

Organizational Advisor

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Reuniting with your exes

Former employees may be the best candidates for your job openings

Even in times of high unemployment many companies have a hard time finding talented and qualified employees. Although posting a job opening may yield dozens of resumes, you can attract better qualified candidates by reaching out to former workers. Let's look at the benefits of rehiring ex-employees and how to keep in contact with them.

Realizing the advantages

In the past, workers who left for greener pastures were criticized by former employers. Now many businesses realize that the days of staying with one organization are gone and some turnover is good for operations. So companies are increasingly welcoming former employees back.

After all, rehiring ex-workers offers many benefits. For one, you regain talented personnel who are familiar with your business and industry and their former positions. Also, you keep them out of your competitors' hands.

Next, these workers can be excellent role models for their co-workers; they may have worked in dismal or stressful offices and are happy to tell troubled colleagues how good they have it. Last, rehired employees have had time to improve their job skills while they were away.

Revising policies

Rehiring ex-workers is one easy way to meet your employment needs, but it isn't as simple as it sounds. Before you call former workers out of the blue:

Assess hiring policies. Address the waiting period for employee benefits, including retirement plan participation, and compensation reviews.



Check references. Perform due diligence on all potential employees, including former workers. Just because everything was fine when you hired them the first time doesn't mean it is now.

Gauge staff reaction. Keep an eye on employee morale, particularly if a returning worker will have a more senior position than before. Why? Employees who stay but don't advance may be hurt and assume that they need to quit to get promoted.

Review your management-development program. If the best-qualified candidates for your openings are former employees, there may be a problem with your company's management-development approach. Review it to ensure it is providing growth opportunities for your staff. For instance, send key supervisors to management training

courses and develop your own in-house management training program. (See “Get the leaders you need through executive talent management” on page 4.)

Aligning benefits with targeted employees

Personal circumstances change, so don't overlook those employees who traded in their executive washroom keys and management responsibilities for a minivan key and less-intense job. Employees with children may be interested in their former jobs when their offspring are older. You can entice these workers to stay or return to your office with family friendly policies, including telecommuting, sabbaticals and flexible work schedules.

Other people retire, only to suffer from investment losses or boredom, and find themselves on the job hunt. Mature workers also enjoy flexibility, such as part-time or temporary work and telecommuting.

Meanwhile, if you're trying to lure Gen-Xers — who are notorious for job-hopping — back into your work force, consider benefits such as a casual workplace and tangible rewards, including signing bonuses and additional vacation time.



Get interactive

As part of their efforts to keep in touch with former workers, companies such as Bain & Company and Procter & Gamble have even created alumni Web sites. They feature:

- Search capabilities for former workers to find colleagues,
- News about alumni,
- General job search and hiring resources, and
- Areas where ex-employees can update their contact and career information.

As you can see, this approach is targeted and more efficient than posting help wanted ads on general sites, such as www.monster.com.

Companies realize that not all former workers are interested in returning, but by continuing to build goodwill with them, they hope that such ex-employees can refer talented people who fit the bill.

Creating an alumni club

Growing in popularity, corporate alumni associations are a terrific way to track former employees. To make them work, be proactive starting with workers' last days. During exit interviews, tell star employees they are welcome to return and you value the relationship.

Be sure you hold up your end of the bargain: If you want former workers to keep in touch, you must regularly contact them. Consider mailing them your company newsletter, press releases and employment openings. (For more on alumni programs, see “Get interactive” above.)

Preparing for labor demands

The projected shift in labor demographics, including baby boomers entering retirement, will significantly affect your organization's ability to meet future staffing and business goals. But there are steps you can take now to address the potential shortage: Develop policies to stay in contact with ex-workers and welcome returning ones. A corporate alumni program is one of your best weapons in the war for talent. 👤👤

Get the leaders you need through executive talent management

To many professionals, executive talent management (ETM) may sound like a corporate initiative spoofed in a Dilbert cartoon. But the benefits it can provide your company are no joke. An ETM plan can help you identify and develop the best executive candidates, internally and externally, to meet your business's leadership needs.

Why do you need an ETM plan?

Lacking an ETM — or having an inadequate one — costs your business in many ways. For one, you likely experience gaps in leadership skills in top executives that harm productivity and your bottom line. This can increase turnover among both senior personnel and other workers. Also, you may use executive search firms frequently, which can quickly add up.

Fortunately, ETM programs are generally more effective than other, broader initiatives because you can design and implement them quickly and manage them efficiently. Macro approaches to talent management are generally too large to manage and costly, requiring expensive technology to support the effort. Focusing on executives allows you a great return on investment. An ETM program can positively impact these areas:

Mission and business goals. In an ETM plan, you select leaders and coach them to support your company's mission, objectives and values. Further, you can address issues such as work force diversity (which can reduce glass ceiling complaints), and link HR initiatives to business goals.

Hiring. Although initially hiring the right leaders may be expensive, the investment is well worth it in the long run. For instance, qualified executives may be able to personally recruit other senior personnel and subordinates, saving you search firm costs. An effective ETM plan includes detailed selection and development criteria, reducing the time it

takes to find talented professionals. So identifying and developing executives can provide one of the highest returns on investment in HR.

