

While some might point to job fulfillment, work-life balance, and income increase as key factors in engineering employee retention, another factor of high importance to many engineering leaders hoping to retain employees: career development.

A recent survey by the Engineering and Construction Contracting Association's Future Leaders program of its members

found that career development opportunity was the top factor in attracting and retaining employees. Out of 150 respondents, 42% said better career development programs was most important to employee satisfaction, ranking higher than authority to make decisions, compensation, recognition programs, and technical programs.

In LinkedIn's 2018 Workforce Learning Report, out of approximately 2,200 employee respondents, 94% said they would stay at a company longer if it invested in their career. And the top reason employees felt held back from engaging in learning and advancing in their careers is because they felt like they didn't have time.

Engineering firms around the country have recognized that their employees

want to seek out knowledge and training to advance their careers, and have obliged by furthering their development programs, continuing education offerings, and opportunities for employees to attain professional licensure and advancement within their workplace.

## Career Development in Private Firms

In recent years, Clark Nexsen, an architecture and engineering firm headquartered in Virginia Beach, Virginia, has increased its focus on furthering technical training and giving employees opportunities to become professionally licensed, according to corporate communications manager Cat Brutvan.

"We encourage our employees to participate in our integrated design group, which is a cross-disciplinary group that explores how we address environmental impact and resiliency," Brutvan says. "We started our own YouTube channel this summer to share useful tips and tricks related to software and new technology. We also have our employees take continuing education courses with SE University—specifically our structural engineers."

Brutvan also says that the company has been better able to retain employees by including benefits like reimbursement for PE study materials, classes, and test cost; a bonus upon receiving professional licensure; payment if employees are in at least one professional organization; sponsored chapter meetings; and opportunities to attend conferences to promote exposure to ideas and practices outside the office.

John Rash, P.E., an electrical engineer at Clark Nexsen's office in Raleigh, North Carolina, began working at the firm as an EIT before earning his PE license in 2016.

"I think for me personally, having the support from your firm to seek out those opportunities to make you a better engineer goes a long way in wanting to stay at that place," Rash says. "Not only did the firm offer support for the PE exam, but I've been able to be a part of things like the integrated design group, and last spring I represented the firm at the NC State Energy Conference and learned a lot from other engineers in the area, which was a great opportunity for professional growth."

Kimley-Horn, headquartered in Raleigh, North Carolina, is another engineering firm

### 2019 Engineering and Construction Contracting Association's Future Leaders Program Survey

What is most important to you regarding employee satisfaction?

