Engaging and keeping the best talent for today and tomorrow
Introduction

Retention. It’s a critical business issue. Employee turnover can be a considerable cost to Irish businesses each year.

It costs more to recruit, hire and train a new employee than to keep an existing one. Some companies are focusing on ways to increase employee retention. They understand that giving employees reason to stay keeps turnover down and profits up.
What is retention?

There’s no one clear definition of employee retention. If you ask 10 different people, you’re apt to receive 10 different answers. Everything from “keeping our top people” to “offering perks” may be mentioned. In broad terms, employee retention involves practices, strategies and programmes that keep top employees working at your company.

In the past, employee retention was a way of life. If employees did a good job and the company could afford to pay them, they kept their jobs. Times have changed. The employer no longer holds all the cards. Employees are not as loyal as in the past. They know they have options and aren’t afraid to use them. It’s now up to employers to figure out how to keep good people.

There are additional reasons that retention is now back in the spotlight. The challenges confronting employers are many. They include:

- **Today’s tightening labour market and tomorrow’s predicted talent crunch.** It’s getting increasingly difficult for companies to keep current employees and find qualified replacements
- **A growing skills shortage.** Many occupations are facing a severe lack of talent
- **An ageing workforce.** The workforce is getting older and upcoming age groups don’t have the numbers to fill the spaces. Businesses need to keep people as long as possible
- **Decreased employee loyalty.** Gone are the days of the 25th anniversary carriage clock. Employees don’t stay with companies as long as they did in the past
- **The search for new opportunities.** In today’s world, it’s easy for people to look for a job. They can search the internet for instant job listings

**Make retention a business priority**

Retention needs to be, and is quickly becoming, a business priority. More companies are recognising the signs of the talent crunch and feeling the impact of pounds lost due to turnover, and they’re starting to take action.
Turnover

Labour costs are the most expensive part of running any business. Turnover adds to those costs. The CIPD’s 2008 survey on employee turnover reported that the average cost per employee was €6,469, rising to €22,308 for senior managers or directors.

-CIPD Recruitment, retention and turnover survey 2008
www.cipd.co.uk/subjects/hrpract/turnover/empturnretent.htm

In spite of the tremendous cost of turnover and high level of retention difficulties reported across all industry sectors, many organisations fail to see it as a critical business issue and do not have retention programmes in place.

How much is employee turnover costing your company? Quantifying your own cost of turnover can be difficult. Some expenses are more obvious than others. For example, direct costs such as the expense of a job advertisement are easily measured. It’s more difficult to assign a monetary amount to other costs, such as productivity loss or a drop in employee morale. Examples of turnover costs include:

- **Direct costs.** Advertising, employment agencies, job fairs, employee referral bonuses, credit and reference checking, testing, signing bonuses, relocation, HR, Internet, training, interviewing, exit interviewing, severance pay, new hire processing, communications
- **Indirect costs.** Lower productivity, morale impact, safety impact, disruption of business functions, lost intellectual capital, dissatisfied customers, overtime, hiring to maintain production levels
Calculating turnover rate and cost
To calculate turnover on a monthly basis, take the number of leavers (voluntary and involuntary) during a month and divide by the number on the payroll. Multiply the result by 100. The answer is the monthly turnover rate.

\[
\text{Number of leavers during month} \div \text{Average number of employees on payroll during month} \times 100
\]

Knowing the cost of losing and then replacing an employee helps you determine how much you can invest in retention programmes. Complete the sample cost of turnover worksheet provided here to get an idea of your company’s turnover expense. Include all quantifiable costs; salary, materials, expenses, etc. Modify, add or delete categories or line items as appropriate for your company.

Cost of turnover worksheet

**Departure costs**
- Exit interview time for HR
- Exit interview time for employee
- Administrative functions related to departure
  - Severance pay
  - Increase in unemployment tax
  - Benefits administration

**Vacancy costs**
- Additional overtime
- Additional temporary help
- Lost productivity (individual)
- Lost productivity (departmental)

**Recruiting/replacement costs**
- Attracting applicants
  - Advertising (newspaper)
  - Internet
  - Job fairs
  - Other
  - Recruiter’s time: understanding position, posting job, etc.
  - Recruiter’s assistant’s time—handling CVs, etc.
  - Employee referral bonus
  - Agency
  - Screening/sourcing activities
  - Interviewing time: administrative staff, HR, manager, etc.
  - Assessments
  - Staff/administrative time
  - Background checks

**Training costs**
- Training materials
- Orientation
- Formal training
- Trainer’s time
- Supervisor’s time spent explaining job role
- Informal training: on the job training, mentoring

**Total cost**
The average time to fill an exempt position is 12.3 weeks for managers and professionals and 6.7 weeks for lower wage vacancies. 

