

Six Strategies for Retaining & Developing Great Players

by Caela Farren, Ph.D., MasteryWorks, Inc.

Introduction

During March Madness every year, millions of fans focus on the best college basketball teams and coaches in the United States. Attracting, developing and retaining the best players and coaches means the difference between winning and losing. We see this clearly in team sports. It may not be as obvious in some of our large enterprises, but it's just as true. What does it take to attract, develop and engage the minds and hearts of great people? Our research over the past thirty years in the field of talent management has uncovered six key strategies for having great contributors in all levels of organizations.

Human Resource professionals can strongly influence leaders, executive teams, and line managers to make these six strategies a priority. Review this article with your business partners. Assess the business unit on all six strategies and pick *one* to take on aggressively in the next twelve months.

1) Showcase Mobility and Advancement Options

Is it easy for employees to see mobility and advancement options throughout the organization?

Great basketball players see the whole court. They see the openings for passing, dribbling or shooting. It's in their line of vision. Organizations need to provide the same visual ease for seeing job opportunities across the entire organization, if they want to keep great players. Websites have made this much easier. However, in many organizations, employees can't see internal career possibilities until the job comes open and is posted. Often, it's too late to develop required skills or experiences for that specific opening and employees look elsewhere.

Success Story

An international consumer products company was losing key sales people. Why? Sales professionals were so busy managing multi-million dollar accounts that they didn't have time to research sales and marketing options in other parts of the company. It was easier for them to go to a competitor or a vendor, where the opportunities presented themselves daily.

MasteryWorks partnered with Human Resource professionals, President, Sales VPs, Sales Executives and Managers to develop Position Profiles for over 200 sales and related positions across the organization. These Position Profiles were then placed in a web-based career portal so all employees had the following information at their fingertips:

- Position Title
- Profession
- Level of Mastery/Expertise
- Behavioral Strengths
- Prior Accomplishments
- Sales Competencies
- Business Competencies
- Leadership Competencies

- Prior Work Experiences
- Education Requirements
- Possible Next Career Options

Involving the key stakeholders in the development of the 200 sales positions, using a web-based consensus building process, brought strong agreement as to “what counted” for each position and great clarity on each of the elements listed above. Eventually 1600 sales professionals had access to the web portal, career workshops to better define their short and long-term goals, and guidelines for discussing their performance and career goals with managers. Managers were rewarded for helping sales professionals develop and transfer within the organization. Managers were also trained on how to use the information to have realistic career and development discussions.

The six month intervention resulted in great sales professionals staying with the organization because they saw short and long-term opportunities. They knew what actions to take to be ready when the positions came open. Managers had the tools and education to develop sales professionals. They were also willing to “let go” of great employees in their region or product line for the benefit of the whole company. They used the Position Profiles for hiring, performance assessment and career development discussions. This process became the career pathing model for the company. (To learn more about the process, see **TalentMapping® Strategic Career Pathing Services** on our website: http://www.masteryworks.com/newsite/consulting/consulting_mobility.htm)

Much of the information employees want about career options is available in a Job Posting system. But, this information is only available when jobs are open. What would happen in your organization if all of that information was available to any employee, whether the job was open or not? Managers and employees could see the “whole court” and prepare for several different positions simultaneously. They’d have a great game plan and several reasons to stay and learn. No promises! Simply opportunities!

2) Promote Only Great Managers/Coaches

Show us a great team and we’ll show you a great coach. Show us a great company and you’ll find great managers. Our research suggests that most often, great coaches or managers have come from the field, industry or sport they coach. They know the intricacies of the field, have the respect of their colleagues and employees, know the competition, and understand “what counts” for real success in the field or sport. They understand that mastery in the field is physical, emotional and intellectual. They see the unique talents of each player and coach them in a way that brings out their special talents. They know how to engage the whole person. They know the importance of practice and teamwork. They care!

Two great college basketball coaches – John Wooden (UCLA) and Pat Head Summitt (University of Tennessee) – have the respect of fellow coaches, players, parents, media and have coached some of the greatest basketball players in history. (Visit our website: <http://www.masteryworks.com/spotlight/marchmasters> for lengthier bios of these coaches and ten others in the Mastery Spotlight.)

John Wooden, UCLA basketball Coach, was a ten-time March Madness NCAA champion and ESPN’s ‘Coach of The Century’. He received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian honor America can give in 2003. He was a fabulous basketball player before becoming the most successful coach in college basketball history.

