

Corporate Retention Strategy #1 - Trust

Organizations are discovering over the last few years that a great workplace culture has more to do with the little things that increase employee retention than almost anything else. The employee is made to feel an integral part of an amazing company. As the company moves from being “a place to go to work”, to becoming “a great place to work”, it is their leaderships people skills, how they relate to each employee that matters. Managers need to be seen as approachable and they are willing to listen to new ideas. You start with competitive compensation rates and health care benefits. (see related article on compensation and benefits)

As I have identified with clients over the years, it is the word trust, along with its intrinsic meaning and the perceived value of that word, that resonates loudest with employees. This is where the employee feels trusted, is treated like family and is seen as a valuable part of the team. They know that they are a part of the success of creating the growth of the company and they enjoy the energy and the excitement that goes along with that growth. It is reinforced to them that they are making a recognizable contribution to the organization and it is celebrated. A high performance, forward thinking, motivational work culture is continuously nurtured. Needs are fulfilled and appreciation is shown.

Teamwork is supported and celebrated. Activities to bond people together are instituted. There is an attitude of not wanting to leave your friends. In fact, work is a great place to go and contribute because your friends work there too. When you hear your employees tell others that “This is a great place to work.” you know you’ve created that great culture.

Chinese philosopher Confucius once said: “Love your job, and you will never have to work another day in your life”. Furthering that idea, H. Jackson Brown Jr., said: “When you find a job that you love, you add 5 days to your week.” This is what successful companies create when they build a culture of relationships based on trust.

Trust includes:

- **Integrity:** - doing what you say you are going to do, and standing behind your promises, values and mission statements.
- **Effective communication:** - so employees consider themselves an insider, knowing exactly what is going to happen in the future, the good news and how the bad news, when it happens, is being handled. This includes financial information – not just budget key numbers.
- **Pride:** – a great sense of accomplishment in both the company and themselves
- **High regard:** – respect for the rights, values and beliefs of everyone regardless of age, sex, race or religion
- **Rapport:** – everyone gets along, feels comfortable and can even share their personal life successes and short comings with supervisors.

Here are some examples of how some very successful companies of all sizes and industries today engage their employees. What is interesting about this is most of these successful companies were modeling these examples as early as 1982, as identified in landmark books by Tom Peters' "In Search of Excellence" and re-enforced in 1991 by "Thriving On Chaos".

A unique office environment. One company purchased all the fixtures from a restaurant that was closing down that had 1950's diner style fixtures and décor and created an exciting new space to both meet client's in and for the staff to enjoy their lunch break. (Pictures available upon request.)

Annual themes. Employees and management are solicited for annual marketing or customer service focus themes, from employees for the business itself, or for the annual conference and conventions that the company organizes.

Autonomy. Employees are fully empowered to make decisions, ask questions and delegate to the level appropriate for their job description. In other words, less time from the initial idea or challenge, to the action or solution.

Career growth / education. Continual support of educational course and/or personal coaching.

Celebrations! Continual celebration of milestones in each employee's personal and professional careers. Includes: "Welcome" to first day of work catered lunch with all employees, recognizing 3rd month anniversary, annual employment anniversaries, birthdays, wedding anniversaries, etc.

Community Involvement. Support employee's charitable work by allowing them to help out at events. Examples would be blood donations or being a volunteer driver.

Customer service survey forms feedback. Immediate sharing of positive customer service survey forms feedback of great service by individual employees. If appropriate, the great results would be shared with everyone at work. Any negative feedback would be delivered in a one-on-one coaching manner, how to improve upon the situation.

Equipment. The latest equipment is provided in order to improve productivity and enhance creativity. Appropriate immediate training on upgrades is provided

Flexible hours. Consideration is given to extra-ordinary or unusual family matters so that work time does not have to be taken off. Other employees schedules are consulted so no long term overload is created.

Focus groups with employees – formal and informal. This is to capture issues and perceived problems and deal with them immediately. This can be done in house or through outside vendors who maintain anonymity.

Gift certificates. Managers are given Starbucks gift certificates to give to employees who deserve a bit of recognition. One bank recently added a Starbucks outlet in its head office to make it easier for employees to get their coffee.

Interest free loans. For various purposes such as assisting employees through a short term financial challenge, but usually for helping with a home purchase. It is available after a certain length of employment.

Management evaluations. Employees get to rate their bosses as to how they are doing their job. The focus of the questions is on the soft skills. (See “Leadership Empowerment Survey” or “C.O.A.C.H.” documents or request information on Corporate Ombudsman.)

On-time Performance Reviews. Complete with action plans to clear up deficiencies and suggested educational objectives in order to promote.

Personal touch. A personal note or call to employees spouses when the employee has to work longer than expected hours.

Play together. Regular staff outings organized to continue bonding. Examples are: bowling, pool, lazar tag, B-B-Q’s, bungee jumping and spa retreat days or weekends.

Professional expenses. Company pays annual fees and conference expenses associated with employee’s professional designations.

Profit sharing plan. One that is meaningful to everyone, may be several levels. Great goals set with buy in from everyone, that are constantly measured.

Promoting from within. A policy of constantly checking to see if employees are ready to move up. There is extensive cross training and grooming of supervision skills before the promotion opportunity comes up.

Stress Recovery Rooms / Productivity Recovery Rooms. A remote room where employees can go for a power nap or quiet time, or undisturbed reading research time to just relax and catch their breath.

Wall of Fame. Every new customer and /or employees pictures are posted on a wall.

This article was prepared by Bruce Lee, President of Encore Seven Inc., a training company he created with his wife Toni. Encore focuses on improving corporate and individual productivity, customer service, and leadership skills through keynotes and workshops. Toni delivers singing inspirational keynotes and just released her CD “Bloom”.

Bruce & Toni can be reached at 403 – 241 – 6212 or BruceLeeSpeaker@shaw.ca