



ClearanceJobs®

4 TIPS FOR RETAINING CLEARED TALENT

HOW TO PREVENT POACHING
IN A CANDIDATE'S MARKET



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You Worked Hard to Find the Best Candidate Can You Keep Them?



The national unemployment rate remains low, the commercial sector remains strong, and federal government employment remains...volatile. If you're a recruiter or hiring manager supporting national security careers, employee retention has never been more important. **It's no longer enough to find a great employee. Your hiring strategy needs to consider how you can keep them.**

Security Clearance Market Trends

In December, the National Background Investigations Bureau (NBIB) announced they're finally making progress on the size of the security clearance backlog, with the number of pending background investigations down to 600,000. Unfortunately, that doesn't mean processing times are improving.

Current Processing Times

459 Days
Top Secret Security
Clearance Waiting Time

226 Days
Secret Security
Clearance Waiting Time



**DoD/Industry Security Clearances*

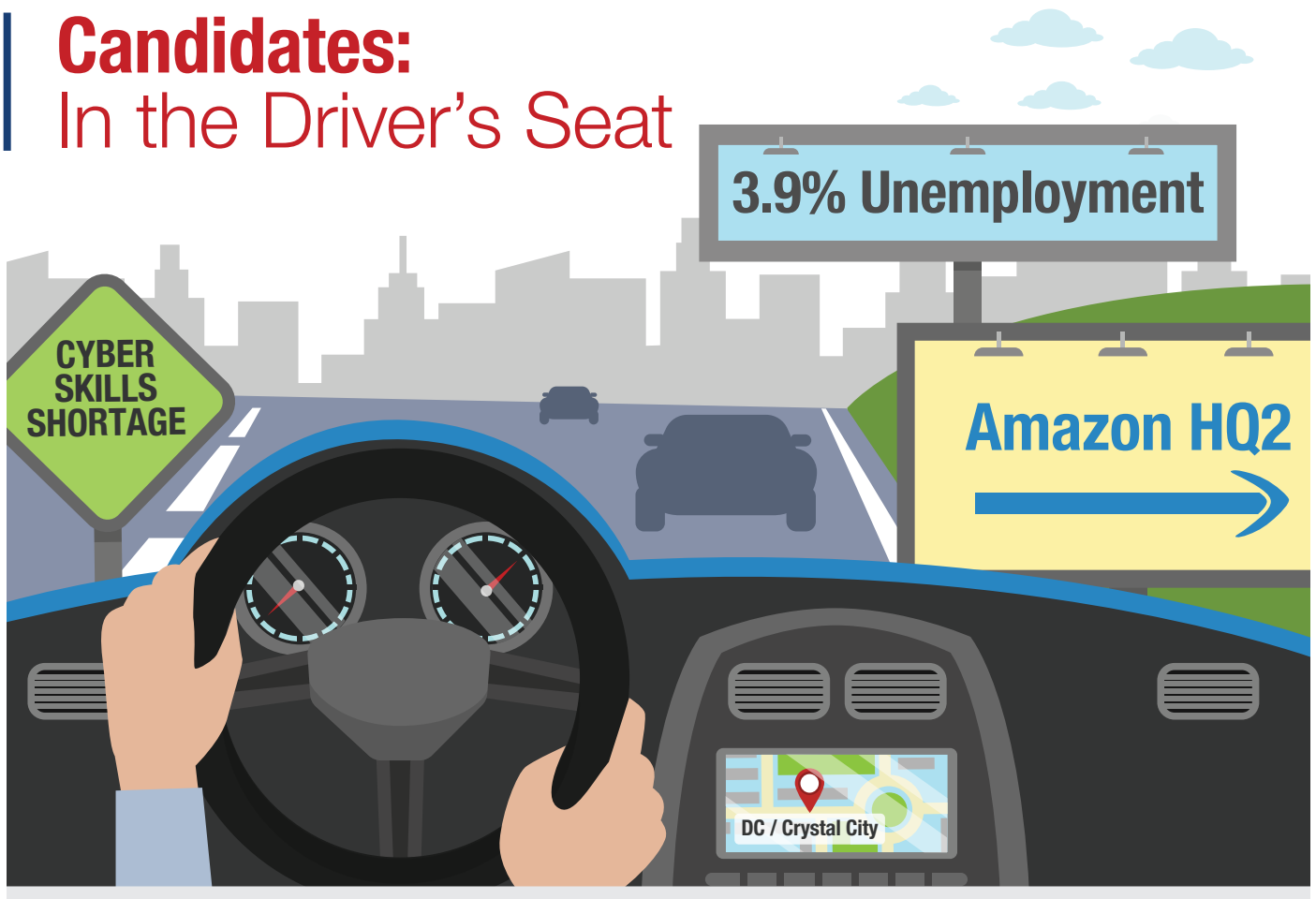
“In today's tight candidate market, you don't have to wonder if your best talent is being actively and continually courted by your competition — they are. That makes employee retention an essential aspect of your recruiting program.”

