

# 5 SUREFIRE WAYS TO GET YOUR BEST EMPLOYEES TO QUIT!

By Tracy M. McIlrath

Okay, show of hands.... Who thinks experienced, connected, knowledgeable employees are over-rated? Who thinks that mushroom personnel management (keep your employees in the dark and feeding them B.S.) is the way to go? How about believing that a paycheck should be enough to inspire loyalty and keep individuals fully satisfied? If you are a staunch supporter of any of these practices, I hope your affairs are in order because **you are quickly headed toward extinction!**

**Your employees are the essence of your company** – not your products or services, not your campaign efforts, nor your market share – it's your employees. They are the ones who make everything happen everyday. A great way to drive even the best business idea into the ground is to create an internal environment that corrodes and undermines employee talent, enthusiasm and creativity. This seems obvious, right? So **why do some companies continue to play roulette with their most important asset?** What are they doing that is so dangerous?

## **Assuming Management Omnipotence**

**The first giant mistake is in assuming that management (from middle to executive) knows best in all things** regarding strategy, client relations and market adaptability. I'm here to tell you, the longer you are "away from the field" the less accurate your information and sense of the situation becomes. Every company I know strives to hire the best and brightest available – the shining stars and top performers whenever possible. When you have experienced and talented people like this on staff, why in the world are their insights and opinions discounted or ignored when it comes to strategic planning or crisis resolution? I would much rather have a mechanic work on

my car who is under the hood and on the road everyday, rather than someone who “paid his dues” for a year changing oil, and who read a few tech manuals along the way. **There is no substitute for practical experience!** To survive and thrive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, organizations must learn cross-functional communication between management and staff, especially in areas of strategy and client relations.

### **The Shell Game**

Another great way to frustrate your top employees is to play the Responsiveness Shell Game. This familiar past time involves assuring staff that they are heard and their needs are understood regarding internal issues, and then **employing an array of distraction techniques to get individuals focused on other areas so management can avoid dealing with the original complaint.** This is often utilized in areas of HR issues with management, poorly planned projects and budget challenges. The truth of this behavior is that it leads to employee cynicism, mistrust of management and the belief that the firm does not value individuals or input regarding problems. This is a great way to throw a wet blanket over morale. Increasingly, a focus on integrity and honest address of situations by management is called for.

### **Actions Speak Louder Than Words**

A continuation of integrity involves “putting your money where your mouth is” or **“actions speak louder than words”**. Employees are barraged with new methods, new processes and new paradigms. Sending management or staff to an afternoon seminar on effective communication, and then not supporting their learning and efforts is hypocritical. Not following through with continued training and the creation and maintenance of practical avenues for effective communication and conflict resolution only sets them up for failure – and they know it! Investing in your employees so that they are invested in the organization is a commitment for the long run – not just till the end of the fiscal quarter.

## **Are You Offering More Than Just a Paycheck**

Another guaranteed way to alienate your best employees is to **make sure the only reason they show up for work is get a paycheck** – no other intrinsic motivation or sense of personal accomplishment. Organizations can achieve this through excessive interdepartmental competition, work group isolation and lack of personal development opportunities. After all, who doesn't enjoy being treated like another faceless cog in the wheel? No matter how sparkly the "golden handcuffs" may be, when individuals don't have the opportunity to express richer aspects of themselves, to the betterment of the company and other employees, it leaves a very hollow feeling at the end of the day. We are all looking for a greater sense of fulfillment in our lives and today's employees aren't settling for the myopic business models of the past.

**Expecting to gain top performance from your people while holding to anemic relationship paradigms just doesn't work.**

## **Do Nothing**

The most tried and true method for losing your best employees is to do nothing. As a wise sage said, **"If you keep doing what you are doing, you will keep getting what you've got."** The statute of limitations on not knowing any better is running out for companies. There is ample information available through business strategy, psychology, education and even religious avenues regarding both the benefit and necessity of addressing these basic and obvious areas of work relationship. The only way to stay competitive, let alone thrive, is to embrace the adjustments to attitude and process that allow organizations and staff to work in concert. The good of the entire corporate organism relies on the health and relationship of its individual components.

**The organization is its people.**

The next time you walk past the Customer Service Representative who diffused last week's client crisis, the Marketing rookie who germinated the latest ad campaign, the Salesman who finally got his foot in the door with that target company in Chicago, or the Administrative Assistant who can find anything and daily pulls off scheduling miracles, make sure they don't have their bags packed. **Employees have options and**

**opportunities with many other companies – your competitors** - who would really love to have them and capitalize on all they know. Even if their passports are in hand, there is still time to reverse the trend - you can attract and retain the best and the brightest by:

1. Listening to and leveraging all levels of experience and expertise in your firm.
2. Not playing the Responsiveness Shell Game. Listen to the challenges and frustrations of your team and tell them the truth rather than dodging questions and trying to avert their attention to other areas.
3. Provide continual support for your team through training and processes for effective communication and conflict resolution.
4. Keep in mind that there is more to your employees showing up everyday than just collecting a paycheck. Investigate and encourage opportunities for intrinsic reward or other senses of accomplishment and personal contribution.
5. Do something! All the knowledge in the world does you no good if you don't act on it. Are you happy and satisfied with the way things are or do you have a vision of something more? The power to create a more successful and enriching organization is yours!

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