



# Retain Top Talent—Here’s How

There is no time like the present to come up with an improved strategy for employee retention and development. It is critical for you as supervisors and managers to engage employees effectively if you don’t want your top talent to look for opportunities elsewhere to grow in their careers. Help your employees do their best work by removing obstacles, recognizing valuable contributions and promoting creative approaches to career advancement. Take action to retain employees: authorize them to make decisions; initiate conversations about performance, be transparent; and provide guidance during times of change or uncertainty.

## STEPS FOR RETAINING TOP TALENT

**Empower employees,** to help maintain an engaged and productive workforce.

- **Show you value your employees** by giving them control over their work. Explain what needs to be achieved and let them determine how to accomplish those goals. Top talent will feel more invested in their work when they are the ones making important decisions.
- **Say thank you.** Recognizing a job well done makes employees feel appreciated. Consider public recognition at a meeting, an announcement in a newsletter or a handwritten note to acknowledge contributions.
- **Designate employee experts.** Determine what your employees enjoy or where they excel, and authorize them as the internal subject matter expert with whom other employees can consult.
- **Make sure employees know their purpose** in the organization. Help them understand the value they bring and how their skills aid the agency’s mission.
- **Ensure employees participate in meetings,** no matter where they are located. Use technology at all meetings, whether formal or informal, to connect the important players.

Recognize when and how to hold **crucial performance conversations** with your top talent.

- **Involve employees in their professional development.** Initiate regular conversations on their professional development goals and the opportunities for achieving them, and chart progress along the way.
- **Make performance-related conversations comfortable.** Let your employees choose when and where they would like to meet.
- **Deliver feedback clearly** by providing concrete facts, and examples of actions you have observed. Try to understand what circumstances may have influenced their actions. Work together to chart a path forward.
- **Emphasize future as well as past performance.** Look forward and discuss the employee’s goals and what the next opportunities will be.
- **Express appreciation for employees’ accomplishments.** Reinforce good performance by communicating the value and importance of your top performers’ work.

Understand how to manage high-performing employees during **times of stress or uncertainty.**

- **Understand stress factors affecting employees.** Those stressors may not be within their control, or even related to their work. You can help employees build resilience by asking what you can do to support them.
- **Do not make assumptions** about how change affects employees. Each employee is different. Some may thrive during uncertain times, while others may struggle.
- **Focus on the response and outcome** to situations, rather than the situation itself. Encourage employees and colleagues to focus on what they can control.
- **Be transparent.** Share information to eliminate false assumptions or backstories about situations and decisions. Employees appreciate your checking in with them, even when there is no new information to share.
- **Provide perspective.** Frame the stressor or the change within the larger context to give employees insights into the situation. Focus on the potential for good outcomes as a result of the changes underway.
- **Remove obstacles.** Hold conversations with key stakeholders on how you can eliminate obstacles preventing employees from doing their best work. Create messaging that explains why changes are happening and make yourself available for questions.

To learn more, [view the Retaining Top Talent webinar series](#). Hear from subject matter experts and agency representatives who share proven tips for engaging standout employees. In a survey of past webinar participants, 100 percent of respondents agreed the webinars were “useful” or “very useful” in providing them with effective strategies for retaining top talent.