



MANAGEMENT CONNECTION

LEVELING UP

GIVE YOUR OPERATIONS A BOOST BY LEVELING UP YOUR TEAM

BY R. ANDREW BRAUN, CDM, CFPP

STAFFING. For some of you the very word will cause an instant migraine. Recruiting and retaining quality candidates is more challenging than ever before. An unprecedented 93 percent of companies are currently hiring, which rounds up to... almost everyone!

Candidates are scarce, and they can afford to be picky. Running short is stressful, with salaried managers choosing between poor quality output, picking up the slack themselves, or paying expensive overtime, and in some cases all three. This leads to a downward spiral, where stress and overwork cause the remaining employees to look elsewhere. They don't have to look far because the average time a decent candidate spends looking for a job is just 10 days. The reality is that your employees can find another job in a week *and* get more money by doing so.

These are frightening statistics, but money is only part of the story. *The top reason people change jobs is for a better career opportunity.* The chance to learn, to grow, and to develop as a person is more important than the paycheck, because nobody wants to be stuck in a dead-end job. Years ago, as a young aspiring chef fresh on the scene in Orlando, Fla., this realization was a powerful one. Top chefs at prestigious restaurants did *not* pay their employees more money than chain restaurants, they paid about 20-30 percent less, and still had fewer open positions *and* better-quality candidates. They were offering knowledge, skills, a better resume, and a brighter future. You want to be a chef in 10 years or still working the fry station at TGI Fridays? You don't have to be Gordon Ramsay to take advantage of this in your own operations, and I will explain how in this article.

EVERYONE WANTS A BETTER TOMORROW

As managers, *we must understand the goals and dreams of our team.* You cannot motivate people without knowing what they are working for. Once you understand the goals of your team, you are now in a position to help them get there. This has a powerful and lasting impact on the people whose lives we change for the better, but it has an impact on your operation as well. When employees see others thrive, it can be very motivating and inspiring for the whole team.

When an employee expresses an interest in management, always sit down with them and take them seriously. Ask what they feel like they need to learn to get there. Give them a realistic evaluation of their strengths and weaknesses, and what will help them be successful in making that transition. I personally make the commitment that when they are ready and they've learned all I can teach, then I will help them get promoted within our company, or elsewhere if there are no openings.

I make this promise knowing that their best chance at promotion might not be with their current job, although it can and does happen. It is far more likely that their next step up will be with another company. At first glance this seems counter-intuitive. How can spending your precious time and resources to build up skills in your best people—and then getting them another job—help lower turnover?

It can, and it has other powerful benefits you might not realize. Some interesting statistics come into play here. *Consider that you are nearly 70 percent more likely to find quality employees from sources other than random applications, and that 70 percent of Millennials found their current jobs through social media.*



Expanding your hiring to include the networks of your employees will increase your talent pool by 10x. Combine this data with the free-flowing nature of both facts and opinions online and you quickly realize that the old saying “People talk” is far more significant when they have literally thousands of friends and followers. Having the reputation for helping people get promoted not only attracts candidates through these networks, but also alters the types of candidates applying. If you are striving to turn dishwashers into cooks, servers into supervisors, cooks into sous chefs, chefs into executive chefs, and executive chefs into directors, *people take note of this.*

Candidates who are looking to learn new skills and work hard for a better future are going to flock to the places where that is happening, and they are often the top performers. You will



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face turnover in food service. You can decide whether that turnover is a trickle of random people applying that “just need a job bro” or whether it is a steady stream of hungry, motivated people who are looking to prove themselves.

Make no mistake, this communication about your work environment, culture, and the opportunities you do (or don’t) provide is going to happen whether you like it or not. I should also mention that just making empty promises and not demonstrating the teaching, training, and resulting promotions will land you in worse trouble. Most people have been fed crap by employers and, sadly, they’ve come to expect it. Always make sure that employees understand that their promotions are contingent on their performance. It is a great idea to set goals, hold them to high standards with regards to performance and



REFERENCES

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attendance, and counsel them whenever they need it. This is best done from their perspective. Explain why it is in their best interest as well as that of the operation.

