

# CX INSIGHTS: USING LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT TO INCREASE RETENTION

In a post-great resignation society where turnover costs an estimated \$7.8 trillion annually,<sup>1</sup> employee retention is a critical concern facing today's companies. This is especially true in contact centers, where attrition costs include both the high cost of replacing someone plus potentially the cost of losing an unsatisfied customer.

While the reasons people quit vary widely, one reason surfaces to the top across the board: poor management-employee relations. In other words, people don't quit their job ... they quit their boss.

In fact, according to Gallup, 70% of the variance in team engagement is based on the manager.<sup>2</sup> Those who recommend their manager are:<sup>3</sup>

**2.3x**  
MORE LIKELY  
TO BE ENGAGED

**2x**  
MORE LIKELY  
TO STAY WITH  
ORGANIZATION

**2.3x**  
MORE LIKELY TO  
HAVE CLARITY ABOUT  
COMPANY'S STRATEGY

So, what can organizations do to develop leaders whose employees would never dream of leaving? There's no magic formula, but there is plenty that can be done to move your culture in the right direction: Train managers to be effective leaders, give them tools that enable top performance, and empower them to empower others.

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## TRAINING: TRANSITION FROM DOING TO LEADING

Gallup reports that only 10% of the workforce has a natural talent to manage. Another 20% show some characteristics of basic managerial talent and can function at a high level if their organization invests in coaching and developing their leadership capabilities.<sup>4</sup>

Particularly in a contact center environment, promoting from within is an excellent way to recognize high-performing agents with a service-first mentality. However, being an effective agent doesn't always mean being an effective leader.

It starts by testing for a leadership mindset. Namely, finding people who get personal satisfaction by seeing others under their guidance succeed. Early detection of top performers who possess this characteristic provides an opportunity for professional development into great leaders.

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This fact recognizes that leadership can be learned with the right training and coaching. To cultivate a servant leadership mentality among your rising stars, consider developing a training program that emphasizes communication, culture and collaboration.

## COMMUNICATIONS

Quite possibly the most foundational skill a leader can have, communication is a pathway to develop further leadership qualities such as empathy, inclusion and delivery of constructive feedback. Those who feel their voices are heard at work are nearly five times (4.6x)<sup>5</sup> more likely to perform their best work.

Upskilling communication effectiveness might include these essential training topics:

- Empathetic listening
- Conflict de-escalation
- Communication styles
- How to have critical conversations

## ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

“So goes the leader, so goes the culture. So goes the culture, so goes the company,” says Simon Sinek, an author and thought leader who explores how leaders can inspire cooperation, trust and change.

He’s right. Leaders set the tone for those they lead, and a company’s culture is formed based on their collective behaviors. Whether the culture is clearly defined or organically “just happens,” every company has one, and it can make a significant impact on employee satisfaction, productivity and retention.<sup>6</sup>

Great leaders spread the culture with their words and actions, and recognize others for embracing it. Enhance their abilities by training them on topics such as:

- Understanding the “why” behind your brand, mission, vision and values
- Creating a culture of belonging\*
- Creating a safe space for your team
- Building trust and respect

*\*Employees who feel a sense of belonging were 5.2x<sup>3</sup> more likely to be engaged.*

## COLLABORATION

Collaborative leaders solicit team input as part of their decision-making process. As a result, those they lead are more likely to take ownership of their work and feel trusted. This is especially important in remote and hybrid work environments, where employees might feel less unified with their manager and team than in brick-and-mortar workplaces.

To inspire a spirit of collaboration among leaders and their teams, train leaders on:

- Working with different personality types
- Hosting team building events
- Coaching versus managing
- Running effective meetings and brainstorming sessions
- Recognizing individuals and teams



## MORLEY EXAMPLE

Leadership training at Morley begins at the agent level, before someone is promoted to a Team Lead position. When agents express interest in advancement, we encourage them to participate in our Fundamentals of Leadership program, which focuses on self-discovery, strengthening skills and mentoring on both a personal and professional level. The course has dual purposes: 1) to demonstrate at an early stage that advancement opportunities and career paths are available, and 2) to prepare agents to take on the role of a leader.

Once agents are promoted into leadership positions, advanced leadership training continues with the Morley GOLD program. Here, leaders take a deeper dive into servant leadership and management principles so that they can effectively lead teams toward success.

Internal data suggests training our leaders through these programs has increased both leader retention and agent retention, leading us to track retention rates that are higher than industry average.<sup>7</sup>

**Insight #1:** Training is a win-win-win when battling attrition. Leaders win by leveling up their skills. Employees win when their leaders are more effective. And companies win when leaders and employees are engaged and happy ... and less likely to leave.

