

## Be a Dream Boss

**G**REAT BOSSES ATTRACT AND KEEP MOTIVATED, enthusiastic employees. That was the underlying message during an open-mic educational session last September at SAF Lake Las Vegas 2005. While the topic centered on concrete ways to motivate employees, generally through nonmonetary incentives, attendees outlined strategies that sounded more like mandates on how to be a better boss than tips on doling out employee perks. Their message? Give employees responsibility, say thank you and reward people who exceed goals.

These creative, nonmonetary strategies pay off, says Susan David, Ph.D., psychologist and emotions researcher at Yale University's department of psychology. (Read more about why nonmonetary perks can be better than cash bonuses in *Hands On*, p. 13.)

"Smart managers realize (that) money alone cannot buy an employee's heart," she says.

Floral Management outlined highlights from the session and asked David to weigh in on why some of the strategies are effective.

### Don't Micromanage

"Money is important, but we're not (the highest paying company in the area)," says Rene Van Wingerden of Ocean Breeze Nursery in Carpinteria, Calif. To compete with companies that offer higher wages, Van Wingerden empowers employees with additional responsibility. And, while it may seem counterintuitive to "reward" employees with more work, Van Wingerden says the strategy works because it makes employees feel trusted and vested in the company. Plus, it helps them learn to delegate, a necessary skill for anyone who wants to rise through the ranks.

Carol Caggiano, AIFD, PFCI, the owner of A. Caggiano Inc. in Jeffersonton, Va., and a member of SAF's board of directors, agrees with Van Wingerden's sentiments.

"You have to give people authority to act on decisions," she says. "They find personal gratification in that. It's not just a monetary thing."

### Acknowledge Extra Work

Don't underestimate the power of "thank you," Caggiano says.

"The No. 1 thing we tried to do (when I owned a retail florist shop) was to say thank you to every employee almost daily," she says. "It meant a lot."

At Hoogasian Flowers in San Francisco, daily thanks come in the form of food. Management buys staff lunch every day. Seem like a stretch? Not to Harold Hoogasian, who said employees make sacrifices for his store and deserve to be treated accordingly, especially around busy holidays.

"When you apply at my business, you're told there are numerous blocks of time that you can't take off," he says, and if a free lunch helps balance the scale in the employee's eye, so be it.

Daily recognition, especially if it's unique to each employee, is a powerful way to connect with workers since "employees achieve excellence when they are emotionally connected to their work," David says.

### Reward Employees for Meeting Goals

Some employees need to be told, specifically, what to do, and, if they accomplish the task, smart managers reward them. For Colleen Taber of Gardens America in Miami that means having "incentive days" for salespeople.

"If the entire sales force sells a certain number of boxes by a certain time, the person with the most sales gets a prize, such as dinner or theater tickets," she says.

That's a solid approach, according to David, who says incentives can benefit owners, employees and businesses.

"Incentives such as prizes are a powerful way to provide employees with positive emotional feedback," David says. And emotional feedback makes employees feel more connected to their employers and their jobs, she says.

### Brand Your Business as Fun

You don't have to spend big bucks to make work fun for employees. Shirley Lyons, AAF, of Dandelions Flowers and Gifts in Eugene, Ore., gives "Dandybucks" to employees for a job well done. The \$1 coupons are good for anything in the store. She's been using them for 17 years.

"Anyone can give another person dandybucks for going above and beyond," says Lyons, who also gives employees \$5 gift certificates to local stores for meeting sales goals.

To build pride in Equiflor, a grower/importer in Miami, Nicolas Trijullo bought sharp-looking uniforms for his warehouse drivers and employees.

"Everyone wants to work for our company — look at the uniforms and clean trucks," he says. "It builds an emotional commitment." (Read more about Equiflor on p. 26.)

### Give Employees Room to Grow

Sometimes letting others know you appreciate your employees is better than a well-wrapped gift.

"I have a great manager and always take her to conventions and industry events," says Mary Gmetro, owner of Plano Florist in Plano, Texas. "She's learning all this stuff, and it's a great way to recognize her."

That recognition could be scoring Gmetro some major bonus points.

"Employees who learn new skills are more likely to be emotionally connected with their work," David says. "This translates into better productivity, job satisfaction and customer service. Employees who are simply given more of the same work without skills development can be left feeling used and disengaged." 🌱

— Julia Hoffman

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