

HBR Case Study

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Why Are We Losing All Our Good People?

Sambian Partners has prided itself on being a great place to work, but now talented employees are leaving. What's going on?

MARY DONILLO, the head of human resources at Sambian Partners, motioned Tom Forsythe, Sambian's assistant director of commercial design, to a comfortable chair in her office. It was late on a Thursday afternoon, and the Chicago sky looked like slate. The darkness outside made the overhead fluorescent lights in her office seem even more glaring than usual.

"Hey, Tom," she said, adding an extra bit of warmth to her voice. "I was so sorry to hear that you've decided to leave. I know your mind is made up - everyone's already tried to talk you out of it. But I do hope you can help us understand why." She paused and offered a rueful smile. "It's a huge loss, but maybe we can learn something from it."

Tom sat stiffly in his chair, one side of his face partially covered by a few strands of dark hair that had escaped his ponytail. The lights brought out the bags under his eyes, and his five o'clock shadow looked more like a seven. With a newborn at home, he probably hadn't been getting enough sleep, Mary thought.

"Well, I think you know that I wasn't out looking," Tom said. "Their headhunter came to me, and, what can I say? It's an of-



fer I couldn't refuse. I mean, a direct-admit partnership to J&N? It really is an opportunity that doesn't come along often."

Mary couldn't help blinking at the mention of J&N, Sambian's much larger competitor. In the past year, it had seemed to step up its raids on Sambian's talent pool, luring some very capable people over to "the dark side," as Sambian's CEO, Helen Gasbarian, liked to call it. "I'm glad for you," Mary managed to say. "Although I wish it were anywhere else."

"I know."

Mary studied Tom's face for a moment, wondering how to press for more. No unplanned departure was good news, but this one was really setting off alarm bells. Tom was at the top of his game; at 35, he'd been with Sambian nearly eight years. The company had been like a family to him, even after he got married and had children. He'd won a slew of design awards, and he was on the CEO's short list of high performers. Mary could see the attraction of a partnership position. But was that the whole story? At Sambian, Tom enjoyed the same kind

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of authority he would have at J&N, if not more. He chose his projects, set his own priorities. Did he know how hard it would be to earn that kind of autonomy at a new firm, partner or no?

"I'm sure it's no news to you that you were coming up for promotion," she ventured. "If not this year, then maybe the next. Would it have made a difference if the raises had been bigger? For that matter, would it make a difference now? I mean, there's no shame in reconsidering - you really *are* highly respected here, you know."

Tom looked at his hands. "It's nice to hear that, Mary," he said. "But of course I've already accepted. And anyway, it's time to move on. I have to challenge myself, keep it fresh."

"But you've always managed to keep it fresher than just about anyone. Are the projects themselves less challenging these days?" She avoided the obvious question: Have you been unhappy?

Tom tilted his head and looked directly into Mary's gray eyes, as if reading her thoughts. "I've been very happy here," he said. "The people are great. I'm not running away from anything. It's just that a fantastic opportunity came along at a good time."

Mary kept probing, asking all the standard questions, but Tom demurred, merely repeating what he'd already told her. By the time the interview had ended and she'd seen him to the door, she felt deflated.

After leaving her office, Tom headed into the back stairwell, pulled out his cell phone, and speed-dialed his wife.

"Alyson? Hey. Yeah. You'll be proud of me - I kept my mouth shut. I mean, you're right about not burning bridges, but who cares at this point? This place can be as screwed up as it wants. It's not my problem anymore."

An Unhappy Memo

Early the next morning, Mary tapped on Helen Gasbarian's door. She found Helen staring at her computer screen, frowning. There was nothing Helen hated more than losing staff to J&N,

and it showed plainly on her face.

"Working on the memo?" Mary asked gently.

Helen nodded. "Not much fun. I was just going to send it to you so you could look it over. How'd the exit interview go?"

Mary confessed that Tom hadn't revealed much. "He didn't want to get specific about why the grass is greener there or tell me about anything that made him unhappy here."

When Helen's father, Peter Gasbarian, had founded Sambian, in 1975, it was supposed to be the antithesis of a behemoth like J&N. His idea was to build a top-notch architecture and engineering firm by making appealing offers to



San Francisco, New York, and London.

Helen looked hard at Mary. She wished she could put the blame for losing Tom

on her - or on someone, anyone - but she couldn't. "You know, ever since Dad founded this company, we've tried to make it a great place to work," she said, sighing. "And I think we treat people really well. Where are we going wrong?"

