

THE ART AND SCIENCE OF EMPLOYEE RETENTION: COMMUNICATION AND STRATEGIC THINKING

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***Abstract :** Employee Retention has become a major concern for corporates in the current globalized scenario. Valuable employees exiting an organization prove detrimental to the growth and progress of the organization. This paper is an attempt to focus on the need and importance of employee retention. It also tries to locate strategies that need to be planned and implemented to retain valuable employees. It is necessary for an employee to be satisfied and happy with his role and career in the organization for optimum performance. With this in view, the paper also tries to locate how the art of effective communication sows the seeds of success in employee retention.*

***Key Words:** Employee Retention, Strategy, Job Satisfaction, Specialization, Participation, Performance, Communication*

Introduction

Employee Retention refers to the techniques employed by the management to retain the employees. Individuals once trained by the organization have a tendency to move to other organization for a change. The change may be for better prospects – lucrative salary, conducive timing, better environment, growth prospects, job satisfaction, updating knowledge, better challenges, frustration and constant friction with superiors or colleagues and so on. It is the duty and responsibility of the management to find out the reasons for the shift of a talented employee from one organization to another. Management uses Employment Retention strategies so that employees stick to the organization and contribute effectively. Employee Retention strategies should go a long way in ensuring growth, job satisfaction and learning for employees. A valuable employee is like a fixed asset to any organization. He is a factor of production whose brain can come up with maximum creation and innovation. Capacity is never a deterrent in case of a valuable employee. The only point of contention is that he should be at the right place at the right time with the right people at the right environment. Losing a valuable employee can leave the organization handicapped or maimed. All organization spends time and energy to retain a valuable employee for the following reasons:

- Hiring an employee is never an easy process. It is time-consuming and cumbersome where an HR professional shortlists a few individuals from a large pool of talent. Going through the whole process again and again will be detrimental to any organization.
- Any organization invests time and money in training an individual for work and for understanding the corporate culture. However, a new appointee has to go through the entire process and the new investment in time and money may not guarantee the desired result as developing an employee is like searching for a needle in a haystack.
- An individual resigning from the present organization is most likely to join a competitor. So, all the strategies and policies of the current organization may be revealed to the rival organization. He carries with him the strengths of the previous organization and exposes the weaknesses of the previous organization and as such present opportunities to the new organization on a platter.
- The employees sticking on to any organization are more familiar with the company's policies, strategies and guidelines and therefore, adjust better. It helps them to know the organization in and out

and so can contribute effectively. Contrary to this, a new employee may be out of sync on all parameters.

- Employees working in an organization for a long period of time learn to initiate as well as cooperate. They know their superiors, subordinates and fellow employees well. As such, they are able to bring out the best in themselves individually and collectively. A new appointee, on the other hand, finds his ego, his past, his character, his attitude and his environment an impediment while adjusting with others.
- Employees aligned to the organization for considerable period time tend to be more loyal towards the management and the organization. Loyalty comes out of the parental attitude of the management and administration. A sincere and honest labour force can do anything for the organization. However, loyalty can never be expected from a new appointee immediately and an insincere and dishonest employee can undo everything.
- A valuable employee is full of innovativeness and potentiality. No organization can survive if top performers quit. Substituting them with a new employee is a game of probabilities.

A trained valuable employee tends to walk out of the organization because of the following:

- When the job is not challenging enough and he isn't learning anything new by sticking to it.
- When he does not enjoy good rapport with his team and is not satisfied with his work.
- When his specialization, qualification, interest and experience are not paid heed to by the management and administration.
- When he is overburdened with work, leading to fatigue and burn-out.
- When rules and regulations are not the same for everyone, he tends to feel victimized.
- When he works out of fear of the boss who instead of being a role model and cooperating with their work castigates them at work.
- When the team leader/superior becomes inaccessible, the employees become demotivated and their queries become unsolved.
- When there is no transparency in matters of authority, responsibility and accountability.
- When appreciation from superior/management is not forthcoming.
- When there is no healthy competition at work for the employee to raise his standard.
- When the valuable employee gets a pay package which is not in sync with the pay packages of employees working in competing organizations.

