



Engaging Your All-Stars:

How Successful Companies Retain Their Top Performers

With the Major League Baseball All-Star Game approaching in July, it's an appropriate time to consider your own All-Stars and identify any issues surrounding the retention and motivation of your top performing talent. With this group, the focus should be on increasing employee engagement and developing programs that make it easier for employees to be successful.



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Your All-Star Line-up

With a commitment to creating greater levels of engagement, employers must provide clarity and show a direct link between the levels of employee performance and total rewards. The more employees understand this relationship, the more success the organization will realize.

Identifying your All-Stars can be done several ways and will depend on your organization's unique business strategies.

Some employers use hard and fast guidelines to determine who top performers are, such as point scales. A company using a point scale may decide that no more than 5 percent of the workforce may be considered a level one employee, no more than 20 percent can be considered a level two employee, and so forth. However, it's not as simple as lining each employee up in a row and giving them a number.

In general, top performers are more productive than the average employee. They are self-motivated workers who don't settle for simply attaining the goal. These employees are adaptable, consistent, and reliable. You can trust they'll be able to adjust to new or different situations without sacrificing quality of work. Ultimately, they require less supervision or monitoring because they take the initiative to develop solutions and solve problems.

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They're dedicated to understanding the goals and objectives of the company, and are not only able to look at the big picture, but are also able to see the details. Strong analytical skills are a common characteristic of top performers. They're intuitive, strategic thinkers, and they become your go-to people.

Batter Up

Compensation in the form of a paycheck is the first measure of value a company gives an employee. Employee dissatisfaction with compensation is usually more complex than the amount of money paid. Instead, top performers are often discouraged by the inequity of knowing they are paid the same as others who are less qualified, or of receiving the same "across-the-board" raises as others who have contributed less to the organization. All told, these feelings can lead to devaluing and de-motivating employees.



Getting on Base

To combat these engagement issues, successful organizations:

- Link pay levels directly to an employee's contribution to the business. Design your reward programs so employees understand the relationship between their performance and their compensation. HR professionals must actively communicate the differences in performance ratings and how they correlate to total rewards. Reward your All-Stars at a high enough level that the tie between performance and rewards is obvious to all employees.
- Identify the progression of advancing responsibilities to ensure the right employees are promoted into the right jobs at the right time. The goal is to create additional value for the company and increase employee clarity about these progression paths.

- Eliminate unnecessary work and duplication. Take time to have employees and managers review their job descriptions and organizational charts. It's nearly impossible to engage the workforce if these fail to represent the impact and influence employees have in their current role. When job descriptions are up-to-date, an organization has the opportunity to move employees to higher levels of engagement.
 - Invite input and feedback from managers and the workforce when designing new pay policies. The more employees and managers clearly understand the compensation programs, the easier it is for the organization to internalize how differentiated rewards and organizational values are connected.



Engagement and motivation is a long-term, achievable solution to retaining your All-Stars. Give them another reason to stay since a basic paycheck is easily matched. Take the time to discover what these employees are passionate about when they're in the office.

Hitting a Home Run

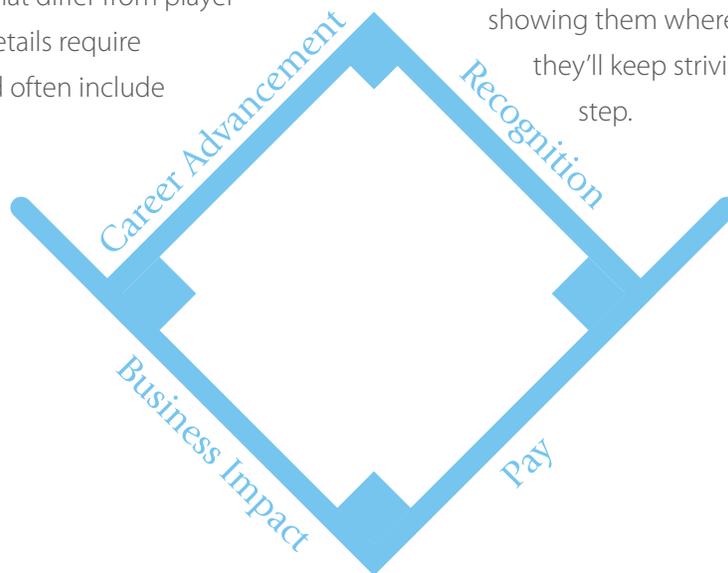
With turnover rates inching back up, opportunities for the best employees are more readily available. Your All-Stars have options when it comes to where they want to work. Companies can be very aggressive in recruiting top performers, and it can be challenging to keep them at your organization if there are not tangible rewards or reasons to stay. It's incumbent upon HR to help managers determine what those tangible rewards can be, set guidelines for recognizing top performers, and ultimately position the organization to recruit and retain the talent needed to move your company forward.

Our MLB idols have signing bonuses and contracts that differ from player to player. The details require negotiation and often include

some very specific perks. This doesn't mean employers should negotiate with their top performers, but line managers should make a point to understand what motivates each All-Star.

Specific engagement tactics may include advancement opportunities, tangible rewards such as a special parking spot or upgraded office, verbal praise and recognition, or simply the freedom to make certain business decisions.

Career advancement can be an effective motivator. When it's clear what lies ahead, people will work hard to get there instead of feeling they're just working to work. By showing them where they're headed, they'll keep striving for the next step.





Another engagement tactic could be giving your top performers the opportunity to choose a project before assigning it. When employees are given options, it tells them the company has faith in their abilities. The company also demonstrates it values the worker as a whole and recognizes he or she has the ability to move the company forward in more ways than one.

It's not about determining what moves an employee to do a good job, but what motivates them to do a great job. It's also not just an executive responsibility. Each manager is responsible for understanding his or her employees' motivators, and accommodating those within company policy. Form a mutually beneficial partnership with these top performers and make it go beyond the paycheck. Employees who know they're valued are less likely to look elsewhere.

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Bottom of the Ninth

When employees do well, the company does well. Load up your bases with top performers and provide the tools they need to stay motivated and engaged. For most organizations, there is a real need for improvement in the use of pay and performance as a motivational tool to increase employee engagement. While pay is a good starting point, innovative engagement initiatives tie it all together and reassure your best employees their hard work, dedication and skills make a difference to the business.

About Compdata Consulting

Compdata Consulting is a national human resources consulting firm offering a tailored approach for organizations needing effective compensation and total rewards solutions. Our practiced professionals are dedicated to creating client-focused, value-added experiences that exceed client expectations. Armed with Compdata Surveys' trusted compensation and benefits database, Compdata Consulting is a full-service firm equipped to provide innovative solutions to the most difficult compensation challenges facing organizations today.

Contact Compdata Consulting for more information about employee engagement.

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