



# Become a RETENTION NINJA:

Keep your top performers.  
And stay competitive.



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# There's a war on.

The economy is improving. Unemployment is down; jobs are up. And you know what that means, right?

Everybody's looking to hire good people. Maybe your good people.

There's a war on, and your best employees are the prize. Your top performers — the ones whose contributions are having the biggest impact on your bottom line — are likely to be targeted for recruitment by the competition. For employees with skills and a good track record, opportunity is everywhere.

But for a competitive company, losing a top performer to the competition is like a double loss. To win this critical battle, you'll need to master the skills of warfare. You'll need to become a RETENTION NINJA.

To find out how, keep reading!

# The high cost of losing

Voluntary quits are expensive. Recruitment, interviewing, onboarding, training — these all take valuable time. Then there's the cost of lost momentum, hiring replacement workers, or reassigning other employees to cover the responsibilities of the one who quit until you can fill the position.

Those costs really add up:

- Replacing an entry-level employee can cost 30 to 50 percent of their annual pay, according to Karlyn Borysenko of Zen Workplace.
- For top managers or highly specialized employees, the cost can be much higher – as much as 400 percent of their salary.
- If they go to a competitor, the cost could be even greater.



**Don't know how much losing employees costs your company?** Try this [turnover calculator](#), created by the Center for Law and Social Policy and the Center for Economic and Policy Research and CLASP.



# The cost of "pay to stay"

If you think you can increase retention through simple salary adjustments, think again. The average pay bump employees get from changing workplaces is 20 percent.

## Can you afford a 20 percent across-the-board pay increase?

If the answer is no (and for most of us, it is), then you need a more targeted, strategic approach. One that will make your employees immune to the siren song of higher pay elsewhere. One that will make them so happy that they won't even think about leaving.

For this, you will need special powers. **Ninja powers.**



# How to be a RETENTION NINJA

You don't need to dress in black. You don't need to rock a headband or a stretchy facemask. You don't need the power of invisibility. You don't even need a sword!

What you need is to **THINK LIKE A NINJA**. Just as a ninja is agile and strategic, you must plan your retention strategy with artfulness and care, developing a plan that is tailored to fit your organization and your employees. You'll need to maintain a strategic focus. You must select and deploy solutions that have been proven to work.

## But first...



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# A ninja knows his enemy.

**The enemy is turnover**, and your first mission is to find out when and why it happens and where the impact is greatest. Start with existing data.

- Which line managers have the greatest turnover? Which have the lowest?
- Same for job categories. Which generate turnover? Which are longevity friendly?
- Study exit interviews. Why did people leave?
- Analyze the cost. Which employees are costliest to replace?

## And then...



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# A ninja prepares.

Once the enemy is known, it's time to make a battle plan.

- Set clear goals. What do you want to achieve?
- Base your plan on real-world information. Consider a survey or a series of employee focus groups. What do they want that you are not currently offering? What would make them stay?
- Study the research. What retention strategies have worked elsewhere?
- Plan to measure success. You need to find out what works — and what doesn't.

## Next...





# A ninja makes allies.

Make retention a priority by incorporating it into your overall workforce management plan. Put one person or department in charge of retention, so there's oversight and incentive to succeed.

## Your retention team should:

- Ensure retention strategies are consistent company wide, so you avoid charges of discrimination and get the results you want.
- Ensure that the goal of retention is built into all HR functions, from onboarding to salary review to promotion. Turnover can occur for many reasons, and a comprehensive retention plan must address the biggest culprits.
- Measure results. To improve the effectiveness of your retention efforts, someone needs to determine what works – and what doesn't.





# A ninja makes use of all available weapons.

Just as ninjas are comfortable fighting with hands, feet, swords and magic, a retention ninja is comfortable utilizing a wide range of strategies.

There is no all-purpose weapon in the battle for retention. Your employees are individuals, with differing preferences, goals, needs and desires. But knowing the characteristic desires of people of different ages and stages of career can help narrow the field as you assemble your arsenal of weapons.

## Thinking in categories is a good place to start.



# For top-performing managers, it all hangs in the balance.

Your top managers are likely balancing the demands of family life with workplace challenges such as long hours and travel. Help in striking that balance can go a long way toward making these highly motivated, often stressed-out workers happy.



