

Why People Stay- A Positive Approach towards Employee Retention: A Literature Review

Abstract

Retention is defined as a voluntary move by an organization to create an environment which engages employees for long term (Chaminade, 2007). Numerous studies have been conducted on employees' intent to leave and why they leave but comparatively less number of researches are available on why people stay. Researcher, thus focus on identifying and elaborating on factors for employee retention instead of employee attrition.

Main objectives of the study are to explore/scrutinize various researches done in the field of employee retention and consequently identify the major factors which impact employee retention (why people stay) in organizations. Literature Review method coupled with secondary data collection from various research findings and corporate practices is employed using a descriptive study technique. Literature includes journal, books and websites.

Keywords: Employee Retention, Recruitment Practices, Socialization, Leadership, Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation.

Introduction

Human resources are life and blood of any organization. It is not possible to think about success of the organization without good human capital. They are the engine of growth for any organization. Recent surveys show that most of the industries (IT, hospitality, telecommunication, education, advertising etc.) are facing the problem of employee turnover. This may be due to numerous reasons – business related factors viz. disliking the nature of work, monotonous job, mismatch of interest, lack of learning opportunities; system related factors viz. fluctuating policies, delay in promotion, lack of transparency in appraisal, lack of growth opportunities; personal factors viz. marriage, having kids, relatively less pay, peer pressure etc. Conditions of employee turnover and their causes may vary from industry to industry & company to company. Although figures and causes may differ but in each case it affects overall health of an organization negatively when talented people leave. When key employees leave, it has a tangible and intangible costs associated with it. Every organization invests a lot of time and money when they recruit a resource and groom them so that they can be productive to the organization. When this employee leaves, the company is completely at loss. According to William G. Bliss, advisor to entrepreneurial companies, figures can easily reach 150% of an employee's annual salary. There are not only direct financial costs of replacing staff but indirect repercussions also which include the loss of key skills, knowledge and experience, disruption to operations and the negative effect on workforce morale (White paper on employee retention by Drake International).

Thus, in today's era, one of the major predictor and indicator of success for an organization is extent to which an organization is able to retain its key employees. No organization, thus, can survive without giving due importance to their employees. Retaining the employees by fulfilling their reasonable expectations is imperative. Dawn Mc Coeey in his book *"Keeping good employees on Board: Employee Retention Strategies to Navigate Any Economic Storm"* (Nov 15, 2009) has opined that employee retention is a crucial business priority. D. Keith Denton in his book *"Recruitment, Retention, and Employee Relations: Field-Tested Strategies for the '90s"* (1992) emphasizes that in these times of labour shortages and increased dependence on employees to perform their task with zeal, it is essential to increase our ability to recruit, retain and improve employee relations. William J. Rothwell in his book *"The Manager's Guide to*



Priyanka Bareth

Research Scholar,
Deptt.of Management Studies,
MDS University,
Ajmer

Maximizing Employee Potential: Quick and Easy Strategies to Develop Talent Every Day” (2010) states that employee retention is not a one-time activity but a continuous process and should be part and parcel of all the major HR activities. Shivangee Singh and Pankaj Kant Dixit in their article “*Employee Retention: The Art of Keeping the People Who Keep You in Business*” (2011) state that employee retention is even more important than recruiting. Thus, it’s time for HR leaders to realize that in a battle to attract and retain top talent their firm has to act differently with superior talent management approaches (Dr. John Sullivan, August 2012).

