

The Subtle Happiness at Work

A Survey of Nurses' Favorite
Incentive Programs



“Subtle Happiness” refers to “subtle yet certain happiness in life”,
from Novelist Murakami Haruki.

A cup of warm milk tea during a cold day,
a shoulder to lean on when feeling blue,
a timely recognition after achievements at work...
these subtle happiness builds the joy in life.

So, where is the subtle happiness,
for a medical vocation that saves lives?

Recognition of families, team members and supervisors;
a smile, a praise or an encouragement among colleagues.

Improve workflow, successful measures,
patient recovery;
professional growth inspire happiness of
personal actualization.
Raise and promotion, performance
bonus, annual leave increase;
substantial rewards establish the
foundation of dreams.

Whether it is tangible or intangible,
external or internal,
utilize workplace incentives, accumulate
subtle happiness,
and transform it to never-ending drive...





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In “How to find Whirling Cat”, Novelist Murakami Haruki wrote, “Life without these subtle happiness (subtle yet certain happiness in life), is nothing but a insipid desert.” Christians love to appreciate the grace of God, Tzu Chi volunteers love to be grateful to all things, as it brings forth peace and harmony, and the courage to face challenges in life and work. Are you happy working as a nurse? Let us examine the subtle happiness at our workplace!

Locate the Sources of Being Happy, Money Matters Somehow

Shortage of labor, high stress and high risk have always been the fatal drawback of the nursing professional. How to integrate positive thinking and sustain passion in a work environment saturated with challenge and setbacks? Discover a sense of happiness from work is the only formula.

According to the survey in “Cheers” magazine July issue, 2012, the top 3 favorite incentive programs in financial and service sectors were: 1) extra performance bonus; 2) customers recommend my service to others; and 3) commendation by superiors. As a life-saving profession, what are the favorite incentive programs of nursing staffs? Is it spiritual or substantial? Have they received any commendation from the colleagues, supervisors or patients and families? Do these incentives contribute to my passion and persistence in nursing? The survey targeted the nursing staffs in 6 Tzu Chi hospitals, with electronic surveys, and a

total of 1,563 valid questionnaires.

The favorite tangible incentives by nursing staffs, as evident in the statistical result, were: 1) pay raise (94.0%); 2) performance bonus (85.5%), and other alternatives, with much lower ratio, were: staff travel (28.7%), official leaves (20.5%) and rewards (18.6%) etc.

The various tangible incentives for Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital nursing staffs include dramatic nightshift raise and advanced allowance increase. As for bonuses, top 3 departments with incidence report would receive a TWD500 bonus, departments receiving patient commendation would receive bonuses, and the winners of various frequented hospital competitions such as cleaning contest, creativity contest, project contest or thesis contests could receive handsome rewards. As for staff travel, it was recommended to consult the practice of other hospitals, such as: copay TWD3,000 to TWD5,000 travel allowance, so hospital staffs could travel with reduced financial burden. About 20% of staffs prefer official leave, but official leave or private leave, everyone loves a good vacation to rejuvenate passion and strengths to retain their posts.

Praise is Powerful, Positive Atmosphere the Most Important

As Cheers magazine revealed in its survey, white collars under 25 years of age believed that commendations from supervisors are more relevant; as for

Basic Statistics

Gender	Number of People	%
Male	40	2.6
Female	1,523	97.4
Total	1,563	100.0
Age	Number of People	%
under 20	35	2.2
21~25	442	28.3
26~30	406	26.0
31~35	340	21.8
36~40	189	12.1
above 40	151	9.7
Total	1,563	100.0
Nursing Level	Number of People	%
N	587	37.6
N1	321	20.5
N2	446	28.5
N3	136	8.7
N4	73	4.7
Total	1,563	100.0
Job Title	Number of People	%
Registered nurse/nurse	1,248	79.8
Deputy head nurse	60	3.8
Head nurse or higher	94	6.0
Functional unit	55	3.5
nurse practitioner	106	6.8
Total	1,563	100.0

