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'How do I hang onto staff in a fast-moving catering firm?'



James Caan

Dear James

"I am co-founder of What On Earth, an organic food supplier and manufacturer in Battersea. In catering, staff turnover can be high. What is the best way to retain and incentivise good employees?"
Jeremy Jaffé

CATERING is very customer-facing – you want people who are strong on personality and passionate about what they do. And you need to keep them happy at work.

My top tip is to see everyone has three or four key performance indicators. I often meet those who never get feedback from their boss which means they are happy to move on when they approached by another firm. Awards such as Employee of the Month are also effective: they cost nothing but generally have a positive impact.

Another way to retain staff is to have an attractive overtime scheme.

I also use job rotation to stop staff getting bored: once they start doing something new you see an immediate uplift in productivity.

Bonus schemes are another very valuable incentive – but make sure it's specific. If I ran a restaurant, I'd want it immaculate, so the restaurant's presentation would attract bonuses.

Discount schemes for family and friends is another idea: it helps staff to show pride in their workplace.

Also, include staff in decision-

making. Last year, we created a regular discussion group and found sometimes the most junior people have the most revolutionary ideas.

■ *James Caan's new book Start Your Business in 7 Days can be ordered on Amazon now. His free app, James Caan Business Secrets, is also available*