

Tools and templates



Talking to employees about an incentive scheme

Incentive schemes are implemented to encourage employee engagement and motivation. They can do great things for staff retention rates, too.

There are lots of options when it comes to what incentives to use, including monetary rewards (think bonuses and remuneration models), gifts, training and experiences. You'll likely find that different staff members have different priorities, which makes getting incentives right tricky.

To implement a scheme that will resonate with your employees and boost productivity within the company, you need to find out what's most desirable to your workforce – what do they need and what would they like?

This information can be gathered in different ways, although anonymous surveys often result in the most honest feedback.

Here are the key questions you should ask.

1. Do you feel valued as an employee? Please explain your answer.

Gauging how well you're currently doing at making people feel appreciated and indispensable is a great place to start. It'll give you insight into the mood of your workforce and the potential gains that can be made by introducing a new incentive scheme.

2. How fairly do you think you're rewarded for your work?

To start, it's good to get an idea of how satisfied people are with their pay and the recognition they receive. Try to gauge whether they think their current package reflects the amount of work they do and their expertise.

3. How well do you think the business does at recognising hard work?

When employees feel like their efforts go unnoticed, their sense of job satisfaction and motivation levels are negatively impacted. Perhaps there are certain people or departments who regularly pick up extra tasks, stay late or have to overcome difficulties, but don't get noticed because they have absorbed the responsibility so well. This question will let you know if things are slipping under management's radar.

4. Do you think rewards are handled fairly across the company and its different departments?

It's very common for there to be varying pay models and incentive schemes across different departments and seniority levels of a business. Identifying whether staff feel that these are handled fairly is key, because if they're feeling short changed, those discrepancies need to be explained and justified, or eradicated.

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5. Do you have a clear idea of how you can progress and gain more rewards?

In order for rewards to be motivating to employees, they need to be accessible. It's critical that people understand exactly how they can achieve them and don't just see them as dangled carrots, else they'll have little impact on motivation and productivity.

6. Are there any benefits the company could offer to make your working life easier?

While monetary rewards are always welcome, there may well be some ways that the working environment itself could be made more enjoyable for staff. This is a great way to spot common niggles that your employees might have and identify unique incentives.

7. Which types of rewards are most valuable to you?

It's not always just the cash bonuses that strike a chord with people and create the best rates of motivation. Perhaps more time off, the chance to work from home or improved social events are higher up your employees' lists of priorities. Some types of rewards to ask about are:

- Monetary (eg. bonuses, pay rises, ad hoc cash rewards)
- Recognition (promotions, praise, training)
- Time off
- Flexible working opportunities
- Social events
- Food and drink (eg. providing lunch, breakfasts or snacks at work)