

huggg



Why does employee recognition matter?

2026 Employee Gifting Handbook



How to build a gifting-led recognition strategy



How to choose the right gifts?

What's in this handbook:

01. Welcome
02. How do you plan for 2026?
03. Why does employee recognition matter?
04. Why does gift-led recognition work?
05. Choosing the right moments
 - A. In the moment
 - B. Life experiences
 - C. Work milestones
 - D. Seasonal events
06. Choosing the right gifts
07. Employee gifting: 3 steps to getting it right
 - A Roles
 - B Tactics
 - C Tools
08. Give a Huggg, make recognition easy
09. Huggg in action: see the impact
10. Contact

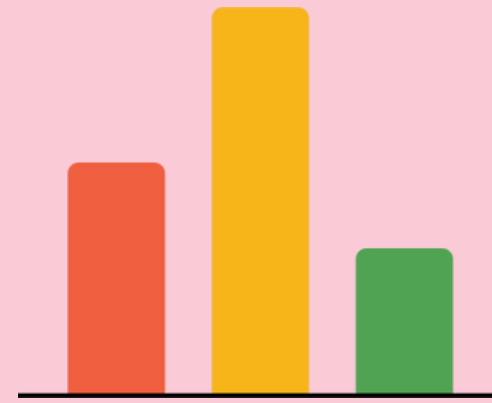
Welcome

We created this handbook to inspire and empower you, your managers, and your teams to make recognition a natural part of your workplace.

From big wins to small victories, we'll help you turn every milestone into a moment of meaningful appreciation.

We encourage you to save it, refer to it, and make it your own.

Keep it in your back pocket, and you'll never miss a chance to show your people just how much they're valued.



How do you plan for 2026?

Culture challenges for 2026

What happens

The impact on your recognition strategy

AI as talent

82% of CEOs say they'll be **cutting teams** because of AI, with **24% of employees** saying they really want answers around **AI**

We don't want to say 'identity crisis', but a lot of employees need new ways to find pride in their work – HR can help.

Work = purpose

The need for meaningful work is growing – thanks to Gen Z and millennial workers – so there's pressure to layer this into daily work

Not everyone can cure diseases, but that doesn't mean their work doesn't matter. Employees should be told that.

Office mandates

The debate continues, with **81% of full-time** office workers **unhappy** – and **35%** saying **workplace flexibility** would make work better

Office-based, hybrid, remote, and field workers all need to be acknowledged, whether it's in-person or from afar.



**Why does employee
recognition matter?**

03 Why does employee recognition matter?

Source:

1. [CIPD](#) - Employee recognition and non-financial awards
2. [Research Gate](#) - The Impact of Recognition on Employee Performance: Theory, Research and Practice
3. [Journals.plos.org](#) - The impact of recognition (...) A large-scale multi-group analysis
4. [Tilburg University](#) - Employees' perceptions of non-monetary recognition practice and turnover
5. [bpasjournals.com](#) - Effects of Employee Recognition Programs on Engagement and Retention

Employee recognition = better work performance

Take it from the CIPD:

"Employee recognition and non-financial rewards tend to have large positive effects on work performance."

