

THE WINNING EDGE:

**PROVEN STRATEGIES TO RECRUIT &
RETAIN TOP TALENT**

COURTNEY KASSERMAN
PRESIDENT



WELCOME



Key Objectives

- Learn **key retention strategies** to reduce turnover
- Discover **high-impact recruiting** techniques
- Implement **data-driven insights** to optimize talent decisions



Why Your Talent Strategy Matters?



The True Cost of Employee Turnover

Vacancy

Lost Productivity
Overtime Paid to Other Staff
Temporary Staff Wages
Decreased Team Efficiency
Missed Deadlines or Project Delays
Mistakes Due to Inexperience



Training & Onboarding

Onboarding Materials & Sessions
Time Spent by Other Employees, Managers
Reduced Productivity During Ramp-Up

Separation

Exit Interview Time
Administrative Processing
Severance Pay
Unemployment Insurance Claims

Recruitment

Job Advertisements
Recruiter Fees
HR Time for Screening/Interviewing
Pre-Employment Testing



Understanding Employee Needs & Motivations



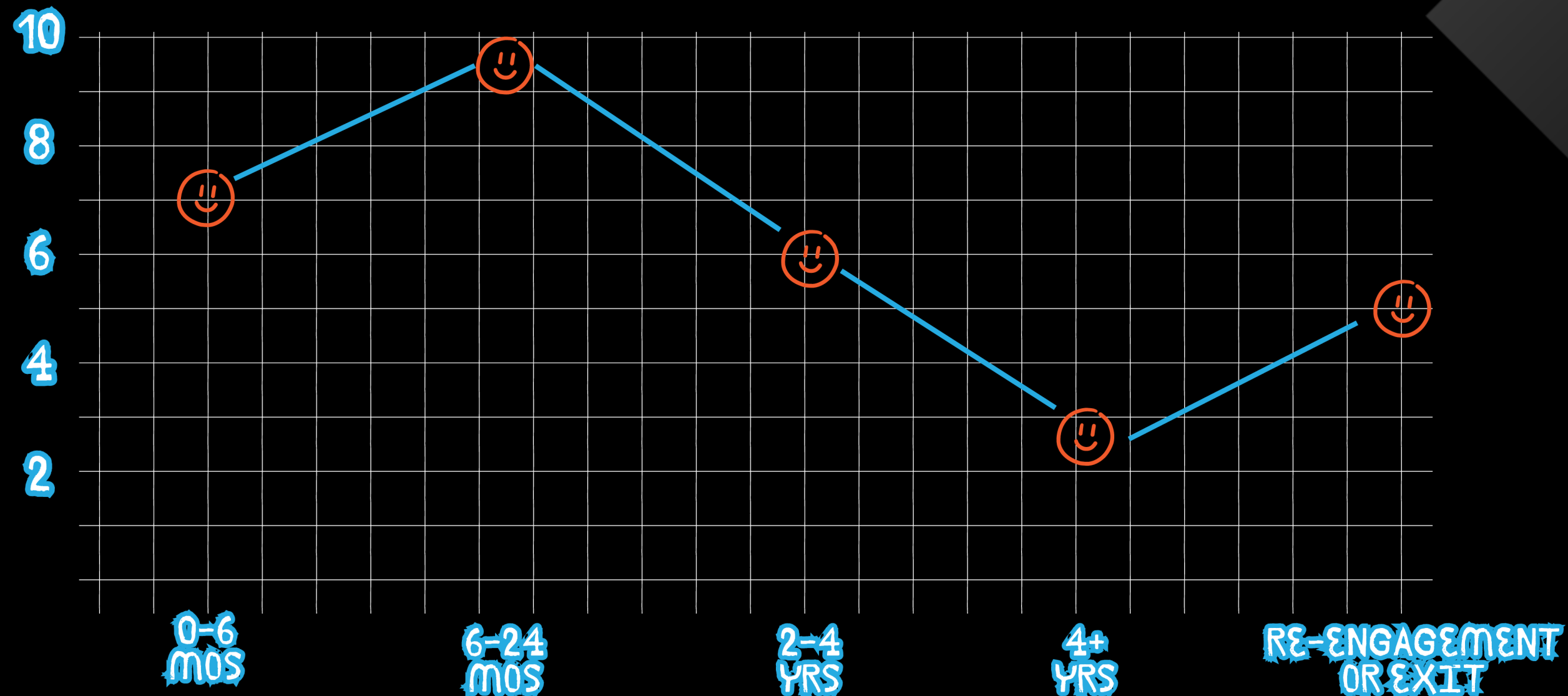
Career Development
Flexibility
Purpose
Recognition
Strong Workplace Culture

Employee Engagement

The life cycle of an "engaged" employee often follows a bell curve-like trajectory over time, starting high during onboarding, peaking during the growth phase, and potentially declining if needs aren't met.

