

Contact Centre Action Newsletter – February 2006

Welcome to another Contact Centre Action Newsletter!

We hope that everyone had a refreshing break with friends and family over the festive season, although it seems like a long time ago now. Hopefully everyone is ready for a big 2006, because it looks like it may be a busy one. I was at a briefing the other morning and it sounds like call centres have money to spend this year - lets hope they want consultants!

About 18 months ago I was asked to facilitate a Professional Development Forum for the CCMA here in Melbourne. The subject was Staff Attrition, and judging by the number of attendees (including those that came on the morning without booking) it is a subject close to everyone's heart - I am sure the attendance wasn't due to the speaker!

I thought it was time to revisit the subject, because it is very difficult to recruit good staff at the moment, so retaining the staff you have is all the more important. This is without even considering the forecast growth in the industry that is likely to occur this year.

Contrary to popular belief, salaries are not one of the main factors in staff retention, although some call centres have started increasing salaries recently in an effort to retain staff. In most cases the 'hygiene' factors are much more effective:

- Make staff feel valued. Ensure they know their role in the organisation and how they contribute to the overall success of the company. Are their job requirements clear and their objectives measurable? Do they get sufficient feedback - good as well as bad?
- Recognise and reward good performance, but ensure it is fair and clear why the performance is being rewarded - objective measures rather than subjective.
- Ensure senior management recognises the importance of the call centre in day to day customer service - and clearly demonstrates that support. The call centre is probably the most important customer service channel - more important than face-to-face contact. Promote this importance to other areas of the business.
- Ensure staff have the tools they require to do their job - including IT systems, furniture, recreation facilities, environment, stationery, headsets - even things like parking, and canteen facilities (or arrangements with local restaurants and take-away outlets) - particularly for shift workers.
- Ensure training is structured and appropriate - if staff are confident they are able to do their job, stress levels will drop significantly.
- Look at your recruiting. Are you looking in the right place for staff? Does your recruitment process effectively filter out inappropriate staff?
- What is your management style? The majority of a manager's time is spent on the top 10% and the bottom 10% of all staff - don't neglect the 'average' 80%.

Most obvious but often most overlooked - communication! What do your staff want? Do you undertake regular staff surveys AND ACT ON THEM? What about

independent exit interviews - do you know why staff leave? Really - or are they telling what they think you want to hear?

I have recently worked with two excellent companies who really understand the importance of the little things in looking after their staff. Here are some of the practices they have adopted:

- Free soft drink in every fridge in every department.
- Cafe-style professional coffee machines in every tea room.
- Fresh fruit delivered multiple times per week.
- Organising on-site yoga classes, discounted membership to nearby gymnasiums, evening and weekend inter-company sporting activities, on-site massages.
- Healthy eating alternatives in canteens.
- Mini-bus service to the local shopping centres.
- A food trolley from the canteen that comes around to everyone's desk at morning tea time.

Most of the above initiatives can be undertaken at very low cost, and remember - retaining existing staff is much cheaper than recruiting new staff.

The presentation slides I used at the CCMA Professional Development Forum are available on our web site - copy and paste this link into your browser - <http://www.ccaction.com.au/Attrition%20Handouts.pdf>.

If you would like any more assistance with reducing attrition, please email me on spels@ccaaction.com.au, or phone me on 0414 593 819.

Do you know of anyone else who would like to be added to our distribution list? Please ask them to email their details to spels@ccaaction.com.au.

Until next time....

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