

# WORKFORCE HORIZONS

## Planning Tomorrow's Workforce Today

Louisiana Department of Civil Service

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### **TIPS ON IMPROVING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND RETENTION<sup>1</sup>**

Employee engagement is a hot topic nowadays because it is a key driver of organizational productivity. A recent study by the Hay Group found that offices with engaged employees were up to 43% more productive based on comparisons of revenue generated.

Actively engaged employees are those who work with passion because they feel a strong bond and commitment to the organization they work for. Yet, a study by Gallup® Management shows these statistics for the current workforce:

- 29% of employees are actively engaged in their jobs
- 54% are not engaged
- 17% are actively disengaged

So, what can you do to engage your employees and make them stay? In a survey by Career Systems International, employees were asked to rank job satisfaction factors that were important to them. The top five (out of 20) were in order of preference

1. Exciting, challenging work
2. Learning and development
3. Working with great people
4. Fair pay
5. Great boss

It is interesting to note that pay is more of a “go” factor than a “stay” factor. That is, an employee may leave if pay is not sufficient, but beyond a certain point it is not an incentive to stay.

### **QUOTE OF THE DAY**

*“If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it, change your attitude. Don't complain.” – Maya Angelou*

Here are some questions you can ask to determine how well your organization is engaging employees:

1. Do employees feel as if what they are doing is important? Are they connected to the organization's goals?

2. Do employees understand their role? Have expectations of what is wanted from them been made clear to them?
3. Do employees feel as if they are advancing in their careers? Are they growing, developing and improving themselves?
4. Are employees getting frequent and regular informal feedback on performance in addition to an annual performance evaluation?
5. Does the employee have a good relationship with his immediate supervisor?
6. Does the organization have strong values, a compelling vision, and inspirational leadership?

Some additional tips on specific actions to take are:

Show appreciation for employees by making time to talk to them about their work individually. What do they like about their current job the most? The least? Are there talents they have that you are not using? What learning opportunities would they be interested in or what skills would they like to develop? What types of projects would they like to work on?

Recognize specific achievements as early as possible in their careers. Providing an award or recognition to outstanding employees within the first 90 days of employment can be a powerful motivator. But the recognition or award should be visibly tied to contribution toward the organization's vision and strategic goals. That way the employee sees that the vision is not just something on paper and that

contributions to the vision are recognized and rewarded.

Start during orientation and onboarding of new employees. Educate new employees about and promote the organization's programs for rewarding and recognizing achievement and contribution to organizational goals and vision as part of their orientation.

Do "stay" interviews. Instead of waiting until employees leave and doing an exit interview, be proactive. Ask employees what you can do to retain them. With the "stay" interview, you are gathering information while you still have an opportunity to act on it and engage an employee before he or she leaves.

Promote employee wellness. Many organizations are implementing employee wellness programs and systems for encouraging or rewarding employees who stay healthy and safe. The idea is to show employees that the organization cares about their wellbeing. Also, healthy employees that feel good are more productive and less costly in terms of health insurance benefits paid out and absentee days. Some examples that companies have used are incentives to quit smoking or lose weight and free or discounted gym memberships.

Give special recognition when employees graduate from training courses. Training and development is a key motivator to engage and retain employees. It also helps to recognize achievement in this area. Recognizing employees in some official way every time they graduate from a course is a growing trend. This could be done by announcing them at some organizational function, providing certificates, publishing names in an organizational newsletter, etc.

<sup>1</sup>Information in this article is taken from “Five Ways to Strengthen Your Engagement and Retention Strategies,” Adrienne Hedger, *Workforce Management* (April 23, 2007)

**WORKFORCE PLANNING MAXIM OF THE DAY**

*“Imagination is more important than knowledge.” – Albert Einstein*

**GUIDELINES ON USING COMPETENCIES**

A reader recently posed this question to *Workforce Management* magazine: “How do I draw up a competency map that aids our workforce planning?”

In response, Dr. John Sullivan<sup>2</sup> offers some guidelines. He notes that when organizations try to implement competency profiling or mapping (determining the competencies necessary for jobs) broadly in recruiting, training and development, succession planning and workforce planning, they usually end up frustrated because the implementation becomes too complex and confusing. He advises starting with a narrow scope and providing directions to managers to use competency profiles as guides rather than absolutes. He also recommends these steps.

1. Identify the competencies that differentiate top performers from average ones. Look at some top performers and some average performers in your organization. What are the “differentiator” competencies that the top performers have and the average performers do not have? Think of some failed employees. What competencies did they lack? It is these “differentiator” competencies that are the most

important to consider in any application such as recruitment, training or workforce planning.

2. Many organizations stop at this point. But Dr. Sullivan points out that in our fast-changing world, organizations must be prepared to adjust the competencies identified to meet changing technological developments or other changes in the work environment or customer needs. As time goes on, the competencies that led to success in the past may change in importance. Continually review your competency list. Try to predict future skill sets that will be needed and identify “future competencies” that your organization will need to be successful in the next ten years.
3. Prioritize and weight competencies to obtain a core competency list. All mission-critical jobs should be filled by persons who possess these in various degrees.
4. Adapt the overall list to individual job families or functions. For each job family or function the goal is to determine the level of mastery of the competency needed. At the end of the process each job family or function should be covered by no more than eight competencies.
5. Once you have refined competencies with a set unique to each job family or function, you then need to further refine the definitions so they are clear and easy to measure the mastery of. This is the hardest step to accomplish and the one most often ignored by organizations. Dr. Sullivan advises defining four or five

key behaviors that characterize each competency; the behaviors should be measurable and demonstrate mastery of the competency. Furthermore, the definitions should be tested to make sure everyone who will be affected by them interprets them the same way.

6. Finally, convince managers to use the competencies in hiring, development, promotion and performance assessments. This is not always easy. Make sure there is a process to reward and compensate individuals who possess and demonstrate mastery of these competencies.

<sup>2</sup>*Dr. John Sullivan, professor and head of the Human Resource Management, College of Business at San Francisco State University. Workforce Management, March 16, 2007*

## **GALLUP® POLL ON WORKER SATISFACTION**

Gallup's most recent poll<sup>3</sup> on work and the work place (August 2006) asked employees to evaluate their current jobs on a number of job characteristics by indicating on a four point scale whether they were *completely satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied or completely dissatisfied*.

Here are the results for several job characteristics related to employee retention. The percentages shown are for employees indicating they were completely satisfied with their current job on that characteristic.

<u>Job Characteristic</u>	<u>% Satisfied</u>
Amount of on the job stress	22
Amount of money you earn	31
Chances of promotion	37
Recognition for accomplishments	47
Your immediate supervisor	55
Job security	55
Flexibility of hours	60
Relations with co-workers	67

<sup>3</sup>Go to [www.gallup.com](http://www.gallup.com) for more information on the poll.

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*Comments and submissions:* We welcome questions about workforce planning and suggestions for improvements to the newsletter as well as submissions of articles about what your agency is doing in workforce planning. Questions, comments, and requests to be added to the distribution list for the newsletter should be sent to the editor.

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