- CIPD Recruitment, Retention and Turnover Survey 2008
  www.cipd.co.uk/subjects/recruitmen/general/_recruitretnt.htm?IsSrchRes=1

The costs of attracting, recruiting, hiring, training and getting new people up to speed can really add up. Prevention is always a less expensive and wiser use of your resources. Identify causes of turnover that you can control and target those areas for improvement.

**Signs of impending turnover**

- Frequent talk about “burnout”
- Withdrawal from co-workers or team
- Reduction or shift in work hours
- Unusual change in behaviour patterns; different clothes, odd lunch hours
- Loss of interest in work-related areas
- Reduced productivity
- Repeated complaints
- Increased absenteeism

**Recruit to retain**

With turnover costs soaring, it makes sense to try to prevent turnover. Your recruiting and hiring programmes can pave the way for retention.

A focus on exceptional recruiting makes for a smart retention strategy. The first question to ask is: “What type of top talent do we want to hire?” Remember that top talent at another company doesn’t necessarily translate to top talent at your organisation. A top candidate may have the skills to fill the job, but his or her behaviour or personality may clash with your company’s culture.

**Success tip:** Make sure all new hires fit the culture of your company. Assess the candidate’s personality and leadership characteristics.

When posting a position, be aware that potential candidates have already made assumptions about what it means to work at your company. Your company’s reputation attracts employees whose values and work ethic are in alignment with your reputation, which is reflected in your employment brand.

**Employment brand**

Your employment brand is your employment value proposition. It’s the essence of your organisation. Employment branding uses the tools of marketing research, public relations and advertising to build the image applicants have of what it’s like to work at your company. A clear employment brand can give your organisation a competitive advantage in the marketplace. It can help you attract, hire and retain candidates with the right fit. It can even increase shareholder value and bottom-line profits.

There are many ways to deliver your employment brand; through your job postings, your career website, your employee Intranet, and all communications with candidates and employees. Your ability to clearly define your employment brand message and then deliver on that promise will provide you with employees who are more loyal, engaged and productive, employees who will stay with your company for the long haul.

**To build a positive employment brand:**

- Get included in “Best Places to Work” lists
- Reinforce and promote the brand at events that attract potential candidates
- Speak at events where potential recruits might be in the audience
- Develop a brand look, slogan, etc., for both internal and external programmes
- Ask current employees why they like to work at the company and get the good word out
- Publish a recruiting blog, newsletter or website for recruits and the public to see what it’s like to work at your company
- Sponsor or host career workshops in the local community to help build image
- Add benefits and programmes; a new referral programme, an on-site gym, etc. that get your organisation talked about in the press
Promotion of a positive employment brand: How do employers build an engaged workforce?

FACT: The first step is to measure employee attitudes. Most large employers in both private and public sectors now conduct regular employee attitude surveys. The results typically show what employees feel about their work on a range of dimensions including, for example, pay and benefits, communications, learning and development, line management and work-life balance. Attitude survey data can be used to identify areas in need of improvement and combined with other data to support performance management.

-CIPD- Employee engagement factsheet 2008
www.cipd.co.uk/subjects/empreltns/general/empengmt.htm

Interview for retention
The interview process can be daunting. With hundreds of CVs, dozens of applications and time-consuming interviews, you may feel pressure just to fill the position. Don’t do it! Take the necessary time to prepare for the interview and cut costs by avoiding regrettable choices. Ask the right questions. Use behavioural interview questions.

Let the candidate do the talking. Make sure recruits have realistic expectations. Provide an accurate description of the job and the company. The time you spend now should help you make a more accurate match, which should lead to longer employment.
Induction

Induction is a programme created to assist new employees successfully transition and integrate into their new roles within your organisation. It includes everything from filling out forms and gaining computer access to assigning a buddy and building a training and development plan.

An induction programme should embrace new employees. Look at it as a long-term process, not just the first day or week of employment. It’s a way to build employee engagement and satisfaction.

