

How to reduce the disruptive effect when an employee leaves your business  
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Today, the average college graduate is expected to hold 15 to 20 jobs before retirement, which translates to an average worker staying two years at a given employer. If plans are not in place to cover both key and non-key employees leaving your employment, significant disruption could occur to your business processing cycle, which could translate to lower customer satisfaction. It takes a lot of hard work to get a customer or client but only one bad experience to lose one. Some of the steps you could take are:

1. Make sure that you have cross trained at least one employee for all of your positions. (Clerical, warehouse, assembly, administrative, etc.)
2. Several times during the year and not just when one person is on vacation, have the cross trained people switch jobs for a period of time pretending the other person is not there. If a skill is learned and not used, it is easy to forget over time and this will help reinforce the training received. Also, the person will be able to concentrate better on what they are doing since they do not have to worry about doing their "regular" job as well.
3. Remind your staff that if they want to advance in your company, someone must be trained to do their job once they are promoted. Present it as showing leadership skills to help elevate the employee's perceived threat, "if someone knows my job then I am expendable."
4. Do not expect the cross trained person to be as efficient as the person regularly assigned to the job, but expect the finished result to be the same.
5. Create a book of standard operating procedures for each process that occurs in your business. The more detailed it is, the easier it will be for your staff to follow. For example, instead of a step being "make deposit" with no other detail, list out the steps that are required for making a deposit. A copy of this book as well as the book described in step 6 should be stored off-site as part of your disaster recovery plan.
6. If you have the time, make a second book which takes the operating procedures and breaks them down to key strokes in your software package including screen shots with information correctly filled in.
7. Think about all the software packages you use on a daily basis in your business. These could include: accounting, contact management, industry specific, server backup programs just to name a few.
8. When writing your standard operating procedures, use color to highlight key steps. Researchers have found that color helps people learn and retain knowledge and reinforces what you would like them to do. Think about warning labels you see in everyday life. Minor signs such as washroom designation are in black and white, warnings are in yellow and black, which stand out a little more, hazard warnings are in red and some other bright colors to make sure you do not miss them.

If you have any questions about the article, please contact Steve Seidenberg at (847) 956-1040.