

LISTEN TO
THE PLAYLIST
WHILE READING!



20
Year

Service Recognition

Bernard W. Smith

In appreciation of exceptional
service to our Company



awardco

best
seller

REKINDLE THE FLAME

Igniting the Fire
of Engagement with
Service Awards

 awardco

Hey friend
you are going
to love this
book! ♡

Have work anniversaries lost *that loving feeling?*

It can be awkward to celebrate an anniversary when you're forced to do so. Work anniversaries can—and should—be so much more special than a date on the calendar. They're an opportunity to rekindle that fire the employee felt on their first day—and a crucial opportunity for employers to show how much they genuinely care. **Implementing a quality recognition and service award program helps employees feel the love. That, in turn, translates to higher engagement, soaring retention and sweet, sweet ROI.**

So get cozy, grab some chocolates and let's get all lovey-dovey with service awards. (Don't worry, it's completely HR-appropriate.) And don't forget the headphones! We created a service-award-inspired mixtape to listen to while reading. Just scan the QR code below and hit play.



listen to the playlist
as you read



keep that
fire burning!



Way more than
a second hand
Emotion

What's Love Got to Do With It?

You have to be careful how you throw around the "L" word in the workplace, but if you're in leadership it's still your job to help your employees know how much you love, or value, them. Not just because it makes people feel warm and fuzzy, but because it improves the workplace¹ in many ways from job satisfaction, to retention, to increased productivity.

A good recognition and service award program can increase productivity and performance by 17%.² This means service awards can translate to higher profit margins, but *money can't buy you love*. You have to create a culture of recognition through service award programs that show you care.

We can learn quite a few things about how to improve our work relationships and anniversaries by looking at our interpersonal (and even romantic) relationships. Throw in some insights from the greatest love songs of all time and you've got a winning combination that won't have your significant co-workers questioning, *where is the love?*

the black-eyed peas
got it?

1. <https://www.hrtechnologist.com/articles/rewards-and-recognition/employee-recognition-and-retention-statistics/>

2. <https://www.quantumworkplace.com/future-of-work/14-benefits-of-employee-engagement-backed-by-research>

As Time Goes By

Love is an attachment, it's loyalty to a person or thing that gives you value in return. Love can be shown by opening a door for someone, sharing a meal, or giving a gift. You can love everything from pizza, to a best friend, to a coworker's new haircut. **People have no problem saying, "I love my job!" so why can't their job love them back?**



Giving an employee a service award is one way to show your love and appreciation. These awards, also known as a milestone award, length of service award, employee anniversary, or service anniversary, celebrate the anniversary of a special event...the day employee and employer became one.

Celebrate good times, come on!

Kool and the Gang

However, a milestone award doesn't just celebrate an amount of time. It's not a "thanks for not leaving me" or "you made it another year" award. It should be a real moment of appreciation and celebrating successes. It shouldn't feel like something that's handed out just for surviving.

they do that on tv not work!

Tenure isn't just employees doing time like they're serving a prison sentence chained to their desk. It should feel like an Unchained Melody.

lonely rivers flow...

Many companies feel that a paycheck is all they need to do to show their love. While, of course, fair compensation is an important first step, studies show that being recognized and rewarded for making a difference at work is often more likely to encourage employees to stick around than a paycheck or a trophy.

So improving engagement isn't about having a service awards program, it's about having one that evokes positive emotions in employees. An anniversary is a positive day of celebration—set apart from all the other days—that helps see employees through days that are stressful or challenging.

love = Commitment

*listen to
Captain & Tennille*



Love Will Keep Us Together

Dr. John Gottman, a top expert on divorce and marriage stability, said that in order for a marriage to survive it must have "Positive Sentiment Override."³ This means that positive thoughts are pervasive enough to override negative feelings that may arise.

Work is sure to have some negative feelings: rushed deadlines, miscommunications, lack of support, and other day-to-day issues.

like pizza: the positivity of the deliciousness overrides that bloaty feeling you get later

So while you can't avoid these natural occurrences, you can create positive experiences that override the minor frustrations that are inevitable at work.

Fondness and admiration are two crucial elements to positive sentiments and the more you can cultivate these feelings the better a relationship will be. In other words: recognize the good. With a strong recognition and service award strategy, organizations can reduce the turnover rate by nearly 40%. *All you need is love...and a killer service award program.*⁴

40% !!!

3. <https://blog.paper-anniversary.com/why-anniversaries-are-important/>

4. <https://protect-us.mimecast.com/s/UjyZCYERzMF8D9WhZWIF3>

Try a Little Tenderness

yes!

Service awards are most effective as simply one part of a balanced recognition strategy. According to a Deloitte study⁵, recognition is one of the top three most effective, non-financial, methods for retention. So a little tenderness really can make a difference in engagement and you don't have to spend huge sums of money to do it. What matters is that you are recognizing your employees often and in a way that feels sincere. A heartfelt thank you and a service award that feels authentic can go a long way to making an employee feel appreciated.

