

# Retention and Engagement: Prioritize Your Employee

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## SPEAKERS

Halie Morris

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Hello everyone and welcome back to The Business of Cleaning. This is our second episode of our mini-season here in December of 2020. Yes, I know this year has been crazy. We're coming back though, to the idea of employee retention and engagement. I know this is a huge thing right now, especially given the economic crisis that we've been dealing with for far too many months. What I wanted to dive into for the second episode is prioritizing the employee. I know with our first episode where we talked about in communication, we talked about making sure that that communication is open and streamlined, but I really want to stress the fact that, yes, you are in business to clean and do specific things like that and it is important to keep that goal in mind, but if you're not prioritizing the employee and the employee relation, you're going to lose it. It's like any kind of relationship you have. If you don't prioritize the other person, you're going to drop the ball and at the end of the day, that relation is going to disappear or become toxic to the point where it's miserable for both parties. You don't want that with your employee and that's why we have such low retention rates and high turnover as we do. Because we're so busy grinding sometimes that we don't get back to the point, which is taking care of the relationship. So one thing that we really need to prioritize and get back to that we're not usually great at, is including non-work-based activities. Yes, I do mean like the baseball games and things like that, but sometimes just chances in the office for employees to come together and talk breaks in the monotony. I know right now, it's a little difficult

because we're not physically in the office. With many of our janitorial staff, they're usually spread out, working different shifts anyways, but things like pizza parties or opportunities for employees to come together and just discuss the different projects and jobs they work on, what works well, what makes the customers happy from their side, where some are struggling, simple things like that, or even just family events. Right now a lot of this is going to be Zoom-based perhaps and a lot of our staff and a lot of those that we work with, do have families and it's what made it particularly hard this year is because taking care of schooling and taking care of work can be a lot for someone. So including those non work-based-activities decreases stress, increases a feeling of inclusion when work is organizing and prioritizing these events versus employees. It just gives a sense of being appreciated. So those are really great ways. Of course, there's the obvious of having comprehensive benefits and compensation. You definitely want to make sure that when you're taking care of the employee, you're actually taking care of their needs and that means that your benefit package is what is needed. It fills all of those voids that they may have as far as health care and then also that the compensation itself is competitive and enough for them to sustain their life. Paying a living wage is vital and of course one of the most debated subjects in this country right now. But look at where your markets at, look at what your employees need, look at what you're able to pay, and make a good judgment from there. At the end of the day, if you can't pay enough, you're not going to keep the employees because they do have to fulfill their needs. It's the same with the benefits If they're not having their basic needs met, they're not going to be able to stay. Now when this comes back to the employee, the first thing, their first point of contact with you after being hired is going to be their onboarding and training. So not only do you need to lure them and with good package of benefits and compensation, but you need to be able to keep them past the first 90 days to actually make the employment relationship valuable on both sides. If you cannot onboard your employee in a good way, if you can't give them the training they need, make them feel appreciated. make them understand who you are and where their role is in the company, then you've lost them from the start. So making sure that you do your research, you understand what you need to train your employees on, and how long it takes them to learn that material. Make sure you offer a diverse way of learning, wherever possible with the cleaning tasks and things like that. Yes, you want to lots of hands-on wherever possible, you want to be able to be flexible, even given current climate where we want to be as hands off as possible, hands-on training is vital, but also offering videos and readings for those people who absorb well with that. Making sure that one-on-one time with supervisors in training is always available as important as well, so that they can see any gaps with the new hire and help fill them or any places they are struggling so they can nip it in the butt early, that you don't have that problem later going on with onboarding. There's also the idea of flexibility that's floating around in the world right now and so when you're prioritizing the employee, one of the things that comes with the learning package is "If you want to work here, we have flexible work hours. We have