Retention. Turnover typically costs a business 1½ times the annual total compensation including benefits, according to Pricewaterhouse Coopers' Saratoga Institute. The cost of losing one executive may equal the expenses of designing and implementing an ETM plan.

How do you implement an ETM plan?

The first step is developing a model outlining the qualities leaders need to complement your firm's mission, vision and values and to achieve its goals.

Next, assess your current and future leadership needs and create a succession plan. Make sure it measures how well your leaders' skills meet your needs as outlined in the leadership model.

Finally, once you identify any gaps, create development plans and timetables for filling them. Again, follow your leadership model. Development plans should consist of specific initiatives — including specific courses, project assignments or coaching on specific leadership skills — to help executives prepare for their next roles in your company. To improve candidate quality and diversity, consider executive search firms.

Where do you begin?

Your days are probably filled to the brim, and you lack the time or manpower to devote to an ETM initiative. But failing to select and develop the right leadership talent can hurt your day-to-day operations and long-term profitability. Consulting an outside firm that specializes in these and other HR issues can help you focus on different priorities. 👤👤

Should you allow moonlighting?

Monday through Friday, Sally works as a paralegal. But on the weekends, she puts her legal career on the backburner, holding a second trade as a writer.

Like Sally, many individuals dream of something more in their careers or need extra cash, so they moonlight. That's why nearly 6% of all U.S. workers hold multiple jobs, according to a Current Population Survey (May 2002) by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

So how do moonlighting employees affect their employers? Some workers are happier at work because they are more fulfilled in their personal lives. Meanwhile, others may be less productive because their second occupations sap their energy. Before you outlaw this practice in your organization, review the advantages and disadvantages.

The pros

Some jobs in companies are just that — jobs. It's hard to turn positions such as data entry clerk and receptionist into glamorous careers. Allowing employees to moonlight gives them opportunities to find challenges or fulfillment outside

Moonlighters may be happy working seemingly routine occupations or have no desire to move up the corporate ladder.

your office. The advantage to your business: It may reduce turnover in areas where responsibilities are tedious or monotonous.



For some employees like Sally, their day occupations are simply income sources. They may work other jobs to pursue their true passions and position themselves in their preferred fields. In the meantime, they work full-time in less desirable roles for other benefits, such as health insurance or flexible work schedules.

These creative personalities can balance your organization, providing more flair in lackluster areas. They may be the workers you call on to plan teambuilding activities or organize the holiday party. Keep in mind that moonlighters may be happy working seemingly routine occupations or have no desire to move up the corporate ladder.

For other employees, they are working second jobs primarily for additional income, so they may be less likely to seek raises from you. If you can't afford to pay your staff more, allowing them to moonlight may help you retain them.

The cons

Likely the biggest drawback to allowing moonlighting in your company is the risk of losing your proprietary and

confidential information to competitors who employ some of your workers. After all, many of these details can be shared in a mouse click. To protect top-secret details, you can take measures such as requiring workers to sign non-compete agreements — and you may even be able to ban them from moonlighting with competitors.

As you can probably guess, another potential problem is that working two positions may lead to exhaustion and burnout; warning signals include tardiness, increasing use of sick time and fatigue.

Plus, workers may commit minor infractions, such as using your company's facsimile machines and copiers, or serious offenses, such as starting their second occupations on company

time before completing their first ones. Immediately address workers who exhibit these behaviors or you may have greater problems later.

A policy

Instead of banning moonlighting, create a fair and comprehensive written policy to address confidentiality concerns and the use of company resources. This way, you can reap all the benefits of moonlighting with none of its disadvantages.

Laws vary by state, so check them before implementing such a policy. Some states, for example, prohibit employers from discriminating against workers because of lawful off-duty activities, such as having second jobs. For help creating or revising a policy in this area, please call us. 🧑🏻‍🤝‍🧑🏻

3 ways to a happier and more productive workplace

In today's shaky economy, many employees have the doldrums. After all, they face longer work days and heavier workloads, and they fear losing their jobs over using vacation or sick time. With a stressed work force, morale and productivity may be low. To boost employees' spirits and get them working at full speed, foster a more humanistic attitude in your office. Here are three tips to get you started:

1. Adjust to your staff's personal needs. More than ever, employees need help balancing work and family. Fortunately, you can provide great assistance with a little flexibility. For instance, establish core hours when all workers should be in the office and allow them to determine their own start and finish times.

2. Implement an employee-assistance program (EAP). To help workers handle difficult times and boost their productivity, consider this resource. EAPs typically offer free, confidential short-term counseling for both employees and employers in these areas:

- Health issues including stress and wellness,
- Family matters such as divorce and domestic violence,

- Financial and legal affairs,
- Education,
- Trauma response, and
- Drug and alcohol testing and educational programs.

Going to such lengths during trying times will not go unnoticed by your staff.



