

What about the PEOPLE?

Investments in human capital can mean breakthroughs for your business.

by Emily Bowers, BEMA

Commissioned by the American Bakers Association and American Society of Baking and released in 2016, Cypress Research Associates' "Workforce Gap in US Commercial Baking" study documented the existing and future labor issues facing our industry. When analyzing the study, it is easy to identify a need for companies of all sizes to take a fresh look at how motivating and training their manufacturing associates can maximize effectiveness and retention. Turnover is an expensive problem. What can companies do to keep their highest-value resources, the people?

Many workplace training programs are focused entirely on the products and the equipment, and while these things are important, they are practically useless without the people. Organizations cannot expect a robust and engaged workforce if all efforts and attention are placed on the products and equipment. High-performing associates — at every level — are those that are engaged, motivated and understood. Baking companies must invest equally in both skill-based and people-focused development programs to attract and retain today's talent pool.

Motivation is key to an efficient workforce. It underpins why — and how — people work. Motivation in the workplace drives people's desire to work hard and produce great results ... and do it all over again day after day. So how do you motivate employees, especially if a monetary incentive isn't an option?

For starters, include all levels of associates in the company's vision. People want to feel like they are a part of something greater. Understanding the business

and what makes it successful will lead to a better understanding of what needs to happen on the front lines, which ultimately ensures job security. And let's face it, job security is motivating.

By 2020, millennials will make up at least 50% of the American workforce, and they thrive in environments that are connected and collaborative. Mentoring or other onboarding programs get new associates involved from day one and motivate them as active, engaged members of the company. Make this inclusion part of your culture.

Go straight to the source: Ask your employees what motivates them. Conduct surveys or set up pre-shift team meetings to talk about important issues such as what people would like to see as performance incentives and what they think could be improved in the workplace.

While there is a shortage of workers to fill jobs in the baking industry, there is not a shortage of avail-

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able training in the marketplace. Trade associations, third-party vendors and consultants are all eager to provide training to organizations. Additionally, many larger companies have made the effort to create their own development programs, attempting to fill the training void.

These solutions often address two issues: skill-based deficiencies and high-level leadership develop-

ment. Acquisition of technical skills and educating the industry's highest-level leaders is important and should continue. However, those training efforts affect a very small percentage of the overall working population. What about everyone else? What about the skills of those who have already been chosen for

technical and leadership development?

Voluntary turnover rates are almost twice as high for non-management positions as for management positions, yet non-management associates are rarely offered training opportunities. At every level of an organization, professional development focusing on topics like teamwork and communication will improve both culture and retention. According to a recent Gallup report, millennials care deeply about development in their current roles and when looking for new jobs. An astounding 87% of millennials rate "professional or career growth and development opportunities" as important to them in a job, as opposed to 69% of non-millennials who say the same. There has never been a more important time to invest in training.

If you need a litmus test to be convinced that programs aimed at motivating and educating your associates are a good investment far beyond the dollars saved due to reduced turnover, consider this: A company should care for and invest in its people the same way it expects people to care for and invest in the customer. •

BEMA-U creates leadership, transformed

In the midst of the current workforce gap facing the baking industry, BEMA has created a variety of turnkey programs under its BEMA-U platform. Learning environments should be flexible, and BEMA offers a number of workshops across the country and on-site.

Designed specifically for baking industry management, BEMA's Transformational Leadership program allows emerging professionals and mid-level managers to gain leadership insight applicable to their day-to-day work. The three-part series takes place in Chicago, each session covering specific topics. Visit www.bema.org/bema-u for more information and to register.

Session 1: April 4-5 | Session 2: May 16-17 | Session 3: Sept. 12-13