

More than money: Ways to increase employee loyalty

By LISA A. BEACH

Bonuses may not be the key to your employees' hearts or to their loyalty.

"The Beatles sang, 'I don't care too much for money, because money can't buy me love.' Money can't buy employee commitment, either," says **Charles Rodgers**, chairman of Boston-based **WFD Inc.**, a national leader in the work-life industry.

According to WFD's research, there are at least seven major drivers more important than compensation that influence sustainable workforce commitment. So, if money doesn't drive employee commitment, what does?

1. **Communication:** Open, two-way communication in the workplace.
2. **Diversity and inclusion:** Employees' sense of feeling valued

and respected.

3. **Job satisfaction:** Satisfaction with specific job characteristics like challenging work, tools to do the job and learning opportunities.

4. **Flexibility:** Employees' sense of control over when, where and how they perform their job.

5. **Manager effectiveness:** The level of people management, communication and business skills of immediate supervisors.

6. **Work-life support:** The degree to which employees feel support for integrating work with personal and family responsibilities.

7. **Career advancement:** Opportunities to grow and advance based on performance.

(See **MONEY** on page 2)

Model appropriate holiday behavior

December means celebration for many people, and workers may be tempted to decorate, party and even go overboard. Managers must be effective role models during seasonal celebrations, helping employees to have fun while keeping up productivity. Start by:

- **Portraying sensitivity to different cultures and holidays.** If you generally give each employee a holiday card, make sure you send greetings that reflect their beliefs.
- **Wishing customers a heartfelt holiday greeting.** Show employees that

customers are important. Keep a holiday calendar and call with an appropriate greeting or send a simple card at the right time for each customer. It will be appreciated and remembered.

- **Reflecting your company's culture.** Portray professionalism and be sure to relay your company's views on holiday decorations, treats and parties.
- **Conveying a sense of fun.** Find a balance between a business-like attitude and a celebratory atmosphere. Make sure that employees know you appreciate them and want them to enjoy the festivities at their company. ■

• **Link success with learning.** Show that you care about an employee's success. Instead of linking goals with punishment, link goals with development.

• **Relay your competence.** When employees don't seem to be taking your advice seriously — especially if you or they are new to the scene — they may not understand your areas of competence. Although it's not good to brag, it is important that employees know you do know what you're talking about.

• **Provide constant feedback.** If you keep feedback for once-in-a-great-while, you're going to find that employees may feel you're "dumping" on them when you do give feedback. If done in this manner, feedback may simply feel overwhelming and may become counter-productive. Talk openly each day about what employees need to do to succeed.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

Several of my employees recently have come to me to tell me that they are bored. I am not really sure what to say — or to do — when I hear such a comment.

(See page 2)

Lead development of leaders

"I start with the premise that the function of leadership is to produce more leaders, not more followers."

— *Ralph Nader*

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

Break through employee boredom

Consider employees who are saying to you that they are bored to be asking for your help. Boredom can lead to the turnover of your best employees, who may be seeking professional growth and opportunities to be creative. *Love 'Em or Lose 'Em: Getting Good People to Stay* by **Beverly Kaye** and **Sharon Jordan-Evans** provides several ways for managers to engage employees.

When you hear employees lodging such complaints, try the following:

- **Change tasks.** New or modified responsibilities can provide employees with more challenging work.
- **Encourage client contact.** Employees who connect with customers are more likely to understand the company's product and how it can fill customer needs.
- **Create reachable goals.** Enrich an employee's experience by creating new goals each year and consciously work on them with the employee.
- **Assemble teams.** Kaye and Jordan-Evans suggest that self-directed work teams, which make their own decisions and redistribute work to create a variety of tasks for each member, help employees feel energetic and empowered.
- **Emphasize innovation.** The book's authors suggest that managers reward employees for creative ideas and provide workers with resources that will encourage innovation. ■

Source: *Love 'Em or Lose 'Em: Getting Good People to Stay* by Beverly Kaye and Sharon Jordan-Evans (Berrett-Koehler 1999).

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MONEY (continued from page 1)

"As a supervisor, you serve as an ambassador of the work culture. Your actions and behaviors actually help create the work culture, in both negative and positive ways," explains **Lisa Levey**, a WFD consultant.

Because most of the seven drivers are directly under your control, you can make or break the work culture, and thus, employee commitment. Levey offers these tips to enhance the work culture and strengthen employee commitment:

- **Create a dialogue with employees.** Communication, especially when it's one-on-one, is a powerful tool. Create time for regular "check ins" to ask employees, "How are you doing? How are things going? What are you having problems with?"
- **Understand the broader context** of employees' lives. Be sensitive to outside problems.
- **Approach employees with a feeling of discovery.** Partner with employees to solve issues.
- **Give employees constructive feedback** (both formally and informally) on a regular basis. In the absence of feedback, employees often think they're not doing a good job. Tell them how they're doing. If they're doing well, give them a verbal pat on the back. If they're doing poorly, let them know how to improve.
- **Listen to employees** — even if you can't always do what they want.
- **Be honest with employees.** Share information with them when it's relevant and appropriate.
- **Discuss professional development opportunities** with employees and help them gain access to resources.
- **Advocate for employees.** Take a proactive approach, step in and act on their behalf. There's a lot you can do in your own department or division. And even when something is out of your direct control, take a leadership role to change the norms or the culture. Employees want to know that you'll go to bat for them.

Once you understand what drives employee commitment — and realize that much of it is under your direct control — you can take the appropriate steps to boost loyalty and retain employees. ■

Source: Charles Rodgers, WFD Inc., Boston, Mass., (617) 244-9682.