

Recognition + Reward = Retention

Retaining employees is a vital part of an organization's success, yet many employers fail to proactively mitigate turnover. Usually, staff retention is treated as more of an afterthought and only becomes a concern once someone quits. This is a costly mistake since losing valuable employees is not only detrimental to morale and your team's productivity, it can also have a significant financial impact on the organization. And, all too often, resignations catch the manager by surprise, leaving them to pore over what they could have done to keep the employee—and then it's too late. Whether you've had to contemplate that question in your role as a manager or not, the answer is likely simpler and more attainable than you think, because it has much to do with appreciation.

Recognition by the numbers

Achievers' annual report on employee engagement and retention showed that 64% of employees planned to leave, or were considering leaving, their jobs in 2020. The report further revealed that **"lack of recognition was the third most common reason employees chose for leaving their employer, behind compensation and career advancement."** In the public sector, where salary increases and promotions aren't always an option, acknowledgement of and appreciation for an employee's good work can go a long way toward keeping an employee motivated, engaged, and even happy.

Engage with intention

Once we see that a new hire is a good fit for the team and they prove to be a self-starting, talented, and reliable employee, it's easy to put them on autopilot in your mind. The problem with this is that taking a hands-off approach and leaving them to fend for themselves could result in their departure, leaving you and your organization to fend for yourselves.

Here's how to keep your team intact by showing your employees that they are valued and appreciated.

Have a conversation. Take time to sit down with each employee to get to know them better and find out what personally motivates them.

While you're talking, ask them how they like to be recognized for a job well done. Some might prefer a private, one-sentence email from their supervisor, while others may want to be verbally acknowledged by senior leadership during a quarterly staff meeting or be given special opportunities. You may be surprised by how easy it can be to make your staff feel valued, and by how far it can go toward establishing trust and increasing satisfaction.

Tailor the recognition. Within reason, follow through on your employees' individual preferences and cater to each person with personalized recognition. When acknowledging a staff member verbally or in writing, use the person's name and include specific details around what they did and how their efforts or skills helped you directly or contributed to the team's success. Include the information in their performance evaluation's narrative. Look for special opportunities to offer to your employees and, when possible, allow them to participate in a new project, lead a committee, or use a unique skill or passion to help another team.

Elicit feedback. Another way to ensure your employees feel valued and respected is by asking for their opinion. Regularly give employees an opportunity to voice their concerns, ideas, and to tell you what a day in their life at work looks like. This not only supplies you with useful feedback and a chance to get a pulse on how your team is doing (from their perspective), it also provides validation to your staff that you respect their opinion and that improving their workplace experience matters to you. It's an easy win-win for you and your employees—just be sure to *use* the feedback to quickly address any urgent issues and to ensure ongoing improvement.

82% of employees strongly or somewhat wish that they received more recognition

60% want to be recognized more frequently

40% answered just okay and nearly 1 in 5 said horrible when asked how their company or manager is at recognizing them

92% agree that when they're recognized for a specific action, they're more likely to take that action again in the future

90% say when they receive recognition it motivates them to work harder

*Achievers Workforce Institute,

**2020 Engagement & Retention Report: Failure to Engage

As a manager, you're faced with many demands, and the added responsibility of keeping your employees engaged, motivated, and coming back to work each day can demand a lot of you. Know that your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is here for you. Consultants are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to provide guidance and support to help you manage your employee retention needs. Management consultations are a key part of an EAP and separate from counseling services. Call or go online any time, day or night. The Employee Assistance Program is a voluntary and confidential employee benefit available to federal employees at no cost.

24 HOURS A DAY

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**Achievers Workforce Institute is an employee engagement research group focused on integrating workforce science with behavioral data insights.*

***Report data compiled prior to the COVID-19 pandemic*