

109 Ways to Appreciate Employees on a Budget

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JUSTWORKS.



Health and Well-Being

Healthy employees are happy, productive, and better for your team. In fact, one study found that employees who eat healthily are **25% more likely to have higher job performance**. Another study found that **regular exercises boosts work productivity by 15%**. By encouraging health and activity in the workplace, you're setting the stage for a productive and innovative workplace.

Provide fresh, healthy snacks.

Easy snacks like apples, oranges, and bananas go a long way.

LOW-COST

Arrange a company wide run. RaceEntry offers a great guide on [how to organize a team 5k here](#).



Get in the spirit with team sports.

LOW-COST

Have a brief daily fitness event. We like to do pushups.

FREE

Give a subscription to Headspace for self-directed meditation. A "gym membership for the mind," as Headspace calls itself. At only ten minutes a day, the meditations also won't take a lot of time.

LOW-COST



Pedal away with Citi Bike memberships for your team. Any companies using Justworks can **offer Citi Bike as a team perk at 20% off**, and the benefits of active employees are vast — from improved health to higher productivity.



Hold a company Olympics or field day. Justworks has had fun with two-legged races, tug of war, and limbo competitions. Pull together some goody bags for everyone at the end.

LOW-COST



Bring the magic of cooking into the workplace. **Groupon** offers plenty of options to infuse healthy eating into the office.

Health and Well-Being

Add some zen to the office with meditation. We've had [Exubrancy](#) come in to offer meditation classes.

LOW-COST



Offer your team gym discounts. [Regular exercise increases productivity](#) (and your employees will appreciate a gym discount). Justworks offers all members [49% off NY Health and Racquet Club](#).



Set up friendly competition with a step tracker. We recommend [Count.It](#), a site that hosts physical activity challenges for teams. The most active team member each month wins a prize.

FREE

Bring in a yoga instructor for the day. Justworks brought [Exubrancy](#) into the office for a yoga wellness hour with employees, and it was a big hit! Exubrancy also offers classes like Zumba, tai chi, pilates, and barre.

LOW-COST



Offer high-quality primary care, like One Medical. All Justworks members who signed up for healthcare [receive One Medical clinical care free of cost](#). Your employees will appreciate benefits like next-day appointments, and a mobile app to schedule Rx.

Relax everyone with a professional massage. Companies like [Massage Envy](#) offer massage therapy wellness programs at work to decrease stress and absenteeism and improve employee morale.



Provide free shots during flu season. Sure, it's not exactly a fun perk, but both you and your employees will be happy when they're not missing work with a fever and chills. Flu season peaks in January or later, and cloistered office spaces are the ideal breeding ground for illness. [Pharmacies like RiteAid](#) and [on-demand companies like Pager](#) will bring professionals to administer shots in the office. You can start to offer them in October, but the [CDC recommends availability throughout flu season as well](#).

LOW-COST

Professional Development

Providing career development and growth for your employees is a valuable investment. **Ninety-three percent of employees who feel valued are more motivated to do their best work**, according to a study by the APA. Even better, a large portion of growth opportunities you can offer are either free or low cost.

Improve your business offerings with a sprint week.

We suggest Jack Knapp's book [Sprint](#).

FREE



Seek out an industry happy hour.

LOW-COST

Move departments for a day.

Let employees sit in another department and see how it works.

FREE

Attend a conference or trade show with the whole team.

FREE

Offer on-site interview training.

Consider a service like [Recruiting Toolbox](#) to help your team hire the right people.

Support new hires through a robust onboarding process. If you need a good [onboarding checklist, we've got one here](#). But there is plenty you can do to help a new employee plant roots in your company.



Here are a few ideas:

- Lunch with the CEO
- Scheduled coffee with a co-worker
- New employee training sessions

FREE

Implement an internal mentorship program.

Not only is this free, but it's also a valuable gift you can offer an employee.

FREE

Create transparent review processes. Stick to your timeline and communicate the process openly.

FREE

Build out an internal training program for promising leaders. At Justworks, we offer a rolling Leadership Development Program for new managers and employees with leadership potential.

Your company can cover training sessions on topics such as:

- Delivering tough feedback
- Giving effective and interesting presentations
- Making meetings more effective

FREE

Go to a meetup, lecture, or fireside chat as a team.

Smaller scale than a conference, there won't be pressure to give up a whole day.

FREE

Provide money (or time off) for professional development classes. Websites like [CourseHorse](#) are a great start.

Knowledge Building

Leverage employee curiosity into an asset for your company. As Ken Robinson put it, “You can’t just give someone a creativity injection. You have to create an environment for curiosity and a way to encourage people and get the best out of them.” These ideas will help you get the best out of your employees.

