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Engage Employees to Increase Productivity

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Hiring a new employee is just the beginning of the company's relationship with this member of its work force. An employee who seems ideal during a job interview might prove a poor match for the job once the probation period ends and he settles into the workplace routine. Studies show that over 70 percent of workers are disengaged. Much of that is because of mismatch between a person's natural talents and the requirements of the job.

While a small-business owner who asks questions tailored to the behavioral and professional requirements of a specific job improves the odds of recruiting the right person, hiring isn't an exact science. Human resource consultants who use job benchmarking tools can improve the odds; but in the long run, matching employees to the right job in a small business requires ongoing involvement in workplace dynamics and a willingness to make adjustments where needed.

Ongoing involvement is worth the time it takes. Costs associated with employee turnover range from 50 to 200 percent of an employee's annual salary, depending on the pay rate of the position. Costs include advertising of the position, reference checks, bonuses, training and low production during the time the new employee gets up to speed.

Be involved

In a small business, each employee must function as part of a team whose members all are working in the same direction and striving for the same goals. One poorly working part might not cripple a large corporation, but it can seriously impact the success of a small enterprise.

A savvy small-business owner stays involved with employees throughout their employment and is willing to move people around to suit the job performance and skills of each team member. If a normally cheerful and enthusiastic employee suddenly appears withdrawn and unmotivated, it's up to the manager to take the initiative to discuss the change of attitude. The employee might be going through a temporary bad patch that's completely unrelated to work; but his behavior might also indicate unhappiness with the job and a willingness to fill a position that suits him better.

Career advancement

Some employees are so well matched to a job that they are satisfied to stay in that position for their entire working lives. Employees that derive satisfaction from mastering a specific job can be indispensable in a business of any size — but especially in a small venture.

Other people need ongoing stimulation to stay engaged at work. If the job isn't one that naturally provides such challenges and opportunities, it's up to the business owner to intervene before a valued employee becomes disengaged or begins looking elsewhere for something that fills this inner drive. Simple changes and support that promote performance or leadership development may be all that are needed. Human resource consultants can help in these areas.

Because the business world is dynamic, not stagnant, a savvy business owner who wants to make the most of the people who work for him must be willing to make changes that improve employee morale, productivity and job satisfaction.

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