Press Release

# How To Retain Employees the Koenig & Bauer Way

As businesses struggle to attract and maintain talent, Koenig & Bauer North America employees happily remain motivated to stay with the company and are committed to its customers

* With a continuous array of new products and services, employees are enthused to engage with customers
* Constant contact to understand employee needs yields unique programs and ensures career advancement
* Integrating the latest digital technology and automation allows employees to remain lifelong learners

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It’s no secret that businesses around the nation are being challenged to hire and retain employees for their workforce. It’s become exceptionally acute during the pandemic. But at Koenig & Bauer North America, a majority of its loyal employees feel motivated in their positions and committed to the success of their customers and ultimately the company.

“Our highly skilled workforce is the backbone of our company and key to our success,” says Kilian Renschler, president and CEO of Koenig & Bauer North America. “By listening to their concerns and empowering them to make customer-centric decisions, along with specialized training has allowed our staff a pathway for career advancement and development. Many are proactively working with organizations and associations to learn and interact with peers. The key to keeping employees motivated is constant communication, understanding their value in serving the needs of our customers, and listening for ways to improve employee satisfaction in all departments. We have surveyed every employee to understand what motivates them and have adjusted accordingly so in the end our employees are retained while ensuring all of our customers are delighted with their interactions with Koenig & Bauer. We’re not just offering jobs; we’re offering careers where our employees can contribute and grow.”

That’s what Chris Talbert, the senior vice president of service and operations at Koenig & Bauer, found when he joined the company as a press mechanic 18 years ago. It was the start of a fulfilling pathway that eventually led to using his management skills and technical expertise. Today, he leads the service operation providing customers with high satisfaction through usage of digital data, machine networking, and highly scalable cloud platforms. “I have remained with Koenig & Bauer for all of these years due to the opportunities for growth, the people and the innovative technology that Koenig & Bauer continuously develops,” he says. “I am thrilled about the technology developed that we’re using today, such as Visual ServiceSupport, Industrial Analytics, predictive maintenance, phone apps, and push-of-a-button Press Call system that transmits press information immediately for fast and timely service for an analysis of machine data. We continue to implement innovative new technology, which makes my position always exciting and rewarding.”

What has grabbed Michael Eichler each day to remain with the company for 41 years? It’s been the gratification from customers who have been aided by his service team as well as the satisfaction of steadily advancing from expert press demonstrator to sales director of Service Select, in which he oversees five very experienced and highly-skilled customer service specialists with well over 100 years of combined experience who support the company base across the country, lend critical support, and deliver unique solutions. His team works hand-in-hand with the firm’s sales department offering technical advice to customers such as upgrading to new advanced equipment, retrofit programs and system upgrades to improve make-ready times, advice on enhancing print quality, and increasing overall equipment productivity to help extend the life span and efficiency of the press.  His team also offers press inspections to proactively identify problems before a downtime event occurs, along with print quality tests to ensure high standards are maintained. Eichler’s role is to maintain his team’s high level of expertise, using his own deep production values, and assist where needed.

Due to Koenig & Bauer’s ethos, many employees are drawn from different organizations to partake in its strong employee culture, advancement opportunities, and industry-leading product offerings. After spending 17 years with another manufacturer, Eric Frank joined Koenig & Bauer in 2002. With his degree from Rochester Institute of Technology in printing management, he longed for the opportunity to work directly with customers, advancing its marketing strategy, publicizing the customer’s many successes, and contributing to sales with product management. His role over the past 20 years has grown and evolved, allowing him to take on more senior management decisions while sharing his experiences and mentoring younger employees. He is extremely active within the graphic arts community and enjoys working with numerous industry associations in all market segments serving as a board member and industry representative.

When an employee shows deep technology knowledge and has a personable way with customers, the best use of their traits is to put them in front of customers. That’s been the case with Chris Travis, the director of technology, who has shown over the past 17 years a unique way to listen to customers in North America and all around the globe, explain highly technical applications that will work best for them, and provide a long-term vision. He has become an integral part of the company and a leading authority within the industry. “My role at Koenig & Bauer has been to get to know a customer’s inner manufacturing and printing production and support their application/production needs and help determine the best press configuration and how it should be equipped,” he says. “I started as a technology manager, but the company recognized my desire to work more closely with customers.” He speaks at national and international industry conferences, accompanies customers to the German factory, and is hosting a series of technological videos from Koenig & Baur. Recently he became a proud U.S. citizen.

