

Attracting and Retaining the Very Best People

By Mike Stones, OLS, OLIP

Many employers complain about the difficulty of attracting and retaining quality people. When considering this challenge, we must look at what makes people leave their jobs. Profiles International recently completed a survey asking this very question. Here are the six main reasons:

- 30% were unhappy with management and the way that they were managed
- 25% felt they received no recognition for good work
- 20% complained of limited opportunities for advancement
- 15% cited inadequate salary and benefits
- 5% were bored with the job
- 5% noted other reasons such as retirement, sabbatical or travel

Are you surprised by the answers? The prevalent theme in these statistics is that people tend to leave people, not jobs.

So what do you do? First, identify and provide training and people information to managers and supervisors who struggle to manage their people in a way that encourages productivity and retention. Good management is a key to retention. There are a number of avenues available to improve management skills including formal training, mentoring and constant feedback on what they are doing well and what they could improve.

Second, seek out opportunities for positive recognition. Look for ways in which your people perform above and beyond the call of duty. Give as many people as possible an opportunity to bask in the glow of positive recognition for a job well done. But be aware that a recognition culture cannot be created from nothing - it requires a healthy working environment to thrive. Let all of your people know where the organization is going; how it plans to get there; how their jobs play a part in the grand scheme of things and why they are a key to your success. Spread information liberally throughout your organization; give your people an "I'm on the inside" feeling - it's hard to leave something that has you on the inside. Create an atmosphere where management expects the best of its team members and they'll respond. Trust is one of the key sources of recognition - no one is more flattered than when they are trusted implicitly.

Previous generations of workers could aspire to promotions within multi-layered, hierarchical companies. In these days of lean, flat-structured organizations, workers rarely have this option. This doesn't mean that employers have to accept losing staff because they cannot offer a corporate ladder. Today's job-seekers want the opportunity to develop themselves to be all that they can possibly be - to continually polish their skills, abilities and experience so that their value continually rises. If they can do this

without the uncertainty of job-hopping, so much the better. You need a clear, ongoing development path - a way that each of your people can advance their skills and value so that they realise their full potential. This means some investment in training and development. Don't be boxed in to limiting the training to those skills specific to an individual's current job. Remember that you are not simply training for job-effectiveness but are also offering your people the development opportunities that make them feel good enough about the pace of their personal advancement that they don't feel the need to look for greener grass elsewhere.

After following 360,000 people through their careers during a 20 year period, a major study was published by Harvard Business Review. It demonstrated that a key ingredient in retaining people is to ensure that they are matched to their jobs in terms of their abilities, interests and personalities. The study found that when you put people in jobs where the demands matched their abilities, where the stimulation offered by the job matched their interests and where the cultural demands of the position matched their personalities, staff turnover decreased significantly and productivity increased dramatically.

If you can implement the above steps, you will address 75% of the reasons why people leave their jobs. And you haven't added a cent to salaries!



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