

Using service awards to engage your employees and impact your bottom line

Service awards have and always will be a key component for building employee loyalty and engagement. With 63% of companies having a more challenging time retaining employees than hiring them¹, an effective service award program, within a broader recognition strategy, supports a strong workplace culture and helps retain employees.

“Years of service” or “service awards” look a lot different today. As Jay Choi from Qualtrics said in a recent Forbes article, “2020 changed the employee experience forever.”² To ensure your strategies are on point, here are some of the latest trends to make your program relevant to your employees and successful for your bottom line.



Make your service awards a strategic recognition touch point.

Consider how your service anniversary program is a critical component within the larger strategic framework. After all, recognition touch points (or the absence of) create emotions. These emotions shape attitudes about organizations, managers or coworkers. In turn, attitudes drive behaviors and ultimately, behaviors shape your culture which drive results. To be effective, recognition (even for a milestone) should be more than just a series of touch points; it needs to be strategic.

Let your culture (employee demographics, business model, corporate values) drive your milestones.

There is no magic number for milestone years. “Long term” to some may be “short term” to others. There are traditional milestone anniversaries for service award recognition (typically every five years), but consider adding every-year recognition touch points between the traditional milestones. All you need to do is take into consideration what is right for your demographics and your culture.

“We’re seeing a ‘great EX awakening’ — one that has 92% of organizations prioritizing EX enhancements over the next three years. This figure is up from 52% prior to the pandemic.”³



Consider positioning your service award messaging differently depending on your employee base.

According to a SHRM study, 79 percent of millennial and Gen Z survey respondents said an increase in rewards and recognition would make them more loyal to their employer.⁴ So, for example, millennials and Gen Zers may embrace language such as “work anniversary,” or “TWC”(time with company) or “how many years have you been a member of the team?” Wherever you land, just remember to position your program in the most positive manner – because tenure is a positive thing!

Consistently inspire with a formalized platform to facilitate interaction.

A service award doesn't have to be a one-time event- rather it can be something that can consistently inspire and motivate your teammates. An easy way to bring more frequency and consistency into your service award program is by using a platform to facilitate continuity, social engagement, and peer interaction like comments and photo uploads.

Reconfirm your affirmation and appreciation.

Employee engagement, in any company culture, can be defined as the process of gaining trust and commitment (emotional and rational), while creating connections between a company and the people who work there. Use a service award program to not only reconfirm your employees' loyalty to you, but most importantly, to reaffirm your loyalty to them.

¹ https://employmenthero.com/blog/employee-engagement-statistics/?gclid=CjwKCAjw7rWKBhAtEiwAJ3CWLlIBFrSan1quyldLz5V2WVpoJspDxNK7tJ58p-4PuBqAV5Pt6riBBcKhoCYO8QAvD_BwE&gclidsrc=aw.ds

² <https://www.forbes.com/sites/sap/2020/12/15/2020-changed-the-employee-experience-forever--these-trends-will-matter-in-2021/?sh=3f2c42475c1d>

³ <https://www.willistowerswatson.com/en-US/Insights/2021/07/2021-employee-experience-survey>

⁴ <https://www.payscale.com/compensation-today/2021/07/how-recognition-and-rewards-can-increase-retention-and-engagement>