While every individual is unique, this model helps companies anticipate engagement challenges and take proactive steps.

LIFE CYCLE OF AN ENGAGED EMPLOYEE



Employee Engagement: 0–6 Months

Onboarding / “Honeymoon” Phase

Engagement Level: High

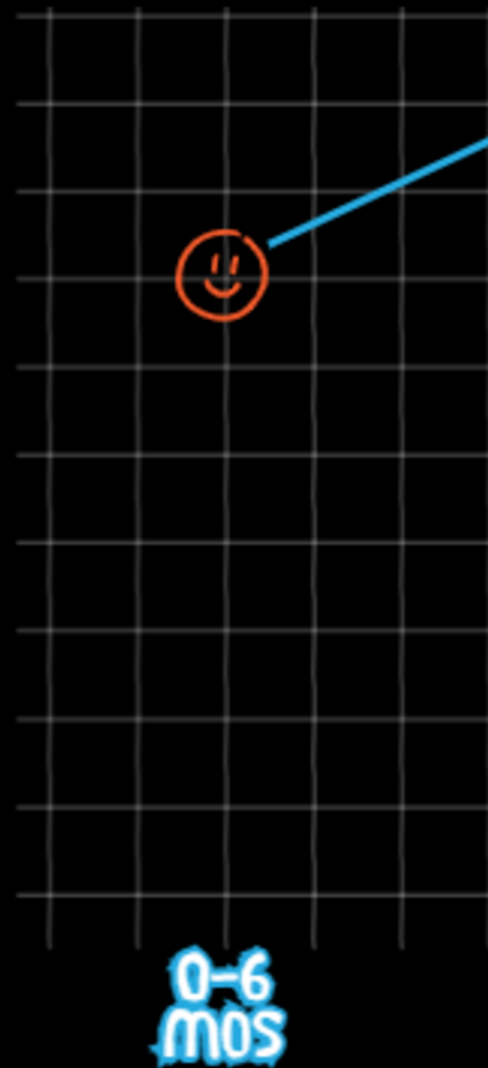
Emotions: Excited, optimistic, eager to contribute.

Drivers: Newness, opportunities to learn, feeling welcomed, structured onboarding.

Risks: Poor onboarding, unclear expectations, lack of connection can derail engagement early.

Soar Insights:

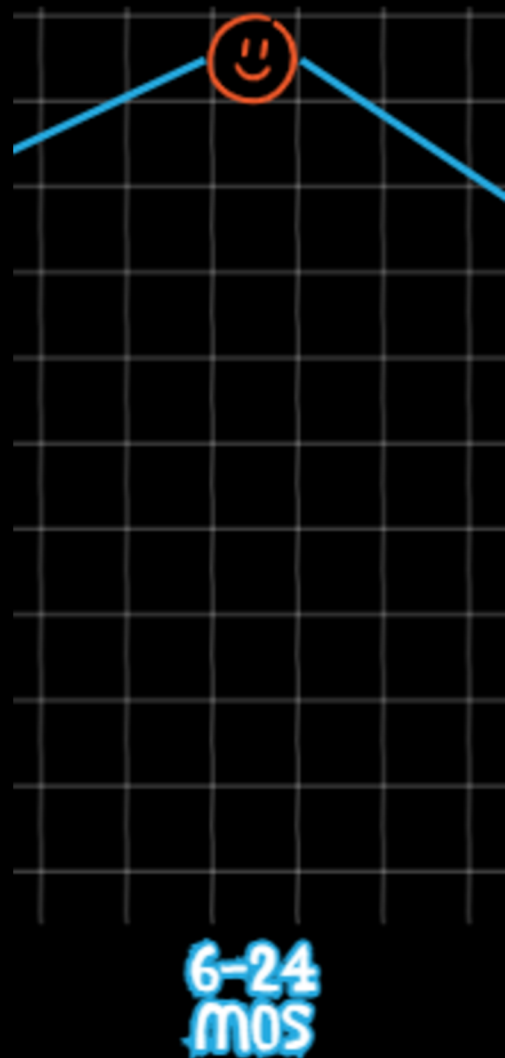
First impressions matter. Engagement here is driven by connection, clarity, and early wins.



