



How to Attract and Keep Employees During The Great Resignation

Short answer: Appreciation. 3 strategies for building a culture of recognition that helps employees want to come and stay.



Finding and keeping talented employees—it's an ongoing charge for HR leaders that's directly supported by a strong company culture. In the best of times, it's important to embed employee recognition for a thriving company culture. In more challenging times, it's an absolute necessity. The Covid-19 pandemic helped create a perfect storm where employees became more isolated, less connected, and felt less appreciated.

One observation after a year of pandemic underscores the need for recognition: "Many experts believe appreciation will become increasingly important. The wide acceptance of remote work has created a workforce that can work from anywhere, opening up new job opportunities that will test employee loyalty."¹ Loyalty is certainly being tested. And it will continue to be tested.

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An essential element: a culture of appreciation

What are the aspects of workplace culture that most influence potential employees? Many leaders might point to a culture of flexibility, where outcome is more important than a work schedule. Some may seek a culture of learning, where opportunities for education and skill development rank high on the list. Still others might favor a solid work/life balance or an inclusive environment as the most important culture traits.

Just as critical, what are the cultural elements that keep employees happy in their workplaces? What are the qualities employees point to most as the reason they enjoy working for their organization?

If you're an HR executive, your goal is to build a company culture that's attractive to employees—today and in the years to come. No matter how you answer either question, one part of a company's culture remains essential to the mix: a culture of appreciation.

Attracting talent in any job market

After a year of pandemic, the job market became extremely competitive for companies looking to hire new employees. In many cases, employers simply could not find and hire the employees needed to fill growing vacancies.

In April 2021, a record 44 percent of small business owners were unable to fill jobs—a metric that foreshadowed the post-pandemic scramble to find new employees.²

44%

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While no company can avoid every type of hiring challenge, a successful strategy for attracting talent is to continually build a culture that employees want to be part of.

A recent Qualtrics report found that what's most important for employees evaluating a new place of work is a sense of belonging. "Everyone wants to feel like they belong at their company, they want to feel a sense of belonging in their team, and most of all feel like they can be themselves at work."³

A big part of belonging is feeling valued and appreciated for your contributions. But feeling appreciated isn't the only attribute that attracts talent. It's just one of six areas people look for in a new company.

The talent magnets and why they attract



O.C. Tanner previously identified six aspects of workplace culture that make organizations a magnet for talent⁴. Not only is appreciation one of the essential aspects, but research shows that recognition significantly impacts each of these areas.

- Purpose (connecting employees to your organization's reason for being)
- Opportunity (providing opportunities to grow and develop)
- Success (employees innovating, doing meaningful work, feel like they are part of a winning team)
- Appreciation (feeling valued and appreciated for unique contributions)
- Wellbeing (employees' physical, social, emotional, and financial wellbeing)
- Leadership (good leaders who are mentors and create a sense of camaraderie)

The six talent magnets have proven to be pandemic-proof. In other words, job seekers still look for each of these characteristics—even when the demand for new talent outweighs the supply.

Employees who can choose from multiple companies pitching for their skills will consider more than the highest bidder. They'll consider the best culture fit as well.

Before the Covid-19 crisis, we saw how organizations that practice great employee recognition are more attractive places to work.⁵ This proves to remain the case today.

Keeping talent when times are tough

Similar to acquiring employees, the ability to keep employees took a hit after a year of crisis. In the U.S. alone, more than 4 million people quit their jobs in April of 2021.⁶ The surge of remote workers certainly may have contributed to the mass exodus of employees, also referred to as “the great resignation.”

Keeping great talent is never a guarantee, especially after a pandemic that disrupted workplaces and changed the way people work in numerous ways. However, a culture of appreciation is still more important than ever to help employees stay longer. The statistics show the value of appreciation as it relates to keeping employees longer.



EMPLOYEES ARE
5X
MORE LIKELY TO STAY
WHEN REGULARLY
ACKNOWLEDGED FOR
GOOD WORK.⁷



79%
OF PEOPLE WHO QUIT
CITE “LACK OF
APPRECIATION” AS
THEIR REASON FOR
LEAVING.⁷



AN EFFECTIVE
YEARS-OF-SERVICE
AWARD PROGRAM
ALONE INCREASES
EMPLOYEE TENURE BY
2
FULL YEARS.⁸

Three ways to attract and retain employees through a culture of appreciation

HR leaders can employ many specific strategies to infuse appreciation into company culture. Following are three suggestions that can make your workplace culture more attractive to both job seekers and current employees.

1. Integrate recognition into the workflow

Our most recent research at O.C. Tanner illustrates the power of integrating recognition into the workflow—and the effect of recognition on connection. To ensure great work gets appreciated as it happens, recognition should be a constant, integrated element of an organization’s culture. O.C. Tanner helps clients accomplish this with plug-ins for communication and collaboration applications like Outlook, Slack, Chrome, and more that let employees give recognition without even visiting their company’s recognition platform. When recognition is an integrated part of the

natural flow of work, it's far more likely to be given in a timely manner when it will have the greatest impact.

We also found that failing to recognize a colleague for great work results in the lowest chances of future connection and support. As you might expect, higher levels of recognition led to better opportunities for connection and support.⁹ This is a critical component of some of several of our talent magnets mentioned above, including Success and Appreciation.

2. Appreciate often in difficult times

We conducted a weekly pulse survey during the first few months of the Covid-19 pandemic. Not surprisingly, we discovered some valuable insights. Overall, organizations without a formal recognition program during the crisis saw a 48.6% decrease in employee engagement.

More stunning, was that those without a recognition program reported a 19.9% higher intention to leave the company.¹⁰

Conversely, we saw a different story for those with a recognition program such as O.C. Tanner's [Culture Cloud Recognition](#). When employees were recognized in the previous seven days, they were 63.7% more likely to believe that their senior leaders had their health and wellbeing in mind. This important finding helped highlight the value of recent recognition during a crisis. Employees will stick with you longer when they know you appreciate their extra efforts in tough times.



3. Don't forget remote employees

Connection is absolutely essential to building loyalty and retaining employees. With more employees working remote, or a partially remote schedule, HR leaders must be vigilant in extending a culture of appreciation to remote workers.

Managers should not overlook offsite workers when recognizing great results. Make it a point to recognize team members virtually through tools like Zoom or Teams. You can also celebrate years of service anniversaries virtually in creative ways. Plus, showing appreciation and connecting with new employees can go a long way to build connections.

For more insights on attracting and retaining talent, read our 2022 Global Culture Report.

SOURCES:

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