



Welcome to the premiere edition of Bergeron Associates' eNewsletter! If you believe that you received this eNewsletter in error and/or do not wish to receive further emails, please click on unsubscribe below.

September represents a fresh start to me. I believe the association has to do with childhood. As a kid, September was a turning point: a new grade, a new teacher, different learning experiences and new friends. September signifies new beginnings so I could not think of a better time to launch Bergeron Associates' electronic newsletter.

My eNewsletter is dedicated to providing you with practical tips on how to enhance the effectiveness of your workforce. Enhancing workforce productivity, within the context of your organization's needs, will lead to improved organizational effectiveness and performance.



Although there have been some encouraging signs of the start of economic turnaround, most business leaders continue to face the task of doing more with less. This leaves little time for leaders to focus on employee retention. When the economy does begin to rebound your talented employees will have access to a variety of employment opportunities. Studies show that organizations consistently working the value proposition they offer to employees will fare best in all economic conditions. Conversely, firms that ignore employee retention will experience turnover and recruitment difficulties. Here are some tips my clients have found to be helpful.

BACK TO BASICS: HOW TO RETAIN EMPLOYEES

By Carol Bergeron

Remember, business cycles are just that → cycles.

It was not that long ago when employees flocked to dot com companies being seduced by extraordinary professional challenges, lofty salary increases and hefty stock options. While that phenomenon may not repeat itself, the economy will rebound and affect organizations with even the lowest employee turnover rates.

Why consider employee retention in uncertain economic times?

1. With each employee departure; knowledge and expertise are lost.
2. Replacing lost expertise can be time consuming and costly.
3. Competitors selectively recruit and hire critical expertise which leaves other companies vulnerable to losing key contributors.
4. Employees know if they are valued or not. Their perceptions may prevent or prompt them to explore opportunities with other firms.
5. Counter offers and attempting to re-hire former employees often produce short lived results.

It makes sense to exert efforts on employee retention regardless of economic condition because scarce expertise will put achievement of business objectives at risk.

The Road Map to Employee Retention

1. Understand the expertise your organization needs in order to achieve its' business objectives.
2. Know with whom that expertise resides.
3. Your knowledge of business objectives and existing employee expertise should guide your decision making on: prioritization of projects, resource allocation, rightsizing the workforce, selective hiring and retention.



4. Target your retention efforts on employees whose absence would make executing your business strategy difficult. These critical employees may be groups of people who possess a particular expertise and skill set or they may be specific individuals.
5. Design and implement retention programs starting with the value proposition you offer to critical employees. Then expand your retention efforts to broader employee populations as appropriate.

Key Elements of the Employee Value Proposition

We define the *employee value proposition* as the reasons why employees choose to join and remain employed with your firm. Research shows the key elements include:

1. **Clear Goals** – People want challenging responsibilities at work. They want to understand what is expected of them and how their goals and contributions align with those of the organization. Through daily conversations, clearly communicate individual goals and how they fit into organizational goals. *Message: We expect great contributions from you and they matter to us.*
2. **Opportunity to Influence** – People want autonomy and the opportunity to influence direction. Without these two ingredients you may find yourself with employees who do exactly what they are told and nothing more. Actively solicit new ideas from employees. Implement suggestions. If suggestions are unsuitable in original form then talk about why and jointly modify them so that they can be implemented. *Message: You have good ideas that make a difference.*
3. **Learning and Development** – In today's knowledge based economy, people want job enrichment, career growth and advancement more than ever. Assign resume-building professional challenges and make use of stretch assignments, special projects and job rotations. Couple training with coaching as an effective development tool. *Message: We believe you have more to offer and we choose to invest in you.*

It is not uncommon for learning and development programs to be cut during tough times. This is unfortunate since they are designed to accelerate workforce effectiveness which is a pre-requisite for achieving business objectives. Our associate, Nancy Oliver who has nearly twenty years experience in Training and Development, has a few practical suggestions on how to assess individual development needs within business context. We hope her suggestions, found in this month's **ASSOCIATE SPOTLIGHT** section, come in handy when you reinvest in learning and development.

