



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Employee Awards Guidebook is part of the Employee Awards Program Kit. The kit is designed to help you create your own Employee Awards Program.

This Guidebook is meant to explain the value of creating an employee awards program and give you the basic outline for getting started.

The kit is provided for free by **Humor That Works**. If you paid for this kit or found it from some other location, please contact kits@humorthatworks.com.

CONTENTS SUMMARY

The Employee Awards Guidebook contains the following posts:

- 3 Reasons to Create an Employee Awards Program
- 8 Steps to Creating an Employee Awards Program
- How to Create Fun Employee Recognition with Custom Awards

See *01 Employee Awards Program TOC* for the other contents in this kit.

KIT CASE STUDY: CORPORATE HUMOR AWARDS

In order to demonstrate specific steps throughout the process, this kit will reference the example of hosting corporate humor awards (which you should definitely do at your organization if you aren't already).

These were the steps followed when creating the [Corporate Humor Awards](#) but they will work for any type of Employee Award Program.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Some of this content was originally posted at www.HumorThatWorks.com. Visit the site for additional information regarding employee awards programs.

For questions or concerns, or to book me as an MC for your awesome upcoming awards program, email me at andrew@humorthatworks.com or call 646.543.7398.

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3 Reasons to Create an Employee Awards Program

One of the best ways to recognize employees is through having an employee awards program that celebrates the behavior you want to promote in the workplace. Not only does it give you a chance to reward employees, it also shows the rest of your company what you're hoping to get out of all employees.



Flickr / ADAM & EVA Award 2012 / eveos

That's what we recently set out to do when launching the [Corporate Humor Awards](#). We sought to celebrate individuals and organizations using humor to improve their work while at the same time promoting humor in the workplace.

Whether as part of an existing rewards & recognition event (such as [what I did](#) while at Procter & Gamble), or as a standalone event, there three key reasons to host your own employee awards program:

Reason #1: To Recognize Employees Who Go Above and Beyond

An awards program creates the perfect opportunity to provide recognition for employees who are delivering exceptional value to their organization. This helps the employee feel respected and appreciated which further encourages their positive behavior to continue.

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With the Corporate Humor Awards, we wanted to shine a light on individuals and groups who use humor to make the workplace more enjoyable because of the tremendous [benefits of humor at work](#).

Reason #2: To Encourage Others to Act Similarly

Employees have a knack for doing what work gets recognized, it's a correlation of "what gets measured is what gets done." They see what type of work that gets applauded and think "If I want to be recognized next time, I better do that type of work."

For the humor awards, rewarding humor not only let employees know that humor is OK, but also that it is encouraged and celebrated as a way to make an organization more effective, more productive, and more awesome.

Reason #3: To Showcase Examples that Can Be Shared and Reapplied

Awarding specific types of behavior gives employees a roadmap of the exact type of work they can do. They don't have to reinvent the wheel with new ways to deliver exceptional value to the company--they can just mirror what they say award-winning corporate citizens doing.

One of the reasons people don't use more humor at work is that they don't know how. The Corporate Humor Awards showed people what type of humor is appropriate for the workplace which can help kickstart ideas for their own humor use. And even if they don't come up with their own idea, they at least have a few ways they can blatantly share and reapply with their own group.

Summary

Hosting an Employee Awards Program can be a great way to celebrate some of your top employees. In addition to recognizing their efforts, you'll also inspire other employees to do better work while sharing best practices of award-winning behavior.

Up next: *How to Create an Employee Awards Program.*

8 Steps to Creating an Employee Awards Program

Now that you know the benefits of creating an employee awards program, you may be wondering how you go about actually doing it. Luckily I've created and hosted my fair share of events (including the recent [Corporate Humor Awards](#)) and I've got all the steps you need to have a successful awards show.



Flickr / Award Recipients 2012 / Auburn Alumni Association

Here's how to show your employee appreciation in just 8 steps. To see a more detailed schedule, check out *03 Example Project Schedule*.

