

Improve Retention by Being a Better Manager

Whether your organization is staffed with seasoned, first-rate managers or individuals who are still developing, cultivating the five behaviors outlined below will improve their leadership abilities and reduce turnover in the process.

- **Good managers communicate with their employees:** What's the biggest complaint employees have with their managers? The answer is lack of communication. Keeping open lines of communication—at all times— is essential. The workplace hates a vacuum, and when information is nonexistent, the grapevine will usually fill the void— often with misinformation. Failing to communicate, incomplete communication, or worse, misinformation, yields distrust and discontent.

In addition to communicating company status information, it's critical that you clearly communicate employee job duties and performance expectations. Everyone on your team should be provided with clear, measurable, and documented job responsibilities.



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- **Good managers trust and respect their employees:** As Wayne Outlaw, author of *Smart Staffing*, rightly points out, “You can demand obedience because of your rank, but you have to earn trust and respect.” And the only way to accomplish that is to show trust and respect to your employees.

Many bosses fail in this effort because of their need to micromanage. In particular, managers who are used to keeping tight reign on their projects sometimes find it difficult to give their staff the freedom to succeed.

Provide your employees with necessary information and support, but trust them to do their jobs successfully; no competent employee likes to be micromanaged when it's not necessary. By being a guide rather than a dictator, your chances of retaining staff greatly increase.

- **Good managers mentor their employees:** Your obvious duty as a mentor is to take an active interest in the professional development of your staff. Encourage them to take training classes, introduce them to potential allies in the company or industry and help them map out their own career paths. The easier you make it for employees to advance professionally, the more likely they'll stay with your department

or organization. On a more general level, mentoring means putting the best interests of your employees above everything else — even if you have to question company policy occasionally.

- **Good managers care about their employees:** If you view employees merely as workplace resources, you'll always battle retention problems. It's essential to support and value your staff as people, especially during times of personal crisis. The work/life balance is difficult under the best circumstances, but when an employee is dealing with situations like illness, death, or divorce, he or she needs to know you are an ally. Employees aren't likely to forget these acts of kindness, and for years to come will remain loyal to the company. By giving employees sufficient latitude during troubled times, you can earn their commitment for the long-term.
- **Good managers motivate their employees:** Everyone can be motivated, just not in the same way. One employee works hard to be promoted, another for bigger bonuses and yet another for the sense of accomplishment. You can provide perks ranging from recognition awards to achievement bonuses. Yet if these “benefits” are not valued by your staff, they're worthless. Your challenge is to find out what motivates each individual and then help him or her to attain that objective.

Communicate with your staff on a regular basis to find out what they want.