

ABSTRACT

Knowledge Workers are those employees who use their brains to create intangible value based assets. These assets are contained in the minds of the employees who create them and are lost when employees leave. Thus the ability to retain knowledge workers is recognised as one of the last competitive advantages available to organisations.

The purpose of this study is to gain an insight into the causes of knowledge worker attrition. It is only through a thorough understanding of the reasons for attrition, is one able put in place measures to improve staff retention.

The case site is an organisation providing a comprehensive range of human resource consulting services to employers throughout South Africa. The organisation has as one of its key objectives, to be the 'employer of choice' within their industry. Whilst the company has made some progress in addressing their staff retention rate, from forty seven percent in 2008, to approximately seventy percent by 2011, managements objective was to improve retention to eight five percent.

A qualitative methodology was used for this research in the form of a single site case study. The researcher collected data by selecting a sample of eight individuals who voluntarily left the organisation within the preceding two years and then perusing their exit interviews and conducting semi-structured interviews with them.

It was found that not paying market related pay was the primary reason for staff leaving the organisation. Thereafter contributing factors leading to staff turn-over was inadequate managerial competencies and not affording employees the opportunity for personal and career development.

DECLARATION

I, Brendan Robert Sayers, declare that this research report is my own, unaided work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of master of Business Administration in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.

Brendan Sayers

Signed at

On the.....day of..... 2012

DEDICATION

To my loving wife Melissa, for her unwavering support and encouragement. I look forward to a future with you, filled with much joy, happiness and large family lunches.

To my parents, who not only provided a solid foundation of education, but also everything I have ever needed. You were fantastic role models as parents, and I hope one day to be able to do half as good a job as you did. Doctor Spok would be proud.

To my as yet unborn twins, thank you for giving me the motivation to finally complete this piece of work. I can't wait to meet you both.

To my sister, you have no idea how much I love and respect you, and the extent to which you have inspired me to complete this work. Love you Shell.

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