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## Why Employees Leave

By Ross Blake

One of the questions we're frequently asked by employers of all types, including those in different countries, is "Why do employees leave?"

Here are 10 of the most common reasons employees leave; we haven't ranked them in their order of importance with the exception of the first one, which is usually the largest single reason employees leave.

### 10 Common Reasons Employees Leave Employers

1. Poor relationship between the employee and their immediate boss. 2. Lack of a career advancement plan. 3. A poor match between the employee and the job or the employee and the company. 4. Compensation not competitive. 5. No direct link between strong performance and increased rewards. 6. A need for stimulating, meaningful work. 7. Lack of appreciation, recognition, and rewards. 8. Insufficient coaching and feedback. 9. Quality of the people the employee works with. 10. Insufficient alignment of how the employee's work achieves organizational objectives, and how the employee can be a greater success.

Reason #1: Poor relationship between the employee and their immediate boss.

There's a cliché that says, "People leave managers, not companies."

Their boss may frequently criticize them while withholding praise and appreciation for quality work; demean them in front of others; pile on more work as a reward for being productive; refuse reasonable requests for time off or other matters; and act disagreeably.

What can you do?

a. Make employee retention part of their job descriptions and base at least 25% of bonuses on employee retention.

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- b. Provide training in how to give corrective feedback—and in how to praise and recognize employees.
- c. Help them understand the high cost of employee turnover and how it affects their performance and department.
- d. Train them to conduct "stay interviews" with their employees so they find out why they continue to work there, what would entice them to leave, what they like most about their jobs, and what other skills they want to learn.
- e. Consider coaching for supervisors and managers who need it; our experience is that most can make improvements.

Reason #2: Lack of a career advancement plan.

Many employers now have many Generation X (those born between 1965 and 1980) and Generation Y (born between 1981 and 1994) employees in their workforce.

Both of these generations are much more determined to add skills, training, and expertise to better develop their careers and stay more marketable and promotable.

Their supervisor or manager is often the person best qualified to help them identify and develop new skills since they're the ones who are most familiar with the employee's work, preferences, and performance on a daily basis. Your company will likely need to learn how to help employees develop career plans, and then train managers to work on these plans with their direct reports.

If two jobs and companies are fairly similar, and one employer offers career advancement help while the other does not, which employer do you think is more likely to attract and retain qualified employees?

Reason #3: A poor match between the employee and the job or the employee and the company.

Many new hires start with a fair amount of enthusiasm when they begin a new job with a new employer. However, when the new hire, the job, or the employer haven't been well-matched, many will leave while the employer incurs expensive replacement costs.

How can you increase the number of successful new hire "fits?"

- a. Use exit interviews, preferably by a third party who can promise confidentiality, to find out why they left.
- b. Be certain job descriptions are accurate and up-to-date, and identify the skills and competencies the job requires, not just the tasks. Be able to state what is required to be successful in the job.
- c. When you have qualified candidates, pay them to shadow a capable employee in the same job for one day, and then get feedback from both of them.

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d. Ask the prospective employee to identify the needs and expectations they have of the job and the company. Spell out the needs and expectations the company has of them, and then compare what both of you have written. How close are you?

e. Continue to review the mutual needs and expectations you have of each other at least once a month during their first three months.

Our experience has shown that measures like these tend to increase employee loyalty, effort, and retention.

Reason #4: Compensation not competitive.

Are your wages, salaries and benefits competitive with what other employers pay? If they're not, you can expect to lose people unless there are other compelling reasons for them to stay for slightly lower wages. Conduct a comparison of your wages and benefits every two to three years.

In addition, are you only paying minimum wage? If you are, then you're susceptible to losing people to other employers for increases as low as 5% in their hourly wages!

Reason #5: No direct link between strong performance and increased rewards.

Do your employees know what they can do to improve their performance and productivity and to earn more as a result?

If they don't, they're likely to reach a plateau which consists of doing work that's good enough to keep the job, but without expending extra effort.

Developing a work–compensation link isn't easy, but companies have been doing it in one form or another for a long time. For example, salespeople who receive a base salary and commissions or bonuses for higher sales.

Or, gain–sharing plans where employees receive a percentage of production gains over a certain level.

The logistics of developing such a program are too lengthy to be covered here, but you can research or get outside consulting help on how to build direct links between increased performance and increased rewards/compensation in your organization.

Reason #6: A need for meaningful, stimulating work.

I must admit I don't know how some people do the jobs they do: repetitive, boring, little thinking required, little chance for advancement.

Some jobs will always have these elements no matter what we do to redesign them. How can we make many jobs more meaningful and stimulating?

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1)By acknowledging the value of the job, and more importantly, the person doing the job. Every job is beneficial to the organization and other employees in some way, yet it amazes me when managers don't recognize the hard work some employees do.

If my boss thinks the work I do is important and tells me (and others), then I will often place a higher value on the work that I do—and on myself.

2)Ask the employee what the significance is of the job they do. If they say, "Just cleaning the building," help them understand it's much more than this. For example: "You help 103 other employees have a clean and more enjoyable place to work, and a building we're proud to show to customers and visitors."

This isn't untruthful, it just sounds odd because many jobs—especially lower level ones—are talked about in negative terms.

