Making sure you’ve recruited the right people for the right role and who fit in with your business culture, means that they are much more likely to remain with you for the long term. Think about the following:

**Before recruiting**
Consider the scope for internal development. De-motivated staff are no good to anyone. If you can create a career path for your employees, they’re much more likely to be filled with passion.

**Recruit for attitude, train for skill**
Make sure your recruits are the right fit for your nursery culture. Match the candidate’s personal values, attitude and behaviours to your business values. Skills can be trained, changing the wrong attitude is much more difficult to manage and can cost you dearly.

**Job offers**
By all means tell the candidate they have been successful over the phone but always offer in writing too. Include that the offer is conditional; there will be a probationary period, DBS checks and two satisfactory references will be required. Check up on those references – there’s usually a reason why there is no response to a reference request!

**Person Specification**
Think of personal qualities. Aspects which are much more difficult to change in a candidate. For a nursery setting think warm, friendly, calm, engaging, approachable and professional.

**Avoid discrimination**
There is continuously growing number of areas for discrimination and you have to be careful throughout the entire recruitment process to avoid any issues. From placing the initial advert, to the mode of interview. You could use written records and a scoring system during the selection process, which could come in handy if you needed to defend a claim. The records you keep will evidence that the successful candidate performed better during the process and that your choice had nothing to do with gender/race/disability etc.

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**Select wisely**
Think about your selection process. Phone interviews can be a good time saver and you can invite successful candidates into a second, face to face interview. Will you do role play? People often rehearse competency based answers in advance. Try knowledge based or situational questions. For example, tell them about a recent issue you’ve had - how would they deal with it?

**Recruiting & Retaining**
Impressive salaries, flexible working hours, Christmas bonuses and extra holidays. These all sound very appealing to those searching for the next step in their career. Unfortunately, the reality in the nursery sector is that you just don’t have the budget to offer these often expensive incentives.

A study, undertaken by the Chartered Management Institute which focused on how to be successful in business after the recession (with financial restrictions), found that business success is about placing people at the heart of your business. Your staff should be your most valued asset. After all, they’re often your biggest business expense.

*We want to show you how you can recruit smarter, engage & motivate your workforce, and retain the wonderful people you have recruited and invested in. The last thing you want is to lose is a valued member of staff to your competitor.*

**Start with smarter recruitment**
Making sure you’ve recruited the right people for the right role and who fit in with your business culture, means that they are much more likely to remain with you for the long term. Think about the following:
Why focus on employee engagement?

Engaged employees are passionate, energetic, innovative problem solvers. They are loyal and motivated to go the extra mile. Who wouldn’t want a workforce who can be described in this way? An engaged workforce can lead to:

1. Enhanced job performance and productivity
2. Increased innovation, ideas and creativity
3. Fewer accidents and safety issues
4. Lower absence resulting from better levels of wellbeing
5. Higher customer satisfaction, retention and recommendation
6. Improved loyalty and retention of employees.

Creating a winning workforce

Now you can see the benefit of great employee engagement, how do you put it into practice to create your winning team?

Use a welcoming induction

- **ROLE** – Clarify job expectations and targets. Research shows that employees who don’t know what’s expected of them from an early stage, are less likely to stick in the role for a long time. Manage performance from day one to ensure your new employee is able to succeed and learn quickly. Enabling success will motivate confidence and in turn, happiness.

- **PURPOSE** – Explain their fit within your broader organisation mission and values. Be sure they understand how important their contribution is to the business.

- **PROVIDE LINE SUPPORT** – Make sure they know who to go to for help and support. Establish those key relationships early and open the lines of communication. The more supported the employee is, the more likely they are to perform well and stay with your nursery.

- **INTEGRATE** – Encourage team work and try to provide a sense of belonging. This feeling of value can outweigh better pay.

Identifying low engagement

Looking out for low engagement should always be on the management agenda. Look out for:

- Reduced effort and performance
- Influencing colleagues and morale negatively
- Unfocussed and easily distracted staff
- High absence and lateness
- General low energy and enthusiasm

If you spot these signs, manage it with sensitivity and care, find out what is causing the disengagement and address it quickly.
The A,B,C of lasting employee engagement:

**DEAL WITH STAFF ISSUES QUICKLY AND SENSITIVELY** – Bickering and bullying can lead to the loss of good staff. Don’t let disagreements distract focus. Grow the trust of your employees so they speak to you before things get out of hand and more difficult to manage.

**CONDUCT EXIT INTERVIEWS** – You can’t keep everyone. No matter how engaged, you’ll still get some staff movement. Make sure you invite leavers to an exit interview. It will allow you to understand their reasons for leaving and then you can take measures to improve areas which come up, allowing you a better chance to keep your remaining staff on board.

**LINE MANAGER RELATIONSHIP** – can make or break engagement. It’s easy to switch someone off with just one badly held meeting and once someone is disengaged, it’s much harder to re-engage them.

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**Line-manager behaviours for strong engagement**

**TRUST** Show humility, honesty and integrity. Managers who are honest and open (even when the message is negative) are more likely to secure trust and support. Being secretive, keeping information from staff and not following up on promises will undercut trust and cause disengagement. Be warm, care about your team, and show it.

**DEVELOP** Manage performance and let your staff develop and progress. Even if there is no career path possible, some kind of development is essential. Where there is no room for promotion, expand responsibility instead.

**LISTEN TO YOUR STAFF** Encourage involvement and participation in decision making. It’s incredibly valuable for staff to feel part of decisions. Plus, involvement will mean they are less likely to resist change. Listening costs nothing, AND you’ll get the input of staff ideas and solutions you might not have thoughts of!

**TRUST, RESPECT, REWARD, RECOGNITION** These are the cheapest and most engaging management behaviours. It’s quite simple - give praise, thanks and show how much you value your people.

**CHALLENGE** Allow your staff freedom and discretion over their work and show confidence and trust in them. Don’t micro manage. People need control over their work for job satisfaction. Give responsibility where possible, providing challenge and stretching potential is vital.

**SUPPORT, ENCOURAGE, INSPIRE AND EMPOWER** Inspirational line managers will make their team want to achieve more, feel confident and great about the work they do. Great managers won’t control or crush.

**GENERATE PRIDE IN WORK** Most people are strongly driven by the need to feel their work is meaningful and important. Create a powerful sense of meaning, purpose and pride within your team. **After all, looking after children is incredibly meaningful and important – drive pride and you’ll find that the sky’s the limit!**

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Want more support? Citation have worked with nurseries for over 20 years and are a Strategic Corporate Partner of NDNA – we know nurseries and we can help you to make yours the best it can be.

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