

How to Keep your Employees UP When the Economy is DOWN*

By Lori Moser

My how the times have changed in the matter of a few months. Raises are lower than what was originally budgeted. Instead of hiring, firms are laying off staff and employees are more focused on *keeping* their jobs than *doing* their jobs! With all these changes there is still one thing that has remained the same, employees want to feel appreciated and needed. During times when money is tight, there are some simple, non-expensive ways to lift your employees up and keep them motivated.

Communicate, Communicate, Communicate

On every HR survey out there, you will find one of the top things employees want from a job is good communication. While there are going to be business decisions made that can not be shared, communication should still take place as much and as often as possible. Keeping employees in the loop on the big picture is vital. It will help stop the rumor mills and calm the anxieties. It helps put the focus back on being client service oriented and back on the business of practicing law.

Ideas:

- Small group meetings
- Quarterly State of the Firm addresses to all

Recognize, Recognize, Recognize

Now is not the time to drop or cancel your employee awards programs. More than ever, your employees need to know they are valued and appreciated for their contributions to the firm's success. Give praise whenever you can. It can be as simple as a thank you in front of others to as formal as an awards dinner for the entire firm. Honor those who have been with the firm for significant year anniversaries. Being recognized and appreciated is something we all want from our employer.

Ideas:

- Formal recognition program during Professional Administrative Week
- Let your employees or managers nominate others who have excelled. Draw a winner from those nominated and award a small token of appreciation.

Fun, Fun, Fun

Make the workplace fun. Do things you wouldn't normally do in the everyday course of business. Make it an exciting place to come to work. It doesn't take a lot of money to come up with ideas, just ask the staff. They are full of wonderful suggestions. You will be surprised how a simple idea will go a long way.

Ideas:

- Have a jeans day

- Wear a coordinating color with a holiday (red for Valentine's day, green for St. Patrick's day). Have a contest for the best outfit.
- Offer a lunchtime learning session with soft topics like cooking, golf lessons, yoga, etc.

Last but not least, say thank you, A LOT! It is easy and it goes a long way, especially when your employees are taking on more and more as staffing gets leaner and leaner. Take the time to tell them you appreciate what they are doing and for being part of your team.

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