

Engage Your Talent or They Leave

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Despite the soft economy, great organizations are still focused on keeping their best people. Studies conducted by Towers Perrin on global employee engagement resulted in these findings:

- Barely one in five employees (21%) is fully engaged on the job.
- 8% are fully disengaged.
- 71% of employees fall into moderately engaged.

Forward-thinking leaders have recognized that an opportunity exists to thrive in the competitive marketplace by better engaging the hearts and minds of employees, especially those that fall in the middle 71%. The large group represents the greatest opportunity or the biggest threat if attention is not placed on moving them to the positive side.

The following provides tips on how to better engage your workforce from my new book, *Attract, Engage & Retain Top Talent*.

1. **Always hire for fit.** A candidate should fit both the job specifications as well as the culture of the organization. Studies show culture has even more to do with engagement and retention than the actual job match itself.
2. **Create an engaging culture.** When employees perceive their organization aligns with their own values, provides meaningful work and treats its members with respect and fairness, then the culture is positively impacting work life. Employees who perceive this positive culture will stay longer and work harder.
3. **Provide interesting and meaningful work.** The more engaged in the work the more engaged in the organization. Lack of fulfilling work leads the list of reasons people choose to leave a company. It also leads the list of the top job satisfiers in a study by Career Systems International.
4. **Supply resources needed to get the job done.** Top companies ask what tools are needed, acknowledge those requests and respond where appropriate. Simply ask each employee, or team, “Do you have what you need to do the best job possible?” If requests are reasonable and you are able, respond appropriately.
5. **Foster an environment of open communication.** Employees feel better when they are well informed and encouraged to share their perspectives. Make sure you communicate the company values and vision and what success looks like for your organization. Communicate your expectations and ask for theirs of you.

6. Continually develop employees. Employees need to feel that they are growing and developing in their careers and improving themselves. Learning and expanding in a current role is good, learning and expanding through advancement is even better.

7. Conduct “stay” interviews. Rather than waiting until employees leave and then engaging in an exit interview to find out what could have been done to keep the employee, why not be more proactive. St. Luke’s hospital in Kansas City credits low employee turnover to their process of conducting random stay interviews with long-term employees asking them why they value working at the hospital and what suggestions they have to improve the work environment. This allows an organization to gather important information while still able to incorporate it into engagement practices.

8. Reward and recognize good performance. The best companies have methods for rewarding individual and team performance in a consistent and equitable manner. Recognition and reward tied to strategic and visionary goals reinforces and motivates the right behaviors in all your employees.

9. Encourage employee wellness. A healthy organization does not include employees who forego their unused vacation and personal time. Many companies have programs that will reward employees who stay healthy and safe. It is mutually beneficial to show employees that the company cares about their health and well-being. Examples include: smoking cessation, weight loss programs and or fitness center membership discounts.

10. Value diversity. Recognizing diversity of opinion, style, approach and ideas sets excellent companies apart. Top companies value and leverage differences in their people to create exceptional results and an engaging culture that is able to attract the best talent available.

Engaged and committed employees are proud to work for their employer, are dedicated to the organization and willing to give the extra effort necessary to achieve the goals of the enterprise. Engagement is a leading indicator of financial performance. Companies that increase their engagement levels can expect to significantly improve their subsequent financial performance. Being proactive will increase engagement and keep your best talent from walking out the door.

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