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Science + Technology Perspectives

Making Your Lab “Sticky:” Four Ways to Retain Highly Valuable Workers

In today’s environment, finding, and just as importantly, retaining valuable laboratory team members can be a challenge. In addition to having the right culture and policies, the facility itself is a critical component to any retention strategy. While your lab may be state-of-the-art, how do the amenities that surround it compare to those offered by other organizations competing for the same talent? In addition, how do you attract workers who may be comfortably working from home to work in an industry where working from home is not an option (like labs)?

You could do a sweeping renovation of your entire facility, including the lab spaces themselves; however, there are less expensive, but no less impactful, upgrades that you can consider. Making changes to support areas, such as lunchrooms, breakrooms, and even outdoor spaces, may make all the difference. Consider these ideas:

1. **Provide easy access to break rooms/coffee stations.** One of the biggest requests we hear from lab personnel is the need to have quick access to either break rooms or coffee stations. Of course, you cannot have your lab staff eating or drinking in the lab, but positioning those amenities near the lab’s

exterior allows them to get that quick ‘pick-me-up’ faster. And for those pick-me-ups, perhaps provide access to a market with fresh food options versus vending machines with stale cookies and chips.

2. **Make sure the lab environment is working as it should,** e.g., appropriate temperature and humidity control. You can buy all the right toys (e.g., technology tools), but if the space isn’t operating as it should, those toys aren’t going to be as effective as they could be. Periodically recommission your labs to ensure the space is operating correctly.



3. **Have a nice uniform area for donning/doffing lab coats and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** with dedicated locations for team members coats, shoes, etc. In addition to helping with efficiency and flow through the space, improving the look and amenities within the uniform area will help employees feel appreciated...and says, "we want you to have less stress." The little things add up.
4. **Provide access to daylight and the outdoors throughout your associates' day.** It is proven that daylighting can be a key productivity booster. While you may not be able to provide daylight directly to the lab space, perhaps it be added to the support areas surrounding the lab? Outdoor access can be another productivity booster. While fitness centers can be expensive (and sometimes under-used) amenities, think about adding walking paths instead. These can enable employees to de-stress through mild exercise. You could make the path more interactive with exercise stations (e.g., balance beams, pull-up bars) located throughout. Paths can even be adapted to the climate! Cross-country skiing, anyone?



Considering and implementing the above ideas into your facility can help attract and retain a best-in-class workforce.

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