

What Is Your Employee Value Proposition?

by Lloyd Princeton

Along with attracting the right talented people, holding onto them is one of the biggest challenges businesses face today. With unemployment at the lowest level in fifty years, and employees with proven ability in high demand, promising workers a position and a modicum of job security is no longer enough to gain their loyalty.

In today's highly competitive environment, employers expect a lot from their staff. Now employees are asking for more in return. And if they aren't satisfied, they will look for better conditions and opportunities elsewhere. A recent Gallup [white paper](#) states that in 2017 about one in four workers voluntarily left their jobs. Besides the economic cost of replacing staff (between one-half and twice the employee's annual salary, estimates Gallup), consider the loss of experience and expertise, the impact on staff morale and project schedules, and possible disruptions with suppliers and clients.

Many factors can trigger an employee's decision to leave. Dissatisfaction with management, with a lack of opportunities for advancement, or with one's duties or assignments are common reasons. From my experience, I have identified four critical areas that employers need to pay attention to if they want to retain and engage employees. I call this the Employee Value Proposition, or EVP.

Essentially, your firm's EVP addresses the question, What do employees get for what they give? Not just in terms of compensation—although that is an important component—but in terms of their overall work experience and quality of life. For some employees, certain aspects of the EVP may be of more importance than others, and that can shift depending on where they are in the career or life stage. On the whole, though, employers should give equal weight to each of the components of the EVP to provide employees with a well-rounded work experience.

With that in mind, in no particular order of importance, your firm's EVP should address the following:

- **Work Environment.** People care about where they work and how it makes them feel. A recent survey conducted in the United Kingdom found a majority of workers frequently indicated design features of their workplace as critical to the business' success. Moreover, workers today are more conscious of the impact the workplace can have on their health and wellbeing.
- **Quality of Projects/Work Assignments.** Employees don't want to be stuck doing monotonous, low-level tasks all day long. They want their work to be purposeful, suited to their abilities and competencies, and challenging. Offering employees a variety of work assignments and the opportunity to interact with their colleagues is crucial to keeping them engaged and productive.
- **Leadership Support/Interaction.** Today's employees, especially younger ones, are accustomed to getting feedback 24/7 through their social networks. Occasional updates and quarterly performance assessments do not provide the level of support and interaction with leadership they are looking for. The Gallup white paper points out that while managers felt they had done all they could to retain an employee who voluntarily left, over half of the employees said that within the three months prior to their leaving, no one within the organization's leadership had asked them how they were feeling about their job or talked with them about their future with the company. Also, keep in mind that employees are not looking to be evaluated. Rather, they are seeking support, constructive feedback, and mentoring.
- **Actual Compensation and Benefits.** In most employee satisfaction surveys, wages do not rank at the top of the list of what employees care about most. Nonetheless, it goes without saying that compensation still matters, particularly as an indication of how much the firm values the employee. Since other factors, such as health, wellbeing and quality of life, do rank high with employees, more firms are improving their benefits plans to include flextime, personal leave time, and working offsite, as well as fitness programs and financial management assistance.

If you haven't done so recently, I advise you to review your firm's EVP and look for areas where it could be strengthened. Engage with employees and find out how they feel you are doing and what matters most to them. Making improvements in your EVP to provide employees with a better work experience will take less time and resources than replacing valued staff who've decided to seek greener pastures.