

Happier workers equate to higher profits

One in three Canadian workers would quit their job if there was no more room for personal development, and 54 per cent believe pleasant colleagues are more important than a good salary, according to a recent Randstad *Global Workmonitor* survey.

Not surprisingly, 82 per cent of workers said they work to live, not live to work.

What does this mean for employers? Workers want to be engaged and valued at their place of employment. Employers that treat employees without the respect they deserve are in for a rude awakening when workers leave in droves for better opportunities as the economy picks up.

Some businesses erroneously think they can make the most profit by squeezing everything they can from employees. But, as soon as the job market improves, expect to see a mass exit of workers from companies that underappreciate employees.

It's no surprise *Fortune's 100 Best Companies to Work For* attract the best workers, have increased employee retention rates and have friendlier work environments that help to significantly increase employee productivity. This is a bottom-line issue — unhappy workers impact profits.

If a company takes its employees for granted, typically



GUEST COMMENTARY

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sometime after the first four to six months, the eagerness and desire of most workers wane. After that, in the absence of feeling appreciated by management, employees adopt a "whatever" attitude. Management, meanwhile, expects great things from these same employees. Management and their employees' expectations, at this point, are diametrically opposed — to the detriment of the company's success.

To keep employees motivated and enthusiastic, incorporate these techniques as part of your corporate culture:

Give employees clear direction: Communicate employee duties and responsibilities clearly so they know what is expected of them — you can't live up to what you don't know. In the absence of clear direction, a job won't get done properly. Frustration mounts

and your employees' desire to be their best dies.

Right resources, right results: Make sure employees have the tools, training and sufficient time to accomplish their tasks and meet company goals. Few things make employees feel as discouraged and unhappy as not having the appropriate resources for the job.

There isn't one negative suggestion in the bunch — and they don't cost a thing to implement. All they require is the strong desire of management to make the company a better place to work.

Fix the problem, don't assign blame: Success doesn't come without failures. When employees have a problem with a task, set them up for success by valuing their efforts to do better, not berating them for failure. Employees need guidance, not reprimands. Focus on educating employees about solutions, rather than banging them over the head with the mistakes they've made.

Increase employee success with frequent, targeted feedback: An employee should never be blindsided by a year-end review. All during the year, employees should receive frequent, targeted feedback about their work. Feedback is critical

to the employees' ability to know what they've done right, and what needs improvement.

The key to successful feedback is it must be immediate as well as specific and sincere. You can target comments more effectively when the event is fresh in your mind.

Catch your employees in the act of doing something right: Ac-

knowledging how employees are doing something right is a far more successful path to work excellence than pointing out what they are doing wrong. Psychology has long proven that people respond much better to positive feedback than to negative.

Most people worry when they see their managers looking over their shoulder or stopping by their work area. They are convinced they are looking for something they did wrong — which is usually an accurate assessment.

So, get employees in the habit of anticipating your visits as an opportunity to be appreciated. When workers know

managers will be on the lookout for good work, they are far more motivated to do good work.

Your employees are only as good as you: Management studies show that, simply put, like attracts like. Your employees will show up on time, have a good attitude, approach problems eagerly and pitch in when needed to the extent management encourages and supports this behaviour. It's up to you to set the example. Attitude matters tremendously in the workplace, and it comes from the top-down.

So, do you notice anything about these management techniques? There isn't one negative suggestion in the bunch — and they don't cost a thing. These changes require only the strong desire of management to make the company a better place for its workers. And, when the labour market improves and employees have the luxury of picking where they want to work, they'll be inclined to stay right where they are.

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