Bonusly

15 Excellent Ways to Celebrate Employee Appreciation Day

Employee Appreciation Day—it's the best day of the year! 😄 🎉 🎶

It's probably no surprise to you that Bonusly takes Employee Appreciation Day *very* seriously. Recognizing and celebrating employees' great work is at the core of our mission, after all!

Employee Appreciation Day falls on the first Friday of March—if you're reading this in 2021, that means it'll be on March 5th!

On this day, employers around the world make the extra effort to appreciate their employees' effort and dedication. Over the past 20 years, an increasing number of companies have embraced this occasion to recognize the achievements and contributions of their employees with special events, gifts, and surprises.

We'll cover why you should celebrate Employee Appreciation Day, and we've rounded up a big list of our favorite ideas. Since Employee Appreciation Day might look a little different this year, we've also added adjustments to make each idea remote friendly!

Why is Employee Appreciation Day important?

Most work weeks are focused on business objectives, decisions from management, or customer issues. Employee Appreciation Day, on the other hand, is a special day that should be truly

centered around the teams of employees that make things happen every single day.

Even a little bit of recognition can make a big impact on employee motivation. Research shows that feeling appreciated [increases morale](#), [improves engagement](#), and [reduces turnover](#). In particular, employee recognition has been proven to [boost oxytocin levels](#)—that's the chemical our bodies create when we bond socially!

Research also shows that recognizing employees makes for a better customer experience. For example, a study in the hospitality industry found a [strong correlation between employee engagement and guest satisfaction](#).

Virgin Group founder Richard Branson famously said: "Clients do not come first. Employees come first. If you take care of your employees, they will take care of the clients."

Mic drop. 🎤

15 ways to celebrate Employee Appreciation Day

So how can you make your employees feel especially appreciated on this day? Here are 15 ideas to celebrate Employee Appreciation Day with your team.

Want some great staff appreciation ideas for day-to-day work? Click here.

1. Volunteer

Volunteer at a local conservation program, homeless shelter, senior living community, or humane society. Give back by planting trees, cooking and serving those in need, bringing joy to seniors, or taking dogs for walks. Research by Deloitte found that 70% of

working Americans believe "volunteer activities are more likely to boost employee morale than company-sponsored happy hours."

Having trouble finding volunteer opportunities and events? Ask your team for ideas or try a service like VolunteerMatch.

Benefits include: Working together with team members, getting to know new colleagues, helping the community, building great memories, and inspiring gratitude.

🖥 **Make it remote friendly:** VolunteerMatch has an excellent virtual volunteering opportunities page to explore. Some other remote-friendly volunteering ideas include:

- Arranging drop-off locations for a food drive or for donating warm weather clothing
- Hosting a virtual fundraiser and raffle off prizes
- Volunteering at a food pantry by packing, organizing, or giving out food
- Delivering groceries or meals to seniors

2. Play games & socialize

Engage in team games like a scavenger hunt, 'pub' quiz, or team-based office Olympics. They can be great opportunities for teams to know each other better in a fun setting while introducing healthy competition and encouraging innovative thinking. Chances are you'll see your coworkers in a whole new light!

Need help getting started? Here are some articles to inspire your next group activity:

- How to Design an Employee Scavenger Hunt
- How to Run a Good Trivia Night
- How to Host Your Own Office Olympics

Benefits include: Having fun, getting to know colleagues you don't normally work with, laughing, and feeling closer to the team.

🖥️ **Make it remote friendly:** There are tons of ways to play online games with your team. Why not set up an <u>Among Us</u> or <u>Jackbox Games</u> party? Plus, check out <u>Water Cooler Trivia</u> for excellent, asynchronous trivia competitions.

3. Gift bags

Create a bag with fun gifts like company-branded clothing, lunch boxes, or water bottles. Include some treats, add gift cards, and share experiences at local restaurants, massage centers, or coffee shops.

Go a step further and ask your staff what kind of <u>gifts they really want</u>. Giving the right kind of swag can increase loyalty and help spark future conversations about your brand.

Benefits include: Feeling appreciated, and enjoying gifts with friends and family.

🖥️ **Make it remote friendly:** Delivery services have really stepped up their game during the pandemic. Create a custom care box

experience with Knack, cult-favorite hometown treats from Goldbelly, or send over the essentials with Doordash.

