



Here to Stay: Recruiting & Retaining Dedicated Library Workers

Lisa Shaw

Small & Rural Libraries & Workforce
Development Specialist – Maine State Library

Scope of Presentation

- “Majorities of workers who quit a job in 2021 say low pay (63%), no opportunities for advancement (63%) and feeling disrespected at work (57%) were reasons why they quit, according to the Feb. 7-13 survey. At least a third say each of these were major reasons why they left.”
- Additional issues:
 - Childcare
 - Flexibility of Hours
 - Benefits

[Source: <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/03/09/majority-of-workers-who-quit-a-job-in-2021-cite-low-pay-no-opportunities-for-advancement-feeling-disrespected/> Retrieved 08/22/2022]



“Before the pandemic, labourers had been plentiful and as a result labour was cheap. Afterwards, the aristocracy and gentry found it impossible to maintain serfdom; there were now so few skilled labourers and farmhands that they began to leave the aristocratic demesnes for better jobs and higher wages.”

This quote is in reference to the aftermath of the Black Death plague in 1348. It comes from the book “A History of the English Monarchy: From Boadicea to Elizabeth I” by Gareth Russell, published in 2015.



Stay Interviews

LET'S KEEP WHO YOU HAVE



What A Stay Interview Is:

“Stay interviews are conducted to help managers understand ***why employees stay*** and ***what might cause them to leave***. In an effective stay interview, managers ask standard, structured questions in a casual and conversational manner. Most stay interviews take less than half an hour.” [Society for Human Resource Management www.shrm.org]

What A Stay Interview Is Not:

A stay interview is not an employer’s evaluation of an employee. It is more of an employee’s evaluation of an employer.



Sample Stay Interview Questions

Question 1: What do you look forward to each day when you commute to work?

Question 2: What are you learning here, and what do you want to learn?

Question 3: Why do you stay here?

Question 4: When is the last time you thought about leaving us, and what prompted it?

Question 5: What can I do to make your job better for you?

[Sources: <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/employee-relations/pages/how-to-conduct-stay-interviews-part-2.aspx> and *The Power of Stay Interviews for Engagement and Retention, Second Edition*. Richard P. Finnegan]



Opportunity for Advancement

■ Professional Development

Does your staff have the chance to attend conferences and/or engage in online or in-person learning?

<https://www.ala.org/aboutala/offices/library-support-staff-certification-information-state>

Requirements for Wisconsin library directors [from Trustee Manual]:

<https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/pld/pdf/TE19.pdf>

■ Education Should Be ...

- Encouraged
- Provided
- Documented
- Compensated

Budget for staff to attend conferences along with you or even in your stead, where applicable.

Remember! Travel and conference time is compensable unless the employee is of their own free will attending on their own.



Know Thy Employee

■ Some Employees Like...

- Problem solving
- Minimal oversight
- Flexibility
- Creativity
- Engagement with public/other employees

■ While Some Employees Prefer...

- Repetitive tasks
- Clear instructions, deadlines, and expectations
- Structure
- Minimal interruptions

Neither of these is The Right Way. However, misaligning staff types and task types makes everyone miserable. Does your employee really want to leave their job or just their current assignments?

Be sure that the work environment is clear in your job descriptions and listings.



What can we do? What *can't* we do?

ATTRACTING AND RETAINING



“Grant to us the serenity of mind to accept that which cannot be changed; courage to change that which can be changed, and wisdom to know the one from the other.”

-Serenity prayer



What We Cannot Change [but affect us]

- Childcare availability
- Gas/transportation prices
- Number of actual human beings available to work
- Amount of funding actually allotted to the library
- Health care/living costs/inflation

<https://www.wsaw.com/2022/05/12/state-wisconsin-child-care-some-industry-experts-say-is-crisis/>

https://www.eia.gov/outlooks/steo/#US_Crude_Oil_And_Liquid_Fuels



What We Can Change

- Wages offered
- Hours open
- Services/programs offered
- Benefits offered
- How we treat employees
- How we advertise positions available



Wages Offered

- Wisconsin Bureau of Labor Statistics Wage Data:
https://www.bls.gov/regions/midwest/news-release/countyemploymentandwages_wisconsin.htm
- Occupation-specific job tasks and compensation – example given is Library Clerks: <https://www.onetonline.org/link/summary/43-4121.00>
- How does your wage offering compare with similar industries in your area?
How does it align with the work expectations?



