

What makes high performers stay?

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By focusing on leadership skills to create a healthy, challenging and inclusive environment, as well as enhancing cooperation within the organisation and working diligently with internal employer branding, an organisation can maximise its potential to retain talent within the company. Doing so will help the organisation to deliver sustainable growth and achieve profitability.



When an employee chooses to leave a company, it is quite common to conduct an exit interview. The human resources department wants to ascertain the main reasons that prompted the employee to resign. The information obtained during such interviews can serve to alleviate the problems that are causing employees to seek jobs elsewhere. However, it is often already too late to act once an employee has taken the decision to leave. When human resources managers become too focused on the problems, they tend to miss the positive factors that encourage employees to stay.

The majority of articles on people retention and attraction describe causes such as “life balance”, “flexible working hours” and “money” as being important factors that determine whether people choose to stay within a company or not. However, they are not sufficient to explain what really motivates the decision to stay or go.

At TNS, we believe that it is important to distinguish between the reasons that encourage employees to stay and reasons that prompt them to leave. For example, it is quite common for recently employed persons to leave if their experiences of their new organisation do not meet the expectations they had prior to employment, i.e. if the actual employer brand experience fails to match the



communicated employer brand. However, even if the experiences of recently employed employees do match their expectations, this does not guarantee that they will choose to stay with the company.

At TNS, our clients often ask us questions such as, “What shall we do in order to retain the attractive and high-performing employees?” To provide a satisfactory answer, we have analysed results from employee surveys in several industries – telecommunications, travel, manufacturing, retail, construction and security services – comprising a

total of 225,000 interviews. We have subsequently extracted the common factors that have an impact on employees' willingness to continue their employment in their current company.

We can conclude that there are quite a few similarities across the industries. One of the key contributory factors to employee attraction is

belief and confidence in the management teams at different levels of the organisation

– a confidence clearly linked to vital aspects such as visibility of management and clarity in their communication to employees.

Another important factor for retention is the company's

ability to live according to the company values and meeting the brand promises

Employees are confronted with the company values and what the brand stands for, both before and during their employment. When employees find that organisational behaviours do in fact mirror the organisational values, the impact on retention is positive.

However, in cases where the organisational values are communicated, but not reflected in people's behaviours, it has a negative effect on retention. Employees get frustrated and feel disconnected from the values that attracted them to join the company in the first place.

The immediate manager has a major impact on employees' willingness to stay. In units and teams where

the immediate manager secures a healthy, developing and inclusive environment

attraction to the company is very high. Inclusion is seen as a leadership style whereby leaders secure an environment of openness and respect, and where leaders delegate responsibilities to employees, as well as challenge and support individual employees through frequent and development-focused dialogue.

Furthermore, the analysis shows that in companies where leaders are capable of

clarifying overall goals and making employees see how they contribute to the overall goals

and thereby to the success of the company, employees are more loyal and inclined to stay.

It is also important for an employee to be able to

collaborate in a business context

knowing why collaboration is key, and with whom to cooperate in order to solve issues, and thereby contribute to the success of the business.

The possibility for career and skills development

is a key factor for retention. For employees, developing and advancing within an organisation is very important in order to maintain and increase their employability - future value and attractiveness in the labour market.



The competition for talent is fierce and no longer confined to certain industries or job categories in particular – it is becoming a reality in many industries and in a wide range of job categories. Nowadays, being able to attract and retain talent is a top priority for most organisations. Through analysis of extensive employee survey data, TNS can see that a number of factors related to leadership and organisational culture are vital for building a highly attractive organisation:



Securing a leadership style where leaders drive business through inclusion, delegation and constructive follow-up processes.

Building a high level of confidence in the senior management teams through clear communication of the organisation's vision and strategy.

Reassuring that the values and brand are anchored internally and externally – these should be enacted internally in people's behaviours as well as in the communication to external target groups.

Strengthening collaboration across the organisation – clarifying roles and responsibilities of the different organisational entities, and ensuring that employees have a firm understanding of the importance of each entity, in order to deliver value to customers and profitability to the company.

Organisations that are successful in attracting and retaining high-performing employees are most likely to enjoy stable long-term profitability and sustainable growth.

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