

# Whos on your team?

By Kym Krey

WE HEAR CONSTANTLY THAT KEEPING STAFF LONG-TERM IS IMPORTANT FOR STABILITY AND PROFITABILITY, AND IT IS, BUT FOR THEM TO BE REAL ASSETS TO YOUR BUSINESS, THEY MUST BE ENGAGED, INSPIRED AND STILL AS COMMITTED AT THE 3 OR 4 YEAR MARK AS THEY WERE AT THE 3 MONTH POINT- OTHERWISE THEY'RE JUST TAKING UP SPACE.

Often I see staff who have been with the business for 4 or 5 years or even longer, who the salon owner would actually secretly like to move on because they're stale, bored, stuck in a rut or just not performing. Do you have one of these? They'll usually be the one who you tip-toe around at team meetings when you're trying to discuss a new idea or make some changes, because they H-A-T-E change and resist anything that might alter their comfy routine and threaten their comfort zone. If your long term employee is the one who vocally challenges whatever you want to implement in front of other staff, then they're no longer an asset to your business!

Employees go through a cycle of highs and lows over the duration of their employment. When they first start working for you, the excitement and challenge of a new job or different opportunity is enough to keep them enthused. But at the six-month mark, studies tell us that disengagement begins to set in. This might be in the form of a loss of enthusiasm, less energy or just starting to cut corners and not doing all the little things they happily did in the early days. Fast-forward to the six-year mark and often boredom has well and truly taken hold. There's no more excitement, no challenge, no new-ness and... often, no performance.

## WHY DID THIS HAPPEN?

A common reason is that we stopped paying them attention when they were no longer new. I have a proven recipe for staff performance: a couple of minutes morning & night; 5-10 minutes a week and 30-60 minutes a month. In the morning you set up the day and get them focused on their goals & focus points (consultation, re-booking; new ideas etc). At the end of the day, you have a quick chat about how they did, praise



them for the good results & talk about what could be better tomorrow. At the end of the week (or Monday/Tuesday next week) they present their week to you; e.g. 'My target was X and I did Y which was \$189 under. I think that was because my average \$ per client was a little lower than last week so I need to work on that. My retail was up \$45 on last week, so that was good. My rebooking was 42% which is a little better than it has been but I'm still trying for 50%'. You then give them support + ideas & suggestions and together you set their goals for the week ahead. Every month (yes, I strongly suggest EVERY month!) you sit and have a 'Powerchat' or feedback discussion. Keep it positive and light; don't make it intimidating and don't save up all the things they did wrong over the month and launch them all at once! I like to have staff fill out a form as preparation to make sure we get the most from the time invested & this asks things like:

- What do you feel you are doing well?
- What do you think you need to improve?
- What will you need to do to achieve this?
- Where do you need help/training/support?
- Anything else on your mind?

In my experience, when I got busy and

stopped making time for these one-on-one chats, they started getting off-track and losing the plot. When I made this time a priority, they kept their eye on the ball and their performance was markedly higher and I kept my finger on the pulse with issues in my business. I know you're busy but it's worth it!

## HOW DO YOU RE-ENGAGE LONG TERM EMPLOYEES?

- If they've been with you that long, surely they have valuable knowledge locked away in their brains. How can you access this and reap the benefit of your investment in them? Do you have younger staff whom they could mentor, train, coach or generally take responsibility for? Sometimes the long term employee just doesn't 'feel the love' anymore. They're not the new kid getting all the attention; they know how to do their job so no one spends time training them anymore; maybe they're just feeling like they're not important so the new responsibility of mentoring someone might just do the trick. Make sure you give them clear expectations of what you want, such as a written training plan for their 'mentoree' and a weekly update of

their performance and progress towards agreed goals. All of a sudden they feel important again and you're delegating time consuming responsibilities. A word of caution: don't just dump this on them and forget about it or expect them to do it as thoroughly as you would without continual input from you. When you stop 'checking in' weekly to see how things are going, they'll start feeling unloved again and lose interest. As a manager, your biggest responsibility is to make sure all your staff are progressing from where they are to where you need them to be. Let go of the notion that they should do this by themselves. They won't; they're not 'wired' that way & you'll only drive yourself crazy expecting them to and being constantly disappointed. It's all about where YOU focus your effort & they'll follow your lead.

