

## Tending to the pastures on this side of the fence

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The Japanese is renowned for the loyalty of their employees, and it is not uncommon for an employee to have worked his whole life at one employer. This tendency is not only true when it comes to the corporate sector but also applies to smaller business. We should ask the question whether this is merely a case of blind loyalty, or are there lessons to be learnt from it?

Small and medium sized businesses struggle to retain good staff, and it seems that this phenomenon has more to it than the limited scope of career development offered by such smaller businesses.

One can understand if staff, who gained the relevant experience, roams to greener pastures if the work environment does not offer the desired career development opportunities.

That is why smaller businesses must identify staff members capable of developing into key role-players, at an early stage in their career and work out a strategy to retain them. Such a strategy could imply ownership of shares, profit sharing and the allotment of more responsibility.

Continuous motivation is usually more important than financial gain. People must also be rewarded for their effort. By creating a climate where staff can actualise their dreams, they will continue to perform better and better.

The flipside of the coin, however, is that an unfair staff policy, long working-hours and unsatisfactory fringe benefits will result in even the most loyal worker to become demotivated.

If supervisors are not well acquainted with the job, if they are not readily available except when giving orders, or if they treat their subordinates without respect, the business climate will be negatively influenced.

The physical work environment could also influence staff negatively.

Unsatisfactory working environments also serve as demotivators. This could include aspects such as the workplace being ill equipped, perhaps being too warm or too cold. Bad interpersonal relationships among staff members should also be set straight quickly.

Ultimately, the best motivator remains recognition of performance. Every person likes a pat on the back by his or her colleagues and employers for a job well done. Successful businesses have mastered the fine art of using recognition as motivator.

Growth and development opportunities are also good motivators. Businesses are obliged to provide career opportunities for their staff within the business and to enhance the skills and the careers of their staff. Since the skills taught to a staff member last a lifetime, the business can reap the benefits of these skills if the person remains part of the staff of the business.

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