

How to Retain Top Talent:

Moving the Needle on Employee Engagement

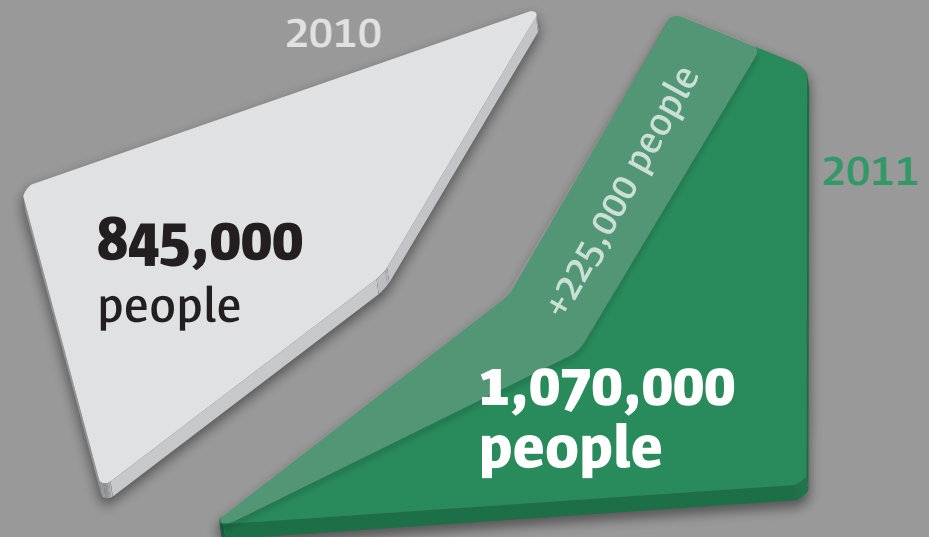


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In the sea of relatively neutral economic news over the past month, the Department of Labor reported in their monthly Jobs report that the number of people who voluntarily left their job increased from 967,000 in September to **1,070,000** in October, up from **845,000** a year ago. The question is, “Why did these people get up and leave now?”

With unemployment rates at an all-time high, one would expect that retention would not be an issue. Yet retention, increasing demands for top talent, lack of talent and/or skills in certain job categories and burnout created by heavy workloads are critical issues for all organizations. Talented employees who have become disengaged are now looking for other opportunities. And organizations are spending more time trying to identify ways to keep their top talent from walking out the door.



To learn more about retaining your top talent, please join TNS Employee Insights www.tnsemployeeinsights.com for a complimentary webinar on Tuesday, December 6th 2011
How to Retain Top Talent – Moving the Needle on Engagement

TNS Employee Insights has been measuring employee engagement in organizations across the globe for more than 20 years. Our view is that engagement has more to do with unleashing energy, especially productive energy. This means providing exceptional service to customers, producing superior quality work, taking initiative, taking ownership for one's work responsibilities, helping co-workers when they need it and so forth. The key to retaining top talent therefore is simple: move the needle on engagement.

Specifically, moving the needle means:

- 1.** Eliciting and Measuring Employee Voice
- 2.** Developing Inspiring Leaders
- 3.** Creating and Building Effective Teams
- 4.** Enabling Organizational and Individual Change



Developing Inspiring Leaders

How does leadership drive engagement? Inspiring leaders create a sense of commitment to the company and its customers by encouraging employees to have a personal interest in helping the organization reach its goals. They foster a passion for the business that encourages employees to give their best. This inspires high performance and creates brand ambassadors who are willing to provide extra effort. In short, inspiring leaders are one of the key drivers of employee engagement.