Considered one of the finest teachers the game has ever seen, Wooden's approach rested on the idea that basketball is a game of threes: forward, guard, center; shoot, drive, pass; ball, you, man; conditioning, skill, teamwork. His ability to instill these principles upon his players made Wooden a master of developing talent. <http://coachjohnwooden.com/thejourney.html>

Pat Head Summitt, the head coach of the University of Tennessee Lady Volunteer basketball team, starts her 33rd season at the helm of the nation's most successful program. Summitt, the all-time winningest coach in NCAA basketball history (men or women) with 913 victories, enters her latest campaign with an additional moniker, the million dollar coach. It seems only fitting, with all of her firsts and achievements in the game, that Summitt became the first women's basketball coach to break through the million dollar ceiling.

70% of Coach Summitt's all-time players have gone on to be decorated as Olympians, All-Americans, USA National Team members, All-SEC performers, Academic All-Americans, Academic All-SEC, etc. <http://www.coachsummitt.com>

To attract talent, hiring managers and executives must select, promote and engage outstanding managers. This is one of the most important challenges facing organizations today. With the loss of organization loyalty in the past two decades, employees more than ever need a tight bond with great managers if they're expected to deliver in hectic, under-resourced work situations.

Investment counselors see the critical impact managers have on the success of companies and do elaborate background checks on the success records of the leaders and managers of their recommended investment targets.

*"You should invest only in companies with sustainable competitive advantages and first-rate managers. Given the shortage of each, it might seem virtually impossible to find potential investments that have both. But there's a positive side to the problem. Exceptional companies attract exceptional managers and people of unusual skill gravitate to places of unusual opportunity."
...The Importance of Management by WealthEffect Staff*

Great managers know their industry, the organization and their people. They understand and communicate the changes in their work environment. They build strong relationships and are respected by the best in their fields. They care about their people and work to have the "right people in the right places."

Building great, trusting relationships takes time and focus. Replacing managers frequently, leaving teams with no managers for periods of time, as well as frequent reorganizations can wreck the spirit of individuals and teams.

You know you have a great manager if he or she:

- Appreciates and speaks about the unique talents, values, and interests of their people to the individual and with the team
- Assesses strengths and weaknesses of each employee and coaches them on how to leverage their strengths – right job, right team, right responsibilities and projects
- Anticipates changes and trends in the industry and core professions and helps people prepare for those changes – talks about what changes are coming months before they become a reality
- Aligns organization needs and long-term career aspirations of their people – talks about strategies and objectives of the enterprise in ways that spark personal learning and ambition
- Accelerates development and learning through frequent career discussions and development projects – learns from mistakes, customers, trial and error, peers
- Shares high performers with other parts of the organization – opens doors and builds networks with colleagues, customers and leaders
- Is well known and respected by other key players in the industry and organization – a leader in their field not just holding down a management position.

Quality of Management is one of the eight indicators for Fortune's 2006 list of the 100 Most Admired Companies in America. Adjusting compensation systems so that the management track is not the only way to increase personal income is critical to assure great managers. And, must want to coach! (See our **TalentBuilder® Workshop** listed on our website for an effective coaching workshop: www.masteryworks.com/newsite/workbooks/workbook_tb.htm.)

3) Offering Ongoing Opportunities for Career and Professional Development

Is the work challenging?

Today's most talented workers don't just want jobs that offer them stock options, but careers that challenge and enable them to be creative, according to a study by Decision Partners. The study, commissioned by IBM found that the fastest way for a company to lose young talent is to bore them. Employers must push and challenge their young employees during their first two to five years with the company to ensure they do not get bored and start job shopping.

Tom Karl, Lead Consultant, MasteryWorks, Inc. reports that *"in the past 6 months, lack of career development and mobility is one of the top three findings in a myriad of engagement and climate surveys across multiple industries. Employees are giving more and more time and energy to organizations. Now, they're asking, what are you doing for me?"*

In a study titled "Rewards of Work," authors Paul Mulvey, Gerald Ledford Jr., and Peter LeBlanc found that the biggest reason people stay isn't salary or a company's reputation or benefits: It's the work itself. Employees take pride in their work and accomplishments. They know that change makes on-going learning imperative. Organizations that provide multiple opportunities for challenge and learning will retain great people.

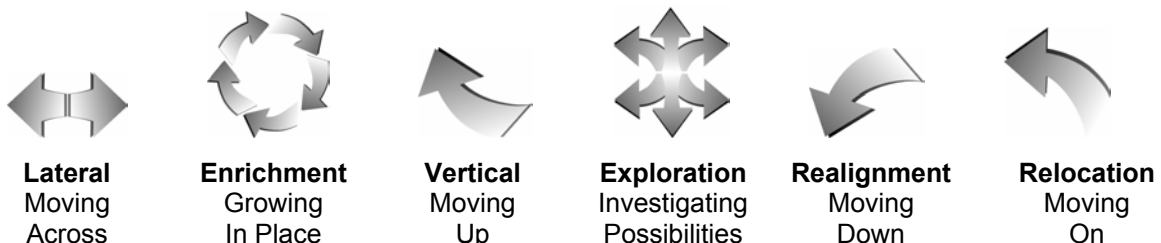
Can employees move easily – laterally, up, or down to learn and develop?

