RETENTION
HANDBOOK

A guide to keeping the employees you need

RDN
Regional Development Network
Réseau de Développement Régional

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The RDN Retention Handbook was produced by the Regional Development Network to support member organizations who work together for the socio-economic development of English-speaking communities throughout Québec.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Executive directors and managers at regional organizations have busy schedules, so it's understandable that once a candidate has accepted a job offer, a box on your to-do list is checked off. However, it's wise to think of that box as being temporarily checked and to implement retention strategies to ensure it stays that way for as long as possible. For many reasons, employee retention should be just as important as grant writing and providing core services.

Understanding the reasons for quitting is important. Employee turnover can be costly for an organization due to lost productivity, decreased morale, and recruitment expenses. Some of the top reasons employees leave are:

A TOXIC WORKPLACE CULTURE

If employees feel that the organization's culture is toxic, unethical, or not aligned with their personal values, they may seek other opportunities.

LOW PAY OR BENEFITS

Compensation is a significant factor in employee satisfaction and retention. If an employee feels that they are not being compensated or that their benefits package is inadequate, they may leave.

MANAGEMENT

Research has consistently shown that a significant percentage of employees cite bad management as a primary reason for leaving their jobs. "People don't leave jobs; they leave managers."

A LACK OF CAREER ADVANCEMENT

Many employees leave their jobs because they feel that there is no room for growth and that there are limited opportunities for advancement and minimal learning and development options.

A LACK OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Employees may leave their jobs if they feel that they are not able to achieve a healthy work-life balance due to long hours and demanding workloads.

LITTLE RECOGNITION

Feeling unrecognized and unrewarded is a common reason why employees leave their jobs. Employees want to feel that their hard work and contributions are valued and appreciated.

BURNOUT OR STRESS

High levels of stress can cause employees to feel overwhelmed and unhappy with their jobs and lead to burnout.

NO FLEXIBLE WORK OPTIONS

Flex-time, compressed workweeks, and remote work are important to employees who want to balance work and home life.

GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN THE WORKPLACE

Understanding generational differences in the workplace is important as these factors influence behaviours and impact overall organizational dynamics. Referencing the chart below can offer insights into the different values and approaches of each generation.

Values	Work style	Ideal work environment	How to retain
Baby Boomers (born 1946–1964)	Optimistic, competitive, workaholic, team-oriented, loyal, and success-driven		
Baby Boomers value hard work and paying their dues, adopting the previous generation's desire for authoritative leadership styles and a sense of duty.	Boomers like structure, clear goals, and specific deadlines. They're ambitious and appreciate recognition of their work. Face-to-face discussions and phone calls are preferred, but email is accepted.	Boomers don't always need constant feedback or micromanaging from higher-ups. They will likely assume the ship is on track unless authority lets them know otherwise.	Provide opportunities for them to prove themselves, acknowledge their contributions, and put them in mentor roles. Bonuses, clear paths to promotions, and professional development opportunities can keep them engaged.
Generation X (born 1965–1980)	Independent, flexible, informal, skeptical, and self-reliant		
Gen Xers are often skeptical of authority and believe competence is more important than rank. They're faster to leave their job when their goals don't align with their employer's. Diversity and personal development are important.	They're independent and adaptable. They engage with immediate and clear feedback and prefer efficiency over form. Email is preferred, but face-to-face discussions and phone calls are also widely used.	Gen X workers are usually more comfortable with telework and flexible work schedules. They value work-life balance and prefer efficiency in order to have more time for their personal lives.	Provide feedback, flexibility, and a work-life balance, as well as offer professional and personal development opportunities and coaching. Gen X appreciates collaborative environments and value meaningful work and family over an intensive career.
Millennials a.k.a. Generation Y (born 1981–2000)	Competitive, civic-minded, achievement-oriented, will switch jobs if their work-life balance suffers		
Most millennials want to be a part of something bigger than profits. They value sustainability, balance, and a sense of belonging in their professional lives.	Flexibility and work-life balance are often large parts of the millennial work style. Freedom to manage their schedules, pursue remote work opportunities, and find time for self-care is key to avoiding burnout. They prefer instant messaging, texting, and email.	Many millennials excel when they see a clear path toward career growth. Professional development, promotion opportunities, and team building activities are all important to their employee experience.	Get to know them personally, manage by results, provide immediate feedback, and offer flexible work as many experience burnout due to workload intensity. They usually seek job security and benefits such as healthcare, tuition assistance, and wellness programs.
Generation Z (born 2001–2020)	Global, entrepreneurial, progressive, less focused, values individuality and creativity		
Gen Z values job stability and individual recognition. They will leave jobs that don't align with their personal values. They often yearn for personal connection in the workplace. Empathy, open communication styles, and attention to mental health are top priorities.	Most people in this generation prefer video calls, 1:1 meetings, and social activities that build stronger interpersonal relationships. They use instant messaging, texting, and social media.	For Gen Z, organizational culture should reflect diversity, equity, and inclusion. Many seek non-traditional work schedules and flexible, remote work opportunities. They value open conversations with management and colleagues.	Empower them to be independent, let them engage in multiple projects concurrently, and prioritize flexible work. Offer hybrid arrangements, as well as wellness programs, mentorships, and career development opportunities.