Employee Retention- The Concept

Employee retention means retaining the employees of an organization for a longer period of time. It can be achieved by improving upon the key policies and practices of the organization. The ultimate goal is happier and motivated employees who want to remain with the company for maximum period of time. A modern employee retention strategy is one that meets the changing business demands on one hand and wavering employee needs and expectations on the other. From a broader perspective, the employee retention program must support the short-term needs of the business as well as the longer term people development objectives, the latter requiring an alignment of retention strategy with the overall talent strategy (Eileen Mullaney, 2014). Retention is defined as a voluntary move by an organization to create an environment which engages employees for long term (Chaminade, 2007). The main purpose of retention strategies is to prevent the loss of competent employees from the organization (Leena James and Lissy Mathew, 2012). Employee retention is a process in which the employees are encouraged to remain with the organization for the maximum period of time. Employee retention is beneficial for the organization as well as employees. Employees today are quite different, as when they get dissatisfied they move to other organizations. It is the responsibility of the employer to retain their best employee lest the organization will lose the star performers (Gurumani, 2010). Retention activities, simply put, may be defined as a sum of all those activities which are aimed at increasing organizational commitment of employees giving them myriad of opportunities where they can grow by outperforming others (R Ganeshan and Tanvir Farooq Khan, 2010). Retention can be further categorized as functional or dysfunctional (Johnson, Griffeth & Griffen, 2000). When non-performers leave and performers stay, it is identified as functional retention and can, in fact, assist organizations to increase optimal performance (Johnson et al, 2000). On the contrary, when non-performers stay and performers leave retention is highly dysfunctional and damages organizational innovation and performance (Abbasi & Hollman, 2000).

Different Perspective: Studying Why People Stay Instead of Studying Why People Leave

Many researches have been done on employee turnover taking into account tangible and intangible costs associated with employee turnover,

causes of employee turnover, turnover intentions. In other words, numerous studies have been conducted on employees’ intent to leave and why they leave but comparatively less number of researches are available on why people stay. In this regard, researcher argues that if we study it as retention issue than turnover issue we will be more focussed and we will be able to resolve the problem more effectively. If we call it retention issue our focus shifts to the people and when we focus on people we get to know what employees are actually looking for. (Mel Kleiman, “*You Don’t Have a Turnover Problem*, 2008). Researcher, therefore, has tried to focus on the factors which encourage an individual to stay in the organization than on the factors which prompts him to leave. In many cases, rather than the instantaneous intention of an employee’s willingness to leave, the intention to stay, especially the intended stay period, could provide much more useful information to management practitioners. Correctly understanding the intended stay period of employees might provide the company with precious information regarding how to deal with their long-term human resource management and development issue.

Objectives of the study

1. To explore/scrutinize various researches done in the field of employee retention.
2. To identify the major factors which impact employee retention (why people stay) in organizations

Methodology

Literature Review method coupled with secondary data collection from various research findings and corporate practices is employed using a descriptive study technique. Literature includes journal, books and websites.

Factors Influencing Employee Retention

Employee retention is not affected by a single factor but a host of factors contribute in retaining the employees in an organization. In today’s economy, companies can’t shield their employees from attractive opportunities and aggressive recruiters. (Peter Cappelli, 2000). Scholars have studied the issue from different perspectives and came up with various philosophies. Claudio Fernandez-Araoz (2006) opines that employee retention can be attained by pushing the employees out of their comfort zones and giving them those assignments which have optimal levels of discomfort. Varied, multifaceted, stimulating and challenging roles will not only continue the growth of the employee but will accelerate it and thus paves way for retention. Margaret Deery (2008) states that managers should adopt flexible working hours, sound recruitment and training opportunities and family friendly work policies in order to create an ideal workplace. Organizations have to define talent management in reference to their own system; ensure senior management commitment, align it with strategic goal of the organization; establish sound talent assessment, data management and data analysis systems; ensure management accountability (who is responsible for which activity in the entire process); ensure proper evaluation and feedback (Julia Christensen Hughes and Evelina Rog,

Rog, 2008). Employees whose ethical values are compatible with their employers are likely to stay more in the organizations than those whose ethical orientations are different from that of employers. The employees who see top management performing ethics-related actions across four domains (talking about ethics at work, keeping promises and commitments, keeping employees informed and modelling ethical behaviour) are more satisfied with their organization (David A. Coldwell , Jon Billsberry, Nathalie van Meurs & Philip J. G. Marsh, 2008). Focus on giving proper recognition to the employee along with the monetary measures helps in retaining employees. Talking about social entrepreneur, authors mention that they should take a broader view and improve their remuneration practices, do away with unnecessary cost-cutting management policies and invest in infrastructural development which will in turn ensure substantial growth in the long run (R. Ganesan & Tanvir Farooq Khan, 2010). In this ever shrinking talent pool employer branding can serve as an effective tool in attracting and retaining the right