4. Get creative

Research at San Francisco State University shows that having creative outlets outside of work boosts job performance. Introduce your employees to some fun hobbies with a workshop on painting, cooking, flower arrangement, crocheting, or origami.

To make sure that everyone participates in an activity that they'll enjoy, propose multiple options and let everyone sign up for their preferred activity beforehand.

Benefits include: Focusing on something fun, right-brained thinking, experiencing a new hobby, and getting to take a masterpiece home with you.

🖥️ **Make it remote friendly:** Just like delivery services, all sorts of businesses have adapted to the socially-distant environment and are offering classes and experiences online. Browse through hundreds of options on The Vendry, Marco, and Airbnb

Experiences! Since Bonusly started working from home, we've attended a virtual cooking class (empanadas!), followed along with an expert mixologist, and will soon embark on a Harlem Renaissance-themed tour for Black History Month!

5. Provide a lunch experience

Provide a catered lunch for your employees and offer activities afterwards, like listening to a lunchtime concert, joining a local walking tour, attending a library talk, or going for a bike ride. Eating right, exercising, and concerts all have proven work-related benefits. Poll your team and refer to your local newspaper for venues and events that could be a good fit for your outing.

Benefits include: Discovering new and exciting things to do in your town, enjoying new experiences with team members, and sharing interests.

🖥️ **Make it remote friendly:** Make an effort to connect by ordering lunch from a local favorite. While we can't be together in person, enjoying the same food is almost as good. 💚

6. Throw a team happy hour

Happy hours provide a relaxed atmosphere that can encourage positive staff interactions. They allow team members to reduce stress and can contribute to a positive company culture. Note that hosting any after-hours activity may exclude some individuals, so consider stopping the work day a little early before other commitments pull people away.

If you choose to host a happy hour, make sure to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of serving alcohol to your team, and be sensitive to any folks who don't drink, providing alternatives.

Benefits include: Casual socializing and learning something new about each other.

🖥️ **Make it remote friendly:** Virtual mixology classes or wine tastings is a fun, fresh way to enjoy happy hours—especially if you feel like the energy around your virtual happy hours is lagging!

7. Take a field trip

Organize a field trip to a local museum, botanical garden, or park. Sign up for a factory, brewery or winery tour. Use Employee Appreciation Day as an opportunity to better know your community and learn about your neighbors. It might even spark some new ideas!

Benefits include: Creating a memorable day, having fun, enjoying local attractions, and learning something new.

🖥️ **Make it remote friendly:** This one is tricky. 😅

If you have a smaller team that's based in the same geographic location, it may be possible to meet up in a park or do some kind of outdoor activity. Consider having a picnic, or taking a stroll along the lakefront.

8. Bring in treats

Who doesn't love a dessert spread? 😋

Desserts—cupcakes, donuts, candy—are a common token of appreciation, but take it a step further by keeping track of your employees' special favorites. Why bring in cupcakes when a team member prefers donuts? Instead of a box of chocolates, how about some vegan cookies?

When you're getting to know new employees during the onboarding process, slip in some questions about their favorite

sweets, and you'll have insider knowledge on how to delight on Employee Appreciation Day.

🖥️ **Make it remote friendly:** Delivery services are your friend! Many sweets shops are offering delivery across the United States, like [Jeni's Ice Creams](link) and [Milk Bar](link).

9. Spruce up their workspace

You know what they say about March—it comes in like a lion. 🦁🌧️

I don't know about you, but March is definitely when I start to get antsy about the [dreary weather](link)—especially when you're stuck inside, working remotely. Employee Appreciation Day is a perfect opportunity to help your employees with a spring refresh of their workspace. Pick up some new greenery for the office,

🖥️ **Make it remote friendly:** Explore options like [The Sill](link) or [Bloomscape](link) for delivery of indoor potted plants. Also, consider implementing a office equipment stipend to make sure your employees have what they need to be productive and successful!

10. Subscription to Headspace

On Employee Appreciation Day, give your team members a sign that you care about their mental and emotional wellbeing. A gift of a Headspace subscription can provide valuable guided meditation sessions that'll leave employees feeling refreshed.