#1. Decide on Your Award Categories

First, you'll need to decide on what exactly you'll be recognizing through your awards. The categories should cover areas that you want to recognize but also want other employees to focus on. It's also worth including a few fun employee award categories to keep the awards ceremony interesting.

In the case of the Corporate Humor Awards, we picked categories that could show how humor can be effectively implemented in the largest number of organizations or for the largest number of individuals.

We chose to recognize both individuals and organizations.

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At an individual level, we recognized: Best Email, Best Presentation, Best Video, Best Story, Best Prank, and Best Humorist.

At the organizational level, we recognized: Best Onboarding, Best Training, Best Best Website, Best Perk, Best Recognition, and Best Corporate Culture.

We also included custom award categories (see below) that allowed nominators to customize the awards program.

#2. Collect Nominations

Next you'll collect nominations for each of the award categories you chose in Step #1. The easiest way to do this is via a form submission, such as what you can create with [Google Forms](#) (which was used for the humor awards) or [Survey Monkey](#). You can also accept these nominations via email but the collection process will be more manual.

When collecting nominations, be sure to collect the nominee's name, reason for submission, and nominator's name (or nickname if you want nominations to remain anonymous).

I also like to use the nomination form as a time to ask a fun/interesting question of the nominator as well, just to get a sense of the people submitting nominations.

Examples of questions I've used in the past include:

- What is your favorite color?
- What is one thing everyone should do in New York City?
- What song are you listening to right now?

#3. Determine Finalists

Once you have the nominations, you'll need to narrow down to a set of finalists. For smaller organizations, you may decide that all nominations are finalists; for larger organizations you may want to narrow it down to 3 to 5 potential winners.

There are a number of strategies you can use to narrow down your nominations:

1. **Have One Person Pick.** The quickest way of selecting finalists is to just have one person pick them. It could be the person running the event or perhaps the senior most person in the organization (this is what we did for the Corporate Humor Awards).
2. **Create a Panel.** If you want the process to be more democratic, you can put together a panel of judges from people on the planning committee or in the organization who then choose their top choices. Keep the panel to an odd number of people when possible to help prevent ties.

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3. **Apply a Rubric.** If you want to make the process as objective as possible, you can create a rubric for selecting finalists that is applied across all nominations.
4. **Choose Randomly.** If you have far too many nominations to narrow down, you could choose 5 finalists randomly from the nominated.

No matter which way you choose, you may want to inform the nominators / nominees of what process was used so there isn't any confusion.

#4. Announce the Finalists (Optional)

Regardless of how you do it, narrowing the list down to finalists can be a great way of creating buzz about the awards by announcing the finalists before announcing the winners.

This can be done privately to each of the finalists so they can get excited for when the winners are selected, or even more fun, an announcement to the entire organization so there is a buzz when the winners are announced.

Monthly newsletters, corporate memos, and breakroom TVs are great places to list the finalists prior to the awards ceremony.

#5. Pick the Winners

When you have your finalists, it's time to choose the winners. Just as when selecting the finalists, you have the same four ways you can choose the winners: have one person pick, create a panel, apply a rubric, or choose randomly.

Personally I think it's best for winners to be selected by a panel. This helps ensure that bias is removed from the equation but also that the best nomination win (as opposed to being randomly selected).

An easy way to do this is to have each member of a panel rank their top 3 choices. Then take the average of all judges responses and the finalists with the best average score is the employee award winner.

I also recommend having judges share 1 or 2 sentences about why they chose their top response. This gives you a great soundbite / blurb to share when announcing who won.

For example, Mary Kay had this to say about [Best Onboarding Winner, Intel](#):

"What an amazing way to introduce new employees to everyone else.
Energizing for both new folks and current employees." --Mary Kay Morrison

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#6. Announce the Winners

Once you have the winners, it's time to announce them to the organization! You can do this either digitally (such as through email, newsletter, or press release) or at an event (such as a corporate offsite or quarterly meeting).