talent (Annelize Botha, Mark Bussin' & Lukas de Swardt', 2011). Compensation packages, though important, have limited success in staff motivation and retention. In order to increase employee retention, those HR techniques should be practiced which integrate the individual well into the organization (Ananthan B.R. and Sudheendra Rao L.N., 2011). When managers receive growing complaints of difficult work conditions (low sportsmanship), he should conclude that individual threshold has been reached and he should take necessary measures to improve working conditions so as to retain employees (Pascal Paille, 2013). Mobility programs achieve strategic business objectives by attracting & retaining talent and also in engaging them positively throughout their term with the organization (Eileen Mullaney, 2014). After perusing several works on the subject researcher has identified main factors influencing employee retention as: Recruitment Practices; Leadership; Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation and socialization.

Table 1
Factors Influencing Employee Retention and the Related Research Papers along with the Contributing Authors

S. No.	Factors	Authors	Research Paper	Year
1	Recruitment Practices	Coleman H. Peterson	<i>Employee Retention: The Secrets Behind Wal-Mart's Successful Hiring Policies</i>	2005
		B.K. Punia and Priyanka Sharma	<i>Employees' Perspective On Human Resource Procurement Practices as a Retention Tool In Indian IT Sector</i>	2008
		Mel Kleiman	<i>You Don't Have a Turnover Problem?</i>	2008
		Murray R. Barrick and Ryan D. Zimmerman	<i>Hiring for Retention and Performance</i>	2009
		Sharon Birkman Fink	<i>From Guess to Process: A Systematic Approach to Hiring and Retention</i>	2011
2	Leadership	Swaleh Toofany	<i>Team building and Leadership: the key to recruitment and retention</i>	2007
		Fernando Jaramillo, Douglas B. Grisaffe, Lawrence B. Chonko, and James A. Roberts	<i>Examining the impact of servant leadership on Salesperson's turnover intention</i>	2009
		Jonathan P. Doh, Stephen A. Stumpf & Walter G. Tymon Jr.	<i>Responsible Leadership Helps Retain Talent in India</i>	2011
		Matasha Murrell- Jones	<i>A Spiritually based leadership approach in the retail environment to assist with the challenges of employee morale and retention</i>	2012
		Joy Huang	<i>Developing Local Talent for Future Leadership</i>	2013
		Danon Carter & Timothy Baghurst	<i>The Influence of Servant Leadership on Restaurant Employee Engagement</i>	2013
		Zhiqiang Liu; Zhenyao Cai and Ji Li; Shengping Shi and Yongqing Fang	<i>Leadership style and employee turnover intentions: a social identity perspective</i>	2013
		Leadership Management Australia	-	2014
		Tebeian Adriana Elena	<i>How to Improve Employee Motivation and Group Performance through Leadership – Conceptual Model</i>	-
Dianne Durkin	<i>Magnetic Leaders – Take these 10 critical steps</i>	-		
3	Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation	M Brit , T. Wallis & G. Winternitz	<i>Talent retention in a changing workplace: An investigation of variables considered important to South African Talent</i>	2004

		Diane Smith Randolph	<i>Predicting the Effect of Extrinsic and Intrinsic Job Satisfaction Factors on Recruitment and Retention of Rehabilitation Professionals</i>	2005
		Barry Silverstein	<i>Best Practices: Motivating Employees</i>	2007
		John P. Hausknecht, Julianne Rodda, and Michael J. Howard	<i>Targeted Employee Retention: Performance Based and Job-Related Differences in Reported Reasons for Staying</i>	2009
		Kenneth W. Thomas	<i>Intrinsic Motivation at Work: What Really Drives Employee Engagement</i>	2009
		Justin Newton Scanlan, Megan Still, Kylie Stewart and Jennifer Croaker	<i>Recruitment and retention issues for occupational therapists in mental health: Balancing the pull and the push</i>	2010
		Puangpen Churintr	<i>Perceived organisational culture, stress, and job satisfaction affecting on hotel employee retention: a comparison study between management and operational employees</i>	2010
		Walter G. Tymon Jr , Stephen A. Stumpf & Jonathan P. Doh	<i>Exploring talent management in India: The neglected role of intrinsic rewards</i>	2010
		Yingyan Wang	<i>Intention to stay in Chinese foreign-invested companies: previous experiences, initial expectations and current satisfactions</i>	2010
		Raus A.	<i>Aspects of work motivation in an educational unit</i>	2012
		Annachiara Scapolan, Fabrizio Montanari	<i>How to Attract and Retain Artistic Talent: The Case of an Italian Ballet Company</i>	2013
		Ady Milman and Duncan Dickson	<i>Employment characteristics and retention predictors among hourly employees in large US theme parks and attractions</i>	2014
4	Socialization	David G. Allen	<i>Do organizational socialization tactics influence newcomer embeddedness and turnover?</i>	2004
		David G. Allen and Linda Rhoades Shanock	<i>Perceived organizational support and embeddedness as key mechanisms connecting socialization tactics to commitment and turnover among new employees</i>	2012

