

Employee retention strategies in the face of COVID pandemic

Author: Taurai Masunda . August 2020

Employee retention refers to the ability of an organization to retain its employees. Each company and industry has a varying retention rate, reflecting the percentage of workers who remained with the organization for a fixed time. Many consider employee retention strategies as relating to the efforts by which employers attempt to retain the employees in their workforce.

Pay does not always play as large a role in reducing staff turnover as is typically believed. {Allen, D.G. (2008). Retaining Talent. Retrieved from }

A distinction should be made between low-performing workers and top performers. An attempts to retain employees should centre on valuable employees who contribute to the company. Employee turnover is a symptom of deeper unresolved problems that may include low employee morale, lack of a consistent career direction, lack of appreciation, weak employee-manager relationships or several other problems. A lack of work satisfaction and the organisation's dedication may also lead an employee to withdraw and start searching for new opportunities.

All of these examples represent turnover, but they don't all have the same organizational implications. To distinguish their implications below is a figure which defines types of turnover.



Turnover Classification Scheme by David G. Allen, Ph.D., SPHR

You need to participate in a constant evaluation of the nature and causes of turnover, as well as establish the right combination of retention strategies to handle retention most effectively. That calls for thinking about retention before recruiting employees while working at your company, and after they leave. You have a vital role to play in the cycle as an HR professional.

How, then, should you approach the task of developing the right retention management plan for your

company? The figure below shows the important steps in this process of developing a retention management plan.

Developing a Retention Management Plan by David G. Allen, Ph.D., SPHR

Over the past few months, COVID-19 virus has spread to different continents, infecting people in many countries around the world. As the virus spreads, the society, economy and business are being impacted. The major issue is how to reduce the business impact of the epidemic, its performance results and, most importantly, on employees – these are the key topics of concern for any leader in the organization.

According to a Deloitte article “How to reduce the pandemic impact on employees: A guide for company leaders” 46% of respondents expect a reduction in performance targets in 2020 as a result of COVID-19 pandemic.

Strategies to Retain Your Employees During COVID-19

Below are some of the suggestions to keep your employees happy on the job, feel secure in their work and not only remain with your business but deliver at the highest rate of productivity currently possible:

1. Encourage Engagement

When employees are not engaged or don't feel engaged is when the job search usually begins. One study (Jim Harter & Amy Adkins, 2017, ‘Are Your Star Employees Slipping Away?’) showed that 56% of employees who don't feel sufficiently engaged will look for another job, and 73% of actively disengaged employees will want to leave your company.

Even if you are operating remotely and have no real face-to-face contact, you need processes in place to keep engagement level up.

2. Maintain Business As Usual

The world is anything but unusual right now due to the pandemic. This is exactly why your employees need to feel like at least some things will stay the same such as their jobs.

Keep up your regular meetings with team members. Keep your projects pipeline plans updated, and make sure you and your team are still focusing on their long-term personal development. Ongoing training is now even more important, to give your team a sense of direction and, at the very least, distract them from potential catastrophic thinking.

3. Be Flexible

Employees are likely dealing with unusual situations working from home: internet disruptions, children going stir crazy, potential illness, or caring for sick loved ones.

Trust that, if someone needs to take a little extra time now to take care of things at home, they will make it up to you. The more understanding you are about their situation, the more likely they are to want to repay that understanding with extra productivity. Work with your team to find a schedule that works for you both.

4. Address Uncertainties

It's normal to feel uneasy in these times. Sooth your team members by reassuring them that their fears are normal, that they are being heard. HR department and other relevant professionals need to talk to your team members to let them vent their fears and frustrations. This is the best time to hire in an expert to help you do this like psychologist. The important thing is that your staff feels heard.

5. Be a Leader, Not a Boss

People follow leaders, not bosses. Many people who leave their company cite their managers (Jim Harter & Amy Adkins, 2017, 'Are Your Star Employees Slipping Away?') as the reason for them leaving.

Be a leader in your company and your staff. Make sure you have a strong purpose and communicate what you stand for. Treat the workers with dignity and ensure that they are sincerely listened to, ensuring that they are genuinely understood.

Given all the threats and pressures as a result of COVID-19, it is important to note that we have in the past faced crises like this. First of all, it poses a threat to the culture and management practices of the organization. When you believe that people are the company's most important asset, then you need to connect, prepare and be consistent. Show up, and help employees.

Taurai Masunda is a Business Analytics Consultant at Industrial Psychology Consultants (Pvt) Ltd a management and human resources consulting firm. <https://www.linkedin.com/in/taurai-masunda-b3726110b/> Phone +263 4 481946-48/481950/2900276/2900966 or email: taurai@ipccconsultants.com or visit our website at www.ipccconsultants.com

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