

## 6 Questions to Strengthen Employee Retention



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### I wish I Knew then what I Know Now

**Employee retention is essential to a successful business.** When I reflect on my time as a sales manager, I often think of the employees who got away. **I wonder why some people stayed with the company, and others left.** More specifically, I ponder why the people I wanted to stay left. When solving this riddle, I often end up concluding that I wish I knew then what I know now.

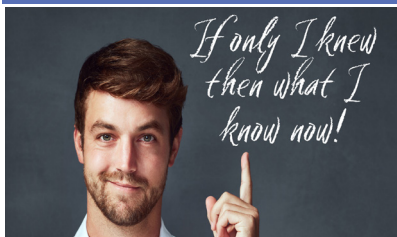
**As a manager I always felt responsible for those in my charge and strived to know them well.** Inevitably, however, there were surprises. For example, there was a person I worked well with who was effective at growing the business. I was confident in his abilities to make wise decisions. I thought he could come to me with anything, both personally and professionally. He did, or at least I thought he did,

until one day he told me that he felt our relationship had become distant. Then he accepted a job with a competitor that offered him a substantial increase to move on. I was deeply affected by this as evidence by the fact that I am writing about it some 30 years later.

### Time to reflect

Now, as a consultant in my senior years, I am removed from all the responsibilities of a 60 -70 hours per week career. I have more time to reflect. I read selected books on sales and leadership which help clarify the many "whys" of yesteryear. I recently finished reading "First, Break All the Rules" by Marcus Buckingham & Curt Coffman (first-break-all-the-rules). This book helped me better understand why people leave jobs.

**Measuring Stick for Managers** Buckingham and Coffman called the following list of questions their Measuring Stick for Managers. **This**



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**queries help managers understand what their reports consider when evaluating how long they will stay working for their current employer.**

Here are six powerful questions people consider when thinking about changing jobs:

1. Do I know what is expected of me at work?
2. Do I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right?
3. Do I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day?
4. In the last seven days, have I received recognition or praise for good work?
5. Does my supervisor, or someone at work, seem to care about me as a person?
6. Is there someone at work who encourages my development?

### **Look to your managers**

The management consulting firm Gallup (gallup.com) specializes in the science of employee engagement. Their surveys have found that people don't leave companies, they leave managers. If you have a turnover problem, look first to your managers.

I am currently working with a manager who is struggling with making a promotion for one of his sales reps. The rep has repeatedly asked for the opportunity to advance. We looked at his record and determined he had the talent and skills required for a higher position. This analysis made his eligibility

apparent, but we wanted to make sure the time was right to give him the opportunity. I asked the manager to put himself in the rep's position and answer the six questions above. Upon doing this, my client realized that if he wanted to ensure that the rep stayed, it was time to offer him an advanced position.

### **Avoiding the comeback**

The individual I mentioned in the opening story reconnected with me a few years after he left our company. He had major issues with the manager at his new job and was interested in rejoining our firm. It was our privilege to rehire him. I could have avoided losing him for two years if I knew then what I know now. **Had I put myself in his shoes and asked those six questions, I am confident he would never have had to go through the stress of changing jobs, and later asking to come back.**

### **Ask questions**

**If you are a manager considering promoting someone, or an employee who is struggling in your current position, ask yourself those powerful 6 questions.** If your answers are more negatives than positives, it is time to make changes that will encourage employee retention. Take the opportunity to "know now, what I wish I knew then."

## 5 KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Employee retention is essential to a successful business.
2. Managers are responsible for knowing those in their charge.
3. Managers must understand what their reports consider when evaluating how long they will stay working for their current employer.
4. People don't leave companies, they leave managers.
5. If you are a manager considering promoting someone, or an employee who is struggling in your current position, ask questions that reveal intent.