GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Staying Power: Why Your Employees Leave & How to Keep Them Longer

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The intention of our work at Magnet Culture is to provoke new ways of thinking among leaders across every organization. We hope their next step is to discuss these issues in more depth and then prioritize the adjustments needed to successfully retain more staff.

Below are a set of suggested group discussion questions on multiple popular workforce topics covered in our book, *Staying Power*. We recommend using a single facilitator to lead the discussion and keep everyone on track, or separating into groups with a table facilitator for each topic. We encourage leaders to customize these questions to get the most impact for each group and its goals.

In addition to these conversations, we highly recommend offering time for leaders across the organization to share their own best practices of something they have implemented that could work company-wide. After discussions with hundreds of leaders across dozens of companies, it always amazes us how many great ideas most organizations have access to internally. Take advantage of retention rock stars within!

DIAGNOSE WHY PEOPLE LEAVE & WHAT IT'S COSTING

- **Do we really know why people leave?** *While many managers assume pay and schedules are the nearly exclusive reasons staff leave/stay, studies show there are many more reasons employees do not share in their exit interviews. How are we gathering candid data regarding why people leave? Are we using validated employee survey tools (such as www.Emplify.com)? Once we get the data, what are we doing with it?*

- **Have we identified the most common "escape routes" or times (based on length of tenure) when people leave our organization?** *Knowing when most people exit (or decide they plan to exit) an organization can explain a great dealabout why they're leaving. When do most of our staff quit? Is it in the first month, 18-24 months, or later?*

- **Are we a place where people want to work?** *Sometimes others' perceptions do not match our own. And the mission statement and core values on the wall aren't always what's actually walking down the hall. How would leadership describe our company culture? How would employees describe our company culture? Are there any disconnects that must be resolved to get us where we want to be?*

- **Are we measuring the right retention numbers?** *Beyond improving just the annual turnover percentage, our goal should be to extend each new hire's length of tenure with the organization. If we take seasoned workers (or "trees") out of the turnover equation and calculate the length each new hire is staying, could we determine where our retention issues are most prevalent? And is our average length of tenure for new hires decreasing over time? (At most places, yes.)*

- **How much is retention really costing us?** *Go beyond the simple recruiting and training line items and determine the real costs of replacing lost talent. What are we really spending annually and where on the front side could that money be better spent to reduce turnover in the end?*

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BECOME A M.A.G.N.E.T. EMPLOYER

M - Management Effectiveness

- **Do all supervisors and managers have the training and development tools needed to effectively engage and retain their staff?** *Even those with natural people and communication skills often need training to become great at managing and retaining talent. Are new supervisors/managers thrown into the role without the tools to be successful? And do they understand the Millennial mindset?*

- **Does our organization and its managers communicate our expectations?** *Staff do not think like managers and employees cannot read minds. How could we address our expectations more clearly throughout the interview process, in our handbook, during new hire onboarding and in staff meetings? What are the most common new hire issues that exist (such as attire, punctuality, lack of "professionalism," etc.) that we should be more clearly covering with new hires?*

- **Do our managers recognize any job well done?** *Some managers believe a paycheck is enough of a "thank you" for doing a job, but today's new workforce expects leaders to recognize any job well done, even if it is in their job descriptions. Do we have recognition opportunities in place at the organizational level, department level and individual level for performance that meets (and exceeds) our expectations? And are our supervisors encouraged to provide this level of feedback?*

- **Do all departments and shifts have team meetings/huddles?** *Team building is critical to build trust and respect over time. How can we more effectively encourage (or require) every shift to have a quick daily huddle to discuss current issues, the upcoming shift's priorities and spend a minute getting to know one another?*

A - Attraction & Recruiting

- **Do we know our employer brand (what employees and candidates are saying) in each location we serve?** *Check GlassDoor.com and Indeed.com for reviews. What can we do to improve/maintain our employer brand to attract more applicants?*

- **Do we have a consistent interview process with updated questions to address today's staffing issues?** *Gather best practices from each location to compile a more effective, reusable format. Ensure interview covers current issues (punctuality, sense of urgency, dependability, etc.).*

- **Do we use effective hiring assessments?** *Evaluate effectiveness of current tools and seek ones that address our current issues. Do our current tools acknowledge what we seek in an ideal employee or are they generic and built for any company to use in the same way?*

- **Does each location have a diverse interview and selection team?** *If the selection team doesn't think like the candidates or new hires, they may throw out great applicants because that candidate doesn't mirror the interviewer's behavior/attitude. For example, one person may consider a 2-year tenure trend as job-hopping while another interviewer says that would be a great hire!*

- **Once hired, do we contact our new hires prior to their first day to discuss expectations AND show excitement about their joining the team?** *We should still be in sales mode, since they could get another job offer. Who could reach out to new hires before orientation and what should that message look like?*

