



## How to Cut Attrition and Get Your Team to Produce the Intended Results

Since 2000, I've owned and run an executive search firm that places high-level salespeople and executives across the country. When I encounter a company with high attrition and/or a team not producing the intended results, one of the following (if not all) is missing.

### 1. Get Clear

Over the years, I've realized that of all the things a company is looking for in a viable candidate, there are two or three, maybe four, that the company actually hinges their decision upon. When I take on a new job order, I speak with the hiring authority for 30-45 minutes before initiating the search. My primary intent in that call is to review their requirements for the open position and sift it down to those few must-haves.

Unfortunately, over half of the time, their must-haves are not even on their own job description. This results in HR, internal recruiters, external recruiters, etc. starting off on the wrong foot and literally looking for the wrong candidate. And to compound the issue, about 1/4 to 1/3 of the time, I'm able to ascertain that the hiring authority themselves is not even clear on their must-haves. By me continuing to ask questions, clarity eventually comes about. Although they are certainly appreciative, one must not look much further to realize why they were previously hiring the wrong people, not getting their intended results, and experiencing the inevitable high turnover.

By taking this step lightly (or skipping it entirely), companies default to making hiring decisions based on charisma, high energy, looks, sense of urgency, frustration, desperation, etc.

### 2. What does it look like?

Once a company is crystal clear on their must-haves, the next step is to get a unified (among those interviewing potential candidates) agreement on what those must-haves "look like." With certain types of positions, this step is already defined. For example, if one of the must-haves is "XRTI-4 Certified," the candidate is either properly certified or they're not. However, in other must-haves such as "they need to be a closer," it's more nebulous. It is imperative that a company define this requirement before the hiring process starts. Without a clear definition, they will default to "we'll recognize it when we see it."

Once again, by taking this step lightly (or skipping it entirely), companies default to making hiring decisions based on charisma, high energy, looks, sense of urgency, frustration, desperation, etc.

### 3. Onboarding Process

Most companies have a general awareness that the first 90 days are the most important in a new employee successfully getting up and running. This is when they will get the "plane off the ground" or they won't. Although hiring authorities are generally aware of the results they're seeking (e.g. sell \$2.5M of services your first year), there are typically no clearly-defined benchmarks for the first 90 days. It is imperative that benchmarks are set for each of the first two weeks of the first 90 days. For example, benchmarks for the end of Week 2

could be something like, "We are going to set up a mock presentation, where I, your boss, and two other executives will play the roles of a potential customer and you must be able to clearly articulate our value prop. Also, you will provide to us a list of your first 100 companies to target, including decision-makers and phone numbers. In that document, you will define time tables of reaching out to these potential customers along with your follow-up plan."

Similar benchmarks would be set for Weeks 4, 6, etc. Going over these expectations in an employee's first day or two provides them a road map and makes it clear what is expected of them in the next two weeks, the following two weeks, etc. It also gives the hiring manager a tool to measure the employee's progress. It's obviously more advantageous to catch a problem at the two or four week mark than in Month 7, when the results are not what was hoped, err, intended.

#### 4. Determining what empowers the employee.

Either through simply asking or through testing, determine the best way in which to draw the talent out of your employee. For example, do they perform best with daily affirmations, working autonomously, being held accountable, etc.?

It's human nature to teach and lead using philosophies and techniques that best suit ourselves. Unfortunately, what you best respond to is rarely the same as what each of your direct reports best respond to. We are all unique individuals. It's imperative to take the time to identify and understand how each member of your team is wired and then tailor your leadership respectively.

Does that seem like a lot of work? You bet. But consider the alternative. Take this step lightly (or skip it entirely) and it often results in your employee being confused, frustrated, demotivated, and most importantly, an underperformer.

#### 5. Acknowledge their wins and hard work.

In all these years of recruiting, I have found there are two primary reasons top producers leave their company, even when they're doing well:

1. Lack of recognition
2. Not being paid what they were promised

Set up a recognition system to acknowledge an employee's wins and hard work. For example, when someone closes a big deal, completes a big project, etc., have a senior executive or C-level officer (someone the employee is rarely in communication with) call that employee. In that 1-2 minute conversation, congratulate them on their accomplishment and genuinely let them know how much you (and the company) appreciate all of their hard work. This step is the least costly (it's free) and arguably the most effective.

This last point relates mostly to salespeople but is not limited to them. Almost all employees realize that comp plans change. They get it. What they don't get is working on a sale/project for 10-14 months (all while sacrificing family time, etc.) with the promise of making "x" if they perform and then have "x" turned into "x-y" toward completion (or even sometimes after completion) of the sale/project. Liken this to implementing a huge project for a client of yours and then upon completion, they inform you that they decided they're only going to pay you 60-70% of what they promised. Do you sense your emotions rising in just hearing that scenario? The "things have gotten tight" card doesn't play quite as well now as when you're dealing it to your employee, does it?

Implementing new comp plans are obviously fine. Again, they get it. To keep your top producers from leaving, simply apply the new comp plan to future deals/projects. As for current deals/projects, pay them per what the comp plan was when they initiated the deal/project. Unless of course, the new comp plan pays more. Then pay them that.

I hope you have found this information helpful. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call.

Point-Blank Recruiting, Inc.

[www.point-blank.biz](http://www.point-blank.biz)

Ken Kuznia, Owner & CEO

Identifying and placing high-level sales talent since 2000

512-904-9120 (direct)