



RETAIN YOUR BEST SALESPEOPLE

9 key ways to retain high performing sales staff



It's a question most sales managers face at one time or another
– how do I stop that revolving door of sales staff turnover?

It's a tricky question to answer and while a small amount of turnover in your sales team is inevitable (and healthy!), it's in your best interest to retain great sales staff rather than constantly recruit new ones. Think about the impact staff leaving has on your work culture, in productivity losses, and in time and money costs (hiring, on-boarding, training etc.)

In an attempt to help answer this question, we surveyed some of Australia's best salespeople about what's important to them in a sales job, and what makes them stay. Here's what they had to say...

NOTE: 

*This is a small snapshot of some great Australian salespeople.
It's good to keep in mind everyone is unique so may have
different reasons for staying or leaving.*



YOU NEED GREAT MANAGERS

A whopping 91% of salespeople surveyed said great managers and leaders are a key factor in keeping them in their current sales role. The majority of respondents said they appreciate the following attributes in their manager:

- Trustworthy
- Respectful
- Approachable
- Supportive
- Clear, honest & transparent communications with team
- Seek team's feedback
- Sets realistic expectations

They also felt these two qualities were extremely important:

1. LOYALTY

The sales staff we surveyed see loyalty as a two way-street. Sales employees are expected to be loyal to the company, but the company should exhibit the same loyalty to employees. As one employee put it: *"We should be as important to the company as their best customer."*

2. MANAGEMENT STYLE

In the wise words of one salesperson, *"Micromanaging harms more than most bosses realise"* especially as it inhibits the salesperson's ability to form a solid relationship with the customer; the key to repeat business.

Being slow to respond with decisions is another big no-no too. This has a big impact on your employees' chance to close their deals, thus hit their targets.



ACTION POINTS

□ Review your communication methods.

A good starting point is to ask yourself how open, responsive, transparent and clear you are in communicating with your team. Better yet, ask your team! This feedback will help you formulate the right communication strategy for your team – especially if you stick to it!

Some suggestions to help:

- Schedule regular weekly check-ins
- Specifically ask for, accept AND implement their feedback about work processes, projects, targets etc.

A bonus tip: during these meetings, ask about work progress but also pose questions to discover more about your team, both personally and professionally.

□ Be loyal.

There are countless ways you can show your sales staff you have their back. One might be to offer them personal and/or professional training. You invest in them, they'll invest in you by staying.

Another might be to show employees you're supportive during the highs and lows of their sales career (most will have them!). Proactively intervene when you think an employee is struggling and give them options to help them through. It might be extra time to hit a target, a reduced workload or a mentor to guide them.

□ Up your trust stores.

Trust goes two ways. Employees must have faith in you as employer that you have their best interest at heart. But you must also place trust in them to perform their job as they see fit. An autonomous

management style works well here. Here are some suggestions to help you practise this form of leadership:

1. When the team fails

Don't blame the team, those above you or external circumstances. Take full responsibility. Perhaps you weren't as clear, or didn't understand the directive from higher up in the first place? Worse still, maybe you weren't really on-board with it? If this the case, do whatever you have to get on-board. Seek more information and keep questioning until you can believe in the project and goal.

2. Put your ego to the side

You don't know everything and your team should know that. Rather than losing face by telling them this, you will likely get more respect. No one likes a leader with a 'God-complex'.

3. Be clear about the project and goal

Ensure your team 100% understands what you want from them.

4. Leave the details to them

Set the overall task and goal, but let team members take full control of the rest.

5. Ask for feedback

It's easy to set and forget a task, but your team are the ones faced with the realities of implementing that task to achieve the required result. They'll often come up against obstacles those who set the goal (often, higher up) didn't think about. Let them know they can come to you with these problems and that you will fight for them.



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HAVE REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

Just over 85% of sales staff said realistic job expectations were important if they were to stay in their current role. Staff want to be stimulated by challenging targets, but still feel they should be achievable. Another key element here was management support while reaching for these lofty goals.

ACTION POINTS

□ Ask your team for feedback.

Talk to them about what they feel they can achieve and if there's anything they need clarified.

□ Regularly check-in.

Touch base to ensure each team member is on track.

□ Monitor sales performance.

If you notice an anomaly, ask them if it's because the targets aren't realistic or what further support they may need.

□ Set the right expectations from the very start.

This means during your recruitment phase – job description, job ad, interviews and during on-boarding. For some tips on how to do this, check out our article [How smart sales leaders attract the best talent.](#)



PROVIDE GROWTH AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Close to 90% of sales staff surveyed value a company's ability to give them growth and/or career progression opportunities. They were particularly positive about managers who recognise hard working team members by promoting them, rather than hiring new staff for the same role.

Almost 70% also said they view coaching and training as very important and would stay with a company that offered these.

There are a bunch of ways you can provide opportunities for your employees to learn and grow.

Some examples might be:

- Assigning stretch goals that relate to an employee's desired career pathway
- Professional development courses – on site, off site, online
- Mentoring
- Job shadowing
- Projects with an immediate impact

ACTION POINTS

Ask staff about their goals.

Instead of going in blind, ask staff their goals to determine what growth opportunities you should provide.

Schedule a six month review.

Talk with each employee about their progress and feedback.