Sources:
Perry, Elizabeth. "5 Generations in the Workplace: How to Manage Them All." www.betterup.com/blog/generations-in-the-workplace. 3 August 2023.
Miroslavov, Miro. "Overcoming Generational Differences In The Workplace." www.officernd.com/blog/generational-differences-in-the-workplace/ficernd. 28 August 2023.

DEVELOPING YOUR RETENTION STRATEGY

Putting a retention strategy in place is not just a matter of operational efficiency but a crucial component in achieving your goals. A comprehensive employee retention strategy is essential in:

- Maintaining stability
- Reducing costs
- Preserving organizational knowledge
- Building stakeholder confidence
- Boosting employee morale
- Retaining top talent

There are several different areas of your internal operations that your organization can control and adjust to improve employee retention. The next pages will present the following elements that you may choose to address or include in your retention strategy:

- ONBOARDING
- DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNTIES
- FLEXIBLE WORK
- COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS
- EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT
- MANAGEMENT STYLES
- PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT
- RECOGNITION AND REWARDS
- WORK-LIFE BALANCE
- WORKPLACE CULTURE

ONBOARDING

Employee retention starts from day one. Employee motivation is at its peak upon their arrival. They are looking forward to discovering their tasks, their projects, their colleagues, and their office. There's nothing worse for new employees than to arrive in an office where their computer or workstation is not ready or where no one is there to welcome and mentor them.

Beyond providing information about the organization's policies and procedures, an effective onboarding process should make new employees feel comfortable and help them learn about their role and the organization's culture and values.

Developing and facilitating employee onboarding takes time. Too often, organizations rush through onboarding, hoping that new hires will learn as they work. However, by taking the time to onboard new hires properly, employers can increase employees' chances of success, engagement, and retention—saving the organization time and money in the long run.

A good onboarding process will enable new employees to be successful by:

Reducing anxiety related to starting a new job. → **Teaching them the organization's mission, vision, and values and their work duties.** → **Helping them build relationships with their colleagues.**

Visit the RDN Member Portal to view the RDN Recruitment Handbook's section on onboarding and to access onboarding checklists.

COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

How you compensate employees for their contributions plays a significant role in whether they feel valued and stay for the long term. Most RDN members have salary scales and pay equity in place to guide compensation levels. Indirect forms of compensation can also be important tools for employee retention.

While not all indirect benefits come at zero cost, understanding their impact on employee engagement and retention can give your organization far greater flexibility than relying solely on salary increases.

Create or review your current practices related to indirect compensation and solicit feedback from employees to learn about what kinds of perks and benefits they value the most. The following presents the three different types of compensation and examples of each.

Direct	Indirect	Non-Financial
Salary	Health or life insurance	Remote or hybrid work
Bonus	RRSPs	Recognition
	Tuition reimbursement	Flexible schedules
	Paid leave (vacations, holidays, sick days, etc.)	Wellness program
	Use of the organization's cell phone and laptop	Time off for volunteering
	Gym membership	Increased autonomy
	Paid training	
	Commuting benefits	
	Office perks—snacks, coffee, etc.	

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

By implementing a well-designed performance management plan, you can ensure that employees are aligned with your mission, working effectively towards goals and continuously developing their skills.

Today's performance management is based on continuous, honest conversations with employees about how they're doing in their jobs and where they could improve. More than just an annual performance review, performance management is the process of setting objectives; continuously assessing progress; and providing ongoing coaching, feedback, and support to ensure that employees are meeting their performance objectives and professional development goals. The following outlines a framework for a performance management system.

Core Principles

Mission-Driven

All performance goals and objectives should connect directly to the organization's mission and strategic plan.

Continuous Improvement

Performance management should be an ongoing process, not just a yearly review. Regular check-ins and feedback are crucial.

Development Focus

Performance evaluations should identify strengths and areas for improvement and provide opportunities for growth and professional development.

Stakeholder Engagement

Consider incorporating feedback from various stakeholders, like clients or partners, when evaluating performance.

