

Organizational Strategies to Retain Employees



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ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGIES TO RETAIN EMPLOYEES

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), over 40 million American people have been voluntarily quitting their jobs each month over the last year. In a Microsoft report, another 41% of the global workforce is considering leaving their jobs this year. These signs have driven organizations to realize they are in trouble if they do not start to figure out how to retain their most critical issue, their people.

What can organizations do to future proof against voluntary resignations? There are 5 areas discussed in this eBook that organizations should address to increase the retention of employees:

- 1) **ORGANIZATIONAL PURPOSE.** The recent pandemic has caused a lot of employees to reevaluate their lives and think about what is important to them. Now, employees want to know more than just “what” they have to do, they want to know “why” they are doing it. They want to be part of something they believe in, and a purpose statement gives them just that. A good purpose statement gives

employees the “why” and allows them to emotionally connect with what they are doing. The Organizational Purpose gives them the direction to work toward and is the basis for decision-making and unity.

2) ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE. With a shortage of employees in many industries, it is an “employee-driven market.” Candidates are looking at websites like “Glassdoor” for reviews of organizations before agreeing to work for them. They want to work for organizations that have healthy cultures of engagement, enthusiasm, and empowerment. This is not a new concept as employee engagement surveys over the last decade have indicated that organizations with higher levels of engaged employees are the “Employers of Choice.” As a result, they have lower attrition and attract more employees. Employers that no longer care about their culture and employee reviews are at a great disadvantage when attracting and retaining top talent.

3) ORGANIZATIONAL FLEXIBILITY. I spoke to one executive who said their highest producing salesperson could no longer work Saturdays because they were a single parent. This executive was not willing to flex the days the employee needed so ended up losing their top producer. Working from home for a year allowed employees to avoid the “California Commute,” lower their living expenses (car & food) and spend more time on the things they cared about. Organizations that have taken a hard line in the past on where employees need to work, what hours they need to work, and on what days they have to work are now at a disadvantage. Many organizations realize that the retention of quality employees is more important than having a rigid structure. Organizations should now consider if they can flex the hours or days employees work and whether or not they can offer hybrid or remote positions. This type of flexibility can have a big impact on the retention of top employees.

4) ORGANIZATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES. Diversity and Inclusion have been a hot topic for organizations to address over the past year. On top of that, motivational studies show that one of the main drivers for today's employees is that they are being developed and grown by the organization. Organizations need to put a development plan in place for every employee. Mentoring, developing, and cross-training employees not only motivates them to stay with the organization but also creates a diverse bench who are ready to move up to the next level if/when they are needed.

5) ORGANIZATIONAL PRIDE. We covered how the Organizational Purpose Statement could help employees emotionally connect with the organization. However, employees want their organizations to take it a step further. Employees want their organizations to be "Good Corporate Citizens." They want their organization to give back. This could be by done in a number of ways including donations to the homeless, digging wells in a third-

world country, or coming together for a beach cleanup.

Employees want to be proud of how their organization makes the world a better place.

Organizations that proactively address these five areas will retain more people, enhance productivity, and boost profitability. The massive return on investment these organizations receive will give them an edge over their competition for years to come.

ORGANIZATIONAL PURPOSE

One of the primary steps to combat voluntary resignation is for businesses to identify their **Organizational Purpose**. Employees today want to feel like they are making a difference. They want to believe in the organization and what it stands for. An organizational purpose statement goes deeper than the standard mission and vision statements that organizations post (and then may ignore). A good purpose statement gives employees “why” they should believe in the organization and allows them to emotionally connect with what they are doing. The organizational purpose statement (when used correctly) gives employees the direction they should work toward and is the basis for decision-making and unity.

So how do organizations develop and deploy an Organizational Purpose statement? Here are 5 R's to make yours a reality:

- 1) **Review**. Look at your organizational artifacts, legends, and heritage. Get a true understanding of the things that made your

organization what it is today. Talk to customers and employees to find out what they hold as having great importance. For example, at my company, it is Dale Carnegie's bestselling book "*How to Win Friends and Influence People*" and the principles within it. By understanding the organizational legacy and what customers and employees hold as important, you can create a purpose statement that has relevance and connects with people in the real world.