"I don't know, honestly," Mary replied carefully, hearing the bewilderment in Helen's voice. "But I want to be careful about not reading *too* much into this. Obviously, we need to get to the bottom of it, but it might turn out that it's not a trend, just a nasty coincidence. People leave jobs for all kinds of reasons."

There was nothing Helen hated more than losing staff to her firm's much larger competitor.

young talent. Rather than spend years as anonymous "leverage" to fat-cat partners, young people at Sambian could start making their mark immediately on interesting projects. It was no coincidence that he had stopped mulling this idea over and turned it into reality after his only child announced she was applying to architecture school.

It was also no surprise when Helen took the reins following her father's death, in 1997. By then an award-winning architect in her own right, she made it her mission to increase collaboration among the firm's cutting-edge designers, engineers, and client account managers. As a result, innovation had flourished in general - and, in particular, the firm had been in the vanguard of the "green building" movement. By the time other, larger firms were just starting their green practice groups, Sambian had already designed dozens of LEED-certified buildings. Riding the growth wave, the company had opened offices in San

Helen pondered the point. "Well, that's true enough: Pat Dougherty moved to Ireland for family reasons." Irena Milkovic decided to go solo - I'm still trying to figure that one out And now Tom, to a partnership at a big traditional firm." She shook her head. "But the fact remains that it is a trend. I want to know what we need to do to keep the rest!"

"I have a few theories, Helen," Mary said, as soothingly as possible. "But to see whether there's anything to them, I'd like to move this year's employee survey up on the schedule. I think we need to get some new data in front of us."

Helen turned back to the computer. "Yes, do the survey," she said. "Do it as soon as you possibly can."

The Word on the Street

Designer Hal Pope and engineer Savannah Dorsey were two floors down in Sambian's large kitchen, heating up their lunches in the microwaves. They were

both subdued, having read the memo bearing the news of Tom's departure.

"Tom sort of checked out when we lost that Marko bid," Savannah ventured. "He really wanted to see that design get built. It was gorgeous, with all that light and air. And anyone could see that the price was right."

Hal agreed. "The design couldn't have been better." He lowered his voice a little. "If only Paul Bonney had been able to point that out."

Paul Bonney was the head of architecture sales. Savannah stared at Hal. "You thought so, too," she said. "His pitch sounded so, well, *uninspired*."

be as simple as that. Two kids now. He'll be worrying about college funds."

Savannah jumped back into the conversation. "True, but you'd think he'd also be worried about quality of life. I guess Alyson must have decided not to go back to work. They'll have him on the road constantly."

This Is Not a Drill

A month later, Helen was scanning a staff utilization report when the phone rang. The phone's display showed that the call was coming from Bob Worham, the vice president of engineering. Through the open door, Helen saw her

rumor about Adrienne, Mary felt the blood start to drain from her face.

"It'll be a real problem if we lose Adrienne," Bob said. "She's in the thick of a huge project, and the client loves her." He gave Mary a hard look as they passed Jessie's desk. "What's going on here, anyway? It's like our talent is being sucked out by vampires."

Hearing them enter, Helen turned away from the window. "OK, Bob," she said. "What exactly is this rumor?"

"People are picking up a vibe that she might follow Tom to J&N," Bob began, pulling the door shut. "The two of them were kind of on a wavelength. It wouldn't surprise me if he wanted to find a home for her there."

Helen shot a look at Mary. "No non-compete?" Presumably, Tom had signed the standard contract preventing him from taking talent or clients with him to the competition.

"Oh, sure," Mary replied. "Tough to enforce, though," she added, immediately wishing she hadn't.

"Oh, I'll find a way," Helen spat. "Even if I can't win, I can make life tough for him."

Mary and Bob exchanged glances. Helen turned to Bob, on the offensive now. "So you're telling me we shouldn't be surprised, but I'm also getting the sense that you haven't done anything in anticipation of this." She couldn't resist adding a swipe at Mary. "And why are you waiting around for the satisfaction survey results before taking any action?"

Mary opened her mouth as if to object, but Helen waved her hand impatiently. "OK, look," she said. "I'll talk to her. Let me see what I can do." She walked to the door and opened it.

"Jess, call Adrienne Perle and ask if she's available. I want to see her as soon as possible."

Oh, Won't You Stay?

