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# Your Greatest Marketing Strategy

## Loyal Employees

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### Your Greatest Marketing Strategy - Loyal Employees

by Kathleen Gage

**W**hy do some companies seem to continually attract business with what appears to be very little effort, while others are struggling to make it? The answer may be simpler than you think. It may be so simple, in fact, that it is overlooked by many. It could all depend upon how well you hire, retain and respect your employees.

In today's competitive business environment, companies can foolishly waste phenomenal amounts of money on, what they think, are effective marketing strategies. Marketing is how your company gains visibility, position and credibility. An unbelievably easy way to achieve your marketing goals is with a solid employee base.

In most traditional marketing approaches, you learn advertising methods such as air time, newspaper ads, direct mail, or a cool web site. Actually, these methods can be some of the most insignificant aspects of marketing. Don't misunderstand, media, direct mail and web sites are important, however, there are far more important, and less expensive, keys to successful marketing.

It is amazing how many companies spend a fortune on marketing in the traditional sense, yet miss the key ingredient to the foundation of their success. A successful foundation lies within the extent people

enjoy working for the organization, how good they feel about their role within the company, what they say and do on the job (during and after business hours) and, most importantly, if they feel respected and appreciated.

A committed staff can literally turn a floundering company around. When people feel appreciated, they are more likely to be committed, loyal, creative, and trustworthy, rather than trying to do whatever they can to undermine the success of the organization or merely being in a state of complacency while at work.

Smart companies are taking a much more holistic approach in retention of their staff. They know the costs that are connected with hiring and retention of employees. However, many organizations have not taken the time to consider what the actual costs are to hire and retain employees. Organizations may think, by not addressing the reality of actual costs, they will be assured that there is no problem of financial drain. Not true. Companies unwilling to address any cost incurred in hiring and retention may wake up to the alarm of bankruptcy.

Some of the costs involved in recruiting and hiring may include: advertising the position, the amount of time spent interviewing candidates, administrative costs, training time and expense, lost productivity, the use of an employment agency, benefits, payroll taxes and much more. Now, take into consideration how many people you interview to find the right

person for the position. The costs associated with a \$7 an hour job can actually be in the thousands. Imagine the cost in hiring a \$40,000 a year staff member. If you haven't made the correct choice, you may be repeating the process within a very short period of time from the original hire.

The greatest challenge for a company is to hire correctly. Often, a company finds they are in a bind and need to fill a position therefore, they hurriedly look for the "perfect" candidate. The real objective should be to match the candidate's qualifications and passion with the company's culture and values. When you can make that kind of match, there is a greater chance for long term retention of the employee.

A missed opportunity in retaining employees is finding out what motivates your employees. Some employers mistakenly think that money alone is a motivator. Some of the most common complaints from employees are: lack of company sponsored child care programs for low to middle income families and single mothers, initial and ongoing training to ensure a job well done, education reimbursement, flex time, telecommuting, and other such incentives.

Perks and incentives for your employees are a very powerful marketing strategy. When your employees are happy and satisfied, they will be more inclined to talk about the great company they work for. Good news throughout the community from happy employees is beneficial, cost-free marketing. Happy employees make loyal employees. Loyal employees make excellent public relations representatives who truly have the desire to make your customers happy.

When your employees are deeply satisfied and happy, they will tend to take less sick time; they will not abuse company property or steal from the organization, and they will take better care of the

customers. It is amazing how many business executives and owners seem to miss this very important detail. When people feel cared for and valued, they will go out of their way to contribute to the success of the company.

Many progressive companies find it beneficial and cost efficient to retain outside consulting firms to assist them in discovering how to retain employees longer. This frees up the time and energy of management, to do what they need to do, while the consultants analyze and customize recommendations and training programs to increase employee satisfaction and commitment, thus contributing to greater success of the organization.

As was mentioned, one of the greatest benefits to a committed workforce is the level of customer service your staff will render. Some of the keys to excellent customer service do not necessarily lie within the policies management implements; they lie within the level of interaction amongst the divisions of the organization with the customers. Interaction that management may not even be aware of.

The primary benefits of excellent customer service are referrals, improved attitudes and morale internally, due to positive feedback from customers, increased sales, stronger bottom line, and the likelihood of job security.

How can you accomplish all of the above and make dealing with your company a pleasant and rewarding experience? Primarily, it is making a commitment to excellence in the hiring and retention of your staff. Remembering, always, why you are in the business you are in and continually honoring the organization's values and its employees.

Is your company making good hiring choices or just hoping to get lucky as you conduct the hiring process? Have you given thought to what the company culture and values are and how they

contribute and relate to employees? Is your management and executive team flexible enough to embrace a diverse workforce in these changing times? Has your company considered and calculated the costs associated with hiring different levels of staff for your organization? Are you doing all you can to hire and retain the best employees? Do you know who your best employees are? Is it time to do things differently within your organization?

When you encourage your staff to be the best, your chances of long term retention are greater. The longer you retain your employees, the stronger your assurance of continued implementation of the greatest marketing strategy - loyal employees.

**Kathleen Gage President of Turning Point Personal & Professional Development**, has broad experience in working with organizations on employee retention. Her background includes sales, marketing, management, public relations, trade show management, events coordination promotion and advertising sales. Kathleen is currently the vice-chair for the Central Region Council for the Department of Workforce Services of Utah.

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