Steps Involved

1. Performance Planning and Goal Setting

- Review the organization's mission, vision, and strategic plan.
- Review the employee's job description to determine if it reflects their work. If the employee has taken on new responsibilities or if the job has changed significantly, you may need to update their job description.
- Collaboratively set goals that contribute to the organization's overall plan. Link the employee's goals and objectives to your organization's strategic plan and/or operational goals. Ensure that employees understand how their goals tie into the overarching organizational goals and mission.

"The employee performance management process should be among your most transparent practices. No one wants to feel like how their work is being judged is shrouded in mystery; this can create tense, unpleasant environments where employees are unsure of what's expected of them or how they can improve. Giving the process a clear structure and establishing exactly how leadership will gauge success eliminates mystery and contributes to a more positive and productive culture that will retain employees longer."

—Laura McGarry, Graham-Pelton

- Discuss which professional competencies the employee needs to improve and make a plan to do so (see page 11).
- Develop a performance/work plan that outlines the employee's tasks and expected results compared to established goals and objectives.

- Both the employee and manager should sign the performance plan. The manager should give one copy to the employee and file the other in the employee's personnel file.

2. Performance Measurement

- Identify specific key performance indicators to track progress towards goals. These metrics can be quantitative (e.g., number of community members served) or qualitative (e.g., participant level of satisfaction).

- Use a combination of self-assessments, informal meetings, and manager input to gather information about each employee's performance, impact, accomplishments, and areas for improvement.

3. Annual Performance Review

As discussed, organizations are increasingly shifting towards performance management models focused on continuous feedback, goal setting, and course correction rather than relying on an annual review meeting. However, these reviews still serve a valuable purpose as standardized checkpoints for managers and employees to formally discuss performance.

- Conduct annual performance reviews that summarize progress on goals, identify key achievements, and discuss areas for improvement.
- Use a standardized performance review form that reflects the organization's values and priorities.

- Approach the review as a collaborative discussion, not a one-sided evaluation.

Visit the RDN Member Portal to access The Appreciative Performance Review Toolkit.

4. Ongoing Coaching, Feedback, and Support

- Support the employee in between performance management meetings by asking about the established goals and providing guidance. Schedule regular check-ins between the supervisor and employee to discuss progress, address challenges, and offer ongoing feedback.

- Encourage open communication.
- Utilize professional development opportunities to address skill gaps and to support growth.

Source: "What is performance management?" HR Intervals, https://guide.hrintervals-intervallesrh.ca/hc/en-ca/articles/4407326866579-What-is-performance-management. Accessed 01 April 2024.

DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Prioritizing employee development should be a key component of every organization's strategic plan. Employees, regardless of their career stage, seek opportunities to learn and grow. By fostering a culture of learning and implementing professional development plans, organizations can enhance employee satisfaction and boost workplace engagement.

Investing in learning, training, and development benefits both employees and the organization by increasing productivity, updating skills, and improving job performance.

Fostering a Learning Culture

A learning culture within your organization encourages employees to take ownership of their professional development and continuously improve their skills. It can help your organization adapt and respond to changing needs. The following tips can help you increase your team's motivation to learn.

Leadership Commitment Involve organizational leaders in learning initiatives to set the tone and demonstrate the importance of continuous learning. Encourage leaders to share their learning experiences, promote learning initiatives, and allocate resources for employee development.

Encourage Knowledge Sharing Create opportunities for employees to exchange information, ideas, and experiences with their peers. Implement regular "lunch and learn" sessions or create an internal platform for sharing resources and best practices.

Offer Diverse Learning Opportunities Provide a variety of learning formats to cater to different learning styles and preferences. Leverage free or low-cost online learning resources and offer access to workshops, conferences, training, and mentoring programs. Encourage staff participation in training and workshops offered by provincial organizations serving the English-speaking community and in training offered by Francophone partners—an opportunity not only to learn but also to network, promote your organization, and improve French language skills.

Mentoring and Coaching Programs Establish structured knowledge transfer and skill development programs through mentor-mentee relationships. Train and support mentors/coaches and regularly assess the effectiveness of mentoring relationships.

Celebrate and Reward Learning Acknowledge and recognize employees' learning achievements to create a positive learning environment. Use newsletters, team meetings, or social media to highlight learning achievements and inspire others.

Provide Time and Resources for Learning Ensure employees have the necessary time and resources to pursue learning opportunities. Allocate specific work time for learning activities and provide a budget for professional development opportunities.

Creating a Professional Development Plan

Use this checklist to create professional development plans for each member of your team, which will show how much your organization values them.

Consider creating an organization-wide professional development framework. To do this, you'll need to know:

- ◯ What skills and abilities your organization seeks in its employees.
- ◯ What skills your employees need to improve to deliver the mission.
- ◯ What resources—including money, time, and information—exist to invest in skills development.
- ◯ How your organization will offer professional development (e.g., will you hold your own programs quarterly, cover employees' attendance at an annual conference, etc.?).
- ◯ How you will communicate professional development opportunities to your team.