Much of the best learning and development today comes right on the job. High contributors and valued employees want to continually develop. And, that doesn't always mean they want to move "up" or into management. Oftentimes, the best people have chosen a profession or trade and want opportunities to develop more mastery. Taking lateral moves across divisions or into different projects keeps them learning, helps them build their networks, and gives them opportunities to develop the entire skill-set required for mastery of their profession.

Do your employees know there are six development options – lateral, enrichment, vertical, exploration, realignment, and relocation? Different options are important at different stages in a career. The MasteryWorks tool - **OPTIONSSMART™ - Aligning Your Aspirations® Inventory** (http://www.masteryworks.com/newsite/assessments/assess_os.htm) - gives your employees multiple options for aligning their aspirations with the needs of your organization. The Online version includes a Personal Report with the results and recommendations for taking action on the top three options.

Career Options Model

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Is learning and development a priority?

Skilled professionals are concerned about opportunities to learn and grow. Most companies incorporate professional development and educational assistance programs in their recruitment and retention efforts. An investment in training and development sends a strong message that management cares about employees, believes their potential is worth developing, wants them to grow, and aims to promote internally to fill key positions.

Google – The 2007 # 1 Best Company to Work For provides 100 training hours per year for each employee.

Volvo –Gent, Belgium - organized what it calls "training weeks" in the year 2000. The goal was to spread the knowledge that is clustered in different departments and make it available to all employees. At the start there was one training week; now there are seven.
www.greatplacetowork.com.

4) Communicate Meaningful Mission and Strategies

Missions are the organizing principle of all organizations. In basketball and most sports, the mission is clear – to win. The standards are clear. However, it's the game plan, offensive and defensive strategies that provide the minute-by-minute guidance for team action and alignment.

In the past decade, I've personally worked with thousands of managers and employees in workshops and public presentations where the participants had no idea what the mission or strategies of the enterprise were. Even though the mission may be published in the Annual Report or on the website and key strategies or initiatives communicated once a year, thousands of people lack a guidance system for determining priorities and actions. Their day-to-day work is not linked in their minds to the mission and strategies of the organization. Mergers, reorganizations or new leaders cloud the mission and strategies. Focus is often limited to the bottom-line. Often, day-to-day changes in the industry, organization, customers or technology are not honored as opportunities for innovation. This, of course, is not true in great organizations.

Leaders must communicate the organization's mission and strategies. Visioning involves creating a compelling picture of the future. In a 2007 Harvard Business Review article, "In Praise of the Incomplete Leader," the authors state that "visioning gives employees a sense of meaning in their work." Employees want to see that their work makes a difference and contributes to the mission and business strategies. Motivated employees want to see how their daily activities and decisions contribute to the health and viability of the organization. They can't, if they don't know the mission, vision or strategies. These are the foundations for inventive dialogue, debates and innovation.

"When asked what advice they would give management to keep talented staff, survey respondents repeatedly mentioned better communication of company goals, performance expectations and appreciation of staff work."

...Louise Kursmark, Contributing Editor, Monster.com

Employees want to feel that their work is meaningful – that they are making something powerful happen with customers. They want to have a sense of pride and accomplishment from their hard work. People who feel like they're working 24/7 want to know they make a difference. A Yankelovich survey found that three desires crossed through the four generations in today's workplace. They were: 1)Respect; 2)Meaning; and 3)Recognition.

The Great Places to Work Institute publishes monthly quotes from employees. The quotes below evidence the importance of deriving a sense of meaning from work:

- *"I feel as though I make a difference. My job allows me latitude to make decisions and implement them in order to get the job done. At the end of the day I can look back and see what I have been able to accomplish with a great feeling of satisfaction."*
- *"...there is a certain satisfaction in knowing that the work I do supports an organization which impacts the lives of everyone in the world."*
- *"I spent most of my career in a company which focused on efficiency and profits - employees were a "means to the end." However, I have had the fortunate opportunity to join this company late in my career. This is truly a place that puts people first, manages from the heart, cares for the community."*

5) Recognize and Reward Accomplishments

A recent survey of business students by Wetfeet.com, a career Website, asked respondents to rate the importance of 35 job attributes. The survey found that recruits want to know they'll be valued for what they can do. Companies often boost salaries and bonuses, but study after study shows that what best motivates employees are less tangible rewards such as personal recognition for a job well done.

