



Are You an Employer of Choice?

TO become an Employer of Choice, let's start by answering these questions:

1. Who are we and what makes us unique?
2. What is our value proposition?
3. What value do we place on our human capital?
4. How do we attract, enhance, reward and retain this value?
5. How are all these tied to our business strategy and measures of success?
6. What kind of systems do we have in place to support our initiatives?
7. Why do people want to work with us?
8. How will we know when we have succeeded in our bid to become an EOC?
9. How will we communicate our plans on this to our current employees, members, and people we want to attract and retain in the organization?
10. How does the market perceive our brand?

The answers to these questions will help you determine how near your company is to becoming an 'Employer of Choice' and what remedies to implement to enable this status to be achieved.

Becoming an Employer of Choice (EOC) is a key strategy to attract and retain the best employees. An EOC program must be a conscious organization-wide strategy designed to position the organization as a "great place to work."

The advantages to becoming an EOC include:

- Ability to attract and retain quality talent

- Enhanced reputation in the marketplace/brand
- Ability to impress customers, members, and clients
- Increased employee morale

A relevant question when planning how a company can attain this status is "what makes a company a great place to work?" This is usually a combination of monetary and non-monetary rewards and/or tangible and intangible benefits. It has to be the right mix for the employees your organization wants to attract and retain.

Robert Levering, co-author of *The 100 Best Companies to Work for in America*, defines a great place to work as "one where you trust the people you work for, have pride in what you do, and enjoy the people you work with."

Many organizations have set out to become an EOC over the past years but only few have succeeded. This is not because they didn't know what they needed to do to be recognized as an EOC, but because the actions and policies necessary to become an Employer of Choice are not easy to carry out.

The authors and researchers of 'The 100 Best Companies to Work for in America' outlined these actions for becoming an Employer of Choice: differentiating the organization from other employers in the areas of pay/benefits, opportunities, job security, pride in work/organization, openness/fairness and friendliness.

One of the keys to becoming an EOC is to be 'talked about' as an organization. Employees want to be able to take pride in where they work. This does not mean your organization has to be big to become a 'household name'-many small organizations have succeeded in becoming an Employer of Choice.

So, are you an Employer of Choice?

Best Practices "Employers of Choice"

- Have a well-defined, strong organizational culture
- Provide strong, visible leadership
- Value your employees and their contributions
- Hire and promote excellent people
- Link employees to organizational strategies
- Provide outstanding pay and benefits
- Provide work/life balance
- Be an industry leader
- Provide limitless opportunities for employees
- Talk about the impact your organization has on people's lives
- Get your organization listed on one of the 'best places to work' or 'best managed' lists
- Publicize awards and honors received by the organization
- Sponsor an academic contest or scholarship and publicize it
- Start an alumni club for employees who leave you
- Have your organization profiled in the media for having great benefits or for doing something special for your employees

The Society for Human Resources (SHRM) and American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) developed a consortium benchmarking study to see how organizations use employee growth and career development initiatives to attract and retain workers.

The key findings of this study are as follows:

- Each organization surveyed had a strong identity and culture,

As in which employees are understood to be one of the main reasons for the success of the organization.

■ Recruiting the "right people" is integral to the recruitment and retention efforts of these organizations. Because their cultures are so unique, and because they commit a great amount of expensive resources to employees, these organizations focus strongly on communicating their identity, values, mission and vision to potential employees, and finding good people who will be a match to the culture.

■ Each organization made employees responsible for their own development, while simultaneously providing them with generous support (and accountability) from managers, leaders, coaches, mentors, and teams. The organizations support employee development at the highest levels, realizing implicitly and explicitly that building the knowledge capacity of employees is a necessary strategy for business success.

■ Organizational infrastructures have been put in place to support human resource efforts to attract and train employees. This is supported by the sophisticated use of technology.

■ Talent profiling (competencies) are extensively used in these organizations to provide a framework for employees to understand the skills, knowledge, and abilities they must have or acquire in order to move through these organizations.

