

The most common type of service award is the traditional length of service award. Just a generation or two ago, it was common for people to sign on with one company at the start of their career and stay until the day they retired. These days, with so many more job opportunities and higher salaries available with each career move, companies are having a more difficult time holding on to employees. The amount of time and money invested in constantly training new employees adds up—one reason why company loyalty to employees must be established quickly.

Length of service programs recognize people for their commitment to the company and can help reinstate an almost forgotten feeling in today's workplace—a sense of belonging. It's no longer realistic to wait until an employee's 25th anniversary to give them the gold watch or a mantel clock—employees who stay with you through the ups and downs, whether they've been with the company one or 25 years, deserve to be recognized and thanked for their loyalty.

Another granddaddy service program is the absenteeism reduction program, better known as an attendance program. Absenteeism—calling in on short notice to take the day off, whether the reason is legitimate or not—creates gaps in staffing and situations where costly mistakes can severely cut down on productivity and quality. It also builds resentment among employees who show up for work everyday and who may have to cover for the person who is always absent.

Employees who are regularly absent often are just not happy with their work or feel so unmotivated that the very idea of going to the office makes them feel ill. People who enjoy what they're doing are energized by their work and don't view paid sick days as an entitlement.

Again, do a little investigating. Try to find out why an employee is consistently absent—maybe he or she just needs more challenging work.

Many companies have steered away from rewarding employees with perfect attendance records with cash and instead offer a quality merchandise award with true recognition and trophy value.

## What's Your Program?

There are several types of service award programs, including:

- Length of service programs—recognize employees for the number of years they've worked for the company.
- Absenteeism reduction programs—reward employees for not missing any days of work.
- Peer-to-peer programs—allow managers and employees to recognize colleagues on-the-spot for doing something right or going the extra mile.

In recent years, the peer-to-peer service award program has come into vogue. These programs allow managers—and co-workers—to identify and reward colleagues who have gone the extra mile.

Those recognized are "caught in the act" of doing something right or demonstrating a new philosophy management has initiated. Most often, awards are given on-the-spot, so there's no delay in recognition, the most important aspect of a service award program.

## D. Selecting Awards

Awards should be arranged in a hierarchy of value and prestige and bear some relationship from one award level to the next. The kinds of awards you select should be those your employees wouldn't ordinarily use their discretionary income to buy for themselves. That is one of the most important reasons that care and consideration has to be put into the selection of merchandise.

### Tips for Selecting Awards

- Although your personal tastes may be great, avoid selecting awards based solely on them. Select inspiring awards that will appeal to both men and women and that truly stand out as a mark of achievement, professionalism and dedication.

- Select awards that are appropriate for the recipient and that are more prestigious as service longevity increases. For example, a one-year service award may be a \$25 lapel pin, tie tack or charm. A traditional gold watch for a 25-year service anniversary will obviously cost much more and carry higher prestige. Either