

# Boomerang employees.

## Here's why you should take them back



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The term boomerang employees is all too common in the sporting world and the concept of 'going home', whether to a former job or geographical location, is not unique to professional athletes.

There was a time when many employers avoided rehiring x-employees, and even now it's not uncommon for businesses to have a no rehire policy. But according to many human resource experts, all types of business are beginning to recognise the value of recruiting and welcoming back former employees.

The biggest challenge to leveraging boomerang talent for most business owners is the nature of the "out" process itself. In a lot of cases, departures, whether initiated by the employee or the employer, are negative events. They can be weighed down with feelings of guilt, often on both sides.

Boomerang employees, as a general rule, do not leave due to dissatisfaction with the job but usually reasons such as pregnancy, change in personal circumstances, spousal relocation or an unexpected job offer. Sometimes an employee may go through personal hardship and could underperform for a period, but under different circumstances could be the perfect employee.

Here are a few reasons why re-hiring a boomerang employee can be good for your business.

They already understand the practice and the culture; it can be difficult to integrate someone into your practices specific culture and work style, but the boomerang employee already knows the culture and was a good fit before. You can skip a lot of the onboarding when your new hire is really an old hire.

They know the grass is not greener on the other side; they may have left you for a 'better' opportunity only to be

disappointed. They may have found that their new employer isn't doing the same things to make them happy. They're disappointed because the environment isn't as supportive. The people aren't as good. The leaders aren't enlightened. They miss their old job. Sometimes employees have to leave in order to realise how much your practice means to them.

Rehiring former employees costs less; research shows hiring from the talent pool of former employees can be up to 60% cheaper than going through the whole process to hire a new employee, and re-hires are usually easier to retain, long term, than other hires.

You know what you're getting; you know that this employee will always turn up for work, answers emails promptly and has a great rapport with patients. They have good work ethic and are good at team work.

They are a less risky hire than a newcomer; they are familiar with your patients and suppliers, and may require little or no training to start making a meaningful contribution.

There can be some downsides to hiring boomerang employees but you will find that it's much easier to discuss any previous performance issues during the recruitment process. Provided they have not been away too long, you should know exactly what you are getting.

If it's been more than a year, the boomerang employee should go through the induction process as any new hire would. Have them retrain if necessary, and be sure you're over communicating with the returning employee. Set expectations that there won't be special treatment and warn them that they may be approached with questions.

There are some strategies you can adopt to attracting boomerang employee

back into your business. Applying forward-thinking work arrangements to both existing, and employees who may want to come back. This can be an excellent retention strategy. Some examples of such arrangements;

- ◆ **Flexible time:** Flexible shifts, compressed work weeks and individualised work schedules
- ◆ **Reduced time:** Part-time options, job sharing, self-scheduling, leave-of-absence programs, and cyclic or project-based work
- ◆ **Flexible place:** Mobile work and telecommuting
- ◆ **Tasks, not time:** Requirements to put in only as much time as it actually takes to get the work done, removing restrictions around a prescribed time or place
- ◆ **Decelerating roles:** Career path options that go 'down' to lower levels of responsibility

So-called "boomerang" employees – those who leave and then return – will become an increasingly valuable source of talent over the years ahead. Regardless of whether the employee's departure is voluntary or involuntary, it's never wise to say goodbye to a good employee and having employees many employees ◆

**Pam McKean** is a Director of AB Dental Employment Agency. The company has been in operation for over 15 years. Over the last 10 years AB Dental has grown into one of the country's leading recruitment agencies for the dental industry, servicing all sectors from government, corporate and private practice.

Currently, AB Dental services over 1,200 businesses with recruiting services including supply of temporary, contract and permanent employees. As professional recruiters, AB Dental can manage as much as little of the recruitment process as required, even if only providing advice.