Which of your people are about to leave?

REVISE Your Culture to Keep People and Productivity

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Market Situation

Unstable company cultures create a high risk of employees choosing "staycation", "rest and vest," or "brain drain": that is, doing just enough to get by, hanging in for stock options, or simply leaving. Recent bestsellers like Rick Wartzman's "The End of Loyalty" and Jeffrey Pfeffer's "Dying for a Paycheck" have documented the evolution of such workplace changes, including worst-case company cultures that literally destroy company and employee health. As employer practices have shifted, employees have reacted – and everyone has paid a price.

The cost of employee turnover in particular is rarely tracked or measured by mid-level and line managers. But the price to replace a single worker ranges from 20-180% of their annual salary. So when turnover soars, the total cost of workforce skyrockets, and profit margins plummet.

There are also hidden, indirect costs of turnover:
- loss of departing staffers' knowledge & connections
- remaining staff become overwhelmed
- increased workload reduces productivity
- endless turnover degrades group morale
- the firm's reputation suffers

In the modern social media era, such flaws are easy to uncover and news of them spreads quickly. In this brutally competitive market, companies with terrible retention will struggle to fill their headcount gaps – and keep paying a high price.

It doesn't have to be that way. Managers can turn things around. They can choose to change the company's mindset, process and culture. The following real-world case study features a workplace with significant turnover problems that were measurably improved when management paid attention and deliberately changed their culture. Intentional efforts like Corralling Chaos' "The REVISE System"**TM** can take on these situations and deliver improved business results.

Business Situation

A high-tech biopharmaceutical workgroup running difficult processes was experiencing very high turnover. Of the 25-person group, 48% voluntarily departed the company. The departures happened slowly over a 3-month span, so group managers didn't see the growing tsunami until problems became apparent:

- there were multiple work stoppages and rush orders
- dozens of project deadlines were missed
- several customers were irate
- staff replacement alone cost the company over $150,000

Management formed an investigation team to figure out what was happening. This team of front-line staff found that increasing business growth had created workload levels which could no longer be met by doing things "the old way." Specific problems included:

- overcrowding, resulting in no space to work
- equipment shortages
- inefficient consumable stocking
- no procedures to handle these challenges

Operational managers were too busy putting out daily fires to think about their processes or culture. Since the problems were not being addressed, staff grew frustrated and disengaged. As they didn't see anything changing for the better, the best chose to leave.

Bringing in Fresh Ideas

To improve the situation, a new strategy had to be created and deployed.
The theory underpinning this practical retention approach is captured in Corralling Chaos's cultural strategy, "The REVISESystemTM": Reward, Encourage, Value, Inspire, Support, and Engage.
When employees feel that management pays attention to them and their needs, productivity and retention markedly improve.

Reward means money
Money is a real need and a social expectation, which must be competitive in the market, but can be flexible. ISO's, salary caps and identical salaries are all real-world examples of flexible compensation structures.

Encourage is to motivate by non-financial recognition
Encouragement via recognition is a key part of a company's cultural norms. It can be given by managers, but is usually most powerful when given peer-to-peer. When customized to reflect the achievement and/or the achiever, and awarded in a manner that the receiver appreciates, it can carry tremendous impact.

Value speaks to personal understanding and empathy
Staff want to see that management cares, understands, and is respectful. This doesn't mean a highly structured or stuffy approach; the environment can be casual, as long as it's respectful and inclusive.

Inspire is connecting to personal purpose and growth

As Viktor Frankl observed, people search for meaning. Everyone needs a connection to a greater cause, and to develop and grow. Managers can help their people connect and align their personal purpose with the company's, to create opportunities for meaningful career progression and real personal growth. Clear mission statements and an emphasis on learning agility can then cultivate not only people's growth, but that of their company as well.

Support involves sustenance and flexibility

People aren't cogs, and success isn't a one-off race; it's a series of marathons. Investing time in staff to help them succeed, and understanding that every person has unique needs, helps staff address immediate challenges and feel supported.

Engagement ensures people want to get their work done

The approach to engagement is to find out what people enjoy doing, what they feel drawn or called to, and how they can live that out to make a difference. For instance, fast-minded people need to be busy; deep thinkers and technical experts need interesting challenges; extroverts need lots of social contacts. And everyone needs involvement and accomplishment.