Ask team members to assess their own skills.

- ◯ Create a survey that asks them to identify strengths they bring to the role and challenges they face.
- ◯ Find out what skills, career paths, and competencies interest your team members.

Review the skills assessments with an eye to your team's needs.

- ◯ Compare your assessment of each individual's skill level and their work record with their self-assessment.
- ◯ Look for opportunities where individuals' skills and interests align with the goals of your team.

Build resources for professional development at your nonprofit.

- ◯ Seek nonprofit discounts from third-party providers.
- ◯ Include pitches for training funds in your grant applications.
- ◯ Consider peer-to-peer coaching opportunities. Can one employee train another on a key skill?
- ◯ Explore mentoring and skills training options through professional association memberships.
- ◯ Ask board members for referrals who could provide pro bono training in needed areas.
- ◯ Use the "train-the-trainer" approach; ask employees who develop a new skill to train others.

Collaborate with employees to build their professional development plans.

- ◯ Consider where the employee needs support to make the most of their strengths and address their challenges.
- ◯ Revisit job descriptions. What skills and competencies can the employee improve that will impact their job performance?
- ◯ Revisit your nonprofit's mission and strategic plan. Are there organizational gaps that professional development could help close?

Guide employees to monitor progress, celebrate wins, and navigate challenges.

- ◯ Ask employees to record the professional development steps they take, what they learned, and how they applied lessons and takeaways.
- ◯ Review progress regularly with employees.
- ◯ Discuss challenges and additional opportunities for learning.

Source: "How to Create an Employee Professional Development Plan [Infographic]." *Nonprofit Risk Management Center*, https://nonprofitrisk.org/resources/infographics/how-to-create-an-employee-professional-development-plan/. Accessed 27 July 2023.

Sample Employee Development Plan 2024–2025

Employee Name _____

Job Title _____

Direct Supervisor _____

Date of Plan _____

Professional Goals *List goals for the next 12 months.*	**Development Needs** *Identify the specific skills or knowledge areas to develop in order to achieve the goal.*	**Action Plan** *Outline actions that are going to help achieve the professional goal.*	**Expected Outcomes** *List outcomes that will be achieved with the actions.*
Example 1: Project coordinator Goal 1: Promotion to communications coordinator	Graphic design proficiency	· Enroll in Acrobat Pro training · Follow self-directed Canva training modules	Professional reports, brochures, and social media materials
	Website proficiency	· Schedule training with website designer	Up-to-date website
	Public speaking	· Join Toastmasters for weekly online meetings	Three radio interviews, presentations at four events
Example 2: Manager Goal 1: Develop mentoring and coaching skills	Mentoring proficiency	**Enroll in relevant courses or workshops that focus on mentoring** · McGill School of Continuing Studies, Course 234	Team members' skills improved through mentoring
	Coaching proficiency	**Enhance coaching skills with professional guidance** · Develop a coaching plan with a certified coach	Higher employee productivity through coaching
Goal 2: Improve office communications	Delivering feedback coaching	**Learn and share the COINS and 4Ps methods of giving and receiving feedback** · Host in-house workshop with consultant	Regular feedback mechanisms in place (daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annually)

Feedback and Evaluation *How is the employee moving towards achieving their professional goals?*				
Goal	**Status and Comments**	**Date of Check**	**Signature Supervisor**	**Signature Employee**

Supporting Career Progression

Providing a structured career path in small mission-driven organizations can be a challenge. When employees are ready to move up, there is not always a place to go.

When chances for promotions are rare, you can emphasize that there is more to career development than a change in title. Growth can be tracked by changes in pay, responsibilities, and influence. Here are a few actions you can take to encourage growth in addition to your employee development plan:

Rotate some tasks.

If you give people the chance to do different tasks, it allows them not only to add new skills but also to have new responsibilities to enrich their jobs and keep them interested in what they're doing. In addition, you'll be in a better position if someone leaves or takes time off.

Move team members horizontally.

Allow employees to move to a completely different department or team to try something new. This can keep morale high and help generate new ideas. If appropriate, increase pay and benefits to reward them for increased responsibilities.

Let your team create new roles.

Allow staff the freedom and creativity to design their own roles, if any new roles are needed. This might lead to much more productive results than if you defined their jobs for them.

Give your team the power to make decisions.

Yes, you're the boss, but allow staff to take their own risks, where appropriate. You never know—they might do something great!

Add responsibilities to their position and upgrade job titles to reflect expanded roles.

For instance, a project coordinator could become a senior project coordinator.

Give your team goals, not actions.

Let your team decide how to reach their objectives. Again, this freedom will likely empower them, and you also might get some really creative results.

