

Live Webinar - Thursday, February 26, 2009 at 2:00pm ET/11:00am PT

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Why Direct Marketers Switch Jobs—Often

Feb 1, 2009 12:00 PM, Richard H. Levey

The average time spent in a direct marketing job? Just a little more than a presidential term: 4.05 years. So says Bernhart Associates Executive Search LLC, a recruit firm specializing in direct marketing and related positions.

That's not the only surprise Bernhart uncovered in a study of 1,000 randomly selected resumes. Another is that entry-level people work for 10 to 12 companies.

Granted, there were exceptions.

“As amazing as it may sound, there are some direct marketers out there who have been with the same company long enough to get their 25-year watch,” says the firm's principal Jerry Bernhart.

To reach these findings, Bernhart focused on the most recent position listed on each resume with a definite beginning and end date. The pool represented job categories at all levels.

To compensate for the fact that some people stay on the job for decades, Bernhart also calculated a median number — a figure that more accurately reflects the tenure of a greater number of individuals. This came out to 2.82 years, prompting him to note that movement has become the norm. It's what an individual does with that movement — how wisely he or she follows a career path, or is willing to learn new skills or take on new responsibilities — that makes the difference over the long haul.

Bernhart also attempted to determine the reasons behind the turnover rates. The answer is in the number of job titles listed under a single employer.

There was only one position per firm listed on 73% of the resumes. Two per employer appeared on 12%, and three on 11%. This may indicate that people jump for promotions.

“This comes as no surprise,” Bernhart says. “Career advancement is among the main reasons candidates give us for wanting to begin a search.”

What does this mean for CEOs and business owners? First, that direct marketers are spending less time with their employers than they did 10 or 15 years ago. This means that turnover costs are much higher than one might realize. And the cost of these actions may be harder to recognize.

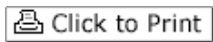
Then consider the full impact when you lose a valued employee: There are the costs of hiring and training a replacement...not to mention lost productivity, business, knowledge, experience and skills. The list is long.

"Imagine the savings a typical direct marketing company could realize if it could improve its average turnover rate from 4.05 years to 4.25, or even 4.5," Bernhart says.

The takeaway for marketers, according to Bernhart, is simply this: Think more about how important it is to retain top performers. Between skills and legacy knowledge lost, the cost of replacing them is higher than what's reflected in a hiring search.

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