

Sitting on a Gold Mine! Finding the Riches Within Your Company

By Suzanne Douglas Harris

A paradox of today's workforce is that in spite of a tough job market, employees not satisfied with their positions are still apt to leave in search of a better opportunity.

The last few years of mergers and acquisitions resulting in massive layoffs, downsizings for survival, and the ongoing surfacing of corporate scandals, have conditioned people to be less dependent on their employer. The migration from loyalty to a company to being loyal to one's personal and professional needs is the hallmark of today's employees from entry level to the executive suite.

It is no wonder one of the top challenges for organizations today is curbing the high cost of turnover! The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) defines Turnover Costs as:

Cost of separation/termination + Cost per hire + Vacancy costs + Learning curve costs

The Department of Labor estimates the cost of losing an employee to be 1/3 of a year's compensation. Research from private organizations engaged in supporting human resource management estimates the cost between .25x and .5x for non-exempt and 1x – 1.5x for exempt employees. And these are only the quantifiable costs. What about the less tangible costs?

An estimated three-quarters (75%) of a company's market value today is made up of intangible assets. These intangible assets consist of their people (human assets), their ideas (generated by human assets), their know-how (from these human assets), and their processes (overseen and implemented by human assets). Yet, with so much of a company's market value riding on its intangible assets, why do we still continue to pay more attention to other areas of our business rather than our most valuable area--our people?

All too often, we neglect to recognize our most valuable asset and frequently our most underutilized resource- *the motivated employee*. In doing this, we have an enormous effect on company culture and productivity.

According to the national 2003 Spherion Emerging Workforce Study of working adults:

- 52% of survey respondents indicated a desire to change jobs, with 46% indicating a desire to do so within six months and 75% within the next 12 months.
- 86% of workers cite work fulfillment and work/life balance as their #1 career priority; conversely, only 35 percent of workers said being successful at work and moving up the ladder were their top priorities.

There is a way to create a winning scenario, whereby companies can reduce turnover costs and leverage their most valuable asset, while responding to the “emerging workforce” needs for job satisfaction: **Scouting for inside talent.**

By taking the time to *really* learn the skills, competencies, and ambitions of employees and better utilize talent, managers can often revitalize jobs and fill openings from within. Consider the following factors as you begin to remove the blindfold and start seeing your employees as a cache of talent:

- **Why is the employee in the current job?** There could be a number of reasons, including work location, pay, dissatisfaction with the last job, etc... why this position looked good. Sometimes the position is not the optimum 'fit' for the employee's passion and skill set. Transitioning into another job can make a good employee become great!
- **Employees mature and grow over time.** With growth, often comes the need for change. When you have a high performer, proactively learn about changes in his or her life and goals, before they start looking to satisfy their professional needs elsewhere.
- **Staleness poisons passion and productivity.** Providing an opportunity for skills assessment may save a good employee. People look to apply learning from their current position and continue to build expertise. People want to develop new competencies to meet a company's required skills and talent needs. They want to avoid obsolescence, and be motivated and utilized.
- **Dynamics between a supervisor and an employee are key to both job satisfaction and productivity.** Coaching those newly promoted into a managerial role, can make the difference not only for the new manager but also those who report to him or her.
- **Has your company strategy changed in recent years?** If so, perhaps some employees can be shifted to better apply their skill set to your new plans. Your people are your most critical asset. Align them with your strategy for effective utilization of your valuable talent.
- **Do your employees see opportunity within?** When people perceive a ceiling, or a dead end in their career path, they are not motivated or committed to do their best.

Back in 1847, a man heard that gold had been discovered in Southern California. So he sold his ranch to Colonel Sutter and went out to search for greater fortune. One day, Colonel Sutter's daughter was playing with the sand from the stream on the ranch. While a visitor was talking with her father, the little girl sifted the sand from hand to hand. And as she did, the visitor saw some bright flakes

throughout...and that is how the first shining scales of real gold were ever discovered in California.

Like the gold in Sutter's Stream, sifting through what we already have will often expose hidden riches!

We look at every nook and cranny to find ways to reduce cost and search for new blood or other resources to boost business. It is worth **scouting for inside talent** to mine the value from your own riches. You are likely sitting on a mine of gold!

Suzanne Douglas Harris provides Personal and Professional Performance Coaching services to the business community and to individuals. Ms. Harris' brings a distinctive blend of expertise and personal empathy to her practice. She maintains a real world perspective based on a comprehensive background of corporate, consulting and academic experience, and has personally survived and thrived through many of life's major obstacles. As a result, she offers firsthand, practical advice and empathy. Suzanne Harris Personal and Professional Performance Coaching located at 40 Richards Avenue in Norwalk, can be reached by phone at 203.852.6532 ext. 2803, or by email at sh@sharriscoaching.com.