Ten minutes later, Adrienne appeared in Helen's doorway. Her heavy-framed designer glasses made it a little difficult to read the expression on her face, but her body language signaled anxiety. It

"We really value you around here, and I want you to be happy. I don't want you to even think about leaving."

Adrienne Perle, another colleague from engineering, couldn't help overhearing as she reached past them for some utensils. "*He's uninspired*," Adrienne said. "And he's not the only one. It's really a pity when you have someone doing incredibly creative work, and the support structure isn't there to let it see the light of day. All the salespeople focus on is cutting the deal. If you ask me, that's why Tom is leaving. He's a first-class architect, but if he doesn't have first-class sales and marketing behind him, he's no one. He's the tree falling in the forest. I've tried telling people upstairs that we're veering off base. But nobody's listening."

Hal shook his head. "I don't know, guys. Tom had plenty of wins. More work than he could handle. I just think he looked above him and realized he was going nowhere fast. No one on the executive team is even close to retiring, and the org chart is top-heavy as it is. Where's the career path?"

Adrienne pulled a sour face, indicating agreement. "I wonder how much he'll make as a partner at J&N? It could

assistant, Jessie, move to pick it up at her own desk.

"I've got it, Jess," she said, lifting the receiver. "Hi, Bob. What's up?"

"I might need your help on something. I'm afraid we're at risk of losing Adrienne. It's just a rumor so far, but I want to jump on the situation."

Helen grimaced. "Adrienne? You're right - we don't want to lose her. Why don't you come up now?"

Hanging up, Helen called out to Jessie. "Can you see if Mary is free? If she can make time right now, that would be great."

She stood up, walked over to the window, and pressed her forehead against the cool glass. On the plaza below, a few late lunchers clustered around a vendor's stainless-steel cart. She closed her eyes. Another loss for Bob, she thought. Was he part of the problem? She shook her head, refusing to pursue that line of thought. The best way to decrease attrition surely couldn't be to fire loyal employees.

In the hallway outside Helen's office, Bob ran into Mary. As he relayed the

wasn't every day she was summoned to the CEO's office.

A few moments of small talk prolonged the awkwardness, but Helen got to the point as quickly as possible. "Adrienne, I've heard an alarming rumor—that you might be considering a job elsewhere. I certainly hope this isn't true."

Adrienne looked down at the coffee table and then around the room as if to see who might have spilled the beans. "Rumors spread fast around here," she said finally.

"I want you to tell me the truth - in total confidence, no repercussions," Helen said pleadingly. She paused for effect. "Tom Forsythe talking to you?"

Adrienne's eyes widened slightly, and her answer seemed, to Helen, a little too quick. "Tom has nothing to do with this," she said. "I mean, it's true that I *talk* to him. We've known each other for a long time - since I got here, five years ago. He's probably the closest thing I've had to a mentor. And I guess I do feel a little lost now that he's gone."

"Well, my job is to make sure that you don't feel lost. We really value you around here, and I want you to be happy. I don't want you to even think about leaving." She paused. "Is it possible that Bob could play more of that mentoring role?"

With an uncomfortable shrug, Adrienne began formulating a careful response. "Well, it's not so much, um..." Her voice trailed away.

Helen let her off the hook. "Well, let's figure out how we can fill that void." It was clear that Adrienne wasn't being totally forthcoming but impossible to know how much she was withholding. Of course, she would know better than to say that Tom was recruiting her, even if he was. Recalling Bob's note of desperation earlier, Helen made a decision. "In fact, maybe you would let me play a little of that role myself. I'm promoting you."

Which Is Worse?

"Helen, you can't do that! Adrienne's only a level-six employee - she'll drown in that position."

Helen had known that the suddenness of her executive decision would not sit well with Mary, but the intensity of Mary's reaction surprised her. She had, after all, succeeded in keeping Adrienne on board. "Desperate times call for desperate measures," Helen offered in her own defense.

"But that's just it," Mary cried. "It will look like an act of desperation to anyone who heard the rumor. And worse than that, it isn't fair. If that job is available, there are other people who should get a crack at it. It's not right that they should effectively be penalized because they were the loyal ones. What kind of signal does that send?"

"I'll tell you what signal I think it sends. It tells people that we aren't so constrained by HR procedures that we can't make exceptions for fast-rising talent. That's a positive message. And as for Adrienne, don't worry about her. Everyone loves her. She'll step up to the plate."

