Best Practices for Staffing and Employee Retention

Student Transportation

Transportation supervisors and hiring managers face a number of human resources challenges – from changing legal requirements such as the forthcoming CDL licensing requirements, to staffing, driver training and retention.

In today's job market and applicant pool, it is not just sufficient to select and hire a suitable applicant driver but it is also important to retain your staff.

The Effects of Employee Turnover

The goal of employers is to decrease employee turnover, thereby decreasing recruitment costs, training costs, and loss of talent and knowledge.

Turnover is a symptom of deeper issues that have not been resolved, which may include low morale, no opportunities for advancement, lack of recognition, poor interpersonal relationships or job dissatisfaction. Compensation is also an issue, however, but does not play as large a role as normally believed.

By focusing on retention efforts, employers can improve retention rates and decrease the associated costs of turnover.

What is employee retention?

Employee retention refers to the ability of an organization to retain its employees which can be represented by a statistic. Many consider employee retention as relating to the efforts by which employers attempt to keep employees in their workforce. In this sense, retention becomes the strategy rather than the outcome.

Why do people join?

The attractiveness of the position is usually what entices employees to join an organization. However, recruiting driver applicants is only half the problem while retaining them is another. Understanding what your employees are looking for in the job while simultaneously making sure your expectations are correct are both important factors to address in the hiring process.

High performers are more likely to be retained when they are given realistic job previews. Organizations that attempt to oversell the position or company are only contributing to their own detriment when employees experience a discord between the position and what they were initially told.

To assess and maintain retention, employers should mitigate any immediate conflicts of misunderstanding in order to prolong the employee's longevity with the organization.

New-hire surveys can help to identify the breakdowns in trust that occur early on when employees decide that the job was not necessarily what they envisioned.

Why do people stay?

It may be feasible to investigate why drivers stay; once the reasons are identified, you may be able to focus your retention efforts on these factors. A stay survey can help to take the pulse of an organization's current work environment and its impact on their high performing employees. Employers that are concerned with over-using stay interviews can achieve the same result by favoring an on-going dialogue with employees and asking them critical questions pertaining to why they stay and what their goals are

Recent studies have suggested that as employees participate in their professional and community life, they develop a web of connections and relationships. These relationships prompt employees to become more embedded in their jobs and by leaving a job; this would sever or rearrange these social networks. The more embedded employees are in an organization, the more they are likely to stay. Additionally, the extent to which employees experience fit between themselves and their job, the lesser chance they will search elsewhere.

Why are our employees leaving?

Before implementing retention strategies, it is vital to address the turnover issues. There can be a multitude of reasons or just one. By understanding the reasons behind why employees leave, organizations can better cater to their existing workforce and influence these decisions in the future.

Often, it is low satisfaction and commitment that initiates the withdrawal process. The most common reasons for why employees leave are better pay, better hours and better opportunity. These typical answers for leaving often signal a much deeper issue that employers should investigate further. Contrary to what most organizations believe, employees often leave due to relationships with managers and/or treatment of employees and not compensation.

What is the reason why we can't keep our drivers?

Is it because of…

- Unrealistic job expectations?
- Hostile work environment?
- Lack of support from transportation supervisor and/or administrator?
- Limited Career Advancement?
- Monetary and Non-Monetary Benefits?

What are retention programs?

Once turnover reasons are identified, policies and programs can be developed and personalized to meet the unique needs of your district operations.

Some of the following (but not limited to) programs may be reasonable for your operations:

- Training and Development
  It is important for employees to understand their career path within an organization to motivate them to remain in the organization to achieve their personal career goals. Through surveys, discussion and classroom instruction, employees can better understand their goals for personal development. With these developmental goals in mind, organizations can offer tailored career development opportunities to their employees.

  Providing ample training and development opportunities can discourage turnover by keeping employees satisfied and well-positioned for future growth opportunities.

  In fact, dissatisfaction with potential career development is one of the top three reasons employees often feel inclined to look elsewhere. If employees are not given opportunities to continually update their skills, they are more likely to leave. Those who receive more training are less likely to quit than those who receive little or no training.

  Employers that fear providing training will make their employees more marketable and thus increase turnover can offer job specific training, which is less transferable to other contexts. Additionally, employers can increase retention through development opportunities such as allowing employees to further their education and reimbursing tuition for employees who remain with the company for a specified amount of time.

  Practicable examples to consider:

  - Top level training program to establish confidence in job performance
  - Master driver program stipend.

- Coaching and Mentoring

  Coaching can be used to build competencies in leaders within an organization and be useful in times of organizational change, to increase a leader's effectiveness or to encourage managers to implement coaching techniques with peers and direct reports.

  The coaching process begins with an assessment of the individual's strengths and opportunities for improvement. The issues are then prioritized and interventions are delivered to target key weaknesses. Assistance is then provided to encourage repeated use of newly acquired skills.

  Practicable examples to consider:

  - Support patrols controlling stressful student behavior
  - Personnel available to assist drivers with difficult student management
  - Employee counseling and management support for personal problems

- Motivating Across Generations

  Today's workforce includes a diverse population of employees from multiple generations. As each generation holds different expectations for the workplace, it is important to understand the differences between these generations regarding motivation and engagement. Managers, especially, must understand how to handle the differences.

  Practicable examples to consider:

  - Administrative interest/support in student transportation program
  - Establish culture that respects and appreciates employees
  - Encouragement of positive mindset to increase employee moral
  - Driver community outreach through fundraising days and attendance of community functions
  - Social gatherings for employees and their families
  - Birthday celebration days
  - Perfect attendance rewards through merchandise

- Compensation and Rewards

  Pay levels and satisfaction are only modest predictors of an employee's decision to leave the organization; however, organizations can explicitly link rewards to retention, i.e. hiring and retention bonuses, and/or choice of work hours and routes, attendance bonuses, benefit package for part-time drivers, recognition from the administration, employee awards, just to name a few.

Practicable examples to consider:

- Competitive base pay and annual pay increases
- Pay based on driving experience
- Offer benefit packages
- Signing bonuses
- Employee pay equivalent to full-time pay
- Annual retention pay
- Paid personal days or holidays
- Increased pay for layover time
- Employee accident free rewards
- Employee years of service rewards
- Weekly attendance reward
- Family and friends referral bonuses/referral bonuses
- Job sharing of other school district jobs/student transportation jobs
- Recruit individuals with irregular hours in other jobs
- Target people who want to be on school schedule

We realize that some of the aforementioned suggestions may not be implementable due to constraints within your organization.

Sources:
Stnonline.com
Wikipedia

For Questions Contact

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