

Do Your Employees Want to Quit?

Nearly Half of Employees Think About It

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If you don't care if your employees leave, think again. There is a strong correlation between customer satisfaction and employee satisfaction.

Think about the last time you had a positive encounter with a service provider? Can you remember a great encounter? Was it at the grocery store, restaurant or possibly the coffee shop? Are you remembering more negative customer services experiences than positives? Would your patients lump the experience in your office in the positive or negative category?

The Gallup Organization has three categories for employees:

***Engaged** employees work with passion and feel a profound connection to their company. They drive innovation and move the organization forward.*

***Non-engaged** employees are checked out. They sleepwalk through the day and put in their time but approach work with a lack of energy and passion.*

***Actively disengaged** employees aren't just unhappy at work; they are busy acting out their unhappiness. Each day these workers undermine what engaged co-workers accomplish.*

According to the August 2009 Gallup Employee Index, only 33 percent of employees are engaged in their jobs, and 18 percent are disengaged!

Which of your staff members fall into what category?

I've worked with many paraoptometric practices around the United States and I can tell you all three categories exist in just about every practice. There are more non-engaged and far too many actively-disengaged employees than you'd probably like to think. What can you do to create an engaged employee?

First, you have to take a good, hard look at your staff. Do they meet your expectations? Are you keeping them out of fatigue, fear of change or just plain laziness? Would you rehire each member? How do you invest in them? Motivate them? Support them?

Once you've decided who you really want to invest in, take stock of their strength and weaknesses then partner with your office manager to develop a plan to develop, grow and energize each one. This is an ongoing process and should be the primary function of the office manager.

The role of the office manager is not just to put out fires and deal with problem issues. Their job is to maximize the potential in every staff member and focus on getting the most out of them. Can your manager perform that task? If not, consider starting there. Seek development for the manager through off-site training, one-on-one consultation and ongoing education. If your manager has stopped growing, so will your practice. It's hard to be a manager – give yours all the support he or she needs.

The role of the doctor is to be the positive motivator in the practice. Treat your staff the way you treat a patient when you walk into the exam room. Make a positive observation, ask them a question and look for a connection. Avoid being the disciplinarian. A month of positives can be negated with one thoughtless comment. Let your office manager deal with the day-to-day issues and you stay focused on building positive rapport.

Here is a “must-do” list for keeping staff engaged:

Get rid of the disengaged employee quickly. If bad behavior is unacceptable to the practice, it won't continue. A quote to live by: "If you aren't fired with enthusiasm, you will be fired with enthusiasm." -Vince Lombardi

Create detailed job descriptions with tasks aligned to be measurable and enforceable. Use them, every day, week and month. This is not something that should languish in the file cabinet. Review them and discuss the employee's performance on a regular basis. Develop a long and short term plan.

Schedule one-on-one monthly meeting between each staff member and the office manager. This should be as positive as possible but deal with issues as needed. The meetings should be regular and anticipated by the employee. Schedule one staff member for the first Tuesday each month, another the second Wednesday, third Thursday and so on. The plan is to keep the employee connected with their immediate supervisor to check in on fatigue and boredom but also growth and development. Employees love too be “seen.”

Set goals for the practice as a whole. Having the employees work as a team will keep them engaged and connected with each other. Consider having all employees give feedback on their co-workers, this must be constructive and very structured in order to be effective. If you'd like a sample of a co-worker survey, please contact me.

Establish a reward system when goals are achieved – I recommend a financial reward and distribution monthly. If everyone experiences the positives of hard work they will stay engaged and enjoy where they work.

If your practice is running well and needs a little fine tuning now and then remember to acknowledge that and reward those dedicated paraoptometric with an unexpected perk. Starbucks cards all around? Gift cards to the local movie theatre? Pizza delivered to the practice? I suggest a little something more for that hard working manager...let me know if you need suggestions!

A happy employee equals a happy patient, doctor and overall practice. Engage your staff. It's worth all the effort you put into it.

** Excerpted from AOA January 2011