

The Top 10 Ways to Retain Good Employees

- 1. Share the results of good work, tangibly.**

Bonuses, cash, and non-cash rewards need to be tied to results so that, in receiving them, the employee knows that he or she is being rewarded for his or her specific contribution. Gifts given at the whim of the CEO can be regarded as actually demeaning in that they bear little relationship to actual contribution.
- 2. Let your employees know they are part of a team.**

Employees have heard the old saw; people are our biggest asset, so much so that they nearly vomit when it is repeated. Letting them know means having direct, regular, and personal contact. I recall walking around the plant with Jim Lincoln, president of Lincoln Electric, many years ago. Every single one of the 604 employees knew and addressed their president by his first name, AND he reciprocated!
- 3. Follow the CFH rule; be candid, frank, and honest.**

Somehow, the higher one gets on the executive ladder, the more the misconception seems to exist that you can get away with not telling the truth to your employees. That simply isn't so. As Abraham Lincoln said: You can fool some of the people some of the time, etc. Being less than honest means that you'll get less than the best from your people.
- 4. Don't spare the bad news.**

Some CEOs have a penchant for spreading the good news and hoarding the bad on the grounds that their employees won't be able to take it. The surprising thing is that, given a chance, most people are more resilient than we think.
- 5. Little things mean a lot.**

Have you ever received a card or note out of the blue, when you were down or having a hard time, from someone who knew and simply took the time to let you know that he or she cared? Take time to find out what's going on with your employees (yes, after 5:00 PM). Letting them know you care-with a card, a call, or simply a word can make a huge difference.
- 6. Recognize that suspicion is normal.**

As a CEO, you may not want to hear it, but one of the unfortunate effects of downsized America is that CEOs are, in general, not regarded as believable! So, it takes patience, fortitude, and a good deal of practice to get to the point where your people believe you. Don't become dismayed; just keep at it, as long as what you do and

say is real.

7. Distribute choice perks.

As long as you are in business to make a profit, no business can afford to operate as though all people and positions are equal, because they're not! Some people are more talented than others; some have more energy, drive, and concern; and some demand more because they can get it. For those in this latter category, the true high achievers, you will have to treat them differently or lose them. They don't need your guidance so much as your recognition that they are outstanding.

8. Set your boundaries and make them clear.

Every single person who reports to you as a CEO should be absolutely clear about two things: (1) what you expect of them, and (2) what they can expect of you. It pays to have a formal written boundaries statement to discuss personally with everyone who reports to you.

9. Make it clear that, in your organization, continued growth is a condition of continued employment.

Too many organizations, especially in government, tolerate average-ness, the hewers of wood and carriers of water. In the long run, everyone, including the employee, suffers. In the twenty-first century, there is less and less room for those who do just enough to get by.

10. Be genuine and be a model.

You would think that this is obvious. Unfortunately, it's not. I've seen so many executives and CEOs who follow the dictum: Do as I say, not as I do. One of the surprising results of chronic reengineering has been that those employees who are truly self-directing have become less willing to tolerate unacceptable conditions. The average performers will hang around, but the outstanding ones will bide their time and leave.

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