

Is Geographical Mobility Good for Companies?

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Recent surveys show that 40% of laborers who quit their jobs thought that their contributions aren't appreciated properly. There are six factors relating to the geographical mobility of labor we must accept:

(1) Mobility of labor is ordinary and inevitable.

(2) Change of jobs within a company is necessary because it helps laborers generate new ideas when they take new responsibilities.

(3) Mobility of labor leads to higher cost because expenditures on recruiting and training new laborers are high, not to mention losses caused by slower customer services and other delays.

(4) High salaries are not enough to retain experienced and skilled laborers who want recognition and job satisfaction.

(5) Most managers know how to retain skilled laborers. Recent studies show that 50% of work satisfaction cases come from good relation between managers and their staff.

(6) Mobility of labor could be reduced by commitment, even if the top managers didn't make any commitment.

Although all facts about the mobility of labor are accepted, most organizations and managers keep worrying about it because it affects greatly their operations. That is why all managers keep a close watch on changes in their staff by using charts, computers, polls, etc. But nothing could give exact prediction about the number of laborers who



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want to change their jobs in a given period. This article wants to outline some ideas and factors that could help organizations and managers estimate effects caused by the mobility of labor.

The first question managers usually ask themselves is, "How can I reduce the proportion of employees who want to change their jobs?" The answer is very simple, "Recruit better laborers." This task means seeking for agreement between requirements of the company, labor policy, demand for staff, budget and candidates. If there is no agreement, laborers will change their jobs, their performance will be lower, and productivity and profit of the company will fall.

In fact, if processes of interviewing, orienting, training and employing laborers produce an agreement between the company and laborers, the overall performance will be better, and the company can avoid unwanted recruitment when the mobility of labor takes place.

When a laborer leaves a company, there will be a lot of rumors and conflicting opinions, such as "I don't believe he will go. We will suffer great losses without him," and "I am happy when he decides to leave. He's really a problem for us."

When a good laborer quits, we usually think of dysfunctional mobility of labor because the company doesn't expect it. On the other hand, when a bad worker goes, we consider it as a functional mobility because it is what the company expects.

Then what are questions that help a company determine whether a departure is good for the company or not? In a survey of 100 companies conducted by Fortune, the mobility of labor in their concerns varies from 12% to 18% a year. Is this proportion high or low? It depends if a departure is functional or not.

To answer this question, the company must examine what department and class of laborers the job-leaver belongs to. Secondly, it should look at causes of his (her) decision and pay proper attention to possible conflict. Thirdly, it should find out if he, or she, feels dissatisfied with policies adopted by the company.

Managers could ask themselves many other questions, such as "Am I aware of this problem?" If the answer is "No," the manager should talk to job-leaver to find out causes of his/her dissatisfaction. Find out their challenges and strengths and shortcomings in the personnel policies. The manager should make the laborers understand that the company always tries its best to make employees gain job satisfaction. Make sure they understand that the company also pays full attention to productivity and performance. By doing so, the manager could create a win-win situation and proportion of job-leaver will reduce.

Loss of laborers is not always good or bad. From the viewpoint of labor management, managers should find out causes of job-leaving, deal with them properly and use more effective methods to encourage and retain the staff. ■