Evan Lesser

President and Founder

ClearanceJobs.com

Candidates: In the Driver's Seat



With security clearance processing times still crawling and the demand for tech talent skyrocketing, qualified candidates with an active federal security clearance are in the driver's seat.

And if you are recruiting in the Washington, D.C. metro, your job is getting exponentially more challenging. In November of 2018 Amazon confirmed it would be placing one of its new headquarters in Arlington's Crystal City, where it will be hiring 25,000 workers with an average salary of \$150,000, according to Amazon officials.

“What this means for recruiters and local companies is more job competition, wage competition and potential for employee attrition,” notes Maria Whitney, a senior cloud recruiter at Smartronix. “Recruiters should be thinking about building those relationships with current employees, engaging with their current top talent to reinforce the company's mission, goals and most importantly — **engage your current employees.**”

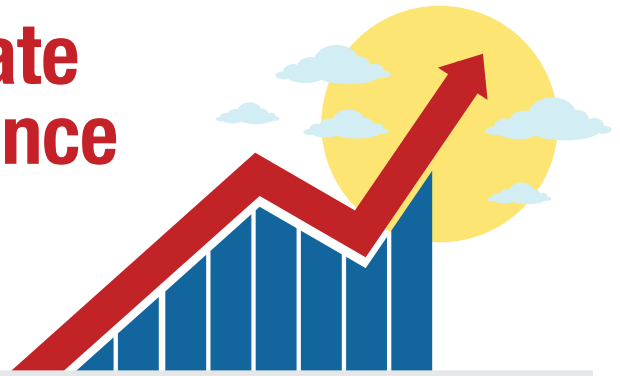
The good news about the Amazon move? Recruiters know what they're up against. The bad news? The D.C. metro's cyber skills shortage is growing worse. And with such a limited pool, candidate poaching will continue.

“Now more than ever, with a hot job market and unemployment levels being so low, there is a higher risk of attrition.

Companies need to work harder and do more in order to retain their talent.”

Luke Mann
Northrop Grumman

Candidate Confidence Soars



In today's job market, employees are both likely to make a switch and confident that even if the unexpected hits — like a merger or layoff — they will be able to quickly score a new role. The 2016 Glassdoor Employment Confidence Survey found 53% of respondents were confident that if they lost their job, they would be able to find a similar position that matched their compensation within six months.

The [2018 ClearanceJobs Compensation Survey](#) found that a whopping 84% of currently working security-cleared professionals indicated they were at least “somewhat likely” to change jobs in the coming year. Of those, 36% said they were very likely to change jobs. Not surprisingly, the lower the salary, the higher the likelihood of changing jobs.

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36% OF THEM ARE LIKELY TO CHANGE JOBS.



The 10 Costs of Losing a Cleared Employee



1 Thought Leadership

Can you find another candidate with the same skill set and knowledge of your company?

2 Workplace Culture

Every employee you lose shifts the dynamic within your organization — and may encourage other employees to leave or for productivity to decrease.



3 Training Costs

Everything you've invested in a hire — certifications, professional development, mentorship — walks out the door when he or she leaves.

4 Management Time

Managers have to spend time and intellectual capital to assist with new employee selection and onboarding.



