



Top Tips to Retain Staff

Once you have gone through all the effort of recruiting a good person, the last thing you want is for them to leave you for something that could have been avoided, or poached by a competitor who offers them a better working environment. Whilst zero % staff turnover is not healthy, as it is good to bring in fresh blood from time to time, none of us want to lose good people.

Here are some good practices for you to follow to minimise the risk of losing good people, and maximising the chances of them staying.

COMMUNICATION

1) Frequency

You can never communicate too much! Most problems can be avoided and solved through straightforward communication. This doesn't mean you talking and them listening, it is a 2 way process! Seriously though, the more you communicate and listen to your team, you will find the chances of them being more engaged, motivated and higher performing, far more likely.

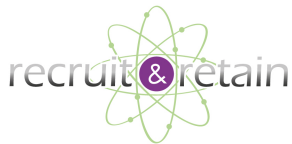
2) Feedback

It is also frequently identified in Engagement Surveys that people prefer to know if they are not doing well rather than not know at all! Particularly common in those that perhaps lack self confidence is 'negative self-talk' where the member of staff doubts themselves, and because they receive no feedback, good or bad, often assume they must be doing a bad job, and this can result in a self fulfilling prophecy, where poor performance then develops. There are two types of feedback – constructive and reinforcing i.e. negative and positive respectively. It has been discovered in recent research by Dr Barbara Fredrickson, that the ideal ratio is 3:1, 3 pieces of positive feedback to 1 negative. Interesting she found that any more than this was deemed insincere and lost its impact.

REGULAR 121 MEETINGS

1) Establish goals

This again provides clarity for the employee about what they are aiming for at any given time, and this in itself can be motivating. By setting clear measurable goals, they are more likely to remain on track and



achieve them. These can be both short term and long term, anything between 1 month and 6 months would be ideal. Make sure they are SMART:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Attainable
- Relevant
- Timely

It is especially good practice to get the team member to set their own goals if applicable, or at least some of them. This way they are far more likely to own them and take accountability.

2) Listen!

Whilst it is important to provide feedback, it is equally important to listen to feedback they have for you! All sorts of problems can be nipped in the bud by having monthly 121's with direct reports. Sadly in my experience it is these sorts of meetings that are often cancelled or postponed, and I see problems and niggles escalating until it is often too late and the team member is resigning. See 121's as an investment in your people, and it will pay dividends; in the form of fewer grievances, better performance and higher retention levels.

3) Length, location and frequency

They don't need to be really lengthy, but equally they shouldn't be rushed. I would say if you are doing them on a monthly basis, then 45 minutes to 1 hour should be sufficient. This gives you time to review where they are at with their goals, gives you a chance to provide feedback, and them an opportunity to bring anything up which is troubling them or they want to ask you a question about.

If possible it is always best to hold them off site. This prevents interruptions and provides a neutral setting for both parties to think clearly and be more relaxed. It also demonstrates that you take their development seriously and you are willing to invest proper time in the meetings. This conversely should mean that they too would take it seriously, and prepare thoroughly for them.

4) Structure

I would always start off a 121 asking the team member how they are and how things are going for them. If there is something that is really playing on their mind, rushing straight into how they are going with their goals, will be counter productive. If everything is going fine, then this is the point to ask them to tell you how they got on with the actions from the previous month. I would also ask what has gone well for them in the past month, and what have the challenges been. See the 'How to Get the Most Out of Your Staff' e-book available on this site, for techniques to use when coaching a team member.

Establish next what they feel their key actions should be for the coming month and make sure that these together with a summary of the key points of the discussion are documented. By doing documented 121's



each month – this provides evidence of how you have supported an employee to improve their performance, and makes annual performance reviews much easier!

TRUST AND ENGAGEMENT

Trust and engagement in my view go hand in hand. If you think about it, those that we are most engaged in working with, we tend to also trust. Conversely where trust has been eradicated, we often find that we are no longer engaged. Often it is the small things that can chip away at our levels of trust and these things can be different for every one of us. See the 'How to Get the Most Out of Your Staff' e-book available on this site, for more information on the SCARF model by David Rock, which speaks directly to this.

1) Do what you say you are going to do

It probably sounds simple, but time and time again I come across leaders who don't follow through on what they promise. I guess it is easy to do if you are at the top of the tree, as there is no-one especially to hold you accountable, and for political reasons you often won't be given feedback by those around you. Think of your staff as internal customers; you wouldn't dream of not following through on a promise to an external customer I would guess, so why should it be different with an internal one.

2) Lead by example

Similar to the point above, it's kind of saying; don't take advantage of the fact that you can do as you like, when you are the owner or someone in authority! You can, but only for so long; people quickly lose respect for their boss when they see them saying one thing and doing another!

3) Conduct an engagement survey

Even if you focus on developing trust, conduct monthly 121's and ensure your employees are being given regular feedback; there will always be some things that people don't feel comfortable telling you. And sometimes if these things are not resolved, they can lead to them leaving and going elsewhere.

An Employee Engagement Survey can be an excellent way of finding out common trends of things that people would like to be different. Again, this doesn't necessarily mean jumping to change everything to make them happy, but by asking the question and having open dialogue about why something may or may not be possible, is an excellent way of increasing trust and engagement. This is something at Recruit and Retain that we would be delighted to help you with, from scoping out the questionnaire to administering the survey, to interpreting the results. We often then help the organisation facilitate the action planning together with the team. Please do not hesitate to get in touch via info@recruit-retain.com or calling on 0203 633 3756.



EXIT INTERVIEWS

So what you do when you have done all the above, but you still lose someone great? Or perhaps you haven't started to implement all these tips and you have a staff turnover problem? Exit interviews if done properly, can provide some very useful information as to possible trends within the organisation that are causing staff to up and leave.

With the best will in the world, people won't tell you everything that is troubling them, as you are their employer! Sometime they see the risk as being too great. It may be too late if it isn't highlighted until the exit interview stage, but at least you can do something about it going forward, if you are seeing similar trends.

I would strongly advise getting a third party to conduct them, or someone in HR if you have an HR department. It is crucial that the ex-employee feels able to be honest, and that the person conducting it can remain impartial. This is something that the team at Recruit and Retain can help you with, so do please contact us via info@recruit-retain.com or calling on 0203 633 3756.