In a survey by Global Workplace Analytics, 95 percent of employers said offering flexible work options has a positive impact on long-term employee retention, and it showed in the data: 46 percent of organizations that began offering flexible work options reduced turnover rates.

## **As you form a retention plan for this group, consider:**

- Telecommuting options
- Flexible start/stop times
- Compressed work weeks
- Incentives to USE accrued vacation time



# Chart a path for younger managers.

Younger managers are focused on the future. What impact can I make? How can I advance? To encourage them to make your organization a home, rather than a stopping place, help them chart a career path within the company.

- Supervisors should sit down with each employee, especially those in this group, and create a 3- to 5-year plan.
- Work with young managers to identify goals that align individual needs with company goals.
- Meet quarterly to review their progress and adjust goals.
- Communicate rationale for pay scale decisions.
- Provide professional development, educational, cross-training and mentoring opportunities which allow them to grow within your organization.
- Be clear about the timing of opportunities for promotions, bonuses or raises. Let them know what to expect.

# Win the culture wars to hang on to millennials.



Younger knowledge workers and other millennials within your organization (who may also be managers) are likely to be motivated by cultural factors. New to the field, they like to give input and be heard, and they often appreciate a culture of trust and collaboration.

**They also are restless and eager to learn — and avoid stagnation like the plague. Offer these workers:**

- Opportunities to learn and acquire new skills.
- “Stretch” assignments that take them out of their comfort zone and allow them to see the big picture.
- Cross-training. This not only stimulates them, it helps with your staffing needs!
- Up-to-the-moment technology to work with, and training that helps them stay on top of new high-tech trends.



# Win the hearts and minds of your new hires.



It goes without saying, but we'll say it anyway: The best retention plan starts with a good hiring process – because a good hiring process yields people who are a good fit for the job.

Once they're in the door, though, the battle to keep them begins. Most newly hired employees decide within the first 90 days whether your company is a place they can stay. To help them decide in your favor, and keep new talent in the fold, offer them mentoring, inclusion, a sense of a future and a chance to feel that their work is meaningful and needed.

- Show them, from day one, how their work supports company's mission.
- Offer a road map for a career within your company, and revisit it at each review.
- Assign a mentor, and make sure the mentor is rewarded for making his mentee feel at home.
- Check in often to reveal stumbling blocks early, before they lead to dissatisfaction.



# A ninja mentors other ninjas (namely, managers!).

“Employees don’t quit jobs,” says Steve Miranda, Managing Director of the Center for Advanced Human Resource Studies at Cornell University. “They quit managers.” Miranda says the experience of most employees is affected more by the culture their manager creates than by the larger company culture.

Train your managers to create a retention-friendly work environment.  
**Here are a few skills you can help them develop:**



- **Sending positive "micromessages."** small activities that convey positive messages (both verbally and nonverbally). Examples include making direct eye contact, encouraging participation from all employees, and asking questions to develop rapport.
- **Listening without interrupting.** When employees know that their ideas are heard and valued, they feel more tied to the organization.
- **Saying "thanks!" often.** Recognizing employees' contributions helps them stay engaged, motivated and loyal. Whether it's a heartfelt "thank you" or more formal recognition, find a reason to acknowledge both individual and team accomplishments every day.

These actions may seem small, but they can have a huge impact on employee job satisfaction – and ultimately, retention.





# A ninja knows when to summon outside powers.

A staffing agency can be your best partner in supporting employee retention, every step of the way. From helping you find the right match for direct positions, to supporting your staff at times of pressure and flux, a staffing agency is a retention ninja's secret weapon.

- Better matches set the stage for longevity.
- Temporary support relieves pressure on staff, preventing burnout, enabling time off and promoting work-life satisfaction.
- By offloading or outsourcing low-priority tasks, core employees can take on more rewarding challenges – and keep growing within your organization.
- Supporting your team with extra hands when the pressure is on shows them you value their contributions, their time and their sanity!



With study, focus, strategy, persistence, and the right allies, a ninja can conquer any problem. You have the tools you need at your disposal. Now go forth and fight to keep your people!

# You are ... a **RETENTION NINJA.**



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