



# A Dozen Ways to Show Employees YOU CARE

By Don Phin

How do you show employees you care? Do you make a specific effort or do you simply assume “they know I care.” Here are a few ideas that will help you get it right.

- 1. Spend five minutes listening to them** – The art of listening is about being present. This means you listen with no distraction and full attention. Five minutes of listening space is a rare commodity and one that will be well appreciated. Ask somebody how things are going and then just listen. As Stephen Covey reminds us, first seek to understand before being understood. Remember not to make the conversation about you—because it's not.
- 2. Ask them for a great idea** – Many employees have great information to contribute, but fear doing so. Usually, they fear any judgment that could come along with the recommendation. The fear of judgment can shut down the sharing of some great ideas. This means you have to *invite* the idea and make it both fun and rewarding. “I know you are really smart and I was wondering what ideas you have about \_\_\_\_\_.” Get the whole team involved at a monthly suggestion meeting and make sure to reward every effort with some tickets, raffle items, etc. If one of the ideas produces a bottom line difference, you can reward that different in kind. See the Creativity Checklist and Employee Suggestion Form.
- 3. Buy them something that will help them with their career** – I like buying them books, DVDs, industry periodicals, time management programs, and the like. Focus on how your gift can help them grow in their career. Let them know why you bought it for them. Let them know you'll check in with them to see if they read it, watched it, etc.
- 4. Give them an unexpected afternoon off** – Imagine stealing half a day for yourself! Chances are you'll come back the next day renewed. So will your employees. If you really want to go for it, pay for them to have a half-day at a spa. They'll love you for a long time.
- 5. Get tickets for their family to do something** – Whether it's tickets to the movie theater, an amusement park, ballgame, or some other event, buy enough tickets so everybody in the family can attend. Then the family will know you care too.



**6. Buy some cool affinity clothing** – I travel a lot. I can tell you that those few companies who buy employees quality affinity clothing know what they're doing. You can notice how affinity clothing affects employees when you go into a fast food establishment. In a sense, you define that employee by how you dress them. If you want them to think like quality, then dress them with quality. Don't get the cheapest shirt you can buy; get the most expensive ones you can afford. It'll pay dividends in the long run. I'll share a quick story. I had a landscaping contractor with most of his employees being Hispanic immigrants. I noticed they spent most of their time on the weekends playing soccer. So I suggested to him that he buy some very cool soccer shirts with the company's logo on it. He did so, and they were all the rage. In fact, many of the other soccer players tried to get work at his company simply because of the branding caused by these shirts!

**7. Do some team building** – The most important work relationships we have are with the people we work with directly. Watch my [five minute video](#) where I show you a very powerful team building exercise designed to help us support one another that much better. Remember, none of us is as smart as all of us.

**8. Spend time educating the workforce on the company's history, vision, mission, values, and goals** – I remember doing a survey for a client and asking employees what the vision was of the company. One employee responded, "How should I know? We're treated like mushrooms." That response has stuck with me since. *Don't treat employees like mushrooms!* How would your employees respond to that question? In fact, how well do they know your company in general? Don't guess at it, use the How Well Do You Know the Company survey so you get a complete grasp on how well your employees *in fact* know your company.

**9. Throw a party** – These are stressful times. We have to balance out the negativity with some fun. Companies that cut down on their fun activities make a big mistake. The best companies make sure they have a company or department-wide event at least quarterly. Whether it's going out to dinner, a night of bowling, a movie at the theater, going to an amusement park, etc. they make sure they have fun together. It's a good idea to make sure there is a 50/50 mixture where the family and kids are invited and events where they are not invited. It's also not a bad idea to invite some of your best clients and vendors to your parties. See the Creating a Fun Workplace Checklist.



**10. Open up the books** – I'm a great believer in open book management and practice it at our company. In fact, we take it to the extreme—all of us know all of the numbers about everything. We're also very clear about how our contribution affects those numbers. Perhaps in a larger company you know the numbers of your department. Drive past any fear you might have about opening up the books. Read *The Great Game of Business* by Jack Stack as well as *Ownership Thinking* by Brad Hams.



**11. Write a thank you note** – This is an inexpensive and "high touch" way to show somebody you care. When you write the note, thank them specifically and mail it to their home.

**12. Celebrate their birthday and company anniversary** – Don't let employees convince you to "never mind." We all want and need acknowledgment. We're not getting any younger, so let's at least celebrate these important dates!

Imagine what might happen if your company did all dozen of these things. You might just end up with a company on fire!