In his book, *The 7 Hidden Reasons Employees Leave*, Leigh Branham discusses the grave disconnect between what managers think motivates employees and what really does the job. The Saratoga Institute statistics are amazing and point to the on-going over focus on money rather than other motivators.

"Eighty-nine percent of the managers think it's mostly about the money, while 88% of employees say it's something other than money." People often say *"it's the money"* in exit interviews. They don't want to burn bridges. But research with 20,000 employees shows a striking misunderstanding of what motivates employees.

Branham further points to the importance of leaders taking care of their people. His findings suggest that *"senior leadership has to make a decision whether to give to the workforce first or wait for them to give to the firm. When you look at the lists of best employers, many of those CEOs have the attitude of 'give first, and employees will give back back.' In other words, if you show your commitment to them, they will show their commitment to you in return. That attitude is what's needed going forward."*

"Thank you" always feels good. More and more companies have authorized not only managers but all employees to give various forms of recognition and reward to colleagues. "On the spot" awards put positive energy in the air. Missions motivate. Recognition lubricates the emotional system of an organization. It helps create a healthy rather than toxic corporate environment. High performing teams and organizations recognize employees and managers in thousands of ways – large and small.

Philip J. Harkens, in his book, *Why Employees Stay – or Go*, describes the critical importance of developing new compensation systems. He says, *"it's critical that your organization reward and recognize actual current and potential worth. Don't rely on old compensation formulas. They're often detrimental—and can create a syndrome by which even the satisfied employee feels that he or she must leave because of the gap between outmoded pay structures and the prevailing market rates. Pay for performance against industry standards and market worth, not internal compensation policies and procedures."*

Managers have so many easy ways to reward employees – a day off, theatre tickets, magazine subscriptions, notes of thanks, lunch, work at home on certain days, a mentor, invitation to a special meeting, feedback from customers, etc. What feels good to one person may not be perceived that way by another. Coach managers in the 1,001 ways to recognize employees. You can even get them a copy of Bob Nelson's best-selling book, *1001 Ways to Motivate Employees*.

6) Be a Great Place to Work – Provide Work/Life Balance

Life appears to be getting more and more demanding. In great part, we are overloaded with data, options and choices. Life is complex. Many feel overwhelmed. Health suffers and so does creativity and productivity. Work/Life Balance strategies offer a variety of means to reduce stress levels and increase job satisfaction while enhancing benefits for the employer.

Recent reports suggest that absenteeism represents a major cost for Australian businesses. A study conducted in 2003 by the recruiting company Morgan and Banks found that sick leave costs Australian businesses \$2.56 billion each year. Further, there is statistical evidence that businesses which have implemented work/life initiatives have experienced fewer stress-related absences, lower turnover and increased employee motivation. In conjunction with decreased absenteeism for stress-related illness, managing workplace stress also has the reciprocal effect of minimizing workers compensation payouts and thus premiums. ...PriceWaterhouseCoopers Legal

Causes of workplace stress are myriad. Some of the most common factors include:

- increased workload
- lack of control over workload
- coping with organizational change, such as restructuring or management 'downsizing'
- interpersonal conflict
- competing family responsibilities
- poor management practices
- long working hours – with little scheduling flexibility
- redeployment or relocation
- job insecurity or redundancy
- shift work and arising fatigue
- lack of communication or consultation
- bullying, aggression or harassment and trauma
- lack of leisure and exercise.

Statistics can help Human Resource Professionals make a case for reducing stress and enhancing work/life balance strategies:

"an annual vacation can cut the risk of heart attack in men by 32% and women by 50%."
Joe Robinson, *Affluenza*, 2006

"Full-time workers are now toiling 160 hours – one full month- more, on average, than they did in 1969."
...Juliet Schor, Boston College Sociologist, 2005.

"Workplace stress costs the nation more than \$300 billion each year in health care, missed work and stress reduction efforts" ...The American Institute of Stress

"30 percent of workers say they are "always" or "often" under stress at work."
...National Opinion Research Center

"In 2005, nearly 9 million telecommuters worked from home three or more days a month"
...Network World, 2006.