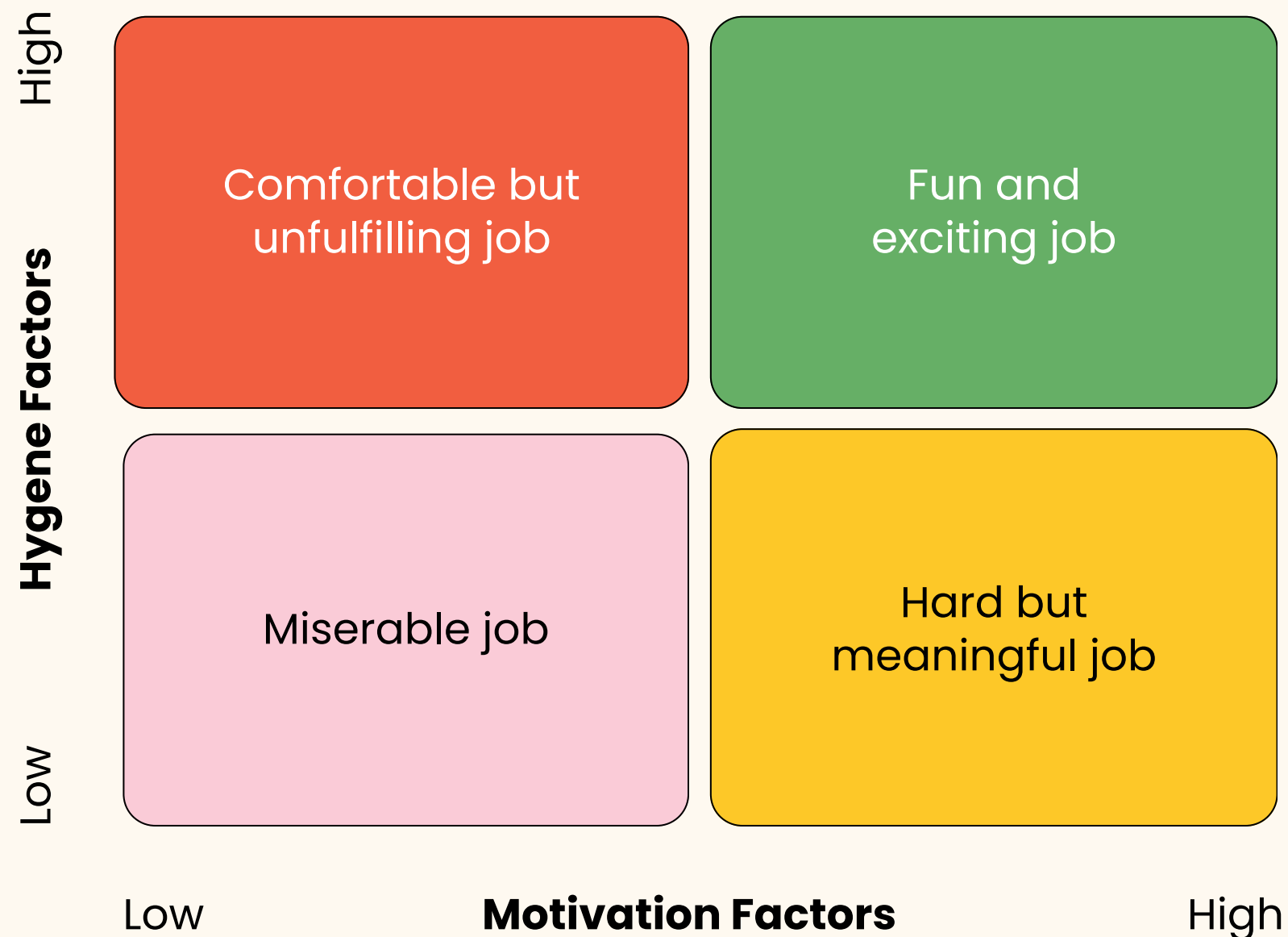
One study linked **recognition** to a:

- **15% increase** in **performance**, rising to
- **40%** when coupled with **feedback**

And that's not all, recognition has also been linked to:

- Higher engagement
- Lower turnover
- Improved morale

03 Why does employee recognition matter?



The psychological perspective:

Heard of Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory Of Motivation-Hygiene?

Sounds complicated, but really it just comes down to this:

Job satisfaction comes down to two things: 'motivators' (like recognition) and 'hygiene factors' (like salary) i.e.

- Bad salary? Employees feel dissatisfied
- Good salary? Employees still need recognition to feel satisfied

This year, recognition matters more than ever - with twice as many employees pointing to a lack of recognition for their burnout.

It's pretty clear: recognition is worth prioritising.



Why does gift-led
recognition work?

04



Everyone likes to hear “good job!” once in a while. And actions speak louder than words. So gift-led recognition, on the most basic level, just makes sense!

But if you’re wondering “why not just give bonuses or increase salaries?” then here’s your answer.

Tangible gifts have more of an impact than cash

(multiple studies say so: like [this one](#), [this one](#), [this one](#), and [this one](#)).

Why? There’s loads of reasons. But think of it like this...

It’s your birthday. Would you rather your partner...

1. Hands you a thoughtfully chosen gift, that’s something you actually want, and reflects that they considered your likes and dislikes?
2. Slaps £20 on the table, and calls it a day?



But how do I
get it right?

04 But how do I get it right?



We hear you.

No-one wants a gift that's generic, tacky, or just not relevant – so giving the right gift matters.

This guide can help. From removing the mental load of choosing gifts, to making the whole process a lot more simple, let's get stuck in...



Choosing the right moments

05 Choosing the right moments



Recognition is important. Gift-led recognition works really well. We've already established that... but how do you actually put it all into practice?

It all comes to knowing **when** to gift. Let's get stuck in.

A

Work performance


A. Work performance

It's key to acknowledge positive performance or behaviours.

But did you know... recognition works best when it comes quickly after the behaviour being appreciated?