68% of HR professionals agreed that employee recognition has a positive impact on retention and 56% said such programs also help with recruitment.⁶

The problem is that many service awards don't seem very authentic, often taking the form of a certificate or pin handed off unceremoniously without a lot of thought. A generic service award may be useless to an employee or, even worse, something that reminds them of how little their company cares. Giving your employee a certificate without acknowledging their own unique personality or circumstances is like giving someone a card without writing anything on the inside. Authenticity comes from attaching real meaning and purpose by acknowledging all that has been achieved during their time at the company.

Authenticity also goes hand-in-hand with specificity. Think of something they've done or a project they were a part of that helped the company grow. Acknowledge the relationships they've built and how they've contributed to the company culture. Enlist the help of team mates to contribute ideas. Point out specific skills they have, especially if it's something they've learned or improved on in the last year.

Pairing service awards with consistent, meaningful recognition goes a long way to:

- Strengthen team bonds
- Improve retention
- Encourage future contributions
- Communicate value
- Build company culture

So sprinkle in regular recognition with service awards to help remind your people that they're simply the best (better than all the rest).

my girl Tina gets it

5. <https://www2.deloitte.com/ie/en/pages/deloitte-private/articles/recognition-programmes.html>

6. <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/toolkits/pages/employeerecognitionprograms.aspx>

Time After Time

Every year

Not even 5 years

An oft-repeated question regarding service awards is “what is the right frequency?” Traditionally, organizations have offered awards starting at the five year mark and continuing for as long as the employee remains. **However, five years is far too late for most employees.** The median tenure for wage and salary workers was 4.1 years in January 2020 according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.⁷ Waiting until year five to show appreciation means most employees will go unappreciated. Don’t make them wait *for a moment like this.*

But even by year three a person may have fallen out of “love.” Many divorce studies conclude that there are two periods during a marriage when divorces are most common: years 1–2 and years 5–8. Since working in an organization is just another kind of social contract, is it too much to infer that eventually the excitement of a new job may wear off in a career just as love might begin to wane in a marriage? Maybe after only a year your employee is experiencing *a total eclipse of the heart.*

Millennials, who currently make up 35% of the workforce, switch jobs about every 2.8 years on average.

The stat above shows that 35% of your employees won’t stay at your company for anywhere close to five years. What about non-millennials? Well, the good news is that the median tenure of workers ages 55 to 64 is 9.9 years—more than three times that of millennials. The bad news? Even if they make it to the five year award, your people likely will not make it to the next milestone.

Who are you going to give all those shiny plaques to if a significant portion of your workforce is gone before year 5 or year 10?

Service awards can only help stoke a flame that hasn’t yet been extinguished. Start rewarding employee loyalty early with service awards on years 1, 3, and 5. Or better yet: every year! Offering your people service awards early and often shows them you value their contributions and you want them to stay.



7. <https://www2.deloitte.com/ie/en/pages/deloitte-private/articles/recognition-programmes.html>

8. <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/toolkits/pages/employeerecognitionprograms.aspx>

Ain't No Mountain High Enough

The sky's the limit when it comes to what kind of service awards you can offer, but your focus should be less about how much money to spend and more about making the experience as memorable as possible.

A work anniversary is a chance for companies to shine a light on individuals, make them the center of attention and highlight their impact on results, workplace culture, and their coworkers. People love to share photos of the flowers they received from their significant other on Instagram with an equally flowery caption expressing their gratitude—often to the chagrin of some of their more romantically-challenged followers. In a similar fashion, a work anniversary might be a perfect prompt for a LinkedIn post—so give them something memorable to post about.

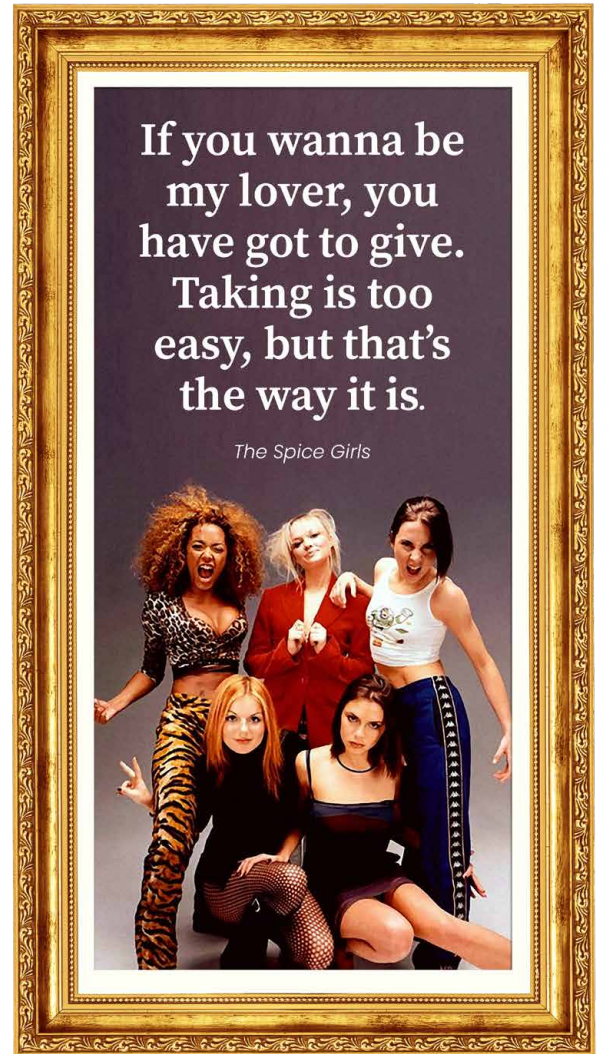
Meaningful service awards call for memorable rewards. Here are some ideas:

