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accountants. This time of year, nerves are frayed and tensions are high. It's no walk in the park for managers either. In addition to your client load, you've got to keep your

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Paul McDonald • Apr. 13, 2016



The home stretch of tax season means heavy workloads and long hours for

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Try to keep the office atmosphere as upbeat as possible. To keep employees' spirits high, promote collaboration by discussing as a group tricky tax issues and solutions. Be sure your team knows you are there to support them and willing to pitch in.

Would bringing in a foosball or ping-pong table relieve stress and add some fun during tax season? You know your team best and what kinds of activities help them unwind. When your accountants are frazzled, it's your job to remain calm and positive and be an enthusiastic cheerleader and coach.

## **2. Pamper your staff**

If there's an office dress code, consider relaxing the rules when your employees are working long hours. On days when they aren't involved in client meetings, allow staff to wear jeans and sneakers for greater comfort. Spring for dinner. Rent or buy a massage chair. Offer to substitute exercise balls for desk chairs, or bring in yoga mats and foam rollers for stretching. And provide plenty of hydrating beverages. You might even consider hiring a personal assistant to run errands for busy employees.

Another treat might be to designate one day of the week as Pet Day. The presence of well-behaved animals can promote relaxation and boost employee motivation, so long as it doesn't bother clients.

## **3. Encourage healthy habits**

When things are at their busiest, it might be tempting for employees to arrive early, stay late and live on caffeine. Don't be an accomplice to your team members sacrificing their mental and physical health during tax season.

Urge them to take [lunch breaks](#) and recharge with walking and stretching. You don't need to ditch the candy jar altogether, but put it behind [healthy snacks](#) such as fresh

fruit, vegetable trays and granola. If you have the budget, hire a massage therapist or

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Another bonus of bringing on [interim professionals](#). You can evaluate them first-hand for potential [post-tax season](#) full-time positions.

## 5. Reward your team

Keep employee motivation high throughout tax season, and especially during the home stretch, by offering surprises. During meetings, acknowledge your team's hard work and thank them for their contributions.

Have a variety of goodies to reward workers on the spot. Rewards can include movie tickets, gift certificates to a spa or gift cards. You might even announce a "mandatory" work stoppage at 4 p.m. on Friday and take everyone out for happy hour.

## 6. Acknowledge a race well run

When tax season is over, it's time to [celebrate](#). Of course, raises and bonuses are always appreciated, but the reward doesn't have to be monetary. You could give each member of your accounting team an extra personal day or coordinate a firmwide outing, such as bowling, a performance, concert or sports event. If you have the resources, invite workers' family members as a way to acknowledge the sacrifices the household makes during tax season. Anything that shows your appreciation and gets workers out of the office will do the trick.

These tips are offered to improve employee motivation when your workers are at their busiest, but keep in mind they work hard all year long. Find big and little ways to thank staff and promote [work-life balance](#) throughout the year. When you do, the reward will be yours in increased loyalty and satisfaction from both your team members and your clients.

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