

Employee Retention Takes Precedence for HR Pros

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The PR industry often speaks of transparency. So it is no surprise that human resource professionals will openly discuss their employee retention tactics with staff members.

"In this field, [HR is] so important that everyone wants to know exactly what's going on," says Kristin Kilmain, HR manager at Lois Paul & Partners (LP&P). "So we try to be transparent in our HR processes."

LP&P has several ways to increase employee retention, Kilmain says, including training from internal and external experts, a reward and recognition program, and a review process that was recently revamped with a new vendor, Halogen Software.

"People like to have more frequent communications, and this system facilitates that," she explains. "One thing we have been able to leverage with Halogen is the goals section, where employees can set a goal, separate from the annual review goals, and keep sharing them with their managers and fellow employees as they touch base throughout the year."

By training employees, helping them achieve goals, and making sure they have a solid understanding of their job requirements, a company can show employees how much they are valued.

An office-wide communications program at GolinHarris is "Real People, Real Stories," in which staffers create videos about their experiences at the firm, to share with employees across the globe.

"The purpose is to create a library that would bring our corporate culture to life," says Fred Cook, CEO of Golin, explaining that topics often align with corporate values, such as collaboration and trust. "We believe that our culture has been the most significant contributor to our continued success. It's the reason people stay with the company for a long time, why clients hire us, and we want to do something to make our firm more tangible and real."

Community involvement and philanthropic endeavors are other ways to retain employees, especially at Marina Maher Communications (MMC), which is celebrating its 25th anniversary with a year of giving back. The company kicked off the celebration by partnering with the *Today* show's "Lend a Hand Today" series in April.

"We do an employee survey every year, and that was one of the things that resonated with just about every level of the organization," says Mary Beth Murphy, SVP of HR at MMC, which launched its "MMC For a Cause" program last year. "It is a retention tool, but that is a happy byproduct."

Outside of the unique programs launched by PR firms, core benefits are still one of the best ways to keep employees satisfied and help with retention, says Tamestrius McWhorter, HR generalist at Jackson Spalding.

“We must always put our people, our staff, first,” she says. “It’s very important that a workplace has inclusiveness, flexibility, and the opportunity to grow. Then everyone succeeds. The staff is happy and they are committed.”

Key points:

- Employees want to feel valued and learn from their experiences at a company
- Encouraging staff communication and involvement gets employees excited about the company
- Recognition programs, helpful review processes, and philanthropic endeavors are all ways to retain star staffers