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IBM The Global CEO Study: Implications for the CIO

HUNGRY FOR CHANGE

The Global CEO Study: Implications for the CIO: Learn about the five key insights from the IBM Global CEO study and what they mean for the CIO as change agent.

Understanding Why Good Workers Quit

May 2, 2008
By Robert
McGarvey

Don't think your competitors are not eyeballing your best employees. The recession has hit IT, head counts are dwindling so it's time to wake up and smell the scent of executive search: recruiters are looking to cull the very people you cannot afford to lose. The worse news is that now is the perfect time for them to strike.

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"This already has become an issue," warns Terry Sember, co-author of *The Essential Supervisor's Handbook*.

Big fuel for this poaching is passivity. Many supervisors think because there is no money for big pay hikes, nothing can be done to sweeten the pot for key employees. Think again. Lots can be done. The reality anyway is people rarely leave a job over money, said Joe Healey, a Virginia Beach, VA-based HR expert. And that means even when money isn't available to help keep the best, there's still much that can be done. Such as?

Experts are ready with a raft of suggestions and the first is simply this: "The secret to retaining your best employees starts with knowing who they are," said Shawn Hayashi, a board member with the Philadelphia Human Resources Planning Society. This works on two planes. First: know who the best on your team are (just as a baseball team's general manager knows who on his roster he won't trade) and, secondly, invest time in getting to know your all-stars.

"What do they value? What are their natural talents?" asks Hayashi.

Know what turns them on and right away you are steps closer to keeping that employee happy. This worker hates teams, that one thrives in groups? Guess what: when their workload is arranged in accordance with such likes, they are that much more likely to be happy.

Kick this up a big notch by using HR expert Beverly Kaye calls "stay interviews". Meet informally – "Are you free to grab a cup of coffee?" – with key employees, as frequently as once a quarter, said Kaye, co-author of *Love 'Em or Lose 'Em: Getting Good People to Stay*. Have just one item on the agenda: "What do you need to want to stay?" Most managers, she acknowledges, are afraid to ask this question and that is a reason why their companies have to do plenty of exit interviews. When stay interviews are part of the culture—and this is a practice in very few companies—attrition of the people you don't want to lose plummets.

"Ask them directly: What can we do to keep you?," urges Kaye. And don't be shy or dishonest. If the employee asks for things you cannot deliver, be direct in acknowledging it but also indicate what you can do. Know, too, that just by talking to employees in this way you are scoring points because it's something that just does not happen in most companies.

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More concretely, Karen Fink, vice president of human resources for Edmunds.com, said that the glue her company uses to keep top IT workers is as simple as interesting work. "Technical workers tend to remain with an organization where they have the opportunity to contribute to interesting projects that stretch their skill sets and where they have the opportunity to be educated on the latest technologies."

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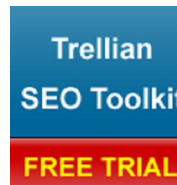
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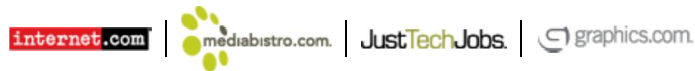
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