Retention and Motivation

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A look at how to keep staff motivated and retain the best employees in surroundings and workplaces that typically have a high-turnover of workers.

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Retaining and motivating staff: a 5-point guide for HR professionals

Acquiring and then retaining the most capable and competent professionals, or 'talent', is one of the main priorities for human resources managers. Nurturing your existing staff can help avoid a high turnover rate – your staff will be happier *and* more invested in your company. However, you need to consider this task with forethought and care.

The economic situation and global competition have had a great impact on the framework of today's human resources departments. These factors have also had serious effects on employment and the motivation levels of employees. This is pushing HR managers to set new goals and new priorities in their strategies, it is part of their role as intermediates between staff and top management to identify a balanced solution that would be beneficial for all parties.

A HR department's biggest priority is to acquire and then retain the most competent and experienced professionals. In an increasingly competitive business world, it is essential to maximize each and every resource at your disposal in order to avoid being surpassed by the competition. Not only that, but the cost of training employees only for them to later move on, in the worst case possibly even to a competitor, can be a severe drain on resources.

Motivate employees and enhance them

Companies have a tendency to focus on the individual performance of employees, investing time on identifying their weaker areas. However, it can be easy to neglect addressing how these individuals perform as part of a group. Increasing the attention placed on developing social skills and other factors such as collective productivity is the real key to business development. This can motivate employees to contribute and 'buy in' to the company by promoting freedom of expression and communication, and through the exchange of best practices and experiences. For example, including further training programs in your employee offering can have the dual effect of improving employee performance and therefore also the business operation, as well as increasing your employees' sense of personal development.

"Adult to Adult is the key driver for motivating and retaining employees. If you treat your people like adults, they will behave like adults, if you treat them like children, they will behave like children. It should not be difficult, but acknowledging, appreciating empowering and respecting your own people will lead to them repaying you handsomely. If you treat your own people badly, then they are likely to do the same to your customers. One of the most successful CX brands in the world, the Ritz Carlton, guide all of their employees to their North Star. Ladies & Gentlemen serving Ladies & Gentlemen - sums it up perfectly!" Ian Golding ijgolding.com

Horizontal management

Traditional hierarchical structures are rigid and nowadays unsuited to the needs of a fast moving industry. Market changes and innovative work processes are increasingly at odds with the new generations of workers. HR managers must therefore stimulate the changing role of managers and meet the expectations of the company. More efficient management of employees in this framework may have a role in stimulating social interaction between managers and employees, and in turn

simplify dialogue between the different functions. These in turn trigger a climate of greater freedom, and therefore employee satisfaction.

A company applying a horizontal management structure would involve self-managed teams, in which, decision making time is shortened and unhindered by layers of management. This decentralized decision-making process promotes employee involvement as they are in turn made more responsible in steering the business success, making employees feel more valued and therefore more motivated. "A flat company structure helps to speed up communication and also enable staff with a sense of value and more freedom to communicate with management, also creating a healthier and more sociable office environment. " Elena Martinez emc traducciones

Provide employees with the best tools to perform their job

Developing employee skills is undoubtedly important, but it is also necessary to provide them with the right utensils for them to perform their job. As technology is ever developing, the tools available to your staff should also be upgraded so as to accelerate and encourage development in the digital realm. To achieve this goal it is necessary to use electronic systems and innovative tools, which will also ensure that you gain a competitive advantage over your competition. This, for example, would mean investing in new equipment such as computers or software.

Using ten year old software when a competitor is using more innovative solutions will not only hamper your staff's ability to perform but will also give your competitors the advantage from a client's perspective. When staff recognize that an investment has been made towards improving their ability to complete their work effectively, they will consequently feel that their work is valued, and in turn, this will improve motivation.

Career paths and internal progression

This is one of the most important and effective ways to reduce the turnover of staff, although one must admit that it is also the most difficult to implement. Employees want to feel they are making progress and that their careers can advance. You could review the organization of your company or your department to examine how to create different roles and responsibilities, which can be turned into specialized career paths for employees. A career path is represented by the ability to move towards a number of specialized positions that provide several benefits to the employee, whether they are professional titles, new responsibilities, additional authority or higher salaries.

Promote a sense of participation

Many companies are emerging from a phase of complex internal reorganization, involving resource optimization and cost cutting as a direct result of the recent economic environment. Managers are directly involved in this process, in order to support the organizational transformation. Recent times have seen the rise of new policies and reporting systems to monitor performance, with the aim to return more autonomy to managers.

When re-shaping the structure and applying such changes it is important to establish a forum whereby everyone from in the organisation can have some amount of input. Whilst this might not result in everyone's needs being satisfied, it can enable managers to make decisions and steer the organisation's operations in a direction that will allow a large majority of the workforce to feel that their input and experiences are valued. Bina Briggs from plaintalkinghr.com states: "Simply put, treat

people as people; involvement and inclusion are two of the key factors which help to retain and motivate employees."

Cary Cooper, Professor of Work Psychology at Manchester University, believes that the conditioning factor in the future of work will be to manage a continuously variable number of employees by offering them flexibility. Cary Cooper states that as time goes by, working methods will be increasingly diverse, as well as the needs of the people working within the organization change, from part-time and temporary staff, as well as meeting the needs of the older population, which will have to work longer, and the younger generation, who want to start a family. It is an interesting perspective and one that could serve to attract and retain new talent. We are moving towards a more collaborative work environment characterized by flexibility, advanced technologies and optimized processes. All of this is crucial to attracting and retaining employees; while taking in consideration that the cost of replacing talented people leaving the company is often very high.

"We deploy a range of different schemes to ensure ongoing motivation of staff including proactively seeking feedback, engagement in improvement plans, incentives etc.. Staff motivation levels are critical in our business and we cascade this culture through the teams by including this within our business KPIs and team objectives. There are a myriad of different motivation techniques that can be deployed and no one size fits all. In essence however staff motivation is driven by three key elements – **listen, empower and appreciate!"**

Ultimately the common factor is to create as comfortable as possible working environment for staff. This will not only result in a motivated work force but will undoubtedly aid staff retention.

Further Reading:

Impact of organization retention strategies

Functions and dysfunctions of hierarchy

The future of HR in Europe