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Kristy Short • Jun. 27, 2012



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clone. These are the employees that make you say, "I don't know what I would do without her." They are super efficient, loved by clients and all around fabulous at their jobs. These are the folks that you want to keep satisfied and challenged.

Retaining your cream-of-the-croppers is simply a smart business move. Turnover is costly on many levels, so it's worth the extra effort to ensure employee satisfaction. To help enhance your firm's culture, implement your own unique internal marketing program that will send the right *message* to your staff—building loyalty to your firm and keeping your most fabulous employees around for the long haul.

The following seven tips will get you started:

1. **Your Employees Should 'Feel the Love'**—A key reason for voluntary termination by employees is that they feel management does not recognize or care about their contributions to the business. Make the effort to praise your employees on a regular basis. Good employees will stay if they feel they have a positive relationship with the firm's leaders and managers.
2. **Understand Your Employees' Potential**—It's your responsibility to identify the unique talents of your employees and make sure that their assigned duties match their skills. Employees feel better about their job when they are successful at it. Don't set employees up for failure by assigning tasks outside of their skill set.
3. **Communicate What is Expected of Employees**—Satisfied employees know clearly what is expected from him or her every day in the workplace. Maintain consistency with expectations. Changing expectations creates an unhealthy, stressful environment (very bad for the firm's overall culture). Constant change makes employees feel on edge, robbing them of internal security and making them feel unsuccessful. While it's understandable that job descriptions will change, expectations can remain consistent.

4. Provide Staff with the Necessary Tools and Training—Frustration is the leading

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dinner or movie tickets for a job well done. You can also offer a bonus program to staff; for example, a set percentage based on the number of new clients they bring through the door. And, of course, just saying thank you goes a long way as well.

6. Keep Employees Challenged—Employees are motivated when they feel challenged in their position. When they are not challenged, they can quickly get bored and are more likely to leave. A motivated employee wants to contribute to the success of the firm and take on work that falls outside of their job description. Think about the employees in your firm that could contribute far more than what they currently do. Approach these individuals and offer them more responsibility. You will likely get a very enthusiastic response.

7. Treat Employees with Respect—Morale is affected negatively when you do not show employees the proper respect. Never reprimand or criticize an employee in a public forum or in front of their peers. Also be sure to thank employees for going the extra mile or acknowledge when you have made a mistake.

Maintaining a positive culture is key in retaining your best employees. Doing a little creative internal marketing doesn't have to take much time. Most often, sending the right message is recognized through a culture of mutual respect, a simple "thank you," and maintaining consistency in expectations. Outside of these things, you can easily implement unique incentive programs, ensure the proper level of staff training, and upgrade your firm's technology—to name a few.

Follow these seven tips and you will better position your firm to keep the *best of the best* on staff. What message are you sending to your employees?

About the Author

Kristy Short, Ed.D, is a partner in RootWorks Communications (RootWorks.com) and president of SAS Communications 360 (SAScommunications360.com)—firms

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