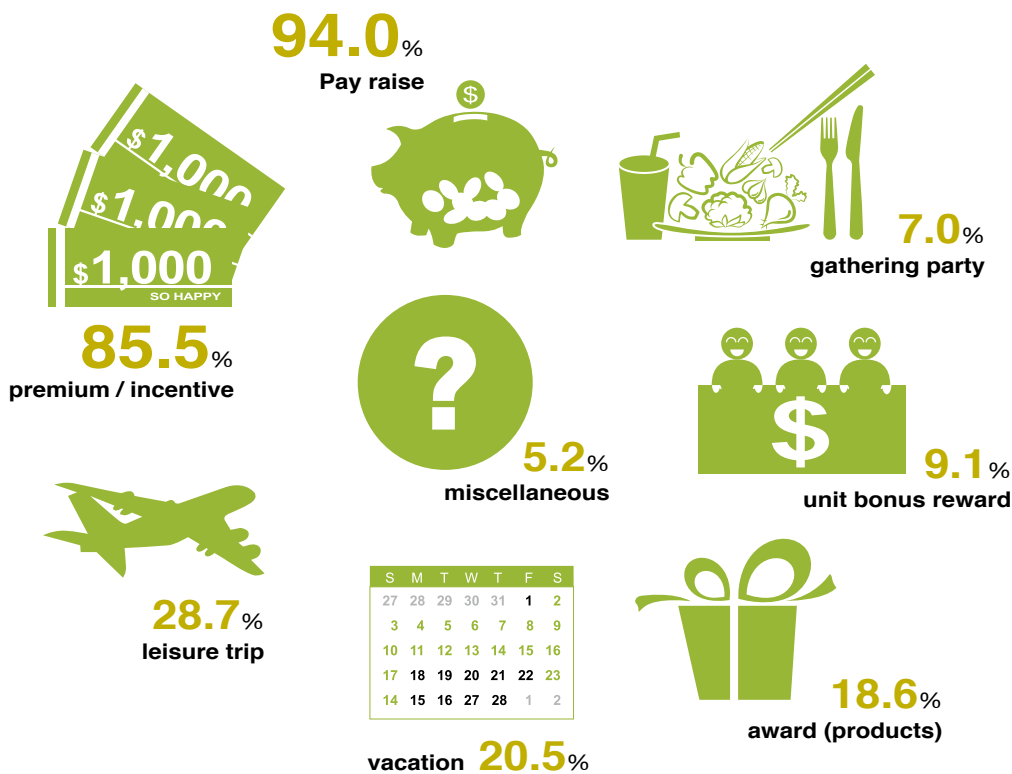
white collars over 25, monetary rewards and commendation from supervisor are equally weighed. Some nursing specialists also believe that tangible incentives could only satisfy one's biological needs, while intrinsic incentives could satisfy the psychological needs of these nursing staffs. Researches in work satisfaction also indicated that intrinsic incentives

as oppose to extrinsic incentive could increase work satisfaction level. Though in this survey, we never inquired whether tangible or intangible incentives is more beneficial, but I believe that when the senior staffs retrospect their reasons for retaining their nursing posts, they would have to recognize the essentiality of intangible incentives.



Q1

What material inspiration I would appreciate most?
 (N = 1,563, multiple choice)



As for the favorite “intangible incentives” category, the top 5 were, as in order, positive workplace ambience (66.7%), receive requested vacation (62.8%), commendation from patient’s families (59.5%), recognition from colleagues (44.4%), and praise from supervisor (33.0%). Eventually what our nursing staffs cared about the most was “positive workplace ambience”, which received a high percentage than “receive requested vacation”. From our observation, a positive workplace ambience creates a stronger colleague cohesion. “Receive

requested vacation” won the 2nd place, which one might speculate it had to do with short-staffed and the nature of shift work deprived staffs from sufficient vacation to rest or long enough vacation days to arrange family gatherings or travels.

Receive commendation from patients families, recognition from colleagues and praise from supervisors were also intangible incentives favored by the nursing staffs. We did follow-ups as to the motivational effect of these three incentives. As there can never be enough commendations, I believe that

hospitals should seize every opportunity, such as in meetings, changing shifts and during work, either verbally or through email, to continuously motivates supervisors and employees, so that everyone in these hospitals can develop the habit of commending and praising others.

Profession Enhancement Also Brings Encouragement

Behind the top 5 of intangible incentives were “successful advancement” (25.1%), “Someone who listens” (24.2%), “obtain professional certification for other jobs” (22.8%), “roster according to my education scheme” (21.5%), “reports certified by relevant institutions”(18.9%), and “department adopts my advice/recommendation” (16.8%).

