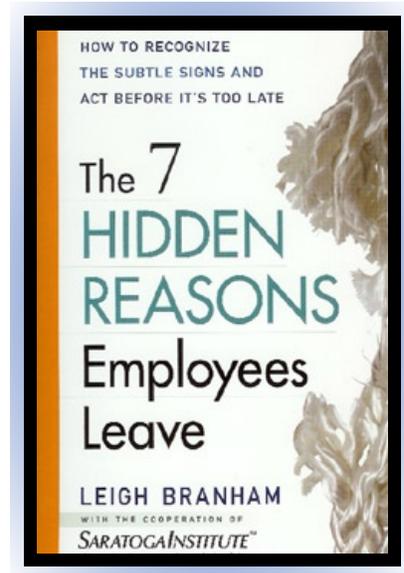# The 7 Hidden Reasons Employees Leave

How to Recognize the Subtle Signs and Act Before It's Too Late

Leigh Branham with the cooperation of Saratoga Institute™

©2005 Leigh Branham
Adapted by permission of AMACOM
ISBN: 0-8144-0851-6

Reviewed by Lydia Morris Brown

Introduction

Over many years, Branham has found that the vast majority of line managers, those charged with engaging and keeping valued employees from leaving the company, believe that most of these employees leave because they are being "pulled" away by better outside offers. The reality is, however, quite different. It is not that capable workers are leaving because the grass is greener elsewhere but because a preponderance of negative factors—from poor management practices to harmful workplace cultures—is essentially "pushing" them to do so.

The **7 Hidden Reasons Employees Leave** is for managers, executives, business owners, and human resources professionals who care about correctly identifying the root causes of employee disengagement. Incorporating the Saratoga Institute's data from surveys of more than 19,000 employees, Branham outlines the real, but hidden, *whys* of worker turnover and offers proven practices for engaging these workers and bonding them to the organization.

PART I: WHY AND HOW EMPLOYEES DISENGAGE AND LEAVE

Branham notes that employee disengagement (characterized by a lack of commitment, marginal productivity, frequent absenteeism, or active sabotage) can be triggered by a number of stimulus events. For example: Employees might disengage if they are passed over for a promotion, learn that they are underpaid compared to others doing the same job, or if they receive an unexpectedly low performance rating, pay increase, or no pay increase at all. Disengagement can also ensue when individuals learn they are being transferred, assigned to a new territory, or are being denied the transfer/assignment.

People can disengage when their hiring supervisor is replaced by a new supervisor they do not like, when they have a disagreement with a supervisor, or when they believe the enforcement of authority is unreasonable. They can disengage when they are asked to perform menial tasks, to do something unethical, or discover the company's unethical behavior. Or, the stimulus event can be sexual harassment, racial discrimination, and/or conflicts with a coworker.

Despite these triggers, Branham has found that employee turnover is not an *event* but an engagement-to-departure *process* that can take days, weeks, months, or years before the actual decision to leave occurs, if it occurs at all. This process, of sequential and predictable stages involves: (1) starting the new job with enthusiasm, (2) questioning the decision to accept the job, (3) thinking seriously about quitting, (4) trying to change things, (5) resolving to quit, (6) considering the cost of quitting, (7) passively seeking another job, (8) actively preparing to seek, (9) actively seeking, (10) getting a new job offer, (11) quitting to accept the new job or (12) quitting without a job or (13) staying and disengaging.

"Just looking at turnover costs doesn't tell the whole story. … Long before many employees leave, they become disengaged. Disengaged employees are uncommitted, marginally productive, frequently absent, or … working against the interests of the company"

Unfortunately, many managers are too busy or too preoccupied to notice what stage of disengagement their employees are in or to even notice such telltale signs as absenteeism, tardiness, or behavior, which indicate withdrawal and/or increased negativity. Nonetheless, because most disengagement begins with some kind of stimulus event, managers need to keep their antennae up when a valued employee has recently experienced some disappointment, some oversight, or some situation that he or she may perceive negatively. Better yet, managers should simply sit down with their direct reports on a regular basis and ask them how things are going and, in that way, open up discussions that can lead to resolution. Branham warns, however, that though this kind of initiative is management's responsibility, it is not management's alone—employees also must be accountable for addressing their concerns and re-engaging in the workplace.

