

Recruit Your Best People Every Day

(Your Competitors Are)

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by Steve Bruce

Many managers think retention is management's problem, that it's all about salary and benefits and perks. "There's nothing I can do" they think. But studies show that in large measure, it's what happens at the department and individual levels that makes the difference in retention.

Reviews of exit interviews tend to back up this idea, often expressed as "People leave bosses, not companies."

Step 1: See retention as the key to YOUR success

The first step in improving retention is to make sure that supervisors and managers realize that retention is the key to their success.

Turnover eats away at productivity. With high turnover, you've got to spend time recruiting and training instead of doing your job.

Turnover eats at morale. Here's what you'll hear if your department has high turnover:

- "Why are all of our good people always leaving?"
- "Should I be thinking about getting off this sinking ship?"
- "I'm tired of spending my time doing the work of the people who leave and then training their replacements"
- Transfer into that department? No thanks—Something's not right there.

Step 2: Recruit with Retention in Mind

When do you start thinking about retention? When someone has been on board for a year or two? How about *before* you hire them?

Careless recruiting is a guarantee of retention problems. Square pegs in round holes won't last long. Either they will leave or you will fire them. So consider retention as you recruit. Hire people who fit the job. Don't oversell. Look beyond just solving your immediate problem. Will this person stay over the long term? Can you keep him or her motivated?

Step 3: Recruit your best people every day (your competitors are)

Start with careful onboarding, making sure new employees are assimilated into the organization socially and professionally. And every day, be thinking:

- What am I doing for this employee to insure that he or she will stay?
- What do my employees care about?
- What can I do to make jobs more interesting and challenging?
- How can I paint an attractive picture of the future?

Step 4: Build a safe and pleasant physical environment

Take steps to make your workspaces pleasant (and safe) places for your people. Treat employees with fairness, honesty and respect—and make sure they treat each other that way too.

Step 5. Create an "I-love-it-here" environment

Consciously work on fostering employee pride and developing team spirit. For example, publicize your participation in charitable and other types of community events.

Celebrate events such as project completions. Some may merit a special gathering, others a lunch, or just a mention at a company meeting. Offer individual congratulations when appropriate. Thank people in public when you can.

Can you do everything employees suggest or request?

Can you follow every employee request? Of course not. But employees know that. Their expectation is that you will listen and consider. And who knows? Some of the suggestions may be good ones.

When you can't do what is suggested, consider what alternatives might accomplish the same thing. For example, you may not be able to honor a request for on-site childcare, but you could perhaps offer a referral service, or negotiate a discount at a nearby childcare center.

Or, while you may not be able to let people work at home, perhaps a more flexible schedule could meet employee and employer needs.

Also consider some of the things you might offer that employees appreciate but that have little or no cost for you. For example:

Wellness programs. Wellness programs generally pay for themselves several times over through reduced healthcare costs.

Green thinking. Employees like it that their companies are conscious of the environment, and you might end up saving some money in the bargain.

Charity events. How about time off to participate in the event of the employee's choice?

On premises services. For example, pickup of dry cleaning is typically a no cost benefit.

Discounts. The company can often negotiate discounts on insurance, health clubs, and any number of other things.

Finally, be sure to communicate what you do offer.