Mary shook her head. "It's not a question of popularity or attitude. She's missing some of the competencies..."

"Well, aren't we all!" Helen interrupted. "Sometimes I think we focus too much on the things that aren't quite perfect. If Adrienne were on the outside and sent us her resume, we'd say she was perfect for this job. Tell me that's not true."

The Voice of the People

A few weeks after the tense encounters over Adrienne, Mary tapped again at Helen's door.

"Survey results time," Mary called out in a singsong voice, glad that she and Helen were back on a happy footing. She sat down across the desk from Helen and handed over a copy of a chart-saturated report. "I'll give you the big picture first. Overall, people at Sambian are quite satisfied with just about every aspect of their employment experience."

Helen groaned.

"I know, I know," Mary continued, "but once you get into the details, there are some nuances." She offered a few ex-

amples of departments whose results diverged from the averages. And, as always, the open-ended questions had yielded food for thought. Commenting anonymously on their survey forms, a few employees had complained of too much deadwood in the project manager ranks. One staffer referred to "certain prima donnas" who cared more about winning awards than staying on budget. The administrative staff was, for the most part, neutral. Some resented the evening and weekend hours they spent when, as one phrased it, "someone higher up the chain procrastinated." The perks were good. The perks were bad. The perks were skewed to the younger employees. The younger employees didn't feel valued enough.

Helen listened for 20 minutes, saying little but shaking her head frequently. Then, when Mary was in the middle of reading a comment about the snack and beverage choices in the kitchen, she interrupted.

"Oh, that one was mine," she joked.

Mary played along. "I thought so. And don't worry, I'm on the case." But she knew the boss had heard enough for the moment. Closing the report cover, she leaned back in her chair. "I know it's hard to separate the signal from the noise here, but at least it gives me some more ideas about what to probe for when I'm talking to people one-on-one."

"And that might be enough," Helen said, "if only they would give us straight answers."

How can Sambian discover what's really driving people out the door?

Four commentators offer expert advice beginning on the next page.

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Mary is not doing her most important job, which is to be the custodian of talent at Sambian.

HELEN GASBARIAN has had a wake-up call. To keep precious talent on board, she must grab the helm. This is especially urgent because Mary Donillo is not giving Helen the help she needs.

Indeed, if I were Helen, I'd be taking a hard, cold look at Mary. In her exit interview with Tom Forsythe, Mary asks poor questions, offers only stock responses, and gives up too soon. Mary is not doing her most important job, which is to be the custodian of talent at Sambian. She should have known Tom was at risk. If she had established an early-warning system, Tom might not have quit. If his departure was not preventable, she should have been looking out for the people around him, such as Adrienne Perle. When Tom left, Mary should have thoroughly rerecruited Adrienne. At the very least, Helen should tell Mary to pull up her socks and start providing the kind of information and advice needed to keep Sambian's talent intact.

Even if Mary were more effective, Helen should be out there listening to people. She cannot delegate that task to anyone inside or outside the firm. In organizations like Sambian, where creativity, innovation, and intellectual capital equal competitive advantage, the most effective leaders devote at least 40% of their time to people - coaching and mentoring other leaders, rerecruiting the top talent. To this end, Helen and Mary - or Mary's replacement - should consider conducting "listening tours." These would involve visiting every department, gathering direct feedback from supervisors and staff, and taking the organization's pulse. Helen should hold small, open discussions with key employees in the form of breakfast or coffee meetings. These should be at least a weekly feature on her calendar.

At Microsoft, one effective listening tool is the HR vice president's weekly blog. In

it, she writes about topics that employees have raised, often during her listening tours, and then she asks for opinions, which people can offer anonymously. Recently, the blog revealed that many employees had a strong interest in international careers but were frustrated because it was so difficult to find out about opportunities. As a result, we're now posting listings of international jobs.

Sambian should also establish an open-door policy so that employees know that they can talk to someone above their supervisors if they have a complaint. Helen must personally guarantee that it is safe to do this and that feedback will be taken seriously. Making this policy work requires robust and clear HR processes.

Additionally, Helen should assure employees that she knows what's important to them and that Sambian's value proposition for employees is clear and differentiated from the competition's. At Microsoft, we try to tailor our proposition to individuals' needs. Parents like Tom, who have young children at home, don't have the same needs as younger, single employees. They may value flexible hours above, say, access to a fitness club. Sambian should also try to engage people intellectually, emotionally, and even through their physical environment, so that they can enjoy doing their best work there.

