

Employees move on, so plan ahead

By [Abram Mbolemane](#)

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A lot of businesses find themselves bewildered when they are suddenly hit with unexpected challenges. Chief amongst these is losing an employee, particularly young workers, who tend to hop from one job to the other. The worst part is when it comes at the wrong time - after putting in months of training and feeling like you've finally reached the point where you can be a little more hands-off; your new recruit is gone. And you have to start all over again. What a pain!



Image courtesy of renjith Krishnan / FreeDigitalPhotos.net

The reality is, job hopping is the 'new normal' for this millennium, according to the recent available data from the Bureau of Labour Statistics in America. The data says the average worker today stays at each job for 4.4 years, but the expected tenure of the workforce's younger employees is about half of that. In fact about 91% of Millennials (born between 1977-1997) expect to stay in a job for less than three years, according to the Future Workplace Multiple Generations @ Work survey of 1,189 employees and 150 managers. This means they could have 15-20 jobs over the course of their working lives!

So what does one do when you lose an employee unexpectedly? Below we share a few tips extracted from Forbes.com to help you deal with this kind of a challenge.

Develop a transition plan

The first step is to work together with your employee to develop a transition plan. His idea of what needs to be finished up before he leaves the company may differ from yours, so it's important as a business owner or manager to collaboratively make a list of all his regular weekly duties, the projects he's currently working on, and clients he keeps in direct contact with. Spend ample time on this list, making it as comprehensive as possible, as you'll soon need to decide who can take over those projects and responsibilities in the short-term. You should also decide together how to proactively contact the regular clients, vendors, and colleagues so that their emails and phone calls won't suddenly go unanswered.

Make sure you know what they know

Before your employee walks out the door, make sure that he is not taking essential information with him. This is especially relevant when he has been with the company for a long time, as there is a good chance he might have developed some unique skills or knowledge that you and the rest of the team may not be aware of. And, unless you transition that knowledge to another team member, it will go right out the door along with him.

Evaluate the need for a replacement

After you've created a transition plan and conducted a knowledge transfer, you'll have a pretty good idea of exactly what your employee did and how much work will be left when they've gone. Then, you'll want to compare this information to your team's current priorities, tasks and workload, so you can determine if and when you need to hire a replacement.

Wish your employee well

No matter the circumstances, make sure you both leave on good terms. Wish him well in his new position, offer to be a reference in the future, and encourage him to keep in touch. Even if his performance wasn't the greatest during those last two weeks, there's no need to burn that bridge - you never know when you'll cross paths again in the future.

Every employer knows the pain of losing an employee prematurely, especially a great one - but as a manager or a business owner you are bound to face it sooner or later. So, it's best to be prepared with a plan of action!

As far as preparing for a premature exit from your employees and ensuring a smooth handover is important, this should be applied even more so when one is managing short-term staff, especially interns.

If an employee is working in your business on a temporary basis, you must ensure that they are aware that they will have to handover their workload prior to their contract ending. They should begin working on the handover process at least two weeks before the actual day of their departure. Without this process, you risk disrupting other staff and also run the risk of key tasks being forgotten. It's absolutely critical that there is at least a basic handover, because in a small firm, "jobs often cover more than the employee was originally recruited for," says Emily Das, independent adviser at HR Consultants.

"If there is no handover, the risk is that smaller details of a job might get missed, or tasks could take longer than usual," warns Das. "It's also important that the new employee is clear on what you expect from them," she adds.

One good way of filling the void left by an untimely staff departure is to use interns, who can be sourced quickly and efficiently through programmes like [GAP](#).

ABOUT ABRAM MOLELEMANE

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