

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The NorthCoast 99 program focuses on recognizing organizations that excel at the attraction, retention and engagement of top performers. As part of this program, ERC collects research on aspects of the workplace that attract, retain, and engage top performers.

In 2011, 2,439 top performers participated in ERC's *2011 Top Performer Engagement Survey* which asks them to not only rate their perceptions of several aspects of their workplace which measure engagement, but also two open-ended questions which ask what aspects of their workplace or job are reasons that they stay at their organizations and what aspects of their workplace or job are those that cause them to consider leaving their organizations.

The analysis of this data yielded 15 key drivers of why top performers stay at their organizations:

- **Work environment and culture:** One of the main reasons that top performers stay at their organizations is the work environment and organizational culture. They cite that their cultures and work environments are unique and unlike others in which they have worked.
- **Challenging and meaningful work:** Top performers stay at their jobs because they love what they do and find their work to be challenging, meaningful, and intrinsically rewarding. They are continually challenged in their responsibilities, and offered the opportunity to work on new projects and tasks and in a variety of areas.
- **Coworker relationships:** The people within their organizations and whom they work with are the main reason that top performers stay at their organizations. Top performers say that their coworkers are helpful, caring, and supportive, and make work enjoyable.
- **Supervision:** Strong work relationships with their supervisors are a key reason top performers remain at their organizations. Their supervisors work with them, understand problems and help solve them, are available and approachable, provide feedback, develop and empower them, and genuinely care about their success.
- **Leadership:** The extent to which leaders value employees, care about them, make good decisions for the business, provide direction, and are accessible and approachable are stated reasons top performers stay at their organizations.
- **Mission and vision.** For some top performers, the mission, purpose, and values of the organization are key reasons they stay. Several top performers also enthusiastically support the vision of the organization.

- **Flexibility.** Flexibility, in terms of schedule and the ability to attend personal and family obligations, is a major reason that top performers stay at their organizations. In general, top performers feel their organizations recognize the importance of work/life balance and respect their personal and family responsibilities.
- **Autonomy and empowerment.** Having the autonomy and freedom to do their jobs is another consistent reason that top performers stay at their organizations. They feel trusted and empowered to do their job well, make decisions, and take ownership over their work.
- **Recognition and appreciation:** In general, top performers feel that they are appreciated for their work and contributions. They are frequently praised and recognized for their hard work, initiative, and dedication and feel valued by their organizations.
- **Fair treatment:** Top performers value how their organization treats them and makes decisions with fairness. Many believe they receive competitive and fair pay and benefits and that their organizations are fair and consistent.
- **Innovation and creativity:** The ability to share ideas and suggestions and use creativity are reasons that some top performers stay at their organizations. Additionally, they value their organization's support for innovation and continuous improvement.
- **Support for health and well-being:** Their organizations' support, investment in, and concern for their health, well-being, and safety are attractive to many top performers. They value the programs, opportunities, and benefits their employers provide to enhance their well-being and create a healthy work environment.
- **Communication and transparency:** Clear communication, transparency of information, and understanding the organization's goals, strategy, and direction and how their job impacts the larger picture are reasons some top performers stay at their organizations.
- **Voice:** Feeling that their opinions, ideas, and concerns matter and are considered at their organizations is important to top performers. They value the ability to share their input about the workplace and business and have it used to create positive change.
- **Growth and development:** A core reason that top performers stay at their organizations are the numerous training and continuing education opportunities available to them and the investments their organization makes in career development.