



## Why High Levels of Management Turnover Happen –And What You Can Do to Stop It

If management turnover plagues your business, we find that there is a trifecta of issues in place: culture, a weak interview process and an ineffective recruiting process. What are you doing to turn the tide?

### So, You're Eating Plant Managers for Lunch

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Here we go again. Another promising hire on your operational leadership team. And another round of looking back, wondering where you went wrong, as you watch your latest human capital acquisition pack their bags and head out the door. Or worse, you're packing their bags for them.

Every manufacturing business leader I talk to today notes problems with turnover and hiring. For years, leaders have been saying that they can't find enough good

people. In the United States, the unemployment rate in manufacturing is at historic lows, dropping to 3% in most regions. And the attrition challenge isn't going away any time soon.

For many of our manufacturing clients, high management turnover in the operational leadership ranks always boils down to one of two problems:

1. Companies can't attract qualified operations leaders.
2. They can't retain the top leaders they bring onboard.

It's often about either quality or quantity. And sometimes, it's both.

## **Leaving So Soon? The Reasons Behind Turnover.**

The first step to fixing your talent woes is to diagnose what's contributing to them and to understand the root cause or causes of your turnover.

We find that for many manufacturers, there's a trifecta of issues at play:

1. Culture,
2. A weak interview process, and
3. An ineffective recruiting process

All three problems stem from internal processes. And manufacturers would do well to put some time and thought into each area before investing in the next new hire.

## **Let's Address the Elephant in the Room: The Culture.**

Perhaps you narrow candidates based upon experience with your specific manufacturing process, those with the right title, education and industry knowledge. Or, you draw from competitors. When we talk to companies that use these approaches we often see that attrition in the leadership ranks can be high.

Instead, hire those with the right experience but focus on those that you can teach and can be taught the manufacturing process. Consider hiring someone from another company that goes through plant managers as fast as you do - or faster. You might be on to something.

We recently completed a market analysis for a client's geographical region. We built a list of 15 manufacturing companies that hired the best operational leadership talent, and lost them the quickest. The reason for the turnover: the companies' cultures.

Candidates who have had experience with negative culture will be very receptive to an opportunity to work in a more engaging, employee-focused environment. If you give them that chance, you'll be the beneficiary of their past experience: they've seen the worst and can handle any challenges you throw at them.

### **Next Up: An Ineffective Interview Process.**

You ask all the right technical questions. Your candidate gives all the right textbook answers. But after six months on the job, your new hire hasn't followed through on one objective in the 90-day plan. The teams are frustrated, productivity is declining, and you're left wondering whether it's a training issue or a lack of will.

If this situation sounds all too familiar, it's probably time to take a hard look at the interview questions you traditionally ask and how you can ask them differently. Many interviewers make the mistake of leading the witness, so to speak, taking them down the path of what to say so the interviewer gets the answers he or she wants to hear. Consider developing some open-ended questions.

Open-ended questions can help you uncover the types of issues candidates have struggled with in their current and past roles. They give you insight into how the potential hire will solve problems, take action or lead others. And they will help you learn if the candidate has experience developing and mentoring others. Ultimately, with better interview questions, you'll find out if the person sitting across the table from you really is the self-motivated, hard-charging process-driven expert you need to lead your plant and deliver better results.

### **On Recruiting New Candidates: Look Beyond LinkedIn.**

Are you casting the ever-elusive recruiting net out to sea with Indeed or LinkedIn ads? Are you hoping you get lucky and snag that perfect player, despite the fact that unemployment is so low and all your competitors are doing the same thing? If you're

relying on an ad to drive the next Tom Brady to your door, don't waste your time.

Find your next star by going after what everyone else isn't: promising talent you can invest in and coach up.

Analyze the local market, go against the grain of competitors, and look for unopened pockets that no one thinks of pursuing. If hourly associates are in demand (and they always are), consider connecting with local community outreach programs that support refugees or the work programs at the local penitentiary. Look at military veterans making their first move to the civilian world. Build a training program for these new production players, and you'll be treated to a motivated group of operators who can help move your business forward.



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