Recruitment Practices

Real key to retention is to hire right candidates in the first place. Procurement practices are instrumental in retaining the employees in the organization. Recruitment practitioners should be able to identify people who fit into their jobs and the culture. Regular satisfactions surveys should be conducted and their results be implemented properly. Companies should hire carefully at each level i.e. even frontline executives should be tested, screened and interviewed as other higher level positions are screened. Modern workforce wants to learn new skills, interact with their immediate managers, wants work of their interest, recognition and respect (Mel Kleiman, 2008). Employers, in fact, can prevent turnover before employees start their job by hiring right person for right job. Higher pre-hire embeddedness (number of friends and family working at the firm and referral by an employee) and greater habitual commitment (tenure in prior job and influence of frequent job changes) with their previous employers indicates high probability of an employee to remain with the organization. Employees having higher personal confidence and higher motivation to obtain the job are more likely to stay with the organization because they are more persistent in adapting to new job demands and work settings. Further, more conscientious people will stay for longer periods in the organizations as they feel that they have moral obligation towards the organization which can be fulfilled by staying (Murray

R. Barrick and Ryan D. Zimmerman, 2009). Instead of "gut-feeling" or intuition personality tests should be used in making hiring decisions covering wide array of programs- mental ability and skills which provide an insight into candidates' strengths, weaknesses, performance behaviours, emotional quotient, Intelligence Quotient etc. (Sharon Birkman Fink, 2011). Turnover starts when an organization hires and whom it hires and therefore they should concentrate on their recruitment process as a first step towards retention (Coleman H. Peterson, 2005). Author emphasised on training HR practitioners in hiring good people and rigorous background check. Kyle Laquras in 2012 states that HR managers should hire employees who are retainable. In other words, HR managers should recruit those employees who have better chances to merge into the organizational culture and work environment.

Leadership

Leadership can help in attaining desired levels of employee retention. Leaders should value employees' contributions and help them strike a balance between their personal and professional life, they should understand and respect others and focus on team-building (Swaleh Toofany in an article titled "Team building and Leadership: the key to recruitment and retention", 2007). Servant leadership create positive work environment which make employees more committed to the organization and thus they show higher intent to stay. Further, study proved that

