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EMPLOYEE RETENTION

3 ways HR teams can prioritize talent, according to ADP

By [Deanna Cuadra](#) May 7, 2024 5:30 AM



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After the last four years, [HR teams](#) may finally be able to catch their breath — but they can't get too comfortable when it comes to maintaining talent.

Employees' [expectations around the workplace](#) and professionalism have changed. On the tailwind of mass return-to-office mandates, LinkedIn found that 85% of workers are considering switching jobs in 2024. Meanwhile, the pace of hiring has accelerated over the last three months, with private employers adding 192,000 jobs in April, according to ADP. To keep top talent from moving on, [retention](#) should still be top of mind for HR teams.

"Any of your priorities as an HR leader should be grounded in your business strategy and the context of where we are in the world," says Jay Caldwell, chief talent officer at ADP. "And given everything we went through with the Great Recession, where so many organizations lost so much institutional knowledge and are trying to build that back, making sure you have enough people and the right people is going to be one of the hardest jobs."

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Caldwell emphasizes that if businesses want to be resilient, their workforce needs to be engaged and motivated to stay. And in his experience, HR teams cannot succeed on the retention front unless they're also focused on improving employee experience and leadership.

Caldwell shares three ways HR teams can prioritize their employees before the next big change strikes the work world.

1 Don't get complacent

First things first: Don't take the current labor market for granted, underlines Caldwell. Even if turnover slows, that doesn't mean employees are happy — they could just be biding their time.

"Don't get complacent because this trend could change very quickly," he says. "We can be more proactive on retention versus reacting when people are suddenly resigning."

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For Caldwell, this means HR teams need to know where their employees' pain points are now and what aspects of the work culture might be pushing people to consider their future elsewhere.

2 Make it easy for employees to stay

Employers don't necessarily need to have the best salaries and benefits for employees to stay, stresses Caldwell. Instead, he advises HR teams to prioritize growth and flexibility. HR should take the time to map out the lifecycle of their employees, from onboarding and possible promotions to more personal milestones like becoming parents. HR should then consider whether employees have easily accessible resources to help them at each of these key stages, such as family-building benefits, parental leave, upskilling opportunities, or mentors.

"How do you make sure you have the right technologies so managers and employees can get answers as fast as possible?" says Caldwell. "How do you really enable managers to provide support to their team, whether it's helping them in their next career step or leveraging a benefit that the company offers?"

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Alongside these more focused resources, employers can't forget about flexibility, warns Caldwell. While working from home every day may not be ideal for either party, Caldwell encourages HR teams to still give employees as much agency as possible in how and when they show up in the office.

3 Train your leaders

While promoting employees to leadership roles is a reason to celebrate, it shouldn't be assumed that those employees know what they're doing, underlines Caldwell. According to a recent study from Development Dimensions International, 57% of employees have quit their jobs because of their boss. Training needs to be well thought out and continuous, says Caldwell.

"The days of sending people to four or five-day programs and hoping they come out as a great leader on the other end are done," he says. "Focus on core skills at the moments that matter most. For example, make sure when people hit the moment of officially becoming a team leader, they have the basics for all high-stakes conversations like interviewing or dealing with a poor performer."

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Beyond the initial training after their promotion, leaders should have training opportunities throughout the year tied to big moments for their employees like performance reviews and promotions. HR teams should consistently stress the importance of team-building and cultivating a sense of belonging to their leaders, too, adds Caldwell.

"There's plenty of people that technically are on the org chart and part of a team, but they don't actually feel it," he says. "Helping team leaders create that sense of connection and a sense that their voice matters is really important."

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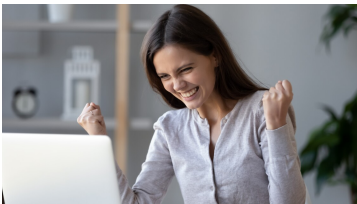
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