What to Do When Your Employee is Looking for a New Job

Our last newsletter included an article discussing the Signs Your Employee is Looking for a New Job. This quarter, as promised, we provide three ways to proactively handle an employee who is seeking an opportunity outside of the company:

1. Conduct an informative, one-on-one meeting. At the first sign an all-star employee is preparing to leave the company, the manager should set up a time to discuss how the individual feels about his or her current responsibilities. This is not a time to blatantly ask if an employee is looking for a job elsewhere or start offering incentives to get the employee to stay. Instead, it’s a time for the individual to discuss with his or her manager his or her responsibilities, likes and dislikes and any desired changes to his or her existing position. The conversation may move towards the employee telling the manager that he or she is looking to leave; however, it’s important that the meeting doesn’t drift towards enticing the employee to stay. Examples of informative questions could include the following:

   » How do you feel about your current workload?
   » What aspects of your position do you like and dislike?
   » Are there any responsibilities you wish you had or didn’t have?
   » What changes would you like to see made to the position/division/company?

2. Prepare for the individual’s departure. Sometimes after the informative meeting, the manager realizes that there is nothing he or she can do to give the employee what he or she is looking for. In this case, it’s time to begin preparing for the individual’s departure. Although the manager shouldn’t completely write off the employee at this time, he or she should take inventory of the worker’s position, including what it entails and what existing employees could handle the job’s duties in the interim, if needed.

3. As a last resort, consider a counter offer. Until the manager is absolutely sure that the employee is looking for or has already accepted a position elsewhere, there shouldn’t be any talk of a raise, promotion or increase in benefits. With that being said, it’s a smart idea to review what could be done, if needed, to entice the employee to stay. Managers should know how far they will go to keep the employee and have an action plan in place, just in case the employee comes to them sooner rather than later.

There will be times when, no matter what precautions a manager takes, an employee will leave without any warning. However, the more connected managers are to their employees, the easier it can be to spot someone who’s unhappy. Managers can then take appropriate steps to find out if an employee is planning on leaving and follow up with an action plan that will guarantee as little disruption as possible for their teams and companies.