Companies with successful induction programmes offer numerous stages of development and progress for each new employee. These extra steps can prove very valuable, typically resulting in lower turnover rates and employees that are more engaged and productive.

Create an induction programme

It may sound daunting, but an induction programme can be an easy way to standardise common processes. It ensures that new employees get the information, education and training they need to be successful. While many components from your traditional orientation programme will be part of induction, they only account for one element of the programme. In addition, while typical orientation programmes last only one or two days, an induction programme extends that time by months, or even until the employee’s first anniversary. This type of programme is a commitment, but one that is worth making.

A good induction programme has these key components/milestones:

**Before the first day**
- Pre-start communications
- Workplace preparation

**First day**
- Orientation
- Introductions

**Beyond the first day**
- Training
- Development plans

**Ongoing**
- Performance goals
- Checkpoints

**Benefits of induction programmes**

Implementing a comprehensive induction programme can be a worthwhile investment. It may take time, but the long-term benefits can be huge: decreased costs, increased time savings, reduced turnover and employees that are quickly engaged and productive. To determine your company’s return on investment, set metrics that you can measure at each step of the induction process.
Employee satisfaction
The satisfaction level of your employees can make or break your company. Studies show that lower turnover and greater levels of employee satisfaction have a definite positive impact on customer satisfaction and company profitability. Happy employees result in a better bottom line.

Employee engagement
Employee satisfaction has evolved. A more inclusive term, employee engagement, has popped up within the workplace. Employee engagement goes beyond satisfaction and measures commitment to the company and the level of willingness to work above and beyond expectations. Engaged employees work with passion and drive to move the company to the next level. These are the employees you want working for you.

Typical issues that cause employee dissatisfaction are working conditions, relationships with management, company policies and procedures and compensation.

Are your employees satisfied?
If you don’t know, ask. Learn about basic satisfaction factors in one-on-one meetings, focus groups, or in a companywide survey. Once you have some of the answers, determine what needs to be done to address any issues that were uncovered.

Ask your employees to rate:
- Leadership effectiveness
- Compensation and benefits
- Teamwork
- Work process effectiveness
- Physical work environment
- Communications
- Adequacy of technology/equipment
- Diversity
- Workplace flexibility
- Work/life balance

Performance management
Career development and training
Job security

Satisfaction factors
While much has been said about the role non-monetary factors have in promoting job satisfaction; pay is still tops with employees. However if an employee is happy at work, it is likely that they show loyalty to a company even if a higher wage is offered somewhere else. The poll found these to be the top contributors to job satisfaction and employee engagement:
- Involvement in decision-making
- Freedom to voice ideas, to which managers listen
- Feeling enabled to perform well
- Having opportunities to develop the job
- Feeling the organisation is concerned for employees’ health and well-being


Do you know why your employees leave?
Even with the best work environments, managers, benefits, etc., employees still leave. Find out why by conducting structured exit interviews with employees who voluntarily resign. Then, use those results to make positive changes in your workplace. Watch for patterns and trends that come up repeatedly and verify those comments with current employees. Ask how these issues could be improved.
Why employees leave
The top factors affecting an employee’s decision to stay or leave are:

1. Quality of relationship with supervisor or manager
2. Attraction of a new job or opportunity, career change
3. Domestic reasons – relocation with spouse or partner
4. Lack of training and development opportunities

-CIPD Recruitment, retention and turnover survey 2008
www.cipd.co.uk/subjects/hrpract/turnover/empturnretent.htm

To identify issues, ask exit interview questions like these:

- Why did you decide to leave the company?
- Is there anything that could have been done to make you stay?
- How do you feel about the company?
- What has been enjoyable/satisfying during your employment with us?
- What has been frustrating/difficult for you in your time with us?
- How well do you think your training and development needs were met?
- What can you say about communications within the organisation/your department?
- How would you describe the company culture?
- What can you say about the way your performance was measured, and the feedback to you of your performance results?
- What suggestions would you make to improve working conditions, hours, shifts, etc?
- What can you say about the way you were managed?
- What, if any, policies/rules/instructions, did you find unreasonable?
- What can the company do better to retain its best people?
- Are you happy about where you’re going (if you’ve decided)?
- What made you decide to join that organisation?
- Would you recommend our company to others?

