

Retention and Engagement

Maintain productivity and hold onto your top performers

For many companies a downturn in business will mean recruitment is the last thing on their minds. However, your people issues are no less pressing. In difficult times it is easy for staff to become de-motivated and insecure. To succeed in a tough market you need to maintain productivity and make sure you hold on to your top performers.

Getting the most from people and retaining them successfully go hand in hand. The engaged, motivated employee is more likely to stay with your organisation than the bored, despondent one. So what can be done?

Job Evaluation. Just because you're not recruiting doesn't mean you can't examine your job descriptions as well as the people performing each role. Are the right people in the right jobs? As outlined earlier, start by reviewing the job itself and then the behaviours required to perform it well. If you find people who are not suited to their roles make some changes – can responsibilities be re-distributed, employees re-deployed or jobs swapped?

Motivators. Understanding what makes your employees tick is crucial - different people respond to different motivators. Some people crave money and prestige, others want security and sincere recognition of a job well done. Talk to your managers and find out if they already have a feel for their teams' motivators. If not, profiling tools can be used to establish them quickly. Making sure each individual is managed in the most appropriate way will help keep them onside and performing well.

Communication. If there's one thing we all hate it's being kept in the dark. Make sure you communicate regularly and effectively with your staff. Where you face problems try to involve them in forming solutions. Employees whose opinions are valued, and who feel their ideas can impact on company direction will feel more aligned to company goals.

Team work. There are a whole raft of reasons why some teams don't work as well as they should – and an equally vast number of ways to tackle team problems. Ironing out team problems will benefit the people in the team, those that work with them and the company as a whole.

Development. While sales might have slowed, your employees' need for learning and development opportunities won't have changed. In fact they may increase as markets change quickly. This is particularly true of your high-flyers who will always be looking for the next rung on the career ladder. Providing opportunities for growth demonstrates your commitment to your employees. Offering training and internal promotion are a great ways to keep staff engaged and incentivise top performers.

As many articles over the past few months have reported those who make ill thought-out cut-backs, or who fail to hang-on to top performers, are likely to struggle in the current climate. When markets do begin pick up those with a strong and motivated workforce are the ones who will benefit most quickly and in the greatest measure

This is a great time to think about your people issues and to take time to get things right. When you have the right people with the right attitude at the helm of your organisation you should be in great shape to sail through whatever economic storms we face.