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The Right Process for the Right IT Staff

Retaining Technical Staff in A High Demand Market

You have gone through the recruitment process, hired your top-notch technical team and are getting your teeth into manufacturing some really inspiring products and services. The next great test, in what is a heavily candidate driven market, is to keep those well fought for staff. With thousands of competitors screaming out for good technical talent daily, this can be more of a challenge than ever before. Here are our top tips to keep your tech teams, happy, motivated and working for you.

1. Keep Them Involved.

Happy staff are fulfilled staff. To ensure they are not going anywhere soon, it is essential that they feel part of something. Make sure they have sight of the whole product or project, not just the bug fixes on Jira. Discuss challenges and future projects with them and ask their advice and take it. Ensure that they feel listened to and that their contribution is seen to be highly valued.

2. Keep them Challenged

Growth and continuous learning are key factors to a happy employee. Monitor their workload and make sure they are constantly able to stretch themselves and explore new ways of doing things. If this is not possible with the current workload, consider adding half a day a week (most frequently Friday PM) for techs to try out their own ideas and projects. This often can be a highly beneficial situation, as they get to grow and might even come up with solutions you can then implement.

3. Keep Your Ear to The Ground

If you keep your ear to the ground, it is often not hard to spot a disgruntled employee. If someone seems demotivated, unhappy, turning up late or often off sick, then discreetly speak to them. It may well be something you can quickly solve before they start looking for a new role.

4. Encourage Life-Long Learning

Feeling that they are learning and progressing their skills is something that is very important to technical professionals, as their skills can quickly fall behind if they do not stay ahead of the curve. Put together a clear training plan, get more senior

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people to mentor them, send your teams to conferences and get them on any course they feel they can make a case for. This not only keeps skills fresh but is constantly improving your teams' capabilities.

5. Keep in Touch

Ensure that you have regular reviews, including salary, to track progress and make sure your specialists are happy with their role in the company. Beyond the formal meetings, speak often to ensure that they are happy and doing well.

6. Get Social

Not all people are comfortable with social events, however they do work wonders in terms of binding together a team. Little things such as Beer Fridays, hackathons, foosball, nights out (not just on the drink) and attending meet-ups together all help cement a team together and create a feeling of belonging and well-being.

7. Create a good working environment

Not many people feel comfortable working in a cramped, messy or dark environment. Some teams are not compatible with each other, for example, programmers who need to concentrate might not want to be next to a loud sales team. Do what you can to provide a calm, engaging, bright and airy work environment. If space is limited, perhaps have some work from home options and desk rotation, until you can upscale. Don't forget that break out rooms are essential, enabling hardworking employees to chill out and let off steam.

8. Respect

Do not tolerate any form of sexism, racism, ageism or any other ism, in the workplace. Technical teams have too long had the reputation of being very male dominated, which can intimidate many others. Bullying is a prime reason for leaving. What might look like banter to one person can be seen as very hurtful to another. Keep an eye on the quieter teammates and make sure they are not feeling pushed around.

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9. Pay Well

This one seems obvious but is so often forgotten. Once the initial salary has been negotiated, pay scales can often be neglected. If you have staff that haven't had a pay rise in 4 years, you can bet they feel undervalued and are getting better offers elsewhere. Tackle this by holding regular market analysis and salary reviews, alongside quantifiable achievable targets, to keep your salaries ahead of the competition.

10. Promote Career Progression

One of the top reasons for technical staff changing jobs is lack of career progression in their existing company. Put together a career plan with clear SMART objectives and follow through with it as much as possible. No one likes still being the Junior after 5 years.

If you have a situation where there is no logical next step, look at cross training or where else in the business you can use their expertise. Have a meeting with the individual and find out how they think they can keep their job fresh and challenging, perhaps through more leadership, new projects or learning new skills, to keep them on the team.

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