

Talent defectors 2010 – now what.....

It's Friday afternoon. One of your top performers asks for five minutes of your time. Before you know it your perfect afternoon as well as your finely tuned proactive retention strategy has been turned into a reactive counter-offer. Sound familiar. The experts agree - losing top talent in 2010 will become a reality for every business ready or not.

A recent study conducted by a major international group found that 60% of top Retail, Hospitality and F& B companies are predicting increased hiring with Logistics and Oil companies coming in with the lowest hiring predictions. The overall sentiment appears to be cautiously optimistic. The hiring of the very controversial contract worker also features as an increasing trend for 2010 worldwide.

The 2010 "employer market" has just been turned on its head. The "satisfied and stable employee" will be the new manager's objective by the end of 2010, with top executives demanding that managers ensure dissatisfied employees do not become talent defectors. Retaining staff and developing a realistic and successful proactive retention strategy has become a priority for any manager wanting to keep top talent from defecting and causing bottom line pain for the business.

Last year most companies halted recruitment, job seekers stayed with their companies in fear of leaving their jobs without the promise of finding a new role. Now overworked these job seekers have become more and more dissatisfied to a point where they now are ready to move for any opportunity that may present itself. Companies now find themselves in an awkward position. After a year of increased workload whilst not increasing staff numbers and decreasing company benefits to save costs, their staff are tired and demoralized. A recent survey conducted in Canada quote as much as 62% of employers citing as their top priority, retention of the employees for 2010 as being a major business priority.

The most probable area of increased hiring, say experts will be in temporary positions and in the hiring of previously employed staff. This will happen as the confidence in the market returns and companies start to slowly gain poise in hiring again. This will certainly be the trend for the first two quarters of 2010.

With the increase use of virtual leadership and the challenges of managing staff that communicate ever more effectively through social networking sites the manager of 2010 faces a battleground filled with challenges that he or she is simply not experienced or trained for.

Retention strategies vary from the simple increasing of salaries in recognition of the leaner and more streamlined workforce to companies implement very complicated employee wellness programs with associated rebranding to ensure staff remains loyal to embattled leaders. One of the benefits that many companies are starting to use more frequently is the

option of offering employees study loans especially to top talent in the form of MBA courses with top institutions.

Decision makers of companies in 2010 also recognise that staff came into 2010 with a level of burnout and have already started to offer better employee benefits in order to proactively retain staff. In many cases this can even cover working flexi hours and less travelling so as to encourage staff to be with family. The use of increased vacation time for burnt out employees has also become a trend overseas with the emphasis on the happy employee.

Economists worldwide agree that we are on the brink of a new economic revolution; the next decade will see the major economies from both east and west competing for the same space rather than into each others economic space. This new era of globalization will put talent into a truly global workspace and South Africa will need to again compete with global companies for staff. Recent surveys suggest that many top CEO's either do not know or are afraid of technology in the workplace. The new age manager will need to face this technology challenge head on and turn a challenge into opportunity especially when tackling communicating with their staff in a virtual space.

These new age type retention strategies will also require companies starting to work closely to manage the various generation gaps that are present in the company hemisphere. Retaining talent will certainly mean keeping staff happy in an environment where all these generations will need to work together in harmony. Combined with South Africa's cultural diverse workforce our managers may be on the brink of becoming global leaders in the management of diversity in the workplace without even being aware of their global status.

Identifying whether your talent is type A, B or C talent is also a trend that we will need to be adopted here in South Africa. The general trend is that talent acquired via career sites are "C" type talent where as talent that do not have CV's ready in their top drawer are "A" type talent and crucial in being retained in the organisation. Most companies still need to identify their "A" type talent and certainly leave this task till its too late and a counter offer is necessary to ensure retention. It is interesting to note that in the USA almost four out of ten employers (37 percent) are planning to emphasize social media in 2010 as part of their employee retention and branding strategies. The fact that this leading economy has embraced this new phenomenon should be a good indicator to our decision makers that we will need to follow by example and embrace this virtual networking channel not restrict our workers to it as so many of us do at the moment.

It is these type "A" passive job defectors that pose the greatest threat to business and is interesting to note that it is the combination of the "A" type talent's inclination to use a strong virtual based presence that recruiters especially overseas have started to tap into. The battleground for this top talent will therefore need to be fought in a virtual space using new management techniques and possibly even with a new type of manager. 2010 therefore promises to be a good year if you happen to be an "A" type talent defector. Facebook or die.