Employee Engagement: 6–24 Months

Growth/Contribution Phase

Engagement Level: Peak



Emotions: Confident, motivated, energized by progress.

Drivers: Mastery of role, meaningful projects, learning opportunities, recognition.

Risks: Lack of challenge, stagnant development, or poor feedback can stall momentum.

Soar Insights:

This is when employees are most productive—and when leaders must invest in career growth and autonomy.

Employee Engagement: 2-4 Years

Plateau / Reflection Phase

Engagement Level: Variable



Emotions: Competent but possibly bored or restless.

Drivers: Opportunities for advancement, leadership roles, cross-functional exposure.

Risks: Complacency, unmet expectations, or feeling undervalued may spark disengagement or job hunting.

Soar Insights:

Look out for red flags – “I feel like I’m doing the same thing every day.”
Now is the time for re-engagement strategies.

Employee Engagement: 4+ Years

Decline / Disengagement Phase

Engagement Level: Declining

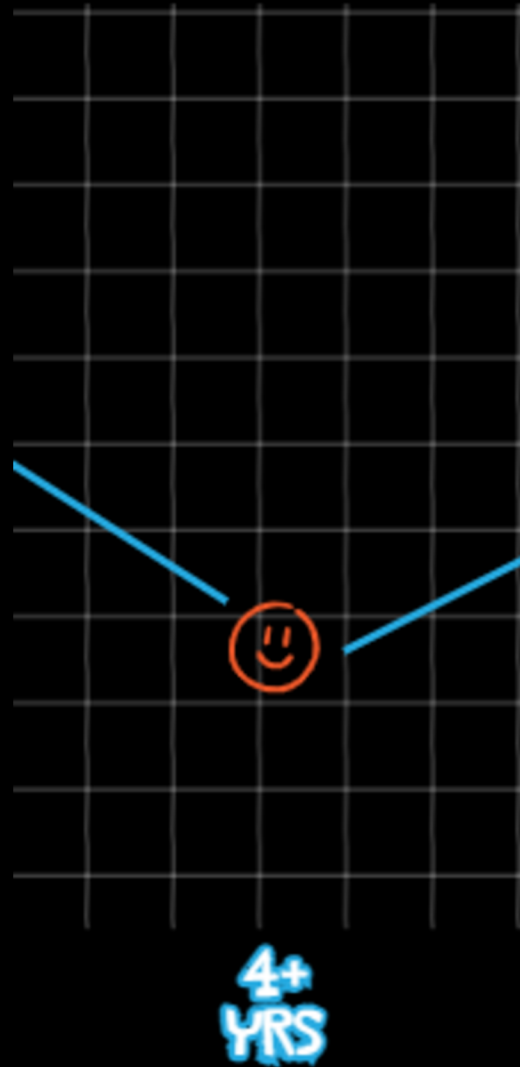
Emotions: Frustrated, possibly resentful.

Drivers: Job security, compensation (more than growth), loyalty or lack of options.

Risks: Turnover, quiet quitting, toxic influence on others.

Soar Insights:

Without career pathing, feedback, or new purpose, engaged employees can become liabilities—or leave.



Employee RE-Engagement or Exit

TWO PATHWAYS:

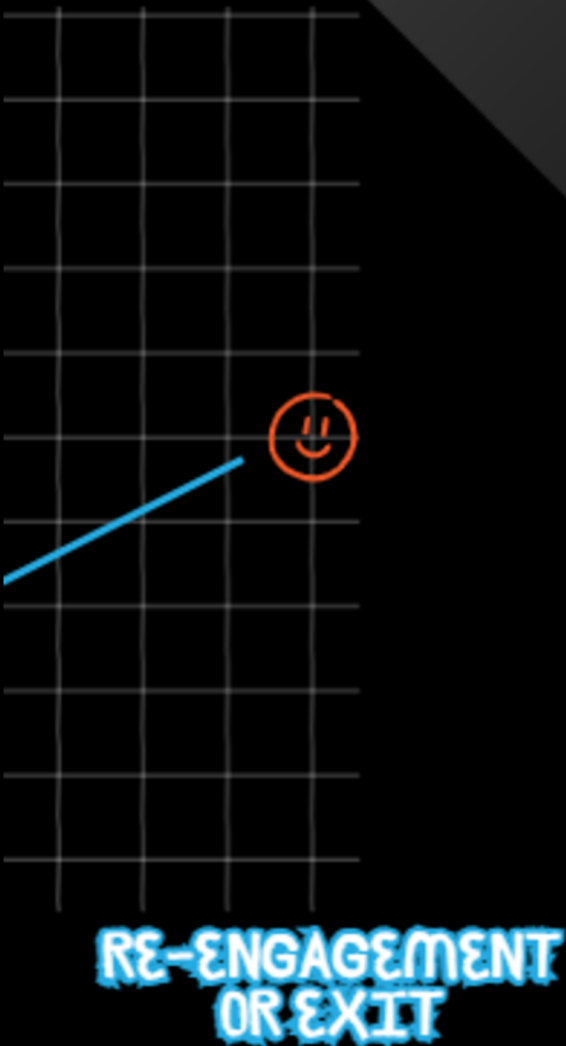
RE-ENGAGEMENT: Role redesign, internal mobility, additional paid time off to reflect, or new leadership can spark renewed enthusiasm.

