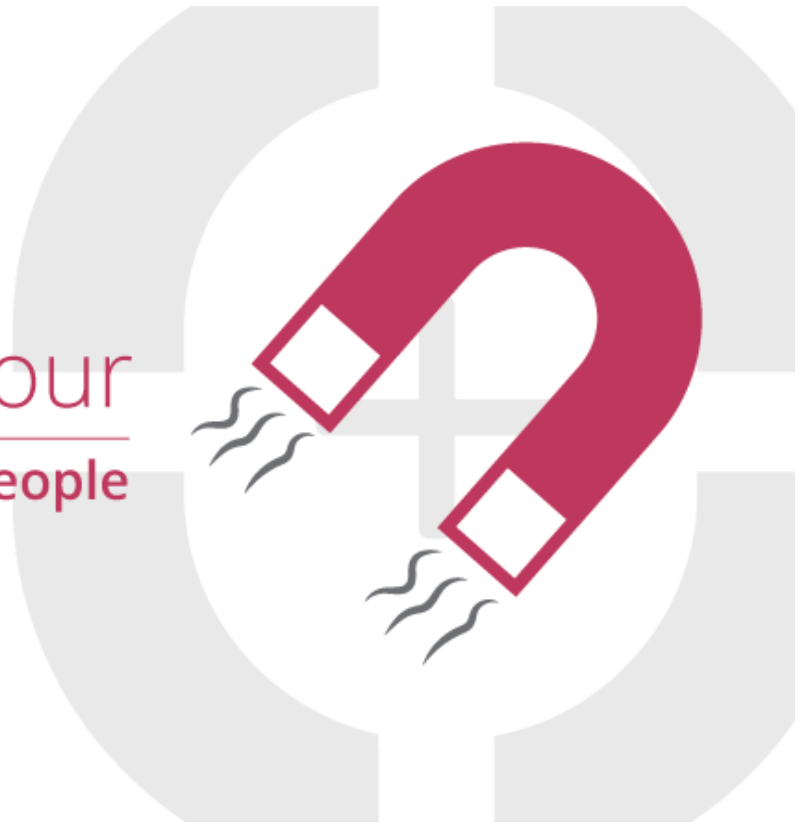# Sourced
We get people.

Retaining Your High Performing People

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A lot has been said about the trend of tenures becoming shorter and staff turnover increasing, with much of the blame for this being placed at the feet of the relatively-newly emerging IT industry (and, of course, the job-hopping "millennials" within it). Whilst it may not be fair to lay the blame squarely on our industry, it is clear that job tenures within IT tend to be shorter than elsewhere. In New Zealand especially, job tenure is generally low, with government statistics showing that half of the population has been in their role for less than 18 months. With people who are high-performers or those who are early in their career, it's not uncommon for us to hear about them staying in a role for a year, or sometimes even less, before moving on elsewhere.

In today's job market, with the often talked about "talent shortage" plaguing employers, retaining top staff is more important than ever. So, with that in mind, what can employers do to keep their best talent with them for longer?

Engaging in the Right Way

Having a strong retention strategy starts with a great first impression. When it comes to engaging talent, consulting with a specialist recruitment agency can be a great idea. We can handle many of the time-consuming and complex stages of the recruitment process, resulting in a far simpler and less stressful hiring experience for you and the candidate.

Throughout the hiring process, it's important to be honest with the candidate about what working with you is going to be like. If what

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they encounter once they start working with you doesn't match what you had promised during initial discussions, then you could run into an immediate trust issue.

This is why it's so important to have a strong employer brand and be able to back it up. With the support of your employees as brand ambassadors, you'll be well placed to get that top talent through the door. We've written in-depth about the importance of employer branding, which can be found here.

Another key part of getting off on the right foot with top talent is to have an effective onboarding programme. Ensure that the candidate has everything they need to settle in and that you and your team are supporting them in doing so. We'll be covering onboarding in greater depth in one of our upcoming blogs, but If you're looking for onboarding inspiration in the meantime, take a look at what other successful companies are doing. There is a lot to be learned about the process from famous examples such as Netflix and Zappos.

