

Recruiting In the Age of Job-Hopping

Many companies are still playing catch-up when it comes to the growing trend of job-hopping. Recent studies show that individuals change jobs or industries an *average* of 11 times within their professional lifetimes. Employers need to stay ahead of this curve to recruit and retain the best employees available.

By Jennifer Umali

As a general rule, people move to new companies because they believe they offer more or better opportunities, but this can play out in several different ways. Most individuals move to new positions to nab a salary increase. Some think a change will result in a better work/life balance. Others are changing their career paths entirely and feel that they have to start fresh at a new company.

In this overly informed world, people believe that building a variety of experiences is only possible through changing jobs. They hear about too many outside opportunities and not enough opportunities closer to their current positions. Job titles can feel confining, and if employees don't hear enough about direct advancements where they are, they will assume they don't exist and look elsewhere.

That's rarely a win for current employers. The high price of investing in an employee-- only to see him leave -- is frustrating, to say the least. Employers need to look at external recruitment needs and build an employee brand that supports retention.

Communicating with Applicants

Many applicants assume they'll have to change jobs often in their careers based on decisions their peers have made, but there are numerous ways to convey a long-term fit to potential employees.

- People want to know a career path exists for them in an organization. Instead of asking the standard "Where do you see yourself in five years?" ask them where they could be in *your* company in five years. This assumes they will still be with you, rather than implying they will find better opportunities elsewhere.
- Convey that professional growth opportunities like on-the-job training, conferences, and industry-specific seminars are options. These help build loyalty and show that the company is willing to invest in its employees.
- The ability to have evolving work/life balance is essential for both men and women. Explain how the organization can adjust to the ways a potential employee's life may change in five years.
- Align values and culture. Most weeks, employees will spend more time in the office than with family. With the considerable amount of time an individual spends working, an environment that is productive but enjoyable is highly valued. Opportunities to do more than just contribute as an employee are important. This can mean anything from volunteering to learning a new trade.
- Transparency is huge! You must be open and honest with people. During the interview process, explain that honest feedback is delivered during day-to-day activities. This transparent coaching is meant to help employees become better at their trades and should make them feel valued. Practice and communicate transparency in the big picture, too. That doesn't mean you need to share trade secrets with the receptionist, but open lines of communication help people feel like they're part of the team. They don't just want to work *for* an organization, but *with* an organization toward a common goal.



You should also watch out for red flags throughout the interview process. If someone has jumped around a lot already, you need to learn the reasons why. There's a big difference between a person changing jobs due to a spouse in the military and someone who constantly blames others for leaving various positions.

On the other hand, it's a great sign if an applicant uses language that suggests she wants to be a part of a team, evolve into a leader or strategic planner, or expand a corporate presence through participation in committees or other groups.

Highlight Longevity During Marketing and Recruiting

Whether you're recruiting at a trade show or working on your brand through social media, you can always emphasize longevity in your company. This often means spotlighting people who have advanced their careers within your organization. Nothing is more convincing than real-life examples and testimonies.

Find individuals who started in entry-level positions and are now in leadership. If they've followed a trail from one promotion to the next, use that story and emphasize what makes them valuable to the organization as a whole. People like to see organizations promote individual success, so get top performers to express why they like their jobs.

If you have any statistics to show that there are more stories like the ones you spotlight, share them. For example, if 80 percent of your organization has been with you for 10 years or longer, you want to promote the heck out of that.

Show How the HR Department Can Help with Retention

Many employees see the HR department as a place to file complaints or deal with paperwork. Instead, HR should be seen as a department that trains the management team to better relate and interact with employees. When HR does a good job of this, the management team can communicate better with the rest of the company, thus resulting in a higher retention rate.

I've seen HR departments at companies implement technologies to improve management and communication. Some departments set up Twitter accounts that are available internally for news and advice-sharing purposes. The topics usually consist of current event blurbs or tips for better management. Because people shy away from training procedures, this type of interaction between HR, management, and employees is beneficial. The more a management team is present to listen, learn, and support employees, the better retention will be and the better the company as a whole will be. Management must always ensure that they have time set aside for support and conversation.

Communication after an Exit Is Key

If you and your management team feel the company is making progress but employees are still leaving, then the reasons why people are leaving need to be evaluated. Some sort of separation, termination, or exit survey should be performed when employees leave your company so you can understand what's causing their departure. This feedback can cultivate and grow your organization so loss of talent can be prevented in the future.

An HR department can also aid in this task. After an exit survey is taken, an HR administrator can circle back to the management team and share insights with them so they can be evaluated as a group, instead of on a case-by-case basis.

If employees feel they are not progressing -- but the management team thinks it is offering opportunities -- then there is a clear problem with communication. With successful management and HR teams that value feedback upon employee departure, this break in communication can be avoided.

If you feel like your organization is lagging behind, it's time to start getting ahead of the job-hopping trend. Most people would rather stay with one company for the long haul, but they don't necessarily know that's an option. Marketing and recruitment strategies that emphasize longevity will help you stand out and attract applicants who will help grow your company for years to come.