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**“THEY LEAVE BECAUSE IT ISN’T WORTH STAYING”
THE EMPLOYEE RETENTION CHALLENGE**

*by Renie Cavallari
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Recently I had the chance to speak on a panel discussion at the Hotel World Expo and the question on the table was: with the current economic realities and the endless need to attract and retain top performing people, how do we live in the same space? In short, the question was how do we realistically balance the benefits for employees against the rising costs of doing business and simultaneously attract and retain the best our market place has to offer?

My response is to think about what supports your Community culture and you will find creative ways to give to your people, cost effectively and competitively. Remember that the cost of losing an employee can be 100-200% of their salary, according to Harvard Business Journal’s latest research, and the loss of a manager averages \$5,000 according to SITE’s most recent study. Keeping your people is the most cost effective solution. So how does building a Community and aligning your culture play a part?

When your people feel a part of something that represents a higher purpose than themselves, they work and think differently, including not rushing off to the grass that is never truly much greener. This is especially true if you offer a great place to work!

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1ST ADD EMPLOYEE RETENTION CHALLENGE

Benefits are a compliment to the culture where people work. Have you ever worked in an environment that felt negative and unappreciative? It doesn't matter what wages and benefits you are offered in this environment, at some point people will jump ship...the water is just too "turbulent".

So how do you integrate Community and Employee benefits?

1. Constantly reinforce and acknowledge your people and what their work is truly doing. Housekeepers aren't cleaning dirty rooms; they are creating a sanctuary for each guest who enters a room to feel comfortable and at peace. Your housekeeping checklists help you with the process and your powerful culture gets your people aligned and fired up. This costs nothing and gets you everything!
2. Benefits are an expensive reality and without them your talent may go down the street. You can surely bet that your talent will leave if they don't feel a part of your Community and a competitor steps in offering them a better benefits package. So how do you offer benefits that don't position you to go broke and support your culture? Get creative!

Here are a few ideas worth considering:

1. Make sure that you offer benefits that support your vision, mission and values. If you are going to reward people for performance and good behavior, have it be directly related to one of these key components. Reinforcement of what you are truly delivering not only gets it delivered, it makes you money.
2. Find ways to recognize people every day and tie the recognition and your comments back to your culture. Be specific. Don't make it hard to be successful.

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2ND ADD EMPLOYEE RETENTION CHALLENGE

3. Think about benefits in four areas:

a. The Basics:

- Health insurance
- Vacation
- 401K
- Holiday pay and the like

b. Training & Development:

- Share what your training costs are per person and how this training will shape their lives as well as improve their work for you and themselves into their future. Training is a gift an employee takes with them along the work journey. Helping them understand its importance and cost shows you care enough to invest in them.
- Executive coaching
- Detail their training benefits as part of their compensation package.

c. Beyond the Basics: (you can trade many of these out with local vendors)

- Offer free group health club trainer sessions.
- Have a nutritionist come in and talk about how to stay healthy through the foods you eat.
- Offer free hair cuts so your staff has time for grooming and doesn't have deal with it on their days off.
- Have a personal shopper come in for your managers and share how to look like a pro on a budget.

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3RD ADD

EMPLOYEE RETENTION CHALLENGE

- Offer on-property or discounted child care services.
- Pay for bus passes or other transit services.
- Free massages
- Free tickets to nearby family attractions or movie tickets.

d. Quality of Life Support:

- Extra vacation days
- Retirement planning
- Savings and Banking
- College Savings Plans
- Life Insurance Planning
- Adoption Assistance
- Non-profit Gift Matching

You must start your employee recruitment and retention strategy with Community alignment and then select benefits that support your culture. Change it up especially in the "Beyond the Basics" area and you will keep them working harder for the purpose you have established, they will be happy to do the work and stay around. We all know people hate change, so if they keep leaving it's because it isn't worth staying.

If you think employee benefits are expensive, take a look at your employee recruiting and retraining costs.

Renie Cavallari is CEO and Chief Inspiration Officer for Aspire, an international training and consulting company positioning organizations to achieve optimum performance. Aspire provides innovative learning, strategic marketing, leadership training and cultural alignment for increasing revenues, growth in market share, a

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4TH ADD EMPLOYEE RETENTION CHALLENGE

re-energized sales force and lasting changes in attitudes and outcome. Founded in 1995, Aspire has headquarters in Phoenix with a network of inspiring professionals across the country.

For more information on employee retention programs, visit www.aspiremarketing.com or e-mail Renie directly at renie@aspiremarketing.com or call Aspire at 602-392-0700.