Hours Open/Services and Programs Offered

- Wisconsin public libraries have standards that set hours of operation based on a tiered system.
- Look at the tier that your library is classified in: If you are unable to attract new talent and/or offer a competitive hourly wage at your current operating hours, can you reduce the number of operating hours in order to increase the wage and reduce the workload?



Benefits Offered

- Does your library offer paid time off [PTO] – accrued or flat amount – even to part-time employees? If not, why not? Is the answer is “not enough coverage,” review the previous slide.
- Options for health care benefits for small nonprofits:
 - <https://www.healthcare.gov/small-businesses/learn-more/qsehra/>
 - <https://www.healthcare.gov/small-businesses/learn-more/hra-guide/>



How We Treat Employees [aka: Board Members, Stay In Your Lane!]

■ What Board Members Do

- Meet regularly to evaluate library director, review finances, review and set policies
- Volunteer
- Fundraise
- Publicly advocate for the library

■ What Board Members DO NOT Do:

- Run the library
- Manage the library staff and volunteers
- Approve collection purchases
- Act against the best interest of the library



How We Treat Employees [aka: Board Members, Stay In Your Lane!] *cont'd*

Important:

- The board only has authority when acting as a body and in session.
- Individual board members do not have authority over staff or building operations. Responsibility may be allocated, such as signing checks, acting in the temporary role of management between directors, etc.
- HIGHLY recommended reading: <https://nonprofitaf.com/2022/03/board-members-please-check-your-egos-at-the-door/>



How We Advertise Positions Available

- How widely, and for how long, are your positions advertised? Advertising only locally excludes people who might want to move to the area. It can also be discriminatory.
- Is your job listing clear about whether the position is an opportunity to engage in creative thinking or a need for certain tasks to be done a certain way?
- Have you talked up your community? Why might someone want to work there? Why do YOU live and work there?
- Be transparent about the wage/salary being offered.



Is Your Job Application a Barrier to Applying for the Job?

- Seven deadly sins of job applications:
 - Online only, particularly where internet speed and accessibility are limited
 - Non-fillable PDFs/anything requiring a printer
 - Being unclear whether you require any combination of cover letter, resume, and/or application
 - Not acknowledging that an application was received
 - Not letting applicants know in a reasonable amount of time whether they are being asked in for an interview
 - Not letting applicants know when the position is being offered to another applicant
 - Relying on AI/form readers <https://www.upturn.org/work/help-wanted/>



Childcare, Fuel, and Human Availability

ABOUT THOSE THINGS WE CANNOT CHANGE ...



Does Your Library Work Fit Your Library Workers?

Is it costing your employees more to come to work than they are earning?

- Would it make more sense to have a part-time employee work one eight-hour day rather than two four-hour days?
 - Transportation costs
 - Childcare costs
- Should your library building be open the same number of, or fewer, hours but on fewer days?
- Can employees do some off-site programming closer to their homes/day cares?



A Shortage of Actual Humans

- Is your library and community open and welcome to new people, including immigrants?
- Have you explored student volunteers, interns, and apprenticeships?
- Can some work be contracted out to a telecommuter or even another library [such as cataloging]?
- Can you share employees and complement hours with another library or even another employer altogether?
- Are you working with local workforce agencies to train and place jobseekers?



What did I miss? What are your questions, thoughts, ideas, and experiences?

WRAPPING UP



Final Thoughts

Respect Your Employees

Give them opportunities for professional development. Ask them to evaluate you as an employer: It helps you know how to retain and attract quality employees. Don't overstep or micromanage.

Prioritize Your People

Don't try to skimp on wages and benefits to try to get more hours out of already over-stretched people. Attracting and retaining good people right now is at least as challenging as a capital campaign. Treat it with the same level of gravitas.

Recognize that Everyone Is Struggling with This

You might not be able to compete with other employers, but there might be times you can complement your work hours.

Care

Employees are much more likely to stick around and do their best when they know you actually value them. It costs you nothing to ask, "How are you doing today?" and actually listening.



Questions?

Contact:

Lisa M. Shaw

(Pronouns: she/her)

Maine State Library – Library Development
Rural & Small Libraries/Workforce Development Specialist

64 State House Station

Augusta ME 04333-0064

(207) 747-8717 (mobile)

lisa.m.shaw@maine.gov

<https://www.maine.gov/msl/libs/index.shtml>

<http://www.linkedin.com/in/lisanealshaw/>

<https://www.ala.org/pla/initiatives/workforce>



Thank you!

