

7 ways to lose good employees to your competition

By Mark Fisher

Have you recently been handed a surprise resignation from one of your star performers? Ouch! Now before you blame everyone else (including the recruiter that poached them) and come up with an elaborate reason as to why they left, stop - and think genuinely about why this person made that emotional commitment to start looking in the first place.

Were there any warning signs in the past few months? How long ago did you sit down and really listen to their challenges and frustrations? More importantly, have you sat down with them recently at all? Do your staff know they can tell you about their frustrations? What level of communication do you promote within your business – at the end of the day, it starts at the top, right?

High-performing staff are extremely hard to find and even harder to retain, but they're often left to their own devices, mainly because they don't need hand-holding. They're good decision-makers and problem-solvers, meaning you often think you only need to catch up with them doing an annual review, at the water cooler or maybe not at all... This is where the trouble starts.

What else has been happening in your workplace that contributed to their decision to leave? Get the mirror out and be honest with yourself and your team - what are you guilty of doing or not doing? Below are 7 reasons star performers decide to leave...

You tolerate poor performance. This doesn't sit well with high-performers who end up doing the brunt of the work, let down by their colleagues. You need to take action. It may be in the too-hard basket but the damage this does to high performers is huge; over time it erodes the core culture of your organisation and the successful people within it. Good people won't hang around forever in a workplace where they're surrounded by monkeys, so take action to help your high performers thrive. There are plenty of HR consultants who can help guide you through this process.

No recognition. When was the last celebration you had with your team or business? Good companies will always celebrate the wins. Big or small people need to know when they've done well. I'm not talking once a year – it has to be a regular thing. Shouting someone a coffee, taking them for lunch or letting them leave early is a clear sign you're impressed and recognise their valuable input. Make time, be really positive and say thank you more.

Never communicating the vision. If your staff don't know where they're going, how will they get you there? It's crucial for any business to regularly explain where the company is heading and why. You need to have the buy-in from all staff that are along for the journey. Be proactive about it because what's in your head often doesn't make it down to those in trenches – but it should!

You rarely listen or include staff in decision making. Happy staff love to be involved, especially when it comes to making decisions around something they're going to implement. Even if you think you know what the outcome is in your own head, include them in the

conversation – this alone will increase engagement and enthusiasm in the plan, plus it encourages better communication all round. They may even offer an exceptional idea you hadn't thought of!

Silly rules and no fun. Have you recently announced some companywide policies that haven't been well received? Did they cause more harm than good? It's fair enough to make rules - every company needs them - but maybe take the time to consult staff and get a bit of buy-in, rather than going at it like it's a done deal. If your new rules are rubbing your high performers the wrong way, you might want to look at what the rules or or how you're announcing them.

Do you actually care? It's all very well having your values pinned to the staffroom wall, but you should be actually living and breathing them. Showing you care about your employees takes patience, listening and flexibility. If you care about your staff, be there to help and support them, provide solutions and advice. Give more, take less.

Resist change. You've been asked regularly by your high performers to make some positive changes but for one reason or another they haven't been priority. Stop – they are. At all costs, listen to your high performers and really understand what they want to see improved and why. By making changes, you show them they're being heard and valued as employees. This results in high levels of engagement and a happy workforce - and less chance of that resignation letter appearing on your desk.



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