KEEP TECHS

HOW TO KEEP GOOD TECHNICIANS

Most departures can be seen coming. Here is what makes people stay.

START WITH YOUR REAL NUMBER

Turnover = technicians who left in the past 12 months ÷ your average number of technicians. Customer data published by a large field service software provider, for the 12 months through January 2026, showed turnover of 21% in electrical, 18% in plumbing and 16% in HVAC among its customers. Average tenure ran from about three and a half to four years. Your number may be better or worse, but you can't improve it until you know it.

Then look at when people left. The same provider suggests a useful way to read the timing: departures in the first year often point to hiring or onboarding, while departures around years three and four may point to pay, advancement or leadership.

WHY GOOD TECHS LEAVE

It's rarely one thing. It's usually an accumulation of small frustrations, plus a phone call from someone offering more.

- Pay that doesn't feel fair, or that they can't predict
- No clear way to move up
- Trucks, tools and parts that make the day harder
- A dispatcher or manager who doesn't back them up
- Being on call too often, or working too many long weeks
- Feeling like a revenue number instead of a person

GET THE BASICS RIGHT

Pay at or above your market. Find out what the competition actually pays, by asking your distributors, recently hired techs and job postings. Pay on time and without errors. Few things damage trust faster than a commission statement nobody can explain.

Keep the trucks clean and reliable. Stock the parts they use most. Buy the tool that saves an hour a day. A tech judges how much you value them by what you put in their hands.

MAKE THE CAREER PATH VISIBLE

Write down the levels at your company: helper, apprentice, service tech, senior tech, lead, trainer, comfort advisor, field manager. For each, spell out what they need to know, what they need to demonstrate and what it pays. Post it. A tech who can see a two-year path has a reason to stay. One who can't will go looking.

Not everyone wants to be a manager. Offer a master-tech track, so your best people can earn more without leaving the trucks.

HOLD STAY INTERVIEWS

Don't wait for the exit interview. Twice a year, sit down with each tech and ask:

- What makes you want to come to work?
- What's the most frustrating part of your week?
- If you could change one thing here, what would it be?
- Has anyone tried to recruit you lately? What did they offer?
- Where do you want to be in two years?

Then do something about at least one thing. Asking and ignoring is worse than not asking.

RESPECT THEIR TIME

Long hours can be a badge of honor during the season, but a steady diet of them drives people out. Rotate on-call shifts fairly and compensate people for carrying the phone. Protect a real day off. Give advance notice of schedule changes. In slow seasons, find ways to keep hours steady, such as outreach to your own customer list, so techs aren't looking elsewhere when work dips.

MAKE THE FIRST 90 DAYS COUNT

A new hire can take six months to a year to reach full productivity. If they leave at month four, you've paid for the training and gotten little in return. Assign a mentor, check in every week, and follow the 90-day plan.

RECOGNIZE WORK PEOPLE CAN SEE

A specific thank-you beats a generic plaque. Read customer compliments aloud at meetings. Share the tech's name when a callback rate falls or a difficult job goes right. Tell their families, too; a note home or a holiday gift card for a spouse who's put up with on-call weeks means more than you might think.

KNOW WHAT IT COSTS TO LOSE ONE

Use the staffing numbers on our Stats page to estimate what each departure costs you. Then spend some of that money before someone walks out.

Sources: Technician tenure and turnover by trade (field service software provider customer data); Service ProCall program guidance.

Published by Service ProCall. Last reviewed November 2026. General information, not legal advice.

BEST PRACTICES: HIRING AND KEEPING GOOD TECHS

MAKE IT A HABIT

What good looks like

> You know your turnover rate and why people leave.

> Every new tech has a 90-day plan and a mentor.

> Pay, growth and recognition are clear and written down.

The habits

1. Hire for attitude and teach the trade, with a clear path from helper to lead.

2. Plan the first 90 days: ride-alongs, checklists and weekly check-ins.
3. Hold stay interviews with your best people before they think about leaving.
4. Make pay plans simple enough to explain on one page.
5. Use a fair scorecard, and coach before you correct.
6. Remove the frustrations that make techs quit, such as bad routes, missing parts and chaotic days.

Signs it's time to get help

- You lose more than one in five techs a year.
- New hires quit in the first few months.
- Techs complain about routes, callbacks or the office.

How one shop did it: Barron Heating AC Electrical & Plumbing (Ferndale, Washington). Built its own 15-week technician school with classroom, lab and field time, and takes six students per class. Nearly 40 graduates, retention above 90%, every graduate passing the NATE and EPA exams, and warranty callbacks reportedly cut in half. Contracting Business, July 15, 2026

Where we fit: We don't place techs. ProCall Field helps with what makes them stay: organized days, fair scorecards and training.

More on hiring and keeping good techs