Exit survey responses, completed by thousands of exiting employees, indicate 67 reasons for individuals voluntarily leaving their firms—everything from advancement opportunities to the vacation policy and work-life imbalance. After taking account of the unpreventable reasons—advancement opportunity, better-paying job, career change, commuting time/distance, job elimination, retirement, return to school, self-employment, and spouse's relocation—and acknowledging that some may have preventable causes, Branham found 57 preventable reasons for voluntary turnover.

After analyzing these preventable reasons, he found that they spring from four fundamental unmet human needs: (1) The need for *trust*—people expect their companies and managers to deliver on their promises, to be honest and open in all communications, to invest in them, to treat

About the Author

Leigh Branham, founder/principal of the consulting firm, Keeping the People, Inc., is widely recognized as an authority on employee engagement and the best practices of organizations that continually experience exception retention rates. Branham is also the author of *Keeping the People Who Keep You in Business.*

For more information, please visit:

www.keepingthepeople.com

them justly, and to compensate them fairly. (2) The need for *hope*—people need to believe that they will be able to grow, develop their skills on the job and via training, and have the opportunity to advance. (3) The need to feel a sense of *worth*—people want to feel confident that if they work hard, do their best, demonstrate commitment, and make meaningful contributions, they will be recognized as valued assets (rather than mere costs) and rewarded accordingly. (4) The need to feel *competent*—people expect to be matched to a job that not only makes good use of their talents but is also challenging. Moreover, they expect to receive the necessary training to perform capably, to see the end results of their work, and to obtain regular feedback about their performance.

> *"If your poach rate [what it costs your competition to pull your people] is less than 20 percent, it ain't the money, honey! People who love their work, love their boss, and love their company don't leave unless the offer is coming from the Godfather."*
>
> *--John Putzier, Get Weird!*

Surprisingly, Branham found that, though competitive pay is fundamental to retention, compensation issues only amounted to 12 percent of all reasons for leaving. Instead, fairness seems to be the key concern in that employees seem to become frustrated about pay when they observe what they perceive to be an inequity—such as: superior performance reviews having little effect on pay increases; experience being discounted and new hires being paid as much as veterans; higher education levels that do not translate into higher pay levels; and/or inadequate compensation for the amount of stress and aggravation endured, or the hours worked.

PART II: ROOT CAUSES AND PROVEN SOLUTIONS

Winnowing all employee complaints down to their root causes, Branham has identified seven reasons, which are simultaneously best-known and most hidden, for workers disengaging and leaving their organizations: (1) the job or workplace does not live up to expectations, (2) a mismatch between the job and the person exists, (3) too little coaching and/or feedback, (4) too few growth and advancement opportunities, (5) feeling devalued and unrecognized, (6) stress from overwork and work-life imbalance, and (7) loss of trust and confidence in senior leaders. These reasons

are supported by Saratoga's research, they are precisely differentiated from one another, they can be prevented or addressed by managers and senior leaders, and they are few enough in number to be manageable. More importantly, says the author, because these causes for employee turnover are, in actuality, negatively stated solutions, they form the basis for many innovative ideas and practical proven engagement practices (54 in all) that organizations can use to address each issue effectively and make employees stay and become more fully engaged.

Reason #1: The job or workplace is not as expected. Unrealistic and unmet expectations cost businesses millions of dollars. Branham's has found that "unmet expectations" is the primary reason that 4 percent of employees leave the job on the first day and 50 percent quit in the first 6 months. It is also probably a key factor why 40 percent of new executives fail within the first 18 months. A plausible explanation can be found in John Kotter's "The Psychological Contract: Managing the Joining Up Process," which states that a psychological contract exists between the individual and the organization in which four sets of implicit mutual expectations reside: what the employee expects to receive, what the organization expects to give, what the employee expects to give, and what the organization expects to receive. The more these mutual expectations match, the greater the probability of job satisfaction, productivity, and reduced turnover. However, when the employee realizes that the employer cannot, or will, not meet a key expectation, there is often a feeling of betrayal, as though a real contract has been broken. It is a realization that can become the stimulus event that begins the downward cycle toward disengagement and departure.