Finally, it's important for Sambian to make leaders accountable for attracting and retaining key talent. This starts at the top. Helen should make it clear that she personally holds herself and her direct reports to a high standard in this regard and will, over time, remove those who are not effective. Sambian's performance management systems should be revamped to focus managers on both business results and people management goals. By doing these things, Sambian will be able to keep employees from drifting.



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SADLY, I'VE seen Helen's panicked reaction too often when good people start to leave a company. After the second or third resignation, the CEO acts impulsively, just as Helen did with Adrienne Perle. She wants to stop the bleeding so desperately that she's trying to do so before she even knows why it's happening. Mary, the cooler head, is absolutely right to try to put the brakes on Adrienne's on-the-spot promotion. Helen needs to take a deep breath, pull back, and move directly to expose the causes of the exodus, going far beyond deciphering the clues in the firm's superficial, apparently self-conducted, survey.

In my analysis of 20,000 employee surveys conducted by the Saratoga Institute, a human-capital-management firm in Silicon Valley, I discovered that in all sorts of companies and industries, there are several "triggering events" that can impel employees to flee. Sometimes, soon after being hired, an employee realizes that there is a misalignment between her expectations and the actual work or

grumbles about a misalignment between the designers and the salespeople. The disconnect between the firm's long-standing focus on innovative design and its concern with deal cutting can lead to disillusionment for proud professionals like Tom.

To get to the root of what is happening, Helen needs to provide a forum where employees can speak openly about their discontent without fear of repercussions. For example, she might consider calling employees together into a GE-style "workout session," where employees break into groups to discuss their concerns and appoint representatives to make recommendations to the larger group.

One design firm I worked with suffered from a staffing flight similar to the one at Sambian. During a workout session, the CEO—an engineer who was an introvert by nature—made himself vulnerable by taking the stage and listening to every employee who had an idea. He took action based on what he had heard—including raising pay to

To discover what impels employees to flee, Helen must go beyond deciphering clues in the firm's self-conducted survey.

the workplace, or she finds that the job doesn't fit her. Other times, a boss offers insufficient coaching or feedback. Workers may feel that their career opportunities are limited or that they are not valued, listened to, or well paid. Employees may experience an imbalance between work and life, or a loss of trust and confidence in senior leaders. Most employees are reluctant to talk openly with management about any of these so-called push factors.

In Sambian's case, several of these below-the-radar issues are in play, as the conversation among Hal Pope, Adrienne, and Savannah Dorsey reveals. Tom feels devalued by Paul Bonney, the head of architecture sales, and so is lured away from Sambian by the promise of a partnership and a fresh challenge. Hal

market levels and reassigning less effective sales staff. This kind of action went a long way toward gaining the respect of his workforce. Within five months, the firm had won a key contract and the bleeding had stopped.

Helen also needs to get some help for Mary, who is not providing the honest information Helen desperately needs to guide the firm. Hiring a third party to assist with surveys and exit interviews would help, because employees will tell a trusted outsider things they may not feel safe telling an insider like Mary. This is clearly the case with Tom. In the absence of an environment in which employees can speak freely about what bugs them, even a once-great company like Sambian may become little more than a revolving door.



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Helen needs to assure her most talented employees that she understands their concerns and desires.

HELEN MAY have inherited her architectural talents -as well as the firm-from her father, but she doesn't seem to have his managerial genes. As a CEO, Helen's number one job is to attract and retain great talent, but she's just not doing that.

I can certainly understand the difficulty of the problem, having been in a talent-draining situation myself. In 2006, Bristol-Myers Squibb, where I was then an independent member of the board, spun into turmoil when the CEO and general counsel were summarily fired following a botched patent fight. Having spent my previous life as a senior executive at both Guidant and Eli Lilly, I understood the business well enough and accepted the board's request to step in as interim CEO of BMS.

Dealing with workforce turmoil was one of the toughest challenges I'd ever faced. Following the firings, employees were in shock. Our stock price fell, and there were rumors that we were going to be acquired. Given the drop in employee morale and our proximity to other large pharmaceutical firms in the New York area, competitors found it pretty easy to lure people out the door. It looked as if there might be a large exodus. Worst of all, nobody really knew me; I had to build trust from ground zero. My job, not unlike Helen's, was to reestablish stability-and fast.

