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## **NURTURING NEW HIRES: STRATEGIES FOR RETAINING AFTER TRAINING**

**SMART CHANGE STARTS HERE.**



Once you hire an employee and train them for the work that must be done, the hope is that your investment will pay off. The goal is an employee who integrates into the fabric of the company by performing their assigned tasks well and continues to learn. The reality for many companies is that it becomes a struggle to retain employees after training.

What makes a newly trained employee decide to leave? The answers are based in the cultural changes that began before the pandemic and accelerated as recovery began. The Gen Z employees born between 1997 and 2012 don't enter the job market seeking longevity, and they do not arrive with a sense of loyalty to an employer.<sup>1</sup> As a generation, they are educated, socially aware, and looking for job opportunities that appreciate what they bring to the table.<sup>2</sup> The minute they get a sense that they have arrived in an organization that sees them as a cog in a wheel, they form their exit plan.<sup>3</sup>

The important statistic is 25 percent. Gen Z is a quarter of the U.S. population at 72 million people. They are followed by Gen Alpha, which is on target to number more than two billion members by 2025.<sup>4</sup> These are the workers you are training and will train. Keeping them requires new approaches to employee nurturing, engagement, and advancement.

### Recognize the Print Industry Reputation

Every new hire has a different motivation for accepting the job and going through training. If they made it this far, there is a foundation for a growing relationship. Do not minimize the elephant in the room—the print industry's reputation as old, lacking innovation, paying poorly, limiting advancement, and missing elements in the workplace that new workers look for. Address the perceptions with clear, confident discussions about starting salaries, benefits, values, and culture.

Minimum wage will not be attractive to most people, and once you spend time training them, they can leverage what you taught them into a better-paying job. When you discuss benefits, look beyond the basics. Do you provide education benefits, student loan assistance, public transportation vouchers, or paid time off to volunteer in »



the community? Work to emphasize the options for more training and growth. Be open about expectations related to work shifts, overtime, and scheduling vacations.

Addressing these issues at the start of the relationship requires an actionable plan agreed to by senior management and team leads, as well as your unofficial leaders. Newly trained team members need to hear a consistent story from everyone, and everyone needs to walk the talk. A big part of retaining these people involves making their time in the shop productive, engaging, and fulfilling.

### Creating the Proactive Workplace

Creating a place where people want to come to work may be easy for your company. You may already have a culture of inclusivity, job growth, and camaraderie. If this is not what you see, this is an excellent time to create and execute a plan to transform into the company that new hires want to grow with.

#### Build a plan that focuses on the following:

- **Review your compensation packages against the averages for your location.**  
In today's competitive job market, it's essential to offer competitive compensation and benefits beyond what is mandated by your state law.
- **Create a positive work environment.**  
Employees leave for many reasons, but one that sits near the top of all surveys is that they don't feel recognized or valued.<sup>5</sup> A positive work environment is one where employees feel valued, respected, and supported. Develop a culture of open communication, providing opportunities for feedback, and celebrating successes. And remember that people have a life outside the business.
- **Provide opportunities for advancement.**  
Newly trained talent is eager to learn and grow. Show them that you value their skills and experience by offering training in new technologies and cross-training them in different areas of the business to position them for promotions.

- **Show appreciation.**

No matter how busy you are, carving out ways to show appreciation is valued. Set aside a budget for recognition awards and team lunches. Remember that while a certificate or name on a recognition board is nice, compensation goes a long way.

### Retention in the In-plant

New hires in an in-plant serve two institutional mandates: the institution and the print shop. To keep them engaged and enthused requires following the institutional HR requirements while building an environment that makes them want to stay. Start with the HR team to get their recommendations and compare them to the current work situation. Interview the last person hired and trained who is still at work to see why they stayed and ask for their recommendations.

### Retention in Commercial Shops

Most commercial shops are masters of their ship, making the options to steer toward an attractive workplace model more controllable. Keeping the newly trained starts with understanding their needs and motivations. Talk to the most recent hires to see what attracted them and why they stay. Ask for recommendations. And then consider adding these to your plan:

- **An ongoing feedback loop.**  
Create a forum that allows everyone to provide feedback to their teams and to management in a respectful and proactive way.
- **Easily accessible ongoing training and career development.**  
Look for training options from the vendors and associations you deal with to help build an educational infrastructure.
- **Flexibility options.**  
The modern worker is keenly aware of their obligations but also embraces the ideas of mental health days and self-care. Some are caring for parents or siblings. Some are dealing with personal issues that require time away. While it is always a balance and deadlines loom every day, building a plan for how employees can meet their needs and the business's needs sets everyone up for success.»



## Nurturing New Hires | Strategies for Retaining After Training

<sup>1</sup> Forbes, "How Gen Z's Impact on the Workplace Continues to Grow." By Edward Segal. May 24, 2023. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/edwardsegal/2023/05/24/how-gen-zs-impact-on-the-workplace-continues-to-grow/?sh=7bd2ab2d6a5b>

<sup>2</sup> Paychex, "The Rise of Generation Z: A Paychex Special Report." May 1, 2023. <https://www.paychex.com/worx/guide/rise-of-gen-z-workforce-special-report>

<sup>3</sup> Fast Company, "Employers Beware: Even Your 'Loyal' Gen Z Workers May Still Be Looking For Another Job." By Michal Grothaus. January 1, 2023. <https://www.fastcompany.com/90835522/gen-z-job-loyalty-employers-report-2023>

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Census data: <https://www.census.gov/topics/population.html> and Statista: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/296974/us-population-share-by-generation/>

<sup>5</sup> Indeed, "16 Reasons Why Employees Choose to Leave Their Jobs." April 14, 2023. <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/reasons-employees-leave>



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Pat is a consultant, researcher, speaker, facilitator, writer, and communication technology evangelist working in print, CCM, product and sales triage, and consulting. She is the managing director of McGrewGroup and MC2 Services, which provide guidance and triage for printing, marketing service, workflow, and companies supporting the print and communications industry.

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