

# TALENT RETENTION

Retaining interns and recent college graduates, encouraging them to stay in Indiana, poses several significant challenges. Indiana's public and private universities attract students from across the globe. **Indiana is 8th in the nation in attracting students** to Indiana for college, but **41st in retaining college graduates**. Meanwhile, the number of civil engineering graduates in Indiana continues to trend downward, while workforce needs have trended upwards. Engineering firms must create compelling value propositions that highlight the benefits of joining their company as well as providing a clear path for career progression. Today's students anticipate and expect this when considering their many career options.

Convincing out-of-state graduates to stay in Indiana rather than moving back home is another significant hurdle. The challenge is twofold: making Indiana an appealing destination and addressing the practical aspects of relocation. Firms must market the benefits of staying in Indiana, such as the cost of living, quality of life, and community culture.

Additionally, graduates may receive offers from firms out of state that offer higher salaries or more desirable locations. To combat this, Indiana companies need to ensure that compensation is competitive regionally, not just locally. Employees must also feel valued and connected to the organization, its mission and goals.



# RETENTION STRATEGIES

## 21st Century Graduates

There are some key differences between today's generation of college graduates (Gen Z) compared to those from 10+ years ago, along with their expectations for their first job. Increased cost of living and the caution in student loan debt has made financial security a higher priority for students. Students that do commit to a college education are generally career-driven, motivated to secure their future and ensure balance in their life.

- Establish and promote your company values proudly. **Younger generations desire to work for companies with a sense of purpose that aligns with their personal beliefs.** They value diversity and inclusion and expect their workplaces to reflect these values while promoting a sense of belonging and impact.
- There is a greater awareness and prioritization of mental health and work-life balance. While most engineering graduates understand the demand of the job, there is a greater emphasis today on flexible working hours and remote work options when not on a job site. **Companies that lean in to these policies will attract and retain young talent easier.**
- **Younger generations are future focused; they anticipate robust opportunities for professional growth, training, and clear career advancement pathways.** Consider building internal mentorship programs to help young professionals connect to the company and their work and provide guidance toward continued growth opportunities.
- Active engagement and feedback mechanisms such as regular performance reviews, goal-setting meetings and "stay interviews" can be used to gather feedback, providing insights into areas for improvement and **ensuring that employees feel heard and valued.**

Sample Engagement Assessment



Actively Engaged

I love the work I do  
I inspire others on to do their best  
I am a vital part of the team



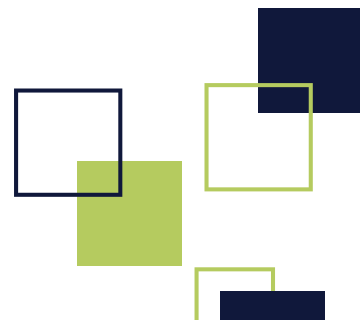
Somewhat Engaged

I like the work I do, but might leave if tempted  
I am unsure how my work contributes to our goals  
I think I am part of something bigger



Disengaged

I do not engage with my team  
I am here for the money  
I would leave if I could



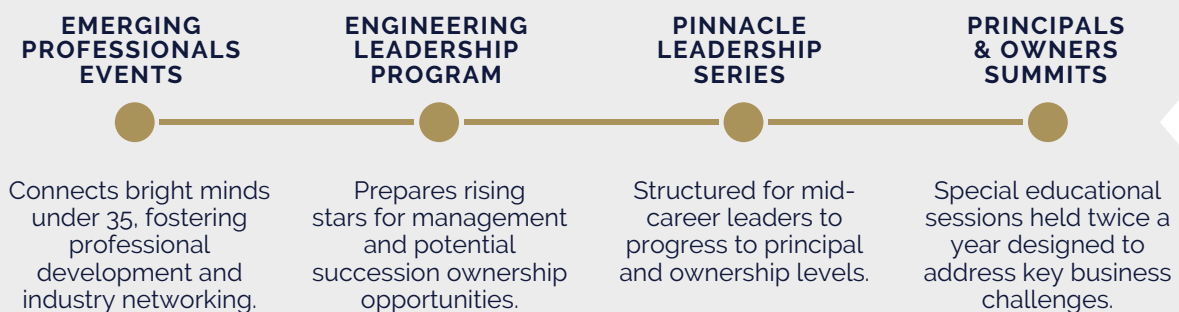
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## ● Incumbent Workforce

Effective talent retention strategies go beyond competitive compensation, encompassing a holistic approach that nurtures a positive work culture, fosters effective management practices, encourages active engagement and feedback and instills a sense of purpose.

- Be able to articulate how each employee's role contributes to the firm's overall success. While this is particularly important to younger professionals, **helping each person see how their work contributes to the overall mission helps establish a sense of belonging.**
- **Compensation and benefits is about more than competitive salaries.** Wellness programs for physical and mental health provide a holistic approach to employee well-being. Policies that allow flexibility for personal use as well as community service help build a sense of community.
- Creating a positive work culture and environment is pivotal in retaining talent. **Firms should aim to cultivate a supportive and inclusive workplace culture where diversity is celebrated,** and employees feel empowered to contribute their best.
- **Employee development and career advancement initiatives are critical for retention.** Competitive companies provide robust opportunities for professional growth through training programs, workshops, and other initiatives that support employees in acquiring new skills.

ACEC Indiana leadership development programs help meet the needs of member firms at every level and encourage retention within the industry.



- Effective management practices are essential for creating a positive environment for talent retention. Firms that ensure managers are equipped with the necessary leadership, communication, and conflict resolution skills will **build a cohesive team and foster a culture of trust.**
- **Provide open lines of communication so employees feel heard and valued.** Consider conducting "stay interviews" (see next page) as a means to receive and provide regular feedback on employee strengths and areas of improvement.