

TEN WAYS TO MOTIVATE YOUR EMPLOYEES

Your customers' first impression of your laundry is usually through your employees. Keeping employees happy and motivated will promote a professional and pleasant first impression, and create a great work environment for your valued employees.

Set a good example. Employees watch you and use your example as the model for how to behave towards their job and towards your customers. Be a good role model by arriving on time, having a good work ethic, being pleasant, dressing neatly, and treating customers like gold.

Provide the training that establishes the standards for your store. Effective training is a must to show new employees their basic responsibilities, as well as the standards you expect them to maintain. Establish a training manual that explains standards for processing drop off orders, handling customer complaints, method and frequency of cleaning various areas of the store, taking vacation or sick days, earning raises, etc. Train a new employee yourself for several days before leaving them on their own, or have your best employee handle this important function.

Provide financial incentives. Money is a good motivator. Why not have an ongoing contest for employees, where they are encouraged to come up with effective and creative ideas for improving productivity at the laundry? Offer a bonus for the best idea of the month. Or, set a standard amount given for any usable idea or tip that improves customer service, increases traffic during slow times, etc. Remember, your employees are "on the front line" every day and probably have some good ideas, if they are encouraged to share what they know.

Give employees the power to make on-the-spot decisions. For example, after setting up parameters upfront, allow each employee to do whatever it takes to resolve a customer complaint, on-the-spot. This will let the employee know they have a say in dealing with customers, and customers will appreciate not waiting to have their problems solved. This is good employee relations, and good customer service.

Remember to give compliments. Evaluate and discuss each employee's performance on a regular basis. As part of this process, include both positive and negative input if necessary. Suggest ways to improve their performance, earn raises, win bonuses and meet their goals. Ongoing, don't be stingy with compliments for punctuality, professionalism, having a great attitude, keeping the laundry spotless, etc.

Conduct regular staff meetings. Meetings let you pass on new information or policy changes to everyone at the same time. They also serve as a forum for employees to share their ideas. An occasional meeting on a particular topic or problem may also be appropriate. Staff meetings are also the perfect time to award employees their bonuses for good ideas, and to congratulate them in front of their peers.

Explain the value of teamwork. Remind employees individually and when together that they are all part of a team working towards a common goal.

Periodically surprise employees with something fun. Spontaneous gestures like bringing in donuts one morning, or ordering a pizza with the works some evenings, go a long way towards keeping the atmosphere light and letting employees know their dedication is noticed and appreciated.

Remember birthdays and dates of hire. For an employee's birthday, buy a card and ask everyone to sign it, bring in a cake, or take the group out for a "Happy Birthday" lunch. On anniversaries of an employee's hiring day, present them with a nice card, surprise them with a cute but inexpensive gift, or simply take them aside and thank them for their hard work on your behalf.

Use employee raffles to encourage good work habits. Ask employees what they might like to win – perhaps two tickets to a movie, a manicure, or lunch at a local restaurant. Also ask for ideas on how an employee gets to enter the raffle, such as one entry per week for each week of being on time for all shifts.