

This month's newsletter provides tips on how to gain insight from an employee who resigns to prevent additional turnover. After all turnover makes your team vulnerable to falling short on the delivery important business results.

## TURNOVER: "WHY ARE YOU LEAVING?"

*is the wrong question to ask a resigning employee*

By Carol Bergeron

Your bottom line takes a hit each time a valuable member of your team chooses to leave. Costs include: direct hiring costs for a replacement, productivity losses and increased work time by co-workers who pinch hit until a new employee is up to speed, training investments and ramp up time for the new hire. Don't forget costs more difficult to measure like forfeited opportunities, lost company knowledge and the disruption factor.

**Too often managers equate the reason an employee leaves with the reason for exploring opportunities elsewhere. One may lead to the other but they are not equivalent.**

The reason an employee leaves can stem from a series of rationalizations made over a journey that started with a fundamental choice - to see if the grass is greener elsewhere. It makes nearly no difference if the employee's journey was self-initiated or in response to an invitation. **The most critical moment is when the employee decides that it's okay to check-out other options. In other words the employee gives himself permission to part ways with your organization. And once that mental separation begins then it gets real easy real fast to explore opportunities.** Thus the focus quickly shifts to what each potential employer has to offer. And so the comparisons and rationalizations begin. And that is how we arrive at this list of common reasons for resigning: better job, career advancement, more money, and better benefits.

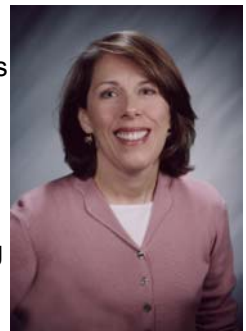
Compare that list with reasons commonly cited for exploring other opportunities. Most are focused on unmet expectations of the current employer: lack of resources to do a good job, unclear goals, things are just too familiar, poor communication, too many politics, not appreciated/undervalued, rewards and pay increases not commensurate with performance, unrealistic work load & working conditions, not enough career advancement, not enough empowerment, a frustrating combination of the above, etc.

More insightful questions for the resigning employee include:

- **What initially prompted you to explore opportunities elsewhere?**
- **What motivated you to accept the invitation for the initial interview? Send that first resume?**
- **What was happening or not happening here, if anything, that influenced your decision to explore other opportunities?**

Whatever the responses, most can be categorized into: **things you and the organization have no control over** (like the employee's desire to change careers or advance to a job that does not exist at your organization, relocate, stop work to take care of a sick family member or go back to school full-time), **things your company could change** (like flexible work schedules, increased communication on business strategy and processes, rewards based on performance) and **things you personally could change** (such as clear performance goals and performance standards, more frequent coaching and feedback, opportunity to take risks and stretch assignments for development).

The responses you get from the questions may also paint a picture of what is on the minds of other valuable employees. **Thus it behooves you to check in with your team and take proactive steps on those items you can change to prevent additional turnover.** Some concerns will be specific to individuals, while others are more



universal or generational. Do take the time to solicit input, sort out the data and proactively change things – a leadership activity that warrants regular attention.

What about counter offers? Many companies engage in this practice though I am not a fan. Counter offers can buy you time. They can also create a false sense of security where the counter offer is perceived as the solution rather than changing those things that instigated the resignation to begin with.

Your organization's performance is dependent upon talented, motivated people. Take steps today to reduce the risk of unwanted turnover through responsiveness and proactive leadership.

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## UPCOMING EVENTS & INTERESTING RESOURCES

**2006 Schedule for Educational Workshops** at [www.bergeronassociates.com/calendar.htm](http://www.bergeronassociates.com/calendar.htm).

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Articles and electronic newsletters filled with practical tips on how to enhance the performance of people and organizations. Explore our publications: [www.bergeronassociates.com/publications.htm](http://www.bergeronassociates.com/publications.htm)

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