

## **EMPLOYERS OF CHOICE – WHY THEY ATTRACT STAFF LOYALTY**

*I wrote this article in 2012 and now (2023) re-publishing it . As a Life Enjoyment Mentor, I got used to being told I am ahead of my time. Barring the first part of this article, it could have been written today. People have always wanted to enjoy their best life.*

*Covid effectively ended the rule of the work ethic. It's being replaced with what I call a Development Ethic ([click here](#)). Am I still ahead of my time?*

One of the biggest decisions taken by western society businesses in the last twenty years or so has come back to bite them. I refer to the decision around 1990 that the cost of permanent staff was too high to sustain and, as much as possible, work should be out-sourced to contract or casual labour. The consequent widespread sacking of staff - especially in the middle management ranges - had a devastating impact on the workforce culture, including workers' dependants.

Loyalty - both ways - died almost overnight. The concept of long-term commitment to the one employer, rewarded with a retirement pension and the proverbial gold watch when they reached their 60's, became a thing of the past. Term contracts for specified objectives became the norm.

It was also the beginning of work life balance as a conflict between the wants of the individual and the wants of her/his employer.

It didn't take long for the workers, including people new to the workforce, to find a positive response to this situation. If business doesn't want to be responsible for workers' careers, the workers were going to have to be responsible for their own.

Workers became their own managers. They began to:

- develop and refine their transferable skills to maintain high employment prospects in a dynamic marketplace.
- choose jobs and employers that best suited their personal goals and enabled them to periodically adapt to changing needs,
- work for as many employers as they wished - consecutively or concurrently, for as long as suited their needs and offering the conditions they wanted.

The rest, as they say, is history. This new flexibility has suited the rapidly changing, stressful, pressurized 21st century lifestyle, offering many benefits to the employer, the employee, industry and society in general.

But business hadn't bargained on other cultural shifts that were going to greatly complicate the issue:

- an ageing workforce,
- a changing interest in life priorities by many 50+ baby boomer managers, and
- people who make up the emerging younger workforce no longer see work as the driver of life but more a passenger.

All of this has given rise to the emergence of the concept of the Employer of Choice offering a range of benefits over and above the money. Flexible working conditions, work/life balance - lovely in theory but difficult in practice - childcare / eldercare provisions and expanded maternity leave involving both the mother and the father are just some of the provisions that have surfaced since the 1990's.

The boot is therefore now on the other foot. Far from business determining the future of the workforce, the workforce now determines the future of business. The dollars that come from work continue to be of major importance but not so the commitment to any one employer. Workers want more than money - they want employment that enables them to achieve their personal dreams and goals.

Employers now find themselves in a struggle to attract, retain, nurture and sustain the best people. The struggle is heightened by the fact that such workers are not sitting at an employment agency, waiting for offers. They are already committed to working for their current employer of choice. Powerful incentives are needed to encourage them to move to another organization, one that is often in direct competition with their present employer. Dollars alone are not enough.

In seeking the best incentives, employers are slowly (I repeat, slowly) beginning to recognize that, to find out what will attract the right individual, they have to look outside their workplace environment. They need to look beyond the person's potential working capabilities and embrace the fact that staff are whole human beings, driven by their reasons for living, not just for working.

To add an interesting twist, the people who are trying to attract staff are themselves not impervious to these cultural changes. They too are increasingly reviewing their life goals and employment aims.

Business, globally, is discovering the need to harmonize its drive for economic success with the desire of its workers to achieve personal goals. It's a bit like satisfying customer demands - you don't need to know every individual person's unique needs but you do have to design your product knowing each buyer will have a personal reason in mind for buying it.

Employers of Choice understand that every employee, or potential employee :

- is on their own personal journey through life, only some of which is spent in the workplace
- has a unique set of life aims and objectives
- chooses workplace cultures that best help them achieve those goals, and
- sees work not as an end in itself but as a means to other ends.

Purchasers buy on emotions - selecting products or services that make them feel good about themselves. We are more likely to commit to employers who appeal to our emotions as much as, if not more than, our pockets. Organizations that cultivate this type of workplace culture are more likely to gain strong staff commitment, sustained high levels of work productivity, reduced long-term stress, improved workforce stability and the vital edge over their competitors.