

PR AGENCY INSIDER

WHAT'S NEW AND WHAT'S WORKING FOR GROWING AGENCIES

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STAFFING

Look Beyond the Smiles: How You Can Know If Your Key Employees Are Satisfied

With the current tight job market and high demand for qualified PR professionals, keeping good employees is a real challenge for most PR firms. Obviously, a happy employee is one who is more likely to stay put. But employees who are not satisfied often don't command much attention, even though they show up for work each day and seem to be getting along just fine. So how do you figure out if all your staff members are really content? And better yet, can you set up some kind of internal structure that will allow them to air their dissatisfaction or make suggestions for constructive changes?

Here are four recommendations gleaned from PR firm managers who have set up effective methods to check on employee satisfaction on a regular basis, and are seeing results in terms of higher retention rates:

Implement programs to touch base with individual employees

At Jericho Communications in New York City, the 52 employees are given the option to enroll in "Eric's School," where they meet with partner/president Eric Yaverbaum for 45 minutes every other week. So far, 36 staffers are actively meeting with the head of the firm, in sessions that are held in complete confidentiality. They are structured in 15-minute increments: The first increment is for any gripes or info they want to air; the second is for Yaverbaum to impart tips for them to improve certain skills; and the third is for any questions to which they may need answers.

Yaverbaum says "when you look at life through the eyes of junior staffers, it's amazing how you can affect change." Although this feedback routine takes up a great deal of his time, he feels it is time well spent if it means that you retain promising employees. In the last 18 months of the firm's 20-month existence, for example, they have not lost a single employee.