

Retaining the talent that drives your success

As the economic recovery builds, are you at risk of losing your top talent? By Jackie Sloane

Breanna held a sales management role at a leading multinational. She consistently made or surpassed her numbers, won many awards and had a good relationship with her boss and her team. Seeking to advance in her career and expand her contribution to her organization, Breanna applied for jobs internally, but she was not even granted an interview. Instead, she was told she needed more business-analytics expertise—but when she asked for that training, she didn't get it.

So when a privately held firm offered her a 30 percent increase in her base, unlimited earning potential and an opportunity to learn a new business in a more collaborative culture, she took it. Breanna's new boss cited her energy and enthusiasm as key factors in his decision.

After a long period of frozen budgets, how can you keep your top talent in place as competitors seek to recruit them? Shannon Shoptaw, a general manager for Marketing Drive, is known for her ability to quickly build and retain talented, high-performing teams. She notes that even in a tough economy, when advancement may be limited, you can create opportunities for your most talented people to learn, contribute, grow—and stay on.

Shoptaw engages her team in her toughest challenges whenever possible, in order to tap their creativity and offer them the chance to learn and to be part of an important result. This makes for good, effective leadership. For example: A global client wanted more visibility in a major mass-market retailer at a time when the retailer sought to reduce product variety and dramatically minimize packaging. Shoptaw presented the project to her team. They came up with a unique prototype—a semipermanent in-store merchandising program—that far exceeded the retailer's strategic goals, winning their client the plum merchandising placement it sought.

The business world continues to shift, but good relationships endure. And you never know when one of your reports might become a client, a peer or someone else who can impact your destiny. **ET**

JACKIE SLOANE is an executive coach specializing in leadership and communication. She works with leaders to improve how they and their teams communicate, delegate, engage others and cultivate relationships.

To retain top talent, these and other executives who excel at it will tell you:

Invest your energy and resources in key people.

Take the time to get to know their strengths, their development goals and what matters to them. Talented people want to produce results and to advance. If budgets are tight, how can you give them learning opportunities that they can highlight on their résumés or leverage later? Do you have a project or presentation that they can take on or second-chair with you that will increase their internal or external visibility?

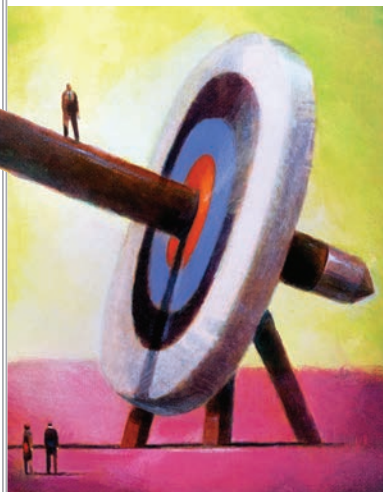
Praise and reward people for Herculean efforts.

When your employees work long hours, thank them with a day or an afternoon off. It's well deserved and will help them recharge. Make sure that your actions and words demonstrate that you care about them and their lives. This is often more important than money.

Cultivate a reputation as a leader people want to work with, a developer of leaders and winners.

You have several ways of becoming a rock star at your organization: Take the first two steps noted above. Become more self-aware—invest in leadership training for yourself, including executive coaching, 360-degree and emotional intelligence assessments. Make sure your superiors know about your team's wins when they happen.

—J.S.



PAUL ANDERSON/GETTY IMAGES