

# The Employee Life Cycle Model™

## How to keep your employees from spinning out

by Arlene Vernon, PHR

As managers, we understand how closely the success of our organizations intertwines with the success of our employees. Each of us has probably asked, “How can I successfully hire, motivate, manage and retain my employees?” We know we must actively develop loyal employees, but doing so is a struggle. Many of us fail to attract and retain the best employees because we apply a one-size-fits-all management technique that is too generic to succeed.

The solution is to manage with Super-Vision — looking into the strengths and weaknesses of your management style and looking into the individual needs of each employee. The Employee Life Cycle Model integrates your Super-Vision strengths with the employee’s needs. Follow this model to create an environment that attracts, motivates and retains the best employees.

**The core of the Employee Life Cycle Model** centers on the organization’s mission statement. Senior management must model the company mission throughout their efforts. This mission must have meaning for employees as well as for the people you serve. Then, the organization must go one step further and develop a human resource statement relating to how it treats its employees.

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The next step is for department managers to develop mission statements that include their philosophy on supervision and employee development. Some companies take this one step further and give their employees the opportunity to develop and share their professional mission statements, which connects them more closely to the organization, the work they perform and the people they serve.

**Communication, motivation and environment** are the three attributes that surround the core of the Employee Life Cycle. By focusing on communicating, motivating and creating a work environment that ties to the organization's mission, you create a consistent foundation from which each manager leads. The result is that supervisors ensure that every communication with employees, every effort at motivation, and every change to the environment and culture directly correlates with their mission. As management displays authentic consistency between word and action, employees will respond with commitment and loyalty.

For example, reflect on your organization's employee relations efforts. Is internal communication a priority? Do you ever hear employees say, "I never received that memo" or "I wish someone had told me that"? Do you have focused, consistent motivational programs for your employees? Do all your managers and supervisors focus on employee relations, developing and motivating your employees, or does this fall behind other priorities? Does your work environment reflect the professionalism that you expect from your employees? Do you consider the impact of physical changes in your environment on the work experience of your employees?

**Phase I - Pre-Employment** begins as soon as an applicant enters your organization for a job interview, the supervisory process begins. Candidates immediately assess whether the interviewer can or will meet their career and professional needs. If the supervisor doesn't treat candidates well during the interview process when they are the "guest," it's likely that management won't treat them well when they're part of your "family." There are many tactics a supervisor can apply to meet employee needs in the pre-employment phase. Some of these include interviewing on time, being prepared, truly establishing rapport, using a prepared interview questionnaire, allowing them time to ask questions and providing a complete, accurate picture of the job and the company.

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## Pre-Employment



## Employment



## Transition



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### Phase II - Employment Phases

have leaders continue to meet employee needs in the employment phase by extending an offer that shows how much they want the new employee to join the team. It's also important to stay in close contact with the candidate throughout their decision making process as well as after the offer has been accepted. This outreach and enthusiasm will encourage the best candidates to accept the offer and ensure that they arrive for the first day of the job, something that is no longer a guarantee with employees.

### Phases III and IV - Orientation and Training

happens when supervisors minimize employee first-day jitters and create employee success by planning ahead and scheduling a thorough orientation and training process. Create a strategy to truly integrate new employees into the team. Assign a mentor to each. Check in regularly on their progress. Share success tips on who and what to know. Then define the employees' training programs. Pace the training to match their unique needs. Apply a variety of training tools to make learning fun. One-size-fits-all or just throwing them into the job is not a strategy to attract and retain the best employees.

**Phase V - Evaluation** often is avoided by managers. No news is not necessary good news — for the employee or the employer. Go beyond once-a-year feedback at an annual review. Give ongoing, nonjudgmental, job-specific, honest, positive and negative feedback as part of regular employee interaction, and watch company and employee effectiveness skyrocket.

**Phase VI - The Reward Phase** motivates employees to perform their best. With today's exciting three and one half to four percent wage increases, we must offer creative rewards for a job well done in order to motivate. Think creatively; go beyond the traditional by rewarding individuals and teams for exceptional performance.

Everyone should know management's expectations and that a reward, recognition, compliment, thank-you or prize will be given consistently. The solution for leaders who don't know what motivates their employees is to ask them and then just do it!

**Phase VII - Challenge** your employees as a method for retaining them. Since promotion of employees isn't always available in our flat organizations, augment employee jobs with challenges that excite, broaden and reward them. But only add challenges to those who merit them; otherwise the challenges lose their magical motivational power.

Once the challenge is given, the Employee Life Cycle begins again. Orient employees to new responsibilities, train them, evaluate their performance, reward them for new achievement and introduce more challenges again and again. It's also important to visualize the Employee Life Cycle in three dimensions. Employees may be in the orientation phase for new or more difficult responsibilities and in the challenge phase for responsibilities they've mastered.

**The Transition Phase** occurs when employees cycle out of your Super-Vision, by either exiting the organization or exiting your department. The objective is to exit employees as professionally and respectfully as they were welcomed. Show the value of employees' contributions by ensuring a professional transition or exit. Conduct company and departmental exit interviews, listening for employee suggestions on how and what to improve. The objective is for management to create a work relationship that is so positive that employees will share their success with others both in and out of the company. There's no better public relations and recruitment process than having ex-employees talk about how great their previous supervisor and job was and recommend the company to others.

The Employee Life Cycle Model works for managers at all levels. It takes a new perspective, a shifting of old work paradigms and a rediscovery of who our employees are and what they seek from their work. Recognize, appreciate and integrate this model of supervision, and you will develop loyal and committed employees.

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