*"A survey of 1,000 teleworkers reports:
15% increase in productivity
100% increased job satisfaction
74% improved quality of family life, reduced costs for transportation and energy savings."*
...North Carolina State – www.teleworking.osp.state.nc.us/report/final

Know Your People's Needs

In order to keep talented people, managers need to know individual needs and negotiate with employees to meet them. The desire for balance in work and life tops the list of most workers today. However, individuals seek balance in different ways. Therefore, the challenge is to determine the needs of each employee and then work to help them. Jane may want time off to coach her daughter's soccer team while Jeff wants to telecommute because he faces long hours in traffic and loses his creativity. Joe may want to attend certain industry conferences because he's new to the industry. And, Carter may need flexible working hours to handle a bout with cancer. Managers need to know what *work/life balance* means to each team member and negotiate accordingly.

How can employees achieve a sense of balance and inner peace? MasteryWorks has developed an assessment survey that helps individuals achieve better personal balance and well-being – **The LifeMastery Builder™** (http://www.masteryworks.com/newsite/assessments/assess_lifemastery.htm). Answering seventy-two questions, individuals can see clearly the twelve basic needs we need to care for as adults. This puts order and peace into life choices. Usually there are two or three areas requiring action and balance at any one time. As the model shows, our needs are interrelated. When employees take action in one area of life (work – negotiating a work schedule to work virtually two days a week) they also impact other areas (family, health, and transportation).

Twelve Basic Needs Model

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Organize Benefits around the Twelve Basic Needs

In reviewing the literature on Great Places to Work, we've found that organizations provide benefits that impact many of these twelve basic needs. In fact, we've recommended that organizations organize their menu of benefits in terms of these twelve basic needs. Why? These needs are enduring and make sense for all adults.

Organizations are providing thousands of policies and practices to help employees achieve a work/life balance. Here are a few examples organized by some of the twelve basic needs:

Work/Career

- **Booz Allen Hamilton** - Consulting can be demanding. More than half of employees use telecommuting, compressed weeks, or flexible schedules.

Health & Well-Being

- **Number Six Software** – On their fifth anniversary, employees are given five extra vacation days and \$2,500 that must be spent on relaxing.
- **Acumen Solutions** – Acumen's Project Wellness Program gives employees up to \$200 each year to help reach a wellness goal, such as losing weight, learning to play golf, scuba dive, or stopping smoking.

Family/Kinship

- **Calvert Financial Security** – Calvert provides \$5,000 adoption assistance, two-week paid paternity leave, subsidized childcare while parents are traveling or working overtime, and backup childcare in the building.
- **Discovery Communications** – Discovery gives three paid weeks of parental leave for both new moms and dads.

Economic Security

- **Capital One** – There is a 401K match of up to 9 percent, stock options for performance, and bonuses ranging from 5 to 70% of an individual's salary.

According to a recent survey by CareerBuilder, Inc., the vast majority (61%) of job-seekers sought career opportunities with companies that were flexible, supportive, and understanding of personal and family needs. Work/life balance issues are major contributors to employees leaving organizations, according to MasteryWorks, Inc. survey of over 1,000 employees. Boomers, Gen Xers and GenYs want a life. Multiple approaches are available to promote work/life balance – teleworking, flex schedules, vacation time, job-sharing, etc. Managers need to be rewarded for listening to employee needs and negotiating ways to assure both work and life requirements are balanced.

<http://www.greatplacetowork.com/great/graphs.php?page=2>

Summary

Developing People Is Smart Business®.

Independent financial analysts have studied the financial performance of "100 Best" companies beginning with the publication of the book, *The 100 Best Companies to Work For in America* (by Robert Levering and Milton Moskowitz, 1984 and 1993). Using various profitability indicators, this data illustrates the extent to which the publicly traded 100 Best Companies consistently outperform major stock indices over various periods of time, preceding or following the publication of the 100 Best lists!

Human Resource Professionals need to become strong voices in their organizations for these six strategies. As business partners, they can influence promotion of managers, showcase mobility options, promote career development, help assure better career fit, assure that strong work/life balance practices and meaningful rewards systems are in place. These strategies help assure we have the talent base to meet our organizational priorities.

About the Author — Caela Farren, Ph.D., is President of MasteryWorks, Inc. in McLean, VA. She has been a consultant, entrepreneur, and educator for over 30 years, Caela has worked with hundreds of thousands of people worldwide to get them on their mastery path. Caela's practice and company builds strong links between changing trends in industries, changing strategies of organizations and the talents and aspirations of individuals. People who work with her company discover their passion, their mastery path, and bring renewed contribution and high performance to their organizations.

Caela is known internationally for her expertise in developing talent management products and services. Her solutions are user-friendly systems that serve the needs of both organizations and individuals. She is frequently quoted in the media regarding her thoughts and advice on changing careers and work patterns in the nation. Hundreds of organizations have implemented talent management solutions from MasteryWorks, Inc. — consulting, workshops, assessment instruments and web-based talent management portals.

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