EXIT: Employee leaves (voluntarily or involuntarily), often due to burnout, lack of development, or misalignment.

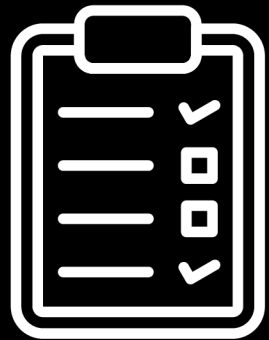
Soar Insights:

Winning cultures focus on continuous listening, to identify active disengagement early and redirect.

Tools such as HR Huddles, Pulse Surveys, and Annual Talent Reviews are highly impactful in keeping employees actively engaged.



Winning Retention Strategies – Keeping Top Performers Engaged



Build a Winning Company Culture

A strong company culture in a winning company is not just about perks or branding—it's the invisible operating system that drives every decision, behavior, and outcome. It's what makes people say, **"This place feels different. In a good way."**

What is a Winning Culture?

Understanding Employee
Needs & Motivations

Career Development
Flexibility
Purpose
Recognition



Work-Life Balance
Career Development &
Growth

What is a Winning Culture?



Clarity of Purpose & Values

- The company has a clear, compelling mission that employees believe in.
- Core values are lived, not laminated—they guide hiring, feedback, recognition, and strategy.
- Every employee understands not just what they do, but why it matters.

Soar Insights: “We help people belong” isn’t just a tagline—it’s how teams design products, write emails, and treat each other.

What is a Winning Culture?



Psychological Safety & Trust

- People feel safe to speak up, take risks, challenge ideas, and admit mistakes without fear.
- Leaders are approachable and accountable—they walk the talk.
- Mistakes are seen as opportunities to learn, not as ammunition to blame.

Soar Insights: A strong culture says: “Your voice matters. Your growth matters. You matter.”

What is a Winning Culture?



Respect, Inclusion, & Belonging

- Diversity isn't just about representation—it's about true inclusion and equity.
- Employees feel seen and valued for who they are, not just what they produce.
- Celebrations, traditions, and policies reflect a wide range of identities and experiences.

Soar Insights: In winning cultures, people don't just fit in—they thrive as their authentic selves.

What is a Winning Culture?



High Standards with Humanity

- Excellence is expected—but not at the cost of burnout or inhuman demands.
- Feedback is candid and compassionate.
- People are challenged and supported to do the best work of their lives.

Soar Insights: High performance is fueled by meaning, not fear.

What is a Winning Culture?



Ownership & Autonomy

- Employees are trusted to make decisions and own outcomes.
- There's freedom in how work gets done—as long as it aligns with goals and values.
- Micromanagement is replaced with clear goals, context, and support.

Soar Insights: People take initiative because they care, not because they're told to.

What is a Winning Culture?



Learning & Growth are Prioritized

- There's a culture of continuous learning—failures, feedback, and curiosity are celebrated.
- Leaders actively develop talent and promote from within.
- Employees feel like their career will evolve meaningfully if they stay.

What is a Winning Culture?



Consistency & Integrity

- What the company says externally matches the employee experience internally.
- Leadership decisions reflect stated values—even when it's hard.
- Culture is not dependent on one charismatic founder—it's systemic and sustainable.

Signs of a Winning Culture in Action...

Winning Culture Shows up in...

Employee Retention

People stay because they're growing, not stuck.

Candidate Attraction

People seek you out—not just for the job, but the “experience”.

Innovation & Agility

Teams adapt, experiment, and solve big problems faster.

Customer Experience

Happy employees = happy customers.

Reputation & Impact

You're admired inside and outside the industry.

Winning Culture Shows up in...