Include them in discussions.

Include employees in discussions on strategy and programming or allow them to attend a board meeting to present their work.

Source: "Career Progression in a Flat Organization." MindTools, www.mindtools.com/ap75wiw/career-progression-in-a-flat-organization. Accessed 12 April 2024.

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Employee engagement refers to an emotional commitment or deep sense of ownership that an employee has to an organization and its goals. Employee engagement means that employees care about and are invested in their work and the organization.

An engaged employee is more likely to make additional contributions to help their team or the organization succeed. Engaged employees don't just come to work on time because they will be punished if they show up late. They come to work on time because it's important to them to show up for their team each day and to be where they need to be to support their community.

Disengaged employees, on the other hand, show up and do the bare minimum. They stop caring, check out, or move on. According to a Gallup poll, "quiet quitters" account for 50% of the U.S. workforce.

What can you do to increase levels of engagement in your organization?

Check in on your level of engagement as an executive director or manager.

In order to set the stage for your employees to thrive, you have to be ready to serve as the standard bearer for what good engagement looks like. This means, at a bare minimum, you've got to be consistent with your policies, have integrity around compliance, and be an example of what it means to embody your organization's mission, vision, and core values.

You can't ask people to engage with you, problem solve for themselves and accomplish goals if you aren't holding up your end of the bargain as a leader. This includes understanding things like pay, wage and laws around working conditions, maintaining a nontoxic workplace, and checking in with your employees regularly to ensure that they are on track for success and that you are creating the proper conditions for them to be successful.

Then check in on your employees.

Once you've got a good grasp on your own level of engagement and are ready to lead the charge for your team, then it's time to look at each of your team members and evaluate where they stand on the engagement scale. The lists on the next two pages should help you get an idea of how your organization currently measures up from an engagement standpoint.

Signs That Engagement at Your Organization Is *Medium to High*

Employers

Value input

Know your strengths and weaknesses

Raise up ideas

Support employee growth (personal and professional)

Give feedback, good and bad

Have a sense of humor

Care about work-life balance

Treat employees consistently and fairly

Employees

Open about successes and challenges

Troubleshoot and problem solve

Bring ideas to the table

Take accountability for their role in achieving organizational objectives

Readily accept feedback, good and bad

Ready and willing to help fellow coworkers

Enthusiastically accept new responsibilities

Self-motivated and looking for ways to improve performance

Signs That Engagement at Your Organization *May Be a Problem*

Employers

"My way or the highway"

Inability to delegate / lack of trust in team

Stifle ideas from subordinates

Indifferent to or unaware of employee well-being

Save feedback for performance evaluations / write-ups

Easily frustrated and quick to react

"Employees should be grateful that they have a job"

Plays favourites (and everybody knows it)

Inflexible with policies

Employees

Sarcastic / passive aggressive

Arriving late / leaving early

"That isn't my job" / "Not my problem"

Passes blame / makes excuses

Lack of care / concern for clients

Burnout

Frequent absences

Abrupt resignations

High turnover

RECOGNITION AND REWARDS

When employees feel recognized, valued, and appreciated, they're more motivated and likely to go the extra mile for their organization. Employee recognition is a crucial element of employee engagement.

Recognizing that different individuals have unique preferences when it comes to recognition is important. Some may appreciate public recognition, while others prefer private acknowledgments where they are not put on the spot. Take the time to understand each employee's preferences and tailor recognition efforts accordingly. This personalization ensures that recognition resonates with employees and increases its impact on their engagement and retention.

Whether you want to launch a full program or find small ways to say "thank you" to your employees, below are some recognition ideas for individuals and teams that leaders and colleagues can implement.

Senior Level Recognition

Being validated by an executive director or manager can be meaningful for employees. It shows that management is paying attention and appreciating their hard work, which drives employee engagement and increases motivation.

For the Individual

Positive Feedback: You can share positive feedback regularly, whether it's via email or in person. It's low-hanging fruit for effective employee recognition.

Shout-Outs: If your employee appreciates public recognition, give a shout-out at the next team meeting. This will help the individual feel appreciated and expose the rest of the organization to the great work others do. If your employee isn't one for public recognition, opt for a private lunch. This will foster meaningful one-on-one conversation and give you a quiet space to share how much you appreciate their hard work.

Experiential Rewards: If you're willing to invest more money into your employee recognition efforts, consider allowing your employees to choose from a wide range of experiences—from a spa day to sky-diving—as a reward for their hard work.

Social Media Praise: Give them a shout-out for a job well done through your organization's social media platforms.

Catered Meal: Consider hosting a catered meal to celebrate a milestone or holiday.

