

Use Golden Handcuffs to Retain Top Staff

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Recruitment is our number one priority!" goes the radio-world mantra, and although continual recruitment of talent should be a top priority — even when there are no immediate openings — it should still be considered priority *number two*. At the top of the list should be employee retention. While good people are hard to find, great people are much harder to replace. We are not just competing for great talent in the broadcasting arena; many great people have been lured out of the industry for what they believe are better opportunities. So, how do you keep your best and brightest from crossing the street and taking the next best offer? You need to train, coach, engage, support, encourage, recognize, reward, promote, and compensate employees in a way that will exceed their expectations.

THE NEW GOLDEN RULE

Contrary to managers' perceptions, money is not the highest motivator in retaining employees, especially to the Millennial generation, who place a greater importance on lifestyle and professional challenge. Management can no longer live by the once golden rule, "Treat people

the way you want to be treated." A Baby Boomer's motivations may be dramatically different than those of a 25-year-old Millennial. The new golden rule is, "Treat people the way *they* want to be treated."

Understand the unique wants, needs, desires, and goals of each staff member, and make your organization a place where they can be realized. If the company's profitability would be significantly impacted by the departure of a top DJ or superstar sales rep, provide them with golden handcuffs in the form of increased salary, bonuses, or non-monetary incentives so they won't consider working elsewhere. While this may not seem entirely fair, assets to the company should be treated as such. Even professional sports franchises pay their athletes proportional to their value to their organization.

IT'S THE LITTLE THINGS THAT COUNT

As a manager, there are many small yet powerful adjustments you can make to attract, hire, and retain the best and the brightest.

1. The Power of MWBA: Get out from behind the desk and practice management by walking around (MBWA). There is nothing more insightful than spending time in the studios or sales areas getting to know your employees and asking questions in an informal setting. MBWA breaks down bureaucratic boundaries and shows that you are accessible, approachable, and real.

2. The Power of Handwritten Notes: Send handwritten notes congratulating employees on recent successes; if the budget permits, include a gift certificate to their favorite store or restaurant. For married employees, send handwritten thank-you notes to spouses recognizing the achievements of your employee and acknowledging the time they spend away from the family; again, budget permitting, include a spa or mall certificate or other token gift. For younger employees who are new to the workforce, send notes to their parents complimenting them on raising a conscientious worker.

3. The Power of Random Acts of Kindness:

Make use of the radio industry's access to trade items that do not require much out-of-pocket costs. Practice random acts of kindness by delivering movie tickets, dinner certificates, gift cards, and other tokens of appreciation to employees who exemplify best practices.

4. The Power of Attractive Benefits: Provide better monetary and non-monetary benefits than those inside and outside the radio industry. Paying a little more in health insurance, providing profit sharing, or contributing to an IRA will be more than made up by the reduced cost of attrition — not to mention improving overall employee satisfaction. Groups hoping to cut costs by reducing employee benefits will suffer long-term costs many times greater than the short-term savings. Time off with family and friends can also go a long way in creating loyalty, so offer paid days off to employees for their birthday.

5. The Power of Recognition and Communication: Institute peer voted employee-of-the-month awards that offer a \$100 certificate to the winner from a trade account (costing you nothing). Recognize successes at staff meetings, and use these meetings to uncover internal and external areas of improvement and set up action committees to develop solutions.

6. The Power of Living Your Own Culture: Staff are energized by organizational synergies and feeling part of something greater than their own contribution. Living the company culture can be as easy as re-naming your associates: Disney has *castmates*, Starbucks has *partners*, Owens and Minor has *teammates*. But beware: Calling your associates partners but treating them like servants will do more harm than good.

7. The Power of Thank You: It is easy for managers to forget to recognize the individual needs of their people. People appreciate feeling appreciated, so remember to say thank you often. Stated with true sincerity, you will receive the greatest return on investment than anything else you can do. It's very difficult for other employers to lure away an individual who has an "I love my job" attitude. That is the bottom line.