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**Helping You Select and Develop
Great Leaders**

Keep 'Em Once You Find 'Em!
The Importance of Great Onboarding
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Increasingly at Roselle Leadership, we are called upon to help leaders new to their positions and new to the organization get off to a good start. There are at least two very compelling reasons to invest in the onboarding process of new leaders:

- Those new to a position who fail to build and maintain effective team and individual relationships, or who do not recognize quickly enough which are the most important results to pursue, have a higher probability of failing in the role.
- Those new to an organization who do not feel fully part of it are much more likely to leave after the first year, most probably before their first anniversary.

These two facts put an exclamation point at the end of the phrase, "keep 'em once you find 'em!" Here are the data that support the importance of a thorough and engaging onboarding process:

Most leave before their first anniversary. A new Harvard Business Review article (OCT) cites a 2015 study in which it is clear that the greatest percentage of new employees leave after just one year! The conventional wisdom has been that exits tend to occur after four or five years, but these new facts indicate that fully 10 times as many people leave after one year than those who leave at five years, and that these exoduses peak around first anniversary dates.

There is a scarcity of qualified leaders. Recent data from a couple of 2014 studies cited in a recent Training and Development journal indicate that 40 percent of business owners are having difficulty in finding qualified candidates for their job openings across the organization. While this figure lumps all levels within the company into one single pool, a portion of this scarcity effect certainly occurs at the manager/executive level.

Your best talent is easily lured away. It is becoming easier and easier for corporate recruiters to find your new employees through their Internet presence, especially now that the recession continues to fade. Social media and data-crunching tools make it simpler to identify potential candidates on LinkedIn, for example, where someone's combination of competencies catches the eye of a recruiter or a search algorithm.

Even your leaders who are not actively seeking an alternative to their current roles can be flattered and tempted by an interested recruiter. As the first study cited here pointed out, this can be particularly appealing to leaders who have not had their first anniversary yet, and who are disappointed with their onboarding experience.

Good news: the longer people stay with your organization, the less likely they are to leave. As employment continues to shift from a buyers' market to a sellers' market, your organizational leaders

must pay closer attention to what job seekers indicate they want. Our own data at RLSI indicates that the new people you hire are looking for a chance to develop new skills, grow in their careers, take on greater responsibility, receive real time feedback and developmental coaching from their boss, and do meaningful work in a culture that fits them.

What are best practices for recruiting and retaining new hires? I discussed this question recently with a principal of a search firm in Minneapolis, and we agreed that the best recruitment/retention strategies typically include the following:

- *Clear and honest job and organizational culture information*. In any materials you send out or publish, from as far upstream as possible, let potential hires know exactly what you want them to do in the role and what the culture will be like around them. By the way, this "official" culture description should match the "word on the street" about your organization.

- *Search firm trusted partners to help find candidates who fit.* Work closely with a search firm that knows your company very well, or is willing to spend the time upfront to get to know it. Look particularly for firms that offer a kind of guarantee that their placements will stay.

- *In-depth interviews with key stakeholders.* Make sure the candidates talk with their manager, manager's manager, direct reports, and peers at some point during the interview process. This helps your team assess long-term fit, and it helps candidates better assess if this will be a good fit for them.

- *Accurate pre-hire assessments.* While multiple interviews can help screen candidates to a degree, they typically don't provide much objective data. Some candidates interview extremely well, but are poor fits six months down the road, while others interview poorly, but would do great work for you in the actual role. Leverage external psychological assessments to provide a deeper, more accurate picture of the bright and dark sides of candidates, to make sure they will be a good fit over time.

- *Thorough, engaging onboarding process.* When you bring new leaders onboard, make sure key stakeholders are present (not travelling, on vacation, meeting with customers, etc.), so that the first 1-2 weeks is filled with meaningful conversations and the beginnings of strong relationships. Encourage new leaders to take the time to fully investigate, influence, and build interrelationships before they try to have real impact in their new role. Tailor your ongoing onboarding process to fit each new hire, making sure there is plenty of dialogue about what each person needs to help him or her feel a part of the organization. Encourage the building of friendships, perhaps with a buddy-mentor who is a peer.

- *Periodic check-ins.* At regular intervals, the new hire's manager and human resources business partner should check in to see how their first year experience is going. Do this at least once a quarter, with particular emphasis on the third quarter of their tenure, since this is just before the time when the most new hires seriously consider leaving.

Please weigh in at http://roselleleadership.com/stay-informed/roselle-leadership-blog with suggestions for keeping talent once you find them. We would love to hear from you!