flexible scheduling." I don't know about you, but rarely is that ever actually true. So practice what you preach if you are one of those companies that expresses real flexibility as a huge thing, or just being open in the beginning with how far that flexibility stretches. One of the most important things when prioritizing employees is that you don't leave education at the 90 day mark. Keep it going. Invest in cleaning education. Invest in varied education. There is not just one type of education you can provide for your employees. They don't have to be in a leadership position to get additional education. They don't have to be in a leadership position to get management training, leadership training, or any of these other things. Sometimes your best leaders are tucked in with that new hire class that you brought in five months ago and they just need a little extra development, and a little more assessment and communication on your part. So make sure that you're providing on getting education. It makes them feel appreciated. It raises the work quality. I know that a big thing right now is making sure that we're raising the standard for the cleaning industry to match what we expect our businesses to put out. We're actually doing what we're saying we're doing, so to speak. That's important as well, continued education. Sometimes that's as simple as finding guest speaking opportunities for your employees to attend, or trade shows for them to go to, things like that. A lot of them are virtual right now, so there's no travel excuses. Just look things up and do your research- we provided a great episode on that- and find those opportunities for your employees. That kind of goes into the idea that we talked about last episode as well, of career development. This can be a touchy subject for some because for many coming into the cleaning industry, yes, you're going to be able to train people up in managerial roles and other roles within the company, but some people are going to essentially train out of your company. What I mean by that is maybe you're working with somebody who just started college, and they just need the part time job, on the side, in the evenings, because it's very convenient work hours. They're still worth your time and energy to actually help them get to that next goal and the reason why is, if you get them at the beginning of college, or partway through college, you could have them for two or four years. You could have a really solid employee. But if you don't invest in helping them develop their career, you don't invest in them as a person, they're going to not put in all their effort to have a job. They're not going to want to be present and it's going to show in their quality of work. Maybe that same employee, when they get to their six month or their year review has a bad performance review and it's not necessarily that they can't do the job. They don't want to do the job. The company did not invest in them, so they did not invest in the company. As a person, you're the same way. You can't fault them for that, but you do need to consider where is this person going in life? How can I help them get there? How does this benefit me? And yes, it almost always benefits you to put time and energy into thinking about what your employees wants and needs are. There's also the idea of, if you are making decisions, make sure you always bring it back to the employee. Sometimes it's very easy to say, introduce a new software, or introduce a new cleaning product, because it's got all

these great reviews, or it seems really comprehensive and great to me. But if you don't decide to tie it back to the employee, maybe it works great at management's level, or maybe it seems like a really, really great idea, but the implementation doesn't happen, or it doesn't happen properly. Because these guys are setting here and you're just pushing a new product on, they didn't buy it or it doesn't actually work for them as well as you thought and there's a better product for your team out there. You didn't know because you didn't talk to them or you didn't tie that decision back to them. Make sure that everything comes back to your team and your employees will help you make more cohesive decision making across the board and maybe you don't see the dramatic results right off the bat that you want but overall performance is going to continue to increase when again, you're investing in the people doing the job. For some, it may be that you can help create your schedule in the beginning, but it'll be a set schedule for so many months or a set schedule for so many weeks. That actually might be flexibility that works with somebody, but if they're thinking that they can just come and go when they choose, or they can leave a shift early or something like that and that's your flexibility, that lack of communication is going to create dissatisfaction in the work environment and the employee's going to leave probably in the first week or two is that. So alternative scheduling methods, whether that's working with managers and their team members to help create a schedule together, or having a rotational set of schedules, you might be able to talk with your team and actually figure out what works better and have higher attendance from your employees on the job versus having that last minute two or three people that didn't show up to clean this building. What do we do? Call 10 minutes after the job was supposed to start? That sucks and not something you want to deal with. So work with your employees. Look at alternative methods of scheduling when you're doing that in the beginning of the month or beginning of employment. Really figure it out right now too, but anytime you can offer leniency with scheduling and leniency with employees is important. We realize some people don't have control over all of their circumstances. The babysitters calls off or something. Yes, you can't have somebody whose babysitter calls off every other day and they just don't show up, but if you have a good employee, or you have an employee that's really doing well, or maybe they just started and stuff comes up, work with them to see what's happening. Sometimes it might be just adjusting their schedule, or cutting back their hours for a short period of time and you retain a really good employee and only have to move a few parts versus hiring a new staff member because you lost somebody. So cut people some slack. Be reasonable. You're human. You know that when things come up that sometimes they're very difficult to handle and very unpredictable, especially if schools are online one month, hybrid the next and back online again by November. So plan accordingly. Know that there's going to be times where you have to concede some flexibility on your part as well. Also, consider breaks. Think about, right now that in the home environment, a lot of people are seeing the need to take breaks every hour or every couple hours for 5 to 10 minutes to get

outside and do things. So wherever possible, look at inserting more breaks, quick chances to take air and come back to the job with a fresh mind. It might take a different type of process or it might just mean segmenting things a little differently as far as cleaning schedules. If you're able, look at breaks or look at things. Also safety measures and health measures are big right now. So anything like that where you can just accommodate your employees needs is going to be super helpful in making that employee feel appreciated. As far as prioritizing the employee, these are all just suggestions that I'm making, but make sure you take in mind what works best for your employees. After talking to so many people over this past season, what I've seen is that the most successful companies constantly brought up their employees, because every decision and every process that happened, the employees are at the forefront. Considering that they make up your entire business, I can see why. So thank you for tuning in to this episode of The Business of Cleaning. We'll see you next week, when we're going to dive into more about how you can increase retention, lower turnover, and drive engagement with your staff so that you can ultimately do a better job of what you're in business to do. Thank you!