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## “They’re lucky to have a job!”

**Laura Huggett, CPA, Partner, Baker Tilly**

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How often during the recession have we heard supervisors, leaders and even owners make this statement in response to employees’ comments and complaints about their work environment?

“The smarter ones mention it behind closed doors in so-called ‘leadership meetings,’” says Art McCarthy, Vice President of Executive Search for Creative Financial Staffing, a national executive search and staffing firm. “The less savvy have been so bold as to actually tell employees just that. If employers only knew the truth: the best people always have options.”

Recruiters are already seeing signs of unrest in the marketplace. The *LA Times* recently reported that job satisfaction for American workers was only at 45 percent in 2009, the lowest level it has been in more than 20 years. Most employees feel their employers have done a poor job managing through the recession. Downsizing, pay cuts, hiring freezes and a generally thankless work environment have all combined to create the least loyal workforce in history.

Poorly treated and overworked professionals are taking an “I have to look out for me” approach to their careers. As the employment market improves, these people will have the first opportunities and they will leave in droves. Therefore, talent retention will become one of the top concerns for employers in 2010. According to a recent CareerBuilder survey, 40 percent of companies polled are concerned about their top workers leaving. The following study by Manpower seems to confirm employers’ fears: 60 percent of employees polled said that they intend to leave their current jobs when economic conditions improve.

This puts employers in a predicament: how to incent your best people to stay, when your business has not yet benefitted from the recovery. If pay raises are not an option how can you stop the inevitable?

Finally, the good news! Money is rarely the primary motivating factor in a person’s decision to leave their company. Certainly, it is a convenient reason and feelings are rarely hurt if money is given as the purpose for a change. However, recruiters have found—and studies confirm—that the majority of professionals leave due to their relationship to leadership, specifically, their direct supervisor. This means you have the power to change how they feel.

Like your personal relationships, work relationships take effort to build and maintain. Take these thoughts into consideration:

- > When was the last time you gave someone a heartfelt thank you for their efforts? Thank you’s are FREE and they go a long way if sincere.
- > Do you praise people publicly? Creating a culture of positive reinforcement pays in multiples.
- > Do you listen more than you talk? Gaining feedback from your team on important decisions gives you valuable perspective and gives them a chance to weigh in on tough decisions.
- > Do your best people know they’re an important part of your company’s future? Don’t assume they do—tell them!

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Sounds easy right? It is not! It requires organization and thoughtful planning. If it came naturally to the leaders in your company, you would not be faced with an impending talent crisis. The creation of a culture where employees are empowered and valued will come through targeted efforts. Just like you plan for frequent interactions and one-on-ones with your best customers, you must map out your plans for your best people. They are assets equal to your customers. Don't they deserve the same special treatment?

We welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss how we can help you meet your business goals. For more information or any questions you might have on this topic, please contact Laura Huggett by e-mail at [laura.huggett@bakertilly.com](mailto:laura.huggett@bakertilly.com) or phone at 608 240 2357.

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