

EXECUTIVE SUMMARIES

Focus on Talent

Craig R. Taylor

In this case study of Sprint PCS and the retention firm TalentKeepers, Taylor points out that unwanted employee turnover is one of the biggest and most costly business problems companies face, and it remains pervasive and persistent even in the economic slowdown. Declining birthrates are partly to blame, as is the erosion of employee loyalty spawned by Generations X and Y. Competition for talent is high, and it's only going to get worse, says Taylor.

Solutions to retention problems have typically centered on wages and benefits, but a landmark study by Gallup, "First Break All the Rules," found that people leave managers, not companies. Leadership and the work culture that leaders create is the number 1 factor in retention.

Training and support for managers are critical to help them fill this crucial role. The article goes on to list 10 leader retention competencies and describe Sprint's efforts to create a culture in which leaders drive retention. Employee retention is far too important to be left to only part of the organization, Taylor concludes.

For complete text, see page 26.

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The Successful Minority

Marvin Wilson

Do you prefer change or stability? The question is a trick one. Accepting even the premise of a choice places you in peril. If your preference is change, then all you'll know is unrest. If your preference is stability, then you'll be liked but not respected.

Individuals, groups, and organizations that Wilson calls the Successful Minority recognize that the issue isn't change *or* stability, but change *and* stability. The Successful Minority risks changing things and people to usher in something worth stabilizing. The winner's choice stipulates getting to the top of a mountain, moving on, and finding and creating new mountains. The Successful Minority, says Wilson, takes several actions to achieve change success, including articulating the benefits and risks, modeling best practices, ensuring that the support chain is consistent, and building in early warning systems to monitor progress.

For ultimate success, leaders must take risks and realize that change is an important requirement for stability.

For complete text, see page 32.

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Are You a Seeker or an Avoider?

Mark L. Berman

Avoiders constantly try to evade failure, responsibility, dealing with authority, and negative feedback. Their top priority seems to be keeping their jobs. They can hinder not only their own careers, but also the overall productivity of their organizations.

Avoiders are present in a wide range of jobs and fields—almost everywhere. Trainers should work with organizational leaders to identify avoiders and help them develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to become seekers—people who are strongly interested in achieving positive results on the job.

Here are a few tips to modify employees' mindsets from avoidance to seeking:

- Objectively assess the forces or factors in the organization that could be making workers exhibit avoidance behaviors.
- Determine which employees are showing avoidance tendencies through interviews, questionnaires, observation, and so forth. The focus should be on helping workers, not blaming them.
- Conduct workshops to educate leaders on how people become avoiders and how to help them.
- Offer an employee assistance program to people who see themselves as avoiders and would like counseling.

For complete text, see page 38.

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Success With Change

Patricia A. McLagan

In part 2 of this series on Change, McLagan offers five key lessons:

Lesson 1: Be sure the change will add value. Ask,

- Will this change make us more successful in our environment?
- Will this change make work more successful while reducing effort?
- Will this change really improve performance for our overall organization?

Lesson 2: Match the change process to the challenge. More complex changes call for new roles and relationships; simpler changes call for just a few behavior, knowledge, and skill changes.

Lesson 3: Provide management support. Designing and guiding an organization for ongoing change requires transformational leadership.

Lesson 4: Prepare the system for change. A change may require minor or radical shifts in processes, technology, tools, skills, and so forth.

Lesson 5: Help people align.

Methods include being scrupulously fair, finding the positives, involving opinion leaders, and more.

For complete text, see page 44.

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