3)Can you give the employee more choice in how they perform the job? Review what the job must accomplish as an end result and any safety or legal matters, and then ask them how to change or redesign the job.

Reason #7: Lack of appreciation, recognition, and rewards.

We won't spend a long time on this section other than to underscore its importance since there are already so many books and resources available on delivering rewards and recognition.

We recommend conducting employee surveys once a year provided you actually act on the results; these will give you a lot of information about how well employees feel appreciated and recognized.

In terms of appreciation, research conducted by Gallup found that effective supervisors and managers praised each one of their employees a minimum of once every five working days.

What's the best way of expressing giving praise? By thanking the employee and specifically telling them what they did right or well.

Answer this question about appreciation: How many people have ever complained to you that their boss gives them too much sincere praise and recognition?"

Reason #8: Insufficient coaching and feedback.

It's surprising, but research shows many employees don't get the positive feedback they need to know if they're doing a good job—and what it is they're doing that's right. So they can continue to do it.

In addition, they often don't get the corrective feedback they need to improve their performance.

Most people want to do a good job, but without the helpful positive and corrective feedback they need in order to do so, they'll consider other employers.

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Feedback is especially important in developing and retaining New Hires. They're often a bit nervous in their new positions; effective feedback helps them understand what they're doing well, builds their confidence, and helps them improve performance.

In many ways, management shapes the quality of employee performance it gets by how frequently and effectively it provides feedback

Reason #9: Quality of the people the employee works with.

This reason for leaving isn't often thought of, but you can quickly see its value.

What are the people an employee works with like?

·Are they a group of complainers that nothing ever goes right for? ·Are they interested only in doing enough to keep their jobs and no more? ·Do they see hidden, negative agendas in everything management proposes? ·Do they criticize instead of support each other?

If so, how do you think their behaviors impact the employee and her or his outlook and performance?

Even those with a generally positive attitude will find negative employees and a negative work environment difficult to overcome, and may decide to work elsewhere.

However, suppose the employee's co-workers are like this:

·They look for ways to help each other out when needed. ·They want to improve the work they do because they place value on what they do. ·They compliment and support each other. ·They share knowledge and expertise.

How do you think these behaviors impact the employee and his or her outlook and performance?

Remember: it is management's job to recruit, hire, develop, and retain the most positive, motivated, and productive employees it can.

Reason #10: Insufficient alignment of how the employee's work achieves organizational objectives, and how the employee can be a greater success.

Many employees know what tasks they need to do in order to do their jobs.

What they so often don't know is:

·What the value of their work is to internal customers and external customers. ·What the value of their work is to the organization, and how it contributes to the organization's objectives.

I once asked a group of employees in a dairy plant what they did, and they said: "We make sour cream and cottage cheese."

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While factually true, this answer is very incomplete. I asked them who they made these products for, how many customers they had, and what the value of their work was.

After working on it, they came back and enthusiastically said:

"We make pure white gold for over a million customers in 28 states every week to help them feed their families."

Which statement demonstrates the group knows what the value of their jobs is and suggests pride? Can you see and even feel the difference in the second statement?

Help your employees understand the value of what they do for your organization.

We've covered 10 of the most common reasons employees leave employers. There are others, but if you pay attention to these, you'll resolve most of the reasons for turnover in your organization.

Ross Blake of Retention Associates helps employers improve employee retention and reduce costly turnover problems. He has just written "10 Strategies to Develop an Employee Retention Program" which can be downloaded at

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### **September, 2004 – How to Take a Break from Leave Administration when Implementing a**

#### **Telecommuting Model**

**By Sanet Janssen**

Telecommuting is becoming a reality. Although Leave Administration is one of the simplest human resource tasks performed in a company, employees will realise that a paper based Leave Administration system is inefficient when a telecommuting business model is considered. LeaveForms, a web-browser based, employee self-service, leave administration system offers a solution to this predicament.

Telecommuting is becoming a reality. The workplace has shifted from a central office to places such as

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employee homes and neighbourhood complexes where people primarily use electronic means to transfer work between home and office.

It is important that employers who consider options such as telecommuting put the necessary support structure around it. One of the many aspects that need to be considered is employee Leave Administration.

Although Leave Administration is one of the simplest human resource tasks performed in a company, employees will soon realise that a paper based Leave Administration system is inevitably inefficient when a telecommuting model is implemented. When using a paper based system an employee might have to drive in to the office just to get their leave form authorised. Managers need to be able to track employee attendance from any where in the world. They need to know which employees are on leave and which leave applications have been authorized. Employees need the ability to apply for leave from their home offices. They need to know what their available leave balance is and whether their leave applications have been approved.

LeaveForms offers a cost-effective alternative in this predicament. With LeaveForms, employees capture their leave applications from anywhere in the world online using their web-browser. The electronic application is sent directly via email to the employees' supervisor for authorisation. Once authorised, the employee is notified via a return email. Employee leave balances are updated automatically after every approval and individuals can verify their exact leave balance at any time, it is always current and accurate!

To download a free evaluation version of Leave Forms or for more information regarding the benefits of implementing a leave administration software system please visit:

Sanet is the Marketing Manager of Techcharge Software. Techcharge Software develops products that stand out because of their build quality, ease of use and ability to offer real value to any organisation.

The Techcharge Software vision is to develop quality software products that offer an excellent return on investment.

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