

Four Secrets for Fighting Employee Turnover

Don't Let your Top Multifamily Performers Slip Away

By Kara Rice

Escalating employee turnover is one of the biggest challenges facing multifamily supervisors today. It can seem as if your best employees are always the first to depart. Why is that? Sure, it's easy for the most qualified individuals to find other, more attractive opportunities; that makes perfect sense. But the bigger question is: Why were they looking in the first place?

Of course, every employer wants to retain their top talent. And yet, recent studies show that one in every two individuals in the American workforce is looking for another job. Let's look at some of the factors you should focus on to keep your apartment community team members from moving on.

Don't punish top performers

Feeling like you're being overworked is among the most common reasons why employees leave a job, and this is especially true of top performers. What do managers tend to do with their most reliable, productive employees? They rely on them, of course! After all, it's human nature to go to the most dependable resource, especially when one's own success hinges on it.

However, that can lead to a disparity in workload among a community's team members. Property management supervisors need to keep in mind that balance is important, even if striking that balance means sometimes putting projects or timelines at risk. Go-to performers will soon resent co-workers who they feel aren't pulling their weight, and they will also resent you for burdening them with an unfair workload. This resentment may ultimately lead to them updating their LinkedIn profile.

If you find yourself consistently relying on one or more individuals who are simply just more capable than their co-workers, you may need to make a concerted effort to assign work more fairly. It could also be a flashing neon sign that your weakest links need strengthening. Furthermore, consider whether a promotion or pay raise is in order for your more capable associates. After all, you'd likely be in a world of hurt if your go-to team member headed for the door.

Let them flex

Top performers need motivation to be challenged. If they're constantly being asked to do less than they're capable of, they get bored and disengaged. No surprise here. Most employees want to be motivated and challenged, but your better employees demand it. (That's probably why they're top performers, right?) The great manager of the equally

great employee recognizes a disengaged employee when he or she sees one. Set stretch goals for this valued individual to achieve and they'll work hard to meet them. Create stimulating work and they will thrive.

But, be careful that you aren't simply piling on extra busywork. Instead, challenge your top performer with assignments that can satisfy them intellectually, creatively, or both. For example, give them a project that's particularly challenging, and instead of providing step-by-step instructions, let them decide the best way to get to the finish line. And, be sure to let them bask in the glory of their accomplishments when they arrive.

Don't stifle them

Top performing employees are passionate about what they do. As a result, they're eager to not just be involved but take leadership roles. They want to be able to pursue opportunities and explore new ideas. How does the not-so-great manager respond to this passion and eagerness? With joy-killing sentiments such as, *"That's great, but we don't have time for that right now. Let's just focus on the matter at hand."* There's no quicker way to disengage a passionate employee than to throw a wet blanket on their enthusiasm and creativity.

Instead, give your top performers a little leeway and the encouragement to do things their way. Don't force them to work a certain way unless it's absolutely necessary (you know, like if someone could get injured.) If the outcome is successful, does it really matter how it's achieved? If you want enthusiastic performance, stop calling all the shots and let your team members lead the way.

Show your appreciation

Nothing is more disheartening for an employee than feeling like they're not getting the recognition they deserve. For your top performers, this is even more important, as they often have responsibility for the more critical work. If they are consistently achieving above average results yet getting no recognition, two things may happen. One, they'll stop putting nearly as much effort into their work, and two, they'll start searching for another job.

Recognition can come in a lot of forms, and it's not always about the money. Consider non-cash rewards for your team members, including increased responsibility, access to senior leadership for mentoring, bonus vacation days, or added schedule flexibility. Most importantly, acknowledge excellent performance with a 'thank you for a job well done.'

It all comes down to a simple truth that, unfortunately, many supervisors forget: If you want your best people to stick around, make sure their needs are being met. If you don't know whether that is the case, find out... and fast!

About the Author

Kara Rice is passionate about books, Broadway, and the Boston Red Sox...and work that satisfies both the brain and the heart. She's found that in multifamily since 1991. Chief Communications Officer at Swift Bunny, Kara helps multifamily companies boost satisfaction and loyalty among their team members by focusing on company culture. Find Kara on Twitter at @kararice or email her directly at kara@swiftbunny.com.