Given this reality, it is unfortunate that discussions between employers and recruits about mutual expectations are not more open. However, interviewees, feeling powerless in the interview process, are often reluctant to ask questions. And, interviewers are often too rushed, simply too afraid to tell the whole truth about the job or workplace, or are themselves uncertain about organizational expectations. In this latter instance, companies frequently make the mistake of seeking to hire only the "best," when they would be better advised to think in terms of "fit."

Branham believes, however, that it is possible to significantly raise the probability of new hire success,

satisfaction, and longer-term retention by using some specific practices for fostering realistic mutual expectations—including:

1. conducting realistic, frank, and open job "previews" with every candidate, and discussing job activities, performance expectations, the immediate work team, working conditions, rules and policies, work culture, manager's style, and the organization's financial stability;

2. hiring from current employee referrals;

3. hiring from a contingency pool (e.g., temps, adjunct staff, interns, and parttime workers);

4. creating a realistic job description, with a short list of critical competencies;

5. allowing team members to interview candidates, without the manager being present, so as to permit both parties to ask and answer questions more freely;

6. hiring from a pool of current employees who are already wise to the ways of the organization;

7. creating a way for candidates to "sample" on-the-job experiences; and

8. surveying new hires to find out how to minimize new-hire surprises in the future.

Essentially, forging this kind of psychological contract with the new employee in the interviewing and orientation phases is a matter of establishing trust. But, if managers fail to make the time and effort, they risk wasting their most precious asset; without trust, there can be no viable working relationship.

Reason #2: The mismatch between job and person. According to Branham, because research has shown that 80 percent of workers feel they are not being allowed to use their strengths on a daily basis, too many managers lack the passion for getting the right people into the right jobs. Some organizations are simply inept when it comes to evaluating talent and matching it to the right jobs. Many employees are unaware of their strengths, unaware of the kind of work that fits them best, and/or they are reluctant to discuss their dissatisfaction with their managers. Sometimes management fails to notice or care if people are bored or unchallenged, and sometimes it is a matter of neglecting to delegate and making jobs more interesting or challenging. For some managers, helping employees grow

and use their talents is not a high priority and, for others, they are so rushed to hire that they just hire warm bodies.

However, the greatest obstacle to matching job and person is a basic lack of understanding about the nature of human talent. Many managers believe that employees are interchangeable parts that can be moved into any slot as needed, that skills and knowledge are more important than talents, and with the right talent/coaching/attitude,

"Unrealistic and unmet expectations cost a business untold millions. … If the average salary is $50,000, then losing twenty employees over the course of the year because of unmet expectations adds up to a tidy total of $1 million."

any person can learn to do well in almost any job. These misconceptions flow from the bottom-line assumption that the needs of the organization supersede the needs of the individual, and it is the individual who needs to adapt. Despite the ubiquity of these attitudes, companies do exist with strong reputations for selecting the right talent and keeping their employees well matched with their jobs because of such best-fit selection practices as:

9. leaving little to chance and making a strong commitment to upgrade talent on a continuous basis;

10. following a consistent and thorough talent forecasting and success-factor analysis process;

11. casting a wide recruiting net so as to expand the universe of best-fit candidates;

12. following a highly focused and systematic interview process and training hiring managers to follow the process rigorously;

13. tracking quality of hire as well as costs per hire;

14. conducting "entrance interviews" with all new hires, asking what they consider their greatest strengths, weaknesses, etc.;

15. striving to enrich the jobs of all employees; and

16. delegating tasks as a means of challenging employees and enriching their jobs.

Reason #3: Too little coaching and feedback— Branham has found that approximately 50 percent of nonperformance problems occur because of the lack of feedback, and about 50 percent of what appear to be motivational problems are, again, actually problems associated with feedback. Thus, he believes that performance coaching and feedback are essential, for

they help employees understand company goals, how the company intends to meet those goals, how the company expects employees to contribute, and how well they are doing in meeting these expectations. In this way, feedback and coaching ensure that employee efforts remain aligned with organizational and unit goals, as well as the expectations of direct supervisors. Moreover, because all

"The manager needs to look at the employee not as a problem to be solved, but as a person to be understood."
--Nigel Nicholson

people have a basic need to be competent, and to know that their talents are being used to make a valuable contribution, feedback constitutes much of what gives meaning to an employee's efforts.