It is difficult to put a full stop to the process of employees quitting a job. However, there are various techniques by which it can be controlled to a large extent. Some of the strategies used for Employee Retention are as under:

- Responsibilities given to the employees must be delegated according to individual specialization and interest.
- Employees should be made to feel that work is not a burden but an endeavour to enjoy. Performance reviews are important to find out the job satisfaction of employees at work.
- Conflicts and disputes spread negativity. Activities which bring the employees closer should be promoted such as informal get-togethers to know each other better, organizing outdoor picnics, maintaining a cordial environment at work place, organizing sports and recreational activities etc.
- The HR personnel should hire a suitable candidate for the right job or else there is likely to be a mismatch between the nature of work and the profile of the appointee.
- Employee recognition goes a long way in retaining employees. The hard work put in by the employees should be acknowledged and appreciated. Monetary benefits such as incentives, perks, cash prizes etc motivate the employees. Citations and awards also help them to improve their performance and self esteem.
- Performance appraisal on a regular basis is important for an employee, as it keeps him on his toes. All rewards, monetary or otherwise, should be related to Performance Appraisal.
- Salaries of the employees must be discussed at the time of the interview. The components of the salary have to be transparent and explained. Salary as well as the terms and conditions should be acceptable to the employees.
- The company's rules and regulations should be employer-friendly. Rules and regulations should be punctuated with exceptions wherever necessary in case of deserving employees.

Apart from the scientific research-oriented strategies to retain employees, there is a simple and cost-effective way of engaging and retaining employees – good, old-fashioned communication. Communication has the power to encourage better performance and maintain employee retention and well-being. With better conversation, information flows more freely through the lines of internal communication

in an organization, there by having a dramatic effect in countering conflicts, lost productivity and engaging and motivating employees. As an added benefit, conversational skill helps in harnessing the power of collective innovation which ultimately results in driving the organization forward.

Employee engagement is not about compelling employees to work harder, but about generating the conditions that will stir them to work more efficiently and not allowing their achievements go unnoticed or unappreciated. As Yann Cramer, a Global Technology Manager at Shell pointed out: “You do not grow a plant by instructing it to do so, or worse by pulling on it. You do not get people to innovate by tasking them with innovating. You grow a plant by providing the Soil, the Space, the Sun... and letting it happen.” Moreover, listening to employees' suggestions and opinions, whether good or bad, provides a vital pulse-check for any healthy organization. The manager who initiates a conversation with his employees and makes an effort to explore how the staff feels about their roles and career in the organization not only gets a feedback on the working environment and their impact but also sends across an important message – that the employee is valuable and has the capability to develop and evolve. However, it is true that not all leaders have the natural ability to start a conversation but it is no doubt a vital skill to develop for the managers, as it helps them to educate themselves about the vibes of the his team, their own performance and most significantly what motivates the employees.

Having the insight to impart information and inviting participation is the secret of the success of inspirational leaders. Successful leader and believer of effective communication in business, Richard Branson has this personal philosophy: “Put your employees first, your customers second and your investors third and, in the end, everyone will be happy.” This holistic approach locates how employees feel about their work at the heart of the organization and recognizes that their happiness is fundamental to productivity and remaining engaged with the company's vision, culture, values and strategy.

Employee Retention is an art, science, process and profession. Employee retention is an art because the creative, innovative, imaginative and unique skills used by Michael Angelo, Leonardo da Vinci, M.F. Hussain etc are used for employee retention too. Employee retention is a science because just like solving the Rubik's cube, employee retention techniques make the impossible possible. Employee retention as a theory is always evolving like the Darwin's Theory of Evolution. It cannot afford to be rigid and static. Employee retention has developed into a profession as well. Hence, we find Human Resource professionals for recruitment; Human Resource management for employee growth and development; Human Resource accounting for value evaluation and employee appraisal. Employee retention has in its scope value addition and economic development. There are four factors of production – land, labour, capital and enterprise. The most important decisive factor among them is labour (employee). He who is the factor of production ensures value addition and generates surplus value. Employee retainers, therefore, ought to know that a value is a value to them only when they recognize the value of values (employees) as valuable to them.

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