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HE CHALLENGE OF RETAINING TALENT

Once upon a time, workers signed on for long-term employment. They found a reputable company, could earn an acceptable wage, and fully expected to hang around long enough for a gold watch and a pension upon retirement. Not anymore.

Corporations decided one of the quickest and most effective cost-saving measures was to reduce staff whenever possible. In response, employees realized that if their companies did not feel the need to be loyal to them, there was no need for them to offer loyalty in return. As a result, the business environment began to look like frogs hopping from one lily pad to another, workers grasping at opportunities that paid just a bit more, offered better benefits, or promised a pleasant change of scenery.

Today, however, more and more businesses are recognizing the value and importance of retaining key personnel. Why invest countless hours and thousands of dollars in training new employees if talented staff can be persuaded not to leave for “greener pastures”? The question is: How to retain them?

One article I read recently listed seven reasons talented employees are willing to stick with their companies instead of taking a nomadic approach to their careers. These reasons include:

1. Being paid well.

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2. Feeling appreciated.
3. Knowing their employers and supervisors are listening to them.
4. They are rewarded for quality work by being promoted.
5. They are encouraged to be involved in decision-making.
6. They are mentored by seasoned veterans within their companies who help them grow and develop professionally and personally.
7. Their work is challenging and fulfilling.

The wisdom of the Bible supports such findings. Here are some of the principles it presents:

Pay people what they are worth. Money is not the only motivator, but compensation helps to assure people that they are valued. *“For Scripture says, ‘Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain,’ and ‘The worker deserves his wages’”* (1 Timothy 5:18).

Even less-experienced employees can offer worthwhile recommendations. Sometimes the most perceptive suggestions can come from the people who must implement the plan. *“Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed”*(Proverbs 15:22).

People want their performance to be recognized. Good workers know when they produce quality work. If their efforts are not recognized, they often choose to go where they are acknowledged for what they contribute. *“Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will serve before kings; he will not serve before obscure men”* (Proverbs 22:29).

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Mentors help to show the way for younger workers. A mentor can be a priceless resource and benefit for a talented, emerging leader. As the apostle Paul wrote to his disciples, *“Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ”* (1 Corinthians 11:1). *“Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me – put it into practice”* (Philippians 4:9).

Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. How successful has your company or organization been in retaining most of its best, highly talented employees?

2. What are some of the challenges you have faced – or observed – for keeping key personnel in an increasingly fluid work environment?

3. Do you agree with the reasons cited for talented people choosing to remain with their current employer rather than moving elsewhere? What, if any, other motivations for staying come to your mind?

4. Which of the biblical principles cited resonate with you the most? From your own perspective of workplace satisfaction, which of them is most important to you?

NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to read more about this subject, consider the following passages:

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Proverbs 12:25, 13:18, 19:20, 20:6, 25:13, 27:5,17, 23-27; 2 Timothy 2

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