You can make 'instant thanks' possible, if:

- Everyone knows which recognition moments they own
- Managers and employees have gifting budgets to spend

Check out: 'Who owns recognition? The complete guide' to learn more 

Here's how that might look:

Moment	Owner
Informal recognition e.g. thank you, everyday kudos	Employees (with budget allocated by managers or HR)
Performance recognition e.g. hitting KPIs, reaching targets	Managers (with tools and budget set up by HR)
Company values e.g. showcasing the best of culture	Leadership (with managers and peers nominating, and HR facilitating)

B

Life experiences

B. Life experiences

Recognising life experiences says “I acknowledge you have a whole life outside of work, as well as being the company’s best PowerPoint-maker”.



Celebratory experiences

Weddings, birthdays, new babies, passing driving tests

Think... celebratory tipples, or themed items
(like branded onesies!)



Challenging experiences

Illness, injury, bereavement, major stresses

Think... comforting meals, practical items, or flowers



Top tip

Be inclusive of what’s important to everyone – winning a stand-up comedy comp deserves as much kudos as getting hitched

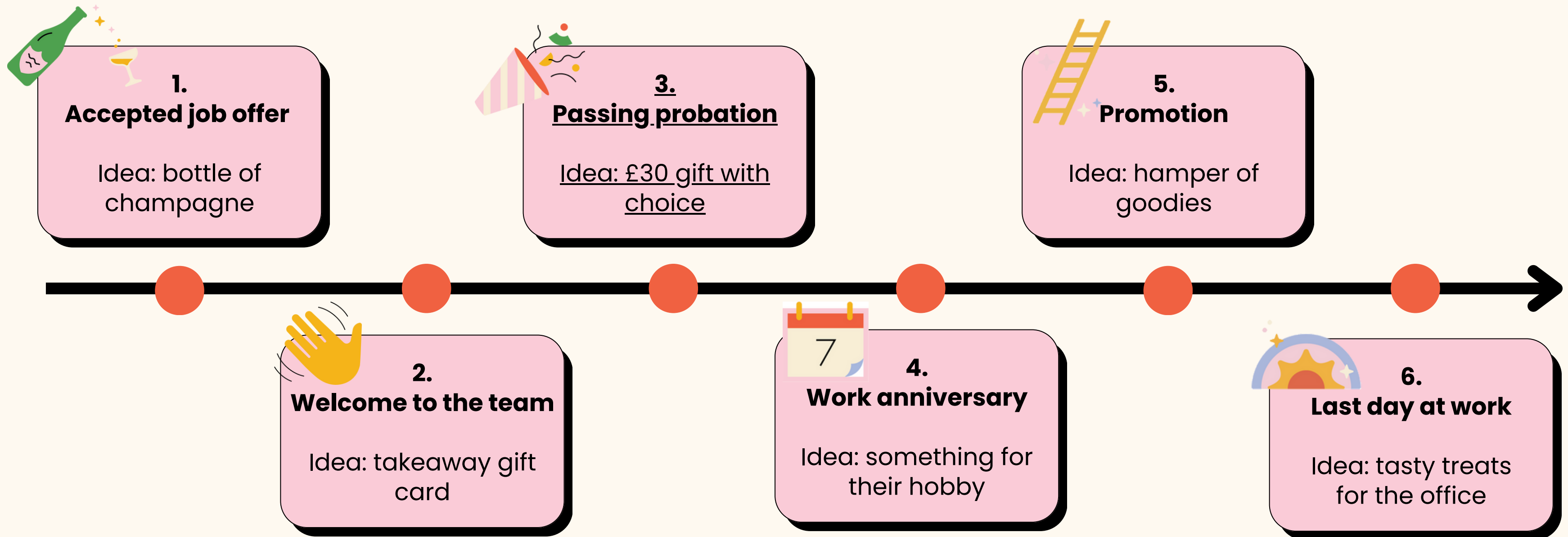
C

Work milestones

C. Work milestones

From Day 1 to “I’m done”, give employees an incredible impression of your business. Not only will it boost their performance, but word spreads fast – great for your employer brand.

6 employee lifecycle moments you shouldn't miss:



D

Seasonal events

It's up to you how many seasonal events you recognise. But the key is being inclusive, consistent, and genuine.



Got a multifaith team?

Send gifts for Christmas, Eid, Hanukkah, Diwali, and any other key dates that matter to your people.



Marking International Women's Day?


Make space for International Men's Day too, and consider the other genders in your business.

