

A RECRUITER'S GUIDE

Introduction

As business confidence in the UK improves, it is important to begin planning for the recovery. This brings its own challenges. One of the most important for any company is how to keep your best employees.

"Any company is only as good as the people that work there. The current economic conditions may help to retain people, whereby your best talent won't be looking for other opportunities," says Richard Nott, website director of CWJobs.co.uk. But that will not be the case forever. As the economy improves, people will begin to feel more mobile.

And that is when what you do now will really count. Research shows that employees who are engaged with their jobs and organisations are **87% less likely to leave** than those who are not engaged.

"Unless employees feel connected and engaged to the business and there is the opportunity to develop and grow within their role coupled with clear and defined paths to new opportunities, companies run a real risk of losing the very people who have made their company what it is, when the employment market improves." says Richard Nott.

And with estimates of the cost of replacing each employee equal to an annual salary, there is a clear incentive to keep good people.

What is engagement?

Engagement basically means providing conditions to allow your employees to work more effectively, according to the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD). It means creating an environment in which people want to do their best work.

How to promote an engaged workforce

There are a number of steps that you can take to make your employees

feel engaged and so keep them with you when the upturn comes. A first step could be a staff survey to measure how engaged your people are. Exactly how engagement works will vary from company to company, but here are the key areas to look at:

Leadership

The right kind of leadership is key to creating this environment. It should provide a clear, shared vision for the organisation, according to Engaging for success: enhancing performance through employee engagement, a report to Government by David MacLeod and Nita Clarke.

The most successful companies work to get buy-in for their mission. "Employees need to understand not only the purpose of the organisation they work for, but how their individual role contributes to that purpose," the report says.

Managers

Managers are a crucial part of keeping your workforce engaged. Time and again studies have shown that people don't leave companies, they leave managers.

The managers who are likely to retain staff are those who are very clear about what they expect from the people who work for them. Staff who don't know what will be regarded as a success are not likely to do their best work.

Managers should also be responsible for making sure that work is designed effectively and efficiently. Employees who are frustrated by trying to do an impossible job will not want to stay on. Employees need to feel that they are valued and that they have the tools and the back up they need to perform well.

Improve and grow

Employees also want to feel that there is a chance for them to grow the job that they are doing. Many people want to feel that they can develop; that there is room for them to move up within the organisation. For all these reasons, the opportunity to develop skills through training adds greatly to a sense of engagement. So although many organisations cut training budgets in difficult times, it may not be the best way to plan for the upturn.

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Feedback

Make sure that your team receive feedback. Do they feel appreciated? People want to know how they are doing and to learn how they can do the job more effectively. Research shows that employees who are engaged tend to be the ones who have frequent discussions about work with their managers.

Well being

Feeling valued and involved is one of the main contributors to feeling engaged with your work, according to the Institute of Employment Studies. Engaged employees feel that they are treated with fairness and respect and are seen as individuals. They also believe that their managers are concerned for their well-being.

Have a voice

Encourage employees to voice ideas, and then listen and act on those ideas. Feeling that they have a voice in the organisation is an important ingredient in engagement. Being involved in decision making is also an acknowledged way to tie employees to your organisation.

Values

Does what actually happens in your company match up to your mission statement? Employees are also more likely to feel engaged when they feel that an organisation lives its values; that people act on the company's stated beliefs. So if a company says it is committed to fighting climate change, it makes sure the lights are not left burning 24 hours a day.

Communication

Many of the factors that will keep employees engaged are rooted in regular and open communication throughout organisations. Companies that keep staff informed, and listen to what they say, even when things are going badly,

are more likely to weather the difficult times and to keep those staff when things pick up.

Money

All of these factors can be more important than money when it comes to keeping your best staff. If the money is right, or about right, it will not be an issue. It won't actually keep someone with you, but if it is wrong, people may start to look elsewhere.

Added benefits

Thinking about how to keep employees engaged will help you keep your valuable staff. But there are other benefits as well.

Research shows that companies with engaged employees benefit from better performance and innovation. One study found that **engaged employees took an average of 2.69 sick days** as opposed to 6.19 for unengaged employees. Another suggests that companies with engaged workforces increase profits three times as quickly as those with unengaged employees.

So if you take the time to look at how well your organisation is doing at keeping your employees engaged you won't be alone. As Lord Mandelson, the UK business secretary says: "Because Britain's economic recovery and its competitive strengths in a global economy will be built on strong, innovative companies and confident employees, there has never been a more important time to think about employee engagement in Britain."

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About CWJobs

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