4. **Recognition and Rewards** – People want to be recognized and rewarded for their contributions to a winning team. Start with a simple "thank you" during a daily conversation. Get the next level of management involved in recognizing success too. Celebrate success at the next project team meeting upon achievement of a milestone. Always link the accomplishment with a related organizational goal. Differentiate compensation between top performers and good performers. Get more aggressive with incentive compensation plans if you want to encourage business goal achievement. *Message: We appreciate you. We value your contributions and how you achieve them.*
5. **Culture and Environment** – People want to work for firms with values similar to their own. They look for environments that are conducive to getting work done. They want leaders and co-workers who are talented and care about their work and respect each other. They want quality tools to do excellent work. Hire and retain for organizational fit. Provide the best tools if you want exceptional results. *Message: We want you to want to be here to create, learn and achieve memorable results.*

Summary

The most successful organizations know what their customers value most and deliver that value. Similarly, successful organizations know what employees value most and deliver that value in all economies because they understand that **scarce expertise will put achievement of business objectives at risk.**



TAKE THE LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE

Create a personalized development plan with your most critical employee using Nancy's step by step approach. Once achieved, engage other employees by using the same process. Feel free to contact me with questions or share your experience: 781-376-4071 or email carol@bergeronassociates.com.

ASSOCIATE SPOTLIGHT



DEVELOPING EMPLOYEES WITH ORGANIZATIONAL PURPOSE

By Nancy Oliver

One element to retaining valuable employees is to provide them with development opportunities. All employees benefit from acquiring new knowledge, skills and expertise. Offering employees an array of development opportunities is fundamental to preparing them for future challenges and reinforcing that they are worth the investment. However, like any investment, development investments should be tied to business objectives. New behaviors and improved outcomes produced by employees enhance organizational performance.

Identify key employees who have both valuable skills needed today and the aptitude to learn essential skills necessary for tomorrow's organizational challenges. Then create a development plan specific to the needs of each key individual. The three phased approach described is easy to use and not time consuming. The phases include preparation, hosting the development discussion and following-through which is a critical success factor.

Prepare

1. Clarify the employee's upcoming goals and put into organizational context. How will the employee's goals contribute to achieving business objectives?
2. Clarify development needs based on what you have observed and put into organizational context. How will the employee's further development favorably impact business results? Focus on three development needs per employee at a time.
3. Set up a discussion time with the employee to talk about development. Prior to the discussion, ask the employee to identify his/her future goals and top three development needs that would make him/her more effective on the job. Ask the employee to bring these ideas to the discussion.
4. Prepare yourself for the discussion by recognizing that you and the employee will have both common and unique ideas.
5. Guide the discussion so that the employee identifies and takes ownership for his/her own development. Do this by asking many questions. Employees who self-identify goals, development needs and learning aids are usually more inclined to take action.

Host the Development Discussion

6. Share the organization's business objectives and vision for the future.
7. Let the employee know that you value the contributions made to the company.
8. Ask the employee to share his/her future goals and related development needs. Ask more questions so you understand what is behind the ideas.
9. Ask the employee to prioritize development needs that once developed, would allow him/her to be more effective at meeting the goals.
10. Look for matches between the employee and organization's needs and show how meeting the employee's development needs would help achieve business objectives.



11. Stress that the company wants to invest in the employee's development.
12. Jointly prepare a development plan. Come to agreement on the knowledge, skills, expertise and behaviors that are to be developed. Brainstorm and settle on the methods for development which may include: training, e-learning, continued education, coaching and mentoring, conferences, reading, etc. Finally, determine job responsibilities, projects or special work assignments during which the employee will have opportunity to practice the new learnings.

Follow-Through

13. Support implementation of the development plan through coaching, mentoring and providing feedback based on your observations in daily conversations.
14. Hold the employee accountable for applying the new learnings to job assignments.
15. As appropriate, ask the employee to share what has been learned with others as a way to reinforce learnings and contribute to the development of others.

RESOURCES

For more information on what employees want from employers, read these publications:

Buckingham, Marcus & Coffman, Curt. First Break All the Rules, What the World's Greatest Managers Do Differently. New York, NY. Simon & Schuster, 1999.

Gratton, Lynda. Living Strategy, Putting People at the Heart of Corporate Purpose. London, Great Britain. Pearson Education Limited, 2000.

Bergeron Associates publications are conveniently located at: www.bergeronassociates.com/publications.htm .

INVITATION FOR FEEDBACK

Thanks for taking the time to read this eNewsletter. I hope you found it of value and I welcome your feedback. Please contact me directly by calling 781-376-4071 or emailing carol@bergeronassociates.com .

ABOUT BERGERON ASSOCIATES

Bergeron Associates provides talent strategies and solutions to prepare your workforce to execute business strategy.

Bergeron Associates
101 Middlesex Tpke, Ste 6, PMB 326
Burlington, MA 01803-4914
781-376-4071
www.bergeronassociates.com

© Copyright 2003 Bergeron Associates. This publication may be freely redistributed in full or in part as long as full attribution and our contact information, including company name, email address, telephone number, and web address, are included.