**Three million
Americans quit
their jobs each
month.**

**U.S. Bureau of Labor
Statistics**

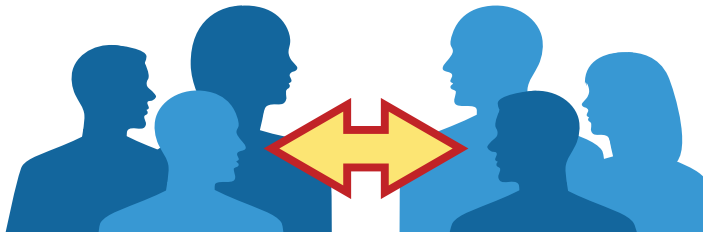


5 Recruiter Time

It takes hours and often months to fill priority positions.

6 Customer Relationships

Clients and customers have to adjust to personnel changes. This could lead partners to get the impression that your organization is unstable or can't deliver a consistent product.



7 Security Program Cost

Every employee onboarded or offboarded costs time and money — and increases risk. Personnel security, facility security, and company security must all be considered.

8 Government Security Clearance Wait Time

Clearance reciprocity may lag for weeks — and new clearance determinations for months. Can you still deliver to your customers with some of your workforce unable to fully perform their jobs?





9 Hiring Costs

Positions must be posted and new candidates onboarded. Consider the total hours put into finding every candidate; if your workforce is frequently turning over, it's a wasted investment.

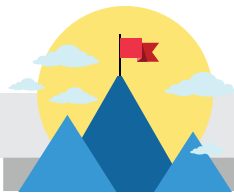
10 Referral Costs and Signing Bonuses

For good reason, many hires come with a referral or signing bonus to sweeten the deal of joining your team. If those employees leave shortly after being hired, it's money down the drain.



FOUR RETENTION TIPS

RETENTION TIP #1:
Sell the Mission



RETENTION TIP #2:
Offer Better Benefits



RETENTION TIP #3:
Create a Career Ladder



RETENTION TIP #4:
Engage Your Talent Pool



Tip #1: Sell the Mission



What can candidates do at your company that they can't do anywhere else?

“Why stay around with stale skills and technology? It leads to obsolescence. A job with no challenge is no fun.”

Certified Information Systems Security Professional

It's easy to assume salary is the biggest driver when it comes to employee retention. And it's true: If your salary is far below the market rate, it will be difficult to keep your employees. But when it comes to what compels candidates to make a move, mission is often listed above money.

That makes sense; few happy employees get up every day just for a paycheck. They derive a sense of purpose from their work. Since 1989, Gallup has asked multiple times in their annual Work and Education polls: Do you get a sense of identity from your job? Every year, a majority of Americans confirm that their job is part of how they define themselves. For college graduates, the percentage is even higher.

Recently, when a Microsoft employee was asked why she enjoys working in national security, she immediately responded, “Because it lets me work for something bigger than myself.”

In fact, time and again, American workers surveyed by Gallup confirm that work offers employees something other than a paycheck. When surveyed, workers say they would keep working even if they won \$10 million in the lottery.

For Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP) Tim King, growth and the challenge of learning something new are the top motivators for making a career change.

“Why stay around with stale skills and technology? It leads to obsolescence,” he said. “Also, sticking to what you know is, to me, boring. A job with no challenge is no fun. Case in point: One of the reasons I left one of my positions is because I knew every inch of my network and there was nothing new for me to learn there. Hence, I moved on to something else because I got bored.”

Ask Yourself:
Are you offering your candidates a challenge?

King’s response mirrors responses given in a recent survey by consulting firm Korn Ferry. Boredom is the top reason candidates are looking for a new job,

according to respondents. Another one-third said they were looking for a challenge. Salary came in fourth as a reason a candidate would seek out a new position.

Ask Yourself:
Are you keeping your employees engaged?

