

# The 6 pillars of talent retention

*There's a saying that employees don't leave companies, they leave managers – and today they are leaving more often than ever. According to ONS statistics, the average tenure of an employee in the UK is falling, mirroring what is happening in the US where it is just 1.5 years. What do these numbers mean? Are managers doing that bad of a job engaging and retaining their people? Is this churn and burn dynamic the new norm?*

Wherever the macro trends are headed, the ability to engage and retain talented employees is a critical skill for managers. Here are six reasons good employees quit and how to keep them – none of which involves throwing a pile of money around:

## No Vision

Most employees don't get out of bed each morning to hit a profit number. In many organisations there are only a few of people that truly care about it or, in some cases, even understand exactly what it means to hit that number. It's vital that your senior executives don't confuse your financial objectives with vision. **Vision feeds financials and not the other way around.**

For example, Walt Disney was the master of painting a compelling vision of the future. He dreamt up Disneyland while his two young daughters were riding the carousel at Griffith Park in Los Angeles. Sitting on a park bench with other parents, he envisioned a place where both children and adults could play together. Today, Walt Disney's vision is worth around \$100 billion (according to Forbes) and his company is the largest media conglomerate in the world. Successful managers sell their employees on a vision of the future and crucially take the employees with them. **If the talent that was nurtured to deliver this vision is dissipating, it's time to reassess.**

## No Connection To The Big Picture

Gallup's Q12 employee engagement survey asks the following question: "The mission or purpose

of my company makes me feel my job is important." Their extensive research shows that there is a direct correlation between how employees rate that one question and employee retention, customer metrics, productivity, and profitability. Gallup concludes that "The best workplaces give their employees a sense of purpose, help them feel they belong, and enable them to make a difference."

One example of this dynamic is Google. While almost no one understands exactly how Google's search engine works, its mission is clear: "to organise the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful." It is a simple, actionable, and meaningful connection to the huge company. Successful companies and managers understand that business strategies may change, but a mission does not.

## No Empathy

No one joining the workforce today expects to get a gold watch after 50 years with the same company. Employers let hundreds and thousands of people go each year while employees are just as likely to leave companies for other opportunities. Generally speaking, there is very little loyalty on either side. But there is an almost ridiculously simple and

inexpensive solution for that problem: Take the time to listen to your people.

This is not just talk therapy – they should leave the conversation believing that you will take whatever action may be helpful and possible or at least logically explain why nothing can be done. But by leaving your door open to employee concerns and suggestions, leaders

encourage them to feel that they have a stake in an organization that considers them important and cares enough to listen.

### No (Effective) Motivation

Alignment of aims, purpose and values between staff, teams and organisation is the most fundamental aspect of motivation. The better the alignment and personal association with organisational aims, the better the platform for motivation.

Where people find it difficult to align and associate with the organisational aims, then most motivational ideas and activities will have a reduced level of success.

Motivation is a complex area. It's different for each person. Motivational receptiveness and potential in everyone changes from day to day, from situation to situation. Get the alignment and values right, and motivational methods work better. Motivational methods of any sort will not work if people and organisation are not aligned. People are motivated towards something they can relate to and something they can believe in. Times have changed. People want more. You should view the following motivational methods and ideas as structures, activities and building blocks, to be used when

you have a solid foundation in place. The foundation is a cohesive alignment of people's needs and values with the aims and purpose of the organization.

According to author and Fortune 100 consultant Charles S. Jacobs:

“It's been well established that such external motivators (compensation) decrease our internal motivation. Working for the carrot displaces the human need for purposeful achievement, and it comes at a huge cost--both in results and in satisfaction. When people are totally engaged in their work, the neurotransmitter dopamine is released, which sharpens focus and increases performance while

creating a profound sense of wellbeing. **We are motivated by the work itself, not the reward.**

Creating career paths that are well communicated and understood by employees is not something most companies do well. Even in the best-case scenario where managers are holding regular performance reviews with their employee, employees often don't understand how to move either horizontally or vertically in an organisation. Of course, not every employee is going to end up as the CEO. Likewise, a person who is brilliant at product design won't necessarily succeed in sales. But, for any employee that is worth retaining, a manager must make clear to them how and where they can move forward on their career path.

### No Future

Rialto has found that the best managers spend time with their team members to find out what their aspirations are, assess what they have been able to achieve in the company, and how the company can help them.

Employees should be given opportunities to do something more than they're used to, such as challenging work projects, or some formal training. Employees want to know that there are opportunities to learn, grow and progress, otherwise they will begin to wonder if their future lies elsewhere.

All managers need to communicate the company's vision of the future to their teams. If employees feel that the company isn't going anywhere, they are bound to think that their careers aren't either.

### No Fun

For many employees, instant gratification is the new norm. The evolution of film, television, the Internet, social media, and handheld devices means that everything is on demand all the time and wherever we may be. As a result, putting in eight straight hours of work at the same desk is less and less attractive to many employees. But this doesn't mean the work force is lazier, it's because defining work in such a traditional manner doesn't make sense to employees in today's constantly interconnected and fast-paced world.

For businesses, this means that attracting, engaging, and retaining top talent depends on reinventing their work environments, blurring the line between work and play. Companies must embrace a culture of increased autonomy and innovation, and engage employees around a powerful mission and purpose.

In 2003, Best Buy's H.R. leaders began piloting a new approach to this engagement problem. Slowly, department-by-department, they rolled out a program called ROWE (Results-Only Work Environment) that relied on increased employee engagement by reducing work to a baseline: productivity. That was it!

Employees were released from a world of mandatory meetings, nine-to-five schedules, and long commutes. It was a radical departure and the results were emphatically positive, engagement rose, causing a spike in performance. The pilot continued until it was adopted throughout the entire Best Buy headquarters operation. In 2006 the company was included on Fortune's list of America's Most Admired Companies.

Of course, ROWE was designed to relieve the tedium of office work and there are serious limitations to this specific program. It is hard to imagine how a schedule-free, post-geographic work environment could be successful for a restaurant or a roofing company. And, sure enough, Best Buy was unable to roll out a

version of ROWE to help combat the company's 67% turnover rate at their retail stores. But the biggest lessons of ROWE's measurable success – thinking about work as fun and flexible – can still be applied to any size and type of business, creating more productive work environments at every level.

**From an employee's perspective, there is a growing body of evidence to suggest that most executives will take control of their careers at the moment they suspect that the company they joined is not the one they were expecting.** For many years now, Rialto has been engaged by some of the UK's leading companies, who face common challenges. They have challenged us to help them to grow, and we have responded by examining the core values of the company, ensuring that the leadership has a strategic vision, assisting them to articulate the vision to align their people and attract new talent to deliver against it. When these elements are in place, the most talented staff commit to the brand and values of the company, and in turn attract future talent to drive the growth that is the lifeline of every organisation. Sounds simple? With the right strategic partner, it can be a rewarding and uplifting experience. See some of our success stories at [www.rialtoconsultancy.com](http://www.rialtoconsultancy.com)

To find out how Rialto can help you and your organisation:

Telephone: +44 (0)20 3043 8640

Email: [info@rialtoconsultancy.com](mailto:info@rialtoconsultancy.com)

[www.rialtoconsultancy.com](http://www.rialtoconsultancy.com)