If my experience can serve as a guide, I would suggest to Helen that she do several things- right away. First, she should simplify the management structure so that she can gain a direct understanding of the issues facing each area of the firm. Second, she should make sure that Sambian's mission is crystal clear and that everyone in the firm understands it. Third, she should ensure that people are being compensated correctly.

It's also critical for Helen to spend much more time with the key talent. At our firm,

the future of the business rests with people in R&D. Having worked with R&D employees in my previous positions, I understood their language, and that proved helpful at BMS when I met with R&D staffers in the wake of the firings to discuss science and technology issues. With our chief scientific officer, I still attend R&D meetings and discuss the importance of the R&D function to the future of the company. In addition, our scientists know that I sit on the board's science and technology committee and that they have the board's full support. At Sambian, Helen can use the language of architecture to connect with her most talented employees and assure them that she understands their concerns and desires.

At the same time, I would encourage Helen, with her leadership team, to hold a lot of face-to-face meetings with senior managers from all departments, including, as often as possible, the folks from San Francisco, New York, and London. Phone calls, e-mail, and teleconferences won't cut it; she needs to read the senior managers' body language and facial expressions. In these meetings, she and the team must define what success means for Sambian and how they will achieve it.

Finally, Helen should start writing bimonthly e-mails - "memos from the CEO" - in which she actively solicits anonymous feedback, suggestions, ideas, and complaints from everyone in the company. At BMS, my memos generate hundreds of responses - a sure sign of employee engagement. I read them all and respond to as many as possible.

As a result of doing all these things at BMS, we cut turnover to a level below the historical average and have attracted some industry stars, all within 15 months. If Helen does likewise, she may be able to turn Sambian around.

SAMBIAN'S STORY is not unusual. People begin leaving, and the blame game starts ("Is it the manager? Is it HR?"). Senior managers react by increasing compensation, making promotions, and introducing new projects and even new managers. But these are short-term fixes. They might postpone a departure, but they are really no more than Band-Aids.

Helen must understand that people don't just leave managers; they leave organizations. Sambian needs a cure for the organizational ills that are making employees unhappy. In a four-year analysis of more than 100,000 employees around the world, the Corporate Leadership Council found that although workers join companies for rational motives (better compensation, benefits, and career opportunities), they stay and work hard for emotional ones.

The most important contributor to employees' emotional commitment is a sense of connection to the firm's mission. Tom's situation reveals the danger of Sambian's failure to make this connection. When his pet project loses a bid, he's disappointed because he feels a misalignment between the direction the firm is taking and his own aspirations. His boss probably failed to spot his growing unhappiness for two reasons: The first is that Tom never said anything about it. Indeed, CLC data show that, on average, only 25% of departing employees express dissatisfaction before quitting. This means that by the time unhappy workers tell their managers what's going on, it's often too late to win them back. The second reason that Tom's unhappiness went unnoticed may be that his performance was so strong. In a CLC survey, however, nearly a third of high performers reported that what they want for their careers is not what their company wants for them.

To better pick up on the warning signs of an emotional disconnect, Sambian needs first to communicate a clearer mission and the contribution individual employees will make to it. Helen must also update the company's mission; words like "creative" and "green" may no longer set the firm apart in the minds of talented employees like Tom. To get disenchanted staffers back on board, Helen could

hold monthly employee-run "mission review sessions," in which workers discuss Sambian's mission and its relevance to their work.

Employees also stick around when they have everything they need - from tools and resources to top-down managerial support - to succeed in their jobs. Without a clear understanding that the firm is aligned behind them, even the most talented workers can feel that their work is futile.

Finally, employees - especially young ones - are more likely to stay at a company whose culture and values they enjoy. Mary should conduct regular "culture audits" to measure employees' connection to the company's work environment. These anonymous audits consist of a brief set of questions aimed at discovering cultural disconnects: "What are the unwritten assumptions about the way work gets done here?" "Do you believe hard work will be rewarded?" "Do you feel that other employees are committed to your success and the organization's success?" By



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Sambian has failed to create a mission and culture to which high performers feel connected and committed.

comparing the answers to such questions with employee demographic data, Sambian may see trends. For instance, employees with five or more years of tenure may feel disconnected from the firm's culture. Such studies, followed by proper managerial attention, can reduce attrition rates by as much as 87%.

In the end, by making sure that Sambian actively supports a mission and culture to which employees feel committed, Helen can see to it that her high performers - and her company - survive and thrive. 

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