

Attract and Retain

Top perks motivate employees to remain at their workplace

» BY ALEXANDRIA ELDRIDGE

Recruiting and training new employees costs

money, time and resources, so it's important to keep good people when you find them. Yet many employers may be surprised by what makes their staff want to keep working for them.

CareerBuilder recently surveyed 2,611 hiring managers and 3,991 workers within the U.S. and showed that, after compensation, employees valued flexible schedules most—even over having an important title. Janet Salopek, president and senior consultant for a human resources consulting firm in Calgary, agrees that it's the intangible things that really matter when it comes to employee recruitment and retention. That doesn't mean compensation is insignificant—it's just not as important as people think.

"You definitely need to know what the market is and you need to be competitive," she says. "After that, however, we believe it's the other aspects of your culture that will actually allow you to attract and retain." She lists perks such as flexibility, career advancement opportunities, and recognition as some of the perks that can really set a good employer apart from an average one.



BE FLEXIBLE

Employees stated that they value flexible schedules, with 51% of survey respondents listing flexibility as something that would entice them to stay with an organization. Salopek strongly agrees. "It's not even having Friday afternoons off, but the whole culture of flexibility," she says. "One size does not fit all." Especially with new technology, it may not always be necessary for employees to be at the office, and a good employer will recognize that and offer flexible options.



THE STAMP OF APPROVAL

Recognition is one of the cheapest ways for employers to boost their employee retention, but Salopek says it's "incredibly powerful." She adds that it's particularly important for the younger generation of the workforce, who require more reinforcement—but, really, recognition is good for everybody. "That's what motivates us. That's what gets us excited," Salopek says. Recognition was important to survey respondents: 50% marked it as important in keeping them with an employer.

LIFELONG LEARNING

Employees want opportunities to advance their career and develop as professionals. "People accept one job offer over another because of opportunities for career advancement," Salopek says. In the survey, 35% of respondents said increased learning opportunities would encourage them to stay at a job, while 22% listed academic reimbursement, and 21% said greater opportunities for promotion were important factors.

TOP TIPS

- Don't have a standard list of job requirements.** Set up the job requirements to be specific to each job, and consider what works well for the employee.
- Send a thank-you email or a card** to an employee who's done a good job. That type of recognition is simple, but it can carry them for weeks.
- Ask your employees for input** on what type of professional development they'd like to see, and implement some of the most popular ideas.