



# WHY WE LEAVE

## THE TRUTH BEHIND JOB SATISFACTION AND CREATING AN OUTSTANDING WORKPLACE CULTURE

By Michelle Ray

**W**orkplace surveys conducted by Manpower, Inc. indicate that despite an economic slowdown, there has been a steady increase over the past two years in the number of individuals who plan to look for new job opportunities. Even if the trend reverses, the impact of workforce mobility and knowledge transfer on organizations cannot be understated. The most common reasons cited for leaving or thinking about leaving a job relate to overall job satisfaction, the relationship with one's immediate manager or supervisor, and low morale. Whether or not you are in a leadership role, in this article you will discover that there are underlying reasons for turnover that are less than obvious and have little to do with achieving a sense of professional fulfillment. The emotional and financial cost of employee departures, whether voluntary or otherwise, will always be significant and ongoing despite prevailing economic conditions.

The solution lies in preventative maintenance. Organizations could avoid the burden of rehiring if they realized that much of the "pain" is self-induced. While it is true that some aspects of an employee's decision are outside of an employer's control, the most neglected area of focus, in my experience, relates to the *intangible workplace motivators*. The highest priorities ought to be building an atmosphere of trust, encouraging open communication, and creating outstanding workplace relationships. Research conducted by The Conference Board indicates that, in North America, job satisfaction has been on the decline for years. In all age categories, the level of satisfaction is below 50 percent. If employers paid greater attention

to developing a deeper understanding of the composition of their teams, sought to meaningfully improve communication, and created more informal opportunities for people to connect and share ideas at work, a happier and more productive work atmosphere would ensue.

Organizations place an enormous focus on attracting talent. Once that talent is on board, however, less attention is given to creating an environment where people *want* to stay and *voluntarily* contribute to the overall goals and objectives. In my experience in working with businesses of every description, the reason many people become dissatisfied in their jobs is that being heard, valued, and acknowledged by management and peers is an ultimately lower priority to their bosses than the work itself. At all levels, everyone feels the increasing pressure of managing their daily workload. As a result, paying attention to the human element slowly becomes neglected, yet this is precisely the issue that necessitates the greatest consideration. In addition, it is fascinating to note that it is the one area within an organization's control: the atmosphere within its own walls. Here are several examples of intangible motivators that you can implement immediately. They are 100% within your control.

- **MAKE IT A HABIT TO PRACTICE "MBWA" – MANAGING BY WALKING AROUND**

Simply put, you are purposely making yourself available by "shooting the breeze" with each person on your team by engaging with them in casual conversation. This single act that may require no more than half an hour to an hour of your time once a week will increase your visibility as a leader and demonstrate to your team that you are interested in them as individuals.

# E. WHY WE STAY?

- **ENCOURAGE ACTIVITIES THAT CENTER AROUND FOOD AND FUN**

For example, have potlucks with a cultural theme. Your team could prepare a range of simple dishes to celebrate a particular culture of one or more of your employees. The result? A relaxed way for people to connect away from their desks and day-to-day work and learn more about their colleagues' traditions and backgrounds while enjoying their work environment. Repeat the exercise with different themes once a month.

- **CELEBRATE PROJECT MILESTONES**

Your employees are often tasked with implementing complex billing projects on behalf of one or more of your clients. How often do you intentionally mark a milestone or completion of such projects? Create opportunities for the team to revel in the success that they have achieved for themselves and for your organization. In the words of Michael Le Boeuf, "Behavior that is rewarded becomes behavior that is repeated."

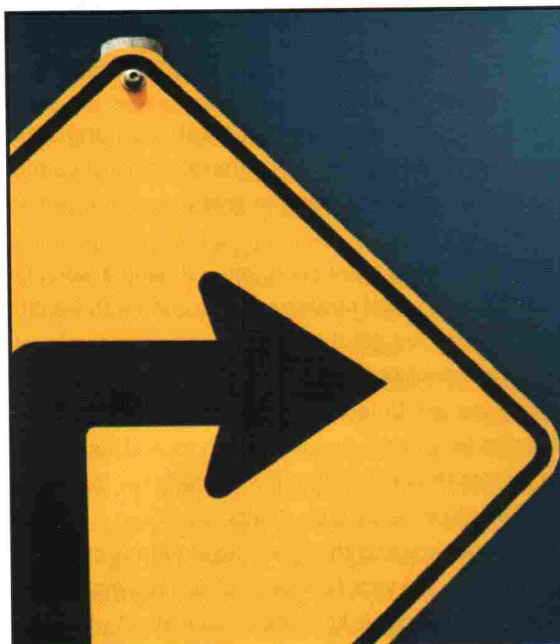
## Conclusion

Consider what you can do to directly impact the atmosphere of your workplace in terms of implementing intangible motivators. You will see a notable difference in attitudes and engagement levels that impact positively on your business and your own leadership style. ■



*Michelle Ray, Workplace Relationships & Leadership Expert, is a leadership and workplace motivation expert who demonstrates a deep understanding of team dynamics, interpersonal communication, service excellence, and personal accountability. Over more than sixteen years, Michelle has worked with hundreds of leaders and their teams by helping them create effective business relationships and positive workplaces. She is a sought-after international keynote speaker, seminar leader, and author.*

For more information about Michelle, please visit her website, [www.michelleray.com](http://www.michelleray.com); email her at [info@michelleray.com](mailto:info@michelleray.com); or call her toll-free at (877) 662-6187.



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