Want to Curb Turnover? The Right Tech Can Help.

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Do you have the right technology to attract and retain top talent?

If you're taken aback by this question, you're not alone. Pre-pandemic, leaders typically used more traditional benefits such as attractive salaries or 401(k) matching to convince workers to join their ranks. Of course, equipping people with the technology they needed to perform in their roles was important. But because the vast majority of employees worked from the office, leaders didn't have to think about tech needs beyond the confines of their four walls — or how it impacted their growth strategies.

However, as more businesses transition to hybrid working models, leaders must broaden their perspective on technology needs. Unfortunately, few have picked up the mantle so far.

In a 2021 survey, for example, a third of workers said their employers hadn't prioritized investing in better hybrid work-friendly technologies. Unsurprisingly, this is affecting their willingness to stick around. A 2022 survey found that a third of employees say that one of the top factors in their desire to change jobs is frustration from dealing with hybrid work tech issues. The lesson is clear: If leaders hope to keep employees around, they can't ignore or undervalue the technology that's needed to create a seamless hybrid work experience.

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A hard-to-fill gap

Most of our current workplace tech was designed with the needs of either all-in-person or all-remote staff in mind. Because the hybrid approach is so new, there simply aren’t many technology tools built with it in mind (at least, not yet).

For example, your office’s conference room was probably built for in-person meeting participation. Attendees sat around one table while the meeting host used a monitor and projector screen to present to the group. When people were sent home during the height of the pandemic, in-person meetings were out of the question, which meant attendees participated separately via a videoconferencing solution. The host could share their screen, and attendees could watch the presentation from the comfort of their couch. Simple enough.

But what does a *hybrid* conference room look like? Some employees might join the meeting from the office, while others might dial in from remote locations. Their meeting experiences will be vastly different and potentially headache-inducing. In fact, 71 percent of respondents to that 2022 survey said hybrid meetings are stressful. They identified issues with sharing content, wrestling cables and connecting audio and video as their top tech concerns.

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How do you bridge this gap to ensure optimal participation and engagement from everyone? We don’t yet have a universal answer, but we do know that the way companies use technology to facilitate hybrid work could mean the difference between employees sticking around and running for the exit. So here are strategies for meeting the technology expectations of employees in a hybrid workplace:

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1. Don’t leave people flapping in the wind.

Simply arming your hybrid workforce with the basic necessities (e.g., a computer with a decent microphone, camera and speaker) and then leaving them to fend for themselves as they integrate those digital tools into their everyday work is a mistake – one that’s, unfortunately, common. According to PwC, only a little more than half of employees believe their employers meet their needs when introducing new technology. That’s in stark contrast to the 90 percent of executives who say the same.

Where’s the disconnect? Consider this: Most technology failures happen during rollout and implementation. That’s often because the people who select the technology, introduce it to staff and train people on it aren’t the same people who use it every day. Instead, have your IT team work closely with “power users”: the people who will use the equipment most often.

IT team members should physically sit with and observe how power users leverage new tech tools throughout the day. Doing so allows IT to proactively identify all the annoying tech issues that pop up, no matter how insignificant they seem. (After all, when you add up all those minor inconveniences, they amount to a lot of wasted time.) Then, IT can put solutions in place to fix issues that probably wouldn’t have been reported otherwise because most people only report so-called “big” problems.

2. Conduct regular employee surveys.

Having IT sit with power users every day for the foreseeable future isn't realistic, so you can fill the gaps with regular companywide surveys. When's the last time you checked in with your employees about their tech needs? Doing so is one of the best ways to proactively improve the employee experience, which will, in turn, prevent voluntary turnover.

Intel, for example, surveys its employees biannually to help managers gain a better idea of how satisfied employees are. It's not a coincidence that Intel is one of the top 10 companies both men and women are excited to work for, according to a joint survey by Fortune and SurveyMonkey.

After your initial tech setup and rollout are complete, send out companywide surveys every few months to gauge the effectiveness of your current tech stack and allow employees to easily report any issues. Surveys not only help you uncover and overcome insidious tech problems, but they also show employees you value their opinions and want to ensure the technology is *actually* meeting their needs.

3. Even the playing field.

When everyone worked under one roof, you were likely able to maintain a consistent companywide technology setup. Everyone was connected to the same Wi-Fi, was outfitted with the same computer, had similar desk setups, etc. However, when employees are spread across multiple locations, maintaining that consistency becomes more complex.

Imagine you employ two salespeople, for instance. Each needs a strong technology setup to run effective sales calls — good lighting, a professional background, solid internet connection, a good-quality camera and microphone, etc.

Salesperson A works from the office, where the lighting is great, the Wi-Fi connection is rock-solid and they can sit in a professional-looking conference room while connecting to the company's high-end audio-conferencing system. However, salesperson B works from home in a darker room using their laptop's average-quality camera and microphone and a low-cost internet connection that's shared with a partner who also telecommutes.

Although costs can add up to equip everyone with an at-home work environment, you also need to consider the cost of not making those investments — particularly for client-facing team members who you have asked to work mostly in a remote work environment. A 2020 report found that only about a quarter of companies paid for or at least shared the cost of work-from-home equipment and internet that year. As we venture further into the hybrid work model, you need to be more deliberate about your employees' home office setups, which means investing company funds into work-from-home technology kits that are accessible to *all* employees.

The ability to effectively work from anywhere is critical. To ensure your hybrid workforce is as productive and happy as it can be — and, in turn, your company retains that talent — you need to put the right technology solutions in place and make them available to all.

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