How to motivate your team

While there's little doubt printing is revolutionary, how can the print industry retain people in these trying times, asks Dharti Desai, founder and CEO of Mumbai–based Mail Order Solutions

With the shortage of skill sets, retaining talent has been a burning issue for small business, including printers. So much has been discussed but the implementation can be summed in a few simple concepts that have been tried and tested successfully by us.

Many printers say, it is difficult to retain "good people", epecially when wages at the neighbourhood mall or as a security guard offers more to a person than on a print shop floor.

In today's times, paying people a good package is crucial, but money is not the only key factor in employee retention. It is a big motivator, but it is other factors like participating in interesting tasks, being appreciated and 'being in on things', giving exposure to constantly learning and upgrading.

The first step at Mail Order Solutions is to ensure that our team has a sense of purpose. They need to feel their work is meaningful, and it can contribute to the company's progress. Evidence suggests that employees who feel that way are more likely to stay connected. Besides this, the importance of the print business providing them with a clear sense of direction in their pursuit of professional success has to be obvious. Again, if they feel the company they are working for has a purpose, they are more likely to stay as it helps them have a purpose.

Another important part is to ensure the lines of communication are open. The team needs access to information so that they can better serve customers and take decisions. Communication within team members and between the individual and management is of utmost importance.

Experts say there also needs to be clear organisational values. The core MOS values are integrity, pride in your work, honesty and passion. Passion is always the hardest to find or teach. There are clear signs when an employee lacks passion, and such an employee should not be dragged in the organisation, especially if the person is in a leadership position.

There needs to be congruence, or at least the absence of a conflict between the values of employees and the organisation. It is also necessary for people to believe that there is a congruence between the stated and observed values of the organisation for people to clearly want to stay. As soon as they see managers saying one thing and doing another, they are more likely to leave.

Giving lots of positive feedback is also important. It makes it more attractive for people to come into work every day. Positive feedback is also important for under performers. Equally, it's important for those who perform well to know that there is differentiation between good and poor performances.

At MOS, besides the above, we are constantly training and developing our team. Our team attends every single semi-

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nar, trade show and awards ceremony that Mehul and I attend. In today's workforce, people expect that as part of career management. It gives them the skills to progress through the organisation. Even if it equips them to take those skills elsewhere, they are more likely to stay on while they are retaining these skills.

Of course, it's also important to pay them well. But if you can't afford it, there are other ways to do it. Benefits like flexible work patterns and family time can be as valuable as cash. Also, don't micro manage. If you hired them for their talents, they don't need anyone looking over their shoulder and constraining them. You also need to make the work environment and facilities as comfortable as possible. Finally, if you can't give them shares in the business, at least make sure there are career paths, so they feel they are getting something out of it. Last but not the least, we allow our people to set their own sales targets instead of imposing numbers on them, which eventually fall short anyway. Empowering them gives them huge responsibilities and this is the key when it comes to achieving results. Like the famous Spiderman quote - "with great power comes great responsibility." We also have a lot of fun, whether it's dinners, wine tasting, picnics, cricket matches or Diwali parties. Getting to know an employee in his or her space gives great insights in to his or her behaviour at work.

In other words, printers wanting to retain staff need the kind of managers that make employees feel valued and who are invested in developing their careers.

If the Indian print industry needs to achieve new heights, they have to invest in the people, the team.■

(As told to Sachin Shardul of PrintWeek India)