11. Film a short video

A few months after Bonusly started working remotely due to COVID-19, we kicked off a quick video project. Participating employees shot a selfie video thanking our leadership team for their care and flexibility as we transitioned to remote work, which was stitched together into a full appreciation video! We surprised them by playing it at our all-hands meeting, and it was a hit! Yes, there were happy tears. 😄 🎥

This is an easy but meaningful way to show your appreciation, whether it's on a company-wide or individual level. If you're on a Mac, Apple iMovie will work in a pinch, but there's also tons of free video editing software out there!

12. Send a postcard or letter

Postcards, letters, and other forms of snail mail are a special joy to receive during the pandemic. Write a letter of appreciation for your employees, and it's something they can pin up in their workspace!

13. Start a mentorship program

According to our 2020 Employee Engagement and Modern Workplace Report, 89% of Highly Engaged employees are satisfied with their professional development opportunities, compared to only 36% of Actively Disengaged employees.

Employee Appreciation Day is a great day to announce a new mentorship program. You should be thinking about how you can help your employees learn and grow, but there are many ways you can do this besides paying for expensive conferences and course tuition. Establishing an official mentoring program empowers employees to build relationships, shadow others in desirable roles, and find opportunities for growth.

14. Establish dedicated time off

Time is a priceless resource, and it's one thing you can never get back. Why not offer some extra PTO to your team as part of Employee Appreciation Day? Even for people who love their jobs, a little extra free time is always welcome.

There are many time-based ways to reward your employees for their hard work, from flexible scheduling to sleep-in days and early releases!

🖥 **Make it remote friendly:** At Bonusly, we've been dedicating one Friday a month as "Rest from Home Days"—a way for our leadership team to acknowledge how many employees are working longer and harder throughout the pandemic.

With many scheduled vacations and plans being canceled, and mandatory remote work heavily blurring the lines between work and personal life, it's important to make sure your employees have the time to actually rest and recharge. There's no better way to show your appreciation for your employees' hard work.

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15. Write a LinkedIn recommendation

Writing a LinkedIn recommendation is the perfect way to commemorate Employee Appreciation Day! It's a personal, meaningful, and an endorsement for someone's hard work. It's an underrated gesture that communicates your appreciation of a team member, but also that you care about their future success—even if it's not at your company. Plus, it's free. 😜

LinkedIn recommendations are the gold star of public recognition, because it's *truly* public. 🌍

We also invite you to learn more about Bonusly's employee recognition and rewards platform to make it even easier to appreciate your team every day.

Impact of employee recognition

How exactly are employees and companies positively impacted by recognition? Employees experience several positive feelings

through appreciation that translate into measurable business benefits:

Job satisfaction

Feeling appreciated and recognized at work helps employees enjoy their work more while also increasing productivity. According to a SHRM study, 48% of employees reported that management's recognition of their job performance was very important to their job satisfaction.

Sense of purpose

The feeling that your work is important and that your contribution is valuable is a great motivator, one that increases employee engagement. According to a study by Alight Solutions, employees who feel rewarded are seven times more likely to be engaged with work than employees who don't.

Well-being

When employees feels like their company cares about them, stress levels decrease, confidence builds, and costly turnover decreases.

An impressive 55% of workers said that if they feel their employer cares about their well-being, they would want to stay at that company for 10 years or more.

Trust

Appreciating employees builds trust. In his book Trust Factor, Harvard Researcher Paul J. Zak states that compared with employees at low-trust companies, those at high-trust companies report 50% higher productivity, 13% fewer sick days, 76% more engagement and 40% less burnout.

Employee Appreciation Day can be an epiphany moment for many employees, one that you can use to show they're cared for and appreciated.

Make every day Employee Appreciation Day

While it's a great idea to celebrate Employee Appreciation Day, it's important to understand that organizations shouldn't limit employee appreciation to just one day. Every day should be Employee Appreciation Day.

If you haven't already, start thinking about creating your own employee recognition program. These programs can be a great way to help your team foster a happy, fulfilled, and motivated culture through recognition. Supporting a recognition program using an employee recognition platform like Bonusly can make it even easier to appreciate your team all year round.

Want more ideas to appreciate your employees throughout the year? Take a tour of Bonusly or talk with one of our rewards experts.

Bonusly is a fun, personal recognition and rewards program that enriches your company culture and improves employee engagement.

With Bonusly, everyone in your organization can publicly recognize everyone else by giving small bonuses that add up to meaningful rewards.

Learn more about employee recognition at bonus.ly

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