Work-life Balance

Career Development & Growth



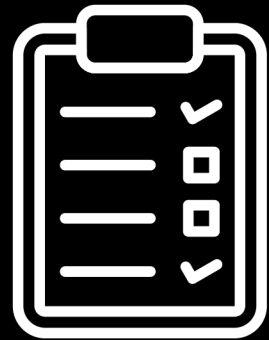
You've Built a Winning Culture

Now What?

Career Development
Flexibility
Purpose
Recognition

Work-Life Balance
Career Development &
Growth

Winning Retention Strategies – Keeping Top Performers Engaged



Work-Life Balance

Purpose-Driven Alignment

- Employees understand how their work contributes to meaningful outcomes.
- Work is designed to maximize impact, not just time spent—discouraging “busy work” and burnout.
- Leaders prioritize results over hours, empowering autonomy.

Soar Insights: A team that hits its targets can leave early without guilt. Performance speaks louder than presence.

Clear Boundaries and Respect for Time

- No expectation to answer emails after hours or on weekends.
- Leaders model healthy boundaries themselves—no “always on” culture.
- Meetings are purposeful, with an agenda, and not scheduled over personal time or lunch breaks.

Soar Insights: Culture check: Do you encourage people to take their PTO and actually unplug

Winning Retention Strategies – Keeping Top Performers Engaged



Work-Life Balance

Flexibility without Penalty

- Remote, hybrid, and flex-hour options are equitable—not tied to seniority or "favoritism."
- People can attend to life (kids, eldercare, health) without being penalized in performance reviews.
- Work is designed to fit into life, not override it.
- Goals and expectations are clearly defined, and team members are held accountable for results

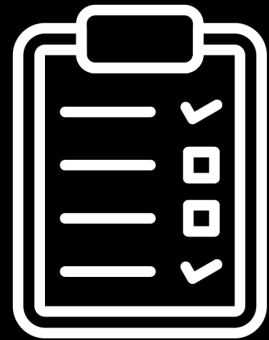
Soar Insights: Trust employees to know when and how they work best.

Psychological Safety and Support

- Employees feel safe saying "I'm overwhelmed" or asking for support.
- Managers check in regularly on capacity, not just productivity.

Soar Insights: Mental health is treated with the same importance as physical health—access to resources, open dialogue, and stigma-free policies.

Winning Retention Strategies – Keeping Top Performers Engaged



Work-Life Balance

Celebration of Sustainability

- Heroes aren't just the ones who pull late nights—they're the ones who build systems that prevent the need to.
- Promotions and recognition go to those who lead with balance, not just brute effort.

Soar Insights: Motto of a winning culture – We don't win by burning out, we win by building up!

**When team members have
work-life balance,
they feel like...**

Winning Retention Strategies – Keeping Top Performers Engaged

“
MY MANAGER DOESN'T
MICROMANAGE WHEN I LOG IN
OR OUT-THEY CARE ABOUT
MY GOALS & OUTCOMES.

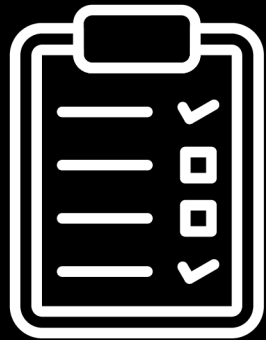
“
I CAN TAKE CARE OF
MY FAMILY AND STILL
GROW MY CAREER.

“
WE'RE ALL DRIVEN, BUT
NO ONE GLORIFIES
BURNOUT HERE.

“
I HAVE ENERGY AT THE END
OF THE DAY-FOR MY
FAMILY, HOBBIES, AND
MYSELF.

They will seek...
**Career Development
& Growth**

Winning Retention Strategies – Keeping Top Performers Engaged



Career Development & Growth

Growth is a Core Value, Not Just a Perk

- Learning is baked into the culture—it's not "extra," it's expected.
- Leaders actively sponsor and support development as a strategic priority, not just HR's responsibility.
- Career conversations are ongoing, not reserved for performance reviews.

Personalized, Not One-Size-Fits-All

- Employees have individual development plans aligned to their strengths, interests, and aspirations.
- Growth isn't limited to a vertical ladder—it includes lattices: lateral moves, cross-training, project rotations.
- People are encouraged to shape their own journey—whether that's toward leadership, mastery, or innovation.

Soar Insights: A winning culture celebrates multiple definitions of success, not just climbing the ladder. Career Paths allow team members to soar.

