

# Employees Losing Faith in Top-Level Managers

By Diane Stafford , Workplace Reporter, THE KANSAS CITY STAR, April, 2008

Insufficient pay is only the second-most common reason employees leave jobs. The first? Lack of trust in one's senior leaders.

That's the conclusion drawn by Leigh Branham, owner of Keeping the People Inc., an Overland Park, Kansas-based research and consulting firm.

Branham, author of *The 7 Hidden Reasons Employees Leave and Keeping the People Who Keep You in Business*, has carved a career in trying to help employers figure out how to keep good workers.

The springboard for his specialty was getting access to about 19,000 exit interviews conducted from over a five-year period by the Saratoga Institute, a third-party exit surveying company.

From 2004 to 2008, Branham conducted his own mini survey, taken by people who visited his Web site at [www.keepingthepeople.com](http://www.keepingthepeople.com). It attracted 256 responses, a drop in the bucket compared with the Saratoga data, but it was enough for him to draw some updated conclusions.

"People's definitions of what constitutes their senior leadership may vary, but it's clear that many workers have lost faith in those at the top," Branham said. bPerhaps, he theorized, it's that workers believe "senior leaders are looking at them as commodities, as costs, rather than assets." Workers see job cuts, they think they're underpaid, they read about stratospheric executive pay, and they feel stifled in their jobs, where training budgets are trimmed and chances for advancement are slim.

"The sense of loyalty that used to exist is pretty much gone," Branham said.

The big take-away from his research, he said, is that workers leave because of pushes , not because they were pulled away by better job offers. The push factors, according to his survey, included feeling that the company didn't care about workers' personal development, that the overall corporate culture was unhealthy, that workers were treated unfairly, that the work was unchallenging, and that teamwork was flawed.

Only a tiny percentage of workers quit because of voluntary decisions to change careers, return to school, relocate, retire, raise a family, or to start a business.

"It's clear that workers send out signals that they're unhappy long before they actually leave," Branham said. "But employers are not taking the time to find out what it would take to keep them. Maybe their direct managers are too busy, are supervising too many people, and don't have enough time to talk to their people."

How sad.

