The Secret to Retaining Good Staff = Less Change to Deal With!

by Laurie Guest

During my years as a professional speaker and trainer, I have paid close attention to the actions of successful business management teams. One factor that seems constant is the ability to retain good staff. I have a few common sense ideas, often overlooked by employers, for retaining good people and building long-term professional relationships.

Appreciate good work.
Watch staff members in action and comment on the good work. When was the last time you gave a sincere thank you to the staff for arriving early to open, staying late to close, or making your day go smoothly? A quick “Thanks a lot!” yelled over your shoulder as you are halfway out the door does not count. Take the time for sincere gratitude.

Acknowledge productivity.
Increased customer volume directly benefits the owner. The staff, on the other hand, may only see it as more work. Recognize hard work with an individualized reward system that increases morale. The key to this idea is to determine what each staff member feels a good “reward” would be. Donuts for breakfast may not always be the extra special treat you anticipated. While one person would like a small cash bonus, a working mother might appreciate time off to catch her child’s soccer game on a Saturday afternoon.

Provide continuing education on a regular basis.
Make it a top priority to send your staff to educational programs in your industry. Encourage your team to become a member of any state or local organizations that are pertinent to your product or service. If there is no such thing, then create “on-site” teaching moments. Employees that feel they are growing in their position will stay longer. You would not think of denying your children a chance to go to school, yet many staff people are denied “work schooling” that could make a big difference to their careers.

Build opportunities for growth.
Plan annual retreats and develop long-term action plans. Focus on personal growth for each team member along with business goals. Allow shadowing of different areas of the company so overall knowledge is as widespread as possible. On occasion, send key staff people to visit others in your industry in a non-compete area in order to bring back business building ideas to share in the workplace.

In summary, if you want to know how to find and keep good people, think of it like a good marriage. Find staff people who have similar interests and values, then treat them like treasured family members. Open communication, mutual respect, time for fun, and plans for a future together will build a long-term professional relationship.