

• How to Retain High-Performing Employees

Stacey McCreery Jun 14, 2018

Losing high-performing employees can hamper an organization in many ways. Clear communication and proactive goal-setting can improve job satisfaction for those employees and make it more likely that they will stay.

No leader wants to lose a top performer. It is costly, and not only because of the time you have to spend recruiting a new employee or the temporary loss of output and productivity. It also sends a message to other high-performers on the team. It makes them start to think that maybe there isn't a place for them in the organization, either.

Furthermore, while you are recruiting the replacement of an employee you consider irreplaceable, other team members have to take on additional work. This burden may hinder other high-performers from achieving their goals, and that frustration and additional strain make them more likely to seek opportunities elsewhere.

So, how can the departures of high-performers be avoided? We need to avoid falling into the trap of getting so busy and that we fail to invest in our employees.

Communication Is Key

Have you ever, in hindsight, recognized that you failed to tell a loved one how you felt—meaning, you should have told them that you love them, but you assumed they knew? We often do the same with our employees. We fail to recognize our best employees because the expectation is that they will do an exceptional job.

High-performers expect communication—and not only in the form of praise or recognition. They expect communication when things are changing and as soon as goals are developed. They want communication throughout the entire process of performing a task, including the how, why, and when.

Perhaps the most important thing that organizational leaders can do to keep their top employees invested is to develop and hand out goals before the beginning of the year. Employees, particularly high-performers, like to know what they are working toward. They also want to ensure that they have the capacity to meet those goals.

Without a firm grasp of their goals at the outset of the year, employees may be left frustrated because they end up with only nine or 10 months left to accomplish those tasks once everything has been spelled out clearly. It is, of course, more attainable to accomplish a year's worth of goals in 12 months. Employees want consistency, communication, and a plan.

Long-term planning is also critical. When employees are unsure of the plan, they begin to question where the organization is going and where you see them going. They also want the opportunity to communicate where they see themselves going. They want to sit down with their leader and have these discussions.

Without communication and planning, high-performers tend to start making their own plans. Those plans may not include your organization.

Turnover Can Be Avoided

Turnover is painful, and turnover is costly. However, it can be reduced by communicating—planning goals in advance of the year, recognizing your team, and putting a plan in place for every team member's advancement.

While turnover can be devastating to any leader, especially unplanned turnover of your highest performers, with these approaches it can be reduced significantly.