



# How to keep employee morale up in the winter

By Nick Patch | February 2, 2018 | Employee engagement



It's a safe bet that as the temperature has dropped, so too has employee morale.

No matter where you are in Canada, you're probably facing some combination of snow, slush, frigid winds, gloomy skies, salt-encrusted shoes, and sunless days. And chances are, you and your employees are not all that

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We have some companies and clients who say they see increased usage in their employee assistance programs and increased absenteeism. People are sick and run down a bit more. It's certainly something to keep an eye out for."

To prevent an outbreak of the winter doldrums at your workplace, try these methods to keep employee morale up through to spring.

### Offer flexible schedules

Winter's brutally short days affect everyone differently. Some of us lament dragging ourselves out of bed when the sun has barely risen, while others detest leaving the office every night into the pitch-black darkness.

You could help alleviate this by offering your employees a little wintertime flexibility around their hours.

"People have a bit of a shift with their sleeping patterns and the way the light works in the winter," says Mark Franklin, practice leader at CareerCycles and co-founder of OneLifeTools. "Some people would prefer to start later because it's so dark in the morning, while others might want to leave early."

If possible, it also helps to give employees the option to

(eGuide)

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an especially important time to review those policies,” said Lisa Kay, president and lead consultant at [Peak Performance Human Resources Corp.](#) “It’s a tough time of year in Canada. Anything you can do to support employees will be appreciated.”

## Lighten up

A little light therapy in the office could do wonders for your team.

Recommendations for light levels vary based on the type of work being performed. The U.S.-based National Optical Astronomy Observatory [recommends](#) a light level of 500 lux for “normal” office work, but 1,500 to 2,000 lux for detailed drawing work. More meticulous work requires even more lighting.

Chances are, your employees aren’t taking in enough light in the dreary winter months. If you don’t want to spring for a light meter, there are several smartphone apps that, while not as accurate, could at least keep you from being completely in the dark about your light levels (pun intended).

## Keep an eye on health and wellness

If your team’s down in the dumps, some movement

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them something to talk about other than the miserable weather.

“Implementing wellness programs will help make sure they’re keeping their bodies in good order,” says Kay.

Pau has also had clients who ran breakfast and lunch programs specifically during the winter months. “It’s just something to break the doom and gloom,” she says.

### **Change your tune**

Nothing lightens the mood like a little music. Even if just for a brief period every week, bringing some melody into the office could offset the winter blues.

“It’s tricky to find music people all like, but if you can have discussion and debate over acceptable playlists, that cheers things up too,” says Franklin.

### **Schedule team-building activities**

If you’ve been considering a field trip for your team, there’s no better time than the winter.

Whether it’s an indoor activity – an escape room, a rock-climbing gym, or a trivia outing, for instance – or a wintry activity like snow-shoeing or tobogganing, lifting your

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usual given the conditions outside.

“Maybe people are otherwise occupied in the summer because they have so many other things to do, but in the winter they have more free time,” says Franklin.

### Tell them to go away

Well, you probably can't really *force* employees to take time off. But perhaps some gentle nudging? “Encourage people to take vacations,” Pau suggested, “and tell them go to somewhere hot.”

See also:

[6 ways to encourage healthy break activities](#)

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