Your own network will grow with the number of directors and managers you create. Over the last eight years I have helped nine executive chefs and directors into their current role with training, advice, and letters of recommendation. I make myself freely available to advise them in their careers and the difficulties they will encounter. I want them to succeed for their own sake, but also because I want them to succeed for mine. Having a reputation as someone who develops talent means that people will reach out to you when they have openings and candidates of all levels, and your talent pool extends far beyond your own employees.

It may seem impossible to imagine an operation where everybody is training for a larger role, but some companies have built their entire workforce on this concept. Take Enterprise Rent-A-Car for example. Every employee working at a branch of Enterprise is either a manager or a manager in training. They hire and promote managers at the store, local, regional, and every level on up, from within. This has obvious advantages as employees that last have learned the ropes, served their time, and are obviously committed to the company. Everyone that is not a manager is planning to become one and will approach their job differently than someone with no expectation of promotion within the company. This is certainly related to their growth from a single location with only seven cars to the largest rental company in the world, with 9,500 locations in 90+ countries, and (pre-pandemic) annual growth of billions of dollars a year. Managers and their trainees will change hats to do whatever is needed, and everyone has an in-depth

understanding of operations because they've been there themselves.

The quality of your operation depends on your employees, and the quality of your employees depends on the training and investment of their managers and directors. What is the difference when training future leaders versus training hourly staff? Managers are trained to problem solve, to reach company goals, to achieve a positive work environment, to resolve conflicts, and to support other staff when needed. Mentoring people to have these attitudes will make your job easier, and part of their development will be to foster their leadership skills with the other members of your team.

Having an environment where your employees are making your job easier and bettering themselves at the same time should be an obvious win for everyone involved. Add in the other benefits of top-quality applicants, a larger pool of potential employees, broader networks, and the warm fuzzies of knowing that you've made your employees' lives better, and you see why the work of mentoring people is worth the extra effort on your part.

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SUMMING IT UP

Some parting statistics to leave you with: 24 percent of managers promoted from within will fail. This sounds terrible until you learn that the fail rate of new managers hired externally is *double* that. Statistics are everywhere and, as always, I urge you to do your own research and find your own facts. A ton of data is out there compiled by a great many sources, and the landscape is changing rapidly with communications tech. It is a brave new world! **E**



R. ANDREW BRAUN, CDM, CFPP | richardbraun1979@gmail.com

Andrew Braun is a chemist and chef with 25 years of foodservice experience, with over a decade in health care and senior living.

CE QUESTIONS | MANAGEMENT CONNECTION



This **Level II** article assumes that the reader has a thorough knowledge of the topic. The desired outcome is to facilitate application of knowledge into practice by drawing connections among ideas and using information in new situations.

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1. More companies than ever before are:
 - A. Struggling to hire and retain staff
 - B. Staffed at the right levels
 - C. Downsizing their workforce
2. The number one reason employees seek a new job is:
 - A. Workplace culture
 - B. Better pay
 - C. Better career opportunities
3. Most Millennials (70 percent) found their current positions from:
 - A. The want ads in the newspaper
 - B. Signs hanging in shop windows
 - C. Social media
4. Promoting from within:
 - A. Boosts employee morale
 - B. Makes your employer brand more attractive to potential candidates
 - C. Both A and B
5. Managers promoted from within will:
 - A. Usually fail within their first year
 - B. Fail at a lower rate than new managers hired externally
 - C. Fail at a higher rate than new managers hired externally
6. Training staff as managers can help them:
 - A. Resolve conflicts and foster a positive work environment
 - B. Solve problems and help the company reach their goals
 - C. Both A and B
7. You can greatly expand your network and talent pool through:
 - A. Your employees' networks
 - B. Posting your job openings in the newspaper
 - C. Pressuring your human resources department to fix the problem



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