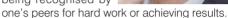# Keep them happy and your employees will stay productive and loyal

Expert advice on incentives and motivation to help combat attrition and boost morale and productivity

Let them decide who has gone the extra mile

NOTHING can beat the satisfaction of being recognised by one's peers for hard work or achieving results.

While praise from managers and cash are powerful motivators, recognition has more resonance when it comes from colleagues. It is therefore more motivating and so helps to deliver results for businesses.

Peer-to-peer schemes allow staff to nominate fellow employees for an award when they feel they have gone the extra mile by, for example, achieving targets, generating a positive working atmosphere, being a good team player, and so on. From these nominations, managers will usually decide which are the most deserving and reward them accordingly.

Before you set up such a programme, there are a few things to consider:

● Define and understand the objectives; is peer-to-peer the best way of achieving them?

● Determine the scope; will the scheme be available across departments only or company-wide?

● Set an "affordable" budget; typically based on a cost per head.

● Remember to consider costs such as the implementation, operational and communication cost.

● Ensure the programme is accessible to all. What's the best way for staff to submit their nominations and receive feedback?

● Will nominations be approved by line managers, with subsequent authority to reward where appropriate, or will nominations be approved by a panel?

● What criteria will the panel or line manager use to assess the nominations? These criteria will need to be communicated clearly to staff and regularly reviewed to ensure they remain in line with the businesses objectives.

● Strong communication of the scheme and its aims will ensure employees understand your organisation's expectations. Communication really is the key and, if implemented effectively, can invigorate any audience by communicating each winner's success and reinforcing the positive outcome of the peer to peer scheme.

Once the programme is set up, there is still work to do. Analyse the data and continue to adapt and adjust the programme as the requirements of the business and its staff develop.
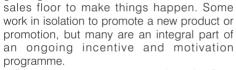
Use surveys and forums to understand the staff clearly and what motivates them, taking into account the different backgrounds and lifestyles that make up a workforce. A one size fits all approach to reward will not work.

Once the initial buy-in has been achieved, reward and recognition will require a level of on-going management and two-way communication to ensure continued engagement with employees.

Colin Hodgson, sales director at Edenred (the new name for Accor Services, Capital Incentives & Motivation and Motivano); colin.hodgson@edenred.co.uk

Beaming in: 'Princess Leia' and 'Darth Vader'

ACTIVITY days are a very simple concept – getting out on the sales floor to make things happen. Some work in isolation to promote a new product or promotion, but many are an integral part of an ongoing incentive and motivation programme.

Bringing an event team onto the sales floor can be the perfect solution to raising brand awareness, boosting an incentive or providing product training that sticks. For the call centre manager, the presence of a group of professionals creating a motivational buzz and boosting sales performance is an absolute gift. Well run activity days get results that extend well beyond the day itself.

We created a character for a software company to promote the idea of upselling the product just as a fast food salesperson will upsell your burger by offering fries or a fizzy drink. The activity days, fully themed and promoted in advance and complete with stamped "loyalty cards", prize draws and actual fast food, generated massive enthusiasm (and sales). The character is now a regular activity day star, and is the figurehead of a major incentive programme.

Not all characters are our own.

Robin Hood, Darth Vader, Cupid, The 'A' Team, Elvis and Kate Middleton (or people who looked very like them) have all graced our activity days. And rewarding individual achievement on the day offers endless scope for excitement. We've run everything from snowboarding trials to cowboy shoot-outs and "cash cubes" – all in the confines of the call centre. Not to mention themed games and quizzes.

For an activity day to work, it must capture the imagination.

Money isn't everything...ask your people

EVERYONE needs a decent living wage, but money isn't the only motivator. We've found that non-cash incentives can be more valuable to both individuals and the business as a whole.

Although the prize is only one part of how a good incentive works, do give it some thought. Money is, of course, always welcome. But the tendency for cash to get swallowed up in everyday use lessens its impact. More memorable rewards work well, so events, holidays and popular technology like digital cameras are all worth considering, though the best guides are your employees.

To be effective incentive schemes need to fit your company's culture and have inclusive appeal. This goes for the way performance is measured as well as prizes.

Many business studies have found that sales incentive programs have the most direct relationship to outcomes. Supporting this theory, our outbound department launched one of its largest and most successful initiatives earlier this year.

The concept was simple: every two hours the top two sellers from each half of the department would spin the "wheel of fortune".

Each section of the wheel named a prize and they varied hugely, from iPods and vouchers to cans of baked beans. In total 373 desirable prizes were given away in one month.

In the grand finale, called "the ultimate game show", the top performers were invited to compete in replicas of famous game shows, including The Generation Game, Catchphrase and Family Fortunes. The overall winner was rewarded with a Sky+ HD terabyte box, a Blu-ray player, home cinema system and a flat screen TV.

Prizes with such a wide appeal are a real motivator for everyone in the office – this particular incentive improved sales by 17 per cent.

Incorporating competition into incentives can also give a business an energy injection at a time when it's most needed.

Ben Dale Gough, site operations manager, Domestic & General