



Employee Anniversary Awards:
Your Go-to Guide for Creating
Memorable Celebrations

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SECTION 1

01 **The link between
anniversary programs
and employee retention rates**

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Should anniversary awards be a part of your employee recognition strategy?

It's easy to ask this question when you look at the numbers around employee retention and tenure. Take millennials, for example, who already make up the majority of the workforce and will hit 75% by 2030. Millennials may get a bad rap for many of their traits and behaviors, but their reputation as job-hoppers appears to be founded. Millennials now spend just 2.3 years on average with their current employer.

About 60% of millennials are currently open to a new job opportunity and they are by far the generation that's more likely to switch. Gallup found that in 2016, 21% of millennials had reported switching jobs within the past year compared with 7% of Gen Xers and other non-millennials.

Yet despite these shrinking employee tenures and the millennial majority in the workforce, anniversary awards programs are still the heartbeat of a company's recognition strategy.

So, how can you create a scalable anniversary awards program that's meaningful for your unique workforce and culture, and has the potential to reverse some of those negative trends in attraction and tenure? How can you ensure a best-in-class anniversary awards program?

How the workforce is shifting

2-3 yrs

Average amount of years Millennials spend with their current employer

85%

Of companies reported having a length of service program²

02 **Beyond the feel-good factor:
Making the business case
for anniversary awards**

The background of the page is a solid teal color. In the bottom right corner, there are several overlapping, wavy lines in a lighter shade of teal, creating a modern, abstract graphic element.

How do you make the business case to introduce or enhance your current program?

Anniversary awards support retention and loyalty

There's a clear connection between meaningful years of service programs and employee retention. When companies have particularly coveted anniversary awards, many employees will openly say that they're holding out for a particular milestone and won't even consider switching jobs before they reach it.

Employees stay at organizations for 2–4 years longer when their company has a meaningful anniversary award program in place. When you factor in the costs of replacing these employees, that extended service translates into hundreds of thousands of dollars saved (otherwise spent on recruiting, or lost through reduced work productivity).

Anniversary awards foster positive feelings

It may sound obvious, but it's worth stating that the vast majority of people crave positivity in their work environment. We love to feel recognized and celebrated for our accomplishments. At the same time, 99 out of 100 people said they wanted a more positive work environment and 9 out of 10 said they were more productive in a positive environment.

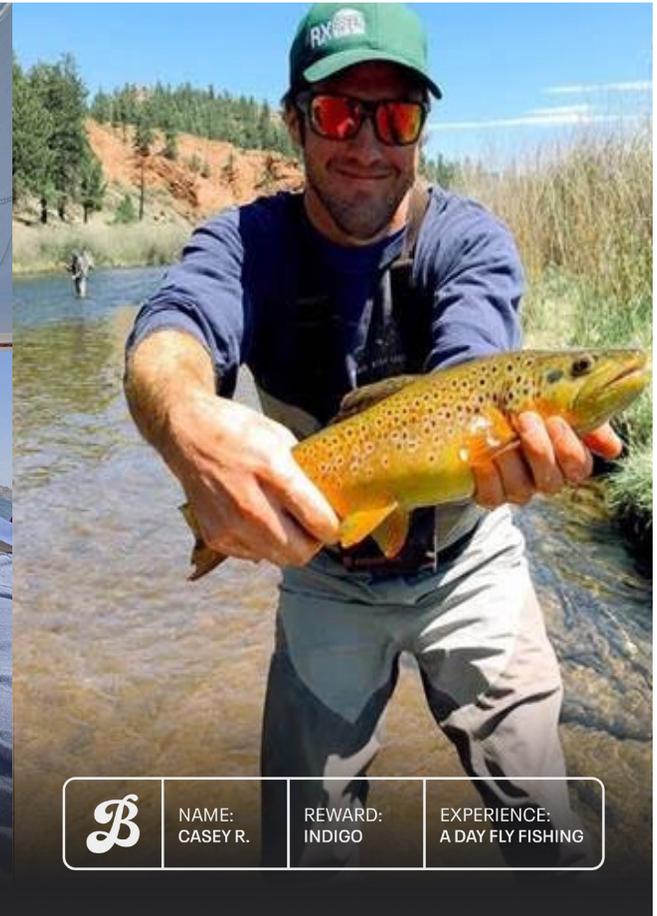
Length of service awards solve for this disconnect and send the message that all employees are valued for their hard work and contributions while promoting a culture of positivity.

