

How To Attract And Retain A Top-Notch Sales Force

By Leni Chauvin

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A couple of years ago, a mailing list to which I subscribe had a question from a participant who owned a real estate franchise. She wanted some advice about how to both attract and retain a top notch sales force.

Well, for me, the answer was very simple. Just apply the golden rule of networking: treat other people the way you would want to be treated and watch them beat a path to your door, AND stay there, too! Treat them as if they're invisible, take them for granted, ignore the PERSON behind the salesPERSON and watch them run like an Olympic Gold Medalist. Since a lot of the subscribers to Networking Gazette are business owners or sales managers (or coaches to business owners and sales managers), I thought I'd share some of the suggestions I gave the franchise owner. I've edited the content a bit to try to make the information apply to any field of work. I started off by asking her:

How involved are you in your industry? Are you active in your local chapters of your professional associations? Are there opportunities for you to speak in front of these groups, serve on committees, write articles, teach a professional development course? Do a first rate job volunteering for these organizations, and you will get you a lot of attention and respect from the people you're seeking:top producers. Quality begets quality.

Regarding retaining employees, you can not only keep employees, but you can turn them into your greatest recruiters if you treat them like your most important customers! In a way that's exactly what they are because they are generating an income for you, the same as a customer does. When customers are happy, they tell their friends. When employees are happy, they tell their colleagues.

Some simple suggestions for keeping your sales people happy and creating your own in-house cheering section:

--Remember their birthdays. Send them birthday cards. Wish them a happy birthday--doesn't cost a cent, yet it's so easy to overlook! Put a cupcake on their desk. Have a birthday present delivered to their homes! Sound outlandish? At one time I worked for a large company (2,600 employees in our office). Every single person in that company had a gift delivered to their home on their birthday! One year it was an umbrella (everyone got the same gift so you can purchase in bulk). The next it was a beautiful brass ruler. Nothing had the company logo on it. It was NOT a promotional product. It was a show of appreciation. This one does cost a bit, but that's why you have a marketing budget, right? :-)

- Make your office a pleasant place to be
- Give everyone on your staff a pumpkin at Halloween and put candy on everyone's desk
- Take your staff and their families on a hay ride
- Have an ice skating party
- Had a good year? Share it with your employees in the form of a bonus
- Put a miniature flag on their desk on national holidays
- Praise them when praise is due
- Sponsor family barbecues
- Start a softball team
- Send anniversary cards marking the anniversary of when they joined your company
- Give them a sweat shirt with your company name on it when they start work. It's a marketing tool for you and for them, and a nice gesture which says, "Welcome to our team."
- Have a wine and cheese party in the office once a month
- Let them know your door is always open
- Ask about their family members and use their names when you do
- Treat them with respect
- Stock your kitchen area with munchies
- Celebrate Christmas in July! Take the team out to lunch in the summer as well as at the end of the year
- Hold an employee appreciation day
- Place a gift certificate to Starbucks on everyone's desk
- Send a a postcard to everyone in the office when you're on vacation
- Out of the blue, hire a bunch of kids to wash everyone's car
- Ask your employees for referrals!!!

Other companies may do some of these things, but how many do LOTS of them? Try it. You'll wind up with happy employees who beget happy employees who beget happy employees, and on and on and on! Now you have not only retained your employees, but you've attracted more of the same

caliber. These suggestions are inexpensive and, I guarantee you, will pay you far more than they cost!

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Leni Chauvin is an executive, business, and personal success coach and an expert in building business through strong referral networks. She works with individuals and groups who want to play a bigger game and who are ready to "go for it!" Visit <http://www.superstarnetworking.com> to learn more and to subscribe to NETWORKING GAZETTE, Leni's FREE e-mail newsletter packed with tips to help you grow your business AND your life.

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