

# Head Light



Recruit to retain



Debbie Hance, Head of Business Psychology, explains the importance of retention to recruiters

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*There are two key aspects to recruitment. The first, obviously, is to find the right candidate for the role. The second - which is often overlooked - is to retain the services of that individual for as long as possible.*

Some recruiters might dismiss the idea that retention is actually part of their remit. But if the employee doesn't stay with the organisation - at least long enough to secure a return on the investment of recruiting them - then they were not the right candidate in the first place.

We all know that a range of factors will impact on whether or not an individual will stay with his or her employer. But what exactly are those factors?

After conducting a systematic review of published sources, we've uncovered 12 factors that fundamentally affect how people feel about their work and their employer. These are the key factors that underpin staff retention. Put simply, if you get these right, people will stay with you.

The 12 factors are: wellbeing; motivation; reward and recognition; involvement; autonomy; teamwork and collaboration; purpose and meaning; relationships; trust; career/personal development; communication and performance management.

### An HR issue?

Recruiters might feel that we're straying into broader HR territory here. Yes, these 12 factors will influence the level of employee engagement in your organisation but that doesn't mean they should be outside the scope of recruitment.

Every recruiter will know the importance of ensuring a cultural fit between the candidate and the organisation. With experience and psychometric tests, you should be able to identify candidates who have the potential to succeed. But you can't match them to the organisation's culture if you don't know exactly what that culture is.

If you 'oversell' the culture, by giving a candidate a misleading impression of what it's like to work in your organisation, they'll soon find that the reality of the workplace doesn't match their expectation. When that happens, people often leave. So, your colleagues might have been patting you on the back for recruiting the right person initially but what are they going to think of you if that person heads for the door after three months?

The point here is that in order to understand staff retention, recruiters have to understand the issue of employee engagement. The two are intrinsically linked. The right candidates for your organisation are the ones who will be engaged by the role, the work environment and your corporate culture.

The best way of finding out what existing employees think about their role, their work environment and the corporate culture is to ask them. But, sadly, when many organisations conduct employee surveys, they simply ask generic questions about attitudes, perceptions and job satisfaction. They don't focus on the specific issues that drive employee engagement, so they never get to the root of this issue. When it comes to analysing the survey data, they get blinded by too much information, which makes it difficult to identify exactly what the data is telling them and where the challenges lie.

The upshot here is that recruiters should liaise closely with the HR colleagues in their organisation who conduct employee surveys, because the results will shed light on the issue of retention.

Ideally, employee surveys should focus on the 12 factors mentioned above. For each of these factors, it is important to ask two critical questions: To what extent do you experience this at work? And: How important is that to the way you feel? The correlation between those two questions will pinpoint where you need to focus in order to enhance engagement and improve staff retention.

The good news is that software is now available which enables organisations to self-sufficiently create and manage their own 15-20 minute engagement surveys. It's therefore easier than ever before to ask these critical questions. In some cases, the software will not only analyse the responses for you, it will also prioritise specific and meaningful actions for every employee, to improve engagement at every level.

Research studies show that employee engagement can increase productivity, improve financial performance and raise customer satisfaction. HR's agenda will undoubtedly be to assess engagement in order to achieve these outcomes. However, from a recruitment perspective, the key take-away is that engaged employees not only perform better, they stay longer. Recruiters can therefore be more effective in their role if they understand that there's a direct link between engagement and staff retention - and that 12 factors will influence both.

### About Head Light

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