

# Attracting and retaining staff starts with your business

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It's easy to forget sometimes that employment is a two-way street; you choose the employee for the skills, experience and attitude that they can bring to your business, but they also have to actively choose your business based on what it can offer them. Recruiting and retaining the right employees for your business starts with understanding exactly what your business has to offer employees and ensuring that you use the tools available to communicate that offer clearly.

## Employee attraction and retention tips

### Attracting employees

#### Start by thinking about your competitive advantage.

Before recruiting you need to think about what employment benefits you can offer that would be attractive to prospective employees and remember it is often not only about the money. Develop a list of realistic benefits that you can offer such as:

- flexible work arrangements
- induction programs
- mentoring arrangements
- training and development opportunities
- competitive salaries
- a positive brand and business reputation in the community (including a positive workplace culture).

#### Look at what your competitors are offering.

Your business is more likely to attract the best and brightest if you can offer a better or different collection of benefits from those of your competitors. Ask your existing employees what it is about working in your business that they like; just be prepared to receive and listen to the feedback you get even if it isn't 100% positive! Conversations like this can help you to understand what other factors people are looking for from an employer, like more flexible working arrangements for example, and give you the opportunity to make changes that can retain good staff as well as attract new ones.

#### What can you do to build your employer brand?

You need to start with a clear understanding of what your business is about; if you aren't clear about this how can a potential employee understand it? This is often expressed in a Mission statement and a Vision statement:

**Mission statements** define your business's purpose and its primary objectives. They are set in the present tense, and explain why you exist as a business, both to members of your existing team and to people outside it. Mission statements tend to be short, clear and powerful.

**Vision statements** also define your organisation's purpose, but they focus on its goals and aspirations. These statements are designed to be uplifting and inspiring. They're also timeless: even if the business changes its short-term strategy, the vision will often stay the same.

You can find lots of helpful resources about how to define these for your business by searching online. It's a good idea to involve your existing employees in the process so that the end result truly reflects your business, not just your opinion. Table 1 contains some tips on how to build a good employer brand.

**Table 1. Tips to help you build a good employer brand.**

OBJECTIVE	HOW DOES IT LOOK?	BENEFIT
<b>Be clear on what your business is about</b>	You have a good idea of what you do, how you do it and how you want to be seen by others, usually mission/vision/values statement.	You are able to check back to ensure that what you are doing or what you plan to do fits the organisation's brand (how others see the business).
<b>Match up your statements with action and visible evidence</b>	If you say your business stands for one thing when it does something different, your promise does not match your actions.	Your employees will receive clear cues from management behaviour, workplace policy and the way the business is portrayed to others.
<b>Focus on the customer</b>	What your customer wants from you may reflect what you want from your employees.  Consider displaying some policies that show your commitment to customers and the community (such as a customer service charter).	If your employees are given the right tools (policies, procedures, training, and equipment) in line with your business promise, your customers will be satisfied.
<b>Be dedicated to your promise</b>	Ensure that managers maintain the promises made to customers and employees.  Doing things in line with the business promise can be difficult at times, but commitment to principles can pay off in the long run.	People come to expect certain things from businesses.  They become comfortable with the way businesses act and how they treat their customers and employees.
<b>Get your message out</b>	Make sure people know about what you do and how you do it.  Leverage internal communication through use of policy, newsletters, memos, training and people management processes.  Make sure your public face clearly and consistently communicates your message – this could be on your website or your Company LinkedIn profile page.	Brand awareness depends on communication to an audience. Your brand will carry value and create certain expectations in the minds of those outside the business only if it is constantly and consistently applied in external and internal messages.

Source: jobsandskills.wa.gov.au June 2022

## Expand your employment pool – build a diverse workforce

The business case for diversity across your workforce is compelling. Given that the traditional pool of potential employees has significantly reduced, workforce diversity is an important component of long-term sustainability.

If you are having difficulty attracting employees, it may be timely to take a fresh look at groups that may not have previously seemed an obvious fit for your business. People from these groups may be qualified, capable, keen and well suited to perform work in your business. There are also financial subsidies and incentive programs provided by State and Commonwealth Governments to help businesses with the cost of taking on a new employee, apprentice or trainee.

Some of these groups include:

- First Nations Australians
- People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

- recently arrived migrants
- apprentices and trainees
- people with a disability
- under-employed people
- people returning to work
- mature age workers
- phased retirees

## Retaining employees

Understanding why employees choose to stay in your business may help you reduce staff turnover. Often the reasons that employees remain are the same reasons that first attracted them to your business.

A good place to start is to ask your existing employees what they like about working in your organisation, and don't assume it's all about the pay. A supportive working environment, job variety or the flexibility to work partly from home can also be powerful factors, for example.

Strategies or initiatives you may wish to consider to improve your retention of valued employees could include:

- flexible work arrangements such as working off site, varied hours and salary sacrifice for additional leave;
- practices that support employees to balance work and caring responsibilities;
- support for employees to pursue personal and professional development or study;
- providing a forum for staff to contribute new ideas and develop innovation in the workplace;
- providing high quality performance development, leadership opportunities, coaching and mentoring;

- employee assistance, workplace diversity, wellness and health programs;
- support for employees participating in local community and volunteering activities; and
- celebrations and recognition of organisational and personal achievements.

## Why do employees stay?

Table 2 lists some of the core reasons revolving around the job itself, the workplace culture, personal reasons and the external environment that influence employee decisions to go or to stay in their current workplace.

**Table 2. Why employees stay**

JOB	CULTURE	PERSONAL	EXTERNAL
Challenging, interesting and meaningful work	Management perceived as competent	Match with personal and family commitments	Economic climate – how readily available other jobs are
Meets expectations in terms of salary and conditions	Supportive leadership and management style	Geographic location	Competition from other industries
Offers training to upgrade skills in their workplace	Meets expectations in terms of co-workers	Confidence in own marketable skills and experience	Past good and bad employment experiences
Offers of career development and opportunities	Provides recognition and rewards for good work	Age (fit with workforce)	Community view of industry, business and job
Good work can be identified and recognised	Gives a sense of security about the company	Health (impacts on and from the job)	
Status of the position (particularly for management and senior roles)	Company values match with personal values		
Leave and superannuation benefits			

Source: [jobsandskills.wa.gov.au](https://jobsandskills.wa.gov.au) June 2022

**For more information on workforce planning including strategies to attract and retain staff, have a look at these websites:**

**Jobs & Skills WA – Developing your workforce**

[jobsandskills.wa.gov.au/resources-employers/developing-your-workforce](https://jobsandskills.wa.gov.au/resources-employers/developing-your-workforce)

**Business Victoria - Create a desirable workplace (attracting and retaining staff)**

[business.vic.gov.au/business-information/staff-and-hr/staff-management/create-a-desirable-workplace-w](https://business.vic.gov.au/business-information/staff-and-hr/staff-management/create-a-desirable-workplace-w)

**Jobs Queensland – Workforce Planning Connect**

[jobsqueensland.qld.gov.au/workforce-planning-connect/wpc-download/#toolkit](https://jobsqueensland.qld.gov.au/workforce-planning-connect/wpc-download/#toolkit)