



Strengthen Leadership to Boost Employee Motivation & Retention

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Many Los Angeles and Southern California business owners and entrepreneurs have identified employee motivation and retention as two of their top business concerns. Some have implemented a wide range of initiatives and programs designed to increase motivation, reduce turnover and boost retention — this includes everything from adopting more flexible and family-friendly work schedules to offering a wide range of creative fringe benefits and compensation packages.

But there's one very important key to employee motivation and retention that is often overlooked: strong leadership at the top of the organization. Flextime, cafeteria-style benefit plans and bonus and profit sharing plans are nice, but many employees are more interested in working for a company where leadership casts a compelling vision for the future — while also making it clear the role that each employee will play in helping this vision become a reality.

You Can't Be “Too Busy” to Lead

Unfortunately, owners and CEOs often get so caught up in the day-to-day tasks involved in running the business that they forget about the importance of leadership in their company's success. This applies not just to motivating and retaining employees, but to every aspect of business management. Ignoring the importance of leadership because you're “too busy” is a formula for failure across the organization.

As noted above, one of the most important tasks of a business leader is to cast a compelling vision that will motivate everyone in the company to give their best effort and pledge their long-term commitment to the organization. Most employees need to be able to see where the company might be three, five or even 10 years down the road — and more importantly, what their future role will be — before they are willing to commit to an organization for the long haul.

Another important leadership responsibility as it relates to boosting employee morale is to take the time to get to know your employees as well as possible. If yours is a large organization, it might not be realistic to get to know every employee on a personal basis. But you can still let all your employees know that you, as the leader of the organization, care about their personal well being and will make decisions with their best interests in mind whenever you can.

Coaching and mentoring is one of the best ways to lead by example and demonstrate inspired leadership. Of course, you can't coach and mentor every employee in your company, but you can coach and mentor those on your executive team. They, in turn, can coach and mentor their direct reports, who can coach and mentor their direct reports, and so on. The key is to create a culture where formal coaching and mentoring are strongly encouraged (and rewarded) starting at the very top of the organization.

Start With Your Hiring Process

Boosting employee motivation and retention by strengthening leadership starts with the hiring process itself. Here are three ideas to keep in mind that can help you be more proactive in hiring employees who will be more likely to make a long-term commitment to your company:

1. **Take the time and effort to hire intelligently from the start.** Of course, there are no guarantees when it comes to hiring. But instead of hiring the first warm body who walks through the door because the position has been vacant for months, think about not only what you need from this position today, but what you'll need in a year or two. Then try to make sure the applicant can grow along with the responsibilities of the job.
2. **Assess whether or not applicants will be a good fit with your corporate culture.** Do they share your core values? How do they respond to your open-ended questions? Do they have stories to tell that illustrate or confirm their answers?
3. **Share success benchmarks with applicants.** Make sure applicants understand what it will take for them to be successful in your organization, as well as what their future growth opportunities will be.

Once they are hired, give new employees clear and attainable goals and make sure they have the resources needed to reach them. Also offer tangible rewards for achieving goals — these can be monetary or non-monetary, like granting extra time off or special privileges for meeting certain goals within a defined timeframe.

In addition, companies with a strong leadership culture make sure that employees receive consistent feedback on how they're doing so they know areas where their performance is strong and areas where they need to improve. These companies also encourage all employees, regardless of their rank or position in the organization, to offer their input and suggestions on how processes can be improved to increase efficiency and boost overall profitability.

Concluding Thoughts

Many businesses today have implemented a wide range of initiatives and programs designed to increase employee motivation and boost retention. But one key that is often overlooked is strong leadership at the top of the organization. Boosting employee motivation and retention by strengthening leadership starts with the hiring process itself. Once employees are hired, companies with a strong leadership culture give them clear and realistic goals, offer tangible rewards for achieving these goals, and make sure that employees receive consistent feedback on how they're doing.

About CFO Edge

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