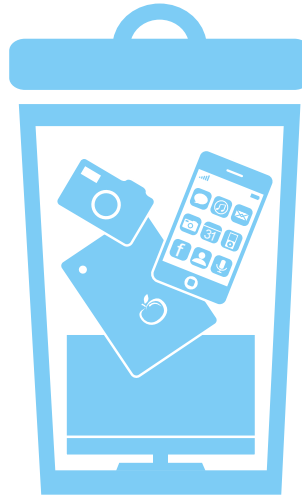
In addition to “listening”, it was evident that most categories were associated with professional advancements. During recent clinical case discussions, staffs from various departments of Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital would share their nursing experiences and professional judgments with “humanoid figure”, which received recognitions and recommendations from lecturers and supervisors, making them feel progressions in their professions.

Managers Should Encourage staff by Speaking Out Compliments

According to the survey results, on the question whether incentives from supervisors

Q2

What non-material inspiration I would appreciate most?

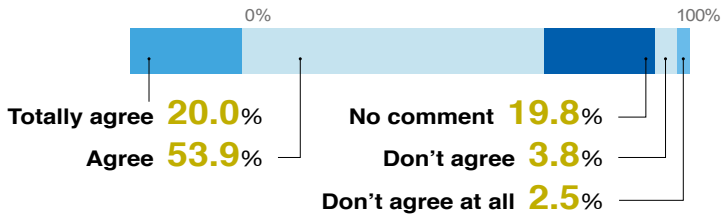


- Fine workplace atmosphere **66.7%**
- Scheduled break for vacation **62.8%**
- Compliments from patient/families **59.5%**
- Recognition from other team member(s) **44.4%**
- Praise from manager(s) **33.0%**
- Professional level upgrade **25.1%**
- Someone would listen my sharing **24.2%**
- Got job-related license **22.8%**
- shifts would cope with my academic schedule **21.5%**
- Essay passed association accreditation **18.9%**
- My unit adopted my advice/plan **16.8%**
- Be able to be a lecturer/preceptor **9.1%**
- Gain comfort from others **9.0%**
- Participate in hospital social club **2.8%**
- miscellaneous **1.0%**



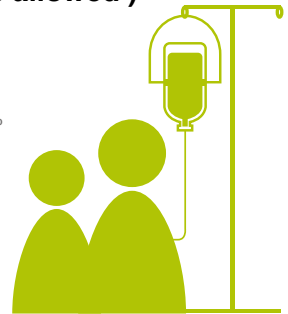
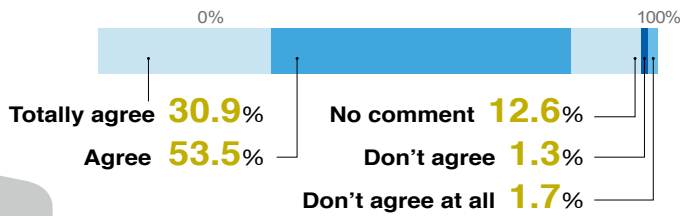
Q3

Encouragement from my supervisor(s)/boss(es) would enhance my incentive to stay in nursing career?(N = 1,563)



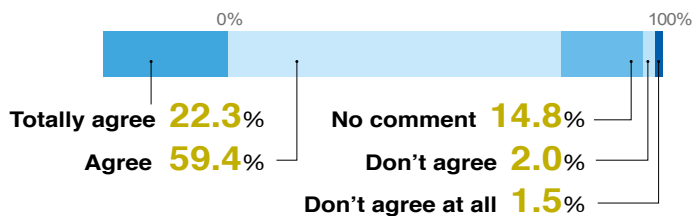
Q4

What are the potential areas of improvement in nursing education? (N = 664, multiple choices allowed)



Q5

What are the potential areas of improvement in nursing education? (N = 664, multiple choices allowed)



could allow nursing staffs to appreciate their professions, 73.9% chose agree or highly agree, 6.3% do not agree, and 20% had no comment. Overlooking renowned global enterprises, their supervisors are inclined to commend their staffs. According to reports, American business magnate Warren Buffett always seize opportunities to compliment his staffs, creating a sense of accomplishments. In "1001 Ways to Energize Employees", Steve Jobs engraved each of the Mac team member's name into the Macintosh case mold as an eternal praise; The 3M Company encourage its employees to expand their creativity, and the highest form of employee commendation is to induce them into the company's hall of fame. The ex-chairman of General Electric Jack Welch has his own business model. During one of his speeches to GE employees, Welch claimed that their key to success was the creativity and ideas of the employees rather than disciplinary actions. Master Cheng Yen, during every global volunteer morning assembly, motivates volunteers and foundation employees around the world, and repetitively announce her gratitude towards everyone.

