

VTrans Employee Retention & Knowledge Management Study



Carol Vallett Ed.D. & Glenn McRae Ph.D., Transportation Research Center
 Jennifer Jewiss Ed.D., Department of Leadership & Developmental Sciences
 University of Vermont



Employee retention (or turnover) impacts organizational performance and knowledge management. This two-year project, conducted with guidance from the VTrans Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and informed by the research literature, examined employee turnover data, staff perspectives on employment, and knowledge management (KM) practices. The findings informed a small pilot project that included: a) the development of an Employee Exit Questionnaire to help determine impacts of recruitment, supervision, and other organizational practices, and b) a process to capture and share tacit knowledge.

Fall 2016

Data Collection

Spring 2017



Identify opportunities for enhancing employee retention and Knowledge Management practices



Pilot Project

- VTrans Employee Exit Questionnaire with 49 voluntarily separated employees (July-December 2017; n=27)
- KM tool and process for capturing and sharing tacit knowledge (8 Structures and TSMO employees)

Caliber of Supervision Makes a Difference

"[Retention and turnover] has a lot to do with the bosses. If you've got a halfway decent boss, you're gonna wanna work for them. If they are not halfway decent, you're not gonna want to work for them."

Tacit and Historical Knowledge are at Risk of Loss

"Institutional knowledge and experience – how we overcame obstacles in the past – are typically beyond written procedures, policies, and guidelines. It's difficult to capture this before it is lost."

Findings

FY2016 turnover

- 11.2% overall
- 5.4% voluntary

Turnover higher

- <5 years of service
- <30 years of age

Primary Reasons:

Why people join / stay

- Benefits
- Job security
- Time off
- Advancement potential

Why people leave

- Supervisory Issues
- Organizational culture

Findings

Knowledge Management

- Resources need to be easily retrievable
- Tacit and historical knowledge is at risk of loss as employees leave
- Employees share knowledge, but could use help with processes, procedures, and templates
- Organizational leadership and resources are needed for success in KM efforts, including organizing knowledge sharing and improving access