



Teaching Nomad

HIRING GREAT STAFF SERIES

PART 2: STAFF RETENTION

You put a lot of work into finding and hiring the best possible staff for your school and now you need to keep them. This article will discuss strategies and benefits of staff retention.

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“There is nothing more important than your staff”

Staff turnover is one of the most costly expenses for any organization. There are direct financial expenses like the fees associated with hiring a professional to replace lost staff but the less direct costs are often much more damaging. If you lose someone during the school year, the impact on the students cannot be understated. Not to mention the impact on your other staff members who will likely have to pick up extra classes as a result. This situation will make the other staff more likely to consider leaving.

In the teach abroad world, turnover of foreign teachers will naturally always be higher than with domestic staff and that's ok. However, the top performing organizations will find a way to keep their staff around longer than the rest. Here are a few benefits of having great staff retention.

1. Happy, knowledgeable, productive staff

Remember the last time you had a first day of work? Remember how you didn't know where to find the things you needed or who to ask for help. Even when you hire a highly experienced teacher for a subject they know perfectly, they don't know your school and it will take them time to get into a groove.

On the flip side of this, the teachers you retain from year to year are knowledgeable about your school, its policies and systems. This makes them more productive and able to accomplish more on a day to day basis.

Happiness is really the key element to staff retention. A good teacher that enjoys their job and enjoys working together with the team will go out of their way to make the school a better place and contribute to a school they can be proud of.

Teaching Nomad is an American owned and operated Education Recruitment Company based in Shanghai, China. We work within all levels of education helping great schools find great staff in China. Clients include: Kindergartens, Training schools, International Schools, Foreign Language Schools and Universities. Visit us on-line to learn more about our [solutions for schools.](#)

2. Improved learning environment

This is really what it's all about, isn't it? The three elements described above all lead to a better, more productive learning environment for students. If the staff doesn't have to worry about "staff" issues, then this allows them to focus on creating engaging and effective lessons to challenge their students. Happy teachers who create great lessons will lead to successful students who are excited about learning. Schools can choose to create a positive learning environment of effective teachers staying in the same school for many years or a negative cycle of replacing teachers every year. Which do you think will build your student population?



3. Lower cost of recruitment and HR

Cash flow must be considered in every organization. It shouldn't be hard for you to calculate your average cost for each hire. Do you run ads and pay in-house staff to recruit or do you pay a recruitment firm? Don't forget the cost of relocation, visa processing and health exams. On the low end of scale, each new hire must cost you at least 13,000RMB. The expenses are likely much more but let's use 13,000RMB for an example. If you increased the average life span of a teacher in your school from just 1.3 years to 1.6 years with a staff size of 25, then that would save you 47,000RMB per year! If you could increase it to 1.9, you'd save 79,000RMB per year in direct hiring expenses.

Here are some steps you can take to retain your staff:

1. Compensation: Due to the increasing competition for teachers and China's yearly inflation, teachers' salaries are continuing to rise year after year. Don't overpay, but make sure you're staying competitive and not losing teachers over a justifiable raise in pay.
2. Trim the tree: Sometimes you have to cut off the dead branches to allow the tree to grow. If you have a negative, dis-engaged staff member, you need to get rid of them even if they are willing to renew their contract. These bad apples will poison your new, excited teachers fast! This creates a negative cycle that must be broken if you want your retention to improve. We've literally had teachers tell us, "I don't understand why all the teachers are complaining, this is the best job I've ever had". Unfortunately, that teacher did not renew his contract because he wanted to get away from the negativity.
3. Have a clear vision for the future: Happy employees need hope for the future and don't want to be stagnate in an organization that's not going anywhere. You need to paint a vision for them of where the school is headed and find a way to track the progress. This will help them feel like they are part of something bigger than them themselves.



4. Hire the right people initially: In China's competitive hiring environment, it can be easy to make an offer to every teacher that looks good on paper. However, you need to make sure that their goals and desires are in line with what you're offering. If they are in line, it is likely that the teachers you hire will stay beyond 1 or 2 years. This also goes back to Part 1 of this series, which explored the benefits of finishing your hiring in advance in order to have the luxury of time that allows you to be more selective about the candidates that you hire.
5. Provide recognition: In a school environment, we often focus a lot of energy on recognizing students for good work, but don't forget your staff! It has been said that some people will do more for recognition than they will for pay. You could have an annual company dinner party with awards given out for particular teacher accomplishments throughout the year. Events like these always create bonding between staff members, which goes a long way to building a successful learning environment.
6. Provide personal growth opportunities: Many times, the best staff will choose jobs with personal & professional growth opportunities over the highest paying position. Arranging workshops or conferences will not only make your school a desirable place to work but will improve the quality of staff at the same time.

Many of the suggestions that have been explored here are easy to do, but they are even easier not to do. I suggest to make a personal plan of action and set deadlines for when you will complete the particular aspects of the plan. Remember, a goal is only a dream if it doesn't have a deadline.

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