According to a 2017 Gallup poll, only 32% of U.S. employees are engaged with their work. They define engagement as commitment to their employer, workplace, and the job they’re doing. That means 68% of employees don’t feel that sense of belonging to their workplace or work. Do you think they’ll consider another job when it comes along? *You bet.*

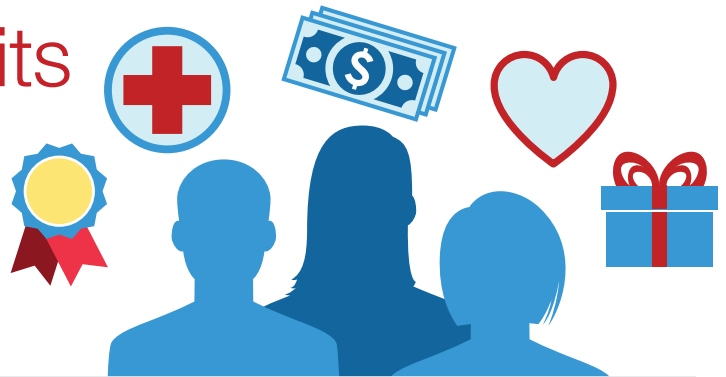
QUICK TIP:

Who’s the one employee in your company you cannot afford to lose? Use their resume to conduct a candidate search using **IntelliSearch**, the **ClearanceJobs** signature search tool. It will pull in every resume that matches that candidate, and even provide a percentage ranking. Make sure those close-match candidates are in your pipeline.



Tip #2: Offer Better Benefits

Smart employers are thinking outside-the-box when it comes to benefits.



If your standard candidate pitch only includes information about your company’s healthcare plan and 401(k), you may be missing some of the key benefits leading to better employee retention — and you’re also likely losing out to the competition.

The number of companies offering benefits like paid training, flexible work hours, and increased vacation jumped from 53% in 2009 to 71% in 2018, according to the Dice 2018 Tech Salary Report. The interest in unconventional benefits highlights the competition of this market. Just as your job pitch needs to be tailored to the candidate, so do your company perks.

What benefits are companies offering?

Take the example of software company VMware. Forget tracking PTO — employees at VMware are trusted with unlimited paid time off. Consulting firm Deloitte offers 16 weeks of fully paid family leave for employees who have a child or need to take time off to care for aging parents. And a growing number of companies are making remote work and telework a part of their benefits packages, as well.

National security professionals may be more pragmatic in their benefit choices, however. A 2016 Ideal Employer Survey by ClearanceJobs found that when it came to ranking benefits, the traditional health plan, 401(k), and salary ranked #1, #2, and #3. Outside perks were far down the list. But the career level of the respondents may have been a major factor. Employees further on in their career, perhaps with families to care for, may prioritize traditional benefits. On the other hand, employees fresh out of college may value other perks — like a relaxed workplace or flexible hours.



“What I’ve found is that the demographic you poll will have an impact on the ranking of benefits,” said Luke Mann, Manager, University Relations & Recruiting-Intern Program at Northrop Grumman. “Given that your population [of survey respondents] had 10+ years of work experience, I’m not surprised at the answers. Especially given the fact that they were experienced folks with roles that required a federal security clearance.”

The takeaway? Your benefits package should be considered carefully — and tweaked based on position, location, and career level — in order to retain the best talent.

Home Sweet Secure Office Space

Not all workplaces are created equally. If your employee needs to work every day in a SCIF, clearly telework is not on the table. But even SCIF workers may benefit from a flexible schedule or increased PTO. For every position, there’s the right combination of benefits to keep the employee happy and engaged.



Tip #3: Create a Career Ladder

Create ‘up and in’ opportunities to keep star talent from leaving to catch their next promotion.



Many professionals report they will need to leave their current company in order to get a promotion — making career progression a key motivator for employee retention. Make sure candidates can see not just their current position with your company, but their second, third, and fourth.

Millennials often get a bad rap for being job hoppers — and they are job hoppers — but they might not be completely to blame. A Gallup poll showed 93% of millennials left their employer to take their last role — only 7% took a new role with the same company. Millennial job hopping may be less about being flighty and more about demanding growth. Companies should make sure employees can see clear paths for advancement. If employees think they have to go out to go up, don't expect them to stay.