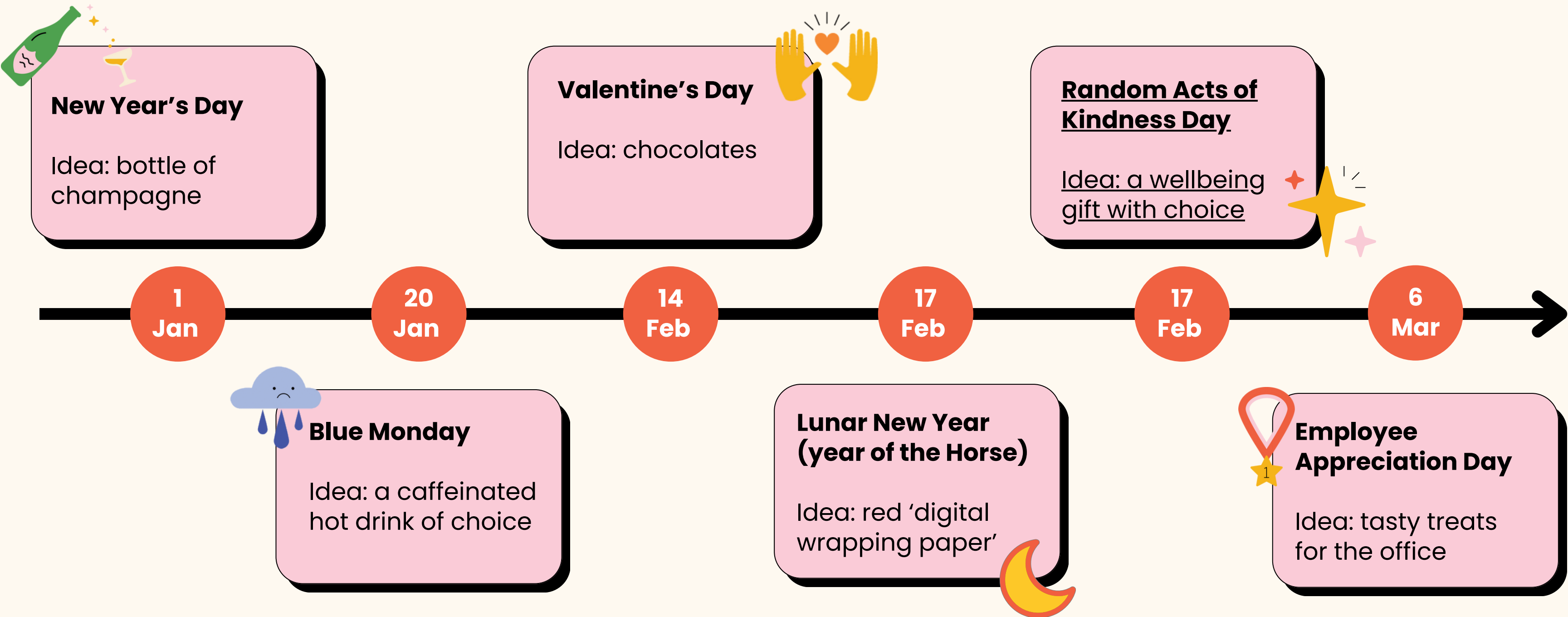


Black History Month or Pride?

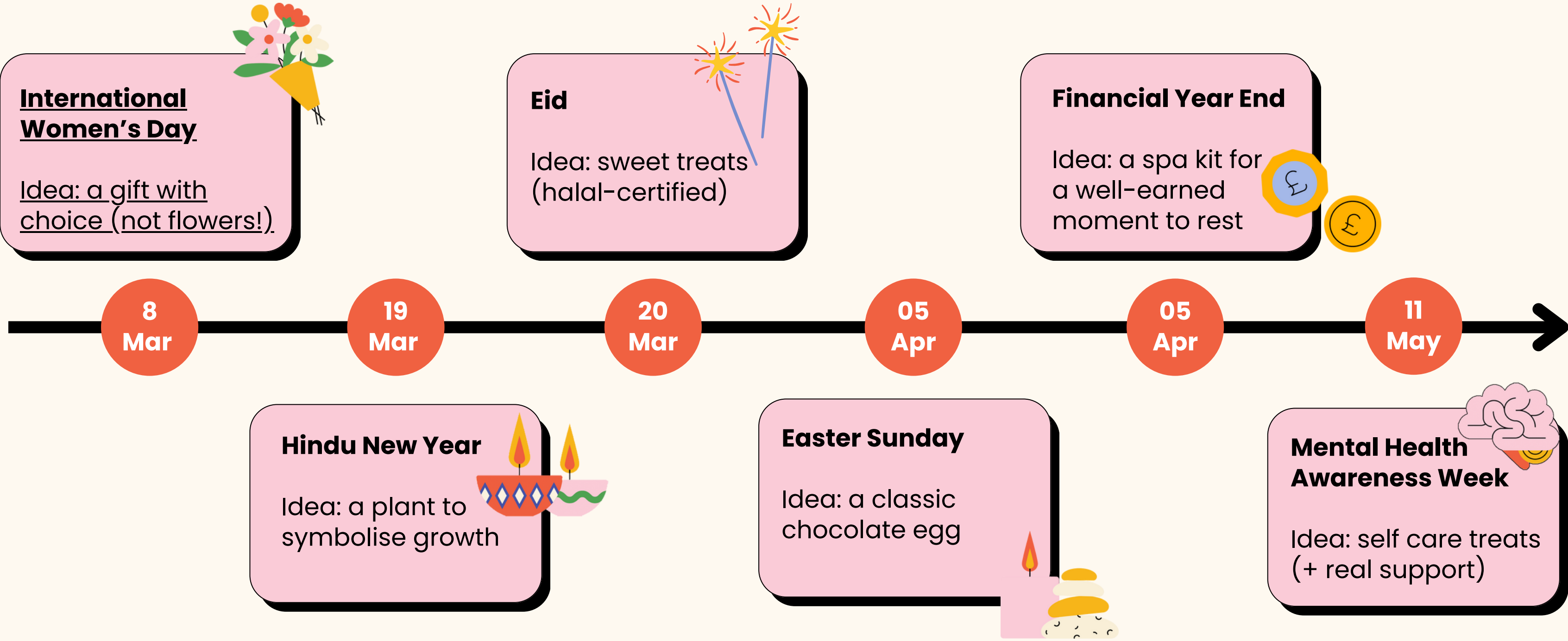
Don't make recognition feel 'trendy', but speak to the people involved to handle these moments sensitively.