The author warns, however, that this involves more than having a series of meetings but is about managers taking the initiative and building open and trusting *relationships* with their employees, via the following engagement practices:

17. becoming proactive in providing intensive feedback and coaching to new hires as well as to current workers;

18. creating a *culture* of continuous feedback and coaching;

19. training managers in performance coaching and refraining from the assumption that employees choose to underperform and that their bad attitudes are unchangeable;

20. making the performance management process less controlling and more of an employee-driven, adult-to-adult partnership and result-focused management tool (versus HR exercise);

21. terminating nonperformers when the best efforts to coach or to reassign fail; and

22. holding managers accountable for the process.

Reason #4: Too few growth and advancement opportunities. In Saratoga's surveys, employees expressed disappointment for several reasons: limited growth/advancement opportunities, unfair or inefficient job-posing processes, failure to hire from within, favoritism or unfairness in promotion decisions, and insufficient training, among other things. But Branham has found that employers of choice seem to have fewer such issues. They know that career growth/advancement consistently ranks among the top three reasons employees stay in most companies, or leave. And, they understand that top performers seek jobs

and careers with organizations that put extra effort into helping them learn, grow, and advance internally.

Moreover, these forward-looking firms understand such new career realities as constantly changing job descriptions; recognition systems, based on value creation and results rather than on tenure; the transformation of long-term career planning by the organization to become short-term planning by the employee; and workers that are more flexible, task-invested, empowered, and responsible. Because of this new environment, most employers of choice clearly communicate that employees must take the initiative with regard to their own career development, however, they also provide the necessary tools and training so that responsibility for employee career growth and development is shared equally by the employee, the manager, and the organization. It is a balanced approach maintained by the following kinds of best practices:

23. providing self-assessment tools and career self-management training for all employees;

24. offering career coaching tools and training for all managers so that they will be better equipped to fulfill their career coaching responsibilities;

25. providing readily accessible information on career paths and competency requirements;

26. creating alternatives to traditional career ladders;

27. keeping employees informed about the company's strategy, direction, and forecasted talent needs;

28. building and maintaining a fair and efficient internal job-posting process;

29. showing a clear preference for hiring from within;

30. eliminating HR policies and management practices that block internal movement;

31. creating a strong mentoring culture;

32. keeping the career development process separate from the performance appraisal process;

33. building an effective talent review and succession management process; and

34. maintaining a strong commitment to employee training.

Reason #5: Feeling Devalued and unrecognized. Although everyone wants to feel important, many organizations tend to make people feel completely insignificant. Sometimes there is simple lack of

appreciation, or too much focus on the numbers, and not enough on people. Sometimes employees feel they deserve the recognition that others receive, that the wrong kinds of rewards are being given, or that recognition comes too late to be meaningful. Some comment that they feel as if no one even knows or cares if they exist, no one is listening, or that they are treated like children instead of adults. Others complain that their companies are uncaring about their physical surroundings, or they fail to provide the right tools. However, pay is the most emotional issue of all. Branham notes that what individuals make not only pays the bills, it measures their worth in the most material way; thus, people tend to define themselves by the levels of their income.

"Companies will realize … [as the economy grows and the war for talent returns] that people work for more than just pay and benefits—they work for what we now call 'total rewards,' the most meaningful of which are not related to pay."

In examining employee comments about this issue, the author found that the cause of dissatisfaction runs even deeper than mere discontent about the sums they are paid. Employees are troubled by the inequity of making less than others who are no more qualified, or even less qualified. They feel that it is an injustice to receive the same pay raises as those who contribute far less to the organization. And, they interpret HR's unresponsiveness to requests for payroll changes as a sign that they are unimportant. Essentially, people end up feeling "less than." For this reason, Branham believes that best practices in both pay and recognition must be considered as "twins joined at the hip" in sending the right messages to employees about organizational values and for reinforcing changes in personal behavior and work culture. Thus, because pay and recognition are more effective together than either can be separately, many preeminent employers have begun to embrace the following best-pay practices:

35. offering competitive base pay that is more linked to value creation than to rank or years of service;

36. rewarding results with variable pay that is aligned with business goals;

37. rewarding employees at a high enough level (some experts say 10 to 12 percent above base pay) to motivate higher performance;

38. using cash payouts for on-the-spot recognition

39. involving employees and encouraging two-way communication when designing new pay systems; and

40. monitoring pay systems to ensure fairness, efficiency, consistency, and accuracy.

