Dealing with Employee Turnover – How to ‘Stop the Hop’
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It was not too long ago that job hopping was considered to be a career limiting move. The first question any potential employer would ask was why such short stints, or why so many jobs in such a short time? Over the past few years, however, it has not only become more commonplace, job-hopping is now the new normal for Millennials.

On average, workers today stay at each of their jobs for about four and a half years and 91% of millennials expect to stay in a job for less than three years. Moreover, we are reaching a stage where Millennials are now progressing into management roles but retaining their title as notoriously disloyal to employers. This means that the perception of job hopping has changed immeasurably.

In a study by the Association of Executive Search and Leadership Consultants, it was found that 80% of recruiters are more willing than they were 10 years ago to hire executive prospects who stay in a company for less than three years. At the same time, employees within the company increasingly focus on personal growth and fresh challenges, which makes the job of retaining staff an even greater uphill challenge.

However, while this new mentality towards employee loyalty – or disloyalty as it were – is great for the employees, it can have disastrous effects on an organisation. The cost of replacing an employee could run anywhere from 1.5 to 2 times their annual salary, while at the same time, productivity within the organisation also takes a hit.

With job-hopping now becoming the new normal, organisations need to step up in several areas in order to keep a strong, dedicated and, most importantly, loyal workforce. “This is an area where HR has a strong role to play,” states Aliena Yang, Human Resources Manager, Asia at Belkin. “We need to understand why job hopping occurs and prevent it by filling the needs that employees feel aren’t being met.” Here are five steps to take to get on the road to long-term, committed employees.

COMMUNICATE DAILY
Every relationship thrives or dives based on the quality of the communication. This is no different for employees and managers. A Gallup report found that when managers are communicating daily with their employees, whether over the phone, digitally or face-to-face, those employees are highly engaged. Also, employees who meet regularly with their manager are almost three times more likely to be engaged than those who don’t.

A similar survey by Dale Carnegie Training, showed that 80% of employees who are dissatisfied with their direct supervisor are disengaged.
at work. While this is not a groundbreaking discovery, it does strongly underscore the importance of communication between employees and managers.

Engagement is a crucial part of why people stay in their jobs. In the Dale Carnegie Training Study, it was found that 69% of disengaged employees would leave their current job for as little as a 5% pay increase, while 46% of partially engaged employees would leave for the same amount. At the same time, only 26% of employees who were engaged would consider leaving for the same rate of pay increase. Clearly, engagement is something to pay serious attention to.

Interestingly, while many employees want their managers to engage with them over work, the Gallup study also found that mere work transactions are not enough to maximise engagement. The study revealed that employees who feel as though their manager is invested in them as people are more likely to be engaged.

“The key to this is through reliable and meaningful communication,” states Yang. According to her, some of the best managers are the ones who make a clear effort to get to know their employees and to help them feel safe talking about any subject, work related or otherwise.

A work environment where employees feel safe enough to experiment, challenge, share information and support one another, is invariably one that has a high rate of productivity. It is also an environment that people want to stay in because team members are ready to give their managers and the organisation itself, the benefit of the doubt. This environment, however, will not come together unless employees feel cared about.

SET CLEAR EXPECTATIONS
A natural offshoot of good communications is making sure expectations on both sides of the table are clear and understood. Without that understanding, situations within the organisation can quickly go awry. In his article, ‘Seven Steps to Setting Clear Expectations’, Leadership Expert Kevin Eikenberry states, “The lack of clearly understood expectation is the source of much strife in relationships, the cause of most conflicts and the beginning of poor organisational performance.”

In order to build this understanding, managers and the organisation itself needs to be clear on what their
INVEST IN YOUR TEAM

For many employees, feeling like they are making progress in their careers is a big factor in staying with an organisation. “If employees feel like they have stopped growing in their roles, they start to look elsewhere,” states Yang. “If they feel that their careers have stagnated, they become much more likely to leave.” As such, Yang feels that it falls to organisations to provide a clear trajectory for employees in their careers. “Career development is a very important part of working at Belkin, as we want our employees to continually grow.”

One way to do this is to make career path discussions a regular part of check-in meetings and performance reviews. These discussions allow managers to discover where employee's interests lie and where their strengths can be channelled to greater effectiveness and productivity, while at the same time giving employees the sense that they are making a meaningful contribution to the organisation. This makes them more likely to stay for the long haul.

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BE GENEROUS

While it is not always the key factor, remuneration is always an issue that comes into play when employees think about whether to stay or go. Employees often know what they’re worth and they want to feel that they are getting it. Certainly there is no amount of money to make a disengaged employee stay, but it’s not always about salary.

Things like bonuses, benefits and welfare contribute to employee loyalty to an organisation, as proven by a recent study by the Society for Human Resource Management. The study showed that 61% of those surveyed listed ‘benefits’ as the leading contributor to job satisfaction while another 65% listed ‘compensation’ in the same category. Having said that, if a top performer decides to leave because they’ve accepted another job, making a counteroffer would not do much to retain them. Unless their only reason for leaving was dissatisfaction with their salary, increasing that salary will not resolve whatever issue is making them leave.

So when considering a remuneration package that will contribute to staff retention – something that should be considered upon hiring and not as a counteroffer – think of it in a holistic sense, taking everything into account.

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These conversations, however, should focus more on strengths than weaknesses. A recent study by the VIA Institute on Character showed...
that having a meaningful discussion with employees about their strengths – the things they are good at and enjoy doing – will motivate and engage them. The study found that 64% of those surveyed now believe they will be more successful at work by building on their strengths rather than fixing their weaknesses.

Further to this, a study by Gallup showed that 67% of employees who strongly agree that their manager focuses on their strengths or positive characteristics are engaged, compared with 31% of employees who strongly agree that their manager focuses on their weaknesses.

By helping their employees to grow and develop their strengths, managers are able to truly engage their team members by allowing them to utilise the best of their natural talents and adding skills and knowledge to develop and apply their strengths. The result is employees who feel appreciated and a far lower turnover rate.

PRIORITISE EMPLOYEE HAPPINESS

While it may once have been considered ‘light and irrelevant’, employee happiness is, in today’s working world, a key indicator of job satisfaction. According to the Staples Business Advantage Workplace Index, 62% of employees say wellness programmes are a selling point when looking for a new job. At the same time, 30% of employees cite work-life balance as a leading contributor to their loyalty.

So while it may sound like a soft topic to many execs, the fact remains that investing in the happiness of your employees will pay dividends in engagement, productivity and, most importantly, retention.

At the end of the day, a constant focus on recruitment can be very time consuming and very expensive for organisations. Every time an employee leaves it creates a disruption in productivity, effectiveness and, very importantly, staff morale. Certainly, job hopping has become the new normal, especially among Millennials, but organisations can turn the tide and reduce turnover by making sure employees are well compensated, find meaning in their work, feel appreciated and know their career will grow within the organisation.

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