

What do your employees need?

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Developing loyal employees is best accomplished by forging partnerships between owners and their employees. The first step in the process needs to be championed by owners who are serious about developing loyalty. Serious owners are those who agree with each of the following three statements: I am willing to listen to my employees, even if it is to criticize me, I am willing to make changes that my employees suggest, I am willing to give up some decision making authority to my employees. Truly serious owners will also agree with at least one of the next three statements: I am willing to pay my employees what they are really worth, I am willing to open my books to loyal employees, I am willing to grant long-term, loyal employees equity in my company. Only serious owners, as deduced from the answers to the aforementioned questions, can initiate successful employee loyalty development programs that actually succeed.

The second step in the process needs to be executed by employees who are serious about becoming loyal to the owner and the business. Their loyalty can be assessed by determining what they need. Many employees need more money in the form of better salary or wages; some may need different types of monetary incentives, such as stock options, commuting costs, expense accounts, employment contracts, vacation time, medical plans, retirement plans, educational reimbursement or life insurance plans. For employees whose predominant requirement is money, their loyalty extends as far as the money goes. They may be excellent workers and can be tremendous assets to the company but they may also depart for another company if the monetary incentives warrant it. Unfortunately they are not the ones who will become loyal.

On the other hand, employees predisposed to being loyal are motivated by long term, non-monetary needs. Their long-term, quality-of-life needs establish the foundation on which loyalty can be built and may include:

- Clear reporting relationships
- Clear vision from senior management
- Decision making authority
- More responsibility
- An appropriate title
- Ability to work in different

- Encouragement from senior management
- Autonomy
- Continuous training
- Satisfying clients
- Participating in significant activities
- Flexible hours
- Working conditions that are conducive to learning and making a difference
- departments
- Working from home
- Potential for growth and promotion
- Feeling of success and accomplishment
- Improving quality of life for clients
- Recognition from family and friends
- An open book policy
- Equity position (although this could be classified as a monetary it is long term in nature)

In essence employees who value long term needs are more inclined to become loyal than their counterparts who crave only the money. One of the best examples illustrating this point is derived from baseball. In the early 1990s the legendary hall-of-fame baseball player Kirby Puckett decided to stay with the Minnesota Twins despite being offered a contract from the New York Yankees that was worth an extra million dollars. He stated that he didn't need the extra million dollars and he felt loyal to the owner, community and fans of Minnesota because of the way they always supported him. Although at the time he was one of the most valuable players and could have set his price with any team; he decided that loyalty superseded money and stayed with the Twins. Similarly, in every successful business loyal employees are more willing to venerate their colleagues and the owner for supporting their long term needs over the immediacy of money; they are the ones who will stay with company during tough times as well as good times. The bottom line is that the best loyalty programs are those that are designed for employees who are responsive to long term, non-monetary incentives and have the full support of the owner. They form the basis of true partnerships between owners and employees and are the best methods of successfully engendering enduring loyalty.