2) **Relate**. When crafting the purpose statement make sure it is tangible, compelling, and straightforward enough for employees to buy in and make it their own. Everyone in the organization, whether they are an employee on the assembly line in a manufacturing plant or the CEO of a finance company, should be able to relate to it and grab onto it as a litmus test when making decisions. When crafting the language of an organizational purpose statement, it should resonate both logically and emotionally with customers and employees. Avoid using abstract words or phrases that people can't get their arms around like: "we

exist to make the world a better place.” At Dale Carnegie **“we change how people see themselves, so they can change how the world sees them, and that changes the impact they have on the world.”**

3) **Reach.** A purpose is something employees will continually reach to achieve. It is a goal that guides what we do, but will never fully be completed. Alternatively, it should bring about a never-ending series of new goals, and constantly drive employees forward.

Looking at the Dale Carnegie example above, even if we worked a lifetime, we would not be able to reach every person in the world to help them change how they see themselves.

4) **Reveal.** The purpose statement is a big deal. If you want employees and customers to adopt it and emotionally connect with it, then revealing it should be with some gravitas. Put thought into how this can be done and then how it can be communicated to the customers as well. This could be done at an annual kick-off

meeting, trade show, or with a full marketing program supporting it.

5) **Reinforce.** The purpose statement will be carried out and fulfilled by the employees. If employees truly bond with it logically and emotionally, it will guide how they make decisions, solve problems and innovate. The thing that can kill the purpose statement from being fully adopted by the employees is the management team. Make sure all managers are on board with the importance of the organizational purpose. Incentives and recognition programs can be built into reinforcing the organizational purpose for both managers and employees.

Organizations that want future proof against high turnover should follow these steps to develop and deploy an organizational purpose statement. This will also allow them to become an employer of choice and attract the critical talent that is necessary to build their successful future.

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

The days when the average employee would work for the same company for 40+ years before they retired are long gone. Employees are no longer interested in working for organizations that have a predominantly “command and control” management culture. They want to work for organizations that have healthy cultures of engagement, inclusion, and empowerment. If organizations do not take steps to create a culture that allows them to be recognized as an “Employer of Choice,” they will experience high attrition and find it hard to attract new employees.

The importance of building a sustainable organizational culture has become critical in order to retain employees. Organizations today must make a conscious effort to define their desired culture, then assess the current state of the culture, and identify the gap so they can proactively address the gaps.

Here are 5 things to consider that can enhance your organizational culture:

1) **Organizational Purpose and Values.** This is another subject I have written multiple blogs on including, “*Organizational Purpose vs The Great Resignation.*” Employees today want, and need, to believe in both the organization and what they do for the organization. This means more than just posting a Mission and Vision statement. It means defining the purpose and values of the organization and then using them as the guiding force for all decisions made within the organization. People want to connect with the values of the organization and make sure they are consistent with their beliefs. This gives them an emotional connection to the organization. They want to see leaders in the organization embrace and embody the values of the organization. People will stay with an organization when they believe in the cause and conduct of that organization.

2) **Organizational Diversity and Inclusion.** These are big topics in society and need to be addressed in a healthy manner.

Organizations need to respect the diversity of their workforce and the customers they serve. Development and mentorship opportunities should be available for all employees. Inclusion also means giving employees a say in what happens in the organization. For more on this subject, check out my blog:

“Building Organizational Diversity: Seven Steps to Success.”

3) **Organizational Leadership Style.** The old “command and control” leadership style of the past is no longer tolerated by the new workforce. Managers will have high attrition rates when using this dictatorial leadership style. Employees also rate them on sites like “Glassdoor” to warn off other potential employees from suffering the same fate at the hands of these antiquated managers.

