

25 Ways to Say “Thanks” Without Spending Much

Practical, people-centered appreciation ideas for small businesses

Free (or Close to It)

1. A genuine, *specific* thank-you for something they did this week (not just a “good job”).
2. A handwritten note left on their workstation – oldie but goodie!
3. Start a meeting with “Wins of the Week”... instead of awkward silence or immediate critique.
4. Public recognition during team huddles or group chats (the positive kind obviously).
5. A physical or digital Peer-to-peer kudos board – because coworkers often see things we don’t.
6. Ask for their input on a decision... and then actually use it (if it makes sense).
7. Offer flexibility for a day: late start, early out, and/or longer lunch.
8. Give them a “No-Meeting Hour” pass so they can *actually* get work done.
9. Let them choose their next project or shift when possible - tiny autonomy, big morale.
10. Celebrate work anniversaries with a short story of how they’ve made the business better.
11. Spotlight an employee on social media (with permission; no surprise tagging).
12. Recognize employees on LinkedIn (with their permission). Great for their career *and* your culture.
13. Create a rotating “Employee DJ” playlist for the week. Choose chaos at your own risk.
14. Publicly thank their family for supporting odd hours or big pushes – it matters more than you think.

Low Cost (\$5 – \$25)

15. Their favorite snack or drink waiting for them – the quickest morale boost known to man.
16. \$10 gift card to a local coffee shop or small business. Great way to support local *and* say thanks!
17. Desk plants (tiny, hardy, low-commitment... like a succulent, not a fern).
18. A personalized keychain, pin, or sticker that represents something they love.
19. A gratitude scratch-off card with little perks (“free break,” “your pick of shift,” etc.).
20. Add a small monthly “Thank-You Budget” for managers to use however they want.
21. Doorstep delivery of a small treat after a rough week – *unexpected* kindness hits different.
22. A team “Wall of Wins” with printed photos and notes.

High-Impact Habits (Free but Powerful)

23. Create a “Strengths Spotlight” tradition - share what each person naturally does well.
24. Host a 15-minute “Gratitude Huddle” at the end of the month.
25. Build a simple recognition calendar, so appreciation becomes a *routine*... not a holiday.

Strategic HR Tip:

Recognition isn’t a seasonal expense; it’s a strategic retention tool. When it sits above the line, it’s the first thing to go when sales wobble. If you move even a small recognition budget *below the line*, you protect the things that keep your best people - which is a far cheaper investment than replacing them.

For more tips on creating strong company cultures and retention strategies, visit www.coralignhr.com