



# RETAINING KEY PLAYERS

David Wee, managing director of Adecco Human Capital Solutions, studies why employees stay or leave an organisation and observes that intrinsic values and interests play a bigger role than factors such as pay, title and benefits

In this ever-changing and volatile employment market, buzzwords are created and tossed around faster than one can say “human resource”. It seemed just a while ago that companies had to ‘win the talent war’. Offering bigger pay packages, better benefits and greater career opportunities, there was a mad rush to try to get talented individuals to join companies. The latest buzzword to hit the HR scene sees employers waking up to the true cost of losing valuable employees.

## Retaining valuable employees

Retaining talents becomes critical as the talent pool shrinks in this thriving economy where demand for talent outstrips supply. A compounding effect is seen when a high-performing employee is replaced: high recruitment costs, disruption of daily operations, and the escalation of morale problems.

In the course of providing career management coaching, Adecco Human Capital Solutions has found, although pay and benefits are still crucial in retaining employees, it is ultimately the degree of employee engagement that has the greatest impact on keeping them.

With the increasingly ageing population and a widening skills gap, it is getting competitive in the recruitment of top talents. The best way to retain them is to engage the employee, continue to be the company of choice and work with a consulting firm to develop and implement a retention strategy. Even if the recruitment is for expansion, it will provide a niche in attracting better talents above the competitors.

## ‘Jumping ship’

In one severe case, attrition patterns pointed to a particular manager who could not engage with anyone. With coaching and through the use of our management tools, he was better equipped to stop his team members from ‘jumping ship’.

Employees often “join an organisation because of the company, but leave because of the manager”. Statistics obtained from exit interviews have shown that one of the main reasons why employees leave is the manager. So, talent retention should start and actively involve the immediate manager or supervisor.

## Best practice

To maximise talent retention and productivity, the process of retention must begin from the start: recruitment. Attracting the right candidate with the right fit will increase the chance of retention. However, in this time of talent shortage, the pressure for companies to urgently fill job vacancies sometimes lead to what HR practitioners term as ‘desperate hires’.

In identifying a potential talent, the individual’s values, skills, interests, strengths and potential have to be assessed. It is equally important to ensure that the individual’s aspiration is aligned with the company’s goals. Often overlooked, communication is essentially one of the key factors in retaining talent. The manager needs to continually engage the employee and remain involved.

## Retention strategies

Pay and benefits are still commonly used by companies as a retention strategy. In recent years, the public sector has even

been creatively using retention pay to help stave off resignations. To be a successful company of the 21st century, this needs to be complemented with many other important considerations. Companies should equip all managers with the knowledge and tools to engage with their team members.

## The trick to work-life balance

Thirty HR practitioners invited to our recent seminar on talent retention were posed a question on how companies can do more with less, since this is the usual case of employees wanting to do less while wanting more.

Companies do not always need to give more, since pay is not the main reason people leave. For an organisation to remain competitive and yet, at the same time, allow employees a desirable work-life balance is tricky. Technically, if employees are sufficiently engaged and given what matters most to them, they will be happier and more productive. It is therefore still possible for companies to do more with less. **HRM**

## RETENTION 101: ENGAGING YOUR TEAM MEMBERS

- Know their uniqueness as persons
- Identify their strengths and coach their performance
- Show them the big picture of the company and the industry
- Explore possibilities for the longer term
- Help them with a development plan