Cultural strategies that utilize the components of "The REVISE System"^{TM} harness powerful positive motivators that drive better culture, productivity, and retention.

To fix the problem in this case study, three high-level objectives were defined that each tapped into "The REVISE System" (TM) concepts:

1. Rapidly change processes to meet the group's increased workload.
2. Develop a new system to allow the group to continuously create better processes peer-to-peer.
3. Immediately improve the negative culture, engage and encourage staff, and stop the exodus of employees.

Turning the Tables

To accomplish all three objectives, the investigation team transitioned into a new role as a process improvement team. They had clear sponsorship from senior management stakeholders, providing time and resources to create and implement the new program.

The process improvement team had weekly standing meetings in a visible hallway location, open to all. A large board on the wall captured and transparently communicated:

- idea submissions
- priorities
- actions taken and primary person responsible
- achievements
- recognition

Over the course of three months, the plan was devised, approved by management and put into operation.

90-Day Impact on The Business

The following objectives were achieved:

1. Rapidly changed processes to meet the group's increased workload.

As a result of actively seeking staff input, multiple issues were identified and addressed immediately. Resupply systems and standardized storage locations were created, reducing delays and rush orders. An equipment and workspace schedule helped prevent conflicts over workspace. Together, these shifted the daily work focus from a scavenger hunt for supplies and space, to direct performance. Customer project cycle time decreased, and on-time delivery sharply improved. Projects were back on track, and customers were happy.

2. Developed a new system to allow the group to continuously create better processes among themselves, independently.

The process improvement team kept getting suggestions for continuous improvement. New ideas moved onto the suggestion board, through the improvement teams' process, into implementation, and became the norm. The resupply system in particular was so successful that staff wanted it expanded. The workgroup had become much more attuned to learning agility: They saw new solutions to their problems and acted to change processes and behaviors on an ongoing basis.

3. Immediately improved the negative culture, engaged and encouraged staff, and stopped the exodus of employees.

The culture had genuinely improved. In their daily activities, staff could see improvements themselves. They were less stressed because resource competition, frustration and conflict were reduced. They were recognized for their contributions and were inspired. They knew that they were being listened to, their input was valued, and they felt appreciated by management – and their peers. They were a team again.

As a result of all of the above, the group soon realized zero turnover, zero rush orders, and zero days

of work-stoppage. Total cost of workforce declined dramatically.

An unexpected bonus also occurred: other groups saw and heard about the improvements, and requested similar systems be set up in their business units.

In summary, all the desired endpoints had been achieved: turnover had dropped, work was getting done, and people were happier.

Case Study Conclusion

Fast-paced, high-tech environments have many technical details that can go wrong and need to be fixed immediately. So it can be hard to stop, think, and chart a new course. But when processes and people go badly off-track, there is both an immediate negative impact on productivity, and a sense that management isn't concerned about people. This encourages staff to look for the exits. To prevent this "brain drain," solutions need to be found that are practical, engaging and continuous.

Why was the approach in this case study so effective? Management's choice to invest the time and champion the effort was critical, as was the decision to trust and empower front-line staff and their leaders to identify and make improvements to their own workplace.

By using the principles of "The REVISE System"^{TM} – Reward, Encourage, Value, Inspire, Support and Engage – management was able to improve not simply the immediate logistical problems, but the culture as well: They deliberately improved their culture by altering workplace climate through multiple behavioral changes.

Processes and cultures that are intentionally crafted can enable employees to be productive, and to stay. Such solutions can be simple, affordable and require minimal training. But any strategy must be based on strong management support and clear respect for and engagement of front-line staff. Deliberate implementation of processes to enable learning agility and continuous, daily improvement can streamline work, engage and empower staff, and deliver positive business results.

Future Proof Success. Now.

YOUR KEY DIFFERENTIATOR IS HUMAN POTENTIAL: REALIZE IT.

Our "Realizing Human Potential Methodology" ™

Exploring: Situational awareness interviews with key client stakeholders

Targeting: Intentionally design solutions to align intangibles to program goals and P&L

Activating: Launch project, promote objectives, establish participant viewpoints

Experiential Training: Deliver blended learning via 1:1 coaching and group workshops

Reporting: Participants present their learning & improved outcomes to key stakeholders

Other business programs for the market

We will be happy to schedule a meeting to learn more about your business situation and ways that we Can move the needle in the right direction. Reply to either the email or phone number below and we can schedule time to meet.

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