



Enjoy the ride

3rd Quarter 2018 Manager Newsletter



Process improvement 101: Pretend you're the customer

In recent years there's been a whole lot written about "process improvement." ***Read more on how you can find opportunities within your team....***



No one wants to be a robot

More and more, the automatons are invading the workforce. ***Learn tips for keeping your work culture more human...***



The stay interview

People love a strong economy. But you might find yourself spending more time in the interview room. Talented but unhappy employees can look elsewhere. ***Read about what you can do to help improve their work lives...***

Resources *for Living*[®]

Process improvement 101: Pretend you're the customer



[Return to index page](#)

In recent years there's been a whole lot written about "process improvement." As a manager, you may already be applying some of these principles. The ultimate goal of process improvement is to make things better for the customer. "Better" can mean lots of different things to different people. But it generally boils down to providing:

- Faster service
- Higher quality
- Lower cost
- An improved customer experience

Your customers don't often know all the things your team has to do behind the scenes. They just know what happens during and after your interactions with them. So it's up to you to evaluate your processes on a regular basis and see where improvements can be made.

Back to the basic

Pretend you're the customer. What are you looking to get from your organization? What are your expectations? When do you feel frustrated by a "pain point" in the process?

It's important to point out that improvements should never compromise the safety of your staff or customers. Be sure not to "cut corners" when it comes to those basics.

Identify solutions

But by thinking like your customers and then brainstorming possible solutions, your team can explore ways to:

- **Find and fix pain points.** You can lose business to a long line, quality issues, overpricing and more. What complaints do you hear most? What would have to happen to turn those pain points into delightful surprises?

- **Remove or reduce steps that don't add value.** Are you going out of your way to provide extras that your customers don't need or want? Try stopping. If they notice or complain, you can always add them back.
- **Add small steps that yield large amounts of value.** Little improvements can make all the difference. For instance, the cherry on top of an ice cream sundae is a small detail. But when you think of a sundae, what comes to mind first?
- **Make the customer experience stand out.** A consistent unique and positive customer experience keeps the people you serve happy. And it makes them excited to come back. They may even refer other customers to you.
- **Monitor the effects of changes.** When you make an improvement, start on a small scale and watch closely. Does it have the effect you expected? Can it be further improved?

By simply seeing your organization through your customers' eyes, you can find opportunities for improvement. Challenge your team to act on them so you can all keep getting better together.

Resources for Living®

No one wants to be a robot



[Return to index page](#)

More and more, the automatons are invading the workforce. We've included robots in manufacturing for a long time. But nowadays, machines are slinging fast food burgers, moving money, answering questions and even driving themselves. Who knows what they'll be up to tomorrow.

For certain jobs, a robot makes the ideal employee. It may be able to work longer hours with fewer breaks and it doesn't complain. But don't make the mistake of expecting your staff to do their jobs like a robot. It's just not possible.

Nurture a human culture

Here are some tips for keeping your work culture more human:

- **Numbers are for robots.** Calling people by name can help show that they're valued. No matter how large your organization may be, use names whenever possible.
- **Greetings aren't just for cards.** When you're busy, saying "hello" can feel like one more thing on the to-do list. But there's a reason people say "hi" and "how are you?" It reinforces relationships and lets employees know you're glad they're here.
- **Build connections.** Like with friendships, you can build work relationships on common interests. And you can also build them on differences. If a team member is an expert in something you don't know much about, just ask! You can learn something new while building rapport.

- **Take an interest.** All your employees have other facets to their lives beyond work. They're engaged with their families, community groups and more. No one works in a vacuum. Share and learn from other aspects of each others' lives when you can.
- **Avoid using guilt as a motivator.** You may be worried about work not getting done, but your team's well-being counts. Encourage your staff to take time away when they need it.
- **Show empathy.** You may not have a solution to a problem or issue a team member is facing. That's okay. Simply making it clear that you care can make a big difference in your team's morale.

If you offer a culture that allows your people to be fully human, it can help the workdays go by faster. And you might just find their response to the idea of leaving your team will be something like:

Does. Not. Compute.

Resources for Living®

The stay interview



[Return to index page](#)

People love a strong economy. But a booming economy means you might spend more time in the interview room. Talented but unhappy employees can look elsewhere. And they do. In fact, a recent Wall Street Journal article shows American workers are quitting at an alarming rate.¹

So the question is: How do you get your employees to stay?

Retention vs. turnover

You interview, hire and train your staff. They work hard, innovate and get along with their coworkers. And then they resign.

Turnover can be costly. It can be hard to find new, talented candidates to fill those empty shoes. You're competing with other employers when it's a tight labor market. Your other employees can burn out, covering extra work when someone leaves. And you still have to spend time and energy finding and training a new employee.

So it makes sense to strive for retention. Invest in your talent. And consider doing stay interviews.

What's a stay interview?

You're probably familiar with the idea of exit interviews. And while they can provide helpful information, by the time you give one, it's too late for retention. The employee's already on the way out.²

In his book, *The Stay Interview*, Richard Finnegan explains how a stay interview turns the idea of an exit interview on its head. Instead of asking "Why are you leaving?" the stay interview asks "Why do you stay?" Finnegan says these talks can help you²:

- Identify strengths
- Respond to concerns
- Assess an employee's engagement
- Retain talented staff

Why a stay interview can help

Many staff retention efforts focus on the big picture. But surveys show that people don't leave because of things like culture, pay or benefits. In fact, a Gallup poll showed 50 percent of employees leave because of their managers.³ Your employee relationships are directly related to their engagement level.

And each employee is unique. Maybe Jan likes to work independently. Steve enjoys creative projects. And Monica longs for consistency. The stay interview helps you identify your employees' differences while building rapport. Armed with this information, you'll know Monica likes work that feels familiar. If a unique project comes in, Steve is a great candidate. And Jan shouldn't be bothered with too many check-ins.

Finnegan's book walks through the stay interview process. But here are a few questions you can begin to use:

- What do you look forward to at work?
- What keeps you working here?
- What do you like the least about your work?
- Can you describe a recent good day you've had here?
- How would you rate your happiness here on a scale of 1 to 10? How could that be improved?

Whether you use stay interviews or another approach, what matters is engagement. By engaging with your staff, you can help improve their work lives. And that can add up to more productivity and less turnover for you.

¹Harrison, David and Morath, Eric. [In this economy, quitters are winning](#). The Wall Street Journal. Accessed July 2018.

²Conerly, Bill. [Retain more employees with stay interviews](#). Forbes. Accessed July 2018.

³Altman, Jack. [Don't be surprised when your employees quit](#). Forbes. Accessed July 2018.



Enjoy the ride

3rd Quarter 2018 Manager Newsletter

Resources *for* Living[®]

The EAP is administered by Resources For Living, LLC.

All EAP calls are confidential, except as required by law. This material is for informational purposes only. It contains only a partial, general description of programs and services and does not constitute a contract. Information is believed to be accurate as of the production date; however, it is subject to change.