Hearing what others are able to do with their Blueboard rewards is really exciting, it's whatever you set your desires to. I'm hoping for that 15-year award and traveling to Iceland. I'm hanging in there, I want that award! It has motivated a lot of people, imaging a long career here and experiencing what the program can offer."



– Kristine V.

Product Development Engineer at Glaukos



Experiential recognition provides opportunities for bonding and building empathy

Meaningful recognition means the anniversary awards themselves are **intentional, relevant, personalized, and an authentic reflection** of your culture. Cash bonuses can feel transactional and private—most people wouldn't discuss them openly with their coworkers. Experiential rewards (like learning to fish, taking your family on vacation to Greece, or spending the day sailing), on the other hand, are memorable and shareable.

Employees are much more likely to talk about their private guitar lesson where they learned to play their favorite Beatles song than to discuss their 3-year commemorative plaque. Sharing these recognition stories is proven to build empathy—giving employees a platform to express their whole self at work, which strengthens bonds across teammates, coworkers, and managers.

03 **The recipe for a
successful anniversary
awards program**

The bottom right corner of the page features a series of overlapping, wavy lines in various shades of blue, creating a dynamic, layered effect that flows from the right edge towards the center.



Make it authentic

The entire anniversary program experience (from celebration through reward receipt) should be an authentic reflection of your unique company culture.

Experiential rewards are **relevant to your diverse employee base**, enable the power of choice, and support your broader mission, vision or values. In most cases, the status quo (plaques, another branded hoodie, rice cookers or last year's iPad) won't cut it.

Make it memorable

Tangible gifts that are commonly given as anniversary awards miss the opportunity to create lasting, positive memories that the employee associates directly with your company.

Meaningful anniversary awards will motivate your employee to stick around. When you offer experiential rewards, you help employees build memories that **promote happiness** and a more positive work culture.

Make it sociable

Congratulate employees at all-hands meetings, in company newsletters, or other communication platforms your team actively uses to stay in touch.

Socialization builds program awareness, which helps inspire new employees to **achieve longer tenure milestones**, and builds excitement for those awaiting their next award.