D. Seasonal events

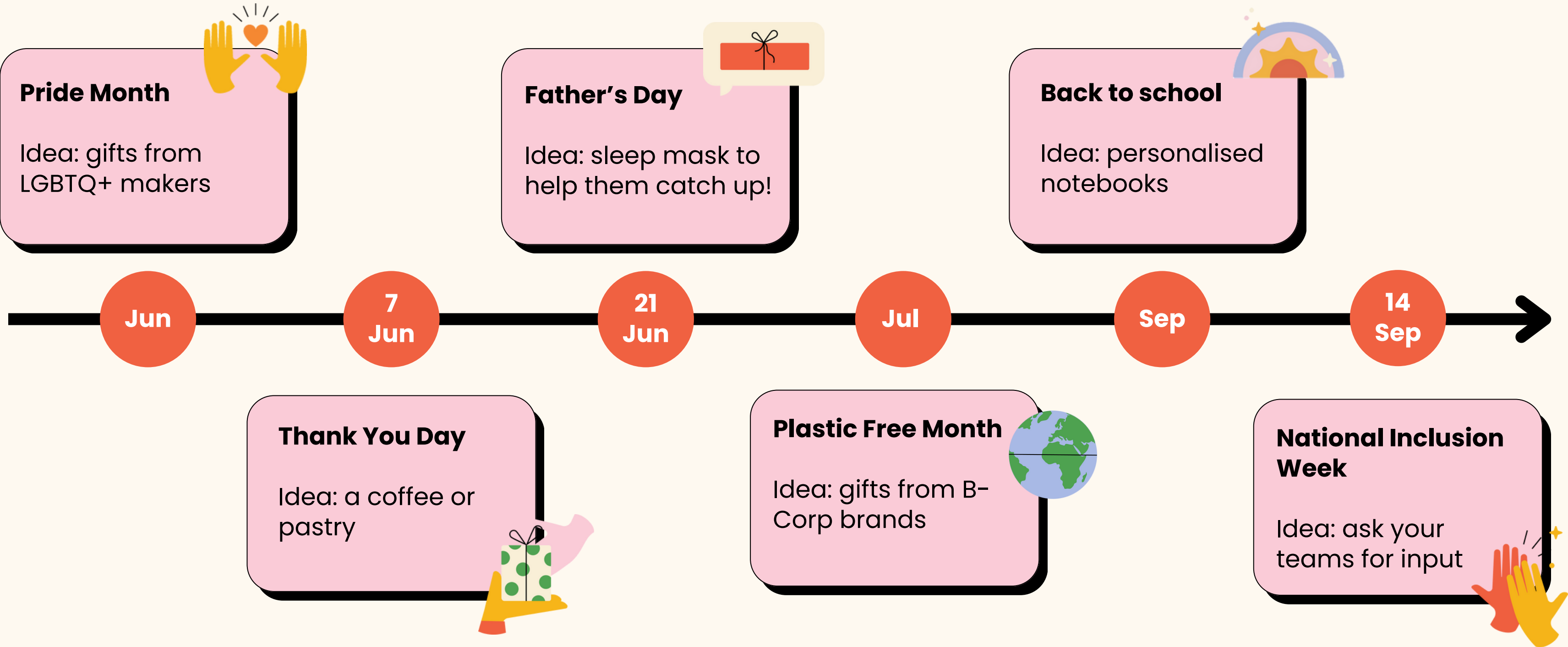
Here's a selection of key events in 2026.
Want an extensive list? [Get a calendar plug-in](#) 