Success tip: When conducting exit interviews, assure the employee that no negative consequences will result from honest discussion during that interview.

An exit interview is best conducted face-to-face because this enables better communication, understanding, interpretation, etc. It also provides a far better opportunity to probe and get to the root of answers. However, if a face-to-face exit interview is not possible, an electronic questionnaire or paper survey is better than nothing. In some cases, employees may prefer to give feedback in writing.
Impact of management

Employees don’t leave companies. They leave managers. Make your managers ones that employees will stick to like glue. The best employees want to work with people whom they can trust and respect. One of the best ways to build trust is through open and frequent communications.

Communication is key

Increasing employee retention starts with one basic idea: Think like your employees. Discover what’s important to them and be creative in meeting their needs. The only way to find out what’s important to your employees is to talk to them. Communication is essential.

To improve communications, try some of these suggestions:

- Coaching. Hold coaching sessions with all employees, not just the ones who are struggling. Everyone can benefit from hearing ideas on how to improve.

- Feedback. Ongoing performance feedback allows employees to know where they stand, gives them a formal means to provide input, and indicates that managers pay attention to their work. Employees need feedback to be successful. Those that are ignored aren’t going to want to stick around.

- Ask and listen. Most companies are afraid to, but the only way to ensure that employees’ needs are being met is to ask. In this case, what you don’t know can hurt you. To solve a problem or improve something you must first realise it exists. Then, when your employee responds to your questions, listen well. Some simple ways to ask and listen include:
  - Hold regular staff meetings
  - Host employee focus groups
Conduct employee surveys: What do you like about working here? What would you change if you ran the company? Is anything holding you back?

Emails dedicated to employee issues: Allows employees to send anonymous messages about problems and why they feel people are unhappy or leaving

Management by walking around: An informal way to ask people how they’re doing

Work side by side with employees

Conduct exit interviews

Share important information: Treat employees like partners: communicate news, numbers, and other important company information, good or bad

One-minute praising tips

- Offer praise as soon as possible after the accomplishment
- Use the person’s name: “Great job, Anne”
- Mention specifically what the person did right
- Encourage more of the same

Keeping great people: retention tactics

Employees not only want good pay and benefits, they also want to be valued and appreciated for their work. They want to be treated fairly. To do work that is important. Have advancement opportunities.

And, they want a chance to be involved in the company. Recognition and rewards play an important role in attracting and retaining employees. It’s often the day-to-day interactions that make employees feel that their contributions are valued and they’re appreciated for their efforts. These types of recognition contribute to a more positive and productive work environment.

Consider these key elements to employee retention:

Pay/compensation. Compensation has long been used as a vehicle to attract, align and retain employees. The problem is that competitors can easily match pay. Pay a fair market wage that will keep employees on par with their peers in similar companies and positions. Also consider offering other motivations, such as performance incentives.

Benefits. Items like medical and dental insurance, holiday and sick pay, and tuition reimbursement are becoming standard parts of benefit packages. Often, the more, and better, benefits a company offers can make the difference between keeping an employee for six months or six years. Pension plans, retirement benefits and job security are especially important for employees at mid-career or later.

Communication strategies. Breakdowns in communication are a major problem for all employees. No one likes to feel “out of the loop.” Make sure you have an open door policy between employees and management.

Work/life balance. Balance may become the most-sought-after “benefit” in today’s workplace. Companies that understand that employees need to achieve the right balance between work and home life will see lower turnover. Work/life balance programmes allow employees time to complete work tasks while maintaining a healthy life outside of work. These programmes can and should differ by company. Ask your employees what types of balance options appeal to them.

Common work/life programmes include:

- Flexible work hours
- Telecommuting options
- On-site childcare
- On-site gyms/discounts to local health clubs
- Longer holidays
- Concierge services
- Job sharing
- Phased retirement

Keep these tips in mind when developing a work/life balance programme:

Acknowledge non-work priorities. People have multiple needs and concerns; families, spiritual, hobbies, etc. Employees develop loyalty for organisations that respect them as individuals, not just as workers.

Offer work scheduling options. Enable employees to meet family commitments, volunteering needs, etc. Options may include flexible schedules, part-time, job sharing, telecommuting, extended leaves of absence and phased retirement.
**Make it OK to use work/life benefits.** Ensure that employees who take advantage of these benefits are not seen as low performing.

