



Teaching Nomad

How to retain great staff

The impact of high turnover rates

Staff turnover is one of the most costly expenses for any organization. There are direct financial consequences associated with a high turnover rate, such as the fees you'll incur while you try to find teachers to replace the people that left.

That being said, the non-financial indirect costs are often much more damaging. If you lose someone during the school year, the impact that event has on students cannot be understated. Not to mention the negative impact on your other staff members who will likely have to pick up extra classes as a result. This situation will make other staff members 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 okay. However, the top performing organizations always find a way to keep their staff around longer than other less prepared organizations.

So, how do you find great teachers to work in your school, & why is it important to keep them?

Benefits of staff retention:

1. Happy, knowledgeable, and productive staff members
2. Improved learning environment
3. Lower cost of recruitment and HR



1. Happy, knowledgeable, and productive staff

Current teachers should want to renew their contracts

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 already knowledgeable about your school, as well as its policies and systems. This makes them more productive and gives them the ability 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 with other staff members will go out of their way to make the school a better place and contribute to a learning environment that they can be proud of.

2. Improved learning environment

Increase morale with happy teachers

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 your current teachers don't have to worry about the school being short staffed or about helping a bunch of new teachers, then this allows them to focus on creating engaging and effective lessons to challenge their students. Happy teachers creating great lessons leads to successful students who are excited about learning. Schools can choose to create a positive learning environment that's full of effective teachers that have worked there for many years, or they can create a negative cycle of replacing teachers every year. Which do you think will build your student population?

3. Lower cost of recruitment and HR

Use your resources wisely

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 to do it for you? 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 13,000 RMB. The expenses are likely much more but let's use 13,000 RMB as an example. If you increased the average length of time that a teacher stays at your school from 1.3 years to 1.6 years with a staff size of 25, then that would save you 47,000 RMB per year! If you could increase it to 1.9, you'd save 79,000 RMB per year in direct hiring expenses. Sounds great doesn't it?





Steps you can take to retain your staff:

1. Compensate fairly

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, disengaged 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 stuck 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 planning your in advance so that you're able 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 about 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 towards 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 it will also improve the quality of your staff at the same time.

If you'd like to speak to us about your hiring needs, please contact us [here](#).