3. Cut loose. Who says you can't have fun at work anymore? Take a look at how Mass.-based Jordan's Furniture treated its staff. Last year, the company chartered planes to whisk all its employees to Bermuda for a day of

sun and games. This type of trip might be out of your price range, but you get the idea. By scaling it back — such as hiring a bus to take employees out on a mystery location for a fun afternoon — you can enjoy the same increase in staff morale as the furniture retailer.

Ask the Advisor

Help! Cupid's arrow is darting around our office

Dear Advisor:

Over the past several months I've heard rumors that some of our employees are dating one another. As a senior level supervisor, should I be concerned about getting hit with an employee-relations problem?

Signed,
Worried Manager

Dear Worried Manager:

Look at your corporate culture to determine why employee dating may occur. For instance, employees putting in 70-hour workweeks may have little time for social lives. So curb excessive overtime and explain the importance of non-work interests. Be sure you set the example by leaving the office at a reasonable hour; otherwise, they may not believe your new policy.

And monitor intraoffice dating. Here are three reasons why your company should watch Cupid's activities:

1. Sexual harassment lawsuits. Like many supervisors, you may think: "The relationship is consensual, so I don't need to worry about sexual harassment." Unfortunately, this isn't true. After all, you must consider what will happen with employees when their relationships cool. For instance, your company could face a sexual harassment charge if a subordinate, who dated an executive, claims that lucrative sales leads have been going to a co-worker since their relationship ended.

2. The impact on a department. You must also consider the effect of intraoffice dating on teams. Discover whether groups still function as a cohesive unit. Some employees may be bringing last night's spat into your workplace or involving co-workers in their personal issues.

3. Staff morale. If there is a romantic tie between an employee and his or her supervisor, the chances are good

that the rest of your work force knows about it. Workers who think that an employee is receiving preferential treatment are typically upset, which can lead to lowered productivity and other issues.

Head off romance-related problems

Some companies may benefit from an anti-nepotism policy, which forbids the hiring of relatives and prohibits dating among co-workers. But this agreement may be illegal in your state.

If your company is able to create an anti-nepotism policy, carefully consider the restrictions you place on your staff. For



instance, are you going to prohibit all dating among employees or limit romantic involvements only between workers in the same department? Of course, you also must determine how you will handle the hiring of family members, if you allow it at all.

Above all, explain to your staff why you created the policy. Workers tend to follow rules more closely when they understand the reasons behind them. Also, include the document in your employee handbook and enforce it consistently throughout your company. Failing to do so can result in costly and time-intensive lawsuits.

Draw the line

The fine line between workers' professional and personal lives is difficult for many employers to navigate. That's why you may benefit from letting a third party deal with your employees' dating issues. An outside professional can provide expertise and objectivity for these and other sensitive situations.

From the CEO's Chair Redeployment: Optimization of Restructuring – A Case Study

Situation:

A division of a major energy company is the service organization for information technology within the international company. With the IT demands of this major energy company changing strategically and structurally, human resources was faced with ongoing layoffs within various business units. The layoffs would result in the loss of long term employees over a several year period. Recognizing that the costs associated with layoffs would be significant in terms of lost talent, severance benefits, potential for reduced morale and productivity, and for negative impact on talent acquisition and retention, the company sought ways to minimize these organizational costs.

Solution:

The company initiated a redeployment effort to positively redirect talent affected by the organizational changes. Employees whose positions were lost through the reorganization were offered a program to help them place within other company entities. Not only did this program communicate the value placed on each employee, but it improved the process for assisting employees in the use of the company internal online placement resource.

The program consisted of a 2-day seminar with additional follow up counseling to assist employees in dealing with the reality of their job loss, developing their resumes and preparing for interviews. Unlike traditional outplacement which focuses on external placement, the redeployment program focused employees' networking on internal opportunities. The follow up counseling helped employees complete high quality resumes that reflected their accomplishments and skills that would benefit other company entities.

Employees have eagerly scheduled their seminars in onsite locations for convenience, in order to maximize their potential for internal placement. They saw it as an opportunity to gain professional guidance for their internal searches and as a way to

“The redeployment effort has been so successful that the company has redeployed employees who otherwise would have left the organization. We value this talent retention far in excess of the substantial severance savings. On the other hand, the initiative is equally valuable in talent acquisition as candidates see the high value the company places on its employees.”

Director, Human Resources

enhance their visibility in the organization with top notch resumes. They also recognized the value of improving their interview skills to obtain offers over other potential internal candidates. For some, help in determining their transferable skills was key to developing a strategy for seeking opportunities.

At the same time, management viewed the program as an excellent way to enhance morale during the 90 day period after announcing the layoffs and to mitigate stress and potential loss in productivity. The program also made management's job of directing the transitions easier and more effective.

Results:

The company found that the program succeeded in every objective. After participation of over 400 employees, management observed extremely positive participation, successful placements throughout the company, improved morale among transitioning employees as well as those remaining, and substantially reduced severance costs.

This is just one example of the innovative approaches Dawson & Dawson Consultants provides its clientele in dealing with the challenges of change management. Whether experiencing acquisitions, mergers, restructuring, or other major change initiatives, our team of experienced consultants customizes a solution to achieve desired results.

*By Sheryl Dawson, CEO
Dawson & Dawson Consultants, Inc.*