

ATTRACT, RETAIN AND MANAGE YOUR WORKFORCE

## Parenting Skills = Management Skills

**M**anagement guru Peter Drucker built an illustrious career based on a simple insight: Dedicated employees are the key to successful companies. The idea seems obvious, yet few employers get it. Employees are extensions of their employers.

How do you help your employees become reliable team members? The answer is to treat them as if they were your children. This does not mean adopting a condescending attitude. Rather, good bosses recognize their role as shepherd, teacher and coach—the traits of good parents.

Nurture and teach your employees. Too often, employees find themselves tossed into the fray and expected to figure things out. A successful boss takes time to ensure employees are ready for whatever comes.

Employees want to understand what authority they have. Letting employees know their roles and where they fit is the most important first step in creating your team.

Pull out your parenting skills again. What do you want your kids to know about the future: everything, nothing or what they need to know? The answer: what they need to know. Tell them nothing, and you're inviting insecurity and encouraging rumors. Telling them everything is more than they, or the business, can handle. Sharing too much information is easy to do in a close-knit small business.

Employees need to know what they need to know, when they need to know it—and nothing more. Find the right balance and your employees will feel secure.

With that in mind, use your parenting skills to help improve your hiring and firing style: Hiring is an intimidating task: Short interviews, a resume and then it's decision time. If you make the wrong choice, you're in for headaches and hassles. Then firing time.

Pretend you're shopping. If you can shop, you can hire. You know what you need, what you can spend and what you expect. Most of all, you know what you like and dislike. Keep those things in focus and make your decision.

Attitude trumps skill. You can teach skills, but attitude is inherent. A potential employee may be laden with skills, but if he has a bad attitude, your agency doesn't need him. A bad attitude is like a malignancy, infecting and spreading to all it touches.


Shop until you find what you're looking for. Trust your instincts, and don't be afraid to make the call.

Unfortunately, hiring is an inexact science. Sometimes you make the wrong call. As losing is part of winning, firing is part of hiring.

Firing someone is hard on you, the employee being fired and everyone in the office. Your firing style is as important as your hiring style. Do it poorly and you undermine office cohesion.

Understand it's your fault when employees are fired. You hired them, trained them and provided their work environment. You thought they were the right people for the job. Learn, grow and improve from the situation. Become a better "parent."

Understand that while the employee didn't fit in your agency, it doesn't mean the person's no good. Leave his or her dignity intact and be sensitive to his or her feelings.

Unless the firing was for "cause" (i.e. stealing, drugs, etc.), you could see it coming. When problems first appear, let the employee know and work to fix them. 

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## Limit Employee Turnover

Serving your employees means keeping them happy and on-board. This helps you minimize turnover, which is the most expensive element of employee relations.

A key to avoiding turnover is to make your employees feel secure. Just like you do with your kids, you need to communicate.

If an employee's work is "A" quality, let them know. If it's "B" quality, let them know how they can correct it. Keep them in the dark and they'll assume the worst.

The best way to keep people from leaving you is to make them want to work for you. If you serve their needs, they'll serve yours.

—R.S.