

Balance: how an organisation achieves its own goals of creating a competent and competitive workforce at the same time as helping employees to meet their career development needs.

Employees are now more likely to display loyalty to their careers than to their employer. And employers are shifting their thinking to: "if we can't retain them forever, how can we retain them for a little while?"

In "Rethinking Company Loyalty" (<http://hbswk.hbs.edu/item.jhtml?id=5000&t=organizations&iss=y> September 19, 2005), it is suggested that companies need to be willing to rethink how they define loyalty and how they manage their people.

Key ideas from this article include:

- "Employees can give their employers 100 percent and provide great performance while furthering their own careers"
- "When firms help workers acquire new skills that support their professional advancement, they often win those workers' commitment - and attract loyal new employees"
- "Employers can promote company loyalty by helping people grow *out* of their jobs - ideally, into new ones within the company"

Some tips (from a variety of sources)

1. *Align career growth with company goals:* Take time to know staff, their strengths, talents and aspirations, and to help them to see how they fit with the corporate vision.
2. *Design work with variety and autonomy:* Allow people to take ownership of projects. Let employees know they can exercise choice. Employ the right people in the right job - workers doing jobs they hate is a recipe for disaster.
3. *Focus on relationships:* "For many employees, loyalty is born or cemented through relationships with supervisors and colleagues." The day-to-day relationship with one's immediate superior is one of the strongest indicators of staff retention.
4. *Highlight the link between employees' values and the company's mission:* Emphasising a company's purpose engenders loyalty, "especially when employees see the connection between their values and the company's mission." Put a human face on the vision.
5. *Provide training:* Provide a mix of learning and development opportunities, professional and personal. Treat employees as whole people. Training keeps the employee's interest level high. The US Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics did a 'Survey of Employer-Provided Training' of 1,000 companies in 2001. It showed that companies with high employee turnover train less than other companies. Providing training is important because it is an investment in employees.
6. *Provide regular performance reviews:* The idea is to focus on the individual as a person and how they fit in the business. Many organisations usually work on 6-12 monthly review cycles, but new thinking is that quarterly is better. It keeps you in touch with the staff.

7. *Allow staff to have an input:* Hold regular meetings, weekly if possible. These are not just to tell staff what is happening, but to seek their involvement and input in improving the business.
8. *Encourage fun:* Boring is dull.
9. *Maintain an ethical and honest culture:* "Employees who perceive that their leaders are ethical have a greater level of job satisfaction and feel more valued as workers."
10. *Increase respect and trust:* This means being trustworthy, trusting employees, and letting them know they are trusted.
11. *Promote stability in the organisation:* At odds in an ever-changing fast-moving world, this demands knowing when change is really worth it. A stable low-stress environment can attract staff to stay.
12. *Reward and recognise employees often:* Employees crave positive feedback and will be more productive when they receive it.
13. *Provide flexibility:* Treat employees as individuals, acknowledge their different priorities and needs.
14. *Know that employees have a life:* Be in touch with them, understand them - they do not leave half of themselves at home, they bring their whole human being to work.

All this demonstrates how you can show loyalty to your employees and help them to want to work for you for longer. It not only makes a difference to them, it sends a message to potential recruits, to the marketplace and to your clients and customers.

And it boomerangs: it helps you to feel good too.

About this article

Each month, I aim to provide personal and professional development information for you and your staff. Topics covered are based on areas of interest raised by clients and colleagues, with material drawn from journals, books, articles and shared experiences.

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