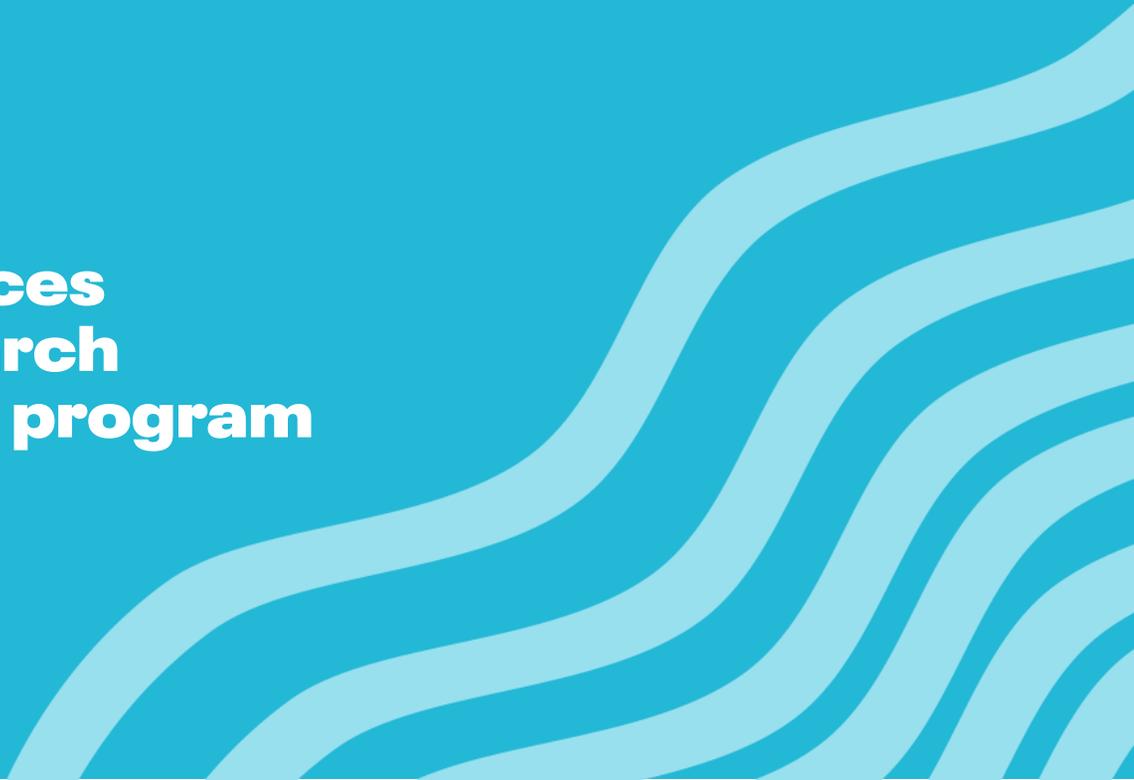
Celebration from the top-down

Strive for all-in involvement across your company, encouraging company leaders to evangelize and celebrate employee milestones at company-wide events (town halls, or internal channels).

When company leaders **show enthusiasm** for formal recognition it has a ripple effect and spurs participation and acknowledgment among the team.

Your anniversary award program is an opportunity to reflect your company's unique and differentiated culture, which means that there's hardly a one-size-fits-all solution. Here's our recipe for success with best practices learned across our hundreds of active tenure programs

○4 **Planning best practices
and budgeting research
for your anniversary program**

The bottom right corner of the page features a series of overlapping, wavy lines in various shades of blue, creating a dynamic, abstract graphic element.

What to consider when planning an anniversary rewards program

1. Start early and annually

With an average tenure of 2.3 years for most employees, holding out for the lofty 5-year milestone is no longer a safe bet. Begin recognizing tenure as soon as year 1, with plans to continue recognizing each year following.

2. Diversify awards and their values as the years progress

It's important to celebrate each year (in a meaningful way), but some years represent more significant milestones. Since reaching these larger milestones is becoming more of a rarity, it's even more of a reason to celebrate them when they do occur. Consider amplifying reward values at the 1-, 2-, 5- and 10 year marks with standout rewards that employees can really look forward to.

Additionally it's not a best practice to offer the same reward value years in a row - it's best to raise the value and investment for each year that passes. More on recommended budgets and tiering structures on [page 11](#).

3. Set managers up for success

Create communication tools and processes that automatically inform the manager before an employee's anniversary date so no one gets forgotten. Our platform offers a 48-hour reminder before the employee's scheduled experience, so that managers can lean in and get the scoop afterwards, continuing the bonding vibes.

Wondering what to budget?

1-2% of gross payroll

is the recommended amount of spending on recognition. Since anniversaries are by far the most prevalent type of recognition, a significant portion of your budget should be for anniversary rewards.

The timeline of a healthy anniversary recognition program with Blueboard

Year 1



Wine tasting

White Gold: Celebrate your employees first big milestone by treating them to a fun night of *wine tasting*, or indulge their passion with those *salsa dance lessons* they've always intended to take.

Year 2



Concert tickets

Indigo: The twos aren't so terrible anymore. After spending two years at your company, they are a valuable team contributor who deserves *concert tickets* to see her favorite artist, or to challenge her comfort zone with a *private parkour lesson*.

Year 3

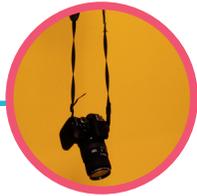


Amusement park with the fam

Tiburon: Three years at the same company is a crucial point of retention in the modern workplace. Treat your employee and a friend to be *pampered at a spa day*. Or, provide tickets for family and friends at a fun *amusement park!*

The timeline of a healthy anniversary recognition program with Blueboard

Year 5



Photography lessons

Emerald: Five years is a big milestone! Fulfill her passion by giving her the ability to take a series of *photography lessons* with their new DSLR, or achieve their professional development goals through *leadership coaching*.

Year 10



Greek getaway

Ruby: Year ten is rarefied air and employees should be rewarded as such. They've been promoted a few times and is part of the fabric of the company. Show them how valuable they are to the organization by sending them to chase the *Northern Lights*, or to the *Greek Island getaway* that's on their bucket list.