Sponsored Volunteer Day: If you have an organization passionate about giving back to the community, offer to sponsor a volunteer day where everyone volunteers for a specific cause.

Office Outing: Treat your team to an office outing that is relaxing and can accommodate a diverse group, such as trivia, bowling, mini-golf, or an escape room.

Surprise Time Off: If you can, surprise your employees with a day off as a "thank you" for their hard work. For example, some organizations have "Summer Fridays," where employees leave early (or get a full day off) on Fridays during the summer.

Peer Recognition

Being recognized by peers is equally important for employees. Creating and encouraging a culture of peer recognition is also a great way to strengthen the bond between teammates. Here are some ideas that colleagues can act on to show appreciation for one another.

Sticky Notes: Leaving thoughtful sticky notes on a peer's computer, keyboard, or favourite coffee mug will be a pleasant surprise.

Surprise Treats: Who doesn't love a homemade cookie? Plus, it is extra meaningful because someone took the time and effort to make it.

Handwritten Note: A handwritten note or letter is a thoughtful way to convey gratitude in a world where digital is dominant.

Pay It Forward: Frequently, people have a positive impact on us in both big and small ways, but we keep it to ourselves. Instead of hiding it, pay it forward by complimenting someone whether it's about their work or personality.

Source: Lee, Sophia. "20 employee recognition ideas that work." Culture Amp. www.cultureamp.com/blog/employee-recognition-ideas. 8 March 2024.

FLEXIBLE WORK

Flexible working arrangements are some of the most effective tools at your disposal. Remote work, hybrid work, and flexible working hours have become standard practices for many organizations. Allowing employees to reallocate their work hours within the week to manage personal matters or simply enjoy an afternoon off can work well for many employees. However, not every role is suited to flexible work, and not every employee will excel under these conditions. By offering as much flexibility as possible, actively listening to employee requests, and making transparent decisions, you can enhance overall satisfaction and retention.

Benefits of Flexible Work

Enhanced Recruitment and Retention

Offering flexibility attracts high-performing employees who value work-life balance. It also reduces turnover by catering to individual needs.

Reduced Absenteeism

Flexible schedules allow employees to manage personal commitments without sacrificing work. This results in lower absenteeism and reduces instances of employees being physically present but not fully engaged.

Increased Productivity

Studies show flexible work arrangements lead to improved employee satisfaction, energy, and focus, ultimately boosting productivity.

Reduced Costs

Remote work arrangements can lead to lower overhead costs associated with office space.

Access to a Larger Talent Pool

Remote or hybrid work widens your net, increasing the quantity and quality of talent available.

Lower Carbon Footprint

Employees save money (work clothing, commuting, eating out for lunch), and employers have less overhead. This can result in a lower carbon footprint.

Creating a Flexible Work Policy

If your arrangements are on a case-by-case basis and you don't have a policy in place that all employees can benefit from, it can lead to feelings of inequality and create tension in the office. If you choose to create a policy, be sure to incorporate:

Clear Communication   Clearly define the duties and deadlines associated with each flexible work arrangement. Open communication is key to ensuring all parties are on the same page.

Supportive Culture   Foster a culture of trust and collaboration. Encourage teamwork and reciprocal support between management and employees.

Formal Agreements   For clarity, consider outlining individual agreed-upon arrangements in a formal document outlining expectations and responsibilities.

Flexible Work Options

There are various levels of flexible work, which can be included in your flexible work policy. These include:

Flex-time   Employees work full-time hours with variable start and finish times with a set core working period. This allows them to manage personal commitments while adhering to core collaboration hours.

Reduced Hours/Part-Time   Employees work less than the standard workweek, offering work-life balance and potentially catering to employees with disabilities.

Compressed Workweek   Employees work longer hours per day in exchange for a shorter workweek (e.g., a four-day workweek).

Job Sharing   Two or more employees share the responsibilities of one full-time position. This option is particularly useful when part-time roles are scarce.

Gradual Retirement   Employees gradually reduce their working hours or workload over time, easing the transition into full retirement. This benefits both employees and the organization by facilitating knowledge transfer and restructuring.

Leaves and Sabbaticals   Authorized periods of time away from work, with or without pay, can be requested for family reasons, healthcare, education, or personal pursuits. Ensure that you are familiar with government programs that support certain types of leave.

MANAGEMENT STYLES

Management affects how engaged employees are and, therefore, how likely they are to stay at your organization. Effective managers use different management styles to support their goals at any given time.