If supervisors want their staffs to appreciate nursing, exhibit excellent nursing quality and work efficiency, the method is simple - start by complimenting.

No-Complaining Environment Encourages Teamwork Better

As survey indicated, 81.7% of nursing staffs agreed or highly agreed

that "recognition from colleagues" is indispensable.

How much of an influence do these everyday colleagues have? American psychological theorist David McClelland proposed three fundamental needs in order to attain motivation in job functions, and they are the need for achievement, the need for affiliation, and the need for power. John Hei, Chairman of Dale Carnegie Training Taiwan, believes that it is difficult for an unhappy person to bring happiness to others, and the only way to communicate and bring happiness to others is to reduce criticism, blaming and complaint. Ken Blanchard, an American author and management expert, proposed the concept of "Gung Ho", in which he claimed that you can only build a hung ho team by engaging in worthwhile jobs, reach goals through self-control, mutual encouragement and praise and persistent endeavors.

Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital is currently actively promoting TRM (Team Resource Management), which yields excellent results in many departments (such as ER), and improves the consensus of medical teams. Many departments, while proceeding with the project, felt like renouncing due to the setbacks and challenges, but eventually accomplished the tasks on time with mutual encouragement and recognitions. I hence recommend commendations among colleagues during every encounter, since, after a day of work, it would allow everyone to work under a very pleasant ambience, but also enhance efficiency and affections among colleagues.



Words from Patients and Their Families Inspires Most

According to the nurse retainment report on volume 11, issue 4, the greatest accomplishment derived from nursing profession comes from the recognition of patients and families (63.5%); the result seem to correspond to the survey result on intangible incentives. Comparing to the incentives from colleagues, patient or patient families that would allow nurses to appreciate their work, “Patients and families” ranked number one (73.9%), “other team members” came second (84.8%), and “supervisor” was last (73.9%). As for those who disagreed that incentives from “patients and families” are beneficial to nursing profession occupied only 3.0%, and 12.5% had no comment.

Many ward-nursing staffs would bloom a smile when they hear a “thank you” from patients or families; some patients and families would buy nurses drinks or meals after seeing them skipping meals. Such positive gestures would take the nurses’ mind off stress and fatigue, and enhance efficiency and sense of happiness; on the other hand, misunderstandings and criticisms would often leave nurses doubt their choices of profession and think about quitting.

Encouragements from patients and families could help nursing staffs to appreciate their profession, therefore we wish to create more opportunities where patients and families could express their

gratitude. Currently, in every bed of Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital is a suggestion box, and I recommend to place “Patient & Family Suggestion Form” beside every bed or on mobile carts, so it would be convenient to patients and families to write down words of encouragement towards nursing staffs.

All-Aspect Inspiration, Work More Happily

Nobel Peace prize Winner Dalai Lama spoke in his book “The Art of Happiness at Work” that satisfaction and happiness from work comes from establishing positive relationships with coworkers, supervisors and clients, which then ensures a pleasant collaboration. Of course, our nursing staffs would complete their tasks even without any external incentives or encouragements, but it would be hard to suppress the thought “why am I working so far?” If patients and families would be generous with their appreciation, without tangible incentives, or if coworkers from the same or different departments could commend each other, and even the supervisors too, the incentive effects multiplied by three could be even more substantial.

The last question on the survey asked the nursing staffs to retrospect on whether tangible or intangible incentives during the past week benefited their work performance. The result indicated that 61.6% agreed or highly agreed, but 38.4% had no comment or disagreed. It was possible that some staffs were not inspired or encouraged for

the past week, or too busy to recognize or to sense them. The worst case scenario was that some were commended but does not believe that it was beneficial to work performance, and these are the people that require counseling. More than 60% of the respondents, fortunately, could sense incentives at work, who would then enjoy happiness from work. Yet, there are still room for improvement.

If the managements hope the fundamental employees to enjoy nursing and perform high quality and efficient services, they should actively create a incentive culture on both tangible and

intangible level, and propose more effective incentive strategies. I believe when incentive culture integrates into one of the many cultural traits of Tzu Chi nursing, it would bring numerous subtle happiness for all our employees, which would increase retainment rate and attract more talents. With more recruited talents, nurse drought would be out of the question, and our nursing staffs would get the vacations they desire to arrange travel or to simply relax. Although the reality is quite far from our ideals, we can realize our dream as long as we act.

Q6

My unit's working environment vs. non-nursing's working environment. Has the hospital achieved "human-centered" care? (N = 664, multiple choices allowed)