Showcase career pathways in your recruitment materials.

Job ads, position descriptions and interviews should all discuss possible progression. This will help attract great employees who want to stay.



PAY FAIR, PAY WELL

Seventy-eight percent of sales staff surveyed said a competitive salary is important to them remaining in their role. Almost 70% said incentives such as commissions or bonuses are important too.

Some interesting comments from respondents:

ACTION POINTS

- Do your due diligence.**
Research market pay rates.
- Tailor your compensation package.**
Our ultimate guide to sales compensation might be helpful here.
- Perform regular pay & commission reviews.**

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“There should never be any surprises when it comes to pay and other remuneration.”

“I look for a good salary plus lots of work in the pipeline to achieve a good bonus.”

“If the pay is good, you won't wonder what it's like in another employer.”

“There should be base pay base plus commission, not just commission. Commission only shows the company has nothing to offer the employee unless they bring in the business.”

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5 REWARD STAFF WITH PERKS AND BENEFITS

Close to 82% of those surveyed stated they need 'non-monetary' recognition of their work. Some said they like individual recognition directly from their boss, while others think team recognition efforts - such as social activities in or outside of work - are important.

ACTION POINTS

□ Review your recognition program.

Ensure you offer a good mix of both personal and team recognition for hard work. Reward frequently, not just when they hit that big end goal.

Personal examples:

- One-on-one 'yay you' meetings
- Public forums such as team or whole-company meetings
- Digital communications (newsletter, social media etc).
- Individual perks & benefits (team member of the month, a free family dinner or a trip away if an employee hits their target etc.)

Team examples:

- Social activities - family picnics/BBQs, tenpin bowling, team lunches, card night etc.
- In office services & treats – gourmet lunch delivery, massages, lunchtime games/trivia, 'theme' days etc.
- Regular team contests with good prizes - free team lunch, half a day off, gift cards



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REALISE THAT TEAMMATES MATTER

Eighty percent of salespeople in our survey felt great teammates and colleagues greatly contribute to their happiness with their job. They love working with people they trust and respect, as well as ones who don't engage in politics.

ACTION POINTS

- Always hire with your current team in mind.** Will the new recruit complement them, or risk upsetting their morale? One way to is to hire with culture fit and culture add in mind. You'll find some great ideas about how to do this in our article [Need a new sales hire? Recruiting with culture in mind is key.](#)
- Regularly engage in team building activities.** Many of the team recognition examples in the previous section work well here, but you could also assign mentors from other successful teams and/or parts of the business.



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OFFER A GOOD WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Eighty-eight percent of those surveyed said they value a good work-life balance. Most respondents said a company that offered flexibility - particularly in work hours - was more attractive than one that didn't.

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“If you couldn't finish a little early one day to pick up the kids or go to an appointment, then what does that say about the trust and respect you have from your company?”

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ACTION POINTS

Promote flexible work hours.

Work from home days or varying start and finish times.

Encourage employees to go home on time.

Offer on-site childcare.

Even if it's only during school holidays.

Prioritise their health.

Depending on your budget it might be wellness programs, an onsite gym or time off to visit medical professionals.



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GIVE STAFF A SENSE OF PURPOSE

In our survey, 83% of sales staff rated a sense of purpose as important in their job. As one respondent put it:

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“I most value feeling part of a team that works together for the benefit of the company and the customers. I detest the pressure to ring up a sale as the only measure of performance.”

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ACTION POINTS

Find ways to show staff how they fit into the ‘big picture’.

How do the results they work hard for each day impact the rest of the business?

Consider partnering with a charity.

Bringing people together to fundraise is great team-building tool. And what better goal than to give to those in need?



ENSURE IT'S A MATCH BETWEEN YOUR SALESPEOPLE AND YOUR COMPANY VALUES AND MISSION

Our survey found 74% of sales team members are looking for alignment between your company values and missions and their own. This one has to do with where you're going as a company but also your on-the-job culture.

ACTION POINTS

Your recruitment materials are key.

Talk about your values, mission and culture all the way through from your position description to job ad to during interviews. This helps the new recruit decide if you're a good fit for them. A good fit should mean they're more likely to stay.

Do a values & mission stocktake.

With the sales sector changing oh-so-fast, maybe it's time you took a second look at how relevant your values and mission are. If you do, it's imperative you get input from your team. If they have a say, it's much more likely they'll adopt them too.

One further tip if you're doing an overhaul: make sure the new values are actionable. It makes it so much easier to live and breathe them in all you do.

A photograph of a metal paperclip holding a piece of paper. The paper has a red stamp that reads "TOP SECRET" in a bold, serif font, enclosed in a red rectangular border. The paper is slightly crumpled and has a yellowish tint. The background is a dark, textured surface.

TOP SECRET

So those are our nine reasons why sales staff choose to remain in their current role rather than job hop; all direct from the staff themselves! If you'd like to find out more about our survey, or would like some extra assistance in upping your retention rate, feel free to contact us. We'd love to help.

bta Sales is Australia's specialist sales recruitment agency. We have more than 25 years' experience successfully placing quality sales professionals in great roles with our trusted clients.

If you're looking for a new role in sales, or hiring a new salesperson, we can happily help connect you with the right role or salesperson for the job.

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