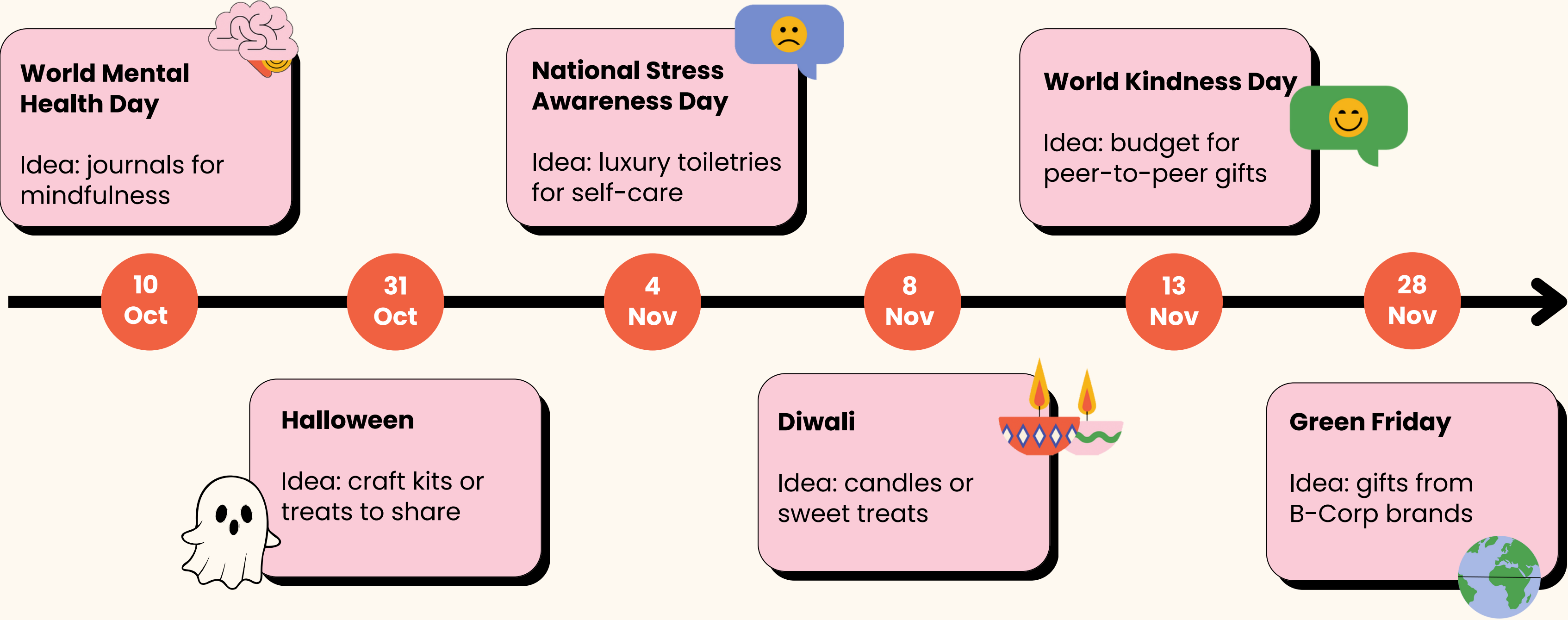
D. Seasonal events



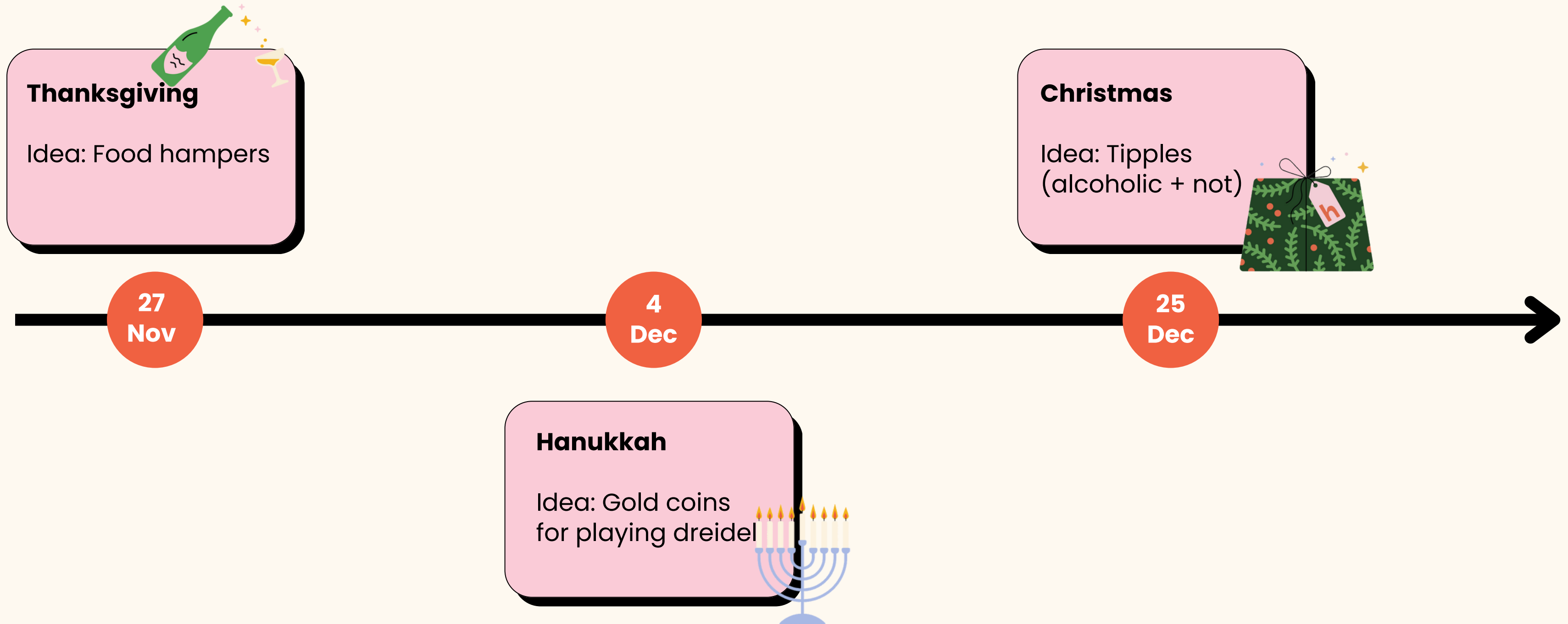
D. Seasonal events



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D. Seasonal events





Choosing the right gifts

(and why it matters)

06 Choosing the right gifts

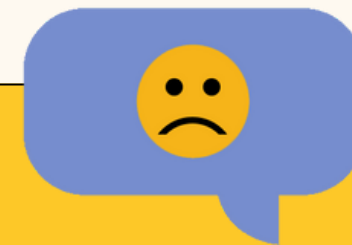
Most businesses know that personalisation matters. And that's not just when it comes to your customers...

Two reasons you can't just give the same gift to everyone:



It says "I don't care"

Sending everyone the same token gift seems low effort - even if it took a lot of thought and planning. People want to be treated as humans, not resources.



It says "I don't know you"

Non-drinkers, vegans, sock-haters - there's 101 reasons that your one-size-fits-all gift might go down like a lead balloon. You could even do more harm than good.



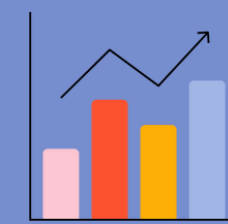
Why not just send a gift card?

We think there's a time and place for gift cards.
You can't pop a chai latte in the post, after all.
But there's a few things to consider:



They feel like a cash equivalent

as we've said, physical gifts have a bigger impact on performance, morale, and retention