An in-person event is more ideal as it increases the exposure of the winners and finalists, and adds an element of prestige to awards. However, if this isn't possible, a digital announcement can still be an impactful way showing your employee appreciation.

A natural place to share the employee award winners is with your other forms of rewards and recognition, such as when announcing work anniversaries, promotions, or retirements.

#7. Award the Winners

After you've announced the winners, it's time to "tell them what they've won" (although you may actually want to say what the winner will receive long before the announcement as a way of drumming out excitement). But now is when you'll actually give the award to the employee.

The award itself doesn't have to be anything fancy. It can be as simple as an employee award certificate with their name and award category that they won, or it can also come with a gift such as a gift certificate, extra vacation day, or cowbell.

The Corporate Humor Award winners received a digital certificate and a copy of my book, [Humor That Works: 501 Ways to Use Humor to Beat Stress, Increase Productivity, and Have Fun at Work](#).

#8. Spread the Word

Finally, once you've given out the employee awards, it's time to spread the word about the great work the winners did. This allows you to further leverage the employee awards program by getting it out to more people so they too can be inspired.

Summary

Creating an Employee Awards Program takes some work, but the effort is well worth it. For examples of the steps above, check out the remainder of this kit.

Up next: *Adding Fun to Your Program with Custom Awards*

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Adding Fun to Your Program with Custom Awards

Showing employee appreciation through an awards program has a number of benefits (in fact I've spelled out three of them for you above).

But just because recognition for employees is a serious matter doesn't mean it can't be fun. That's where custom awards come in.



In addition to your traditional office awards, these creative awards celebrate the unique employees in your organization in a fun way:

What is a Custom Award

A Custom Corporate Award is a way to celebrate individual personalities in your company. With these awards, the nominator creates the award name, award criteria, and the winner.

That means the awards will be 100% unique to your organization, with a focus on individuals instead of your normal work criteria.

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Example Custom Awards

Here are some of the custom awards I've come across in my time as an award producer / host:

- "Most Likely to Answer a Question with a Story Award" for a manager who always answered questions with some type of story.
- "Fake Job Title / Straight Face Award" for an employee who would make up a new job title every time the phone rang.
- "Ties Everything Back to Milkshakes Award" for someone-who-won't-be-named for unsurpassed devotion to relating business matters to milkshakes.

Of course the actual awards are entirely up to your organization.

Why You Should Include Custom Awards

Custom Awards allow your organization to express its personality, and celebrate the personality of all of its employees, by recognizing people for their individuality.

They also help to add humor to existing rewards and recognition programs by adding creative awards that stand out among your typical awards.

How to Include Custom Awards

Including custom awards in your employee appreciation is easy: just follow a streamlined version of the 8 steps listed above.

1. **Collect Nominations:** Create a process where employees can create custom awards, specifically nominating: a award name, award criteria, and the award winner.
2. **Pick the Winners:** If you have too many nominations, you can narrow down the "winning" custom awards, or you can choose to share all of them.
3. **Announce the Winners:** As part of your ongoing rewards and recognition, announce the "winning" custom awards to celebrate your organization's unique personalities.

Summary

Custom Awards can be a great way to personalize your employee award program specifically to your organization. They'll also inject some humor into the ceremony and get people excited to see what awards their peers have come up with.

Up next: *Next Steps*

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Next Steps

Now that you know the value of creating an employee awards program, the steps it takes to get started, and a fun way to inject humor into the process, it's time to actually get started.

So... what are you waiting for?

If you're looking for more assistance, check out the remaining resources in this kit:

- Example Project Schedule
- Example Award Categories
- Example Nomination Form
- Example Awards Program Emails
- Digital Certificate Example / Template

If you have any questions or concerns, or if you want to book me as an MC for your awesome upcoming awards program, email me at andrew@humorthatworks.com or call 646.543.7398.