

ARE YOU GROWING YOUR LEADERSHIP TEAM?



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Guest Writers

Who makes up your leadership team? Were many of them promoted from within? Have they fully transitioned into the leadership role?

Many people are promoted to leadership positions without the proper training or some times without any training. This is risky. Some will figure it out and succeed, though usually taking longer and at a much greater cost than necessary. Others struggle and sometimes are lost both as a productive worker and a potentially great leader. Even leaders who do okay may never fully transition without learning effective leadership skills. This has tremendous impact on attracting and retaining employees. Good employees

expect good leadership; without it, they may be tempted to move on.

A leader needs skills in three overall areas: technical, process (strategic thinking) and human skills. Without formal leadership development, leaders tend to rely on their technical skills and end up doing their people's job instead of their own.

Though every leader has his or her unique style, it is beneficial to get all the leaders on board with foundational leadership skills, speaking the same language and supporting a consistent organizational culture.

Think you can't afford to develop leaders because you have a small company? Actually, it is even more important since you have more limited resources. Every single person in a small company must operate

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at the highest productivity level. A good leader will make this happen. Otherwise, you are wasting money every day from lost productivity and missed opportunities.

WHAT ABOUT EMPLOYEE RETENTION?

While we don't have control over external workforce demographics, we certainly have control over keeping good people! Substantial research has gone into why people leave their current employer. According to Saratoga Institute studies, the reasons given fall into seven categories:

- The job or workplace not as expected
- Mismatch between job & person
- Too little coaching & feedback
- Too few growth opportunities
- Feeling devalued & unrecognized
- Stress from overwork & work-life imbalance
- Loss of trust in leadership

Notice something missing from the list – compensation. Does this mean

money isn't a reason people leave? No. But research strongly suggests while employees leaving often cite "more money" as a reason for their departure, it was something else that triggered them to start looking. It was easier to say money was the main issue, rather than talking about leadership and company culture (and not wanting to burn bridges).

Bottom Line: Leadership has control of the company culture, and has responsibility over these seven retention issues.

The answer? Every transportation company's needs are unique, and various specific programs are being tried. You will need to create an employee retention culture that fits your company best. Ideas to address these seven areas include:

- Provide updated job descriptions
- Assess strengths of each employee & the fit to the job
- Free up time you can invest in giving positive & coaching feedback & listening
- Implement development & motivation plans for each person – learn their goals & what's important to them
- Tell & show employees how much you appreciate them
- Provide managers with coaching/mentoring training – so they know how practically to value people & listen to them
- Keep your word & follow-through on commitments

Do You See Any of These Symptoms in Your Leadership Team?

Not Exercising Authority Effectively: The manager isn't holding some or all team members accountable. The manager works around an employee who isn't doing his or her job. Perhaps the manager is being too hard on employees and abusing the power of the position rather than coaching and inspiring.

Poor Time Management and Productivity: The manager puts out fires constantly rather than identifying the cause and developing longer term solutions and processes. The manager works long hours and doesn't think he can take a vacation. The manager thinks he is too busy to provide employee coaching.

Not Developing the Potential of the Team: Lots of time is spent answering questions because the manager is the only one who knows the procedures; nothing is in writing. Employees are micromanaged rather than developed. The department doesn't work as well when the leader is away.

Lack of Delegation: You hear the manager say, "It's faster to do it myself than

teach someone else". This might be true the first time, but if we don't take the time to teach, we will always be doing the task rather than doing the real job of leadership which is getting results through others.

Missing Motivation: You hear the manager says, "No one cares as much as I do." or hear employees being told, "We need to do this because top management wants it done." Good leaders take personal responsibility and tap into the individual employee's motivation.

Ineffective Problem Solving and Decision Making: The manager makes decisions and solves problems his or her people could solve.

Create the Right Environment for Leadership Growth

Create a leadership development plan for yourself and each employee, but don't waste training dollars. You can't just send someone to a one day seminar most of the time. Take these steps to create a climate of real leadership behavior change:

- Prior to the training, agree upon what specific behaviors and results should be

different after the training.

- Agree upon how the changes will be measured.
- Spread the training over a period of weeks to increase retention and application.
- Allow multiple exposures to the information through reading and listening.
- Schedule weekly meetings where the trainee and his or her manager measure progress and discuss specific application of the ideas.

Cultivate leadership skills in yourself and in your team. Create the right climate for individual and organizational growth. Grow your own leaders! The first step is awareness. To take a free leadership self-assessment, visit www.attainmentinc.com.

Linda Tennant is President of Attainment, Inc., a franchise of 40-year-old Leadership Management Inc. (LMI). Using a proven Behavior Change Process, Attainment helps leaders improve in the areas of leadership, productivity, communication, teambuilding, coaching and sales. Listen to 'Attainment with Attitude' on the John Adam Show, KXAM1310, Tuesdays at 7:40pm.



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