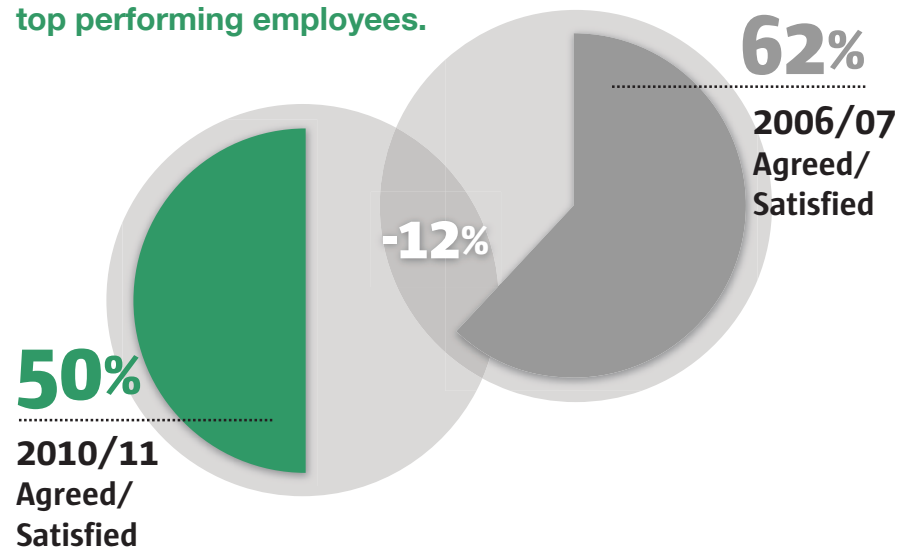
Elicit and Measure Employee Voice

Sometime in the mid-to-late 70s the realization emerged that the very values and behaviors that made America strong might also strengthen American corporations: corporate democracy, employee participation, involvement, input, and empowerment emerged as the new mantras for business strategy. At the core of this new movement was the idea of Voice. Voice has been defined as “the discretionary communication of ideas, suggestions, concerns, or opinions about work-related issues with the intent to improve organizational or unit functioning.”

First, Voice is a choice and cannot be forced on employees. Second, it covers a wide array of comments ranging from positive suggestions for improvement to more “negative” feedback about perceived problems or gaps. Third, Voice is constructive. Despite the possible negative tone of Voice the intent is positive - to improve circumstances or conditions. Fourth, the focus of Voice is “we” – the organization, the work unit – not the needs of “me” or the individual employee. And finally, Voice is inherently risky as it represents a challenge to the status quo.

Why is Voice important? Voice has been shown to improve decision-making, particularly under conditions of rapid change or ambiguity. Employees become critical sources of data and input into “what’s really going on around here.” Voice also creates essential conditions for innovation as diverse ideas provide fuel for new products, services, and approaches.

This organization does a good job of retaining top performing employees.



Create and Build Effective Teams

A key component of effective leadership is the ability to create and build effective teams. Whether you lead a group of 5 or 500, it is your responsibility to take the steps required to engage your team members. Engagement motivates and creates energy. It inspires people to do their work and it provides alignment between team members' work and organizational goals and objectives. This helps employees feel like they are contributing to the success of the organization. Engaging team members creates cooperation and collaboration that drives high performance and innovation. TNS research has identified a number of factors that distinguish high performing work groups from others - Cooperation, Capabilities, Accountability, Workload, and Effort.

The TNS normative database shows that high performing teams score 17% higher than other teams on Capabilities (having the resources, personnel, etc. to do quality work). This may be due to better selection processes (i.e., ability to hire and retain better talent), better understanding of what work needs to be done, better utilization of available resources or all of the above. Whatever the reason, high performing teams are more capable.

Enable Organizational and Individual Change

Organizational Health improves the organization's ability to align, execute or renew itself through improvements in Strategy, Structure, Systems, People, Culture, etc. Productive action directed at improving organizational health should lead to improved performance. Performance is about delivering both financial and operating performance.

One of the fundamental principles of change is that "people support what they help create." The truth is most people don't like change very much, especially if it's forced on them. However, if a person senses that they can somehow have an impact on the organization or on the change they are experiencing, then they are more likely to willingly engage in the change process.

As this article illustrates, the retention of top talent is an integrated employee engagement strategy. Employee engagement will help drive retention of top talent, customer engagement, and business success.



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