

Employee Retention Strategies: Becoming A Magnet for the Best Employees



By Patrick Healey

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The Employee Attraction™ Workbook]

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Make your business a magnet for the best people

Imagine how much easier your life would be if your agency was considered a fabulous place to work. Think how simple your staffing would be if your best team members were so thrilled with their jobs that they raved to their friends and family, and those people came to work for you, too. What if you could choose among plentiful, qualified applicants for every open position? What would your days be like if everyone who worked for you loved their jobs and it showed?

**How are you going to create
that magical, near-mythical environment
where people
compete to work for you?**

It starts at the top; it starts with your leadership. That's actually the good news, because it means it's all in your control. According to the Great Place to Work® Institute, which has been conducting surveys since 1980, trust between managers and employees is the primary defining characteristic of the very best workplaces. They further define this as "a place where employees trust the people they work for, have pride in what they do, and enjoy the people they work with."

What can you do to create an environment of trust?

In my experience there are many steps you can take, which are explored in this workbook, but these are high on the list:

1. Demonstrate to your team that **you are committed** to making your agency a great place to work. That means showing up on a regular basis, being available to answer questions and being accessible to your entire team.

2. Share your **visions for the company and your team** and encourage employee engagement with them as well. The way to do this is to encourage your team to identify their own purposes for doing their jobs and tie that into the company mission.

3. Act with integrity. Follow through on your promises and do exactly what you say you will—or explain why you changed your mind. This is the core essence of trust. Be accountable.

4. Understand that positive, **friendly interpersonal relationships among team members are essential** to your success. When you come across two of your employees chatting about personal matters, do they look sheepish and quickly scatter, certain that you'd disapprove of how they're wasting company time? Do you, in fact, become irritated and try and dream up ways to squeeze higher productivity out of your team? Well guess what? That attitude may be *diminishing* productivity, adding to employee stress, creating an unpleasant office culture and contributing to health problems for your team.

5. Prove by your actions that you **welcome diversity**, that you encourage employees to be authentic and that your office is a place where people can feel comfortable being themselves.

Respect is another important component in creating a place where great people want to work.

It's a universal desire to value your job and to feel valued in return. If that essential sense of worth is in place, you can expect to enjoy working with a happy, productive team. You show respect by acknowledging their accomplishments and doing it often. Sincere praise is the cheapest and most under-valued technique you can use to enhance employee satisfaction and loyalty. Find creative ways to reward your people—just ask them what they'd like—they'll be thrilled to tell you! Do you think the majority of your employees feel valued?

Here are some more ways you might contribute to creating such a workplace:

- Empower your team by giving them more responsibility and the authority to act. Teams who steer their own ship run aground less often.
- Magnify what's working, instead of what's not.
- Honor thinkers who leap outside the proverbial boxes.
- Encourage the younger and newer associates to share their ideas—innovation often comes from the mouths of your newest employees.
- Ask for input from your team, and most of all, act on it. Employees need to see that their ideas are valued and actually useful. You want them to keep having good ideas, don't you?
- Make your office a place where employees are treated as human beings with personal lives that also matter. They need to know you care about them as people, that there is flexibility when it's needed to handle personal crises and issues.



I like to think of it as becoming an **Employer of First Choice™**.

This is what that looks like:

- people will compete to work for you
- people will want to join in creating your success
- people will continue to work for you, even when they receive job offers from other employers—even ones with very appealing enticements
- more than 50% of new team members are the result of referrals from current employees

This entire workbook is designed to help you become an **Employer of First Choice™**. Sometimes it helps to look at your business from the outside in. When auditioning new companies (and employers) here are some of the positive signs prospective hires consider. **How would your agency measure up with these criteria?**

- Offers opportunities for growth
- An energized workforce, where there is a lot of vitality and enthusiasm
- Evidence of a love of learning and an ethic of constant improvement
- High-caliber peers to learn from
- Employees are trusted to achieve desired results in their own way

Numerous surveys in North America reveal that managers think employees are most concerned with job security and salaries. While those things do matter,

other things matter just as much. When employees were polled for *Fortune Magazine's* annual listing of the 100 Best Companies To Work For® in America, they replied that what they value is:

- Working for leaders who demand and inspire their best efforts
- A physical environment that makes work enjoyable
- A sense of purpose and a feeling they're working for more than a paycheck, that they're helping build a company where they can be proud to work



In a 2006 keynote address, Isadore Sharp, founder and CEO of Four Seasons Hotels, noted that “creating a great workplace is a subject finally being recognized as the primary necessity for success in almost every industry.” Well-known for superior customer service, his company inspires employees to out-perform year after year. Sharp explained that “In our experience, performance rises to meet expectations. The resultant customer satisfaction boosts confidence and self-esteem. And living up to that growing self-image keeps raising performance levels. That’s what distinguishes leaders from managers. Managers can get people to do what they’re told. Leaders get people to want to do whatever should be done.”

Sharp then added that “To change bottom-level attitudes you have to start at the top. Your colleagues are either with you or against you.” Describing what makes his hotels great places to work, Sharp said, **“Employees develop a camaraderie that deepens year by year, creating a sense of community that makes cooperation the norm.”**