

Training for Keeps

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Many cooperative managers ponder the question of whether investing in employee development just gives employees the skills to get a position at another firm that pays more. Human resource specialist counter that training reduces turnover. A recent study published in the *Journal of Applied Psychology* explored that issue. The results clearly indicated that human resource development improved job satisfaction and the employee's perception of the firm's commitment. The impacts on job performance and turnover both depended on the perceived opportunities within the organization. Employees who agreed with a statement "there are career opportunities within the firm that are attractive to me" tended to improve job performance and were less likely to voluntarily leave the firm when they took part in training and development. However, when the perception of career opportunities within the firm was low there was no relationship between training and either job performance or reduced turnover.

The take home message from this research is that training and development can be vehicle to create and hang onto valuable employees. However, you have to do more than train employees. You also have to provide an opportunity for them to take advantage of their newly acquired skills. You can also get more out of training and development by creating a continuous learning environment. Development can involve job rotations, new assignments, mentoring or apprenticeships. The career path within the cooperative should not relate to job titles but rather should recognize the contributions to the success of the organization. There should be an advancement track for employees who excel in operations as well as those that transition to management.

When a manager asks me "what if I train an employee and they leave?" I always respond "what if you don't train them and they stay?"

10-29-2015