

“CELEBRATE EMPLOYEE CONTRIBUTIONS, NOT SENIORITY”



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As the employee posted for a promotion in his company, he was sure that he was a shoo-in to get the job. After all, he had been with the company far longer than any of the other candidates, and genuinely felt that he deserved this opportunity.

When he did not get the job, George asked the hiring manager why he was passed over. "I've got fifteen years with this company," he complained. "And Pat only has eight." The manager turned to him and explained, "Please understand, George, that you have pretty much done the same job in the same way for 12 of the past 15 years. That's one year of experience, repeated 12 times. Pat may have only half your tenure, but during those years has achieved far more by taking on different challenges and developing an increased breadth and depth of knowledge about the business. "

After that, George never bid for a promotion again. He settled safely back into his routine, biding his time until he could retire. He wasn't motivated to achieve anything more than to show up and do the basics that were required for him to get his paycheck. He never did get over being passed up for that promotion, continuing to believe that he rightly deserved to have his tenure rewarded. Needless to say, George continued as a minimal performer, whose attitude and quality of work continued to diminish over the years.

None-the-less, his employer continued to ceremoniously acknowledge him at company events for his faithful years of service. Everyone, including George himself, knew deep down that his contribution and value to the company was minimal, but the charade continued until his long-awaited retirement.

Today, employers need more than someone who is willing to merely stay for the duration. Even with the best of intentions, longevity can, over time, breed complacency and a sense of entitlement. This extends to and affects the co-workers as well. Nothing is more de-motivating to an employee than a co-worker who is paid comparably (or more) for doing considerably less.

Most employers will agree that given the choice, they would much rather have a strong performer for only four or five years, than one who is merely getting by and collecting a paycheck indefinitely. Even with the significant cost of finding a replacement when the desirable employee moves on, it is still less costly than taking on the long-term financial burden of his or her unproductive counterpart.

As the rapidly changing workplace welcomes the new generation of employee, the bar has been raised. Both employee and employer expect more of one another, and must be willing to do their part to make the employment relationship mutually beneficial. The employee now says, "Challenge me, grow me, pay me well, or I will leave!" The employer now says, "Contribute your part to the company's growth, competitiveness and profitability, or we will ask you to leave!"

It's probably a good thing that people will not be expected to hang around in one place for their entire career anymore. Loyalty based employment served its purpose in previous generations. But now it is time to recognize and celebrate those employees, both new and not-so-new, who are willing to learn, grow, and contribute to their company's competitive advantage.