



# Workplace Satisfaction

## Connie's Weekly Newsletter

According to the Human Resource Management's Human Capital Benchmarking database, the annual rate of employee turnover in the US is 15%. As high as this may seem, in animal welfare the annual rate of turnover is even higher amongst Americans at 29% as reported by the Society of Animal Welfare Administrators 2012 Annual Compensation Survey. Further, the rate is even higher in direct animal care positions: 45% annual turnover for animal care staff; 41% turnover for adoptions staff; 35% for veterinary services staff, and 33% for field services staff.

Recruiting and hiring new staff is expensive and the costs associated with turnover in the first year alone are estimated to be three times the salary of the position according to a 2007 survey by the Wynhurst Group.

Why does animal welfare have an annual turnover rate that is almost double the national average? A number of factors that are chicken vs. egg come into play.

### **1. Lack of training for staff responsible for managing employees.**

The common reality in animal welfare is that if you have lasted in the field for a year or more, you are likely to move into a position with responsibility for other employees.

In the July/August issue of *Scientific American Mind* an article titled *How to Be a Better Boss* provided some simple guidelines.

- Rein in your ego. A study conducted by organizational psychologists at Michigan State University and the University of Akron found that arrogant bosses – those that blow off feedback, disrespect employees' ideas and avoid blame by pinning it on others – are destructive to business. Humble leaders, those that are open to new ideas and able to admit when they are wrong are more likely to gain loyalty. As a humble boss you should not expect staff to necessarily like you any more, however they may respect you more and according to this study, you can expect them to stick around longer.

### **2. Establish a culture of being able to unplug from work.**

A study that looked at the use of technology at home found that staff who used technology at home during evening hours had less detachment from the office which left them more stressed and less happy. A second study conducted at Bowling Green State University and Portland State University found those that thought about and engaged in work during off hours were actually less effective on average. Yet people who never checked-in or thought about their work after-hours also performed poorly according to the study. How can this be? The answer is moderation. Establish a culture that allows people to unplug after hours while also trusting them to use their best judgment in knowing when to respond to critical emails. This way you can better manage the well-being of your employees and ensure maximum productivity. PetPoint allows you to restrict access to the database in a number of ways. You can allow people to log in offsite, which can allow people to only have access to the database during specific shifts and/or time periods. Sometimes it may be necessary for those staff or volunteers to interject and look out for one another or encourage a co-worker to take a break and log-off if they seem stressed or burnt-out. Help them to see that you are not punishing them, but rather looking out for them. It's important that all staff understand the importance of unplugging and rejuvenating in-between shifts.

### **3. The carrot not the stick.**

The science on this is well accepted, not just in the field of dog training but also true in the area of human behavior. Punishment is simply not a motivator. When employees do a good job, remember to tell them so. It's easy to do and won't cost a thing.

### **4. Lack of formal training programs for new employees.**

Formal training can provide all new employees a solid platform to embark on their new career at your organization. By not providing this type of support for your organization, you are only setting them up to fail. Be proactive and reduce, if not eliminate, the amount of on-the-job mistakes.

The Humane Society of Boulder Valley and the Charleston Animal Society have both developed training programs to help reduce the turnover of new hires; group based hiring and training. While this approach is not always easy to manage, as it requires hiring employees in groups and providing a week-long classroom training session for the first week, it does appear to work; when the HSBV for example, tried to get away from this program it saw an increase in staff turnover and a decrease in staff morale.

PetPoint has made it easy for you to provide your staff and yourself with all the necessary training. We have online help which has detailed how-to's, many with corresponding videos to use to train new staff. One organization I know has staff sit down and watch the tutorial, then practice the feature in the software before they are signed-off by managers for having completed the required training. This is a great way to ensure everyone has fully comprehended what they have just learned.

### **5. Not giving staff the responsibility or control they need to do their job effectively.**

Give employees some control. Multiple studies have found one of the best ways to reduce stress in the workplace is to provide staff with more autonomy. Stressed employees will cause your organization to have higher medical bills, more sick days, poor employee morale, and increased turnover. Edward Deci, a psychology professor at the University of Rochester, has conducted some of the seminal research on self-determination at work suggesting, "If we don't get rigid as managers or business owners, we can allow for employees to work some things out in terms of what feels good for them. The best bosses make employees feel understood and as if they have some choice in what they do and how they do it." At the Charleston Animal Society a survey was conducted amongst staff, resulting in the same conclusion. Staff wanted more responsibility and say in how their area or department of the organization operates.

Budget the time and money to send staff to conferences, which provides your organization with far more than just staff training. It also can cover the above factors just discussed, helping to reduce your organization's overall staff turnover rate.

Use conferences to reward those highly motivated and to all of your committed staff members. Once they return, they can have the responsibility of training other employees. It's also a great idea to help the employee feel that he/she has ownership of something that could have a direct impact on the success of the organization.

As a leader, you should not attend a conference alone. There is great value in sending employees and volunteers - not just for the good company, but for a different perspective. You may be surprised at what information they take back with them that you might have missed.

In closing, I encourage you all to send at least two staff members to this year's Chicago PetPoint Summit, held September 15<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup>, 2013, where your staff will learn extremely valuable new skills that can translate into increased efficiencies within your organization.

**Did you know?**

Our headquarters hotel – the Hyatt Lodge at McDonald's Campus – is now sold out! However, the Residence Inn by Marriott, which is also located in Oak Brook, IL, will serve as our official overflow hotel. We will be providing daily shuttles for attendees to and from the Residence Inn and the Hyatt Lodge / McDonald's campus. The Residence Inn is offering Summit attendees discounted rates until September 6th starting at only \$119.95/night, so act fast! For further reservation information, please visit [our Venue/Hotel](#) information page.

Sincerely,

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