There are also best practices for valuing and recognizing people that are absolutely free in the sense that little or no money needs to be invested, only time, energy, and imagination. Of course, employers must care enough to make those investments, and they must understand what kind of recognition their people desires. Not everyone wants the same kind of recognition, and not everyone wants the kinds of acknowledgment that managers require (managers should simply ask their people how they would like to be recognized. Of course, some kinds are valued by all employees, and these are reflected in such best practices as:

41. creating a culture of informal recognition founded on sincere appreciation—being simply and genuinely thanked for their contributions is the primary form of acknowledgement people desire;

42. making new hires feel welcome and important;

43. asking for employee input, listening, and responding;

44. keeping employees in the loop—few things say "you're not important" more loudly than withholding information people want and need (it is an oversight that creates disconnection, alienation, and disengagement);

45. giving employees the right tools and resources they need to succeed in their jobs; and

46. keeping the physical environment fit to work in by doing away with cramped, noisy, hot, cold, messy, dirty, noxious, and/or unsafe conditions.

Reason #6: Stress from overwork and work-life imbalance. Although it is widely understood that the American workplace is stressful, it is the number and variety of stress triggers that is the real surprise, including overwork, personality conflicts, forced overtime, disorganized supervisors, gossip, harassment, prejudice, poor teamwork, manager abuse and insensitivity, employees who fail to pull their weight, inflexible hours, family illness, child care, elder care, long commutes, and sacrificing family life.

This would indicate that stress is, indeed, such a significant problem that 55 percent of workers said, in several surveys, that they sometimes feel overwhelmed by the amount of work they have to do. Twenty-nine percent said they are "quite a bit or extremely stressed at work." Forty-nine percent of those who experience high levels of stress say they are likely to seek employment elsewhere. Seventy percent think there is an unhealthy balance between their work and personal lives. And, 61 percent would give up some pay for more family time. Meanwhile, 79 percent of employers think they take care of their workers, yet only 44 percent of workers agree.

Examining these numbers, Branham concludes that, because one-fourth to one-half of all workers are feeling some level of stress-related dysfunction, there is a likelihood that productivity and employee retention are being affected negatively. Thus, taking care of employees as people is not just the right thing to do, it is also good for business. In fact, even the growing cost of health care can be greatly attributed to the decline of the "psychological health" of workers. However, when one looks at the best places in America to work, one sees that what they have in common is a philosophy of "give first, get second," which motivates employees to respond in kind, and results in a virtuous cycle of reciprocal commitment. This philosophy is characterized by practices that:

48. tailor the "culture" of giving to the needs of key talent in the applicant pool and among current employees;

49. build a culture that values such spontaneous acts of caring as, for example, letting the team lunch at the manager's expense;

50. build social connectedness and harmony among employees, which, in turn, fosters employee commitment to the organization; and

51. encourage fun in the workplace.

Reason #7: Loss of trust and confidence in senior leaders. According to comments from Saratoga surveys, workers are most troubled about senior management's seeming lack of trust and integrity; greed and self-interest; lack of concern, appreciation, trust, and respect for workers; mismanagement of change; lack of communication; and the isolation that makes top leaders unapproachable and out of touch with day-to-day reality. Add to these concerns, the distrust, spawned by the downsizing of the 1990s, and fueled by the corporate scandals of the early 2000s, and what emerges is a growing crisis of suspicion, cynicism, and loss of confidence.

Thus, Branham believes that the special challenge facing senior leaders today is the mandate to create a culture of trust and integrity that strengthens the bonds of employee engagement. And, though the responsibility of this challenge falls to every manager and employee, it is incumbent upon senior leaders to be in the vanguard, setting the tone and the example. Studies show that, leaders, who foster "lean and mean" organizations, also foster a formula destined for failure. "Mean leaders make for mean employees who are often mean to customers." But, leaders with a servant mentally (i.e., those who seek to *serve* the people they are *called* to lead), strike a resonating chord among today's workforce. And those companies, whose leaders strive to maximize employee value (versus those only concerned with shareholder value), seem to build strong reputations for excellent customer services, provided by committed front-line employees. These latter two have employer-of-choice engagement practices that involve:

52. inspiring confidence in a clear vision, a workable plan, and the competence to achieve it;

53. backing up words with actions; and

54. placing their trust and confidence in their workforce.