When Brooke Wachtel graduated from Elizabethtown College armed with an international business degree, she could have landed anywhere in the world. But her journey began with Koenig & Bauer in June 2013 as a sales operations specialist, learning about the graphic arts industry and the firm’s printing press models. Soon, she was completely immersed in working with customers and their orders and became an indispensable member of the team as the liaison between sales managers and the German factory to process orders, and coding and producing detailed contracts. Nearly ten years after graduating, the management team has continued to recognize her hard work and she has entered into the Junior Management Program (JUMP).

“Throughout my career, Koenig & Bauer has allowed me to grow within my department and my role has continually evolved to keep me intellectually engaged,” says Wachtel. “My team is composed of hard-working, passionate individuals, who will always go the extra mile to support one another. To be honest, my Koenig & Bauer family is just that, a second family to me.”

Like all of Koenig & Bauer’s sales managers, Sam Creel’s career began with a solid technical background. As he was earning a degree in electrical engineering, he took a junior position at a local printing firm. After graduation, he continued in the industry as a pressman and shift supervisor. This experience caught the attention of Koenig & Bauer, which hired Creel as a press demonstrator out of Memphis, then promoted him to regional service manager. All of this knowledge led Creel to move into press sales in 1999. For more than 20 years, Creel has grown the Southeast region with solid sales relationships, serving printers in all market segments. Today, he’s taken on the additional responsibility of working with international accounts as he continues to focus on the individual needs of each customer. “Koenig & Bauer continues to offer advancement opportunities and the support to grow within the company,” he says. “Plus the positive reinforcement from our management team makes working here a pleasure.”

For Matthias Naumann, manager of remote maintenance in Dallas, Koenig & Bauer has always been part of his life. Growing up in Germany, Naumann’s father worked for the company his entire career as head of the design department. Matthias joined the company in August 2004 and, after the apprenticeship program made him a certified mechatronics technician, he underwent another 18-month rotational program to become even more familiar with the firm’s product line. In 2009 he departed for the U.S. to join the remote maintenance team visiting customers and learning about their press installations. After joining the remote maintenance department as a remote support engineer, he was named its manager. Since then, he has brought in the latest technology to support his team and doubled the number of engineers. “This is a very rewarding job and I love working with the management team and my team of engineers,” he says.

It was the wide scope of responsibilities and the ability to provide input on the firm’s culture and benefits that attracted Ericka Luneau to join Koenig & Bauer more than 15 years ago when she was tapped to lead the human resources department when the firm was based in Williston, VT. Since then she has joined the firm’s Senior Management Team and earned a Professional Human Resources (PHR) certification from the Human Resources Certification Institute (HRCI). In her current role as director, she is charged to staff all segments of the firm---from its engineering and technical teams to its sales and executive ranks---and has contributed to the firm’s enormous growth in North America. Overseeing this important department calls for her to meet with candidates, act as a liaison between the company and recruiters from colleges and universities, keep up with the latest regulations for human resources and medical benefits, attend association meetings, and find the best well-educated and highly-skilled employees for its diverse workforce. She has been a key motivator behind the firm’s apprenticeship program by working in collaboration with the Training and Human Resources Departments at the firm’s factory in Germany to establish the new program and has fostered a partnership with Texas State Technical College (TSTC) to recruit qualified students.

“We’re continually geared toward supporting our employees,” says Renschler. “I’m proud that we’ve created a work environment in which our valuable employees want to stay. We are all part of the Koenig & Bauer family. We’ve seen many great accomplishments throughout our organization and our employees are one of the reasons for our success. They are our greatest asset—talented, hardworking, and they set us apart from other organizations. We strongly believe what makes the difference is the people that are the Koenig & Bauer team. Together we bring knowledge, expertise, and service to the highest level.”

Interesting website: [www.koenig-bauer.com](http://www.koenig-bauer.com)

**Photo 1:**The Koenig & Bauer team enjoys a customer-focused work atmosphere and are committed to the success of their customers

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**About Koenig & Bauer**

Koenig & Bauer (US) is located in Dallas, Texas and a member of the Koenig & Bauer Group, which was established over 200 years ago in Würzburg, Germany. Koenig & Bauer’s claim, “We’re on it.” gets to the heart of Koenig & Bauer’s values and competencies for all target groups. The group's product range is the broadest in the industry; its portfolio includes sheetfed offset presses in all format classes, post press die cutting, folder gluers, inkjet presses and systems, flexographic presses, commercial and newspaper web presses, corrugated presses, special presses for banknotes, securities, metal-decorating, glass and plastic decorating.

Further information can be found at [www.koenig-bauer.com](about:blank)