

Seven Excellent Ways to Celebrate Employee Appreciation Day

By Deborah Galea

Employee Appreciation Day is celebrated each year on the first Friday in March. On this day, employers around the world make the extra effort to appreciate their employees' hard work and dedication. Over the past 20 years, an increasing number of companies have embraced this occasion to recognize the achievements and contributions of their employees.

Why is Employee Appreciation Day important?

Most workdays are focused on business objectives, decisions from management, or customer issues. Employee Appreciation Day is a special day that should be truly centered around the teams of employees that make things happen every day.

Even a little bit of recognition can make a big impact on employee motivation. Feeling appreciated [increases morale](#), [improves engagement](#), and [reduces turnover](#). Recognition has been proven to [boost oxytocin levels](#) – that's the chemical our bodies create when we bond socially, one that makes us feel cared for.

Research also shows that recognizing employees makes for a better customer experience. For example, a study in the hospitality industry found a [strong correlation between employee engagement and guest satisfaction](#).

Virgin founder [Richard Branson](#) famously said: "Clients do not come first. Employees come first. If you take care of your employees, they will take care of the clients."



Impact of Employee Recognition

How exactly are employees and companies positively impacted by recognition? Employees experience several positive feelings through appreciation that translate into measurable business benefits:

Job Satisfaction

Feeling appreciated and recognized at work helps employees enjoy their work more while also increasing productivity. According to a [SHRM study](#), 48 percent of employees reported that management's recognition of their job performance was very important to their job satisfaction.

Sense of Purpose

The feeling that your work is important and that your contribution is valuable is a great motivator, one that increases [employee engagement](#). According to a study by [Alight Solutions](#), employees who feel rewarded are seven times more likely to be engaged with work than employees who don't.

Well-being

When employee feels like their company cares about them, stress levels decrease, confidence builds, and [costly turnover](#) decreases. An impressive [55 percent of workers](#) said that if they feel their employer cares about their well-being, they would want to stay at that company for 10 years or more.

Trust

Appreciating employees [builds trust](#). In his book [Trust Factor](#), Harvard Researcher Paul J. Zak states that compared with employees at low-trust companies, those at high-trust companies report 50 percent higher productivity, 13 percent fewer sick days, 76 percent more engagement and 40 percent less burnout.

Want to learn more about how to foster employee recognition in your organization? Read our [Guide to Modern Employee Recognition](#).



Seven Ways to Celebrate Employee Appreciation Day

So how can you make your employees feel especially appreciated on this day? Here are seven ways to celebrate Employee Appreciation Day with your team:

1. Volunteer

[Volunteer](#) at a local conservation program, homeless shelter, senior living community, or humane society. Give back by planting trees, cooking and serving those in need, bringing joy to seniors, or taking dogs for walks. Research by Deloitte found that [70 percent](#) of working Americans believe “volunteer activities are more likely to boost employee morale than company-sponsored happy hours.”

Having trouble finding volunteer opportunities? Ask your team for ideas or try a service like [VolunteerMatch](#).

Benefits include: Working together with team members, getting to know new colleagues, helping the community, building great memories, and inspiring gratitude.



2. Play Games & Socialize

Engage in team games like a scavenger hunt, 'pub' quiz, or team-based office olympics. They can be great opportunities for teams to know each other better in a fun setting while introducing healthy competition and encouraging innovative thinking. Chances are you'll see your coworkers in a whole new light!

Need help getting started? Here are some articles to inspire your next group activity:

- [How to Design an Employee Scavenger Hunt](#)
- [How to Run a Good Trivia Night](#)
- [How to Host Your Own Office Olympics](#)

Benefits include: Having fun, getting to know colleagues you don't normally work with, laughing, and feeling closer to the team.

3. Gift Swag Bags

Create a 'swag' bag with fun gifts like company-branded clothing, lunch boxes, or water bottles. Include some treats, add gift cards, and share experiences at local restaurants, massage centers, or coffee shops.

