



## Management and Performance Associates – November 2011

### Retaining talent....without extra cash

If money, by itself, doesn't motivate people (see our October newsletter, one of our best according to many of our readers) is it enough, at least, to retain talent in their current positions?

Regarding the subject of retention, a few weeks ago, we were facilitating a motivation workshop for an organization that has been focusing on attracting and retaining talent. This workshop was exclusively for a department that, due to the nature of its business, employs highly qualified, intellectually differentiated professionals who are constantly sought after by the competition.

At one point, the discussion became polarized – some argued that professionals in this area are primarily motivated by cash (given the significant value of their financial contribution to the company) and others argued that other components were more relevant to the retention of these professionals.

As the discussion became more heated, a recently hired participant gave the following testimonial: "For years, I tried to hire professionals from this company for my previous employer. I was able to interview many, but I was never able to convince any of them to accept our offers, in spite of offering a substantially higher compensation package. As it turns out, I'm the one who changed employers, and now that I am here, I can perfectly understand why these people didn't change jobs."

What makes people reject a more substantial offer and remain at their current job? The answer has to include an environment which stimulates the employee's engagement and makes him/her feel motivated.

Let's start with engagement. This concept deserves a closer look since we have heard--more often than we would like--that engagement means to arrive early and to leave late. This is a very simplistic view that doesn't translate the range of the concept of

engagement. Engagement exists when three attributes are present:

1. Emotional commitment – the pride of being part of the organization, of being associated with the brand.
2. Rational commitment – the objective belief that the organization can meet career and professional expectations.
3. Discretionary effort – the willingness to do our best, to go the extra mile.

As discretionary effort and motivation go hand in hand, it's worthwhile to expand the content of our October newsletter regarding motivation. The following are additional tips to create an environment where people want to walk the extra mile and do much more than the minimum acceptable:

1. Talented people expect their leaders to be capable of amplifying and strengthening their experiences, so that their contributions can be more and more differentiated.
2. As a leader of talented employees remember to provide feedback on their strengths, recognize a job well done and their initiatives that made a difference. Some investigations conducted by international consulting firms show that many talented people leave their jobs because they are not recognized. It is a classic scene when the manager says to the resigning employee: "How come? You are the best guy in the department." In reality, that was the first time the employee was ever told that. Too late!
3. Be alert and able to identify what is most motivating to your employee: a new challenge, an opportunity to get more exposure, the possibility to interact with others inside and outside the department, the opportunity to have new experiences in order to increase expertise, enjoying a convivial environment and proximity to



colleagues, geographical mobility, initiating a new learning curve, etc.

4. Lead more--manage less. Talk to your employees about their short and long term aspirations. Help them find alternatives and paths to their development through coaching conversations.
5. People need clarity on the purpose of their work, the vision of the company as well as of their unit. They need clarity on the meaning and contribution of their work. This is the foundation of engagement.
6. Foster an open communication channel. You are working with grownups and honest communication is the basis for quality relationships.

Talent can be found at all organizational levels. Don't fall into the trap of considering only people with a similar profile as described in the beginning of this newsletter. Every professional who performs at an excellent level and that demonstrates engagement should be on your radar for retention. In the end, they are the ones who make the difference.

Coincidentally, last week, as we were waiting for a new client to give us access to their offices, we observed something worth mentioning. In spite of this company having approximately 2,000 employees, the security guard was personally greeting each of the arriving employees, saying good morning, shaking hands, and more surprisingly, addressing them by their names, regardless of hierarchy. (No, they did not have their ID badges on.) The look in his eyes reflected the pleasure he was having as he performed his job. We're sure that if another company offered him a job without this same opportunity to interact with each employee, he would refuse the offer, even with a higher salary. Want to bet?

If you're skeptical and feel this is something for Human Resources only, check some hard data at the website below:

<http://www.thesocialworkplace.com/2011/08/08/social-knows-employee-engagement-statistics-august-2011-edition/>. You'll be surprised with the information provided.

For those of you who would like to know how to inspire people, so that they feel engaged, you may be interested in the following TED Talk\*:

[http://www.ted.com/talks/simon\\_sinek\\_how\\_great\\_leaders\\_inspire\\_action.htm](http://www.ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action.htm)

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**See you next month. Suggestions are welcome.**

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