

Re-Recruiting

The Best Strategy For Keeping Your Best Employees

By Jay P. Rammes, CPA

We all know the importance of retaining employees. Study after study has confirmed the high costs of replacing employees — from recruiting and interviewing to lost productivity, customer dissatisfaction and client attrition.

“...make sure they know they’re a valued part of your team...”

But the fact is, some employees are more important to hold onto than others. It’s the *above-average* employees, the superstars, whom companies must do everything in their power to retain. One technique for doing this is a process known as “re-recruiting.”

Renewing and Re-Energizing

Re-recruiting is a tool for talent management, leadership development and succession planning. The goal is to assess important employees’ commitments to their jobs and your company, and then renew and re-energize them so they’re ready to perform at peak capacity.

In today’s low-unemployment environment, it’s more critical than ever to hold onto your best and brightest. Your superstars are likely in high demand, and if other companies (including your competitors) are actively recruiting them, doesn’t it make sense for you to do the same?

Think about it this way: To impress potential new employees, you probably stress to them the benefits, strengths and potential career op-



portunities your company has to offer. A re-recruiting effort seeks to constantly reinforce these things to your key employees and make sure they know they’re a valued part of your team — since they may be hearing it from other companies actively trying to recruit them *away* from you.

The Process

Re-recruiting takes the standard performance management systems that many companies already have in place (e.g., annual performance reviews, development plans, mentoring relationships) and adds several key elements. One of these is a formal meeting and conversation with the key employee to discuss:

Job satisfaction: How satisfied is the employee *really*? Dig deep. Make sure the employee is comfortable answering this question with 100 percent honesty; otherwise, you won’t learn anything of value.

Current job duties and responsibilities: What duties does the employee enjoy the most and least? In what duties does he or she excel or need improvement? Are there special assignments and projects you can give the employee to provide new challenges and excitement?

Career aspirations/goals and opportunities for advancement: Is the employee on a well-defined and desirable career track? Is there a plan for helping the employee reach specific job and career milestones? Does the employee have a clear idea of his or her value to and potential future with your organization?

The integration of professional and personal lives: Does the employee have the proper balance between his or her professional and personal lives? Without prying or getting too personal, try to find out how things are going for the employee outside of work.

Strengths and weaknesses: What specific steps can you take to bolster the employee’s strengths and shore up his or her weaknesses? Are there opportunities for continuing education and training to help build the employee’s skill sets?

Strategic vision: Share your big-picture vision for the company and how the employee fits into it. How do the employee’s individual efforts contribute to the overall mission and strategy of the organization?



Getting Feedback

Before this meeting, you should first elicit feedback from the employee via a self-evaluation, and from his or her coworkers via 360 degree feedback.

In the self-evaluation, ask the employee to give you his or her honest feedback in each of the areas discussed above. A few other good questions:

- What do you feel is your greatest accomplishment over the past year?
- What do you see as your greatest strengths, and in what areas would you most like to grow and improve?
- What are the biggest obstacles to doing the best job that you possibly can?
- How would you recommend that these obstacles be removed?
- If you were president of the company, what are the two or three most important things you would do right away to improve the business?
- From your perspective, what do you see as the most attractive growth opportunities for the business? The best ways to improve efficiency and productivity?

360 degree feedback is the process of soliciting performance feedback from those who are often in the best position to gauge it — the employee’s peers and coworkers. Talk with them individually to get their honest assessment not only of the employee’s performance, but also of his or her attitude and demeanor. This will likely prove to be revealing, as most employees act differently around their peers than they do around “the boss.”

The Components of a Re-Recruiting Initiative

An ongoing re-recruiting initiative might include the following components:

Mentoring program: Key employees should have a clearly defined mentor or coach within your organization that is responsible for leading the re-recruiting efforts. The mentor should keep tabs on the employee's overall level of job satisfaction, and be prepared to offer new challenges and opportunities to keep the employee motivated and content.

Open-door policy and open-book management: All employees, but especially your superstars, need to be encouraged to ask senior management about anything that might concern them. And management should be willing to share as much key financial and strategic information with employees as is feasible.

Well-aligned performance recognition systems: Rewards and compensation (such as bonuses, commissions and promotions) should be designed so that they support key business objectives and strategic initiatives.

Formal career planning: The employee's mentor should offer structured career coaching and guidance to help the employee determine if his or her current career path is a desirable one and, if it is not, work with the employee to explore other alternatives within the company. ■

"...New employees typically enjoy a honeymoon period with high morale and excitement about the future..."

When to Do It

Most jobs, especially managerial and professional jobs, tend to follow a "morale curve" with fairly predictable peaks and troughs. The re-recruiting meeting with the employee can be timed to coincide with these.

New employees typically enjoy a honeymoon period with high morale and excitement about the future. Assuming the job goes well, this continues to build during the first and second years. By the third year, it starts to level off and may begin to drift downward as the initial excitement wears off and the job's challenges and inevitable difficulties start to take their toll.

Ideally, you'll plan your re-recruiting meeting while morale is still high to hopefully stave off the morale downturn. Of course, you can also plan the meeting each year as part of annual performance reviews and success planning. The frequency of the meeting will depend on each company's and each employee's individual situation.

"...a tool for talent management, leadership development and succession planning..."

Keep in mind that one of the primary factors in job dissatisfaction is a lack of professional growth by the employee. By planning the re-recruiting meeting to coincide with the predictable troughs of the morale curve, you can stimulate ideas for new challenges and learning opportunities to help the employee get back on a growth track.

An Ongoing Process

Re-recruiting is really more than just a once-a-year meeting with key employees. Ideally, it's a structured and ongoing process that is reinforced through the consistent actions of management and adherence to the company's core principles and values. (See the sidebar for more on the components of a re-recruiting initiative.)

Finally, the commitment to a re-recruiting initiative must come from the top of your organization. If it is not embraced and championed by senior leadership, it is likely doomed to failure. ■

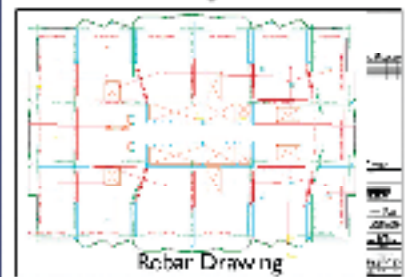
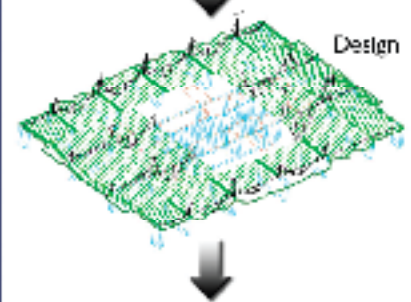
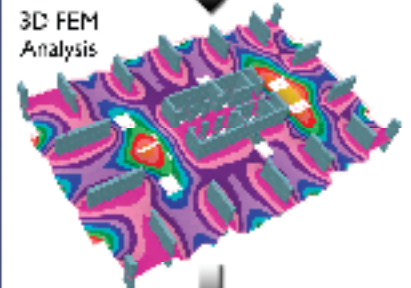
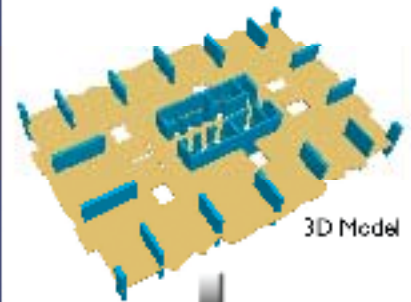
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