

The Case for Starting Years of Service Awards at Employees' First Anniversary, Not Year Five

New Awards.com guide explains why service awards should start in year one, not year five, and how to match the award to each milestone as tenure grows.

BOCA RATON, FL, UNITED STATES, July 21, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- More employers are rebuilding their years of service programs to recognize people earlier, and a new guide from

Awards.com explains why the old five-year starting line no longer fits how people work.



Awards.com Recognition Awards and Plaques

The traditional [years of service awards](#) ladder begins at five years. That model was built for an era when workers stayed for decades. Today, most turnover happens in the first two years, which means the milestone many programs are built around arrives after the employees a company most wanted to keep have already left.

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Vincent Nero, VP GM,
Awards.com

Awards.com published a practical guide, "How Companies Are Rethinking [Service Anniversary Awards](#)," that lays out what has changed and what to do about it. The short version: start earlier, give the award its own moment instead of tucking it into a review, and match the award to

the milestone so a one-year marker and a 25-year marker do not look the same.

The business case is not soft. Gallup and Workhuman research found that employees who do not feel adequately recognized are twice as likely to say they will quit in the next year, and that only about one in three workers strongly agree they received recognition in the past week. The same research estimated the global cost of turnover and lost productivity at roughly \$322 billion and identified recognition as one of the cheaper ways to reduce it.

"A service award often sits on a desk for twenty years, while most branded swag gets tossed inside two," said Vincent Nero, Vice President & General Manager at Awards.com. "That is the

whole reason the material and the engraving matter. You are not buying a gift. You are buying the object that reminds someone, every workday, that they belong here. Most companies already have this moment on the calendar. They just under-use it."

The service guide breaks the [employee awards](#) tenure ladder into three stages. Early milestones, from one to three years, call for warm and simple pieces like engraved glass or acrylic, where timing counts more than scale. Mid-career milestones, from five to fifteen years, are where optical crystal earns its place, along with perpetual awards that add each honoree's name to a shared display over time. Long-tenure milestones of twenty years and up call for larger, more personal pieces that name a specific contribution.

Perpetual and stacking awards are one of the most affordable ways to recognize people every single year. The display piece is bought once, and each year after that you add a low-cost engraved plate or block, so the yearly cost of keeping someone recognized stays small. That frees up the budget for the years that matter most. Employers can put the money saved toward a real reward at the milestone anniversaries, whether that is a cash bonus, a gift, or branded swag, while the perpetual award keeps the recognition visible in between. It is a way to get both: steady, low-cost recognition every year, and something bigger when the five, ten, or twenty-year mark arrives.

Awards.com engraves every piece free of charge, provides a proof before production, and has no order minimum, so an employer can order a single anniversary award or plan an entire tenure program at once. The full guide and the years of service collection are available on the company's website.

[Read the guide on Service Anniversary Awards](#)

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awards, and service recognition. We design and engrave crystal, glass, acrylic, and plaque awards, with free engraving, a free proof before production, and no order minimum, so buyers can order a single piece or an entire program. Learn more at Awards.com.

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