

# **But if I train them they will leave!**

According to the American Management Association, the cost to replace an employee who leaves is, conservatively, 30% of his annual salary. For those with skills in high demand such as IT workers the cost can rise to a frightening 1.5 times the annual salary. The estimated average cost being \$20,000.

As a training center, one of the biggest complaints we here from our corporate clients is, “If we train our staff, they will leave and go to another company offering a higher salary.” And, with statistics like the ones mentioned above, it is no wonder that our clients are concerned about their IT Staff leaving.

However, our research in working with hundreds of IT professionals and corporate firms has proven that improving the skills - and consequently the value and potential salary earning - of your IT staff is NOT the cause for them leaving your organization.

We submit to you that within reason, income is rarely the primary factor motivating workers to move on to greener pastures. Think about it. Most of us realize deep down that there are alternatives (and probably always will be) where we could do essentially the same job, but make more money. Yet, we typically don't act on that realization until something else causes our dissatisfaction to reach an unacceptable level.

Case in point: how many people do you know that earns a 6-figure income yet hates their job? Conversely, have you ever met someone working for peanuts because they just love what they do? Who is more likely to leave their current job?

## **What REALLY causes IT employees to leave?**

For most people, it is when they feel their efforts are unappreciated, that they are being treated unfairly or taken advantage of, or the work environment (nature of the work, security, co-workers) has eroded or is being compromised. Other contributors are feeling “out of the loop”, lack of a clear future or path of advancement, and lack of interesting work.

Before leaving an employee will do some careful consideration of employment options, weighing the value of making a move against the value of staying put. The value of an employment option is a complex mix of money, benefits, employee relations, employee morale, career development, work environment, corporate culture, quality of life issues, and attitudes.

You need to create a situation in which the value that the employee gets from staying with the company outweighs the perceived value that the employee would get by leaving.

And, as a matter of fact, training actually helps to retain skilled employees because they are less frustrated and can accomplish more – satisfied employees produce greater results, and they don't leave the company nearly as fast.

**Besides, if you think training is expensive, try ignorance.**

## **Ok, so how do I keep them after I have trained them?**

Ensure that salaries are competitive and fair for the skills that people have. Employees who have greater skills and produce a higher output of work deserve a higher reward. And, even though you have invested money into training them, at some point, all the other value propositions in the world won't be enough to outweigh a sub-par salary.

Give incentives tied to company/business unit/personal performance. Group incentives work as well as individual incentives – this has been proven to work for years for sales teams. Why not try it out on a whole project team for meeting a deadline or exceeding expectations?

Give future financial rewards – for example stock options that improve with each year of service.

Personal advantages – shorter or flexible hours, compressed workweeks, exceptional cafeterias, childcare, job sharing, telecommuting. Giving employees the ability to control this aspect of their work life is a big motivator.

Finally – ask the employees! You can find out what matters to your particular employees and where you may have issues that you need to address. Then you can select the appropriate options from those presented here.

## **Other Sources for You to Consider**

In addition to existing employees, have you looked at other sources of possible IT recruits? Do you test non-IT people for aptitude and train those that have potential?

Have you targeted retirees? Both IT and non-IT professionals? Many of these people would appreciate a part-time job. What about spouses who have dropped out of the work force to care for children or parents?

## **Final Thoughts**

You will never be able to retain 100% of your employees and you probably wouldn't want to. However, by hiring the right ones to begin with and then training them to do an outstanding job you will get more from them and keep them longer without a doubt. Accept that all employees want to do a great job – get rid of the ones who don't and train the others to be the best they can be.