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staff engagement and RETENTION

YOU'VE WEATHERED THE economic storm; business activity is on the rise once again, you've retained your key employees – it's smooth sailing ahead... or is it?

Through difficult economic times it was all about survival and as a result the level of engagement with your team may have suffered. Staff retention strategies were unlikely to have been top of mind for those businesses simply trying to stay afloat. But it is now no longer business as usual with the market clearly showing ongoing signs of a sustained recovery.

Therefore, now is the time for employers to reassess their levels of engagement with their staff – to re-implement strategies that may have been put to one side or compromised in difficult times and to also see what can be done better in the future.

By reengaging with your staff you will maximise your chances of retaining the best people in your business and deter them from seeking a growing number of alternative opportunities in the marketplace.

It is fair to say that many employees saw their job responsibilities, earning potential and overall job satisfaction take a substantial hit during the economic downturn. Now that this is behind us they will be expecting to kick start their career once more, see an increase in career opportunities, enjoy greater rewards and improved working conditions.

Begin by asking your staff what their expectations are with respect to their roles and work environment now that market conditions have improved.

If their work responsibilities have changed or been down graded due to market conditions, firstly gain clear agreement on current responsibilities. More importantly confirm what expectations they have with respect to their role and responsibilities moving forward and discuss these in line with your own objectives for each team member. Similarly if their career path has stalled or a promised promotion was postponed discuss this openly and frankly. Ensure that your employees are aware that career and succession planning are as important to you as it is likely to be for them. If that promised promotion cannot be offered at this time see whether you can

involve the employee in special project work or provide one on one leadership coaching or an external training program that will enhance their skill set.

Also, remember that not everyone is motivated by career advancement. Some just want a secure job where work is part of life, not life itself. Reconfirm these motivators amongst your team and in conjunction with this seek to improve your performance management systems. Aim to devise a customised and structured career plan and a regular performance feedback process tailored for each employee.

Many employees will have also experienced a freeze in salaries over the past 18 months. Ensure that your rates of pay are in line with the market and fair according to the employee's experience, work responsibilities and performance. Now could be the time to reward staff for their loyalty through the economic downturn whether that is through a salary increase, implementing a bonus or reward scheme or even the offer of a stake in the business.

But don't assume everyone is driven by financial gain. Revisit what motivates your staff so you can get the best out of each team member. If a staff member seeks a flexible work arrangement that wasn't possible during more difficult times now might be the time to consider this. For example, offering remote access work from home arrangements, time off to undertake a relevant course of study, etc. Of course, this is also an ideal time to acknowledge your teams' productivity and loyalty through the tough times and to promote and reconfirm your company's values and culture.

Be ahead of the game and you will reap the rewards that flow from having a contented, committed and consistent team in 2010 and beyond.

For further information contact Event Recruitment on (02) 9279 2019 or email info@eventrecruitment.com.au.