## 2 TOOLS: BEAT BURNOUT FOR YOURSELF & YOUR TEAM

Statistics on leadership burnout are harrowing. Over the past year, 66% of managers say they have suffered from burnout and 76% say they feel overwhelmed.<sup>8</sup> Gallup 2020 and 2021 survey data shows “manager burnout is only getting worse.”<sup>9</sup>

Organizations can support leaders by providing them with tools to help prevent burnout and reduce costly turnover. Examples might include:

- Software tools that automate time-intensive or repetitive tasks
- Project management tools that help streamline processes
- Recognition tools that boost moods and make people feel appreciated
- Mental health tools that encourage wellness and self-care
- Productivity tools that analyze work habits, such as time spent in meetings (Note: While collaboration in and of itself is a good thing, too much collaboration can leave employees with little time for all the critical work they must complete on their own.)



## MORLEY EXAMPLE

Leaders in call centers are tasked with ensuring their teams are meeting or exceeding KPIs. When they have access to voice of the customer (VOC) data points, it can help them predict (and train agents to understand) key drivers and patterns that positively impact handle time, customer satisfaction scores and other key metrics.

But capturing VOC data and then compiling and analyzing it can be a time-consuming endeavor ... unless you use VOC software that does this for you. This tool helps agents capture real-time customer sentiment so that they can focus on empathizing with the customer in the moment. For leaders, VOC software provides more accurate customer sentiment than what can be captured manually, leading to an easier-to-interpret roadmap of improvements upon which to act.

Instead of focusing on the process of repeatedly gathering and analyzing data, leaders can spend that time finding creative solutions for pain points and recognizing team wins – both of which are key retention drivers.

**Insight #2:** Leaders who leverage the right mix of tools are better able to focus on their teams' needs, individually and collectively, which leads to increased loyalty and productivity.

### 3 EMPOWERMENT: DO WHAT'S RIGHT FOR YOUR TEAM

When leaders are empowered to do what they think is right for their teams, they feel in control of their work environment and trusted to share authority, information and rewards with others. In our experience, they're able to use their talents in a way that benefits both them and the company, leading to:

- A more engaged workforce
- Higher productivity and job satisfaction
- Lower turnover
- A team that's aligned with company business goals

Empowerment can take many forms. It could be any combination of:

- Creating a culture of accountability and ownership
- Building trust and respect
- Facilitating great communications, sharing information and listening to feedback
- Aligning with company core values and goals
- Inspiring creative thinking
- Giving timely rewards and recognition
- Ensuring autonomy (taken another way, minimizing micromanagement)



#### MORLEY EXAMPLES

##### *Self-Selection*

Morley's company values exude "empowerment" at every level, from maintaining a Family Comes First mentality to asking them to Do What's Right to creating an atmosphere where they can Be Their Best Selves. It's so embedded in our DNA that as soon as six months after hire, associates are invited to "raise their hands" to show interest in advancing their Morley career by taking our Fundamentals of Leadership program.

##### *Client Exposure*

We often invite Operations Managers and Team Leads to business review meetings with clients, where they are active participants reading out on business updates, KPIs, employee engagement, recognition and process improvement initiatives.

To prepare, Directors meet with leaders ahead of time to review materials and expectations, and afterward to review the meeting outcome, best practices demonstrated and lessons learned for future meetings. It gives leaders an opportunity to grow, build confidence and feel that they've made a significant difference. Leaders enjoy this opportunity as it demonstrates that they're part of the team, part of the vision and a valuable asset to the organization.

**Insight #3:** Supercharge your ability to retain employees by empowering leaders to care for their teams, share information and opportunities, and engage with stakeholders at all levels of a project.

## Sources:

- <sup>1</sup> Gallup: [\*The World's \\$7.8 Trillion Workplace Problem\*](#)
- <sup>2</sup> Gallup: [\*Managers Account for 70% of Variance in Employee Engagement\*](#)
- <sup>3</sup> Glint: [\*State of the Manager 2021\*](#)
- <sup>4</sup> Gallup: [\*Why Great Managers Are So Rare\*](#)
- <sup>5</sup> Salesforce Trailhead: [\*Understand the Business Impact of Inclusive Leadership\*](#)
- <sup>6</sup> GreenThumbs: [\*75+ Eye-Opening Company Culture Statistics For 2022\*](#)
- <sup>7</sup> Internal Morley Data Tracking
- <sup>8</sup> Digiday: [\*Managing stress: Company leaders face pressure, burnout just as employees do\*](#)
- <sup>9</sup> Gallup: [\*Manager Burnout Is Only Getting Worse\*](#)

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