

# Direct Hire Associates

## How to Retain Your Staff

### Save money – keep your best people!

Turnover has a real cost and keeping your best staff is about much more than proper compensation. Thousands of interviews with job seekers have taught us that when an employee begins to look for a new job, it is rarely just about the money. As a manager, the relationship with your staff influences the quality of work produced, the atmosphere in the office, and your ability to retain your employees. If you focus on the following areas you will find your team happier, more invested, and willing to stay for the long-term.

#### **The first week is critical**

Humans instinctually don't like change. Anyone's first week in a new job can be stressful, awkward, and challenging. As an employer, you need to consciously take responsibility for the quality of your new employee's first week. Be prepared for his or her arrival. Have the first day planned with a welcome meal of some kind, a facility tour, or an orientation. Not having a desk, a computer, logon, e-mail access, business cards, etc. is unacceptable. Do not let your lack of planning negatively effect your new employee's first impression of your organization. You want your new employee to feel that you are ready for them and have planned for their arrival.

#### **Be accessible and responsive**

After your new employees' first week, you must communicate that you are accessible to them going forward. If you don't convey this, they might not know that you are available for them to reach out to. Beyond demonstrating that employees can reach you, make sure that you are reaching out to them as well. Scheduled reviews are nice and periodical meetings are necessary, but sometimes checking in, just for the sake of checking in, can yield some very positive results and healthy communication.

#### **Consistent follow-through**

Simple rule: say what you'll do and do what you say. The number one staff complaint regarding managers, is a lack of promised follow-up. When you fail to do the things you've agreed to do, such as recapping a meeting, reviewing results, planning for a particular event, debriefing after an incident, etc., you establish a dangerous precedent for unreliability. Hold yourself accountable to deliver. This will generate respect and trust from your staff. Consistent managers are seen as fair, and although fair isn't always well liked, fair is usually respected.

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**Fair does not mean equal**

Different people produce different results and it's fair to treat them differently based on those results. Being fair means giving all your staff the same opportunity for success; it doesn't mean treating all their results as the same. These days, the concept of "everyone gets a trophy" has eroded the vital concept of competition. Cooperation and competition are the tactics that encourage progress and higher standards of excellence. In your organization, you want to encourage staff to try to outperform their peers. This does not mean stealing from or stepping on fellow employees, but it does mean encouraging exceptional performance in some, to inspire above average results in others.

**Developing a productive process**

If you are a manager, make sure you are using your ears and your mouth in correct proportion: 2 to 1. The mere act of asking for input and taking it into consideration will help your staff's buy-in to whatever change may need to occur. Including employees' opinions creates a sense of personal investment in the company. If you have good staff members, they may have ideas that you will want to hear and seriously consider.

In addition to feeling heard, you need to show your employees appreciation. This is more challenging, because people like to receive appreciation in different ways. Take a moment to know which of your employees prefer a cookie, a pat on the back, or a letter of recognition. Some people like a hug, and others like a handshake. Good managers don't have only one way of appreciating their staff.

**Professional growth**

There are many roles within organizations that are fairly routine. That doesn't mean that there isn't room for improvement in that persons' professional career. As a manager, it is crucial that you are giving your employees opportunities to take on greater responsibilities, broaden their skills, and cultivate a network of relationships with their colleagues. Professional growth does not necessarily equal a raise and a promotion. Both employees and companies can profit from pursuing an employee's area of interest through assignments and projects, offering training in broader business or specific technical skills, and allowing employees to attend conferences and develop professional relationships. Not everyone can be the CEO, but each member of your staff can achieve more and feel more engaged in their role if they are provided with opportunities to learn and grow.

**Be aware of your presence**

Knowing what effect your presence has in a particular setting will allow you to produce or encourage different results. Whether you manage out of love or through fear, you must embrace your style and consciously remain consistent. One of the most common management problems we hear about is a manager has an inconsistent communication style. Predictable behavior and reliable reactions are critical to maintain long-term rapport with your direct reports. Your staff needs to have some kind of reference point for what they can expect when they reach out to you, in order to have any confidence to consult you regarding a difficult situation. Just like you don't want to be surprised with information as a manager, your staff doesn't want to be surprised by your reaction when approaching you.