Year 15



Machu Picchu

Aviator: At year 15 an employee is a big reason for the company's success. Show that appreciation by either sending their growing family to *Disneyland with a resort stay*, on a *trip to Fiji* with their partner; or at the Aviator level, they can check off yet another bucket list item by *visiting Machu Picchu!*

Anniversary Year	Blueboard Amounts	Count of eligible employees	Annual Cost
1	\$250	194 employees	\$48,500
2	\$500	146 employees	\$73,000
3	\$1,000	98 employees	\$98,000
5	\$2,500	50 employees	\$125,000
10	\$5,000	10 employees	\$50,000
15	\$10,000	2 employees	\$20,000
Total			\$414,500

Calculating your anniversary rewards budget

We've put together a sample framework above to give you a high-level view of what your anniversary budget could look like. Leverage data from your HRIS to determine your variables - like number of employees, and the milestones they'll be achieving this year. From there, it's a quick calculation to determine your total budget.

Our team is on hand to share collaborative anniversary budget calculators and work through best practice scenarios to find a solution tailored to your company. Questions? You can always find us on live chat at [Blueboard.com](https://blueboard.com).

05 **The ripple effect of a memorable, sharable anniversary program on your employer brand**

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The ripple effect of shareable anniversary programs

Picture this: An employee hits a significant milestone. You give them the option of choosing from a number of unique experiences (think VIP concert tickets, Michelin star dinners, zero-gravity float tank sessions, or bucket list travel, to name a few). They post photos and videos to your company's Slack, and return to the office with renewed enthusiasm for their work and your company. They continue to share stories of their experience at lunch or in team meetings, convincing coworkers to stick around so they can have a similar experience.

But these stories don't just get shared around the water cooler. Your employees will talk about their once-in-a-lifetime experience with their friends and family, posting photos and videos to social media accounts and maybe even writing up a recap or directing a video. Employee referrals are the best way to build your candidate pipeline, and employee advocacy makes your job sourcing new candidates even easier.



Liked by [blueboardinc](#) and 19 others

[khill562](#) We spent the morning at the [@brevardzoo](#). Savannah had a blast feeding the giraffes! Thanks [@blueboardinc!](#) [#blueboarding](#)

September 7

“ I let everyone at work know about my five year experience and that it was a great perk. It's certainly a motivator to retain good folks, especially with the generosity and variety of options. Thank you.



- Dan Horner
CrowdStrike

The effects of sharability in action

These authentic, employee-driven stories are an asset gold mine for building your employer brand. Creating opportunities for you to share content on your careers page, reposting to company social media accounts, or featuring in your Total Rewards handout. Helping to differentiate your company's benefits package to future candidates, and to reinforce that your company embraces a culture of recognition.

[Pager Duty](#), a cloud-computing company, documents the moment employees receive their Blueboard anniversary award via Twitter, with branded hashtags like [#DutonianDay](#) to encourage discovery. This helps build excitement and offers a little peek into the perks of being a Dutonian, which directly assists company branding efforts. Imagine how prospective employees feel when they learn about some of the amazing ways they'll be recognized for their work.

PagerDuty @pagerduty · 15 Nov 2018
Congratulations to all of our Dutonians on their 1, 3, and 5 year anniversaries! We truly have the best team! Thank you to @blueboard for providing the stellar experiences to our wonderful employees [#DutonianDay](#) [#BlueBoarding](#)



1 3 6

Life at PagerDuty @PagerDutyLife · 2 Nov 2018
Happy 5, @AngChappy! [#DutonianDay](#) [#PagerDutyLife](#)



Angela Chapman @AngChappy

Today marks 5 awesome years @pagerduty! Cheers to the next 5! 🚀 love you all!

2 8

[Check out our blog to learn more about launching an anniversary program](#)



What's on your mind with regards to anniversary rewards? Our team is here and happy to share our budget calculator and planning tools and dig into the best practices shared in more detail. [Simply schedule time with our team online here](#) to chat through your goals, and receive a short demo of our tenure rewards offering. We'll look forward to hearing from you.



Get in touch.

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Browse more resources at blueboard.com/resources