* * *

Bibliographic end notes, a bibliography, and a subject index are provided.

Remarks

At the beginning of chapter 9, Branham quotes Randall Tobias, chairman of Eli Lilly, who says, "… the key to competitiveness is innovation, and the key to innovation is people. Taking care of people, therefore, is an essential way of taking care of business." Although the sentiment is one with which almost all companies would agree, and most likely without hesitation, their behavior, as evidenced from Saratoga's study, says otherwise. This behavior, stemming from an outmoded mindset and superficial understanding of what causes capable employees to disengage and leave (or sometimes even worse, disengage and stay), has led

to spiraling and expensive wage wars and employee turnover.

Yes, the business literature is stuffed to overflowing with the message that the costs (economic and social) of disengaged workers is staggering (The cost of absenteeism alone, "a signal symptom of disengagement" is estimated at $40 billion annually.), still (again, as Saratoga's surveys indicate) many executives and managers just don't get it, or they just don't care. **The 7 Hidden Reasons Employees Leave** is for executives, managers, business owners, and HR professionals who *do* care but who are, perhaps, still shrouded in what Daniel J. Boorstin calls *the illusion of knowledge* that prevents them from "getting it" well enough finally to implement strategies that are truly effective in holding on to the best workers.

From his analysis of the data and employee surveys, from such a wide range of industries (financial, industrial medical, technology, manufacturing, distribution, insurance, health care, telecommunications, transportation, computer services, electronics, consumer products, consumer services, business services, consulting, and "other" services), Branham demonstrates that getting it well enough means understanding: (1) Employees don't leave because they are *pulled* away by better offers. They leave because they are *pushed* out by factors under management's control—initial stimuli that open the door to the pull of outside opportunities. (2) The important question that remains unasked in so many exit interviews is not, "Why are you leaving?" but "Why are you not staying?"

This approach makes it evident that management can no longer afford to maintain outdated attitudes about turnover, especially when turnover is preventable. Saratoga's studies illustrate that a new mindset is critical—one in which "every voluntary avoidable employee departure is a disappointment to be analyzed, learned from, and corrected." Moreover, maintaining this new mindset requires that managers and senior executives view employees' superficial answers (e.g., "better pay" and "better opportunity") about why they quit as unacceptable. It is a mandate for organizations to know the *truth* about why they are losing valuable talent and to accept the responsibility that perhaps it was something they do, or don't do, that pushes people out the door.

Thus, **The 7 Reasons** is about elusive motivations, "hiding in plain sight" that cause capable employees to disengage and leave. Branham builds on the premise that,

if companies commit to correctly identifying the root causes of employee disengagement, they can address those root causes with on-target solutions. Though solid enough for readers to fairly judge the reliability of his analysis of the issues, his outline of the *problem* (i.e., the elusive motivations) is blessedly brief. Instead, the author takes a proactive approach and focuses on *solutions* to provide the practical insights, ideas, and best practices companies need to engage and retain their best people. His hypothesis is that, "complaints [causes of employee disengagement] are just negatively stated solutions"—when people complain for poor management, what they want is good management, and when they complain of favoritism, they are really asking for an even playing field. Given this approach, the book's title could just as well have been: "54 Best Practices That Serve as Building Blocks to Employee Satisfaction, Growth, and Retention."

With 7 problems, and 54 solutions, Branham's treatment of the issue might seem, at first blush, to be rather formulaic. It isn't. Though this framework keeps things simple, for easy accessibility and assimilation, it is by no means simplistic. Instead of relying on tangible, easy-to-implement, tactical fix-it-for-a-day band-aids, he draws on strategic dynamics, which revolve around challenging intangibles, and which companies can select from, according to the imperatives of their particular culture, management practices, and their business objectives. These strategic dynamics are inspired by the best practices of "employers of choice"—companies that "understand they are competing with other employers—both large and small—for talent, and realize the importance of 'branding' themselves as preferred places to work." Thus, the perspective offered here goes far beyond the more traditional approach of passively recruiting by "selling" the company during the job interview. It reaches for the proactive proficiency of "marketing one's organization as a great place to work' and, at the same time, underscores the necessity for "a virtuous cycle of reciprocal commitment"— the necessity for employees to share the responsibility for keeping *themselves* committed and engaged.

