Tough Times Toolkit for Supervisors

The current state budget situation can present a challenge for supervisors who want to retain their many hard-working Mason classified employees. Some departments will be unable to fill vacancies to cover budget reductions while the work remains and is reassigned to other employees. The state has delayed the November 25, 2008 pay increase and our nation’s financial outlook is uncertain. This creates pressure to find funds and options to retain our experienced employees and assist them through these challenging times.

But it’s not all about salary! According to the Saratoga Institute 89% of managers mistakenly believe the top reason employees leave is higher salary. In fact salary is reason number four and for Generations X and Y it’s even farther down the list. The top reasons for leaving the organization for all generations are related to job fulfillment such as lack of promotion opportunities, no recognition, and wanting more interesting, meaningful work. This is the perfect opportunity to use all the resources Mason has available. It’s time to become creative and flexible. And there is a toolkit available! Here are a few of those tools:

**Telecommuting and Flexible Work Schedule** During difficult times, flexible work options can go a long way to reduce costs and stress. Giving employees more flexibility in when, where, and how they work provides much needed flexibility in balancing work and home lives. Additionally, telework can significantly reduce commuting costs if done on a regular basis. In a recent survey of Mason supervisors who had employees participating in Summer Flex, 71% reported increased productivity as a benefit to the university of Summer Flex and nearly 82% reported that their employees were more engaged at Mason as a result of having flexible work options available. For more information on flexible work options, please visit [http://hr.gmu.edu/worklife/flex](http://hr.gmu.edu/worklife/flex).

**Training Opportunities** Research has shown that employee engagement and retention is higher in organizations that invest in training and provide developmental opportunities. A variety of no-cost programs are offered by Mason. These classes range from improving desktop skills, developing coaching and mentoring skills to the SUPERvisor series. For more information or to register for classes, please visit [http://hr.gmu.edu/training/](http://hr.gmu.edu/training/). Mason also offers online training for faculty and staff through SkillPort. Courses range from IT applications to management and project management modules. Because it is self-paced, online training, it is available 24/7. More information about SkillPort may be found at [http://smartforce.doit.gmu.edu/index.html](http://smartforce.doit.gmu.edu/index.html). To obtain your login information or to resolve any login concerns you may have, contact the TOPS office at 703.993.3426.

**Reward and Recognition Program** Recognizing the efforts of our employees is an integral part of Mason’s culture. We have more than a dozen different items available ranging from “Thank You” cards and Mason portfolios to gift cards from a variety of stores. Centrally funded Immediate Impact Awards can be given in amounts from $75 up to $200. Recognition leave is also an excellent way to provide employees some extra time off and reduce stress. Visit our website for more details on these and many other options at [http://hr.gmu.edu/awards/](http://hr.gmu.edu/awards/).

**Temporary Pay** Supervisors may find it necessary to reassign work to one or more employees in order to save funds and cover budget reductions. Employees can be asked to perform additional work for up to 6 months without receiving temporary pay, if funds are not available. However, if salary savings are available you can temporarily increase the affected employee’s pay. Classified employees may receive temporary pay up to 10% of their annual
salary in a fiscal year for duties that would be assigned to a position in the same role or up to 15% for higher level duties. We ask that you submit paperwork in advance and limit the time to an initial period of no more than 6 months but may renew it if needed. Temporary pay will let your employees know that their hard work is recognized and appreciated.

**In-Band Bonus**

One more budget conscious tool to recognize your employee’s efforts is an in-band bonus. Bonuses are lump sum payments given for the same reasons as in-band salary adjustments (retention, internal alignment, etc.) when funds are only available in the current budget year. Bonuses are subject to the same maximum of up to 10% of annual salary limitation as are in-band salary adjustments. A completed Classified Transaction Form, available on the Human Resources and Payroll website is all that is required. Bonus payments or other lump sum payments to classified employees may not be processed via Electronic Approval.

**Base Pay Increase**

While in-band adjustments are another tool, departments need permanent funding for the increase and associated fringe benefits. Please keep in mind that units with more limited funding are not able to do the same. This has the potential to create salary inequity with similar positions across the University. Therefore, departments must limit base pay increases to only the most urgent or pressing circumstances. The Human Resources and Payroll compensation staff is available to brainstorm alternative options to retain your staff.

**Discount Opportunities**

You may have heard the adage, “It’s not what you earn, but what you keep.” Or Ben Franklin’s popular, “A penny saved is a penny earned.” Sharing ways to save money can help ease tightened budgets. Please check out the work/life discount pages at [http://hr.gmu.edu/worklife/discounts](http://hr.gmu.edu/worklife/discounts) for availability and terms on a range of discount opportunities on everything from new tires to stereos, cell phone plans and restaurants. New discounts are added regularly.

**Higher Education Recruitment Consortium (HERC)**

Challenging economic times can sometimes put a spouse, partner, or other family member on the job market unexpectedly. Mason is a member of the new Mid-Atlantic Higher Education Recruitment Consortium (HERC). HERC is recruitment collaborative. Positions of member institutions are posted on the HERC search engine providing a powerful way to explore career opportunities in universities around the region. Please visit [http://www.midatlanticherc.org](http://www.midatlanticherc.org) for more information.

Human Resources and Payroll welcomes budget friendly ideas to help Mason’s supervisors motivate, recognize and reward their employees. Email your suggestions to [Awards@gmu.edu](mailto:Awards@gmu.edu). Bob Nelson, author of 1001 Ways to Reward Employees, wrote, “While money is important to people, thoughtful recognition motivates them to perform at higher levels.” Mason supervisors have a toolkit that has many money saving options aimed at motivating, retaining and recognizing employees.