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Paul McDonald • Jun. 11, 2015



As your firm emerges from yet another busy season, the last things you want to revisit and mull over are all the long hours and hard work you and your team put in to reach the finish line. But before you officially move on from this intense work period, there are still two important things to do:

1. Show your appreciation to your employees for a job well done.

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A sincere thank-you is a meaningful way to acknowledge your team members for their good work. No doubt, you've already offered thanks and praise to your staff. Perhaps you even acknowledged some or all of your employees in a more high-profile way — for example, by trumpeting their success in a firmwide meeting.

But how do your workers want to be recognized? Think financial compensation. According to 60 percent of CPAs surveyed for *The People Puzzle: Building and Retaining a Talented Accounting and Finance Team* from the American Institute of CPAs and Robert Half, a salary increase is the preferred way to be acknowledged. (A promotion was a distant second, at 25 percent.)

Raises for deserving employees can also have a lasting, positive impact on your firm's retention efforts. Chief financial officers and workers interviewed for a [Robert Half survey](#) agreed inadequate salary and benefits is the number-one reason good employees quit their jobs. In today's highly competitive hiring market, skilled professionals know they have options and are not likely to continue working for an employer that is not providing an appropriate level of compensation.

If pay increases for your team members are simply not in the cards due to budget constraints, consider [the bonus track](#) instead. Keep in mind that replacing a productive worker [costs much more](#) than a bonus acknowledging that person's contribution to the firm's success.

The gift of time — and fun

Paid time off or extra vacation days — and making it possible for staff to take that time when they want to — can also be powerful perks. The end of busy season is an especially good time to underscore to your employees that the firm takes their well-being seriously. Show them how much by instituting scheduling and telecommuting options they can take advantage of year-round to better maintain [work-life balance](#).

This gesture can have a positive impact on retention, too: In *The People Puzzle*,

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accomplishments, all while enhancing your **team-building** efforts.

These recognition efforts can give your workers reason to be proud of what they achieved during busy season. And as the stress of the past several months fades, they also will soon recall why they love their jobs — especially if **you help them** remember.

Ask for staff input on how to improve

Now, to the second item on your post-busy season to-do list: *Think about how you can do things better next year.* Not sure where to start? Ask your employees. They will know firsthand what worked and what didn't these past several months and likely have valuable suggestions for improvement. There are a variety of options you can tap to obtain their feedback. One-on-one and group meetings represent an opportunity to hold in-depth discussions on issues and suggestions raised by staff members.

If you have the resources, consider conducting an employee survey. Many times, people feel more comfortable offering feedback, particularly if it's negative, via an anonymous survey. The results can provide you valuable insights into how your team members are feeling and ways you can improve your operations.

In every communications channel you use, make clear that you want to hear individuals' concerns and recommendations. What you learn can help you determine, for example, whether you had adequate resources in place this year, and if you should consider setting aside budget for interim support or other hiring next year.

Before you know it, Q1 2016 will be here. Cross off these two final to-dos for 2015 if you want to be fully prepared to meet the challenges of the next busy season.

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