

# How Important Is the Change Facilitator to Employee Retention?

Change, such as mergers and acquisitions, can be disruptive to employees. Change facilitators help employees adapt to new conditions by ensuring that employees understand the reasons for change, the benefits that result and the steps required to transition or transform to the new state. Facilitators help managers identify options, communicate clearly and resolve conflicts. Without a clear change management process in place, employee morale decreases. This typically results in talented employees leaving the company and seeking positions elsewhere, usually at a competitor. The cost of recruiting, interviewing and hiring new personnel more than justifies the expense of designating a facilitator to change management activities at your company.

## Identifying Threats

Change facilitators help managers identify threats to the success of their change management program. They make sure that the changes proposed have the support and sponsorship of company executives. By conducting focus groups and personal interviews, facilitators gather input from all levels of the organization about impending changes, such as a move to a new facility. Employees may not feel comfortable complaining to their manager, but if they trust the facilitator, they are more likely to be candid about their feelings. The facilitator may discover that a radical change, such as move to a different location 30 miles away, poses a hardship for more than half of the employees, who will quit if the move occurs. The facilitator can then alert management to this situation and propose alternatives, such as flexible work schedules or working from home part time, to cope.

## Identifying Opportunities

Facilitators help managers identify the leaders in the organization. By asking for commitment from these staffers to promote the benefits of the changes proposed, the facilitator takes a team-building approach to managing change. By conducting training activities and answering questions, facilitators prepare employees for changes. For example, if new policies and procedures for submitting expenses go into effect in December, the facilitator conducts preparation sessions in November. At that time, he identifies weaknesses and helps modify the procedures so everyone succeeds in achieving strategic goals. This empowers employees and prevents them from becoming discouraged and leaving to find another job.

## Conducting Meetings

Employees who feel they have a say in company policy tend to have higher levels of employee satisfaction and job retention rates. Successful change management professionals help managers articulate the vision to employees, usually in five minutes or less to be effective. Facilitators run meetings that allow company leaders to describe the future of the organization, the strategy that executes the vision and how changes will occur. Facilitators help organize the meetings, prepare presentation materials and take questions from employees. This allows the manager to focus on making the presentation. Employees get their questions answered and this typically results in higher levels of loyalty to the organization.

## Getting Support

Employees require support and guidance to handle change effectively. Facilitators act as intermediary in disputes over proposed changes. By resolving conflicts quickly and efficiently, facilitators help the organization operate more productively and ensure that employees get the tools, resources and training they need to transition to a new state without feeling the need to get a different job and leave the company.

