

# How to Keep your Employees

...

*And how to avoid working for a bad company*

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10 years in the industry

Three at Avalanche

Seven at Paradox

← Now indie!

(Sci-fi, photography, books,  
Star Wars Galaxies, Morrowind)

# Outline

- What does a good workplace do?
  - 11 things research agrees about
- What does a good workplace NOT do
  - Four things research agrees about (but you might not)
- Telltale signs for future employees
  - Five things to keep an eye out for

# Good 1 - Good Managers

- The most important one!
- Great at programming etc does not mean great manager material
- Can motivate
- Have assertiveness
- Create culture of accountability and trust
- Build relationships
- Make decisions based on productivity
- Need to have enough mandate

# Good 2 - Recruit Right

- Rush creates delays later
- Overqualified means bored
  - Could potentially work, but you need a plan!
- Do exit interviews to find out why this recruitment did not work.
  - Listen, take notes, analyze and take action if needed.

# Good 3 - Rewards

- Salary is important
- Benefits might make up for the difference
- Be creative!

# Good 4 - Challenge People

- Growth mindset is good
- Aim to build from the high points
- Think about mentoring
- Have a five-year plan

# Good 5 - Praise

- How do you reward excellent behaviour or results?
- Public, well-deserved praise goes a long way
- Must be well-deserved!
- Celebrate small successes every day.
- Can be easy. Say “Thank you”, “great work” or similar - often!



# Good 6 - Talk with people

- Did someone just become a parent? Check if their desires have changed
- Who likes to travel, who does not?
- Who could really benefit from working from home sometimes?
- Who would appreciate flexible working hours?

# Good 7 - Office Culture

- A welcoming culture will make your recruitment pool bigger
- Don't say stupid things - not that hard
- Focus on work
- Compliments are tricky

# Good 8 - Transparency

- Where are we headed as a company?
- Main obstacles?
- Rough patch can be communicated now, or later
- Vision
- Values

# Good 9 - Encourage Initiatives

- “Nice - but how is your task coming?”
  - Should not be the response if they did something clearly valuable!
- Talk about what kinds of initiatives are welcome

# Good 10 - Purpose, Needed and Appreciated

- This is what most people want to feel at work
- Responsibility for own area
- Don't forget the non-dev people

# Good 11 - Flexible Working Hours

- Also, the possibility to work from home

# Bad 1 - Play Favourites

- Even if one person is really good, keep praise varied
- If a person can't ever be praised, do you really want them there?

# Bad 2 - Public Shaming

- Fail Wall - Good
- Public Shaming - Bad



# Bad 3 - Crunch

- Well researched
- Bad for health, motivation, creativity and productivity
- 56 to 70 hours per week showed almost 0 increase in productivity
- A couple of weeks might be fine
- Months at the time is not

“when you keep our husbands and wives and children in the office for ninety hours a week, sending them home exhausted and numb and frustrated with their lives, it's not just them you're hurting, but everyone around them, everyone who loves them”

-Erin Hoffman (EA Spouse)

# Bad 3, pt.2 - Crunch

- Can be good team building in shorter periods
- Hardly ever positive for people with small children
- Don't base overtime on hours, base it on the things that need to be done
- Mandatory, unpaid crunch builds resentment
- Makes people quit the industry

“nurses experiencing burnout were rated by their patients as being awful, awful human beings.”

-Jamie Madigan

# Bad 4 - Long Hours Culture

- Works best with a uniform young team
- Experienced people with families have a hard time competing
  - Might start to look around

# Telltale 1 - Treatment in Recruitment Process

- Do they seem to value your time?
- Seem professional?
- Respectful?

# Telltale 2 - The Workplace

- Do people look stressed?
- In the workplace clean
- Do you see angry notes/signs?
- What do they have up on the walls?
  - Fail wall vs shame wall
- Do you feel like spending lots of time there?

# Telltale 3 - The Manager

- Probably the most important person
- Talk about work styles and preferred practices
- Ask what others have done before that they did not like

# Telltale 4 - The Team

- Treasure if you get to meet them
- Take your time
- They should want to make a good impression
- How long has everyone been there? Ask.

# Telltale 5 - Job Definition?

- Is there one?
- If not, can success in your position be defined?



# Telltale 6 - Employer Handbook

- Is there one?
  - No might be ok for a small company
- There is one, but you can't see it?
  - Weird
- Read through it carefully, check for things that are not compatible with you
- A warning sign might be a no-moonlighting policy for example
  - Non-compete clause makes sense though

# Thank You! Questions?

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