

# What Matters Most To Employees?

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We are fond of saying, “Unless you’ve got followers, you’re probably not a leader.” Given the challenges of hiring talented employees in today’s highly competitive labor market, keeping your “followers” becomes essential to your success.

Many managers truly believe that people stay with a company, or leave, based on salary. Recent research and our findings prove that this is not the case. Employees tell us what matters most is the ability to:

- C learn and grow in their jobs
- C do work that is challenging and meaningful
- C work with good people
- C feel like they are a valued team member
- C work with good bosses
- C be recognized for their contributions
- C be autonomous and feel in control of the work
- C have flexibility in their hours and dress

Consistently coming in towards the bottom of employee-ranked lists is “fair pay and benefits.” What’s exciting about this list is that while we may have little control over their pay, we have a high degree of control over what employees say really matters and will keep them on the job.

These tips will help you become a retention expert with a loyal “following.”

## 1. **Make Retention an Organizational Commitment**

Employee retention is critical to your organization’s success. Know your employees and their values. Don’t assume you know. Ask and listen carefully to the responses. If you’re not sure, conduct a survey. Once you’ve identified important retention factors, take actions as a management team that support your employees, both professionally and personally.

## 2. **Create an Exciting Environment**

Focus on keeping the tempo up. Get to know what work excites them. Give more opportunities to do challenging work. Delegate something meaningful. Provide training. Get people involved in determining the team’s vision and setting goals. Be both the coach and cheerleader!

## 3. **Remember, People Come First**

Today’s workforce values a balance between work and life. Acknowledge people as unique contributors and value their time away from work. Entertain flex schedules and allow for telecommuting. When possible, provide comp time after an extensive project. Try to promote a happy, productive, stress-free environment that acknowledges people have a life beyond work.

**4. Spend More Time Leading and Less Time Managing**

Demonstrate your trust by giving employees more opportunities to direct their own time and work. Be open to creative approaches for accomplishing work. Listen to your team and use their input. Serve as a mentor. Model what you want to see. Praise and recognize work and behavior that you want.

Most leaders know what to do, but often become too busy to focus on what employees say matters. But...if you are too busy now to focus on creating an environment that keeps employees, how will you find the time to replace people when they leave?