

Not everybody wants to advance, and that's OK.

Creating a great team requires superstars, but it also requires supporting roles.

By Gleba & Associates

When it comes to your business, you are probably thinking about one thing: Growth! Broker/dealers and custodians are quite bold in pushing their advisors to grow their practices into larger businesses. As a business owner, you likely are looking at all of your employees and considering whether they are worth advancing to the next level in your company. However, have you considered whether they have any interest in advancement of their own?

To the surprise of many business owners, an employee can turn down an opportunity for advancement for any number of reasons. This is not a bad thing. Remember that it's not personal, it's business. Many owners assume an employee's reluctance for advancement must come from a lack of drive, or loyalty to the company. When you look at it that way, it's easy to see how the professional relationship can sour. Having this outlook often ends with the employee and the firm parting ways. This is a bad result for all parties involved. The employee must now try to replace a job that he or she was very good at, and would have done happily for a long time. In addition, the firm has lost a skilled employee and now must pay, in both time and resources, to recruit and train a replacement.

Everyone's definition of success is unique. The stress, long hours, and heavy workload are worth it to you, but that doesn't mean that everyone is as committed to the same thing. However, just because they aren't sacrificing as much as you are, that doesn't mean they can't contribute to the team. Success comes from many sources and takes on many forms. What you can get out of your employees depends on your ability as a manager.

When starting out an advisory practice, the owner/advisor and maybe a small staff will be doing a lot of work in the beginning. There will be a lot of long nights getting clients set up, sending out reports, etc. As long as your employees are team players and are receiving fair compensation, this shouldn't be a problem. However, as business grows and the work becomes more routine, those long days should be the exception, not the rule. This means everyone on your staff doesn't have to be a superstar. Those routine tasks still need to be completed by someone, and having a quality employee at that level can be just as important as having quality employees in higher positions.

If you understand the motivations of your employees, and what they want to get out of their jobs, you can find the perfect position for them within the firm. Here are some things to discuss with your employees while you try to help them find their definition of success.

What do you want your job title to be?

Are your employees happy at their current position, or are they looking to advance into

management? Knowing where your employee wants to end up makes it much easier to motivate them. Understand their goals and be honest about their potential: if you don't think they have what it takes to get to the level they want to be at, let them know up front where they are most likely to end up within the company. If the job isn't a good fit for their personal goals, it's best you both understand that now. Don't force someone into a role that they don't enjoy. If a young financial planner enjoys, and is good at, managing portfolios, you're better off letting them play to their strengths.

How much income do you need to earn?

If a high income is desired, your employees are going to have to further their commitment to the company and take on a role such as manager or lead advisor. It is unlikely for an employee who isn't supervising others to maximize their income. As your business grows, these opportunities for larger roles will present themselves. The folks who take advantage of that will be the leaders of your firm.

However, if your employee wants to stay in a particular role, or just maintain their current lifestyle, their current position and income level may be satisfactory to them. As long as they know the implications of their choices, the decision is theirs to make.

What kind of lifestyle do you want to lead?

Some employees value career advancement over their current quality of life. Others place value on commitments and goals that have nothing to do with their job. As a leader, it's your duty to make sure they are informed. Where will those long hours and hard work lead your employee? Where will they end up if they take on less responsibility? What is the work-life balance they need in order to be healthy and happy with their lives? The answers to these questions will help you see the long-term potential, and career path, for each employee.

How/When do you want to retire?

People's retirement goals play a major part in how they live their daily lives. Helping your employees chart their retirement path can affect their career decisions, and will also help you gauge their level of commitment and maturity.

What sacrifices are you willing to make?

An advisory firm can offer employees the chance to make good money and hold a respected, professional position they are proud of. However, it's not easy. To get there requires a lot of dedication, commitment to long hours, and sometimes additional schooling. It's definitely not for everyone, and that's alright. People will need to weight the benefits between income and lifestyle; their commitment to their jobs and their desire to retire early. As an advisor, you are already helping your clients make these same decisions. Use your expertise to help your employees as well. Helping them find the right career path is going to be beneficial to all parties involved.

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