Winning Retention Strategies – Keeping Top Performers Engaged



Career Development & Growth

Transparent Career Paths

- Clear internal tool that shows what's possible across departments and levels.
- Role expectations and competency models are public, structured, and actionable.
- People know what skills, mindsets, and impact are required to grow—no mystery, no “politics.”

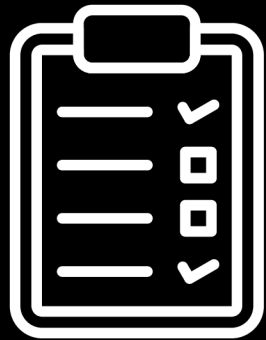
Soar Insights: Career Paths establish performance, behavioral, and educational expectations for a clear trajectory for growth. This is NOT always a path to leadership, but to other technical roles, as well.

Managers as Growth Coaches

- Managers are development partners, not just task assigners.
- They give regular feedback, suggest stretch assignments, and advocate for their team's advancement.
- Career growth is discussed quarterly or monthly, not annually.

Soar Insights: Winning cultures train managers to ask: “How are you growing this month—and how can I help?”

Winning Retention Strategies – Keeping Top Performers Engaged



Career Development & Growth

Learning is Continuous and Just-In-Time

- Employees have access to microlearning, mentorship, and real-world practice—not just courses.
- Internal knowledge-sharing, shadowing, and peer coaching are encouraged.
- Learning is tied to business needs: “Here’s what you need to learn to solve today’s challenges.”

Soar Insights: Career Paths establish performance, behavioral, and educational requirements for a clear trajectory for growth.

Managers as Growth Coaches

- Managers are development partners, not just task assigners.
- They give regular feedback, suggest stretch assignments, and advocate for their team’s advancement.
- Career growth is discussed quarterly or monthly, not annually.

Soar Insights: Intentional growth opportunities can best be managed using the 70-20-10 approach to learning.

The 70•20•10 Approach to Learning

70

Learning from Experience

Workplace Integration of Learning

On-the-job Training
Problem Solving
Job Shadowing
Project Assignments
Job Rotations

20

Learning from Others

Learning Momentum

Coaching
Mentoring
Feedback
Blogs
YouTube
Podcasts
Books

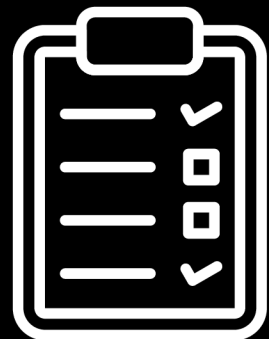
10

Structured Learning

Learning Event

Workshops
Webinars
Online Learning Portals
In-Person Training

Winning Retention Strategies – Keeping Top Performers Engaged



Career Development & Growth

Stretch Opportunities and Recognition

- Employees are regularly offered stretch projects, temporary leadership roles, or task forces.
- High potential employees are spotted early and guided—not left to stagnate.
- Contributions toward growth (like mentoring others or building systems) are recognized and rewarded.

Soar Insights: Growth isn't just about the self—it's about lifting others too. Conduct an Annual Talent Review with company leadership to identify key talent in the organization and be intentional about how you will recognize and develop each of these team members to keep them engaged. Bonus Points – Create a score card for each and review actionable outcomes on a quarterly basis.

Safe to Try, Fail, and Learn

- People are encouraged to experiment, share lessons learned, and bounce back from failure.
- Psychological safety allows employees to raise their hands for opportunities—even if they're not "ready."
- Feedback is framed as a gift, not a performance warning.

Soar Insights: When feedback is continuous, it becomes less uncomfortable and more valued.

Winning Retention Strategies – Keeping Top Performers Engaged

Signs of Growth in a Winning Culture

WINNING CULTURE SAYS...

“LET’S CO-CREATE YOUR DEVELOPMENT PLAN.”

“YOU CAN LEAD FROM ANY SEAT.”

“HERE’S A NEW CHALLENGE BASED ON YOUR GOALS.”

“FAIL FAST, LEARN FAST.”

TOXIC CULTURE SAYS...

“JUST DO YOUR JOB AND WAIT YOUR TURN.”

“PROMOTION IS ONLY FOR MANAGERS.”

“WE ONLY INVEST IN TOP PERFORMERS.”

“MISTAKES WILL COST YOU YOUR REPUTATION.”