**Career development.** To retain employees, offer career development opportunities. Many workers want the opportunity to advance their skills and careers. Employees who aren’t given these options often look for them elsewhere. Employees who feel that there’s no next step professionally or personally will also look elsewhere. Career and succession planning are part of the solution, but so are initiatives like team assignments, regular transfers, stretch assignments, mentoring, formal and informal learning opportunities, partnerships in communities of practice, and international assignments.

**Training.** Ongoing training and continued learning opportunities are the wave of the future. Employees want and need to have access to training to perform and improve on the job.

**Mentoring programmes.** Employees often benefit from, and enjoy having, a mentor in the workplace. Your employees may want to participate in a mentoring programme that could include one-on-one meetings, goal setting, skill development and more. If you’re not sure your employees would see the value in this type of programme, ask them.

## Retention by generation

Today’s workplace is a blend of three primary generations: Baby Boomers, Gen X and Gen Y. Generally speaking, the people in each generation tend to have differing ideas on what’s important in a job, how they want to work, and what will keep them happy. Successful companies understand this and create recruiting and retention programmes to match. Here are some of the main drivers for each generation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work drivers</th>
<th>Task-orientated</th>
<th>Process-oriented</th>
<th>Achievement-oriented</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>In person</td>
<td>Direct and immediate</td>
<td>Email, voice mail</td>
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<th>Retain with:</th>
<th>Promotion</th>
<th>Pay for performance</th>
<th>Mentoring</th>
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<tr>
<td>Status</td>
<td>Challenging work</td>
<td>Volunteer programmes</td>
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<td>Salary</td>
<td>Chance to do what they want</td>
<td>Flexible schedules</td>
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</tbody>
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### Baby Boomers (1946-1964)
- Motivated by: Security, Upward mobility, Quality of life
- Work/life mindset: Live to work
- Job changes: Rare
- Adaptability: Resist change

### Gen X (1965 - 1978)
- Motivated by: Immediate rewards, Work/life balance, Feedback
- Work/life mindset: Work to live
- Job changes: Occasional
- Adaptability: Accept change

### Gen Y (1979 - 2001)
- Motivated by: Challenge, Making a difference, Meaningful work
- Work/life mindset: Work to live
- Job changes: Needed
- Adaptability: Embrace change
Baby Boomers
Baby Boomers, the group born between 1946 and 1964, represent the largest single sustained growth of population in history. This generation is confident, independent and optimistic. Their large number is forcing a redefinition of work and employment.

Baby Boomers are interested in jobs that allow them to maintain good quality of life. They want an understanding employer and will remain in a job that:

- Is meaningful
- Accommodates personal needs
- Provides job training and education opportunities

Baby Boomers, with years of work and life experience, are valuable assets for any company. Create programmes that allow them to share their knowledge, such as mentoring or coaching programmes. Also look at work/life options for boomers, such as part-time work, phased retirement, sabbaticals, etc.

Gen X
Generation X was born between the years of 1965 and 1978. Research infers that this generation is most in-sync with contemporary corporate Ireland. They’re young corporate climbers full of attitude and ideas.

Gen Xers are good workers because they are:

- Flexible
- Good at collaboration
- Mature
- Capable of multi-tasking
- Not bound by tradition

Gen X stays in jobs that provide:

- Non-financial rewards
- Increased responsibility
- Opportunities for creative expression
- Meaningful work that has impact
- Quick feedback and consistent instruction
- Opportunities for growth

Gen Y
Generation Y, also known as the millennial generation, consists of the children of the Baby Boomers. Gen Y is a bit more relaxed than their Gen X predecessors, but is likely to be the most entrepreneurial generation we’ve seen in decades. Gen Y:

- Prides themselves on determination
- Believes they will get to where they want in life
- Would rather improve themselves than the world

Gen Y is known for wanting lots of career variety and opportunities to make a big impact early. This group has plenty of skills and enthusiasm to add to a company. Plus, they’re techno-savvy, knowledgeable about global and diversity issues, team-oriented and multi-taskers. They’re very connected and rely on technology to stay that way. On the down side, they may lack independence, have unrealistic expectations, be impatient, and could lack basic communication skills (because they rely on spell check and other technology).

