

The Human Dimension

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Building Loyalty Reduces Employee Turnover

High turnover is a costly issue for most employers and turf managers are no exception. In fact, for those turf industry managers in the northern climates, the seasonal nature of the work often increases the potential of high turnover. Many turf managers have a very small year-round crew, and then a larger seasonal crew. To be successful, many managers try to keep the very best year-round crew, and then keep as many quality seasonal employees coming back year after year as they possibly can.

There is a great financial incentive to keep turnover low. It costs hundreds—if not thousands—of dollars in advertising costs, interview costs, training time, and other expenses every time an employee decides to leave your business. The key to low turnover in many cases is the amount of time the employer has spent being sensitive to employee needs and building loyalty. In short, those employers who create a work environment where employees want to stay, usually are successful keeping turnover rates low.

To reduce turnover and keep a satisfied, productive work force, here are six steps to increase employee loyalty:

1. Design jobs with employees in mind. It is hard to sustain interest in tasks that are difficult, repetitive and boring. While the assignment of difficult tasks is inevitable at times, job variety is the key to keeping employees fresh and enthusiastic about what they are doing. Rotate jobs so that the most difficult tasks get distributed among a number of people.

In addition, try to fit the employee's interests to the tasks that they are assigned to. If, for example, an employee has a particular aptitude for working with equipment or for organizing tasks and projects, matching the employee's interests with specific jobs will enhance employee motivation.

Working conditions are also an important part of job design. Proper equipment, including safety equipment and clothing that will protect them from various weather conditions will enable your employees to do a job safely and effectively.

2. Create performance expectations and goals. Employees want to know what their job

is and what specifically is expected of them. Management research clearly indicates that employees who set goals accomplish more than employees who don't. Effective managers work with employees to establish job goals and expectations. To the greatest extent possible, goals should be in writing so that they can be referred to from time to time and evaluated. Above all, goals and accomplishments expected should be realistic.

If an employee views his or her goals as unattainable, chances are the individual won't even try to achieve them. Likewise, if the goals are too easy to attain, performance will suffer. A good set of performance goals provides an opportunity for ongoing performance discussions between manager and employee. In addition, the accomplishment of performance goals can provide employees with a great deal of job satisfaction and motivation.

3. Provide ongoing support and feedback. By providing coaching and feedback, managers put themselves in the position to support top performance in their employees. Effective managers also provide encouragement when needed. Higher levels of performance can be achieved when the employee knows that the manager has confidence in him or her, and that the manager will help them succeed at a difficult task.

By receiving continuous feedback, employees know how they are doing and what corrections they can make to proceed in their work more effectively. Employees also want to know why a job is being done a particular way or why a specific procedure is important to success. Explaining why a job is important and letting employees know that good performance is appreciated, will help you build employee loyalty.

4. Listen. Listening is perhaps the most important aspect of communication for a manager or supervisor. Effective managers make it clear that they want their employees' feedback and that their comments about the workplace and job performance are welcome any time.

Listening is an important way to show respect for employees' contributions, abilities and ideas. Managers who put priority on taking the time to listen are more likely to identify improvements in job design and performance.

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