Managers need to be trained on how to motivate and lead with inclusion. For more on this topic, read my blog: *“The 8 Be Attitudes of Motivational Leadership.”*

4) **Organizational Flexibility.** With the vaccine being readily available to those that want it, organizations are asking employees to come back to the office. The problem is that employees no longer want to spend the time or money commuting back and forth from work. They have had a taste of the benefits of working virtually and they like it. Organizations need to offer flexible schedules to entice employees to return to the office. This might mean starting with only a couple of days a week at the office or adjusting schedules, so people do not have to sit in rush hour traffic. Organizations should take a serious look at what they can do to accommodate more employees if they want to retain them in the future.

5) **Organizational Philanthropy.** Employees are looking at what the organization is doing to give back to the community. They want to know that the organization stands for more than just making a buck. If your organization is not already doing food drives, cleaning up beaches, or fundraising for a worthy cause, you

should consider doing something. Ask the employees “In What Ways Could We Give Back?” This will help employees to truly connect with the organization as well as impact a good cause.

The future of organizations will depend on their ability to retain their greatest asset...their employees. Organizations that want to proactively retain employees will consider and implement a plan on how they can improve in the 5 areas listed above. Doing so provides a strategic advantage against the competition in the future.

ORGANIZATIONAL FLEXIBILITY

According to “Monster.com” an estimated 95% of workers considering changing jobs, and 92% are even willing to switch industries by the end of the year to find the right position. For years, organizations have taken a hard line on where employees need to work, what hours they need to work, and on what days they have to work, and now these organizations are in danger of losing their most important asset...their people.

Employees are no longer willing to put work as the only priority in their lives, they want work-life balance. They are willing to leave their jobs to find what makes them happy. Organizations have started to realize that the retention of these quality employees is more important than having a rigid structure. Organizations should now consider if they can flex ridged policies or schedules that have existed for years to accommodate this new employee mindset.

Organizations should consider these five areas when reviewing where they could become more flexible in order to retain more employees:

1) **Flexible Days.** Flexibility in what days or how many days an employee works per week. This is a hard mental shift for organizations that are used to being open Monday through Friday, but many businesses are open 7 days a week. For years these organizations have had to be more flexible in order to schedule employees to cover all 7 days. I spoke to one executive who required all employees to work on Saturday. This executive told me their highest producing salesperson could no longer work Saturdays because she was a single parent. This executive was not willing to flex the policy on working Saturdays and ended up losing her top producer. Many organizations, open Monday through Friday, may need to start hiring 2 people to split the work week. Would having one person work 3 days and the other work 2 days be a viable option? Why not?

2) **Flexible Hours.** Similar to being flexible on the days worked, being flexible on the hours can help retain more employees. Here in

Southern California traffic is bad for a couple of hours in the morning and a couple of hours in the late afternoon. Allowing employees to start before or after rush hour helps reduce stress and shorten commute times. Some people may have to take their children to school and then come to work after. When my kids were young, I was working for a telecommunications company and asked for my hours to be 6:30 AM – 3:30 AM so I could avoid traffic and be available to coach my kids after work. They gladly accommodated me, and I was a very dedicated employee.

Whatever the reason, organizations should consider flexible work schedules for employees so they can be more accommodating of their needs.

3) Flexible Location. During the pandemic, many employees worked from home. This allowed employees to avoid the “California Commute,” lower their living expenses (car & food) and spend more time on the things they cared about thus achieving a greater sense of work-life balance. Organizations that quickly adjusted to

being forced to go remote found a way to get things done. They have slowly advanced their ability to be more and more effective in this “new normal”, but now they are calling employees back to the office. This “work-life balance” is something many people are not willing to just give up, so they are hesitant to come back to the office full time, and many are leaving their jobs. So, while not all positions can be done remotely, organizations need to make concessions where they can and determine if some positions can work hybrid or even permanently in a remote capacity.

4) **Flexible Workspace.** With people working remotely or in hybrid schedules, fewer people are in the office at any given moment. This allows organizations to rework their office layout and maximize available workspace. Many organizations are eliminating assigned desks to allow employees to work in a way that suits their individual styles and needs. At one organization here in Orange County, they have a pond surrounded by USB ports, laptop plugs, and tables outside so employees can even sit

outside while working. This type of new work environment could also help organizations create larger common areas where teams can come together to brainstorm ideas or collaborate on how to solve a problem.

