

## Maximize the Value of Your Employees

How do you judge whether you are “getting what you pay for” out of your employees? There are obvious standards you expect them to meet, such as showing up to work on time, staying until the end of their shift, being available for necessary overtime, having a friendly disposition with customers, and so forth. But the key to maximizing the investment you make with your employees is to make them a valuable part of your business, one that helps you keep and maintain more customers.

Employees are an investment, so make sure you are doing all you can to get the best return on that investment. Consider these guidelines for maximizing the value of your employees:

- **Set the standard** – If you want your employees to be professional and enthusiastic, you need to set the standard for those traits in your store. Whatever it is you ask of your employees, make sure they see you not only reaching, but exceeding that same standard in your own behavior.
- **Reward creativity** – Encourage your employees to share their ideas and suggestions for improving your business. Reward those suggestions with a free lunch, tickets to a ball game or other prizes when those ideas are implemented. More than likely, your employees are collectors as well. They may have an idea that other customers would also enjoy seeing put into place.
- **Hire sales people, not clerks** – Your business survives on sales, so train your employees to sell. Let them know the secrets of suggestive selling, add-on sales, the benefits of knowing customers by name, knowing the buying habits of frequent customers and referring them to specific products and other tools that can help you boost revenues (if you’re not familiar with some of these sales techniques, make sure you learn them yourself). Again, reward those employees who do an outstanding job with their sales efforts with bonuses or other perks to keep them motivated.
- **Get them out into the community** – Your employees are representatives of your company, so use them to promote your business. Have them wear some T-shirts and hats featuring your store name and logo and get them out to Little League games, local shows, festivals or other events to hand out flyers, cards and other information about your store. If you don’t have full-time employees for this kind of task, hire some fun, energetic people to do this kind of promotion on a part-time basis, whenever the need arises.
- **Tap into their knowledge** – Don’t be embarrassed to admit you aren’t an expert in gaming, website development or Internet sales. But if these areas aren’t your expertise, hire people who will guarantee your store doesn’t fall behind the competition. It’s not hard to find young, energetic workers who would be excited about supervising your gaming sales and/or events, creating a website for your store or supervising your eBay sales. They’ll not only help your bottom line, but they’ll also help you become more knowledgeable as well.
- **Make your store a fun place to work** – Good employees are hard to find, and often harder to keep. One way to keep good employees is by making your store a fun place to work. The more an employee enjoys his job, the more loyal they will be. They’ll also be more willing to talk up your business to friends and family. Keep any negative comments about the industry away from your employees. Make sure their focus remains on the fun products and services your store has to offer.

As a business owner, you not only have the power to hire and fire employees, you also have the responsibility to train them to be the best representatives of your store to your customers. Don’t take that responsibility lightly. The more time and effort you invest in your employees, the more likely you will see a return on that investment.