

Retention That Works: Simple, Low-Cost Actions That Make a Real Impact

A practical takeaway for HR and leaders

1. Make Managers More Present (Not Busier)

- Hold **15-minute monthly 1:1 check-ins** (non-operational—focus on the person, not the work)
 - Ask one consistent question: *“What’s getting in your way right now?”*
 - Follow up on something discussed previously (this builds trust fast)
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2. Recognize Work in Real Time

- Acknowledge contributions **within 24–48 hours**
- Be specific: *what they did and why it mattered*
- Encourage peer-to-peer recognition in team meetings

Employees don’t leave because they aren’t appreciated once a year.

3. Give Employees More Control Over Their Work

- Offer small flex options (start/end times, remote days where possible)
 - Involve employees in decisions that impact their work
 - Let them **own a piece of a process or project**
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4. Clarify Expectations (Reduce Friction)

- Ensure every employee can answer:
 - What does success look like in my role?
 - What are my top 3 priorities right now?
- Eliminate or pause low-value work when possible

Confusion and overload drive disengagement faster than workload alone.

5. Create Micro-Development Moments

- Assign **stretch tasks**, not just training
- Ask: *“What’s one skill you want to build this quarter?”*
- Offer shadowing or cross-training opportunities

6. Strengthen the First 90 Days

- Schedule **regular check-ins with new hires** (not just onboarding week)
- Pair them with a peer “go-to” person
- Ask at 30/60/90 days: *“What’s been surprising or unclear?”*

7. Equip Managers to Handle Issues Early

- Encourage managers to address concerns **when they’re small**
- Provide simple talking points or scripts if needed
- Reinforce: avoiding the conversation creates bigger problems later

8. Make Communication More Human

- Share **context behind decisions**, not just the decision
- Be transparent about challenges where appropriate
- Create space for questions—even if you don’t have all the answers

9. Remove One Frustration Point Per Quarter

- Ask employees: *“What’s one thing that makes your job harder than it should be?”*
- Fix what you can—and communicate what you can’t (and why)

10. Close the Loop (This Is Where Most Organizations Fail)

- If you ask for feedback—**respond to it**
 - Share what you heard and what actions you're taking
 - Even small changes build credibility and trust
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11. Reinforce Purpose and Connection

- Regularly connect individual work to team or organizational goals
 - Share examples of impact (client wins, customer stories, outcomes)
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12. Standardize What Good Looks Like for Managers

- Set expectations for:
 - Frequency of 1:1s
 - Recognition practices
 - Team communication
 - Don't leave retention to individual management styles
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Bottom Line

Retention doesn't require more programs.

It requires **more consistency in the moments that matter.**

One Question to Take Back to Your Team

“What is one thing we could start, stop, or fix in the next 30 days that would make people more likely to stay?”