Teach an in-house writing workshop. See if a team content guru is willing to offer a writing workshop for interested employees.

FREE

Volunteer together. Block out a few days where your employees give their time together, like going to a soup kitchen or cleaning up a park.

FREE

Invite employees to a Design Night. Every month, Just-works’ design team sponsors an outing to an art exhibit or cultural event that everyone can enjoy.

LOW-COST



Start a club. Not only are they free, but they build great team camaraderie.

A few ideas:

- Book Club
- Wine & Cheese Club
- Film Club
- Art Club

FREE

Get a company-wide membership for online courses. Online classes from websites like [Coursera](#) or [Udemy](#) on Adobe Photoshop or Ruby on Rails are low-cost ways to impart your employees with tons of knowledge.

LOW-COST

Sponsor language classes. Schools like [FluentCity](#) help employees expand their horizons and build new skillsets.

Cover the cost of subscriptions to people’s favorite online or offline publications.

LOW-COST



Produce a lunch-and-learn series. Everyone at your company has specialized knowledge to offer. Knowledge shared over food is always a winner, and will make your employees feel like they can make a difference.

LOW-COST

Give a book buying budget. Officevibe has [Kindles that employees can rent](#). Some companies offer book stipends for Amazon.

Have a library. If you have spare books on business strategy or even creative fiction, create a nook where all employees can enjoy.

FREE

Teach refined skills with your employees as instructors. Block out a couple hours for a free intro course on programs like Photoshop or SQL for other employees to take advantage.

FREE

Recognition and “Thank You”

According to [How Full is Your Bucket](#), the number one reason Americans leave their jobs is because they don't feel appreciated. Thank yous may feel corny, but they go a long way to boost the worth of people who are working hard.

FREE

Have a new employee introduction at weekly meetings. At Justworks, everyone shares the first concert they attended.



Give a handwritten thank you note. It's free and incredibly meaningful.

FREE



Introduce new employees to the company via email. Throw in fun facts and a picture to seal the deal.

FREE



Give a welcome package the first day of work. At Justworks, we give a swag bag with branded mugs, pens, and a postcards signed by team members.

LOW-COST

Offer awards for work well done. You don't even have to give a trophy (though that doesn't hurt). We nominate team members once a month for awards in hard work and excellent teammanship.

FREE

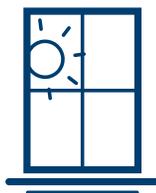


Celebrate work anniversaries. A card or simple announcement will do.

FREE

A Welcoming Office Space

As the famous entrepreneur Thomas J. Watson put it, “good design is good business.” Design a positive work environment — both in aesthetics and company culture — and you’ll find yourself surrounded by content employees.



Choose an office with windows.

Neuroscience research has shown that **natural light in the workplace** allows employees to sleep better at night.

FREE

Transform your space with plants.

Plants at work can raise employee job satisfaction, increase attentiveness, and raise productivity.

LOW-COST

Opt for lamps instead of harsh fluorescent lighting.

Natural light has a positive effect; **fluorescent light has a negative one.**

Have a dog-friendly office.

People love bringing their furry companions to work, and it adds a home-like vibe.

FREE



Give a desk decoration stipend.

Whether it’s \$20, \$50, or \$100, your employees will appreciate being able to decorate their workspace.

LOW-COST

Conduct an ergonomic assessment. Did you know that the average adult spends 50-70% of their workday sitting down? Keep your employees healthy by providing optimal ergonomics. **Websites like this** will let you know where your score stands. **Make adjustments accordingly**, and your employees will thank you.

LOW-COST

Get standing desks.

Not everyone wants them, but those who do often can’t go back.

LOW-COST

Day-to-Day Highlights

Variety is the spice of life, and the workplace is no exception. Find ways to keep work interesting for your employees with special days during the week, or celebrations every few months. It will bring people closer together, and appreciate their workplace all the more.



Make breakfast tasty with Bagel Tuesday. Pass the strawberry cream cheese!

LOW-COST



Implement no-meeting Fridays. Nix the meetings once a week; your employees will love you.

FREE

Mix it up with off-site meetings.

Trendy working spaces like [PivotDesk](#) and [Grind Spaces](#) offer beautiful shared areas.

LOW-COST

Offer an internal hiring referral program.

At Justworks, we give referral bonuses to employees that refer new hires.

Host a weekly all-hands meeting.

As CEO of Justworks Isaac Oates put it, “Start building internal communication channels early. Building a rhythm around that stuff early on has created a framework that keeps people on the same page, even as we’ve grown.”

We often choose teams to present and always leave room for questions, announcements, and introductions for new employees.

FREE

Schedule walking meetings. Is your computer necessary to hash out a certain idea or project? If not, take a stroll around the park and brainstorm. It will act as a huge refresher.