Go a step further and ask your employees what kind of [swag they really want](#). Giving the right kind of swag can increase loyalty and help spark future conversations about your brand.

Benefits including: Feeling appreciated, and enjoying gifts with friends and family.

4. Get Creative

Research at San Francisco State University shows that having creative outlets outside of work [boosts job performance](#). Introduce your employees to some fun hobbies with a workshop on painting, cooking, flower arrangement, crocheting, or origami.

To make sure that everyone participates in an activity that they'll enjoy, propose multiple options and let everyone sign up for their preferred activity beforehand.

Benefits include: Focusing on something fun, right-brained thinking, experiencing a new hobby, and getting to take a masterpiece home with you.



5. Provide a Lunch Experience

Provide a catered lunch for your employees and offer activities afterwards, like listening to a lunchtime concert, joining a local walking tour, attending a library talk, or going for a bike ride. [Eating right](#), [exercising](#), and [concerts](#) all have proven work-related benefits. Poll your team and refer to your local newspaper for venues and events that could be a good fit for your outing.

Benefits include: Discovering new and exciting things to do in your town, enjoying new experiences with team members, and sharing interests.

6. Throw a Team Happy Hour

Happy Hours provide a relaxed atmosphere that can encourage positive staff interactions. They allow team members to reduce stress and can contribute to a positive company culture. Note that hosting any after-hours activity may exclude some individuals, so consider stopping the work day a little early before other commitments pull people away.

If you choose to host a Happy Hour, make sure to weigh the [advantages and disadvantages](#) of serving alcohol to your team, and be sensitive to any folks who don't drink, providing alternatives.

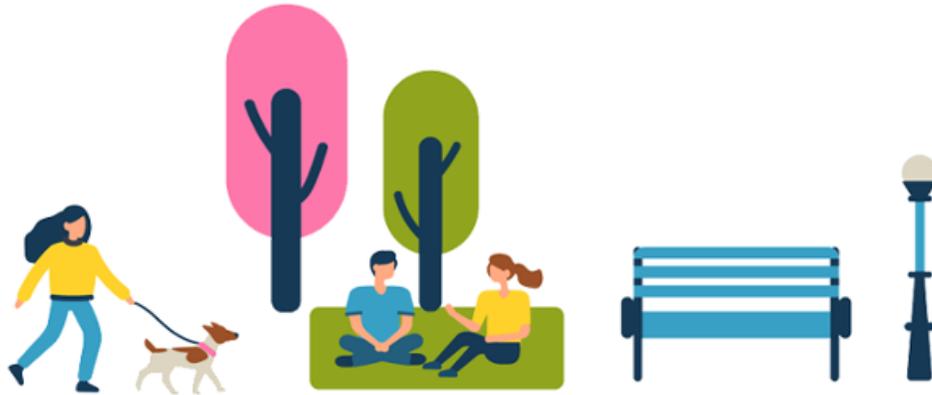
Benefits include: Casual socializing and learning something new about each other.

7. Take a Local Field Trip

Organize a field trip to a local museum, botanical garden, or park. Sign up for a factory, brewery or winery tour. Use Employee Appreciation Day as an opportunity to better know your community and learn about your neighbors. It might even spark some new ideas!

Benefits include: Creating a memorable day, having fun, enjoying local attractions, and learning something new.

Need more inspiration for rewarding your employees? Learn about [Bonusly](#) and check out this comprehensive list of [creative employee reward ideas](#).



Make Every Day Employee Appreciation Day

While it's a great idea to celebrate Employee Appreciation Day, it's important to understand that organizations shouldn't limit employee appreciation to just one day. [Every day should be Employee Appreciation Day.](#)

If you haven't already, start thinking about [creating your own employee recognition program](#). These programs can be a great way to help your team foster a happy, fulfilled, and motivated culture through recognition. Supporting a recognition program using an [employee recognition platform](#) can make it even easier to use all year round.