

Reading

Retaining good staff

A Discuss these questions before you read the article.

- 1 The article talks about people who are high performers. What does this phrase mean? What sort of people are they?
- 2 What do you think motivates high performers to stay with the same company?

B Read the article and answer these questions.

- 1 What qualities of high performers are mentioned in the article?
- 2 What are the problems of losing high performers?
- 3 Which motivating factors are mentioned in the article?

Motivating high-calibre staff

By Michael Douglas

An organisation's capacity to identify, attract and retain high-quality, high-performing people who can develop winning strategies has become decisive in ensuring competitive advantage.

High performers are easier to define than to find. They are people with apparently limitless energy and enthusiasm, qualities that shine through even on their bad days. They are full of ideas and get things done quickly and effectively. They inspire others not just by pep talks but also through the sheer force of their example. Such people can push their organisations to greater and greater heights.

The problem is that people of this quality are very attractive to rival companies and are likely to be headhunted. The financial impact of such people leaving is great and includes the costs of expensive training and lost productivity and inspiration.

However, not all high performers are stolen, some are lost. High performers generally leave because organisations do not know how to keep them. Too many employers are blind or indifferent to the agenda of would be high performers, especially those who are young.

Organisations should consider how such people are likely to regard important motivating factors.

Money remains an important motivator but organisations should not imagine that it is the only one that matters. In practice, high performers tend to take for granted that they will get a good financial package. They seek motivation from other sources.

Empowerment is a particularly important motivating force for new talent. A high performer will seek to feel that he or she 'owns' a project in a creative sense. Wise

employers offer this opportunity.

The challenge of the job is another essential motivator for high performers. Such people easily become demotivated if they sense that their organisation has little or no real sense of where it is going.

A platform for self-development should be provided. High performers are very keen to develop their skills and their curriculum vitae. Offering time for regeneration is another crucial way for organisations to retain high performers. Work needs to be varied and time should be available for

creative thinking and mastering new skills. The provision of a coach or mentor signals that the organisation has a commitment to fast-tracking an individual's development.

Individuals do well in an environment where they can depend on good administrative support. They will not want to feel that the success they are winning for the organisation is lost because of the inefficiency of others or by weaknesses in support areas.

Above all, high performers – especially if they are young – want to feel that the organisation they work for regards them as special. If they find that it is not interested in them as people but only as high-performing commodities, it will hardly be surprising if their loyalty is minimal. On the other hand, if an organisation does invest in its people, it is much more likely to win loyalty from them and to create a community of talent and high performance that will worry competitors.

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