It takes more than money to make Gen Y stay on the job. Offer training and career development programmes. Set up a rotation programme for recent college graduates. Let them spend a few months in a number of different departments/roles to find the best path for them. While it’s imperative to be aware of employees’ varying needs and wants and to create some generation-specific programmes, today’s businesses need to find ways to attract and keep employees, regardless of age. Those that refuse to bend may end up losing workers at both ends of the spectrum. Those that get creative may reap the rewards and please younger and older workers alike.

These generation-friendly retention strategies appeal to all ages:

- Flexible work schedules, Part-time job options
- Flexible benefit plans: Older workers may choose healthcare benefits; younger workers may choose extra vacation days
- Work from home possibilities
- Liberal leave policies
- Performance-based compensation
Creating a recognition programme

Employees like to be rewarded and recognised for a job well done. Employee recognition programmes can be a great way to boost employee morale while achieving company objectives. Ultimately, a retention programme should identify the areas on which an organisation needs to focus and include specific actions and timeframes for tackling those areas.

Many people, especially managers, ask, “Why should employees be recognised and rewarded for simply doing their job?” It’s a valid question. The truth is, praise and reward of an employee reinforces, recognises and motivates behaviours that you want to see. So, it’s a good thing.

Low-cost/no cost recognition ideas

- Personalised thank you notes, emails, voicemails, etc. from supervisors and managers
- Periodic “bonus” days off
- Spot rewards; gift certificates, movie tickets, etc.
- Discounts for local attractions
- Casual dress days
- Award car wash certificates
- Seasonal celebrations; summer picnic, holiday pot luck, etc.
- A gift from the employee’s favourite catalogue
- A contribution to the employee’s favourite charity
- Opportunities to cross-train
- Inclusion in a special project

There are almost limitless options when it comes to creating recognition programmes. Some companies favour informal programmes, such as handwritten notes from a supervisor. Others focus on formal programmes, such as an Employee of the Month programme. Many companies implement a combination of both. Regardless of the programme type, there are several elements that are necessary for success.

Steps to creating a successful recognition programme

**Do your homework.** Conduct a focus group of employees and managers. Ask what they’d like in a recognition programme. Not everyone has the same idea of what makes a good reward or a realistic programme.

**Target your audience.** Decide if this is a companywide programme or one targeted for specific departments or projects. It can be difficult to create one plan or programme for all. Consider what different work groups should accomplish. Determine if individual or team rewards are more appropriate. Then, decide who the programme target is.

**Define the goal.** Design a programme that reinforces the desired behaviours. Target behaviour that impacts the bottom line. These targets should also be measurable, such as an increase in productivity, decrease in costs, etc. Focus on the most pressing needs. Make sure goals are realistic. Create a mission statement for the programme and come up with a meaningful name that reflects the programme goal and company culture.

**Build a budget.** Even though retention efforts are much more cost-effective than recruiting efforts, you still need to budget programme costs. When planning for a programme, remember to consider the following items in your estimate:

- Cost of programme materials
- Number of recipients
- Cost of awards
- Presentation type
- Administrative costs
- Training costs

**Develop criteria.** Determine the rules of the programme, requirements, eligibility, etc. Consider different levels and types of rewards. Be specific about programme goals. Define exactly what needs to be done to receive the award. Also, be specific about the timeframe for completing the goal. Consider how progress will be measured on an on-going basis.

**Choose rewards.** Selecting the award is one of the most important steps in the success of a recognition programme. If the reward doesn’t motivate or inspire employees to achieve the programme goal, the programme may have less participation and not achieve the desired results. It’s crucial to listen to input from employees and supervisors on the type of reward you offer.
Awards should be:

- **Sincere.** Express genuine appreciation
- **Meaningful.** Be aligned to values, goals, and priorities. Ask employees what types of rewards are meaningful to them
- **Adaptable.** A diverse workplace demands options. Consider creative alternatives to keep your programme fresh. No single reward works every time
- **Relevant.** Have someone significant to the recipient provide a personal touch
- **Timely.** Respond to the behaviour you want to reinforce. Don’t let too much time pass or the reward will be devalued and credibility weakened

**Success tip:** The very best way to know how to recognise your employees is to ask them

Train/involve all levels of management. Make sure all supervisors (especially front line), managers and leadership know programme details. Give them programme tips and make sure they understand their roles in the programme. Management also plays an important role in promoting the programme and making sure that the programme remains fair to all employees.