If you want to ensure you or your managers are effectively leading your team and using the right management style, it's important to check in with your team regularly and ask them for feedback. This can help you make improvements when necessary. Here are a few common management styles for organizing and leading a team, with potential advantages and disadvantages listed for each:

STYLE	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
AUTHORITATIVE		
Authoritative managers follow a top-down approach to leading. Managers make decisions almost entirely alone. They set clear and specific policies that everyone must follow, and they typically don't request feedback from employees.	Useful when efficiency is important and in crisis situations when it's necessary to make quick decisions.	New and innovative ideas rarely emerge.
CONSULTATIVE		
Consultative managers ask employees for feedback consistently and take employee concerns seriously. They often have an open-door policy that encourages employees to share what is and isn't working in the organization. However, they ultimately retain sole decision-making power.	Leads to higher employee engagement, stronger problem-solving as a team, and less turnover.	Isn't always as efficient as an authoritative style since more people are involved in making decisions.
DEMOCRATIC OR PARTICIPATIVE		
With democratic or participative managers, the decision-making process is heavily influenced by employees and includes effective communication and openness through all levels of the organization. It is especially effective when it comes to making long-term decisions that impact the whole organization.	Employees feel valued and empowered to contribute in meaningful ways. This encourages them to tap into their full potential.	Decision-making often involves debates and consulting multiple parties, which can take time.
LAISSEZ-FAIRE		
Laissez-faire managers are more like mentors than leaders. They're available when employees need guidance, but they often let employees make decisions on their own about how to move forward with projects. Managers monitor what's happening with employees, but they don't become too involved with the day-to-day tasks or projects.	This style can be effective because it gives self-motivated employees the autonomy and space they need to be productive. This could be particularly useful in a creative environment.	Because this management style is hands-off, it can leave some employees feeling neglected or in need of guidance and direction.

STYLE	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
PERSUASIVE		
Persuasive managers hold control of decision-making but work to help employees understand why the decisions made are best for the organization. They share the rationale behind the decision-making, fostering an inclusive and trusting environment. When an organization is successful, employees generally accept top-down decisions and work hard to implement them.	These managers instruct and motivate employees with reason and logic, which some individuals prefer to authoritative management. It can be helpful when leading a less experienced team.	While it isn't as dominating as the authoritative style, it's still a one-way communication process and employees don't necessarily have an avenue to give feedback.
TRANSFORMATIONAL		
Transformational managers focus on creating an environment that supports innovation. Leaders with this style often push their employees to set and reach goals even if it makes them slightly uncomfortable. These managers collaborate with and inspire staff to reach their full potential and aim for professional growth.	Adaptability, problem-solving, and innovation typically increase with this management style.	This style requires the right kind of employees. If they're not ready to adapt or if too many changes occur too quickly, they might not be willing to follow top-down ideas.
TRANSACTIONAL		
Transactional managers have a results-oriented style that relies on attaining goals through structure, supervision, and a system of rewards and punishments. Transactional leadership focuses on short-term goals.	This style works well with self-motivated employees and establishes unity throughout the organization.	This style does not address overall goals or long-term goals and may not motivate all types of employees.
COLLABORATIVE		
Collaborative leaders work closely with their team members and believe that when people feel personally and professionally fulfilled, they're more effective and more likely to produce great work. Because of their emphasis on employee satisfaction and teamwork, they tend to achieve higher levels of respect. A collaborative leader is an excellent leadership style for nonprofits. These types of leaders are exceptionally skilled in building employee morale and helping people re-engage with their work.	Collaborative leaders have the capacity to boost employee loyalty and productivity, improve employee development and decision-making, cultivate trust, and create future leaders.	Collaborative leaders can become burnt out as they attempt to boost collaboration with and between their team members. They might also find it difficult to create time and space for high-level strategic planning.

Source: Herrity, Jennifer. "8 Types of Management Styles for Effective Leadership." *Indeed*, www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/management-styles. 31 July 2023.

"When you have great managers who can maximize the potential of every team member, you have delivered on the new global will: a great job and a great life. That is the future of work."

—Jim Clifton and Jim Harter, It's the Manager

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Achieving a healthy work-life balance is now a major factor for employees when choosing and staying at a job. While employees may initially be attracted to your organization's mission and goals, they can burn out if they don't have a good balance between their work and their personal life.

Be realistic about the workload and deadlines that you set for your staff. Overworked employees are at a greater risk of burning out, being stressed, and performing poorly. They are also more likely to view their work and workplace negatively.

To promote work-life balance within your organization, consider implementing the following strategies.

Eliminate Unnecessary Work

Streamline your processes by reducing or eliminating non-essential meetings and reports.

Communicate Expectations Clearly

Ensure that staff members have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and goals.

Encourage Information Sharing

Foster a culture of open communication between staff and management to enhance collaboration and transparency.

Support Workplace Autonomy

Empower employees by allowing them the freedom to prioritize their tasks and manage their time effectively.

Encourage Participation in Decision-Making

Involve employees in decisions that affect their work to increase engagement and satisfaction.

