

# Hiring/Retaining Cuts Both Way

To maximize hiring efficiency, a company must apply an active, organized, and structured system. The underlying principle is a common sense approach prevalent in other business functions. However, that might not be the answer to a company's problems if turnover is rampant. If a company does not apply good sound doctrine to treating employees fairly, then improved hiring may just cause the revolving door to spin faster. Hiring and retaining are part of a double-edge sword that cuts both ways.

Although hiring and retaining are related, my focus is the hiring side. Since retaining is critical, a column devoted to it seemed appropriate. With that in mind, an interview with Don Vlcek (Volecheck)—“Employee Retention Guru”—provided some interesting insights into this complex problem.

“Don, while you were at Domino's Pizza, it earned the distinction of being one of the “100 best companies to work for.” Likewise, as a VP, you increased employee retention by almost eight times the industry average. What's the secret?”

“Paul, this is so blatantly simple. You don't lose people if you give them what they want and don't give them what they don't want!”

“That's pretty basic. Please go on.”

“Retention is usually one of those things that managers look at *after* someone resigns or after moral sinks to an all-time low. By then, it's too late!”

“Don, when *should* a manager be concerned about retention?”

“It's a daily routine. When a manager thinks “Jane is doing a great job”, he should also be thinking, “What do I need to do to keep Jane happy?” Regularly, to reinforce positive behavior or to correct any problems quickly, Jane must be approached concerning her job satisfaction.”

“The first thing that pops into my mind is that most employees will say “make me real happy by giving me a big raise.” How would you handle that?”

“A raise is partially influenced by the cost to replace Jane. So if money is really an issue and it seems warranted, then Jane could be given a task list that needs to be accomplished to earn that raise.”

“What if Jane thinks it is easier to just leave?”

“Money is rarely the *real* issue. Paul, consider this. I know someone who will hire you for the same job but pay you 50% more. At first glance you would feel pretty excited about that but what if the company was losing money. Even worse, the culture was full of politics, a huge bureaucracy, confusing direction, inefficient meetings, and brutal infighting. Also, your egotistical boss is never satisfied with your work. How does that big raise sound now?”

“Don, you made your point. What is the key to employee satisfaction?”

“Pay and benefits take a back seat to being in a “peaceful work place.” A manager must actively ensure a company has a positive, family-like atmosphere where everyone feels fortunate to be working there.”

“Peaceful sounds religious. Define it.”

“Paul, peaceful is another way of describing a well-oiled machine. There are only 14 elements that promote a fully functioning business. I even use them as a checklist to diagnose problems within organizations. From that, I know which programs to implement to improve performance but more importantly, to establish a peaceful workplace that retains, motivates, and energizes employees.”

“Don, what are the 14 keys?”

“In my keynote speeches and management seminars they are referred as the “14 Steps to Profit! Peace™.” As they apply to employee retention, the first four are “foundation setting” steps:

1. Clear strategy—avoid confusion, give employees a clear path for making correct decisions.
2. Accurate measurables—analyzes employee performance and sets expectations.
3. Fair rewards—allows achievers to benefit by doing the right things beyond expectations.
4. Communication—employees should be repeatedly reminded of expectations, performance measurements, and rewards for achievements.”

“Sounds more like a guide to proper delegation?”

“It is but it’s more like a roadmap to success. People will, and really want to, know what is expected, how they will be evaluated, and what’s in it for them.”

“Don, continue with the other steps to Profit! Peace™.”

“These are the “execution steps.” As employees follow the roadmap, a manager needs to make sure that systems are in place to avoid the potholes:

5. Setting culture—“repetitious visibility” generates culture. If employees see strategies in every department function, they are better prepared to carry out those strategies.
6. Good planning—if plans are made with employee participation, it will be easier for the employee to embrace and to execute the plans.
7. Proper goal setting—employees should *never* be given a *single* goal. Essentially goals should be three tiered. The middle level is expected results. The bottom tier is the point of performance crisis where intervention becomes necessary. The top tier is the beyond expectations where the rewards are the greatest for the employee.
8. Clear accountability—employees must be given a maximum of 10 functions that dictate desired performance. Monthly reviews are mandatory.
9. Reducing overload—employees should be asked annually if any part of their workload seemed to be a waste of time. If appropriate, eliminate those tasks.
10. Maximize meetings—everyone recognizes that most meetings are time wasters. If a meeting is absolutely needed then set routine agendas, closures, and follow-up.
11. Internal language—employees should receive training on how and when to express disagreement.
12. Listening—train employees on listening correctly to the messages from peers, customers, and supervisors.
13. Great leaders—since a boss is influential in an employee’s life, every manager should strive to earn each employee’s “best boss ever award.”
14. Great coaches—managers must support their employees to help them grow and learn.”

“Good steps. Please summarize the overall strategy to retention.”

“Paul, retention is all about having a functional team working towards a common goal. The resulting organization will maximize sales and

profits, which naturally leads to more job security and satisfaction. Ultimately, the reward for an individual is increased compensation and advancement opportunities.”

“One final note, where can somebody contact you about your programs?”

“They can contact me at [ProfitAndPeace@AOL.com](mailto:ProfitAndPeace@AOL.com) or 1-800-459-0438 for any of my services to make businesses more profitable.”