10 Ways to Show your Customers and Employees you Care

'Tis the season of giving, which means it’s a great opportunity to show both your customers and your employees how much you appreciate them. There are infinite ways to show you care, but here are a few ideas to get your creative juices flowing.

1. **Send a Card.** This tip isn’t reserved to the winter holiday season. Sending a card for a client or employee’s birthday, the holidays, or even just to say “thank you,” is a great way to make the individual feel appreciated. Snail mail is so rare these days (other than bills nobody wants), that sending a card is sure to evoke surprise and a positive response.

2. **Take Them to Dinner.** Sharing a meal with a long-time customer or employee you want to single out for praise not only shows you care, but it also gives you the opportunity to get to know the person. You’re likely busy during the workday and might not have had the chance to get to know your employee on a personal level; going out after work provides you the opportunity. Even a quick coffee break gives you the chance to connect outside of business talk.

And while taking a client to dinner doesn’t always need to mean you talk business, it can help you see things from her perspective. You might come up with new ideas about how you can better serve her and all your customers as a result.

3. **Give Praise Vocally.** Your employees work hard to make your company a success, and they deserve appreciation. Thank a staff member for a job well done, and do it in front of others if possible. Make a point of singling out employees when they go above and beyond, and you’ll make your entire staff want to try harder too. **Be specific in your praise**, so your staff knows what gets your attention.

4. **Hold a Party.** Company holiday parties are typical this time of year, and they can provide a great opportunity to let your hair down with the rest of your staff. Hold it somewhere other than your office so that you get out of the work frame of mind. Find a nice restaurant or bar and arrange for dinner and drinks for your team.

You can do the same for your customers: hold a customer appreciation party! Your customers probably have not met one another, so this gives them an opportunity to network and you the chance to show your appreciation.
5. Give a Gift. Naturally, gift giving is on the mind this time of year. No matter your budget, if you can find a way to give a little token of appreciation to your employees or clients, they’ll appreciate it right back.

Avoid self-promotional gifts, and focus instead on gifts that the recipient will truly appreciate. For golf lovers, golf-related gifts like tees or balls may be appropriate. Or for a client who works hard, maybe a spa-themed gift basket would fit. Everyone loves candy or flowers too. For your staff, give identical gifts to avoid comparison. If it’s your company policy to give a monetary end-of-year bonus, that may be your token of appreciation. You could also opt for giving gift cards.

If money is too tight to buy your staff gifts, find non-monetary perks to give, such as extra days off, a month of “Casual Fridays” every day, or fancy coffee in the break-room. It is, as you know, the thought that counts, so be sure to express your appreciation along with whatever gift you give.

6. Share a Book. For some reason, books are an intimate gift. There’s something about taking the liberty of assuming another person would enjoy reading a book you’ve read, and something rewarding when you’re right. Select books you think would be a good fit for an employee or client and pass it along, including a note outlining why the book made you think of him.

And if you’re not comfortable picking out a novel for a client, stick with a proven business book.

7. Listen. Sometimes listening is the best way to show your appreciation. You may think, “I listen to my staff and clients all the time!” But consider whether that’s true. When is the last time you sat down and really heard what they wanted? Without simultaneously checking your email or playing with your phone?

Make an effort to spend time with those around you and listen. Whether it’s about their kid’s baseball tournament or gripes about your product, commit yourself to hearing them. Then ask yourself how you might be able to help.

8. Call Him By His Name. It seems a small thing to do, but if you’re not in the habit of calling someone by his first name, it can be a huge thing. Consider the last time someone called you by your name: how did it make you stand up at attention and feel appreciated that this person was focusing on you? If you have dozens of employees, many might assume you don’t even know their names. Prove that you do.
9. **Invest in Your Office.** Perhaps rather than spending money on each of your employees, you’d better show your appreciation by investing in new computers or office equipment for your staff. If it’s been awhile since your last technology update, it may be time. Your staff will be thrilled to not fight against the copier or printer anymore, and they’ll know you did it out of appreciation. Take a survey of what needs updating in the office and show that you’re paying attention by replacing it when the budget allows.

10. **Keep the Appreciation Going.** Don’t stop showing your appreciation after the holidays are over. Remember to make the effort to show that you care to both clients and employees year ‘round. Celebrate their birthdays. Ask them how they’re doing. Show that as the owner of your company, you care about their well being, and not just during the holidays.

Showing that you care can help you maintain and grow your professional relationships, both with your staff and with your customers. You show that you’re not just about the bottom line, and that you do, indeed, care about these people as individuals.