



## People Watching

Have you ever just sat back and watched people?

Seriously, pretend you're a fly on the wall. Take yourself out of the action. Simply become an observer. It can be beyond interesting!

Take, for instance, the way people approach revolving doors. (*No, I've not losing it. There really are multiple ways that people tackle the seemingly simple task of entering or exiting a building.*)

Some plow right through. And, if you happen to be in the compartment ahead of them, be prepared to quicken your pace or you'll become a casualty of the door.

Some near the door with great hesitation. They appear not so sure that they can get into this cubby...no, maybe the next one...oh my, let's try the one after that. And, eventually, much to the delight of those who have been not so patiently waiting also to go from Point A to Point B, the line leader finally makes that move.

Some get in and never come out. You know the sort. Perhaps it's a kid (or the kid in us). Having entered, this person just gleefully goes around and around in circles, having a grand old time.

Finally, some avoid the spinning monster all together. When nearing the entrance, instead of taking the straight path to the revolving door, they take the extra steps and veer to the left or right in favor of the conventional, and often safer, open-and-close option.

Yup, it can be amusing to sit in the wings and watch the victors...and the victims...of revolving doors. But did you know that companies can have revolving doors too? And, this kind of revolving door usually is far from amusing.

Join me for this month's edition of **EA Insights** as we examine what you may want to consider when a revolving door seems to have been installed at your workplace.

Trust me. This is one circle you want to get out of quickly!

All the best,

*June*

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## Lessons from the Personnel Revolving Door

**June Melvin Mickens**  
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*People moving out.*  
*People moving in.*

Music lovers may remember these as the opening lines to the old Temptations song, "*Ball of Confusion*". While the answer to the Temps "Why?" question looked one way for the early 1970's world they were describing, considering the ball of confusion caused in the work setting when there's an upswing of staff moving out and staff moving in.



## In This Issue

[Lessons from the Personnel Revolving Door](#)

[Quotes](#)

## Quick Links

[EA Home Page](#)

[About Us](#)

[Solutions for Businesses](#)

[Solutions for Professionals](#)

[News](#)

[Contact Us](#)



## "Quotes"

*"You can get a good handle on a company's culture before you even get inside the building. For example, when companies say, 'We value our employees' but have reserved parking spots, a private cafeteria, and over-the-top offices for the executives, that tells you more than any PR spin."*  
~Steve Blank

*"A leader's most important decisions are about people. Who do you put in which jobs? How long do you leave them in a job?"*  
~Carly Fiorina

*"There's a handful of teams that have a revolving door, that are changing coaches every couple of years, and you can look at the success that they're having. They're not."*  
~Jeff Fisher

*"Companies lose some of their best employees when people are beaten down; then they over-promote junior people because they can't persuade outsiders to sign on."*  
~Mindy Grossman

*"I think one of the reasons people quit is because they're afraid they won't be able to get better and better; that they have to come to a zenith of some kind."*  
~Conrad Hall

*"Creating a strong company culture isn't just good business. It's the right thing to do, and it makes your company better for*

Are there lessons to be learned when we see a revolving door becoming the norm in our organizations? Absolutely, yes! The revolving door signals that it's time to slow down and do some checking.

**Check Your Compensation.** This is a good area to get out on the table first. Are people being paid fairly for the work they are expected to do?

Start with wages. Is your company's pay in line with your particular industry? Are you offering benefits and other perks that are attractive to the people you want to join you and stay with you? In other words, as you examine the total compensation packages offered to people in your workspace, does what you see demonstrate that you respect them and their talents and that, because you do, you are willing to compensate them fairly? If these questions prompt any sort of waffling on your part, it's no wonder why folks may be willing to jump ship as soon as something better comes along.

**Check Your Culture.** I was preparing for an introductory meeting with execs recently for possible work with their company, and I did a little advance work online to see current and former staff reviews. In wading through the mix of plusses and minuses, a common theme began to emerge (even from staff rating the place favorably, which lent added credibility to the comments). The feedback: The company seemed to be losing the "feel" that attracted people to it initially.

