

IEC Webinar Recap: Keeping Your Best People: Smart Retention Strategies

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Challenges

- The industry has a skilled labor shortage.
- Fewer people entering the trades, and retirements are outpacing training.
- There is often limited mentorship and leadership development.
- Cultural and management challenges drive turnover.
- **Bottom Line:** Hiring is expensive; retention is critical.

Metaphors for Managing Workplace

The Golden Goose: *Your top performers; the people who drive results*

Characteristics:

- Highly productive and dependable
- Strong skills and work ethic
- Sets the tone for others

How to Retain Them:

- Identify and track high performers
- Provide tools, training, and growth opportunities
- Recognize consistency and reward results (bonuses, promotions)
- Remove barriers that limit productivity
- Create a culture of respect, trust, and communication

Take care of the people who make you money before someone else does.

The Ugly Duckling: *People with potential who need development*

Characteristics:

- Inconsistent performance
- Skill gaps or soft-skill challenges
- Strong effort and coachability

How to Develop Them:

- Identify hidden talent early
- Coach, not criticize
- Set clear expectations and growth plans
- Provide mentoring and regular check-ins
- Celebrate improvement and progress

Today's ducklings are tomorrow's golden geese.

The Fox: *Toxic or non-productive team members*

Characteristics:

- Negative attitude or low effort
- Steals time, energy, morale, or resources
- Undermines culture and team trust

How to Address:

- Identify toxic behaviors quickly
- Clarify expectations and document conversations
- Coach when possible—but set limits
- Remove true foxes when behavior doesn't change

Retention for the company sometimes means letting people go.

The Eagle: *Leadership- the culture guardian*

Characteristics:

- Set the tone, vision, and standards
- Protect morale and company culture
- Lead by example (“demonstrator, not dictator”)
- Hold people accountable consistently
- Develop future leaders through mentoring

Key Truth

- Culture and retention start at the top.
- If the organization is struggling, leadership must act.

What Strong Retention Looks Like

- Employees feel valued and supported
- Clear paths for growth and leadership
- Accountability matched with encouragement
- A culture people don't want to leave and are welcome to return to

Key Takeaways

- Keep your best talent
- Grow your future leaders
- Remove threats to culture
- Build an environment where people want to stay