Boosting Employee Engagement for Long-Term Success

It begins with you...read your employees' stories

Employee Engagement Survey

- Be prepared for the feedback
- Be transparent with results
- Be ready to take at least 3 key actions
- Allow team members to give feedback anonymously



SOAR INSIGHTS

Reach New Heights with Employee Retention Strategies

SWOT Analysis

Pulse Surveys

HR Huddles

Annual Talent Review

Training and Development Platform

Career Paths

Individual Development Plans

Develop Core Values & Mission Statement

Mentorship Program

Recognition Program

STAY Interviews



Winning Recruitment Strategies – Finding & Hiring the Right Talent

Importance of a strong employer brand

- Attracts the right talent
- Improves retention & engagement
- Enhances reputation, leads to more word-of-mouth
- Differentiates you in a competitive talent market
- Reduces time and cost per hire

Soar Insights: Culture, growth opportunities, and leadership values are now the differentiators—not ping pong tables and pizza parties.

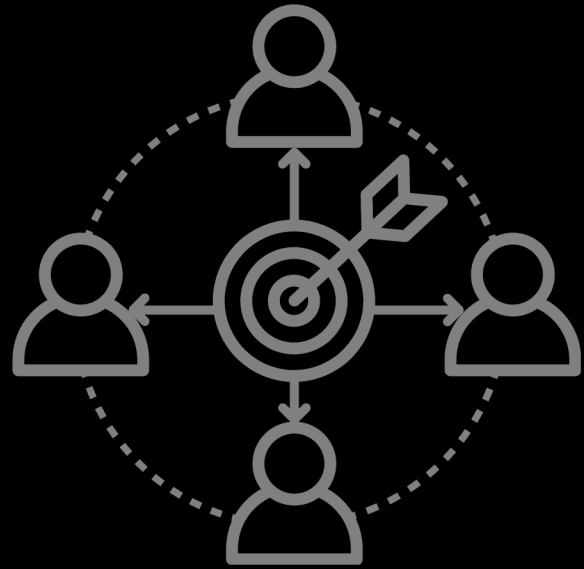


Winning Recruitment Strategies – Finding & Hiring the Right Talent

Crafting Job Descriptions and Posts

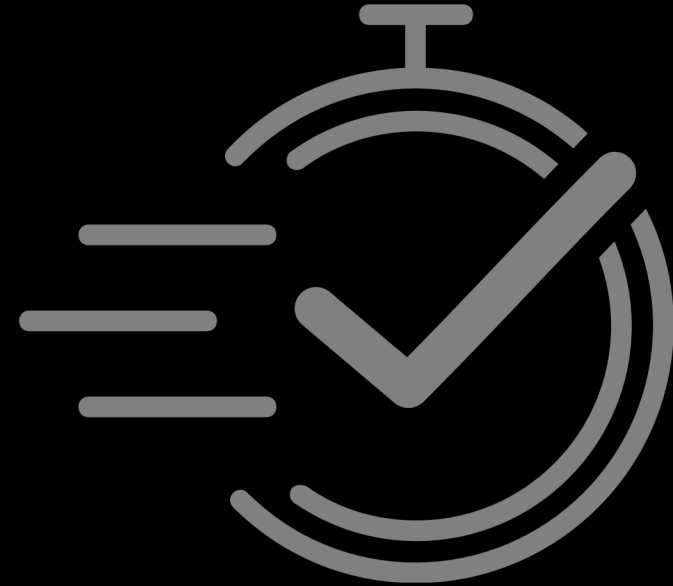
- Start with a hook, lead with purpose, include a quick & exciting summary of the impact
- Tell them WHY your company is worth it, include a “Why You’ll Love it Here” section
- Clarify the role, but keep it human, include verbs like “You’ll lead the charge”
Highlight what success looks like, this highlights this role has purpose and direction
- Focus on growth and impact, include learning opportunities or “How this role could evolve...”
- Be inclusive and intentional with language, focus on outcomes, not just years of service
Make it easy to apply!!, avoid clunky processes – Top Talent won’t wait!

The Power of Employee Referrals



Higher Quality Hires

- Referred candidates are often pre-vetted by employees who understand the culture and performance standards.
- They're more likely to be a values and skills match from day one.



Faster Time-to-Hire

- Referrals cut down sourcing and screening time—candidates come in warm and ready.
- Streamlined processes = faster onboarding and ramp-up.



Greater Retention

- Referred hires tend to stay longer—they were recruited by someone who knows the company well.
- They're more loyal and engaged early in their journey.



Cost-Effective Sourcing

- Lower cost per hire compared to job boards or agencies.
- One-time referral bonuses are far cheaper than long recruitment cycles.