5) Flexible Work Assignments. Feedback on most motivational surveys shows that people want to work for organizations that help them grow. Flexible work assignments allow people who want to develop professionally to try different projects within an organization. Similar to cross-training, this would allow employees to grow their skillset and knowledge making them more valuable to the organization. In turn, employees that take on different assignments for different departments and/or supervisors will have a deeper understanding of the overall organization. They will be ready to step up to the next level in the organization when a position becomes available.

Voluntary resignations will continue to have devastating effects on organizations that do not proactively try and retain employees. By implementing organizational flexibility, when possible, you show employees that you care. This can have a big impact on the retention of top employees and in turn, helps enhance your competitive advantage.

ORGANIZATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

As organizations are calling employees back to the office, many employees are considering leaving their jobs. This is due to several factors, but how do organizations create an atmosphere that motivates employees to stay?

Motivational studies show that employees who have access to formal development programs have a higher level of engagement than those who did not, and so they would be more likely to stay with their current organizations. With this in mind, organizations need to put a development plan in place for every employee. Mentoring, developing, and cross-training employees motivates them to stay with the organization and can create a diverse bench of candidates who are ready to move up to the next level if/when they are needed.

Here are 7 types of opportunities for organizations to consider as a way to develop and motivate employees.

1) **Manager Coaching and Mentorship Programs.** There are many different types of mentoring programs such as career mentoring programs, diversity-focused mentoring programs, and high-potential employee mentoring programs. The key is that managers have to be respected by the employees that they mentor and coach, or the program could cause employees to become disengaged. Organizations may want to train their managers on how to mentor and coach employees. The organization should set guidelines and goals for these types of programs along with regular checkpoints to make sure they are hitting the mark.

2) **Peer Coaching and Reverse Mentoring.** Employees like to feel like they are valued. Implementing programs that allow them to mentor peers and give perspectives to managers up the chain helps drive the feeling of importance they play in the organization. This can also help to drive more transparency, knowledge sharing, and collaboration within all levels of the organization.

3) **Cross-Training.** The goal of this type of training is to build the skills of employees in the organization so they have a better understanding of exactly what it takes to run vital areas of the business. Cross-training empowers employees to provide support from within the company instead of outsourcing or overloading one group of employees when disasters happen, or extra resources are needed. Organizations that want to start cross-training should start by identifying the critical tasks and skills in each department or area of the organization. Then the organization should start training employees on these tasks and skills so that they can step in to provide support when needed.

4) **Stretch Assignments.** This type of growth opportunity helps move employees to higher performance levels. Stretch assignments help grow confidence and skillsets as employees prove themselves by taking on projects that may be beyond the scope of their typical job description. Stretch assignments encourage

growth, affirm a willingness to grow, and can keep employees engaged.

5) Internal and External Classroom-style Training. Whether

organizations are using internal or external training teams they should have a formal development plan in place for employees.

Creating a 3-to-5-year program for employees to receive continuous development shows employees that growth and development are important. This type of plan is also essential for consistency of processes and helps identify high potential employees. Also, this is a style that can be used when implementing succession planning programs. Organizations can create cohorts with formal program tracks that help prepare employees for what is needed at the next level.

6) Self-Paced Computer Based Training. This is the most cost-

effective opportunity for training employees that organizations can provide. Organizations can record videos and content and

then allow employees to review them at their convenience. This type of training is typically more focused on compliance and onboarding, so when using it to grow employee talent, it is more effective when combined with the ability to apply concepts at work to reinforce learning and allow for skill transfer.

7) **Online training sessions and webinars.** This differs from self-paced as it is still led by an instructor. This type of development opportunity is more effective than self-paced and provides more flexibility than traditional classroom-style programs as the learning can be accessed from work, home, or a mobile device. The increased accessibility allows organizations to reach employees wherever they may be. The challenge is that many people may multitask or may have online meeting fatigue so may not be fully engaged during the training session.

