

# The 7 Hidden Reasons Employees Leave

How to Recognize the Subtle Signs and  
Act Before It's Too Late

Leigh Branham

***AMACOM***

American Management Association

New York • Atlanta • Brussels • Chicago • Mexico City • San Francisco  
Shanghai • Tokyo • Toronto • Washington, D.C.

## C O N T E N T S

PREFACE	xi
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	xiii

### Chapter One

WHY CARE ABOUT WHY THEY LEAVE?	1
Managers Will Not Hear What Workers Will Not Speak	2
Turnover: Just a "Cost of Doing Business?"	5
When the Tide Turns, Mindsets Must Change	7
What About HR's Role in Exit Interviewing?	8

### Chapter Two

How THEY DISENGAGE AND QUIT	11
The Disengagement Process	11
The Deliberation Process	15

### Chapter Three

WHY THEY LEAVE: WHAT THE RESEARCH REVEALS	17
Why Employees Say They Leave	20
What Caused Their Initial Dissatisfaction?	24
A Few Words About Pay	24
Respecting the Differences	26
Who Has the Power to Meet These Needs?	27
The Next Seven Chapters: Hidden Reasons and Practical Actions	28

### Chapter Four

---

REASON #1: THE JOB OR WORKPLACE WAS NOT AS EXPECTED	31
Hidden Mutual Expectations: The Psychological Contract	34

How to Recognize the Warning Signs of Unmet Expectations	37
Obstacles to Meeting Mutual Expectations	38
Engagement Practices for Matching Mutual Expectations	39
How Prospective Employees Can Do Their Part	44
The Beginning or Ending of Trust	45
Employer-of-Choice Engagement Practices Review and Checklist	45

## Chapter Five

<b>REASON #2: THE MISMATCH BETWEEN JOB AND PERSON</b>	<b>47</b>
What's Missing: A Passion for Matching	49
Common Misconceptions and Truths About Talent	50
Recognizing the Signs of Job-Person Mismatch	52
Obstacles to Preventing and Correcting Job-Person Mismatch	53
Best-Fit Selection Practices	54
Best Practices for Engaging and Re-Engaging Through Job Task Assignment	62
The Employee's Role in the Matching Process	67
Employer-of-Choice Engagement Practices Review and Checklist	68

## Chapter Six

<b>REASON #3: TOO LITTLE COACHING AND FEEDBACK</b>	<b>70</b>
Why Coaching and Feedback Are Important to Engagement and Retention	72
Why Don't Managers Provide Coaching and Feedback?	73
Recognizing the Signs	75
More Than an Event: It's About the Relationship	75
Engagement Practices for Coaching and Giving Feedback	77
A Five-Step Coaching Process	82
What the Employee Can Do to Get More Feedback and Coaching	89
Employer-of-Choice Engagement Practices Review and Checklist	90

## Chapter Seven

<b>REASON #4: TOO FEW GROWTH AND ADVANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<b>93</b>
What They Are Really Saying	95

Employers of Choice Start by Understanding the New Career Realities	97
Recognizing the Signs of Blocked Growth and Career Frustration	99
Best Practices for Creating Growth and Advancement Opportunities	100
What Employees Can Do to Create Their Own Growth and Advancement Opportunities	114
Employer-of-Choice Engagement Practices Review and Checklist	115

## **Chapter Eight**

<b>REASON #5: FEELING DEVALUED AND UNRECOGNIZED</b>	<b>118</b>
Why Managers Are Reluctant to Recognize	122
Recognizing the Signs That Employees Feel Devalued and Unrecognized	123
Pay: The Most Emotional Issue of All	124
Pay Practices That Engage and Retain	125
Three Types of Variable Pay	129
The Total Rewards Approach to Scarce Talent	132
Nonpay Best Practices for Valuing and Recognizing People	133
Focus on the People, Not Just the Numbers	136
What Employees Can Do to Be More Valued and Better Recognized	144
Employer-of-Choice Engagement Practice Review and Checklist	145

## **Chapter Nine**

<b>REASON #6: STRESS FROM OVERWORK AND WORK-LIFE</b>	
<b>IMBALANCE</b>	<b>147</b>
How Big a Problem Is Stress?	150
Causes of Increased Stress	151
Signs that Your Workers May Be Stressed-Out or Overworked	151
Healthy vs. Toxic Cultures	152
More Than Just the Right Thing to Do	154
The Best Places in America to Work	156
It's Not Just the "Big Boys" You're Competing With	158
A Big Menu of Benefits and Services	160
What the Employee Can Do to Relieve Stress and Overwork	175
Employer-of-Choice Engagement Practices Review and Checklist	176

## Chapter Ten

### REASON #7: LOSS OF TRUST AND CONFIDENCE IN SENIOR LEADERS

	<b>179</b>
A Crisis of Trust and Confidence	182
Reading the Signs of Distrust and Doubt	183
The Three Questions Employees Need Answered	183
Criteria for Evaluating Whether to Trust and Have Confidence	184
What the Employee Can Do to Build Reciprocal Trust and Confidence	193
Employer-of-Choice Engagement Practices Review and Checklist	194

## Chapter 11

---

PLANNING TO BECOME AN EMPLOYER OF CHOICE	<b>196</b>
Talent Engagement Strategies in Action	198
What Do We Learn from These Success Stories?	205
Linking Talent and Business Objectives	205
Linking the Right Measures to Business Results	206
Creating an Employer-of-Choice Scorecard	207
The Plan Works . . . If You Work the Plan	211
Partners in Working the Plan	211

## Appendix A

SUMMARY CHECKLIST OF EMPLOYER-OF-CHOICE ENGAGEMENT PRACTICES	<b>215</b>
--	------------

## Appendix B

GUIDELINES AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR EXIT INTERVIEWING/ SURVEYING AND TURNOVER ANALYSIS	<b>218</b>
BIBLIOGRAPHY	<b>225</b>
INDEX	<b>231</b>