

How to fight resignations with low (or no) budget

I think I have figured out a big part of the “Great Resignation.” At Gregory & Appel, I am fortunate to work with multiple organizations as a consultant and “trusted advisor”, and it means I have the viewpoint of an inside outsider.

I wish you could have been with me when I listened to a freshly resigned CSA employee at a coffee shop. Was it the money? Was it because the tasks were too difficult? No, it was because they no longer felt that their boss listened to them or cared about them. Here are a few simple reasons why your employees quit and low-cost actions that you can take to reduce the chances of having to re-staff.

Why do people leave their jobs?

It's not about the money. Even if you can offer more money than other employers, that won't help you retain talent. Money is a very small part of why employees quit (only about 30 percent of workers leave for better pay), and it's easy to get a wage bump if another employer offers one. The main reason employees leave is because they don't feel valued. Disengagement breeds resignation.

It starts with the boss. Based on my, albeit unscientific, surveys asking people why they quit, more than half said their main motivation for leaving a job was their lack of a positive relationship with their boss. If your employees don't feel like they can be honest with you and if they don't see themselves as part of your team—they may quit. So what can you do?

Ways to improve employee satisfaction

Show empathy

Good bosses demonstrate empathy by showing their team that they're invested in them as people and not just employees. On a surface level, empathy is similar to listening—but it goes beyond simple attention and understanding; it means being willing to say “I feel your pain” without feeling judged or called out. This kind of management is good for your employee's health, both physically and mentally.

Value mental health

This is a tough topic that isn't discussed enough. When a person is in pain, all one can think of is the pain. When a person is not in pain, their mind is free to focus on other pursuits. Offering mental health resources and paying attention to warning signs will build trust. However, these don't always require expensive programs. Simply being understanding and a little lenient when an employee is going through a difficult time can go a long way. Also, ask what about your work environment could be contributing negatively to mental health. Those 60-hour work weeks are probably taking a toll.

Finally, keep your own mental reserves up — make sure you look after your own mental health so you can be

prepared for what's ahead.

Improve your listening skills

A good boss knows how to listen and take in what employees have to say, while also keeping an open mind. Someone who lacks active listening skills—or worse, someone who is actively dismissive—might be bad news for anyone on his team. Not only will a boss's lack of listening create an environment of mistrust and resentment, but it can make people feel like they're not being taken seriously. Sometimes you'll hear from employees on small issues you can easily change. Other times, there might be bigger issues causing problems for employees that are harder to solve. Whether you can help immediately or not, actively listening and making sure their concerns are heard will go a long way in earning an employee's respect.

Provide recognition from superiors

Three simple rules – know your people, know your people, know your people. Recognition is an important part of motivation, so make sure your employee knows that you're paying attention to their work, and let them know when you think they've done a good job. A little recognition and appreciation can make a big impact, even if it's just a simple thanks for doing their job well.

Where do you start?

The top of the list is simple — listening and mental health. These are key foundations that you can't build much without.

If your employees have no respect for you as a manager, and don't believe in your vision for the organization, there isn't much else you can do but wish them well on their way out. However, there are ways to make sure your managers are effective leaders: training programs, regular performance reviews, and enforcing standard operating procedures all go a long way toward improving how people relate with each other at work.