given in person.
- ☐ **Praise in front of the team.** A short mention at the team meeting that says what the person did and what it changed.
- ☐ **Note to the person's manager.** A message to a colleague's manager saying what that colleague did.
- ☐ **Customer words shared.** Pass on a customer's kind message to the person it is about, with the date and the customer's own words.
- ☐ **Spoken thanks at shift handover.** The outgoing team lead names 1 thing that went well on the shift.
- ☐ **Recognition in the one-to-one.** The first question in every one-to-one is about something the person did well since the last one.

Peer-to-peer ideas

- ☐ **Shared thank-you channel.** A chat channel where anyone can name a colleague and say what they did.
- ☐ **Recognition board.** A physical or digital board where people post short notes about a colleague.
- ☐ **Pass-it-on token.** A small object passed from one person to the next, with a note on why.
- ☐ **Weekly team nomination.** Each week the team picks someone and says why, in 1 sentence.
- ☐ **Helper of the month.** Colleagues nominate the person who helped them most that month.
- ☐ **Thank-you jar.** People write thank-you notes on slips of paper and read them out at the end of the month.
- ☐ **Cross-team thanks.** A monthly thank-you from one team to another that helped it.
- ☐ **Peer-chosen award.** Colleagues vote for an award for the person who made the team better.

Milestones and service

- ☐ **Work anniversary message.** A personal note from the manager that names something specific the person did in the last year.
- ☐ **Anniversary gift of choice.** People choose from a short list: a gift, a day off, or a donation to a charity.
- ☐ **Project completion thanks.** At the end of each project, thank each person for their own part by name.
- ☐ **First-year welcome back.** At 12 months, a conversation about what the person has learned and what they would like next.
- ☐ **Long-service lunch.** A meal for people who reach 5, 10 or 15 years, with colleagues who worked with them early on.
- ☐ **Retirement tribute.** Colleagues write short notes for the person's last week.
- ☐ **Probation completed.** A message from the manager when a new starter finishes their first months.
- ☐ **Goal achieved.** A named thank-you when someone reaches a goal they set.

Awards

- ☐ **Quarterly values award.** One award per value, each given with a short story of what the person did.
- ☐ **Customer champion.** For the person customers name most often.
- ☐ **Quiet achiever.** For work that kept things running and rarely got noticed.
- ☐ **Newcomer award.** For someone in their first year who made a difference.
- ☐ **Team player award.** Chosen by colleagues, for the person who helped others most.
- ☐ **Improvement award.** For the person who found a better way of doing something.
- ☐ **Safety award.** For someone who noticed a risk and acted on it.
- ☐ **Leader award.** Nominated by the manager's own team.

Team celebrations

- ☐ **Team lunch after a hard stretch.** A meal after a busy period, paid for by the organization.
- ☐ **Half-day for a finished project.** Time off in recognition of a large effort.
- ☐ **Team wall of results.** A display of what the team completed each quarter.
- ☐ **Celebration at the end of a busy season.** A short event where each person is thanked by name.
- ☐ **Visit from a senior leader.** A leader spends 30 minutes with a team to hear what they did and thank them.
- ☐ **Team choice of reward.** The team decides together how to mark a result.
- ☐ **Public mention to the whole organization.** A line in the company newsletter naming the team and the result.
- ☐ **Learning day.** A day for the team to learn something together after a major effort.

Free

- ☐ **Say it in person.** Tell someone what they did and what it changed. Do it today, not at the next review.
- ☐ **Write a short note.** 3 sentences. What they did, why it mattered, thank you.
- ☐ **Thank them in front of colleagues.** Name them and the work at the start of a meeting.
- ☐ **Share their work upward.** Tell a senior leader what the person did, and copy the person in.
- ☐ **Ask for their view.** Ask someone for their advice on a decision, and say why you asked them.
- ☐ **Give them a say.** Let them pick the next project or choose how to approach a task.
- ☐ **Protect their time.** Take a meeting off someone's calendar the week they are busiest.
- ☐ **Pass on a compliment.** Forward a customer's or colleague's kind message, with their own words.

Small cost

- ☐ **Coffee or lunch.** Take someone for a coffee or lunch and use the time to listen.
- ☐ **Their favorite snack.** A small treat that shows you noticed what they like.
- ☐ **Hand-written card from the team.** Everyone adds a line about what they value in the person.
- ☐ **Plant or small gift.** Choose something that suits the person, not a generic gift.
- ☐ **Book or course.** Cover the cost of something that helps them learn.
- ☐ **Subscription for a month.** Something they have mentioned wanting to try.
- ☐ **Framed message.** A short message from a customer or colleague, framed.
- ☐ **Donation in their name.** Give to a charity the person supports.

Time and flexibility

- ☐ **Early finish.** Let the team leave early after a busy week.
- ☐ **Extra day off.** A day of paid time off after a major project.
- ☐ **Flexible start.** A later start or earlier finish for a week.
- ☐ **No-meeting day.** A day with no meetings for the team.
- ☐ **Choose your project.** A week to work on something the person finds interesting.
- ☐ **Long lunch.** A longer lunch break for the team.
- ☐ **Time to learn.** Paid time to take a course or attend an event.
- ☐ **Quiet recovery day.** A day after a major effort with only light tasks.

Team events

- ☐ **Team meal.** A lunch or dinner paid for by the organization.
- ☐ **Team outing.** A short trip somewhere the team chooses.
- ☐ **Games afternoon.** An hour of games or a quiz.
- ☐ **Cooking or craft session.** Something hands-on, led by someone from the team.
- ☐ **Volunteering day.** The team spends a day on a cause it picks.
- ☐ **Visit from the CEO.** A leader spends time with the team and thanks them directly.
- ☐ **Award ceremony.** A short event with specific thanks for each person.
- ☐ **Team photo wall.** Photos from the year, with a line about each project.

For remote and hybrid teams

- ☐ **Video message.** A 1-minute video from a manager or leader saying thank you.
- ☐ **Delivered treat.** Send something to the person's home.
- ☐ **Virtual coffee.** A 15-minute call with no agenda, to say thanks.
- ☐ **Online team quiz.** A short, friendly quiz at the end of a busy week.
- ☐ **Shared thank-you document.** A document where colleagues add thanks for the person.
- ☐ **Voucher for a local place.** Let the person choose near where they live.
- ☐ **Recognition in the weekly update.** Name 2 or 3 people and what they did.
- ☐ **Handwritten card by post.** Receiving something in the post is unusual enough to be remembered.