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**Welcome to**

**The**  
**Effective Retention**  
**Conversation**

**Dr. Clarence E. Whittenburg**



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***Today's Conversation:***

- The business case
  - Why do people quit?
- How do we fix it?
- What can HR do?
- Where do we go from here?

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***Why Is Employee Retention So Important?***

- Replacement is expensive?
- Lost Quality of Work?
- We cannot compete with higher paying organizations so jobs go unfilled?
- Others?

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### *Why do people quit?*

- Working together in groups of 4-6, take five minutes to discuss and write down your top 3 answers.
- Now, let's hear your responses



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### *Why people quit their jobs:*

- Toxic Culture (62% - 75% of EES)
  - Lack of respect
  - Unethical behavior
  - Poor inclusion practices
- Poor Management (42% - 56% of EES)
  - Bad experience with a supervisor
  - No support and/or untrustworthy leadership

□ Source: Gallop Polling March 19, 2025

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### *Why people quit:*

- Lack of career development / career advancement opportunities (35%- 74% of EES).
  - Especially true with Millennials and Gen Z
- Inadequate compensation and benefits (59%-63% of EES)
  - Due largely to high inflation

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*Why people quit:*

- Burnout (49% of EES)
  - Excessive workloads
  - Lack of flexibility in work scheduling
  - Inability of work remotely
  - Mental and physical health issues

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*Why people quit: key 2026 concerns:*

- Revenge quitting
- The Great Stay
- Return to Office Resistance

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*How do we fix it?*

- Understand what drives your organization's Climate
- Understand the Keys to Retention
- Informed Leadership
- Healthy Human Resources Practices

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## What Is Climate?

- Climate is the way it feels to work here. (Please see your handout on WHAT IS ORGANIZATION CLIMATE?)



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## Why Is Climate Important?

- The way people feel about their organization has a direct and measurable impact on their motivation and their performance.



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## How is Climate Measured?

- Structure
- Standards
- Responsibility
- Recognition
- Support
- Cooperation

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## Climate...

- Structure- having well defined jobs
- Standards- the need to improve performance
- Responsibility- being own boss and not having to double check decisions - empowered

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## Climate...(cont'd.)

- Recognition- being rewarded for job well done
- Support- feeling of trust and mutual support
- Cooperation- teamwork

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## What Determines Climate

- External Environment
- Strategy
- Policies or lack of them
- Attitudes
- **MANAGER'S BEHAVIOR**

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### *Climate Summary*

- There are six dimensions of climate to consider.
- What a manager/leader says or does influences climate.
- Inspired leaders know and understand the need for climate control.

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### *Keys to Retention (refer to handout for checklist):*

1. Select The Right People In The First Place
2. Get Them Off To A Great Start
3. Competitive Compensation and Benefits
4. Career Growth and Mentorship
5. Coach And Reward

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### *1. Select The Right People*

- Understand why some leave and others stay
- Define the results you expect and the talent you need
- Give a realistic job preview
- Hire from within when possible
- Creatively expand your talent pool
- Can do, will do, is there a good fit?

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## 2. *Get Them Off To A Great Start*

- Give new hires the red -carpet treatment
- Get commitment to a performance agreement
- Train for autonomy and initiative

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## 3. *Competitive Compensation*

- Understand your compensation philosophy:
  - Below / Midpoint / Above
  - Midpoint 100% of market? 50%? 25%?Is it your goal to get everyone to midpoint over a period of time or do you hire at the midpoint?  
It's important to have the discussion

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## 4. *Career Growth*

- Promote from within or hire from outside? 100% 75% 50% . What's right for you?
- Do you offer education refund?
- Do you offer in-house employee development programs?
- Who manages your talent?

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### *5. Coach and Reward*

- Proactively manage the performance management process
- Train managers in career coaching and expect them to do it
- Know when to keep and when to let go

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### *Inspired Leaders (Team Leaders)*

- Know how to get people to focus
- Work to get resources for the team
- Good (Effective) communicator
- Skilled @ developing team to high level of performance
- Empathize with the struggles of employees
- No longer the “expert”
- Comfortable w/ relying on expertise of others
- Understand change

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### *Former Supervisors/Managers*

- Authoritative
- “Whip and Chair” disciplinarian
- Everything structured
- Employees not paid to think
- Employees expect to keep quiet
- Used threats
- Had “pet” people, showed favoritism
- Not good at giving feedback
- Did not counsel

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**Key Management Points**

- Provide clear description of responsibilities
- Provide employee development opportunities
- Have right people in right jobs at right time.
- Provide open and honest feedback

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**How Can Human Resource Help?**

- 1) Help the organization understand it's climate
- 2) Summarize exit interviews and discuss with organization leaders periodically
  - Know and understand who is at risk of leaving and plan accordingly
- 3) Teach leaders how to lead for results

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**How Can Human Resources Help?**

- 4) Own The Retention Drivers:
  - Appealing work environment - climate
  - Competitive compensation and benefits
  - Organization Environment
  - Worklife balance
  - Opportunities for growth

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*HR Continued:*

- 5) Re examine your performance management system. Reward people not only for **WHAT** they accomplish but **HOW** they accomplish it
  
- 6) Hold leaders responsible for retention goals. Bake retention goals into the performance management system

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*HR Continued:*

- 7) Implement **stay** interviews, not just exit interviews, to understand employee needs (similar to engagement interviews)
- 8) Consider implementing Employee Handbook
- 9) Adopt a Zero Tolerance policy for harassment

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*Summary:*

- The challenge for HR Directors:
  - Retention is not just about keeping employees, it is about keeping the right employees, keeping them engaged, and in the right jobs at the right time.
  - Your work is important, your job is hard

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## *Where Do WE Go From Here?*

- Launch an Employee Retention Strategy
  - City?
  - Area (several Cities)?
  - State?
  - Grounded in research and statistics
  - Seek funding for your strategy
- The old-fashioned HR

Contact: [cwhite@gmail.com](mailto:cwhite@gmail.com)

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## *References, Reading and other Resources:*

- Keeping the People Who Keep You in Business by Leigh Brannham
- Race Without A Finish Line by Warren H. Schmidt and Jerome P. Pinnigan
- The Corporate Leadership Council
- DDI Consultants ( [ddi.com](http://ddi.com) )
- The Harvard Review ( [hbr.org](http://hbr.org) )

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