

RETAINING AND MOTIVATING EMPLOYEES

Larry Memmott

Stemilt Growers

Larry.Memmott@Stemilt.com

Motivation is the steering of one's actions toward certain goals and to commit a certain part of one's energies to reaching them.

It is proven that a high turnover percentage can cost employers a great deal of financial distress. Depending on the size of the company, to many employers it can make the difference in staying or going out of business.

As our companies grow and prosper we are in the need of loyal long-term employees that we can count on. This is why it is important that employers train their supervisors, managers and employees themselves to learn to motivate each other. Supervisors must know their employees; they must ask and research what is important to their employees, what they want to accomplish, and what their goals are. This will help supervisors know how to motivate employees and how to get the most out of them.

It is important that we review our organizational practices to see if we are meeting the expectations of our employees. The labor market continues to tighten and there are less and less available skilled, loyal, and motivated employees. Organizational practice changes can include simple training:

- Create clear job descriptions (expectations and key success factors)
- Motivate employees instead of dictating to them
- Engage employee's input and ideas, not just their physical labor
- No favoritism
- Align responsibility with authority
- Morale

Morale motivates the employee. For example, allowing employees to hold a hot dog feed or a potluck to raise money for a co-worker that has fallen on hard times due to a death or emergency of a family member, giving employees balloons on a birthday or sending flowers due to a birth of a child. These types of activities boosts morale, which in turn creates unity, which helps employees, feel as if they are part of a family rather than a part of an organization. It creates a great deal of job satisfaction, and a sense of security. Once an employee has been motivated by morale retention comes more easily.

One of many ways to motivate and retain your employees is by giving traditional rewards. The employer cannot and should not wait for the employee to come and ask for a raise or recognition, the employer should be the one to recognize employee performance and should reward good performance with monetary, benefits, and compensation incentives.

Culture differences can create a challenge in motivating and retaining employees. In the Hispanic community, for example, to say “Good Morning” on the first encounter, to them means a great deal of respect, and it also makes them feel noticed. Consistently reminding supervisors to say “Please” and “Thank You” before and after every conversation with an employee is a simple thing to do, yet if a supervisor forgets to do so, it can be considered rude and offensive at times. This is why it also important to train our supervisors in communication skills both verbal and written.

FACTORS THAT MOTIVATE AND RETAIN EMPLOYEES:

Open Communication

Employees are more likely to continue their employment at a company where they can communicate openly and freely with all aspects of management, up and down the chain of command. This benefits not only the employee, but also the company. The company can receive good input from their employees on how things are going. Employees can provide you with a list of areas that may need to be addressed. We must always solicit and provide feedback. The following points will help ensure that you are motivating your employees:

- Communicate philosophy and values of the company
- Open door policy (be a good listener)
- Grievance procedures
- Have a genuine interest in people (and show it)
- Explain why things have to be done in a certain way
- Meetings with employees (regular Q & A sessions)
- Train supervisors in communication skills (including Spanish)
- Personnel committee meetings
- Bulletin boards
- Communicate company, team and individual goals (and accomplishments)

Human Needs

Providing pay and benefits that truly meet employee needs. No one likes to be underpaid. For most of us to be underpaid means we are being unappreciated. We must offer competitive wages and benefits to help bring good employees aboard and to maintain our current employees happy. Research what your employees need and what satisfies them, and make a list. The list should include the following five items:

1. Physical
2. Safety
3. Social

4. Esteem
5. Self-actualization

Using the Participative Approach Successfully

Give opportunities for personal growth within the company and make employees feel a part of the company. We need to make them feel needed, and we need to leave space for all of our employees to grow. Let it be known that good employees, who have shown loyalty, good attitudes and good work quality, have grown within companies. Most importantly, teach them how to grow by:

- Defining objectives clearly
- Provide system of rewards
- Make individuals, as well as groups, accountable
- Ensure a receptive attitude of top management

Flexibility

A good supervisor makes for happy employees. We all want employees who can be flexible with their working schedule. So why not give our employees the same thing we expect of them? We need to understand that our employees also have personal lives, children, etc. and they need to know that we can be flexible for their needs also. For example, letting an employee leave for parent/teacher conferences, sick child, Dr. appointments, and other needs that everyone has:

- Employers want employees, who can be flexible with their schedules, work responsibilities etc.
- Employees want employers who can be flexible with their personal lives, sick child, Dr. appointments, parent/teacher conferences etc.

Changing Labor Relations

We need to change the way we look at our employees. We need to make sure and see them as equals, people with feelings, rather than just workers. And we do this by making sure that our supervisors are:

- Delegating complete responsibilities
- Capable of taking the blame and giving others the honor
- Looking for the 99% that people do right and re-enforce confidence based on that (instead of emphasis on the 1% people do wrong) and use mistakes to learn from
- Giving honest and frequent feedback
- Being respectful to all employees
- Being fair and consistent and admit your own mistakes

- Promoting-whenver possible-from within
- Keeping promises

As a supervisor you must also:

- Provide means (do not play the boss)
- Coaches, solve problems and facilitate
- Make people more productive based on goals (and incentives)
- Be visible (and at ease)
- Be available and listen
- Decisive, persistent and modest
- Simplify (make things look easier)
- Know your employees by name
- Do some dirty work yourself
- Trust your employees

We must recognize our employees individual goals, values and desires motivate them selves and we must get to know our employees and understand their needs. Then give them assignments that motivate and satisfy their needs. Attitude plays a significant role in employee relations. A great place to start learning about motivation is to understand ones own motives. Motivation is contagious. If your supervisors/managers are motivated about their own job, it's much easier for your employees to be, too. If your supervisors are doing a good job of taking care of themselves and their job, they will have a much clearer perspective on how other are doing with there employees. Good supervisors and managers try to maintain a positive attitude. By valuing employees and treating them fairly, managers and supervisors can create a positive and supportive environment, which can result in retaining better employees and motivating employees in their jobs.

Remember that personnel management is everyone's responsibility.