- Haven't got around to writing that Policies and Procedures manual? If your long term staff member is capable of writing down how you do all of your regular procedures (reception, stock control, even cleaning routines) why not ask them to document each of these and then you can just 'polish' it and add to your manual. It's much faster & easier to make a few alterations to someone else's material than it is to write it from scratch & this may just mean you finally get that manual under way!
- Does anyone (other than you) take responsibility for roles like stock management; internal marketing (welcome letter, non-return letters, thanks for referring notes etc), writing your email newsletter, even creating and maintaining a facebook page for the salon? These are the things that salon owners are always telling me they struggle to find time to do, so why not let your staff step up and have a go? You check EVERYTHING before an order is placed or a letter or email is sent and of course, you check any changes to your website or facebook page before it goes live until that person has proven themselves to be competent. Give them clear instructions and procedures to follow to do each of the tasks as you would do it yourself. If you write those instructions down, you'll have something valuable for your policies manual!
- Give them a project: Is there a new service or product that you've been thinking of adding, like extensions or Keratin Protein smoothing treatment or even a make up range etc? Why not give them the project of researching all the companies on the market, getting information and pricing and reporting back to you with the results so you can make the final decision. Wouldn't that save some time and actually get something done that may have been put off for another 3-6 months?

### WHAT IF THERE'S NO IMPROVEMENT?

So you've tried several of these things and you still can't find a pulse or a sign or renewed enthusiasm? It's time for a chat. Don't put it off; don't tell yourself that it's no use- she'll just get upset or whatever excuse you normally use to avoid a conversation (I know- tough love!). Sit down, just the 2 of



you, and have a real conversation about what's going on. It might start like this: *'Cathy, you've been with me over 4 years now and you've built a great clientele and I certainly appreciate the contribution you've made to the business, but I am concerned that for the last few months you seem to have lost your enthusiasm. You don't seem as excited or happy as you used to be and I notice that you seem to be a little resistant when I bring new ideas to our team meetings. How are you feeling about your role here?'*

Unless she says something like *'Actually, I've been meaning to talk to you. I think it's time to move on'*, it actually doesn't matter too much what she says here about why it might be happening or if in fact, she agrees that it's happening because your next few sentences will be something like: *'So, of course you would understand that this has an impact on the business and as the owner/manager, I can't allow that to continue or to cause further damage, so I guess what I'm saying to you is that we need to either find a way to restore your commitment & enthusiasm to the level we need and maintain that or maybe consider that this is as far as we can go together & it might be time for you to find your next new challenge or opportunity. What do you think?'*

If you just cringed as you read that, I have some advice for you. If the horse is dead ..... get off! Sometimes we can hang on too long to people who are no longer adding to the business and we cause ourselves all sorts of heartache as a result. In business and

particularly when it comes to staff, you get what you settle for, so if you're settling for a fairly poor effort, your business is probably suffering as a result.

Also think of your other staff who are working next to this person. How motivating is it to work with someone who is continually negative or who has 'lost their mojo'? People are inspired to stretch when they work with people they admire and want to be like and won't want to stay very long in a negative environment so by hanging on to someone who needs to move on, you might find yourself losing other good staff as a result. If you can't change them (their behaviour, attitudes and actions).... you must change them (as in out of your business!). The change could be just the rejuvenation they need. Be okay with letting go.

Yes, I know it's scary the first couple of times you do this, but 3 months down the track, you often realize that it's the best thing you ever did and you have a fresh new & enthusiastic team who are keen to try new ideas and be the best they can be.

### WHO WOULD YOU RATHER HAVE ON YOUR TEAM?



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