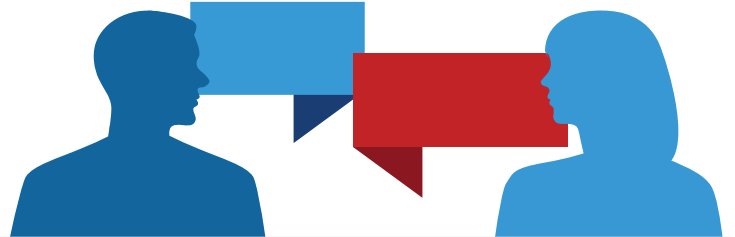
If you're a government contractor, there is another factor at play: contract change and lack of stability. When you're hiring candidates, do you only see them in a single position, or are you thinking of how their career can grow with your company? Having an internal mobility strategy is critical for defense contractors.

“We actually have an internal mobility team,” explains Cheryl Garrison, Vice President of Talent Mobility at GDIT. “Whether it’s a contract coming to an end and finding that next opportunity for those employees — or for those employees who are ready to raise their hand for the next move. So we’re very proud of that. We believe it’s a differentiator and it really is a statement to how committed we are to the mobility of our employees.”

A company strategy for internal mobility allows candidates to focus on their careers. Cleared professionals know they always have to stay one step ahead of reductions to the defense budget or the end of their contract. If employees can feel secure enough that they have a future at your company, it will make them less vulnerable to poaching and attrition.

Tip #4: Engage Your Talent Pool

Don't let entrance and exit interviews be your only guide.



Wondering if your current employees would consider an outside opportunity? Ask them! The best repellent to candidate poaching is properly engaging your employees. Make sure they know you care about their career, and solicit their feedback early and often.

“We start on this as early as the hiring process,” said Mann. “It’s important to first understand why an employee chose your company. What was it about your company that made them pick you? Use that data to build a success profile. Once they’re onboard, our work isn’t done. People are fluid, and as their lives change so do their needs. We should be doing an annual pulse check to understand what is important to them, and what they want. Treat your employees like the top assets they are, show them you value them, and you’ll see your attrition numbers decrease.”

“Treat your employees like the top assets they are.”

Feedback Means Hearing Things You May Not Like

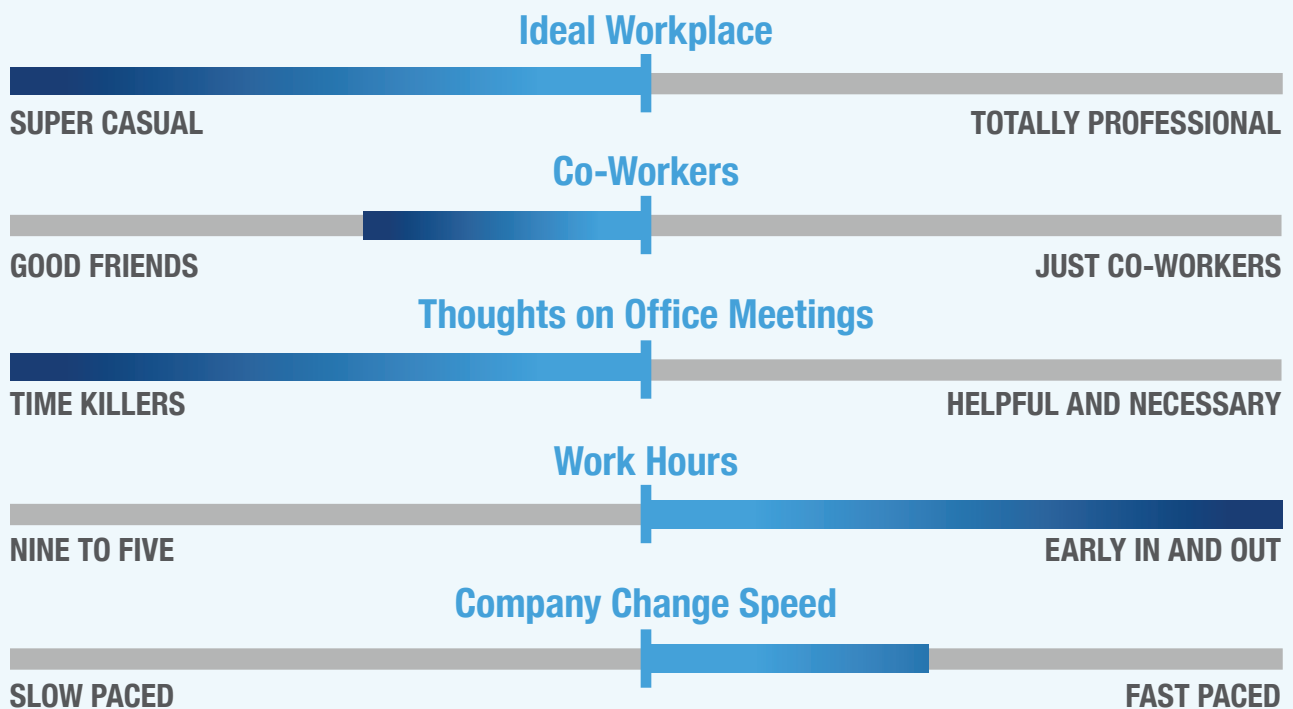
Conversations between employees and employers should be ongoing. Create an environment of continual feedback between managers, employees, and human resources — and be sincere about it. If you only get flattering feedback (or no feedback at all), this should raise red flags. Employees may fear retaliation or that their comments will just end up in their manager’s wastebasket. Employees should know they can provide feedback at any time, and that their opinions matter.

