

# Mastering Employee Retention

## 6 Reasons Why Employees Choose to Stay

As revealed by employees at great organizations...

Amy Bergman

MasterMind Consulting Network

September 2008



Many people that I talk to are amazed that their employee retention rates are not better, given the troubled economy. Others have decent or even excellent retention levels, but aren't exactly sure why. In order to retain great employees, organizations need to be aware of these 6 secrets – the reasons why employees choose to stay. Once these are understood, it is time to take action to [implement systems](#) to make sure that these secrets are part of the internal operating systems of your organization. And, if you are retaining great employees, let's make sure that you've got the tools to keep those retention levels high.

1. **Communication** – one of the main reasons employees have given for why they love their organization is because of the good, open, regular [communication](#) they experience. *This statement was shared by an employee of one of my clients: "The first thing I noticed about this company was that they really did have good systems in place to share information through all levels of the organization. I felt like I understood the company better and faster because of the attention they paid to making sure information was shared. The communication started right at the top with the President setting up various communication channels and actually using them!"*
2. **Feedback** – It cannot be overstated that both positive and constructive feedback is cherished by employees. They prefer their constructive feedback to be given privately – so please don't correct them in front of co-workers (or worse yet, in front of customers!); however, believe it or not, great performers do want constructive feedback. Those great performers know that to continue to be great, they need to learn from their past to continuously improve. Companies with solid [performance management systems](#) in place have an advantage because there are actually systems built into the culture of the organization that dictate the intervals of when feedback should be given, at minimum. Even if you don't have a performance management system in place yet, it's never too late to start making an effort to elevate your employee feedback intervals. Great performers don't want to assume that they are doing the right things; they want to be told and told often, once a year is not enough!
3. **Purpose/Contributions** – Employees want to feel a sense of purpose in their work. Even if they are line employees assembling a product, they can still find real meaning in their work if you take the time to share that with them. A great employee recently shared with me: "I feel like my contributions here make a real difference to the organization

and to our customers.” “Why do you feel this way?” I asked. “Because management makes a point of sharing the value of each of our roles at some time or another throughout various communications; and because my manager takes the time to talk to me about it too.” This reinforces the standards and expectations that great employers take time to outline and communicate – thus allowing them to *inspect what is expected*.

4. **Recognition** – Saying *thank you* takes less than one second, yet failing to say thank you can cost you hours of productivity. Courtesy and recognition can go a long way. For example, the marketing assistant likes to know that the customer was impressed by the design of the proposal that she created, even though she wasn’t on the sales team that presented it. Employees like to receive thanks and praise because it is human nature. Some recognition can be done in a public forum and that can be powerful, but the majority of the recognition does not need to be that formal or have a lot of fan fare. A simple handwritten note or quick phone call, with only a mention of the recognition, can be very satisfying. One employee shared “the President actually called me to say he received a customer call praising me for my service and he wanted to thank me for my work – no other company that I’ve worked for has bothered to recognize my efforts like this one.”
5. **Resources** – [Great organizations](#) don’t hide behind excuses when providing great performers the resources they need to do their job, rather, they solicit feedback directly from their team to find out what they can do to help them do their job. For example, manager’s that ask their staff “what can I do/provide to help you accomplish these objectives” may find out that having a Blackberry or iPhone would make their jobs a lot easier as opposed to a laptop computer (and wouldn’t that be more cost effective too?!). Not all resources need to cost the company a lot of money either. Some may find out that simply rearranging a workspace or switching offices with someone on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor would improve efficiencies for their staff. The key here is that great employers *ask* their employees what they need and great employees stay with them because they get asked! Not all great employees expect that their every desire will be met either, especially when a reasonable explanation (not excuse) is given.
6. **Manager and co-worker relationships** – The [relationships](#) between one’s co-workers and one’s managers are one of the most important factors in good employee retention. Employees stay places where they feel connected to their co-workers (like they are really a TEAM) and they also must be able to respect and be respected by their manager. Great performers stay when they have a professional yet familial relationship with their co-workers and their managers.

Now that you know the 6 secrets of why great employees choose to stay, you can get started on retaining your high performers today!

If you would like some help on [mastering employee retention](#) in your company, you may want to partner with an expert. Contact Amy Bergman, at MasterMind Consulting Network to get started: 517-917-5730, or [amy@mastermindconsult.net](mailto:amy@mastermindconsult.net).