Reduce Unnecessary Travel

Minimize travel requirements by utilizing virtual meeting tools and remote collaboration technologies.

Promote Personal Well-being

Organize workshops on topics such as stress management and mental health to provide employees with valuable life skills.

Schedule Focus Blocks

Allocate specific blocks of time in the calendar dedicated to focused work that is free from meetings and interruptions.

According to Statistics Canada, nearly one-third (32%) of working Canadians aged 15 to 74 reported that their work interfered with their home and family life in 2022. Canadians aged 35 to 49 (40%) were most likely to report work interfering with home life.

Work-Life Balance

Creating a balance between work demands and the healthy management and enjoyment of life outside work

Healthy workplaces make good business sense

The Average Worker spends

50.2 hours

Work-related activities per week

Just over half take work home to finish outside regular hours.

2012 National Study on Balancing Work and Caregiving in Canada

- Attract new employees
- Help retain staff
- Reduce sickness and absenteeism
- Improve morale
- Increase production and satisfaction

10 Tips for Employers

- Treat all employees in a fair and respectful manner
- Allow workers to have control and input as much as possible
- Recognize workers' results and skills
- Provide workers with the training, skills and resources they need
- Clearly define roles and responsibilities
- Set schedules that work with life outside the job
- Assess the risks of work-related stress and take action
- Match the workload to workers' capabilities
- Design meaningful jobs that allow workers to use their skills
- Provide opportunities for social, wellness and volunteering activities

Work factors

- Negative workplace culture
- Lack of control
- Relationships with colleagues
- Lack of clarity about roles and responsibilities
- Poor match of skills to the job
- Unreasonable demands
- Uncomfortable physical environment

3.7 million workers in Canada go through a regular day feeling a high level of stress.

Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2010.

What workers can do

- Take breaks, even small ones
- Make to-do lists
- Unplug from technology once in a while
- Build downtime into your schedule
- Choose activities that positively impact your work or personal life

CCOHS.ca
Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety

Source: Work life balance infographic, (www.ccohs.ca/images/products/infographics/download/worklife_balance.jpg), Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS), October 2023. Reproduced with the permission of CCOHS, 2024.

WORKPLACE CULTURE

An organizational culture that is engaging, respectful, and transparent will always be a more effective retention asset than one that is dull, toxic, or competitive.

Taking the pulse on your organizational culture is vital for creating a positive and fulfilling work environment. By identifying and addressing toxic cultures and burnout cultures, organizations can foster employee engagement, satisfaction, and retention.

You can better understand your current workplace culture through:

One-on-One Conversations

Managers should meet regularly with employees individually to understand their experiences, concerns, and suggestions. These conversations can help uncover underlying issues, build trust, and demonstrate that their opinions are valued.

Pulse Surveys

Conduct anonymous surveys to gauge employee satisfaction, engagement levels, and perceptions of the work environment at least each quarter. Include questions about communication, teamwork, recognition, and work-life balance.

Observing Behaviours

Pay attention to the behaviours exhibited within your organization. Look for signs of toxicity, such as disrespectful communication, lack of collaboration, or excessive competition. Similarly, watch for signs of burnout, such as decreased motivation or declining performance.

Reviewing Policies and Practices

Assess your policies, practices, and systems to determine if they align with the desired cultural values. For example, evaluate how performance evaluations, rewards, and recognition programs are structured to ensure they promote a positive and inclusive work environment.

Performance Management

Collect feedback on the organization and management as part of the performance management process.

Visit the RDN Member Portal for instructions on how to create and deliver pulse surveys, including 75 possible survey questions to include.

Transforming Workplace Culture

Implementing the retention strategies described in this handbook can go a long way in creating a positive organizational culture. Keep in mind the importance of the following if you are working to change your culture.

LEADERSHIP COMMITMENT

Cultivating a positive culture starts from the top. Leaders must demonstrate a commitment to fostering a healthy work environment, model positive behaviours, and communicate the desired cultural values.

CLEAR AND TRANSPARENT COMMUNICATION

Regularly communicate organizational values, expectations, and goals to employees. Ensure that communication channels are open, transparent, and inclusive. Encourage employees to provide feedback and suggestions for improvement.

LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Provide training programs that promote positive communication, emotional intelligence, and inclusive leadership—both for the employees and the managers. These initiatives can help employees develop the skills and awareness necessary for a healthy and collaborative work culture.

EMPLOYEE SUPPORT PROGRAMS

Implement initiatives or connect to resources to support employee well-being. Stress-management workshops and employee-assistance programs can help mitigate burnout and foster work-life balance.

Source: "The Employee Retention Guide." learningbank, www.learningbank.io/employee-retention-guide. Accessed 8 March 2024.

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