Communicate the programme. This is critical. Every detail of the programme should be clearly communicated. There should be a clear link between what the target audience is rewarded for and the company’s goals. Develop consistent messaging and even consider a theme for your programme that can be used on all programme components, such as awards, promotional items, letterhead, etc. The messaging as well as the look and feel of the programme should match your company’s image. If the programme is brand new, consider using teasers to pique your employees’ interest. Have a strong kick-off; promotional materials, meetings, etc. to build momentum and excitement about the programme. Once the programme is launched, continue to remind employees about the programme by providing updates, new award items, etc. Provide frequent updates and reminders to keep the programme top of mind.

Present the awards. Generally, if something is worth recognising, it’s worth publicising. Make sure your presentation matches the significance of the recognition. Presentation celebrations could range from a pot luck lunch to a formal dinner. Keep in mind; formal presentations may impact your budget.

Evaluate/update the programme. It’s important to measure programme success. These metrics are typically in the form of tangible and intangible results. Ask for feedback from upper management, supervisors and employees (programme participants and non-participants). Distribute a companywide survey. Check turnover rates, attendance records, production levels, customer satisfaction, etc., to identify tangible results. Once you know whether the programme is working, you can fine tune it or plan for updates. Never let a programme get stale.
Out of the box retention/recognition ideas

As employee retention comes to the forefront, many companies are implementing innovative programmes to keep employees satisfied. The ideas offered here only scratch the surface of what can be done.

- Create a job shift programme. Allow high-performing employees to be eligible for assignments in other departments
- Hold a “fun” breakfast for your department. Bring in the usual food, but add an element of fun by watching a comedy show
- Set up holiday funds for employees. For each week of work, contribute a sum of money for employees to use when they take leave
- Have break times at work. Combat sleepy times by offering healthy snacks and short activities to keep employees’ minds alert
- Organise volunteer events and programmes, even during the workday.
- Offer back-up childcare and emergency childcare options
- Give employees the chance to sign up for a training programme of their choice
- Let employees set their own schedules
- Implement a travelling trophy that goes to the outstanding employee of the week, month, etc.
- Find out an employee’s hobbies and give an appropriate gift or a card
- Create an employee newsletter that includes a recognition section

Closing
RetentionPolicy is usually started only when turnover has become an issue. Since we know it takes more money to replace an employee than to retain an employee, retention planning and programmes need to be proactive. Companies that understand the importance of employee retention have a competitive advantage.

Obviously, the time to act is now. The labour force is shrinking and the talent crunch tightening. Look at the retention programmes you currently use and determine if they need to be tweaked, updated or completely overhauled. Once your research is complete, let the planning begin.

Remember these basic building blocks as you design your retention strategy:

- Build relationships: Communicate with employees on a regular basis
- Build better recruiting strategies: Hire the right people
- Build morale: Create an environment where people want to work and have fun
- Build respect: Provide feedback on performance
- Build motivation: Recognise achievements
- Build a level playing field: Treat employees fairly
- Build trust: Empower employees to get things done

Remember, each company’s retention strategy will differ. There is no one magic tactic, benefits package, or incentive programme that works for everyone. Your employees know what they want from their employer, so ask them and then deliver.
About Manpower
The world of work is constantly changing shape. It’s constantly evolving. And so are today’s successful companies. Manpower Ireland has over 35 years of experience in staffing, recruitment, training, outsourcing and consulting in Ireland. We help companies anticipate and benefit from the changes happening now and next in the contemporary world of work.


Today’s talent crunch demands flexible solutions. Let Manpower create one for you.

Manpower Worldwide
- 82 countries and territories
- 4,000 offices
- 400,000 clients

In Ireland
- 5 offices
- Over 600 clients
- Over 10,000 registered candidates
- Delivers 1.8 million hours of work per year
Keys to retention

Today’s shrinking labour pool demands that employers create a work environment that allows people to be productive and makes them feel good enough to want to stay.

For better retention, focus on these basics:

- Improve hiring and recruiting processes to make better employment matches. Recruit to retain
- Improve the work environment
- Invest in training and mentoring programmes
- Know what your employees want and value
- Improve communication up and down the organisation
- Hold managers/leadership responsible for turnover
- Measure turnover costs
- Engage employees
- Create retention programmes that employees will value and support