servant leaders' concern for ethics make their followers believe that organization is functioning at high ethical standards (Fernando Jaramillo, Douglas B. Grisaffe, Lawrence B. Chonko, and James A. Roberts in their article titled "*Examining the impact of servant leadership on Salesperson's turnover intention*", 2009). "Virtuous" firms are often rewarded in the marketplace for being socially responsible. There is strong positive relationship between responsible leadership- measured on three main elements – employees' perceptions of support they receive from the managers; the HR practices and corporate socially responsible actions - and employee retention. Responsible leadership will get its full benefit in terms of employee retention only if their actions are communicated properly to the employees (Jonathan P. Doh, Stephen A. Stumpf & Walter G. Tymon Jr. in their article "*Responsible Leadership Helps Retain Talent in India*", 2011). Employees working in spiritually-based organizations are less willing to leave. Spiritually-based leadership style empowers an employee for organizational success, enhances productivity, develops trust of employees and builds an employer brand (Matasha Murrell-Jones in an article titled "*A Spiritually based leadership approach in the retail environment to assist with the challenges of employee morale and retention*", 2012). Companies can achieve high retention rates by means of leadership development programs, provided these programs have clear focus, well-designed agenda & a support from the top leadership (Joy Huang in an article titled "*Developing Local Talent for Future Leadership*", March 2013). Servant leadership¹ changes the environment of the company positively. Employees feel their opinions are valued and therefore they own their behaviour and feel accountable for providing good services which consequently contribute to the longevity of the employees (Danon Carter & Timothy Baghurst in their article "*The Influence of Servant Leadership on Restaurant Employee Engagement*", 2013). Leader member exchange (LMX) leadership style is negatively related to employee's intention to leave. It impacts employee's intention to leave through organizational identification. Collectivism oriented HRM (C-HRM) also strengthens the mediation impact of organizational identification on relationship between LMX and employees intention to leave (Zhiqiang Liu; Zhenyao CAI and Ji Li; Shengping Shi and Yongqing Fang, 2013). A genuine and honest approach of the leaders towards creating good work environment-increasing job satisfaction, providing support, skilling middle level managers, be the employer of employees' choice- enhances the retention of employees and thus will help the organization not only to survive but to grow and flourish (Leadership Management Australia, 2014). Leadership motivates intrinsically by improving expectations and extrinsically by improving reward systems and thus help in retaining human resource who are bearers of information and knowledge and loss of a key employee means loss of expertise, of time, of knowledge, of relations, of morale and it breaks teams (Tebeian Adriana Elena). Leaders should identify

those skills which are successful in their organization culture and recruit people with those skills. Organization culture will keep these people happy and loyal. Leaders should have good listening skills so that they give an ear to what their people are saying and bring improvement wherever necessary (Dianne Durkin).

Motivation

Intrinsic Motivation

If organization provides supportive and conducive environment, it can help in retaining employees. Communicating the benefits to employees is equally important as this will shape their perceptions of work environment which in turn affects retention (M Brit, T. Wallis & G. Winternitz, 2004). Intrinsic context factors such as conducive work environment, opportunities for professional growth, say in decision making, environment which matches one's values was strongly related with one's desire to stay. Intrinsic content factors such as fair policies, achieving career goals, closeness with co-workers were strongly related with employee's intent to stay (Diane Smith Randolph, 2005). Most difficult task for HR managers is to keep the workforce engaged and motivate them to consistently give their best to the organization (Barry Silverstein, 2007). Differentiating the retention strategies for different job performers and different job levels is important. Job satisfaction is the primary retention factor followed by extrinsic rewards, constituent attachments, organizational commitment, lack of alternatives and organizational prestige. Organizational prestige emerged as one of the important factors of retention which is less known in earlier literature. The remaining factors of investments, advancement opportunities, location and flexible work timings received less importance. Retention strategies should be customized according to the retention factors identified for particular employee groups. Organizational prestige and advancement opportunities were particularly important for high performers and high job levels (John P. Hausknecht, Julianne Rodda and Michael J. Howard, 2009). In today's world where workers and teams are expected to be self-reliant, intrinsic motivators are more important and should be exploited for creating a committed and engaged workforce (Kenneth W. Thomas's, 2009). Intrinsic pull factors prompt a person to remain with the organization while intrinsic push, extrinsic pulls and extrinsic push factors prompts him to leave. A person will be retained when intrinsic pull factors offset the other three factors. Intrinsic push dimensions should be taken on priority as they are directly linked with people leaving jobs and they show organizational focus (Justin Newton Scanlan, Megan Still, Kylie Stewart and Jennifer Croaker, 2010). For employees at operational level organizational culture has more impact on retention than satisfaction has. On the other hand, for employees at management level job satisfaction was more important retention factor than organizational culture. Interestingly, stress did not have any influence on employee retention at both levels. It may be because stress has been taken by the employees as routine phenomenon and they have learnt to