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G - Guidance Upon Entry (Onboarding)

- **Are new hires "wowed" on the first day on the job?** *We want them to come back tomorrow and tell their friends/family how great our company is. Could we provide small welcome baskets with their favorite snacks/drinks and something with the company logo on it? How else can we make them feel at home that first day/week?*

- **Are our expectations for new hires clear enough?** *Many companies rely on assumptions and do not communication their expectations clearly enough to incoming staff. How could our handbook and orientation be clearer to those who have never worked in our field or for our organization?*

- **Does our organization have a standard onboarding process and orientation across all locations and departments for the first day or two on the job?** *Ensure consistent experiences and create checklists (by organization, department, role) so no training topics are skipped on accident, including building-specific tours and introductions to VIPs.*

- **Do we have a strong understanding of what our new hires really need on day one, week one, month one, and year one?** *Not all training is needed (or retained) the first few days on the job. Review training requirements and create a calendar that makes sense based on what new hires need to know when.*

N - New Staffing Models

- **Could we offer staff more scheduling flexibility?** *There are more scheduling options beyond working from home, which a lot of organizations cannot (or will not) implement. Could we offer more options on shift length (at 12, 10, 8, 6 and 4 hours)? Should our start/end times be shifted? Is it possible to allow staff to self-schedule (in some or all departments) and still maintain the coverage we need?*

- **What additional "opportunities for advancement" could we offer staff?** *Many workers see today's front-line roles as "stepping stones" and they expect advancement opportunities, but it doesn't have to be a promotion. Let's get creative! Do our staff want to go back to school, get a mentor, be a mentor, cross-train, work on special projects, etc.? How do we find out what motivates them and would be a worthy investment for the organization as well?*

- **Do we allow employees to "level up" in their current roles?** *A flat hierarchy is the enemy of retention for younger workers. How can we create competency levels for high-turnover roles so employees can be promoted over time within their same job (i.e. level 1, 2, 3)?*

- **What new "carrots" are we offering to incentivize staff to stay longer?** *Annual pay increases are not enough to keep staff. What else could we offer along an employee's career path with us that would keep them longer?*

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E - Empowered Retention Champions

- **Who owns retention here?** *Instead of pointing fingers from senior leaders to HR to front-line managers and back again, identify who should drive the retention conversation and initiatives. Should one or two people lead the charge, or should it be a small retention team? What metrics should they measure to track progress? What tools and support do the Retention Champions need to be successful?*

- **Should we form an employee council or network?** *Staff want to be heard and they need to know their opinions are respected by the organization's leaders. Does it make sense to create a cross-discipline, multi-shift committee where retention problems can be discussed and new ideas can be formed and launched, creating stronger employee buy-in as changes are implemented? If so, who should be in this group and how would we select/rotate the participants?*

T - Trust Through Transparency

- **Do our staff feel they are kept "in the know" on most things?** *Many employees feel out of the loop regarding company information, policy changes and many decisions made across the organization. If they aren't given sufficient information, rumors and assumptions will creep into those information gaps. How can we better inform our staff to keep them engaged and committed to the organization?*

- **How do we review the performance of our staff?** *Annual performance reviews alone do not provide the amount of feedback today's workforce wants. Consider chopping up the annual review into smaller feedback sessions on a more regular basis. How can we get supervisors to do this, and what does that feedback timeline look like? Should we implement Stay Interviews?*

- **Do we customize recognition and rewards for employees?** *Some staff want public recognition, some want gift cards, and some want scheduling preferences. How can we determine what is truly valuable to our staff and offer what makes it worth their effort to change their behavior or attitude to meet (and exceed) our expectations?*

- **Are our current recognition programs still effective?** *Many programs have a great launch with high employee interest and participation, but then lose steam over time. Do any current programs need a revamp? Do we have a committee to review, adjust, and implement these programs on a regular basis?*

- **Do our seasoned workers "eat their young," bully, or push away new hires by forcing extra grunt work on them?** *Since new hires have the option to go elsewhere, this behavior cannot occur if we want to retain talent. How can we separate these negative individuals from new hires (or the organization), so they don't drive talent away?*

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ACTION PLANNING TOOL

Those who make it through this group discussion document typically have a notebook full of to-dos.
What steps will you and your organization take next to reduce employee turnover? It's time to plan!

1. Why should we change anything at all? What will be the impact?

2. What are our top 3-4 priority areas of focus that will help us improve employee retention?

3. Who will own each priority area?

4. What's our timeline for making progress? Should we set quarterly or monthly focus areas?

5. What will we do first to move these items forward?

6. What roadblocks will we face, and how will we get around the roadblocks?

7. What will happen if our organization doesn't make these changes?

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Visit WeReduceTurnover.com for more retention resources.