DIELE
CONSULTING

10 Signs

You're About to Lose Someone You Can't Afford to Lose

A practical guide for leaders who want to catch the warning signs before it's too late

Joe Diele
dieleconsulting.com

The Problem With Great People Leaving

You don't lose your best people overnight.

The signs are almost always there — weeks, sometimes months before the resignation letter lands on your desk. But they're easy to miss when you're heads-down running a business.

And the cost of missing them is real:

- **6–9 months** to find, hire, and fully ramp a replacement
- **Institutional knowledge** — the kind that lives in someone's head — walks out with them
- **The team notices.** And some of them start wondering if they should leave too
- **Your momentum stalls** at exactly the moment you need it most

Most of these exits are preventable. Not all of them — but most.

The difference is catching the signals early enough to do something about them.

The 10 Signs

01 They're more absent, late, or using PTO in unusual patterns

What it looks like: Unexplained spikes in sick days, late arrivals, or personal time — especially around deadlines or high-visibility projects.

What to do: "I've noticed your schedule has shifted lately. Is there anything going on I should know about, or anything we can adjust?"

02 They've gone quiet in meetings

What it looks like: Someone who used to push back, ask questions, or drive discussion is now sitting back. They're present but no longer engaged.

What to do: "I feel like I haven't heard your take on things lately. What's on your mind?"

03 They've stopped talking about their future here

What it looks like: No more questions about what's next — for their role, their growth, or the company. When someone stops imagining themselves in the future here, they've often already decided.

What to do: "Where do you want to be in a year? What would need to be true here for that to happen?"

04 They've become withdrawn one-on-one

What it looks like: Fewer personal updates, shorter answers, more transactional check-ins. The relationship that used to have warmth now feels like a status report.

What to do: "You seem a little removed lately. Everything okay?"

05 Their LinkedIn profile just got updated

What it looks like: New headline, refreshed summary, recently added skills or certifications. This is rarely accidental.

What to do: Don't confront it. Use it as a prompt to have the career conversation you should have been having anyway: "I want to make sure we're thinking about your growth here — can we carve out time for that?"

06 They're mentioning outside options — even casually

What it looks like: "A recruiter reached out..." or "I'm thinking about what's next..." These aren't random comments. They're often trial balloons, testing how you'll respond.

What to do: "Are you exploring? I'd genuinely rather have that conversation openly than lose you without a chance to talk."

07 They've stopped owning outcomes

What it looks like: The shift from "I'll figure it out" to "I did my part" or "that's not really my area." They complete tasks but have quietly stopped caring about results.

What to do: "I've noticed the energy around your work has shifted. I'd rather know what's going on than guess."

08 They're venting to peers instead of you

What it looks like: You hear about frustrations second-hand, through teammates or the rumor channel. They've stopped bringing problems to you directly — which means they've stopped believing it will help.

What to do: "I want to make sure you feel like you can bring things to me directly. Is there anything you've been sitting on?"

09 The quality of their work has quietly dropped

What it looks like: Errors they wouldn't have made six months ago. Details they used to catch getting missed. Not incompetence — disengagement. The brain checks out before the body does.

What to do: "This isn't like you, and I want to understand what's getting in the way — not call you out."

10 Your gut is telling you something is off

What it looks like: You can't name it exactly. But you've managed people long enough to know when someone's energy has changed.

What to do: Trust it. Don't wait for a resignation letter to confirm what you already sense. Have the conversation now, while you still can.

If You're Seeing Multiple Signs

One sign is a conversation.

Three or more signs is a pattern — and patterns don't fix themselves.

1–2 signs	Have the conversation now. Don't wait for more evidence.
3–5 signs	Something systemic may be at play. It's not just about this person.
6 or more	They may already be mentally gone — but it's still worth trying. And it's worth understanding why it got this far.

Want a Second Set of Eyes on What You're Seeing?

I offer a free 20-minute People Pulse Check Debrief for leaders who want to think through a specific situation — no pitch, no agenda. Just clarity.

Book a 20-minute call: calendly.com/josephdiele

dieleconsulting.com

Joe Diele | dieleconsulting.com | joe@dieleconsulting.com