

Psst... lots of workers hate the boss; change that

By BETTY DOO

Why do people leave their jobs and move to new companies? More money? Better benefits? More opportunities for advancement?

Yes, these factors contribute to career changes. But they're not the only reasons, and in many cases they are not the *primary* reasons people make a change. These are often the explanations listed in personnel records from exit interviews. It's no secret, however, that sometimes the real reasons for leaving a job don't appear in exit interviews, for fear of "burning their bridges."

The most frequent responses given on confidential management surveys for leaving positions are often the following: "difficult manager," "poorly organized company," "lack of strong leadership," and the like. These are primarily related to general management practices which people recognize have a major impact on their work.

Business leaders are keenly aware of the importance of recruiting and retaining talented workers in today's tight labor market. This is a major issue within the technology community, given the demand for skilled technical people; companies frequently employ creative strategies to draw skilled workers such as giveaways and sign-on bonuses. Yet businesses sometimes overlook what workers really want in a job.

It is true that good compensation packages are important. Providing valuable benefits, flextime arrangements, casual dress and other appealing draws can attract good people. Today's savvy workers, however, are looking for more. In short, they are looking for a nice place to work. Ping Pong and foosball are fun, but they don't compete with a workplace that is intrinsically rewarding because it is founded upon sound management and organizational practices.

If you are concerned about your company's ability to attract and retain good talent, it's worth taking some time to review your company's management practices. Some of the areas to consider include:

Leadership. Today's business world demands a new type of leader. The volatility of the current economy creates concerns that today's success story may result in tomorrow's massive layoff. Many high tech workers are now skeptical of the get-rich quick scenarios and instead look for companies run by leaders who can create sustainable organizations.

Visionary and creative leaders provide a clear and compelling direction for the business, ensure alignment among key stakeholders, and inspire their employees to do their best work. Innovative leaders also recognize that leadership that is shared throughout the organization creates a more productive and profitable business. Companies that incorporate new ideas about leadership into their infrastructure are more likely to excel.

Professional development. Today's high tech workers understand the critical need to keep abreast of current technologies and business practices. Professional development is essential to keep oneself marketable as well as doing work that is challenging and rewarding. Companies that provide ongoing opportunities for professional growth are also making a clear statement they value their employees. Staying on the cutting edge of new learning initiatives is imperative. This necessitates going beyond traditional classroom training to include access to the full range of e-learning technologies, management training, coaching and mentoring programs, and in general a professional development program customized to the individual needs of the employee.

Shared vision and commitment. The current buzz is that in today's economy company or employee loyalty is gone. This perspective is probably related to the

current reality of multiple job changes that are a part of startups, mergers and acquisitions. Employees are very aware of the potential to be downsized or become involved with a startup that fizzles. However, there are many talented professionals who still value commitment in their workplace. The enlightened company recognizes that people are most productive and companies most profitable when their workers are fulfilled and feel a commitment to their job. This commitment comes when they can participate in the vision and direction of the company.

Diversity as a strategic advantage. Today's workplace is a diverse arena composing people from many different backgrounds and cultural groups. Differing management and communication styles are present as businesses move into the global network. A progressive company values, rewards and promotes diversity by implementing programs to support and attract diverse groups of people.

Recruiting and retaining talented professionals in the high tech industry is a major challenge today. But there are potential benefits to this current problem if one can see beyond the immediate difficulties. As the demand for talented employees increase, they are more valued. When companies recognized the need to address customer demands they developed better business practices. The current shortage of talented high tech workers may cause increased scrutiny of existing management practices that could ultimately lead to greater viability for businesses over the long haul.

Want to learn more about recruiting and retaining talented professionals in the high tech industry? See our free report at bettydoo.com/strategic.htm