

How to Attract and Keep Good Employees

Employees. We all need them. Good ones. Ones that bring new ideas to the table and are not afraid to work hard. Employees that want to succeed, move up in the company and honestly contribute to the wellbeing of everyone they work with. Employees that do this are engaged. Are yours?

When is the last time you hired someone that came into your office and said, "I'm here to make this company a better place."? Whether he or she said it straight out or demonstrated it through actions, it probably conjured up the thought in your head about how to keep him or her as a part of your organization.

What makes an employee engaged? What makes them happy and motivated to keep pushing for success? What keeps them at the top of their game, looking for ways to improve? What can you do to help them along the way and still decrease your costs? What are the intangibles that will either make your company attract and keep these employees or become a revolving door of talent that could have been?

A recent Gallup poll shows that in world-class organizations, the ratio of engaged to actively disengaged employees is 9:57:1. In average organizations, the same ratio is 1:83:1.¹ Where do your employees land in this spectrum?

It is easy to compare engaged employees to the front-runners in a marathon; well-trained, disciplined and healthy. They are the epitome of wellbeing. They want to stay in their prime and they want to see that their company supports their efforts.

¹ <http://www.gallup.com/consulting/52/employee-engagement.aspx>

On the contrary unhealthy employees cost the company on numerous fronts:

- Increased health insurance costs
- More sick days
- Increased risk of workplace injury
- Presenteeism (working while sick)
- Second-hand exposure (smoking or illness)

In the end, it is up to you to manage these employees and the associated costs effectively and efficiently. The good news is there are many good wellness program templates available to follow so you don't have to spend a lot of time developing ideas or worrying if what you are doing will be effective.

In addition to lowering health insurance and lost work productivity by increasing the healthfulness of your employees, a study by Towers Watson cited in the Harvard Business Review notes that healthy employees actually stay with your company². It goes on to iterate that the number one reason exiting employees leave Nelnet (based on exit interview responses) was the wellness program.

In order to be effective, please keep in mind that these efforts should strive to change the underlying culture of the business and should be supported from top down. This means that you cannot give a one-time injection of healthy advice. You need to implement a program that is sustainable and covers a broad spectrum of what it means to be well. Gallup has defined 5 elements of wellbeing³:

- Career Wellbeing
- Social Wellbeing
- Financial Wellbeing
- Physical Wellbeing
- Community Wellbeing

A good wellness program educates and provides options. It needs to be accessible

² <http://hbr.org/2010/12/whats-the-hard-return-on-employee-wellness-programs/ar/1>

³ <http://www.gallup.com/consulting/126584/Wellbeing.aspx>

to all employees and easy to use. As an employer, you need to decide how much you are willing to invest in your company's wellness. A good starting point may be to perform a complete health risk assessment in order to discover the trends and risks that exist in your organization. This will also help you develop a baseline on which you can measure results and benchmark your ROI.

What you decide to do will depend on your risk factors and your overall organizational goals. I'm sure there are very few that will see the need to go all out, install a company gym and hire a Wellness Director to monitor goals and provided incentives. I would be equally surprised if there were those that chose to do nothing and hope they are exempt from the trends that unhealthy employees corrode bottom-line profits and drag good employees down with them.

Where does that leave you? How do implement change without creating complete culture shock? The best way is to take small steps and allow employees to adapt overtime. Start by adopting relatively inexpensive (or free) ideas or concepts that encourage employees to improve their lifestyle and self-monitor their choices. You can then build upon the successes and look for other ways to engage the non-participants.

Consider this: the most prevalent lifestyle risk factors that exist are: poor nutrition, emotional health, safety and weight.⁴ So, why not examine the food options that employees have while they are at work? Ask yourself what your break room really offers your employees. Unless you currently employ an Executive Chef on site you may leave your employees feeling that their best option is to venture out to the nearest fast food restaurant. You need a new option.

Introducing Company Kitchen. Company Kitchen is a mini market installed right in your break room. We offer fresh fruits and salads, homemade sandwiches and wraps as well as yogurts and cheeses. To make a good thing even better, it is completely cashless. You simply choose your items out of our coolers or off the racks, scan the products at the kiosk and pay with a preloaded card. It's as easy as shop, scan, enjoy.

This is a solution that allows you as the employer to provide healthier options for your employees during their workday and comes with no up-front cost to you. All that is needed for installation is space, power and internet. We do all the work and you reap the kudos from your employees.

In addition to the healthy options offered, Company Kitchen allows your employees to set their own nutritional goals and track their purchases to see how their food choices assist (or hinder) their ability to achieve a healthier lifestyle. This system is called DNA (Daily Nutritional Analysis). Individual Company Kitchen users can create a profile where they input specific criteria they want to monitor (fat grams, carb count, sodium levels, etc.). Then, as they purchase items using their Company Kitchen card, DNA will highlight which options met their goals and where they may need to improve.

As you can see, Company Kitchen is the perfect step for you to encourage employees to be healthful. Remember; healthy employees stay at a company when their managers show a genuine interest in their wellbeing. These are also the employees that rally others to do the same, both in their projects at work and their overall health. The end result creates a win-win situation of healthy and engaged employees.

To take the first step towards happier and healthier employees, call or email me today!

⁴http://ohp.nasa.gov/disciplines/hpromo/pdf/The_True_Cost_of_Poor_Health.pdf