



## 5 Simple Ways to Retain Talent! Bruce E. Roselle

In the past few months, I have had several conversations with leaders in the 35-45 age range who had either left their previous companies, or were actively pursuing other opportunities. They worked for multi-billion dollar organizations and had been at their companies for 5-10 years. None were probably considered 'flight risks' by their current companies.

Why did they decide to look for other options? They were not satisfied enough in their current roles and they started to develop a 'wandering eye' about what might be available to them elsewhere. Their fundamental needs were not being met, and nobody—including their manager—was asking them about those needs. They were just plugging along and everyone assumed they were happy where they were, though in a couple of the cases, they had actually talked with their manager and more senior leaders about their desire to be promoted.

**What's missing?** Based on my own research and that of others in the leadership development/employee engagement field, we know that people often have these as their primary work motivators:

- Have a say in the decisions
- Do work that is meaningful to them, the organization
- Are able to develop friendships with coworkers
- Can build new skills, advance
- Have a manager who relates well to them and appreciates them
- Experience balance in their work and private lives
- Are paid competitively for their time
- Make clear progress towards goals

When organizations fail to meet some or most of these needs, the motivation level drops and retention of key talent is threatened.

More recent research indicates several indicators of employee commitment that seem to be the primary drivers in whether employees stay or leave. Most of them are related to the relationship with their immediate supervisor, as well as more senior leaders. Here they are, in order of importance from greater to lesser:

1. My career aspirations can be achieved at this organization.
2. Senior leaders treat employees as valued resources.
3. I am rewarded based on my performance.
4. I am acknowledged for my accomplishments.
5. My manager supports me.

**Are you seeing a theme here?** Each of these five motivating needs related to work are significantly impacted by the relationship between the individuals and their leadership. What are you doing in your organization (or, what is your organization doing for you) that makes sure employees are progressing in their careers, rewarded and acknowledged for their work, as well as valued and supported?

Does your organization intentionally address these work satisfiers by developing and promoting leaders who inspire their team members and bring out the best in them?

**How can organizations retain talent?** Especially in this time of high employment and competition in recruiting top talent, organizations must do all they can to be proactive about employees walking out the door.

Here are the five best practices I suggest, gleaned from my client organizations that are most successful at retaining talent:

- Ensure that every position has a clear path toward a next position. Even if the incumbents in a particular role express their desire to remain there and not move to another role, make sure that a path exists and the learning they will need at the next level is clear.
- Gather regular feedback from employees about how they view the culture at your organization and how well they feel like they fit in and are welcome. Ask for specific ideas about how the culture could change to be a better fit for them individually. Then, make the changes you can.
- Tie the compensation of each leader to the retention, development, and promotion of their team members. Though there are always extenuating circumstances (spouse moves out of state, team member decides to go back to school fulltime, health issues force early retirement), connecting a financial and promotion component to keeping and growing existing talent on your team makes it clear how important this is to the organization's success.
- Require frequent career discussions as part of the regular one-on-one meetings between manager and subordinate. Build in communication pathways that allow subordinates to also talk with their manager's leader or others about their career aspirations. This way, managers who conduct career discussions just to check a box can be 'double-checked' by another leader in the organization. Too many talented people leave, because their manager represents a roadblock to their progress and career satisfaction.
- Build in metrics that help you recognize every six months which managers/supervisors have unusually high turnover and conduct due diligence to determine what was missing in the retention and development of those people who left. Take steps to correct these gaps.

Bottom line, make it so appealing for talent—especially young talent—to stay in your organization that they do not want to leave.