FREE



Get fancy with Formal Friday. Everyone needs an excuse to get dressed up every once in a while (especially in a casual office setting).

FREE

Get festive with Aloha Wednesday. Wear Hawaiian shirts every Wednesday.

FREE

Day-to-Day Highlights



Share lunch on your office's rooftop or common area.

FREE

Provide flexible working hours. Everyone has a life outside of work, and with remote technology, it makes more sense than ever to be flexible.

FREE



Work together in a coffee shop.

LOW-COST



Cut off late and early meeting hours. Consider implementing a rule that no meetings can happen before 9 am or after 5 pm — because let's face it, nobody will be paying full attention.

FREE

Treat your team to lunch. Meals are an opportunity for people to build stronger connections than they would eating alone at their desks.



Offer Summer Fridays. You'll likely notice productivity levels stay about the same, but employee happiness will skyrocket.

FREE

Arrange clothing swaps. Schedule a day to trade clothes you're tired of, then donate the remainders to charity.

FREE

Onsite Team Building

If you're showing employee appreciation on a budget, onsite team building is a great place to start. It's perfect for regular team bonding experiences, minus the price tag.



Play bingo. Theme it with branded stamps or company colors to add some flare.

FREE

Create lounge areas. People are more likely to mingle and work well together if they have a place to do it.

FREE

Throw a company-themed trivia night. Decide what you want to quiz on: will it be industry knowledge or facts about your employees? Throw some chips into the mix and you have a party.

LOW-COST



Bring someone special to work day. Kids, parents, grandparents, friends: the more the merrier.

FREE

Keep board games around the office.

Pandemic, Settlers of Catan, Cranium — the possibilities are endless.

LOW-COST

Have a company spelling bee.

Someone on your team must be able to spell [elucubrate](#), and everyone will enjoy the element of nostalgia.

FREE



Organize a scavenger hunt with company themes.

FREE



Keep a dartboard in the office.

LOW-COST



Host an arts and crafts night.

[Crafts by Amanda](#) offers some great online tutorials and ideas: Think Instagram cabinets, vintage frames for desktops, keychain charms, or even tie dye and bracelet making.

LOW-COST

Mix it up with random lunches. Randomly pair workers in groups with four or five coworkers to grab lunch. (Justworks even has a random lunch generator on our software platform!)

FREE

Hold a games tournament. Raise the stakes with team rewards (or just some good snacks).

LOW-COST



Keep puzzles around the office.

A stimulating way to take a break.

Offsite Team Building

Help people come together outside of work, and they'll make a stronger team beyond the 9-5. From trivia nights to camping trips, everyone will appreciate these respites.

Take advantage of free museum trips. Take a half day off and enjoy the exhibits or planetarium with your colleagues.

FREE

Go camping together. There's nothing that can replace the bonding of the great outdoors away from electronics.

Have a picnic. This is free if employees pack their own lunch, and still low-cost if you provide some bread and sandwich fixings.

LOW-COST

Attend a minor league baseball game. In NYC, [Long Island Ducks](#) and [Brooklyn Cyclones](#) tickets are affordable.

LOW-COST

Tour a beer or tea factory for free.

Places like [Celestial Seasonings](#) offer an unforgettable tour.

FREE

Take a day hike. Not into a full camping experience? The same benefits as a camping trip apply.

LOW-COST

Decompress by attending class together.

Some fun ideas:

- Paint bar
- Mixology class
- Cooking class
- Wine tasting
- Scotch tasting
- Chocolate tasting
- Truffle making

Be a kid again. Who says adults can't have some of the fun? Some ideas:

- Paintball
- Lasertag
- Indoor skydiving
- Bowling
- Karaoke
- Arcades

Experience an electric tour.

[MuseumHack](#) offers creative and unforgettable museum tours or in-office team building activities.

Treat your employees to Dinners in the Dark.

[Dinners in the Dark](#) offers a sensory exploration of food, sans vision.



Pedal around with Citi Bike Fridays. If your team has a [Citi Bike membership](#), consider biking to the park together and throwing around a frisbee one of those summer afternoons.

Start up those games you used to play at sleep-away camp. [Mafia](#) and [psychiatrist](#)? Free and fun.

FREE

Sail away for the day. Have a boat party with a company like [Spirit Cruises](#).

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How Can Justworks Help?

We know how important it is to care for your team and keep them happy and productive.

Justworks offers affordable employee benefits and perks that will give your small business an advantage.

We achieve this by pooling together customers to increase buying power, with access to top-quality healthcare. Justworks also takes care of dental, vision, pre-tax commuter, 401(k), life insurance, and numerous other benefits and perks.

Interested in learning more? Give us a ring at (888) 534-1711 or email us at experts@justworks.com.