



Forget Retention. Think Employee Engagement

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After investing tremendous time and energy in recruiting the right employees, many companies fall short when it comes to having a well-defined strategy to keep the talent they've worked so hard to get.

The concept of employee engagement goes a step further than traditional retention techniques, taking into account the psychological connection your team has with their work... and their role in your company. In the short term, a solid engagement strategy in place can reduce turnover costs associated with advertising positions, interviewing candidates, the loss of productivity during your on-boarding process, and a decline in customer satisfaction.

In the long term, successful engagement strategies can have a significant positive effect on your bottom line. When your employees are engaged, each one will stand out in his or her role by proactively exceeding performance expectations. They'll be more productive and more likely to contribute innovative ideas across functions and teams.

The key to improving employee engagement is to ensure every individual knows what to do, has the tools and information in place to get the job done, and feels like they're a valuable contribution to the company's mission.

Here are four questions to ask yourself – and your management team – that will help determine if employees are as engaged and productive as they can be.

- **Are our employees connected to our vision and corporate mission?** Productive, engaged employees know about – and are aligned with – your company's mission. If they understand the long-term vision you have for the business, they'll see where they contribute to company-wide objectives. Each employee will then have a greater sense of accomplishment and accountability to their daily tasks.

In fact, when employees know where the company is headed, they are motivated to deliver ideas and tactics outside their roles or departments, leading to innovative products and customer service solutions.
- **Do they know what to do? Is everyone set up for success?** Your engagement strategy will be most successful if you frequently inform and reaffirm how individuals' efforts contribute to business objectives. Making it easy for employees to access information first-hand – through training, alignment meetings, performance reviews and more – will keep individuals from getting lost in the minutia of daily tasks. Group meetings with senior leaders motivate both teams and individuals, particularly when the communication flows both ways.

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- **Have we removed all impediments that are getting in the way?** Leaders at every level should regularly review the tools, technology and work processes that are involved with their team's jobs, assignments, and projects. By actively seeking out issues getting in the way of progress, they can look to front-line employees to inject fresh ideas and energy to make improvements that help everyone work smarter.

When leaders remove obstacles and pave a clear path to success, employees are better equipped to get the job done...more effectively and faster than ever.

- **Is every employee challenged?** People with well-defined goals are much more likely to achieve them. Smart job design and clear performance metrics will keep each employee engaged in their roles and result in top performers in your business.

First, make sure that each employee is in a position that best aligns with his or her skills, talents, interest and experience. They should also be challenged – though not by processes or functional barriers – with projects that are achievable. Setting measurable goals and a system for regularly assessing employees' progress provides another opportunity to remind everyone how they fit in with the company mission.

BottomLine

For long-term results, you should modify your retention strategy to emphasize employee engagement to forge an emotional connection between employees and your company. Not only will every contributor feel more accountable – and be more productive -- you'll see increased cross-team collaboration and heightened innovation. Plus, by reducing costs associated with turnover while boosting performance at every level, you'll see the results in your bottom line.

If you would like more information about this or other human resources and employment practices issues, please contact Praxis HR via email at info@praxis.com by phone at 206.262.8133 or visit our website at www.praxishr.com.