

Develop a Talent Retention Plan

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SUMMARY

Certain tools and tips can lead to a successful employee retention plan. Flexible work hours, an internal job posting process, and an awards system to recognize achievement are among them.

TOOLS TO RETAIN STAFF

Once a firm has analyzed its workforce and retention issues, management will need to decide how to respond. Seeking feedback from staff about what will keep them at a firm will heighten their expectations, and the subsequent actions of managers will be seen as a sign of the organization's commitment to its employees. In most cases, the staff's level of interest will encourage firm leaders to develop a retention plan. Consider the following when developing such a plan:

- **Benchmarking**—knowing what a firm's competitors are doing to retain staff
- **Consistent programs and policies**—considering the key motivators identified by firm staff
- **Training and development**—a critical retention tool and relatively inexpensive way to develop staff while promoting goodwill
- **Compensation and benefits**—usually a major factor in a firm's retention rate
- **Special perks and considerations**—today's diverse workforce makes it difficult to offer one package of benefits that appeals to all employees
- **Awards and recognition**—it is not uncommon that employees leave because they do not feel valued
- **Career-development action plans**—predicated on job descriptions, career paths, development plan templates, and inventories of skills and knowledge
- **Two-way communication tools**—gathering suggestions in a nonthreatening way, gathering

feedback from new hires, conducting exit interviews

- **Implementing the plan**—with timelines and measurement tools in place

MORE TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL RETENTION PLAN

- Be realistic in what is undertaken.
- Estimate hours required to develop, implement, and manage the plan.
- Make sure that necessary human, technological, and capital resources and tools are available.
- Develop processes for special situations.
- Modify the firm retention plan as necessary.

RETENTION INITIATIVES AND POSSIBLE MEASUREMENTS

Develop an internal job posting program (for visibility of promotional and lateral opportunities), tracking the following:

- Number of internal applications received (to evaluate program popularity)
- Number of internal transfers (relate to historical turnover data)
- Number of internal promotions (relate to historical turnover data)
- Comparison of present and historical external recruiting costs

Offer flexible work schedules to high-performing individuals, tracking the following:

- Turnover of people with high ratings on performance appraisals before and after the program
- Number of requests for flexible schedule (to evaluate popularity)
- Turnover for those on a flexible work schedule as opposed to those not on a flexible schedule

Develop awards and recognition programs, tracking the following:

- Turnover of key staff before and after implementation of the programs
- Perception of programs in new employee and exit interviews
- Program effectiveness through staff surveys

Offer special perks and considerations, tracking the following:

- Overall turnover statistics of those receiving special perks and considerations as opposed to those who do not receive them
- Overall turnover statistics before and after implementation of policy on special considerations
- Level of contentment, noting differences in demographics, based on staff surveys and related to turnover statistics

See also the 14th edition of the *Handbook*, which can be ordered from the AIA Bookstore by calling 800-242-3837 (option 4) or by email at bookstore@aia.org.

Feedback

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RESOURCES

More Best Practices

The following AIA Best Practices provide additional information related to this topic:

- 07.05.01 Five Factors of Employee Satisfaction
- 07.05.03 Three Methods of Knowledge Transfer
- 07.01.05 Seeing is Believing and Learning

For More Information on This Topic

See “Keeping Key Staff,” by Celesta Lewis, *The Architect’s Handbook of Professional Practice Update 2004*, page 91.

