



Retaining Employees – Protecting Your Most Important Asset

In the nonprofit field, salaries are generally low and working with clients who have multiple needs can be challenging. Although this can make employee retention difficult, there are steps you can take to provide a work environment that is supportive and fun, one that individuals look forward to coming to every day, and one in which they want to remain. As your goal is to retain employees as long as possible, this article provides ideas that can lead to increased employee retention.

1. If you don't already have a current employee retention program, consider developing and implementing one. It will show your staff how much you appreciate and value them, and their respective contributions.
2. Assess your organization's culture. Make sure it is one that values and supports its employees, that it maintains open communication channels, and that it supports diversity and full inclusion.
3. Meet with your employees at least monthly to obtain updates, discuss job-related issues and concerns, and review performance goals and objectives. Regular meetings not only provide an opportunity to strengthen the employer-employee relationship, but they also let the employee know that their work is important and critical to the success of the organization.
4. Ask your employees for feedback on a semi-annual or annual basis, separate from regular staff meetings. Solicit feedback regarding their job satisfaction, if they have any ideas for program or system improvement, if they need a specific type of training, etc. This demonstrates that you value employee input. You can solicit feedback via face-to-face meetings or through a survey.
5. Capitalize on the attributes, skills, and talents of your employees by assigning them duties that align with their strengths. One way to accomplish this is through job carving or modifying job descriptions. For example, John Doe is skilled at developing press releases, but this duty isn't in his job description. You could assign this duty to him while giving one of his job duties, in which he is weak, to someone else who is skilled in that area. In essence, you're carving the job to align with John's strengths.
6. Provide ample training opportunities for your staff, as your budget permits. You are investing in them and they will recognize and appreciate it.

7. If salaries are low, you can offset this by providing other benefits, such as additional vacation days, flex time, and working from home.
8. At agency staff meetings, acknowledge the accomplishments of your staff members (e.g., completion of an important project, a promotion). You can also acknowledge staff via announcements in your newsletter, at events, or on your website.
9. Celebrate the milestones in the lives of your staff members, such as birthdays, engagements, weddings, and the birth of a child. You could schedule a group lunch, focusing solely on one individual, or engage in some other type of standing celebration (e.g., monthly lunch, monthly party) where the milestones of several individuals are celebrated at the same time.
10. Develop an employee recognition/award program or annual event (e.g., dinner). You could present awards, such as Employee of the Year, Best Supervisor, Best Project Manager, Best Customer Service Representative, etc. It would also be an opportunity to acknowledge new and innovative ideas that improve the effectiveness and/or efficiency of systems, attainment of licensure/certifications, special accomplishments, etc.
11. Develop and advertise an employee suggestions box. This provides an opportunity for staff members to submit suggestions (confidential or otherwise) related to improving operations, systems, personnel functions, marketing efforts, etc. Awards can be given to individuals with the best suggestions, especially ones that result in increased effectiveness and efficiency.
12. Although serious work needs to be done, make every effort to ensure that the work environment is relaxed and fun. Choose interior decorating colors that are bright, post positive quotes and affirmations on walls, provide refreshments at staff meetings, designate a day of the week where staff can wear jeans or comfortable clothes, etc.

Developing and maintaining an employee retention program demonstrates that you value your employees and want them to succeed. They will be happier, look forward to coming to work, and want to remain with the organization. Satisfied employees are more committed and loyal, resulting in a productive work environment. Invest in your employees; they are the most important asset you have.

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If you want to make positive changes in your professional life, and create the job or career you desire and deserve, then working with Executive & Life Coach, Sharon L. Mikrut, is the solution. Although her specialty is in partnering with nonprofit executive directors and managers to maximize their resources in a competitive environment, she is passionate about working with all individuals committed to personal and/or professional growth. Visit her website (<http://www.createitcoaching.org>), Nonprofit

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