manage this (Puangpen Churintr, 2010). Pride has direct effect on satisfaction and consequently on reduced intention to leave and increased perception of career success (Walter G. Tymon Jr, Stephen A. Stumpf & Jonathan P. Doh, 2010). Individual's previous experiences should also be considered along with his current satisfaction while studying his intention to stay. When the current gap (gaps between initial expectations and current satisfactions) is huge the individual will reconsider whether he has to stay with the company or not. Larger cumulative gap (gaps between satisfactions at current and previous workplace) means larger satisfaction level with the present company. Therefore, if cumulative gap is high it predicts employees' intention to stay with the present company for a longer period (Yingyan Wang, 2010). Raus A. examined the correlation between four groups of motivational factors –extrinsic positive, extrinsic negative, intrinsic positive and intrinsic negative. Very strong positive correlation was found between all extrinsic and all intrinsic factors which defy the theory that extrinsic rewards undermine the importance of intrinsic motivation (Ryan and Deci, 2000). This study revealed that participants considered positive intrinsic as most motivating. On second position were positive extrinsic factors (Raus A., 2012). Issues related to humane approach towards employees, fun and challenge at the job, nice people to work with, well-structured training, flexible work-hours and performance reviews may appeal more to new generation employees and can form the basis of employee retention strategy (Ady Milman and Duncan Dickson, 2014). If given a conducive environment, proper career growth opportunities and due recognition, employees will not only get glued to the organizations but are more productive and efficient (Deepti Chandra)

Extrinsic Motivation

Compensation as a retention tool should be used judiciously because employees will compare their compensation with external compensation rates and will respond according to perceived equity or inequity (M Brit, T. Wallis & G. Winternitz, 2004). Pay package is certainly an important deciding factor in employee turnover intentions but it is not the most important one; Incentives do increase productivity but only in the short run. In the long run it is the quality of work life, respect and recognition to employees, growth opportunities and friendly supervisors which matter (Deepti Chandra). Negative extrinsic as well as intrinsic factors ranked lower than positive extrinsic and intrinsic factors in retaining the employees (Raus A., 2012). When hygiene factors are low, intrinsic rewards increase the satisfaction to a great extent and compensate for lack of hygienic factors (extrinsic rewards). On the other hand, if extrinsic rewards are high, employees are satisfied with the organization as long as intrinsic rewards are adequate (Walter G. Tymon Jr, Stephen A. Stumpf & Jonathan P. Doh, 2010). Extrinsic motivators (like pay, benefits, status, bonuses, commissions, pension plans, expense budgets) are useful only in case of control jobs where job holder does not have any say in the organization and management of job (Kenneth W. Thomas's,

2009). Extrinsic rewards are more important while dealing with low performers and low job levels (John P. Hausknecht, Julianne Rodda and Michael J. Howard, 2009). Extrinsic factors such as compensation were found to be less significant in shaping employees intent to stay (Diane Smith Randolph, 2005).

Socialization

Socialization tactics (serial and investiture) and embeddedness were negatively correlated with turnover. Socialization tactics that provided experienced members as role models and positive social support; and realistic job previews were positively related with embeddedness (David G. Allen, 2004). Socialization tactics impact job embeddedness and perceived organizational support (POS). Both POS and job embeddedness are positively related to commitment and commitment is negatively related to Turnover. Institutional socialization tactics lead to higher POS and embeddedness and indirectly to lower turnover (David G. Allen and Linda Rhoades Shanock, 2012)

Conclusion

Quoting William Schienman, chief executive officer of Somerville author advises organizations to create a "retention index" that gives early warning signs of probable employee turnover in different units, roles and locations. Schienman opines that a departing employee is generally not honest during his exit interview as he does not want to spoil his relations with current employer. So he suggests human resource managers to talk to the departing employees 3-9 months after they leave to know the real cause of their leaving. One of the methods suggested by Schienman need special mention here-creating alumni groups on LinkedIn- it will help in bridging the communication gap with the former employees. Former employees can serve as good source of referrals and at times may even return to former organizations (Meg Mcsherry Breslin, 2013). Each employee is different and thus factors which motivate him are also different. Therefore retention strategies have to be customized accordingly. Immediate supervisor can play a very important role as he is in regular touch with his team. Do not write off an employee without knowing the root cause of underperformance. Train and motivate line managers as no strategy can be successfully implemented without full support of line managers. So line managers should be encouraged and trained to execute company's policies effectively (Kyle Laquras, 2012).

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Endnote

1. Servant Leadership is a leadership philosophy which addresses the concerns of ethics, customer experience and employee engagement while creating a unique organizational culture where both leaders and followers both unite to reach organizational goals without positional or authoritative power.