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The Not-So-Great Resignations

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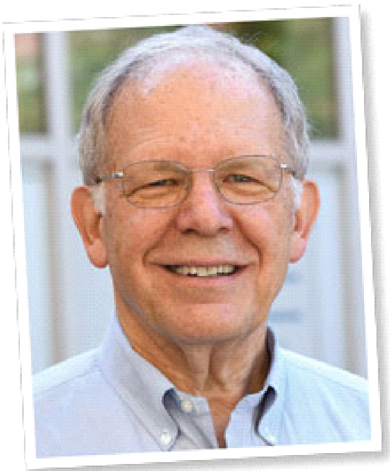

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"What we talk about is off the record, right?" That question indicates a very meaningful phone call full of anguish, consternation and doubt.

“We pride ourselves on having a great staff. They know their stuff and are loved by our customers. We consider them part of our family.

“During a recent company-wide meeting my business partner whispered, ‘We have 25 employees here. Six have been with us 15 years or more. The other 19 have been here under two years. There’s no family in the middle. Could ‘The Great Resignation’ have hit us and we didn’t recognize it? Did people leave during the pandemic without us recognizing the trend? Worse, did they leave us because of us?”

The retailer continued, “We’re fairly good at annual salary and performance reviews. When we don’t do them exactly at 12 months, we always back-date any pay increases so employees never lose money because of our delay.”

When I asked how long it could be between reviews, he said, “Probably 13 or 14 months in most cases.”

Consider this answer from the employee’s perspective. Do they interpret the lack of interest in employee feedback as an indication management takes them for granted? Is the sole point of the review to give raises? What does it signal when raises are delayed for no good reason? Many older people won’t believe the younger generation wants to do a good job and receive feedback. They do. One way they’re different from other generations is their need for more frequent feedback—call it shorter attention span if you want.

For many managers/owners, the formal annual review process is a form of torture. Get rid of it! Recognize the new world we live in.

Consider shorter, less formal, more frequent employee updates to replace the annual review. Check in or update with each person monthly or every six weeks. “Update” is a less scary and less formal word than “review.” It must include two-way understandings of what the employee and company want from each other.

Ask employees what their professional goals are and together outline steps to reach them.

Say an employee’s goal is to become a professional horticulturalist? You can help them through work assignments, industry events and continuing education. They’ll eventually leave you, but meanwhile you have dedicated employees who stay while working toward their goals.

A California retailer complained he'd lost employees for $1/hour increase. Very few people quit for that extra dollar; they quit the boss or the working conditions. I may have lost this retailer as a reader, but I'd appreciate your feedback. Do quitting employees want a little more money or a better environment?

The media is constantly reminding us—and your employees—there's a labor shortage. Much of it is caused by people resigning from employment. Your team sees "Help Wanted" messages everywhere. If they have a frustrating day on the job, do they have a way of sharing that frustration with you now or must they wait for an "annual review," which isn't reliably done on an annual basis?

There's a larger percentage of over-60s who left the workplace for "early retirement" during the pandemic. Garden centers that have located these people for part-time work report they're more dependable as part-timers than most new full-timers. Offer jobs to smiling customers who enjoy being in your store. For many of them, the money won't be as important as employee discounts, occasional "free" plants or just belonging to a healthy lifestyle garden center.

One of the best recruiting avenues is your current team. If they aren't recommending you to their friends, why not? What can you do so your team members are your best recruiters?

It's a new world. Finding, educating and retaining your work force will continually take on more importance. How will you adjust your actions so your existing team and new team members know you value them and want them to remain? **GP**

Bill McCurry would love to hear from you with questions, comments or ideas for future columns. Please contact him at wmccurry@mccurryassoc.com or (609) 688-1169.