

Sarah Krom sits down with SKC's Director of Marketing, Karen Donaway to answer questions on employee engagement, mentoring programs and the benefits of asking for feedback.

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You are very involved in recruiting for SKC. Given the challenges in your industry, has that changed the way you have historically recruited and how?

SK: Absolutely. There is such a need to make recruiting part of your everyday. Now you need to block time on your calendar to dedicate to recruiting. And, you need to be open to hiring someone who may not have the exact qualifications you're looking for – but has the work ethic and desire to grow. There is stiff competition for talent right now and you need to be open minded.

Q

How does employee engagement affect retention in an organization?

SK: I recently heard the statistic that 60% of new hires will leave within 6 months! Recruiting needs to continue long after you onboard your new hire. It starts with listening. Do you have a culture of open communication where the management team is willing to be flexible? People need to be heard. The three things employees are most looking for are autonomy, communication, and transparency. It's important to address all three.

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Aside from work/life balance, professional development seems to be a top priority for people looking for career opportunities. To that end, you recently implemented a mentoring program at the firm. What are the benefits of that program?

SK: Part of the transparency piece that people are looking for is transparency in their future. They want to know what they need to do to get to the next level. By bringing our mentoring program in-house, it is very customizable. We are able to address what each person needs to do to be a better leader and better team member overall. And our program is adaptable to all levels. We continue to build curriculum around specific strengths and goals.

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What would be your words of advice for a business owner addressing employee retention and satisfaction issues in their organization?

SK: Take an anonymous survey. Send out 3-5 questions to your team... you need feedback! You can start with 3 simple questions: what's something we should start doing, continue doing, stop doing? Then, go on a "listening tour" in your office and spend a few minutes at each person's workspace and find out what's really going on. Once you have garnered feedback, communicate to your team that they have been heard. Address the things you will change, and, more importantly, the things you're not going to change...and why.

Q

It's been said that "it's lonely at the top" – and many entrepreneur business owners can find themselves in this position. Did you have or currently have a mentor for your career development?

SK: I operate from the standpoint of my "personal board of directors". As a business owner, you need feedback and advice. Three or four people that you know and respect can give you much deeper insight than just one person. Mastermind groups with other business owners can be extremely beneficial.

