

## Chapter Five

### Two Reasons Employment Situations Fail

**I**ronically, turnover doesn't usually occur after a lengthy period. At least 50% occurs within the first six months of hire. These hires, while not appearing expensive, actually are because of the major investment in time and effort during that initial period.

What causes the *she just didn't work out* scenario? How can you limit the *she had us fooled*, but she wasn't the one situations? Over the years, I've discovered two primary reasons employer/employee situations fail:

#### 1. Miscommunication of mutual expectations

##### 2. Misalignment of talent with task

Let me explain. The first usually begins during the hiring process and goes downhill from there. An example, the boss says, "I expect a full day's work for a full day's pay." The employee hears, "Be here at 8:29 a.m. and don't leave until 5:01 p.m."

What the boss meant was "Be here before anyone else and don't leave until I'm satisfied that you've completed the job." Now whether you like the boss's old school style or not, there's obviously a misunderstanding of what each expects. There is more about this in Chapter Eight on Delegation.

The second reason is often seen in internal promotions and shifts in job descriptions. In the first, there is a frequent mistake by managers to view the

accomplishments of an employee in a particular position as being the sole criteria for promotions or moves into other areas. In a healthcare situation, taking a marvelous bedside nurse who possesses an incredible talent for patient comfort and family interaction and promoting her to the director of nursing position is a disaster.

Unfortunately directors of nursing have less to do with patient care or family interaction today. They have the tasks of charting, record keeping and verification, meetings, staffing, personnel issues, shift scheduling and others that are not hands on nursing.

Take a wonderful nurse and throw her into an administrative position for which she has neither the desire nor the skills or training and you'll soon have an ex-employee and a nursing department in shambles.

Another example I saw repeatedly during my stint in the corporate world was promoting superstar salesmen to sales managers. This was usually done for two reasons: It was cheaper to put the superstar under a manager's compensation plan than pay the tremendous commissions and it seemed to be a logical way of getting someone in a position to make clones of himself by directing the other salesmen.

The realities are that super salesmen love prospecting, competing, negotiating and closing the deal. They love being in the spotlight. Much like the director of nursing example, they abhor paperwork, personnel and administrative issues. They are usually lousy teachers and the realities of sales management are to cultivate and encourage sales people to put them in the spotlight, not you.

Can you see why this scenario almost always results in disaster? I'm sure you've had your own personal and professional examples along the way where you've seen great people thrust into situations they were neither desirous of nor prepared for.

So what's the answer to these two dilemmas?

**The miscommunications issue:**

- ◆ State your expectations.
- ◆ Ask the employee to restate them in her own words.
- ◆ Ask for clear understanding.
- ◆ Monitor the situation, or see that someone else does, before the task is completed to ensure that things are tracking well.
- ◆ Consider pairing an employee up with a trusted veteran to help in the process.

**The talent-to-task issue:**

- ◆ Determine an employee's desires and capabilities early and often.
- ◆ If there's a desire to advance, see that training and grooming are provided.

◆Monitor employees who are potential candidates for promotion on a regular basis and give them incremental assignments and projects to evaluate their growth and preparedness.

◆When a person isn't promotable, but is a Worker, see that recognition and reward are provided so the employee has a sense of accomplishment, advancement and value without necessarily taking on totally new responsibilities.

◆Never send the message that people must move up. The noble Worker usually doesn't mind staying put and doing a phenomenal job as long as she is appreciated and compensated.

Let's go back to the miscommunication and the talent/task issues. Communicating expectations for job conduct and performance together with ensuring the fit between the employee and the task require time, money and commitment. It begins in the interviewing process, is clarified in new hire orientation and is extended throughout the employee's tenure.

This is accomplished in every formal and informal review and ongoing internal training initiatives. It is a significant investment, but one that pays off tremendously in satisfaction for both the employer and the employee.

Whether you call it indoctrination, probation or simply new hire training, **the goal should be the same, to clearly outline the expectations of the job and provide the policies, procedures and resources for supporting the effort.**

To these ends, I would suggest following the general outline for an orientation initiative found in Chapter Nine.