Recipients know what you've spent

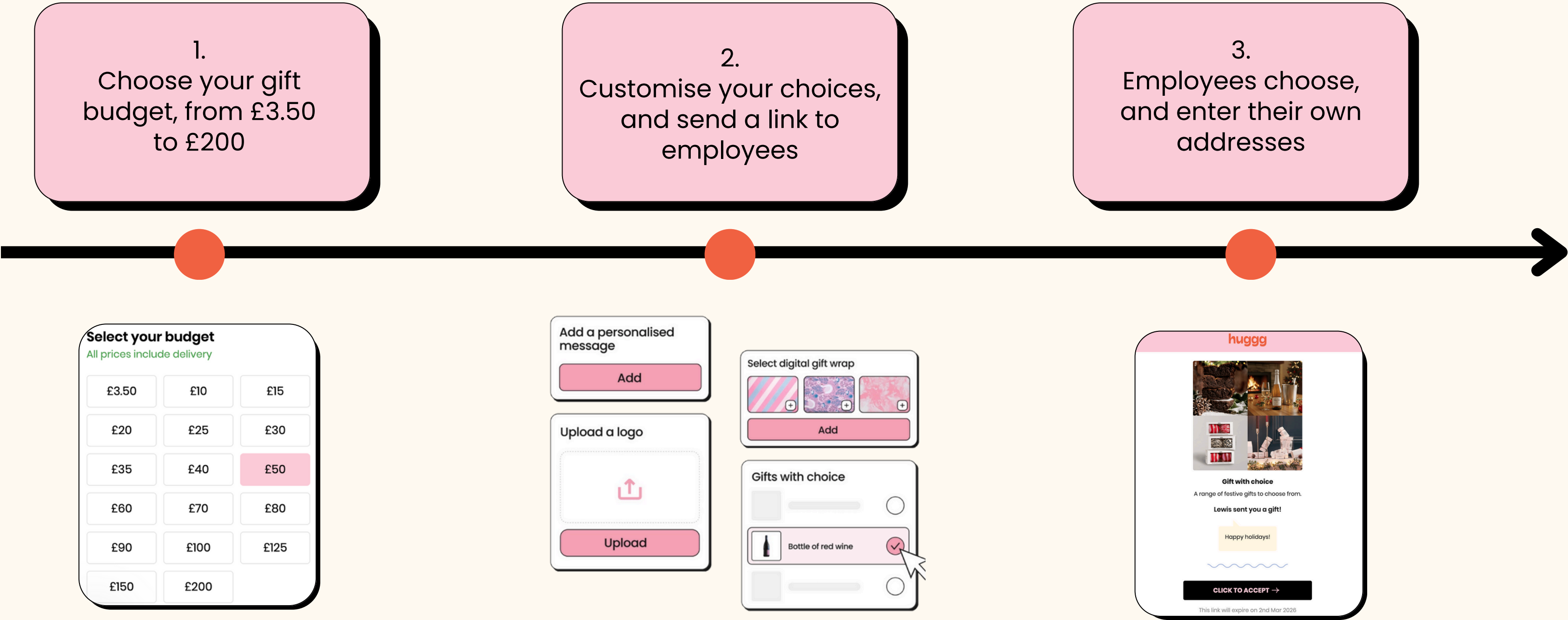
gift cards show a cash value, and employees may feel that's your opinion of their worth



That's why we offer a 'Gift with Choice'

Halfway between a gift card and a
traditional present

Here's how it works:





Employee gifting

3 steps to getting it right

07. Employee gifting: 3 steps to getting it right

Roles

'Gift-led recognition strategy' sounds complicated. But it doesn't have to be.

Your first step: deciding who is planning, organising, and sending the gifts. Between the leadership team, HR, and employees themselves, be clear on who owns what.

Resource:
[Ownership guide](#)

Tactics

What moments will you mark? How will you mark them? Create an achievable, consistent, culture-fitting plan for gifting.

Think about the makeup of your workforce, the size of your business, your budget, and all the other factors that'll affect what you can realistically accomplish.

Resource:
[Calendar plug-in](#)

Tools

Are you heading to TK Maxx en route to the Post Office? Or will you use a platform like Huggg to send gifts to employees?

Either way, understanding your tools is a key part to seeing the improved performance, morale, engagement, and retention that we know is an outcome of recognition - especially when it's handled using gifts.

Resource:
[Huggg demo](#)

Give a Huggg,
make recognition
easy ✨

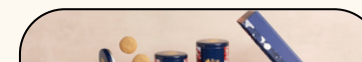


08. Give a Huggg, make recognition easy



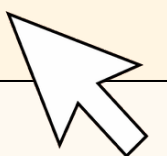
Free-to-use platform

- Send 1 or 1,000 gifts at once
- UK/Europe delivery of physical gifts
- Send via email, SMS or sharing links
- Allocate team gifting budgets
- Detailed reporting and VAT receipts
- Reactions/feedback from recipients
- Support via live chat & email
- Implementation support available



Growing choice of gifts

- Hand-picked selection of physical gifts
- Top brands & independent businesses
- Choose specific gifts or offer a range
- Wide range of gift cards available
- Customisable ranges by budget
- Sustainable and eco-friendly suppliers
- Options for all diets and preferences



Huggg in action: see the impact



Since Octopus
EV started
using Huggg:

- 96% feel more appreciated by the company
- 96% feel more appreciated by peers
- 72% feel more appreciated by managers
- 71% feel more motivated at work

“Huggg truly enables & empowers all people in the organisation to reward. It's been an essential tool in helping us instill a culture of recognition at Octopus EV. It's the first tool of its kind that we've seen team members not only adopt but get excited about. We love it!”

Alys Peart, Chief of Staff, Octopus Electric Vehicles



Our parting gift...

Thanks for reading our guide.

We know 'recognition' is a big word, but gifting is a simple solution. Huggg is here to make your working life easier, and make corporate gifting a little less corporate.



[Book a demo](#)

[Start gifting](#)

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