

# Turn your recognition program on its head with peer-to-peer initiatives



Is your recognition program a top-down affair, with execs or managers deciding how to sprinkle around the praise and prizes?

More employers are turning recognition on its head by creating peer-to-peer recognition initiatives.

Studies show P2P recognition can actually boost employee morale and productivity more than traditional reward programs. Why? Employees value P2P rewards more because they come from co-workers. Plus, they are typically unexpected and carry an emotional impact on givers and receivers.

Here are some real-life examples of low-cost P2P programs that work.

**At Zappos**, the online shoe and apparel shop, employees can award one \$50 bonus per month to a co-worker. Employees can receive more than one bonus per month. Workers can also award “Zollars” for outstanding efforts on the job or answering questions during training. Recipients can exchange Zollars for items such as movie tickets, gym bags and desk fans. Or winners can donate Zollars to charities.

**At Zebra Technologies**, employees can send appreciation certificates and spend up to \$100 on gifts without management approval. Employees can also give infrequent cash awards ranging from \$350 to \$3,000, for which management approval is required.

Another company gives each employee three coins each quarter to distribute to co-workers who they see performing work beyond the call of duty. Employees can cash in their coins for prizes.

## P2P programs: Do's and don'ts

- ✓ **Do provide specific criteria for awarding P2P recognition.** Explain that recipients must go above and beyond daily duties.
- ✓ **Don't allow employees to reward peers randomly.** Recognition given too frequently loses value. Limit the number of rewards that employees can give within a specific time period.
- ✓ **Do ask for specifics.** Require employees to detail why a peer deserves recognition. Specific feedback has a bigger impact on winners ... and gives others a goal to shoot for.
- ✓ **Don't delay in rewarding employees.** Timeliness increases employee appreciation and participation.

✓ **Do solicit employee suggestions** for designing P2P programs—it leads to better participation and results.

✓ **Do involve social media**, such as Facebook or Pinterest, where employees can post short stories and photos supporting why a peer deserves recognition.

## **7 unique, real-world retention strategies**

1. A Kansas software firm drafts an “expectation agreement” with each new hire. It spells out what both sides need and expect. They are updated every six months.
2. A California shipping company hosted BLT (Breakfast, Lunch, Talk) sessions that brought company officers together with groups of six new employees each quarter to answer questions and talk about company goals.
3. An insurance company created “Bring a Friend to Work Day” that included free food and fun. It helped build goodwill and spur referrals.
4. A Dallas ad agency installed an on-site laundry room to help employees who work long hours.
5. A company that used to give \$200 spot bonuses switched to giving the high performers the use of a BMW for a week.
6. Periodic “Roast, Toast and Boast” lunches featured the roast of a long-time worker, toast to new hires and boast about a company accomplishment.
7. A company gave spot B.E.E.R. awards to employees showing performance Beyond Exceptions Exceeding Results.