Mentoring, coaching, and developing employees help to create a culture of continual growth. This type of culture motivates and engages

employees. Organizations that apply the types of programs discussed above will increase employee retention causing a positive bottom-line effect on profitability and helping your company avoid becoming one of the casualties of the high turnover.

ORGANIZATIONAL PRIDE

The fallout of the pandemic has created a shift in work ethics. Many people want to have more than just a cursory “work-life balance.” They want to work for an organization they believe in. This means that organizations must look at their purpose and how they can become a “Good Corporate Citizen” in order to attract and retain employees in the future. Organizations must shore up their organizational cultures by insisting on high moral and ethical standards from the front-line employees to the C-suite within the organization. In addition, organizations will have to consider the needs of the community they serve while examining the environmental impact of their organization.

There are a number of ways to drive pride in an organization. In addition to the organizational purpose discussed previously, here are five different areas to consider when looking at how to drive organizational pride:

1) **Ethical Standards.** We have all heard stories of embezzlement, racial unfairness, or sexual misconduct in the news conducted by leaders within an organization. These behaviors need to be prevented from entering organizational cultures by creating and enforcing an organizational code of ethics. A code of ethics is a set of organizational behavioral standards that guide the professional conduct of everyone within the organization. Strict enforcement of these ethics creates ethical pride within the culture of the organization.

2) **Philanthropy.** There are a lot of different ways that organizations can give back to the local or global community. Globally this can be through financial contributions to organizations that do things like “replant the forest” or “dig wells” in third-world countries. Local philanthropy could also be offering scholarships to disadvantaged youth or donations to local charities. Giving time is also a great way to give back. This can be done through activities like volunteering at local food kitchens, cleaning a local beach, or

sending a team to build a house for someone in need. Employees are proud to work for organizations that don't just try and make the most profit but also find ways to make a positive way to give back and make a difference in the world.

3) **Team Building.** Many of the philanthropic activities listed above can also be team-building activities. Activities like food drives, adopting a family for the holidays, or building bikes to donate to kids that don't have any are also ways to combine these two types of activities. Team building can also be fun. When doing activities like a team barbeque, a bowling night, or other fun activities employees feel more connected and prouder of the organization for investing time and resources back into the employees.

4) **Empowerment.** Similar to investing time and resources for team building, when an organization empowers its employees, they develop a greater sense of pride in the organization. Empowerment can take the form of stretch assignments, cross-

training, formal mentoring and development programs, or simply giving them the authority to make decisions to get the job done.

Employees don't want to be micromanaged, they want to know the organization trusts them and is giving them the ability to make progress towards their professional and personal goals.

5) **Impact.** Most people would like to know they are making a difference in the world. To show employees that they are helping to make an impact, an organization can use customer testimonials, case studies, or white papers. Some organizations bring in customers or record them talking about how they benefit from their product or application. If they are captured on video, these can be used internally for retention and externally to help attract new employees. When employees see and/or hear the impact the organization has on customers through their combined effort, they can feel a greater sense of pride in the organization.

Employees want to be proud of their organization. When organizations take an intentional approach to cultivating organizational pride through the methods discussed above, they can retain valuable employees.

Reducing turnover has a direct and measurable impact on bottom-line profitability for organizations. Develop pride in your organization's culture to grow your bottom line.

SUMMARY

The new pandemic that is putting organizations in danger is “**high turnover**”. With more and more people considering leaving their organizations, they are in danger of losing one of their most valuable resources... their people. Organizations that ignore this trend will face a disadvantage when competing against those who proactively address **Purpose, Culture, Flexibility, Opportunity, and Pride** covered in this eBook to transform their organizational culture. These organizations will retain more people, enhance productivity, and boost profitability.

Combating the attrition can't be done by simply giving a small raise to employees. Any employee can find a job that will pay a little bit more. Employees want to know they are working for an organization that cares about them with a culture that provides inclusion, opportunity, and growth. The points discussed in this eBook provide the framework to fulfill what employees are searching for in their ideal organizations. The retention and attraction of employees will provide a substantial

return on investment and give organizations an advantage over their competition for years to come.



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