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Where Did They Go?

Several weeks ago I wrote in my weekly email about this topic, and I feel more time should be given to addressing this serious issue further. Thousands of dollars and countless hours are spent to find the best people we can. We congratulate ourselves because we have found the key person, that emerging leader who will help take our company to the next level. We are just so pleased and begin to tell our friends about this new key person and the high hopes we have for them. We then move on to other tasks, and before we see it coming, they leave. What happened? They were the perfect hire. You thought things were going well.

So why do they leave us? The answer is very simple. It has little to do with our company and almost everything to do with us. Are we effective leaders? Are we adding value to their lives or are we a burden to them? We could actually be driving them out of our organization. Let's take a look at what might be driving them out.

- **We have overloaded them.** Emerging leaders are always ready to take on a challenge. Because so few employees will rise to the occasion, we have a tendency to keep going back to the same person when things need to get done. Remember the saying "if you want something done, give it to a busy person." Just keep piling it on, and they will leave.
- **We hire them and then micromanage them.** When we presented the job offer, we told them how much we looked forward to their insights, ideas, and how valuable their experience would be to our team. Now we don't listen to their ideas, dismiss their experience, and expect them to do things just the way we would. Then, to make things even worse, we check up on them incessantly.

- **We don't make them feel valued.** Do we let them know that we care about them? Do we have any idea what they are passionate about? Do we know the names of their family members and perhaps their hobbies? Do we know what their growth goals are? Have we taken the time to share our goals with them, the company vision and how all of the pieces will fit together, so everyone wins? Are we showing them that we care more about ourselves and our life by expecting them to carry the load, work extra hours, or move vacations while we go off and do our own thing?
- **Are we dealing with poor performers?** One sure way to drive great employees away is to allow poor performers to skate along without facing the consequences. We end up losing the best and keeping the rest.
- **Too little coaching and feedback.** Do we take the time to come alongside our team members and really coach and mentor them? Are we giving the feedback that is needed for them to grow and develop? It is our job as the leader to help them grow and develop. We are the gardeners that tend the soil, pull the weeds that compete for nutrients, and prune the shoots that will not produce real growth.
- **We don't honor commitments.** In my conversations with people, I frequently hear that things were promised and never happened. Whether it was a possible promotion we eluded to during the interview or simply promised to get back to them with a question, when we don't follow through it is often viewed as a lie.
- **We don't give meaningful recognition.** Are we making our recognition meaningful? Are we specific when we thank people publicly? Meaningful recognition proves to our team member that we value their individual efforts.
- **They have lost faith in us.** These great emerging leaders don't leave quickly. It takes time for them to realize what is really happening. Over time, these issues add up and in the end, they lose faith in us and move on.

The sad reality is this; **people don't leave companies, they leave bosses.** So, what can we do? It's simple. Be an authentic leader. Ask yourself a simple question; would you follow you? Care about your people. Talk with them. Be real with them and encourage them to be real with you. Establish a real connection with them. Believe in them, help them grow, and then watch them blossom.