Creating a Culture

Though it's important to get off to a good start, in the long-term it's essential to maintain that level of support. While the need for support will be lessened once the person is settled in and comfortable in their new role, maintaining an open line of communication is an important step in making someone feel like they are part of the team. This communication is a significant part in creating a good environment and fostering a strong company culture. At Facebook, management (including CEO Mark Zuckerberg) work alongside everyone else in open offices to further reinforce that sense of unity.

Your internal culture should be a fundamental part of your organization.

Culture is one of the aspects we hear most about, with employers telling us that cultural fit is a crucial part of their criteria. Many candidates are also telling us that a good workplace culture is the main thing they're looking for in a new role, sometimes even more so than salary. In IT especially many of the 'dream' workplaces include companies who are famous for their culture, like Google, Facebook and Apple.

Despite the many misconceptions, workplace culture in IT isn't all foosball tables and flexible working hours. People are quick to latch on when culture is just window dressing, rather than part of a company's ingrained ethos. That means that your internal culture should be a fundamental part of your organisation, and constantly reinforced from the top-down.

It might seem obvious, but when people enjoy coming to work they're less likely to leave and more likely to produce better results. However, workplace culture isn't a one-size-fits-all concept, and one approach likely won't work for everybody. Find out what makes your office tick, whether that's putting on regular social events or putting incentives in place for good performance, and see how you can integrate this in your day-to-day operations.

Reward & Progression

One of the key ways of doing this is to implement system to reward top performers. Everyone likes to be recognised for their hard work, and even though you might be used to a certain standard from your top performers, that doesn't mean that it should go unnoticed. Recognising and rewarding success is a key driver for employees; whether that reward is intrinsic to the role or financial in the form of bonuses or other incentives. Much like with your culture however, these rewards are not one-size-fits-all. Finding out what drives each specific person is critical in being able to effectively reward them for their work.

These rewards will only serve to further motivate them, which will

Rewarding success with internal progression is a powerful incentive

produce better results and increase their morale. However, for top performers, one of those drivers at work is ambition. That means that regardless of being rewarded for performance, these people will likely move on if their desire for growth isn't being satisfied. Giving that opportunity is one of the most effective ways in which you can ensure that you retain your top people.

When employees can see a clear path towards the role they want in an environment they are comfortable in, taking that path will always be a better option than moving on elsewhere. If you already have people in high-level roles who have moved there from other areas or progressed from other positions in the business, showcase them as an example of the kind of upward mobility that is possible within your company.

Other ways to nuture progression for top performers include: helping them undertake courses or other kinds of professional development, or simply by giving them the freedom to take up other responsibilities within the business. This type of support is crucial in helping top performers develop and reach their goals; which can in turn help you achieve your business objectives. Creating your own internal development framework where your team can experiment, innovate and grow, like companies such as MYOB have done to great success, will increase employee engagement and happiness at work.

Culture

Create or develop a culture tailored to your workplace

Your culture is more than window dressing; it's a fundamental part of your business

Reinforce your culture from the top down throughout the organisation

Reward

Give your your people for tailored rewards good performance

Make sure that potential career paths are clearly communicated

Support career development wherever possible

Engagement

Make the process of being hired as straightforward as possible

Give the new hire the support and resources they need on day one

Set milestones and ensure clear communication throughout

Summary

In and around the hysteria of a talent-tight market, retaining the best and brightest has taken on a new level of importance to employers. However, in a high-turnover industry such as IT, organisations who successfully hang onto their top performers are invariably those who engage in the right way, have a strong internal culture and reward their people effectively, along with providing clear pathways for career development and progression.

If you're looking for help in building the structures to retain and attract top talent, or you're looking to work for an organisation who does those things well, please don't hesitate to get in touch.