



## 9 Tips for Retaining Your Best Workers

Susan landed her dream job. It had everything – pay, perks, reputation and challenge. She started the job with lots of energy, enthusiasm, and high expectations. Within six months, she was running out of steam; in twelve months, she crashed. She left the company disappointed and disillusioned. What happened?

Employee retention has moved onto the radar screens of corporate executives. From small businesses to major corporations, executives throughout the world have either witnessed or experienced the damages associated with employee turnover. The impact of excessive turnovers can be devastating – lost customers, lost production, poor morale, unemployment claims, and hiring costs.

There is no magic formula for employee retention. However, there are some things every organization can do to help keep employees happy, increasing the chances they'll be around for the long haul.

- **Start by hiring smart.** Examine your hiring needs. What are the essential services and needs for the company that help to sustain its productivity and success rate? What types of skills and personality traits are necessary for an employee to have in order to fulfill the duties described in the job description? Then, hire smart. Make sure you hire people who can do what they say they can. Employee turnover can be reduced substantially by hiring the right person for the right job at the right time.
- **Clarify expectations.** Let employees know what's expected of them. This expedites time and helps to avoid potential conflicts that can occur due to the lack of knowledge and miscommunication. Establishing expectations within a structured working environment helps employees stay focused on the specifics of their individual duties; therefore, meeting corporate goals as a whole.
- **Get to know your employees.** Take the time to get to know the interests of your employees. Find out their expectations, not only within their job requirements, but their long-term goals, hobbies and extracurricular activities. Getting to know

your employees helps you to better meet their needs. And, it sends the message that you care.

- **Give feedback.** Let employees know how they are doing; that you value them; and want them to stay. Leslie was an administrator in a medium sized school district employed for several months, but she decided to seek employment elsewhere because the job wasn't fulfilling. About a month later, she was still on the job and seemed to have a new attitude about her work. What made Leslie change? She explained that the day after she submitted her resignation letter, her boss came to her office. He told her how much he valued her work, and asked her to stay. Leslie said that this was the first time she had ever been told her work was appreciated. This small gesture changed her whole outlook – about herself and her job. She felt wanted, valued, and needed. On-going feedback results in improved performance, communication, and less turnover. It is one thing to *love* your job, but it's even better when you know that the job *loves* you back.
- **Be aggressive on turnover by making employee retention a part of your organization's culture.** This should not only be your goal, but the goal of the entire staff. Emphasize the need for supportive staff members who can motivate other employees to be committed, passionate and accountable to the company. This cultivates a “we're all in this together” team atmosphere in which everyone feels included. As a result, employees gain emotional satisfaction by recognizing that cohorts can actually become a little more like family and are more likely to remain on the job.
- **Educate and train.** Provide a career management program that offers continuous education and training. As an employer, it is up to you to make sure your team is confident in their abilities to perform the required task. If you want to see growth in your business, then you must be committed to growing your people. Offering employees opportunities for education and training helps to make them stronger, more confident, and competent. Plus, it sends the message that they are valued and appreciated.
- **Offer incentives and rewards.** Just as you make special offers to external customers to let them know how much you value them, offer your internal customers incentives and rewards to show you value them, too. Almost everyone seeks some type of reward or gratitude towards a work effort. As an entrepreneur, I've been able to witness the drastic differences between the behavior of those who are rewarded and those who have been overlooked. The passion and energy levels of those who are acknowledged for their work is far greater than those who receive little recognition. Offering incentives and rewards creates a happy and charged working environment and shows your employees an even greater sense of appreciation.
- **Empower.** Within reason, empower employees to make decisions that allow them to expedite customer service and satisfaction. Remember, if your mission

is to retain employees, then employees need to be prepared to handle any situation that could evolve from in-house operations, to customer service interactions. Empowering employees sends the message that you trust them and their ability to make sound decisions.

- **Give performance updates and evaluations.** Give employees periodic performance updates and a comprehensive evaluation at least once a year. Periodic updates allow them to address challenges and build on strengths on an ongoing basis. When evaluating, use the sandwich technique – start with praise for work well done, discuss challenges or deficits and together create corrective action strategies. Close on a positive note. This allows employees to walk away feeling good about themselves and gives them a positive place from which to start addressing challenges.

Finally, the primary drivers of employee retention are the organization's leaders. People may join an organization because of the job itself or the perks, but they are likely to stay if they like and respect their leaders. Therefore, companies must be committed to investing in their leaders, especially first-line managers, because their skills can directly impact retention and the bottom line. And, first-line managers are in the best position to implement the suggestions outlined above.

Copyright © 2007, Big Eyes International, LLC. All rights reserved.  
Big Eyes International  
P.O.Box 3924 Sarasota, Florida 34239  
Phone: 941-266-0676  
Email: bigeyes@daisysaunders.com