

The Coaching Corner

with

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People Join Organizations and Leave Bosses

About eight years ago I heard Tony Jackson say the words that are the title of this piece. While I associate these words with Tony, he tells me it actually comes from someone at the Gallup Organization. I tell you this because the focus of this article is on retaining those employees you have searched so hard to find and hire. And the work by Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman (*both of Gallup*) in *“First, Break All the Rules”* has much to tell us about retaining employees.

Think back on your employment decisions. Weren't you excited about working for your new organization? Didn't you come into the job feeling good about the organization and the boss? But the real test comes in the next 90 to 180 days...did you make the right decision to come to work here?

That is what is going through the minds of your new hires, and the time frame of 90 to 180 days is crucial. Sure, it is the general time for an employee to be in a probationary period, but so are you as the new boss. If they don't like what they see, it is way too easy in today's labor market to simply move on. So what's a boss to do?

Buckingham and Coffman have much to offer here. The central lesson from their book is that there are 12 things that have a profound effect on employee satisfaction, and the following are crucial during this initial 90 to 180 days.

First, be clear about what you expect from your employees. How disheartening is it to find that what you thought your job was isn't really the case, as your boss wants you to do many other things never discussed in an interview, or perhaps even listed in the job description.

Explain not only day-to-day activities and responsibilities, but also what you expect in the way of behavior towards customers, other staff, and visitors to the organization. Explain very explicitly for what you will hold them accountable. They want to know. New employees generally want to do a good job. Help them do so by being very direct about your expectations.

Second, provide the tools and resources to do the job right. Can you imagine hiring a maintenance worker and not providing screw drivers, hammers, drills, etc.? How frustrating it must be for an employee who wants to do well to show up and find their ability to perform at a high level is compromised by a lack of needed resources? And include training as a required resource. Be sure your orientation program meets the needs of the new employees. Not sure if it does or not? Ask some of your newest hires.

Third, create a sense of belonging. If a new hire feels like an outsider after 90 or 180 days, do you really think they will want to continue to come to work? Make concerted efforts to include new employees in departmental gatherings, lunches, and social events. Introduce them personally to department members. And be sure you, the boss, spend some time getting to know them personally (*and, in turn, they will get to know you*).

Finally, create an environment of mutual respect. Employees feel respected when the boss recognizes the good work that they do (*not just the mistakes they may commit*) and takes an active interest in their development.

Demonstrate that you truly care about the employee as a person. Respect them and they are far more likely to respect you.

“New hires: first 90 to 180 days are crucial.”

“The greater the effort you make with a new employee, the sooner you will begin to see a payoff.”

—National Institute of Business Management