



# High Potential Employees:

Why They Leave & What  
You Can Do

Whitepaper



Losing employees to turnover is never fun, but it's especially painful when one of your top performers decides to leave. This has become an increasingly common issue in the modern workforce. Every organization wants to retain its high potential employees for the longest period of time because retaining great employees is crucial to the success of any team.

According to Microsoft, over 40% of the global workforce considered leaving their employer in 2021. Why? Because the key to retaining these high-potential employees is not just about financial compensation, these employees want more.



**Less than 50% of high performers are satisfied with their jobs.**



# Why Do High-Potential Employees Leave?

Why do high performers quit? Why are so many top performers so unhappy in their current roles? We've put together some of the top reasons top performers leave and some steps you can take today to keep them on your team.



## 1. They Don't Find Work Engaging Enough

You might make the mistake of thinking that your top performers are engaged because they're so productive and hard-working. You may be thinking, "how could they do all of that if they aren't highly engaged?" But the truth is, they might be less engaged than you think. And if you're not making constant efforts to engage them, that's probably the case.

## Why is it vital to engage high performers?

- If they're excelling at the job far beyond what anyone else on the team is doing, they might eventually get bored of doing the same tasks.
- If they're surrounded by a stagnant work environment or a team with underperformers, they can start to feel stuck and look around for another role on a team that's more at their level.

Don't forget to look at their managers to check for negative engagement factors. Employees who work for uninspiring leaders are only in the 9th percentile for satisfaction and happiness. If your top performers are stuck with lousy managers and your organization doesn't do anything about it, they're going to be disengaged and start job searching.

You can engage high performers by giving them more challenging and creative tasks and focusing on the "why." That helps keep things fresh and exciting and prevents them from jumping ship to something more exciting.



## 2. Their Career Development Is Limited

Your top performers know that if they're at the right company, they have plenty of exciting potential in their careers. Nothing is more frustrating to someone performing at their peak and making excellent contributions to the company than repeatedly being passed over for promotions or left in the same role too long. If your best people don't see how they can have a long and successful career at your company, they will be out the door in no time.

### How can you help them progress in their career at your company?

- It's important to have regular career development discussions with them. Talk about their goals and how they can achieve them at your company.
- Ongoing training is highly valued by top performers. Are you providing them with the opportunity to develop new skills?
- If you have seen a pattern of high-performing employees leaving because of career path frustration, this is a place for your team to figure out how you can make room for growth for the people you want to keep.

**1 in 5 high-performers** believes their aspirations don't match the career path their company has planned for them.

**1 in 4 high-performers** plan to leave within a year.



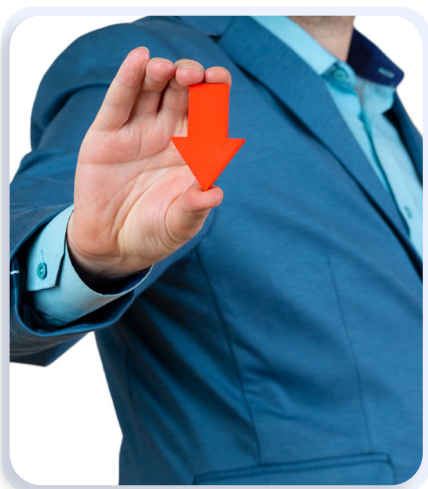
### 3. They're Overworked and Burnt Out

Did you know that a top performer can be up to 400% more productive than the average employee? That's incredible, but too many companies take advantage of this productivity in the short term but hurt themselves in the long run. If you reward your best people's incredible productivity by heaping more work on their plate, that's a recipe for dissatisfaction and burnout.

## How can you reward higher productivity in your top workers?

- You can have options for compensation that acknowledge their contributions go above and beyond, such as bonus programs or offering commission.
- You can also consider looking into flexible work options so that when they do an excellent job, they can have the option to take time off to recharge and relax. You can offer compressed workweeks, job sharing, flexible schedules, telecommuting, and more to attract and retain top employees.

Rewarding top performers adequately can be difficult in tighter financial times. However, it's vital, and there are ways to make it work. It may cost time and money to do this, but how much of both will your business lose if another high performer leaves?



### 4. You're Not Meeting Their Expectations for Benefits

Your top performers value benefits, rewards, and good compensation. Not so different from most employees. But with your high performers, they know that they have the skills to get those needs met elsewhere if your company isn't providing enough. So nothing will stop them from accepting jobs that offer what they're looking for or hunting for companies that will offer them what they need.



## What benefits can you offer that high performers value?

- Flexible schedules & remote work options give employees the flexibility and autonomy they're looking for.
- Encouraging employees to take vacation time and sick leave when they need to.
- Training and development programs that will help your employees grow.

Or you can get information from the source by sending out a survey to your employees and asking them what they want. If you're not providing a wide range of benefits that reward your highest-performing employees, they're likely to look elsewhere for them. And they're likely to find a good enough offer to tempt them to leave. This is the number one reason that some of the best employees quit.



### 5. They Don't Feel Valued

Everybody wants to feel valued and appreciated at work, it's a basic human need, and that is why recognition is so vital in the workplace. In this case, it's very easy to take what your top performers do for granted when they've been doing it for a while and make hard tasks look easy.

This is one of the main reasons that good employees quit. If the only reward your top performers get for going above and beyond is more work piled on their plate, they won't feel valued. Instead, they feel taken advantage of and will become unmotivated.

## So how do you recognize your top performers?

- A yearly bonus isn't going to cut it. Recognition needs to be frequent, specific, and even small to make an impact.
- You create a rewards program that can make your employees feel recognized when they've achieved something.
- Expressing your gratitude to high performers can also go a long way. A small "thank you" and making it known that you value their contributions and effort can mean a lot to them.

If you're not rewarding employees or going out of your way to make them feel recognized and appreciated, top performers are going to feel overlooked and undervalued. Then eventually, they're going to leave.



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