A 1997 survey of employees sponsored by the Saratoga Institute listed these items as the way to make an organization a "good place to live and work:"

- Employee job opportunities
- Work/life balance
- Family friendly place to work
- Employee/employment principles such as self-esteem and responsibility
- Competitive compensation and benefits
- Strong leadership
- Excellent communications
- Flexible work environment
- Organizational culture that values learning and caring
- The success of the organization

While it is not easy to become an Employer of Choice, the benefits for making the effort will have an impact on employee morale and retention as you make your way toward becoming an EOC!

Barbara Mitchell, Senior Advisor, The Millennium Group, has over 25 years experience in human resources management and is a nationally known expert in employee recruitment and retention.

Six Principles for Excellence

1. Use your word wisely. It is important to communicate with employees with honesty, openness, and respect. Communications should focus on what is possible.

2. Be accountable. Employers should act proactively and be committed to truth telling, focusing on the question behind the question rather than offering excuses or explanations.

3. Focus. By focusing on independent goals, employers can extract the greatest value from the efforts of employees.

4. Mine the gold. Employees and managers should strive to bring out the best in their employees, and be committed to collaboration and cooperation.

5. Strive for balance. Employees will be vital and energetic at work as a result of a balanced life. Employers should therefore give their employees the opportunity to refresh and renew.

6. Lighten up. Perhaps the most difficult of the six principles, employees should not take themselves so seriously. Employers and their employees should seek to bring laughter and joy to the workplace and look for opportunities to make other people's day.

Sandy Asch, author of *Excellence at Work—The Six Keys to Inspire Passion in the Workplace.*



8 factors employees consider important

HERE is a list of eight principal factors considered by most employees when looking for a good job.

1) The Company.

Does the company have a solid history and a good reputation? Is it stable? Is the company respected in its industry as well as in the community? Are the products and services worthy - do they have a positive value for society? Are they well-produced and of good quality? Is the company socially conscious and environmentally sensitive?

2) The Culture.

People want to work for a company with high values and standards. They want a culture of

accessible, reaching out to others. They embrace change, making continual change and improvement comfortable for all.

4) Care of People.

Quality of life issues are increasingly important to workers in today's fast-paced, active world.

A home-like, safe, and healthy environment is expected today. People want good working conditions, flexibility, and lots of recognition. They want their families involved and they want to know what's going on. A good internal communications system is a common characteristic of Employers of Choice.

5) Growth and Opportunity.

Personal and professional growth are

strong motivators today, as employees concentrate on their future marketability. Whether they stay with one employer or not, people want to choose their own circumstances. Staying current makes that choice possible. Supervisors become advocates for employee growth, encouraging people to take training, gain new experiences and participate in the company's mentoring program. Fast-track opportunities abound.

6) Meaningful Work.

People want to do something meaningful in their work today; 'just a job' doesn't feel right. They want jobs that make a difference, either for the public, customers, or internal customers. Employees want to see the value of their work. They want to stretch to reach

their full potential, expanding and enriching their jobs, enjoying stimulating opportunities. Employees like to be involved in the design of their work so they feel a part of what's happening.

7) Compensation and Benefits.

Today's workers are concerned about competitive pay, but they're also looking for profit sharing, stock options, domestic partner benefits, direct deposit of paychecks, diverse insurance coverages, wellness programs, adoption coverage, time off, discount pricing, and childcare. Some are even asking for pet care benefits. It's the total package that counts.

8) Making a Difference.

Social values are increasingly important. What are we doing to improve the world around us? Savvy employers are involved in their local communities and in broader interests that serve Mankind. They lend their support-financial, in-kind, and human-to United Way, community theatre, Habitat for Humanity, youth programs, and clean-up/fix-up projects.

Employers eager to attract and hold top talent will become much more responsive to what people are looking for. The corporate design and approach will change with the times, creating new relationships between workers and their employers.

Tell me again how lucky I am to work here ...



I keep forgetting

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