

Who's getting your team across the desert?

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Who, in your organization, is so valuable that they create an advantage or benefit for the organization of which very few others can provide? More than likely it is someone who is unique and valuable in some way either because of their personal knowledge, company knowledge, or market knowledge. And leaders should be making every effort to take care of and retain them!

I read an article about a salesman who brought in 40 percent of the total sales in his company. But one day when a new payroll controller came on board and convinced top management that the salesman was making too much money, the company cut the salesman's commission, reducing his income by more than 50 percent. The salesman protested but the company insisted that the customers belonged to them and were loyal to the company and its brand and not the salesman. They told him if he wasn't happy, to go work somewhere else. He did. He walked across the street, got a job with a major competitor, and guess what? The majority of the customers in his portfolio followed him. His old company lost 38 percent in sales revenue and almost went bankrupt.

The salesman was able to walk across the street and work for a

competitor because he didn't sign a non-compete agreement. Workers who have signed one may not be able to act so boldly if in a similar situation. But even so, a non-compete agreement doesn't guarantee anything for either the employer or employee. Check the laws in your state. In some states, non-compete agreements are not allowable or can't be legally enforced. In other states, agreements can be enforced if the following conditions are met:

1) Reasonable time restrictions (generally less than one year).

2) A limitation to a certain geographic area (city or county versus an entire state).

3) A necessity to protect trade secrets, business information, or a company's relationship with customers, clients, or vendors.

4) A supported consideration such as additional compensation, stock options, specialized training, or some other benefit that applies to it.

Sometimes non-compete agreements are unavoidable due to systemic policies. With or without them, though, the best talent is going to eventually move on if they are more valued elsewhere. Other organizations have ways of getting them in their doors and legally protecting them (or they provide legal support to get non-compete agreements thrown out

in court.) The "wine-and-dine" tactic seems underhanded and not right, but it has been happening for a long time. For centuries, leaders of all kinds have heisted valuable people to their side for their benefit, stemming from old wartime operations.

All the way back in the year 1220, even Genghis Khan, the great and powerful leader of the Mongol army, knew the value of someone with knowledge. He once led a military campaign to capture the Turkoman city of Zarnuk for the sole purpose of acquiring a man who had lived in the Kyzyl Kum Desert all his life and knew where all the oases were located. This vital knowledge enabled the Mongol army to cross the desert from one water hole to another to attack their enemy from an unguarded avenue thought to be impassable because of the long stretch of desert. Khan used the knowledge of one man to defeat an entire army!

If you're an organizational leader, you better darn well know who can get your team across the desert. You better value their knowledge of the oases. And are you compensating this person with a little (or a lot) more than they're worth? If not, be sure to have their phone number in your contacts so you can "keep in touch."

~ The End ~