

Providing Holiday Perks for Your Staff

BUSINESS OWNERS IN THE FLORAL INDUSTRY KNOW the mantra of working harder and longer hours during the busiest holidays of the year. As Ken McLaughlin, manager at Florist Atlanta, Inc., sums up the holiday experience: “We just eat and go on.”

Despite the apparent perseverance of your staff, however, there are countless ways — and reasons — to help staff fuel up for the grueling hours and then de-stress following the rush.

Marta Land, owner of House of Flowers in Shawnee, Okla., sees a direct correlation between her employees’ happiness and her customers’ happiness.

“I want to make it a fun, as well as profitable business,” Land says. “If [employees] are happy, they do better designs and talk about the shop.”

Relief for the Body

Land tries to vary her gifts to her longtime staff each holiday. Past gifts have included in-store massages (from a professional masseuse), gift certificates for pedicures and massaging socks to alleviate their stress levels.

This year Land is leaning toward getting her staff another variation of healing, in the form of a corn sack, or a weighted fabric bag that, when heated in the microwave or chilled in the freezer, provides therapeutic relief for muscles.

The staff at Shirley’s Flowers and Gifts in Rogers, Ark., has likewise enjoyed in-store massages, on Mother’s Day. Owner Jo Buttram, AAF, AMF, also breaks up the stressful December holiday season with bowling and movie nights to help them wind down.

Nourishment, In All Forms

Land supplements her therapeutic presents with home-cooked goodies. At least once a year she makes her famous stuffed French toast with pecans for a staff brunch held during a busy holiday.

“We want to give them a reason to come to work, besides a paycheck,” Land says.

Employees at Beverly Hochstedt Florist, Inc., in Baltimore, look forward to perks, also in the form of food, to help them cope with the holiday workload. “Every holiday we have one pizza day and one day where everybody gets a crab cake platter, with all the trimmings,” says owner Beverly Hochstedt. Other food perks the staff have come to love are candy and various snacks, which Hochstedt says helps them recharge.

On one of the days leading up to Christmas, Nunan Florist & Greenhouses, Inc., in Georgetown, Mass., has a catered lunch buffet for staff as well as a potluck of goodies. Manager Lisa Greene, AAF, AIFD, PFCI, says Nunan’s tries “to keep everyone fed and happy” during those busy days, she says.

During Christmas week, Kathy Dudley of The Bloomery in Butler, Pa., also provides lunch each day for her staff, mostly catered, she says, but there’s a homemade lunch mixed in there, too.

Dudley and Greene each host a cookie exchange for their staff in December, as well.

The staff at Tiger Lily Florist in Charleston, S.C., anxiously awaits the Secret Santa gift exchange and an annual holiday party hosted at co-owners Manny and Clara Gonzales’ home. The event is catered because “we don’t want our folks to lift a finger ... [we] try to make them feel like honored guests,” says Manny Gonzales.

Appeal to the Inner Child

Employees at Kallisto Greenhouses, Inc., in Fontana, Calif., look forward to creating its annual winter wonderland, according to co-owner Kathye Rietkerk. The warehouses undergo a festive transformation to prepare for the holiday get-together for the employees and their families, which includes stringing lights on the rafters, lining the walls with palms and creating a themed backdrop for photo opportunities.

“It’s a tradition that allows the families to have a good time,” Rietkerk says. And that tradition, held usually on the second Sunday in December, includes having a veteran Santa Claus — the same one for the past 15 years — at the party, giving stockings to the employees’ children and hitching up a sleigh ride (made with materials from the greenhouses) throughout the property.

Rietkerk wants to show employees that they’re valued, especially during the holiday season, because “it’s a team effort to make the business a success.”

Ellison’s Greenhouses in Brenham, Texas, starts the holiday season early in November with a two-day celebration of Christmas for its staff and customers, which includes a pet adoption, crafts, home baked items, photo opportunities and a Santa Claus — with all proceeds benefiting the local 4-H Horse Club — according to owner PJ Ellison-Kalil. The festive weekend also features appearances by local radio personalities and a book signing for “Doug Welsh’s Texas Garden Almanac.”

And the list of fun things employers can provide for their staff to help de-stress goes on, and on. But, keeping employees happy in their job, especially during the long days, is crucial. Land says staff is like family because, around the holidays, they spend so much time together. And, like family, she says, “we do things along the way to keep things smooth.” 🌿

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