

Creating a workplace people want to join

Written by Julie Desmond
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NASA Administrator and Astronaut Charles Bolden Jr is living an industrious and adventurous life as the first African American to travel into space. He spoke recently about the future of the evolutionary and evolving NASA. What caught my interest was that people apply for work with NASA by the thousands every week. And yet, NASA is a space-focused organization which very recently sent its last ship into space. One reporter asked him the obvious, “Why would anyone want to work there?”

Bolden’s response to that question was a surprisingly upbeat rendition of, “Why not?” He explained that people want Affiliation: they to work where they can be a part of something wildly impactful and important. Also, people want Opportunity: they want to be confident that opportunities for advancement will be there as they progress through their careers.

With the number of great employees available right now, and the high cost of hiring (and firing) employees, good companies and good people can create environments that will attract quality employees regardless of the work at hand.

Do top employees want to be affiliated with your company or team or department? Hiring people with both skills and personality is the first step to becoming a group people want to be a part of. Add training and encourage interaction and teamwork. Employees who are allowed to try new things and interact across various job descriptions become flexible, trainable, promotable employees. These are exactly the people that attract other good employees. Work on that.

Do current employees perceive long term opportunities within your company or department? Even in small organizations, opportunities for growth can be horizontal. Not everyone needs supervisory responsibilities. Many excellent performers will be satisfied long term in their current role if they are given new projects occasionally. Allow employees to offer input on initiatives. Opportunity does not have to mean Promotion. Opportunities come in all shapes and sizes.

Your organization does not have to be NASA strong to be a place people want to work. Create an environment people want to be a part of, and give employees new opportunities consistently, and your ability to attract and keep great people will be out of this world.

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