



## HOW DO GREAT ORGANISATIONS MAINTAIN LOW LEVELS OF TURNOVER AND HIGH LEVELS OF EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION?

**D**espite fluctuating economic times and increased globalisation of jobs, most employers are finding it hard to keep good workers. The reality of today's job market is that workers are expecting more from their employers and are not afraid to move on if their needs are not met. This is evident in a recent survey we conducted where 78% of employees indicated they were planning to move jobs in the next 6 months – despite the economic uncertainty.

Based on compelling data from the Society for Human Resource Management and others who study workforce trends, leading organisations must take time to analyse their retention realities and ensure that the key employees they currently have are not seeking greener pastures. How do great organisations maintain low levels of turnover and high levels of employee satisfaction? The answer is found in one word: culture.

Organisations with high rates of employee retention concentrate on creating three distinct cultures that keep people focused on the organisation and its goals. The purpose of this article is to explore these three cultures and to recommend practical strategies for developing them in the workplace.

### The Culture of Choice

Donald N. Smith, the president of Burger King said, “The individual choice of garnishment of a burger can be an important point to the consumer in this day when individualism is an increasingly important thing to people.” Burger King recognised long ago that Americans expect to have multiple choices each day. Workers are not an exception to this rule. Today's employees are looking for choice in the methods they use for completing a job, in the benefits they receive from work, and in when and how they report to work.

In the last two decades, we've seen an explosion in the types of employee benefits offered by employers. We've seen an increased acceptance of telecommuting and flex-time. Choices in the tools they use, the methods they employ, and the recognition they receive are all characterised as innovations in HR management. In short, we continue to learn more and more about employee engagement and the link between empowerment and retention.

### The Culture of Development

Bestselling authors Beverly Kaye and Sharon Jordan-Evans, in their book, *Love'Em or Lose'Em*, say that any organisation that ignores the ambitions of good people can't expect to keep them. High rates of retention are clearly linked to the amount of attention the employee gets in terms of their professional development and growth. When employees feel that their career goals have been acknowledged and that they are continuing to be challenged on the job, they are likely to stick around. Employees who feel stagnated, ignored or bored will likely start to look for other opportunities. A culture of development can be cultivated through a variety of tools. Training, mentoring, and clear career paths all contribute to this culture. However, the strongest culture of development is created by the first line supervisor who works with the employee each day. Every supervisor and manager has an opportunity to show that they are interested in the employee's growth and development by asking the right questions and by understanding where the employee wants to go professionally.

Simply by asking, managers and supervisors can begin to create a culture of development and raise levels of retention.

### A Culture of Care

In a strict sense, the kind of motivation we need to be talking about in today's environment is inspired rather than induced. Employees will be motivated to stay put and work at higher levels if they feel that they are cared for and if they care about the work they are doing. In other words, employees must feel a sense of inspiration to fully commit to their daily activities.

In organisations where retention levels are high and turnover is low, research has found that employees find some level of inspiration from their jobs. Such inspiration might be a sense of contributing to the greater good. It might be a commitment to the team and its goals. Inspiration may be derived by following a committed and ethical leader. However the inspiration is created, employees must be lead to care about their work and about the organisation.

We have all read the ominous reports that indicate the workforce is shrinking in significant numbers due not only to the current economy, but also with the anticipated exit of the baby boomers. It is clear that despite the current day challenges, organisations that do not work on their culture during the tough times will find it difficult to attract and retain qualified and committed employees when the things start to improve. Now more than ever is the time to turn our attention internally, to the culture of the organisation.

With the national average length of employment hovering around one and a half years per job, it makes sense to explore what it takes to retain and develop a committed staff. Retention, while often considered a factor of economic times, is now being considered a long-term strategic goal for organisations that recognise its value.

**About the Author:** Craig McCallum is the General Manager Marketing for the Chandler Macleod Consulting Group. Email: [craig.mccallum@chandlermacleod.com](mailto:craig.mccallum@chandlermacleod.com)