Experiencing a higher-than-usual exodus of people? Check your culture. It may be that, due to growth, or new product/service direction, or financial constraints, or location move, or a leadership change, something's... different. Try to determine if there's been a shift in culture -- subtly or dramatically -- that may be contrary to your organization's desired or longstanding values and environment. A resetting of some sort may be in order.

**Check Your Jobs.** My guess is that the staff members you want to retain are people who expect to put in a good day's work. So when even those hard-working folks begin heading for the hills, you might want to check the jobs that you have people doing.

Look at the volume of work assigned. Is a reasonable level of resources -- human, facilities, equipment, etc. -- in place for people to accomplish what they're charged with doing? Is work distributed equitably? Are people in jobs for which they have the proper preparation, potential, and support? Is the work meaningful, and are people encouraged to grasp how their daily contributions propel the organization toward its mission? (See [REV Up Your Mission for Outcomes and Engagement](#), Sept. 2018) Do people have chances for ongoing professional and personal growth to advance their own careers and interests? Do you have them working 24/7, such that there's no time for family, friends, and the other things in life that recharge them and make them whole?

The job that's been carved out may be at the heart of the problem. You inadvertently may be clearing a path to that revolving door by setting people up for failure in their current jobs, by overloading them, or by not supporting them to see and prepare for life beyond what they do here and now.

**Check Your Managers.** There's an old saying that people don't quit companies, they quit managers. While not true across the board, there are many instances for which this definitely is the case.

A department that shows a lack of personnel stability, or that has a string of frank exit interview comments about supervisory challenges, should not be ignored. You see, far too often companies elevate people into supervisory roles because they have been super workers. Far too individuals are placed into leadership because they have ambition, even if they're not seasoned sufficiently for the new level of responsibility. Unfortunately, the ability to accomplish results as an individual does not automatically equate to accomplishing results with and through others as the leader of a healthy and well-functioning team. Consequently, when qualified people, with options and potential, find themselves on teams with struggling or off-putting or self-focused managers, it is not uncommon for them to grow frustrated and soon take their gifts elsewhere.

So, when you begin to see an uncomfortable number of people moving out (even if you still have others willing to move in), it's not a time to don the blinders. Pause and check it out. It may be time to adjust compensation or to devote time to culture correction. It may be time to tinker with who's doing what as well as how and/or why they're doing it. It may be time to renew efforts to build into leaders generally and also to supporting each one individually in his or her specific development areas. By pausing and checking it out, you may learn some useful lessons from your own revolving door.

Diagnosing revolving door causes and then slowing the exodus can be daunting. However, you need not go it alone. Call on us at [Executive Advantage](#). Let us partner with you as you check out what's happening. [Contact us today.](#)

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At [Executive Advantage](#), we are committed to providing results-based business and management consulting, leadership development, and coaching support. We partner with business leaders to build healthy, well-functioning organizations, where goals are met and people thrive. We also partner with individuals to create professional (and personal) lives with clearer direction, improved results, and greater balance.

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*all stakeholders -- employees, management, and customers."*  
~Julia Hartz

*"One of the symptoms of a losing streak is a turnover of top executives. It's a revolving door."*  
~Rosabeth Moss Kanter

*"I have a theory that burnout is about resentment. And you beat it by knowing what it is you're giving up that makes you resentful."*  
~Marissa Mayer

*"It's better to grow your employees, steer them into a place that they can learn and succeed, and want to work hard and be loyal, than to have a revolving door of employees. That's demoralizing."*  
~Glen Mazzara

*"People may take a job for more money, but they often leave it for more recognition."*  
~Bob Nelson

*"In managers, I look for people who can get things done through other people. The most important thing for a good manager is that the people on his team feel like he or she has integrity."*  
~Sam Wylie

*"Organizations relying upon young, idealistic, and mission-driven people to work at below-market compensation over the long-term will burn them out and find the best people leaving over time."*  
~Andrew Yang