



August 2011

Top 10 Ways to Keep Great Talent

Happy August! Last month I discussed progressive disciplinary actions to take when you have a problem employee so I thought it would be apropos to follow up this month with ways to keep the good ones! Thanks to the power of Google and some advice from some colleagues and friends, here are the Top 10 reasons (I found) employees stay within a company.

1. **Great communication and clearly defined expectations.** The most satisfied employees know exactly what is expected of them and what the ultimate outcome is of a particular project or job description. They know exactly what the big picture is for their position. For example, my recruiters' job is to fill open jobs with the most qualified candidates possible. They know I track their success and look at the fill ratio each month. They also know that I allow them to find their own route toward these outcomes. I allow them to use their own styles and strengths but I also give them processes to follow so that I am able to track their performance.
2. **Allow them to make a difference.** When they feel a sense of mission and purpose, their job has meaning and significance. They want to know they are contributing to an important endeavor. The best workplaces give their employees a sense of purpose, help them feel they belong, and enable them to make a difference. One applicant recently stated that he left his last employer because he was tired of being a round peg in a square hole. He did not feel like he belonged and when another company sought him out, he left.
3. **Allowing opportunities for development.** The innate yearning to learn and grow is natural to human beings. Employees who are encouraged to expand their personal and professional development appreciate their jobs. Seminars and ongoing certification programs for your employees feed their personal development appetite. I encourage engagement into various associations to help foster growth. It is a win/win because oftentimes my employees come back with great ideas to share with me and the team.
4. **Recognize great performance.** These are essential building blocks for employee retention. There is nothing complicated about recognition, but it continues to be one of the highest needs on employees' lists. Recognition can be received by way of verbal praise, with awards, etc. The point is to extend praise regularly. Everyone needs a pat on the back every once in a while. PTP is a small business so we cannot afford to always spend lots of money on recognition. However, an occasional pedicure, car detail, or lunch on us is always appreciated.
5. **Showing empathy and caring.** Employees say this is at the top of their list for job satisfaction. When someone at work, either the employer or the manager, sincerely cares about them as a person, they tend to stay longer and have a much higher level of productivity. Treat employees as individuals and respect them. This can be shown in little ways like not counting a sick day when they have to take off 2-3 hours for a doctor's appointment. I have found that flexible schedules can really foster this. When you show that you want them to have a work/life balance they feel like you care.
6. **Money does not always create happiness.** Employees say it is actually in the middle on their list of top ten reasons to stay at a company. Work environment, people, and growth opportunities rate much higher than money and benefits. Fair compensation is necessary to attract great employees, but it is not always why they stay.

7. **Give feedback as often as possible.** Regular performance evaluations help the employee stay focused on their productivity. Objective feedback helps the employee continue to understand his role. Emphasis should be placed on their strengths and how best to use them. This will help the employee gain self-understanding and knowledge about the talents they possess and how those talents are applied every day at work.
8. **Nurture friendships at the office.** Human beings are very social by nature. Work is a place where long-term friendships are often developed. This evolution of quality relationships between people is very normal and it is a part of a healthy workplace. Employers understand that loyalties between their personnel can foster company loyalty. Set up an environment in which friendships can be developed and are able to grow. Have group get outings every quarter to allow for some fun outside of work.
9. **Invest in the right tools.** Simple things like adequate lighting, ergonomic furniture, product information guides, and computers that are networked together allow your people to do their job right. In addition, software that allows them to boost productivity and performance will increase their satisfaction. How many times have you been frustrated because you had a task to complete but did not have the tools to get it done quickly?
10. **Include them in the decision making process.** Great employers consult with employees regularly to make sure their ideas and instincts are recognized. Especially when decisions are made that affect an employee's position, it is most important to make them a part of the process. In doing this, you acknowledge the intelligence and value of the employee. When their opinions count and credit is given to them for good ideas, they tend to stay in your employ.

Work atmosphere, the camaraderie of fellow employees and their managers, and the continuing personal development opportunities are the primary reasons employees remain at a company. When these innate needs are met, employees tend to be much more productive, profits increase and there is a greater level of customer satisfaction.

As always, I would love to hear your thoughts and if there are things you have done to retain top talent, please share!

All Our Best!

Carey