

Rehiring a Resigned Employee as a Talent Strategy Approach

Some businesses embrace a fairly rigid “no rehire” policies for a multitude of reasons. Often employees who resign have been viewed as lacking loyalty and being untrustworthy, thus, not eligible for rehire. Traditional arguments against rehire include the fear that the employee may leave the employer again, so employers have difficulty trusting the intentions of a former employee.

However, employers are rethinking longstanding practices that prohibit the rehire of “boomerang” employees—former employees who voluntarily left the company and now want to return. As the drain of talent and knowledge looms, hiring an individual whose talents are known, who is familiar with the business and its culture, and who can **immediately contribute to the bottom line is very appealing**. The induction expense of a rehire is also attractive to budget-conscious recruiting professionals as well. Perhaps most importantly, they can often provide competitive intelligence and a new perspective garnered through their experience with their interim employer.

Many employers are creating alumni programs as they can be an excellent, low-cost, high-ROI recruiting approach capable of producing top performing talent. Many employees who move on are tempted by higher income and promises of greener pastures. Often, the greener pastures turn out to be barren fields and, as we know, money is not necessarily the key ingredient to retaining the best employees. Corporate culture, responsibility, authority, empowerment, and non-monetary rewards are often the main motivators in retaining employees.

What, then, are the drawbacks to rehiring a former employee? Poorly managed rehire policies often do more damage than good. The reentry process must be carefully managed. First, probe the real reasons the employee initially left. Was it money, problems with management, or the business culture? Have any of those conditions changed since the individual left, so that he or she is likely to be any happier this time around? It is essential to inquire about the individual's reasons for wanting to return. Understanding the motivation to return can be key in determining whether the person should be rehired. It can also assist with organizational placement and assignment of duties and responsibilities.

Without thoughtful communication, hiring a former employee to a higher level position may send the wrong message to the current workforce. Employees may get the message that the only way to get ahead in the company is to leave and return at a higher level with greater compensation. This could undermine loyalty and make those who stayed behind feel betrayed. This resentment may be manifested by behavior such as employees not being cooperative or collegial. To gain optimum value of rehire, the employer should carefully address the attitudes of existing employees towards rehiring. Fears and concerns about the individual's return should be addressed to ensure a smooth transition.

Alternatively, if “rehiring” is managed and communicated appropriately, employees may be convinced that the firm is a preferred place to work, made obvious by those who left and want to rejoin. Rehire may also challenge the “myth” about the grass always being greener. To be successful, the end result should be governed by fairness to those who remained with the company and those who choose to rejoin. If managed carefully and effectively, rehire can be an effective tool to ensure corporations meet their goals and objectives.