Reducing Employee Turnover: 
The STCC Case Study (2)

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MSIA graduate student Stanley Jamrog continues with part two of his case study of how to reduce employee turnover and support good security. What follows is the continuation of a lightly edited and shortened version of a weekly paper that he wrote in a graduate seminar in the summer of 2007.

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IT staff have families and personal responsibilities. When family issues crop up staff members are encouraged to deal with those issues instead of feeling pressured to come to work. This strategy allows members to set a higher priority on their home lives and decreases the stress of being on the job when they are needed elsewhere. Vacations are considered an important stress reliever; staff are encouraged to use their vacation time away from their job. Multiple people in the team learn all jobs, so that when an individual is on vacation, they do not need to be called in if an issue develops. Even the director leads by example, using her vacation time to spend with family.

Growth and development of skill sets are also considered important to the director of the department. Despite a small budget, funds are set aside to send team members to seminars and other educational settings to increase their skill set. This investment increases feelings of personal worth among the employees and contributes to a lower-stress environment for employees.

Employees are encouraged to seek help if their job becomes overwhelming. Job loads are routinely monitored and employees can be asked to assist someone who has an unusually tough load. To manage such reallocation of resources, communication is key. Employees talk about their job loads at weekly meetings and if help is needed, job loads can be spread out at these times. Such collaboration is another benefit of having staff learn multiple roles within the department.

Problems with end users can contribute greatly to job stress. To decrease stress, administrators have set a policy whereby all personality conflicts are pushed directly to them. If a member of the IT team has a problem with another employee at the school, they are to report the conflict to the IT administrator. The administrator then takes the position of mediator in the problem, decreasing the stress level for the IT employee and creating better understanding and trust with the end-user population.

Overall, the IT department does an excellent job of managing stress, burnout, and turnover. This is evident in the very low employee loss rate at the school. Even though rates of attrition at institutions of higher learning are generally low, STCC enjoys an exceptionally stable IT environment. Low staff turnover is also noteworthy throughout the college as a whole.

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The enlightened management practices at STCC can serve as fodder for discussions in many organizations where employees are treated less well. If your group suffers from loss of trained personnel, demoralized and frustrated staff members, low productivity, poor customer relations or even outright sabotage of policies or systems, use STCC as a basis for comparison and analysis.

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