Reading Suggestions

Reading Time: 16-18 Hours, 251 Pages in Book

Essentially, **The 7 Hidden Reasons** is a book of lists—an itemization of 54 employer-of-choice practices for engaging workers and bonding them to your company. As Branham notes, some of these practices will fit your specific situation, and some won't; thus, you can freely "skip from chapter to chapter, picking and choosing among the practices that best fit the needs of your company and your key talent." You will find a *summary* checklist of the 54 practices in the appendix, which you can use to plan your employee engagement strategy. You will also see the same kind of list, called a *review* checklist at the end of chapters 4-10, to be used for the same purpose.

Nonetheless, you are not to infer from Branham's instructions, or from these user-friendly implementation tools, that you can skip and skim, and pick and choose, when it comes to *reading* this books. Yes, **The 7 Hidden Reasons** is chock full of lists and even lists within lists (e.g., why employees leave, why they don't stay, why they don't perform, what managers should do, what employees must do, on and on). And, yes, the word "list" signifies easy accessibility to concrete points so that you can move through material more rapidly. In this case, however, Branham's inventories are not a mere enumeration of facts and figures, but a thoughtful organization, examination, and interpretation of the facts and figures that provides fresh insights and original perspectives. On every page, you will find something—a research statistic, a piece of data, a snippet of common sense (and not so common sense)—that you can add to your bag of ideas and solutions to help you retain just one more valuable employee and add thousands (maybe even hundreds of thousands) to your bottom line.

Although you might find what appears, on the surface, to be a lot of repetitive material, please don't let this seeming repetition lull you into the false notion that you can circumvent this or that guideline or piece of information. Sometimes one guideline flows into or out of another (not only within chapters, but also from chapter to chapter), and sometimes several practices combine to represent two sides of the same coin. This is so because the seven reasons, the 54 practices, and the numerous and instructive case examples are interrelated. Thus, though you may be able to pick from this "cafeteria" of practices at will, we doubt

if effective implementation of any one or two practices is possible without an understanding of how each fits into the total picture.

With that said, we suggest you first read the preface, chapters 1-3, and chapter 11, up to the section "Linking the Right Measure to Business Results" (p. 206). The preface and first three chapters provide the necessary introduction and framework. The "Talent Engagement Strategies in Action" section in chapter 11 details the engagement strategies of United Parcel, Motek Software, Meers Marking Communications, Inc., Steak and Shake, and FleetBoston Financial, and shows not only how their practices depend on their business strategies, but also on the size and complexity of their organizations. This is helpful information to keep in mind as you go back and read chapters 4-10, which detail the 54 employer-of-choice best practices.

Throughout each chapter, you will find numerous boxed items—supplementary material that provides words of wisdom from various business luminaries, real-world examples, FYI pieces that contain Web links and information on how, for example, your company can become "One of the Best Places to Work," etc. So as not to impede your flow, we suggest you mark these pages and return to these items after reading the chapter. As for the remainder of chapter 11, save this to last. In fact, you might even want to put this aside until you actually begin planning the implementation of your employer-of-choice strategy.

The seven reasons why employees leave are similar to the turnover causes Branham describes in his earlier book, *Keeping the People Who Keep You in Business*. Although it isn't necessary to read this earlier work, before reading **7 Hidden Reasons**, we believe it is a good idea to have it on hand—the author often refers to it, along with other books, as a supplementary resource for more details on the various issues under discussion. This is another reason why a careful perusal is in order—although complete bibliographic end notes (concluding each chapter) and bibliography are provided, seeing them within the context of Branham's analysis extends their educational value substantially.

We recommend using the end notes, and the bibliography, categorized by such topics as "Human Capital ROI," "People Management Best Practices," "Talent Management and Business Strategy," etc., as checklists to put the in-text citations in order of

importance for further study. From among these excellent sources, we suggest you include Bardwick's *Danger in the Comfort Zone*, Fitz-enz's *The ROI of Human Capital*, Rosenbluth and Peters's *The Customer Comes Second*, Sartain's (with Finney) *HR from the Heart*, and Zemke, Raines, and Filipzak's *Generations at Work*.*
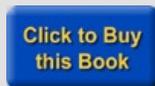
CONTENTS

*Reviews of these books can be found at www.BusinessBookReview.com