

COACHING WILL IMPROVE RETENTION AND PRODUCTIVITY

Peter West P.Eng.

Robert's story

Robert was VP of operations and production for a small oil company. Robert liked his job and knew he was indispensable to the success of the company. He was the only one who had experience in drilling, construction and production. He had a pretty good boss. Joel, the president, was aggressive in expanding the company. This kept Robert busy with capital projects on top of production operations.

There was one problem in this picture. Life on Robert's home front wasn't so good and he knew why. There had been a great deal of overtime since he took on this job. He was rarely home in time for dinner and his weekends were spent on the phone plus occasional field trips to iron out problems. However Robert was cultivating Ashray, a young engineer who had been with the company for two years and was showing promise. Robert was beginning to delegate responsibility to Ashray and this would give him more time with his family.

That was until today. Ashray had quit. He just said he had found another opportunity. Robert suspected there was more to it than that. Joel had once mentioned that perhaps he (Robert) was micromanaging his people. Robert knew that he did give a lot of direction but he believed he had no choice, since he was the only one experienced in field operations.

Let's look at why Robert is in this situation and what could have been done differently. First, what do employees look for in their jobs and what will make them want to stay. There are three basic desires that are completely universal; they are independent of the industry, the company and the individual's position in the company. You know them because they apply to you.

Three basic "wants" that people seek in their career.

1. Corporate Culture or Climate

Do you have any fun at work? Do you look forward to Monday mornings? Do people smile in your work environment? Do you and your coworkers talk with pride about your organization? Do you have a boss that you highly respect? Does he/she let you know exactly where you stand, all the time? If you do say 'yes' to all these questions you are very fortunate. Most of us are not that fortunate.

2. The Nature of Our Work

Is your work challenging, interesting and contain variety? Maybe you might even feel passionate about your work? Do you feel that what you do is important and makes a difference?

3. Compensation

Are you are well paid compared to your peers? Do you believe you are in one of the better paying companies? How do other benefits stack up such as; flex time, stock options, on site child nursery, Fridays off, bonuses, retirement plan and much more.

Which of these 3 is most important?

When employees decide to change companies, what do they say? The two most common reasons stated to their manager and in job interviews are a) greater opportunity and b) an increase in compensation. But what do these same people say to their trusted friends? It's the boss! Over and over again, surveys tell us that **workers quit their bosses**.

The work climate is the most important. How you get along with your peers, the work ethic in your team and most important, how you feel about your boss is critical. He/she most strongly influences your work environment, the kind of feedback you receive, your work assignments, the type and frequency of communication he/she gives you, a smile, a feeling of being appreciated and valued.

West Jet

Don Bell, VP of West Jet says that employees who are emotionally attached to the organization are the most productive. This seems to be borne out by West Jet's amazing profitability in a very competitive environment even as they are expanding. Don also says that West Jet receives 1500 unsolicited resumes a week. Do you think they are struggling for staff? Not likely. Why do so many people want to work there? **Because of the corporate culture**. All this says that the same organization where employees have fun can also be highly productive.

Super Bowl

The Indianapolis Colts won the Super Bowl. Did you notice their coach Tony Dungy? He doesn't look like the typical football coach. Tony never raises his voice and never uses profanity. His players have immense respect for him and this showed in their effort and productivity. Clearly Tony is both a strong motivator and fostered a positive team environment.

First Break All The Rules

This book by Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman says; "so much money has been thrown at the challenge of keeping good people --- in the form of better pay, better perks, and better training --- when, in the end, turnover is mostly a manager issue. If you have a turnover problem, look first to your managers."

What is the solution to Robert's problem?

Robert had been told that he was micromanaging; in fact he also had a 360⁰ feedback in which there was strong signals of micromanaging. Robert needs some help. He needs constructive feedback on his management style, he needs someone to hold a mirror in front of him. But he needs to do this soon before he is divorced and has health problems.

Every manager can benefit greatly with the help of a coach. Holding deep conversations with a coach, examining your leadership style, observing you on the job and providing objective feedback. Working with you to set goals and holding you accountable, helping you to discover your own strengths and capitalizing on them. The leader, who is motivated to make changes to his/her leadership style and gets help, will see strong positive results.

Peter West is an independent business coach.
Visit www.peterwestcoach.ca