In addition to ongoing conversations, take advantage of formal entrance and exit interviews. Make both your onboarding and offboarding processes focused on the individual you’re interviewing — what they saw in their career, what they liked about your company, and what they didn’t. Don’t burn bridges with employees on their way out, either — make them wish they had stayed. In this market, the candidate in an exit interview today may be back with your company in an entrance interview before you know it.

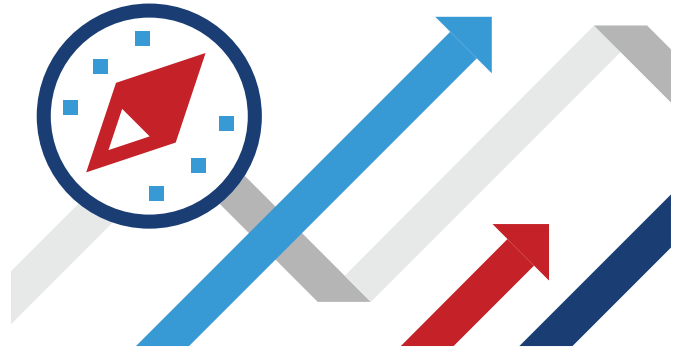
QUICK TIP:

[ClearanceJobs](#) takes the guesswork of knowing what kind of workplace candidates are looking for. When you're hiring talent, see if a candidate's "Workplace Preferences" align well with your organization. A worker who enjoys a casual, flexible office may accept a job in a traditional setting — but they probably won't keep it long.

Workplace Preferences



ClearanceJobs: Your Tool for Candidate Engagement



You work too hard to attract and retain the best cleared talent. Don't let your hard work walk out the door after a year or two. Follow these tips to help your recruiting program not just attract the best talent, but retain it, as well. **Once you've found the right talent, follow these four tips:**

*Don't get caught in the storm. Follow these **FOUR RETENTION TIPS** and watch your cleared recruiting program take flight.*



Retention Tip #1:
Sell the Mission



Retention Tip #2:
Offer Better Benefits



Retention Tip #3:
Create A Career
Ladder



Retention Tip #4:
Engage Your Talent
Pool

CLEARANCEJOBS HAS POWERFUL TOOLS AND INSIGHTS TO HELP YOU MASTER THE ART OF RECRUITING.

YOU CAN:

- Build your network through the largest online database of cleared talent.
- Nurture your new contacts through the best, most secure social recruiting tools on the internet.
- Build your brand and reach hyper-targeted audiences with Lengo.

Want to learn more?

Connect with a ClearanceJobs Recruiting Specialist today at **1.866.302.7264** or visit our website at www.clearancejobs.com

