

Your Ministry Needs to Look and Feel Good: Retaining the Right Employees for Your Mission

By Carolyn B. Thompson

YOUR STAFF MEMBERS WANT CHALLENGING, fulfilling work with a high level of independence, and research shows they'll change jobs – five or more times in their lives. Want them to be committed with great enthusiasm to your ministry? Do so by taking a thorough look at your ministry's image.

Every year, evaluate your ministry's management practices with the critical eyes of potential staff, current staff, board, congregation/students/customers/whomever you serve and others. Ask insiders and outsiders to complete a "Look and Feel Good Report Card" on the various key areas that impact staff retention:

Purpose and Values Do your actions and those of other staff reflect the ministry's purpose? Do you know your values and those of the ministry and do you believe in them? Does your staff understand and believe in them?

Vision A healthy ministry has a vision that's the driving force behind its work. Is yours a driving force or just words?

Fiscal Structure Is it appropriate for your ministry and is it healthy?

Organizational Structure Is it appropriate for the current size of your ministry and do staff understand it?

Policies and Procedures Are they written, easy to read and do they reflect current employee practice?

Staff Training Does it exist, is it based on staff needs, is it enjoyable, does it make them feel confident and are staff rewarded by learning and growing?

Management Philosophy Are all managers practicing a similar style of management?

Physical Work Space Is it adequate for the number of staff and their functions? Is it an enjoyable place to spend most of your waking hours?

You'll discover your ministry is lacking in one or more of these areas every time you complete the "Report Card." That doesn't mean your ministry looks or feels bad. If your staff sees you actively working toward improvements and you've created an atmosphere of openness, trust and enjoyment, they'll produce quality work and become active participants in the improvements! Ministries that look and feel good will retain staff and inspire them to excellence.

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The Little Tools I Love

By Nick B. Nicholaou

THOSE OF US WHO USE TECHNOLOGY a lot have a collection of little tools and utilities we've come to rely on to help us get a lot done. Here are a few of my favorites that help me accomplish a lot.

Picasa2 I read about a program from Google (picasa.google.com) that many were praising as the best and easiest-to-use tool for editing digital pictures. I downloaded it from Google and found it extremely easy to use and powerful for most of the editing I do.

Cellular Modem WiFi is terrific, but finding a free hot spot can be challenging. If your community isn't heavily populated with them, or if you travel a bunch, you may like the solution I use. It's a cellular PCMCIA phone modem, and it keeps me connected in almost every location. These are even starting to show up as additions for motherboards! They're very handy.

Do some comparison shopping. Not all cards are created equal, and not all service providers offer wide coverage areas.

MindManager MindManager from MindJet (mindjet.com) is a great tool for brainstorming and taking notes. I use it in meetings and when I'm trying to make sense of a major project. It's easy to use, intuitive and powerful. It even interfaces with MS Project, MS Office and my PDA!

eWallet Like many, I have a PDA, on which I like to carry a lot of credit card and other sensitive information. eWallet from Ilium Software (iliumsoft.com) is a great solution. It encrypts its contents, allows you to categorize and manage your data, and even has easy to recognize symbols to help you identify various categories.

MyBible Speaking of PDAs, where would I be without MyBible from Laridian Software (laridian.com)! On my smartphone, I carry two complete versions of The Bible. These can be viewed separately or together for comparison, and come with a concordance for easy lookups. Of course, I had to show it to my pastor, so he wouldn't think I was playing solitaire while he was preaching!

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