

Champion Your Employees Through Tough Economic Times

Tandem HR recognizes the value of employees to our business. Without our dedicated employees, we wouldn't be able to provide our clients with the high-touch and customized service in which we take pride. Like many businesses, however, Tandem HR has experienced salary freezes and other cost cutting measures. During these times, we find it especially important to continue motivating our employees and rewarding their hard efforts. We needed to create a cost effective program that both motivates and rewards dedicated employees. Last year, Tandem began a "fun month" consisting of treats and activities for all internal employees. The varied activities are spread throughout the month, sharing one key factor: they're affordable!

We'd like to share ideas we've implemented for our employees in the past few years. Creating a program suited to your business culture and employees is important.

Breakfast- Whether it's continental or a hot breakfast buffet, this treat will help employees get a jump start on their day.

Movies- Movies are easy to play in conference or break rooms with a laptop and LCD projector. Consider a theme of movies, once a week viewed over a long lunch hour. Laughing with co-workers over a comedy is a great way to break up the work day.

Recess- Go outside and play! Encourage employees to bring their favorite outdoor games or find some at garage sales to store in the office. Some favorites of Tandem employees include tailgate toss, Frisbee, volleyball and ladder golf.

Lunch- Find a local lunch joint your employees like to frequent. Ask the establishment if they would like to partner with you and offer a discount to your employees for lunch. Take the time to walk if it's close. Tandem employees walked to McDonald's together on "Fry Day" with company sponsored gift cards.

Eat Green- Encourage healthy eating by catering in a simple lunch of vegetables, fruits and salads.

Happy Hour- Gather your employees after work hours at a local restaurant or bar. Keep costs down, and limit liability, by providing the first round of drinks only. Order appetizers and encourage cross departmental socialization. Employees will unwind and feel more personally connected when socializing outside of the workplace.

Exercise- Exercise encourages wellness in addition to team building when done together. Schedule sports games during the lunch hour, organize a walking club or encourage employees to bike to work.

A Tandem employee, who frequently attends a yoga class, was able to lead fellow employees in a short yoga session for a midday break. Don't be afraid to use your employees' talents.

Chair Massage- Treat employees to fifteen minute chair massages. (A Tandem employee favorite!) Discounts on chair massages can be found in the Self Service Center (click on Tandem Discounts).

Extra Breaks- Arrange a week where employees can take turns utilizing an extra hour for lunch. Alternatively, allow employees to come in an hour late (snooze week) or leave an hour early (skip out week).

Casual Dress- Observe a week (or month) of casual dress days. Make sure to outline any exceptions (like when visiting prospective or current clients) and be clear what is and is not permitted.

Office Trivia- Learn fun facts about your employees and send out a trivia email each Monday. Employees need to find answers to the trivia by Thursday to enter a drawing for a restaurant, retail or gas station gift card. Some examples of questions that allowed Tandem employees to get to know one another and have fun include: Who in the office is a twin? Who ran a marathon? Or Who was born in another country? Make sure the questions are not too personal yet allow employees to learn new things about their co-workers. Tandem employees received a full tank of gas and a car wash on Friday for winning weekly trivia contests.

Sundae Monday- Nothing cures the Monday blues like an ice cream social. Include lots of toppings and this mid-afternoon snack is sure to be a hit!

These are a few examples of how we got creative to treat employees in an affordable way. With a little planned relaxation in appreciation of everyone's hard work, employees feel appreciated, recognized and know a little more about one another!

For more information on employee programs, contact Tandem HR at 630.928.0510 or visit www.tandemhr.com. The staff at Tandem HR contributed to this article. It is intended as information only and is not a substitute for legal advice. Tandem HR is a professional employer organization specializing in strategic HR partnership with small and mid-sized businesses.

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