- * Offer a day of PTO
- Take the entire team out to lunch
- Give them money to donate to a cause of their choice
- * Decorate their desk
- * Have treats delivered to them
- A subscription to Audible or another service
- * Something useful for their home office
- Let them choose their own reward
- Points or gift cards for them to use on what they want

good idea

Of course if one of your employees prefers a more traditional award, that's great! Get that plaque or company pin—just also include something that communicates sincerity. When it comes to your employees, is there really *any mountain high enough, any valley low enough, that could (metaphorically) keep you from showing them you care?*

The true test for an effective service award is found in answering the question **“did the employee feel valued?”** Going the extra mile to ensure employees feel valued will pay dividends in any organization. Now, pairing memorable experiences with choice...



What an [Employee] Wants



options are great!

No two individuals are completely the same. So, if your organization is giving out traditional awards from a limited catalog—like a watch, set of golf clubs, or a jacket—you may need to re-evaluate your program. Don't get us wrong, those rewards are great (and we offer them, too!) but we're talking about options, and with traditional rewards your options may not be of value to your employees. Show your love, let your significant coworker choose their own gift, and they'll feel truly valued. Solutions that offer points to redeem are great for this, especially if they have a direct dollar-to-point value like Awardco does, all with no markups. Now your employees can get whatever they want without any extra fees, and THAT'S love.

Having a diverse organization is ideal, but without providing employees the opportunity to choose their rewards, leaders choose for them—which leads to unwanted rewards and unfortunate waste. Providing choices helps your employees show some love to the planet. When you let people choose their gift, they'll keep their gift. No more awards tossed away to end up in landfills or swag balled up at the back of the closet. As a bonus, when you customize gifts to the individual, you don't end up with boxes of leftover items shoved into closets or under desks at the office.

Just as each employee values different things, not every person loves public attention. Find out if your employees prefer to be acknowledged in public or in private before their anniversary—they'll thank you for caring enough to ask.

Have I Told You Lately?

Frequent and consistent recognition can seem hard to maintain, but it's definitely doable. Even if your company policy dictates that you don't do an official service award every year, you can acknowledge employees on other important occasions. Showing employees you care can be as simple as a heartfelt thank you, a celebratory "great job!" or a small token of appreciation like a gift card for coffee. And inviting team mates in recognition is like adding cream and sugar.

41% of Millennials prefer to be recognized for their work at least monthly, if not more frequently.⁹ *Don't go breaking their hearts.*

Doesn't take much, does it?

If you have hundreds or thousands of employees it may seem impossible to acknowledge each person every year. The truth is it certainly can be impossible if you're sending around a card for team members to sign. However, technology and automation have made it virtually effortless to make every anniversary special.

Awardco simplifies service anniversary program setup and management with automated programs that schedule awards and invite team mates and leaders to participate in each employee's special day. This is just part of something we call MemoryBooks, an unforgettable digital experience full of well-wishes and fond memories from co-workers and friends. By giving each and every employee a memorable service award experience annually, you're ensuring employees feel appreciated, stay engaged, and provide years more valuable service.



9. <https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/hr-management-services/publications/assets/pwc-nextgen.pdf>



This Will Be an Everlasting Love

In conclusion, effective service awards really aren't complicated. It all boils down to one simple concept: show people you value them by giving them value in return. And taking the guesswork out of what your employees value is a no-brainer. One Awardco client thought they were giving their employees value with their prior vendor in the form of a commemorative 10-year plaque only to find that 50% of recipients threw it away when they left the company. Yikes.



As a contrast, think of when you get something for a loved one. That loved one thinks of you every time they use it. Imagine if your employee had a positive feeling about their workplace every time they turn on a TV, use an iPad, make cookies with a kitchen appliance, or put on a branded sweatshirt (in the size and color they chose). If they take a trip or get tickets to a show, the positive memories they make will be associated with their workplace.

And should they leave your company someday, they will have these positive lasting memories of your company. That's *an everlasting love*.



Love is a Many Splendored Thing

Remember, an employee that feels cared for will care more about their work.¹⁰ Love isn't just *a second-hand emotion*, it's showing your true, genuine appreciation for your co-workers. It's reminding them—and everyone else—that they are a part of what makes your company great.

If this feels like a lot to take in, don't worry, we would love to help you create a service award program that works for your company and your employees. **You can learn more about the rewarding practice of employee recognition at award.co.**

Award.co

Scan this!!!

We made you a mixtape of love songs that prove our point, scan here to listen:



10. <https://www.hrtechnologist.com/articles/rewards-and-recognition/employee-recognition-and-retention-statistics/>