

# 'PEOPLE DON'T LEAVE JOBS, THEY LEAVE bosses'

If your staff keep resigning, could it be down to your management style?

By ERIN COE

## YOU'RE A MANAGER.

The work is dynamic and exciting, and everyone on your team is happy with their salary. What could go wrong? Nothing, you think – until your hardest and best worker resigns. Then another member of the team resigns. And then another...

Well, perhaps the work isn't as dynamic or exciting as you thought. It couldn't possibly have anything to do with you, right? Not so fast. While you may have a list of reasons to explain your high staff turnover, it is good to remember that old nugget of truth: People don't leave jobs, they leave bosses. With this in mind, here are some managerial dos and don'ts.

## DO Encourage growth

We all know the importance of developing valuable skills and experience at work. 'Not

only does it make you more marketable, it actually helps make the job more interesting,' career coach Penny Holburn says. If your staff don't find their jobs interesting, you're going to have trouble. 'Bored employees or those who feel they have not been learning or growing for some time will start looking around for other jobs,' she says.

Thankfully, it's relatively straightforward for managers to ensure employees' growth. Penny's suggestions? 'Give them projects that will allow them to develop their skills or gain new ones; send them on courses or for training; or organise a mentoring programme. There is so much you can do for your staff. And in return, they will have the skills to do so much more for you.'

## DO Recognise good work

When it comes to office morale, the best thing you can do is let your team know when they have done a good job. After all, everyone enjoys being praised.

Penny says: 'Most employees want someone to say "great job" or "well done". They want to know that their efforts are appreciated and aren't being overlooked, and that they're not being taken for granted.'

Executive coach Nerisha Maharaj agrees, saying: 'Good managers can connect to the hearts of their people, which, in turn, inspires greater levels of productivity and contentment. One way to connect is through simple appreciation.'

Not doing this can often result in employees feeling demoralised in their role in the company, adds executive coach Evelyn Masotja. 'And when they become demoralised, employees may begin to engage in negative behaviour such as absenteeism, gossiping and producing substandard work, and develop a bad attitude.'

All of these can lead to an eventual resignation as they begin to feel worse and worse about their jobs. And even if they don't resign, you probably wouldn't want people like that on your staff anyway.



## HAPPILY EVER AFTER

Don't worry if you're having a difficult time mastering the whole management thing – it takes practice. It can help if you've had bad managers in the past. Just ask Ro Paddock, 30, a manager at a software company in Cape Town. 'I've taken the worst parts of the managers I've had and tried to do just the opposite,' she says. 'It's so important to really understand what your role is as a manager. The goal is to ensure each member of your team is empowered and executing to the highest standard.'

## DO Encourage creativity

'As a manager, it's up to you to create a culture of innovative thinking,' Nerisha explains. 'I often talk to senior leaders who say they wish their people would think more and come up with creative solutions and ideas. However, often when their employees do that, they shoot down those ideas.'

This, of course, can result in those employees no longer offering creative solutions, as they know that they likely won't be appreciated. 'This can result in employees who feel their full potential isn't being made use of.' And when an employee feels this way, you can guarantee that they won't be putting their best foot forward at work.

So how can you encourage creative thinking? It can start with simply asking open-ended questions and beginning to listen actively to your team's input – in any scenario. 'You might just be amazed at the wealth of great ideas,' Nerisha says. She also suggests that you ask employees to submit any innovative ideas about process improvements or cost-saving plans, for example. 'Any approved ideas can be given a reward. This will be a great start to getting those creative juices flowing.'

## DON'T Overwork people

We get it: Sometimes a last-minute project comes in and you have to ask your team to work late. But it isn't the norm, and they know that. There are many other scenarios, however, where overworking your team is just plain wrong. Perhaps unrealistic targets have been set and you are pushing your team to meet them? Or maybe your expectations are simply

too high? Getting more done in less time may sound great to you as a manager, but the fact is that driving your staff too hard will have anything but positive consequences.

'If you're overworking your team to the point where they have to work in their personal time, then you have a problem,' Evelyn explains. 'Work-life balance is so important, and if they don't have that, they may suffer from depression and ill health caused by stress. If that goes on for too long, you shouldn't be surprised when they end up quitting.'

## DON'T Micromanage

Discouraging and the ultimate confidence killer: Nobody likes to be micromanaged. You may know this already, but still feel as though you need to control every aspect of your team. We assure you, you don't. Let go! 'As a manager, be clear on the output you want and allow your employees to do the work on their own to get there,' says Penny. 'Let them know you're there for them if they have any questions, but let them get on with the job.'

Not only will this take the pressure off you, it'll result in more competent and happy employees. That sounds like a win-win, doesn't it? **AL**

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