Building an Effective Referral Program



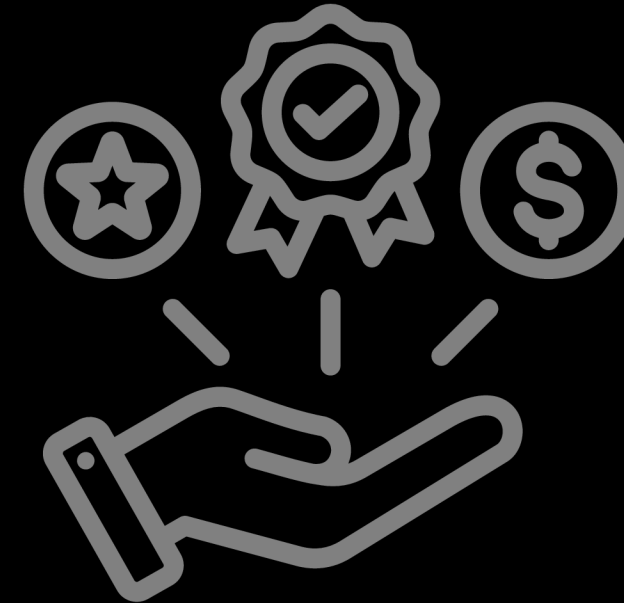
Keep it Simple

- Make it easy to submit a referral
- Include role descriptions and what a good referral looks like.



Communicate

- Promote openings internally with context: “We’re growing this team—know someone amazing?”
- Use newsletters, dashboards, or town halls.
- Keep referrers updated on their candidate’s progress.
- Celebrate wins and let everyone see the impact of referrals.



Rewards

- Cash bonuses, extra PTO, public recognition, or donation to a cause.
- Reward tiers for volume or high-impact hires (e.g., leadership roles).



Culture

- Make referrals part of onboarding, performance conversations, and leadership incentives.
- Highlight successful referrals as culture carriers in all-hands or spotlights.

Streamline the Hiring Process for Success

1

Define Success Upfront

Create clear role profiles with aligned competencies, values, and expectations. Everyone should know what a great hire looks like before interviews begin.

2

Keep the Process Lean and Fast

Limit to 3–4 meaningful steps. Remove unnecessary layers and make decisions quickly—top candidates won't wait around.

3

Use Smart Tech to Save Time

Automate scheduling, screening, and assessments with tools—but always keep the process personal and human where it counts.

4

Deliver a Standout Candidate Experience

Communicate clearly, offer feedback, and showcase your culture. Make every interaction reflect who you are as a company.

5

Train and Empower Hiring Managers

Equip managers to lead inclusive, values-aligned interviews—and make them active champions of the hiring process.

Onboarding for Retention & Success



Culture

"Welcome to who we are and why it matters."

THINK: Mission, Values, Team Norms, Leadership Expectations, How Decisions Are Made



Connection

"You belong here, and we're glad you're here."

THINK: Peers, Leaders, Cross-Functional Key Team Members, Informal Team Events, Social Safety Nets



Clarity

"Here's how you'll contribute—and succeed."

THINK: 30-60-90 day roadmap with goals, check-ins, feedback loops, performance expectations, success metrics, celebration of small wins

Measuring Success & Continuous Improvement

What to Measure:

- Employee Engagement Score
- Manager Effectiveness Rating
- Internal Mobility Rate
- Time to Hire
- Quality of Hire
- Offer Acceptance Rate
- Voluntary Turnover Rate
- Absenteeism
- First-Year Attrition Rate

Why it Matters:

- Highly engaged employees = higher performance and lower turnover.
- People don't leave companies—they leave managers.
- Strong indicator of career development and satisfaction with growth paths.
- Long processes cost you top candidates and revenue.
- It's not just about filling roles—it's about filling them well.
- Low rates may signal a weak process, uncompetitive packages, or poor experience.
- High voluntary exits are a sign of disengagement or external appeal.
- Think of absenteeism as the "check engine light" of employee satisfaction.
- Strong onboarding = lower early turnover and stronger ROI on hiring.

How will you measure your Talent Strategy?



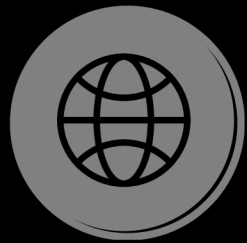
Questions?

Courtney Kasserman

Cornerstone Talent Solutions



330.465.7691



cornerstonetalentsolutions.com



winning@cornerstonetalentsolutions.com

