

A **FULLYALIVE** *White Paper*

Getting more of what you want and less of what you don't want

The True Secret to Keeping the Best

The Challenge

At every **Fully Alive Leadership** keynote and workshop I hear leaders complain about the difficulty of finding good people to fill their job openings. There's a skills gap, they tell me. The right people just aren't knocking on their doors.

There's a reason that highly desired workers aren't knocking on their doors or on yours, either: it's that they don't have to. In this full employment economy workers are being courted by employers who are poaching talent from other shops. Seen from the other side, you are at risk of losing your best people to talent competitors. In fact, your competitors for talent are reaching out to your best people right now.

On top of that, employees are leaving in greater numbers. Voluntary employee quits are double what they were in 2010.ⁱ In exit interviews, 44% tell their boss they're leaving for more money. However, in 3rd party interviews they 'fess up and more money is cited in only 9% of cases.ⁱⁱ Perhaps these people have other motivations for leaving, needs that aren't being met.

The good news is that HR studies lay before us the one key thing - *The True Secret* - that is the biggest driver to help you attract and keep your best people: better pay.ⁱⁱⁱ

But wait just a second: didn't those 3rd party interviews establish that it's not just about money?

Another study says it's the culture of your organization that matters most.^{iv}

Yet another study says it's new and interesting challenges.^v

The truth is that it really isn't as simple as suggested by claims of "*The True Secret*" because there isn't just one thing and it isn't a secret.

It's complicated

Your A-players are, by definition, very hard to replace, so you truly want them to stay. But your high performers won't stay any longer than necessary if they can't get the leadership they need, so you have to provide that leadership.

The piece of leadership that will serve you best is to recognize that your people are human beings and they want to be treated as such. They are three dimensional and complex and need you to deal with them with that understanding. That translates to you caring enough to see them as whole human beings.

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Yes, you do have to pay wages and benefits that are better than competitive. That's just the ante to be in the game of attracting and keeping the best people. It takes more than that.

You have to learn what's important to them and deliver it. There's only one way to figure that out and it doesn't come from an HR study. You have to ask them. Here are some ideas for that.

- Ask them about their professional aspirations.
- Ask them what they want to tackle next.
- Ask what they need in order to do their best work.
- Find out about their lives beyond your walls.
- Ask them about their ideas for improvement in your shop.

About that last point - Their hands are on things yours aren't on, so they may know things that you can't know. They just might have some really good ideas. Besides, your asking what they think says that you respect them. People like to be respected.

What will you do?

It's about them getting the message that you care enough about them to focus on them and their welfare.

Key Point: If you want your people to invest in you, first you have to invest in them.

In an HR study about what's most motivating to Millennials, one respondent captured perfectly a critical need of an entire generation. She wrote, "I want my boss to take an interest in my professional development."^{vi} Could it be any plainer?

Step up your efforts to get to know your people and what's important to them. Never imagine that they think the same way you do because they aren't you. That means that you really don't know what's important to them.

So, ask.

Treat them as they want to be treated.

That's as close to *The True Secret* as you can get.

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ⁱ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018

ⁱⁱ *Why Are Workers Quitting Their Jobs in record Numbers?* By Roy Maurer for SHRM, December 12, 2018

ⁱⁱⁱ *Better Pay is Top Reason Workers Are Quitting Jobs*, by Dana Wilkie for SHRM. January 18, 2018

^{iv} *Culture Is What motivates and Retains Talented Employees*, by Betty Thompson for SHRMBlog November 12, 2018

^v *Job Switchers Seek New Challenges Above All*, by Roy Maurer for SHRM, January 30, 2017

^{vi} *Gen Y: Part II – Gen Y Opinions and Perspectives on Workplace Culture and Their Top Employers of Choice*. CareerEdge Organization, 2010