

European Currency Fund UP 32% Jan. - June 2007	Results are based on the system employed by the fund. Performance is not indicative of future results.	FXCM WWW.FXCM.COM CURRENCY TRADING INVOLVES SIGNIFICANT RISK OF LOSS.
USD/CHF 1.2029/34	EUR/USD 1.3787/9	Current Performance & Fund Details

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Keep Your Single Staff in Mind

Play fair with single employees if you want them to stick around.

By Mark Henricks | [Entrepreneur Magazine - August 2007](#)

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About half of Thomas Harpointner's 25 employees are unmarried, a fact he considers unremarkable given that AIS Media Inc., his 10-year-old firm, produces software and services for electronic marketing and commerce. "Being an IT company, it's more common to have younger employees," says Harpointner, 37. "And younger people tend to be single."

Entrepreneurs in many other fields are likely to find themselves with similarly single work forces, according to a 2006 U.S. Census Bureau report showing that, after a decades-long tilt away from marriage, the number of Americans who are over age 18 and single reached 41 percent. Forces driving the transition include delayed marriage and increased frequency of cohabitation among unmarried couples. Whatever the cause, this group of nearly 90 million poses some challenges for entrepreneurs used to managing married workers.

Retention is the big issue, says Jan Civan, a senior consultant with HR advisor WFD Consulting. One survey she analyzed found that employees who were married or had a partner were less likely than singles to say they would probably change employers within three years. "If you're not in a committed relationship," she concludes, "you're more likely to leave your organization."

Resentment is another matter. Single employees don't usually demand the flexible work schedules that those with families often do, and they don't always appreciate it when married workers get special privileges. Harpointner recalls when an employee of his Atlanta-based company left work early on Halloween to go trick-or-treating with his children. "That raised eyebrows around the office," he says.

Employers can soothe unmarried workers' concerns by making benefits available to all employees, Civan says. Harpointner, for instance, began offering company-sponsored health insurance to domestic partners of AIS employees. But equalizing benefits isn't necessarily enough, according to Civan. Job meaning is often stronger for single employees than for married ones, so singles often want to learn new skills, she says. Entrepreneurs should talk to singles to find out what they desire, then figure out a way to provide it. Harpointner pays tuition for job-related classes and gives time off for employees to go to school, and he meets with each one quarterly to delve into what they would like to get out of their work.

You can do a lot to overcome the retention issue by asking singles the right questions during the hiring process, Harpointner adds. "There are other indicators, primarily how long they were in their previous position, but also whether they are just out of college and whether they've decided on a career path or they're just looking," he says.

Civan says that enterprises with more layers of management have to make sure first-line supervisors have the policies and power to give singles the flexibility they need. If your company has personal leave policies that work for families but not singles, she says, it's going to be hard for managers to make the right moves to keep them happy.

Just as married workers offer loyalty and sometimes burdensome family demands, singles bring energy and flexibility as well as retention problems. But if AIS is any indication, most entrepreneurs can handle the challenge. "It's a topic we've never had much difficulty with here," says Harpointner. "In terms of single employees, we've found them quite valuable."

Mark Henricks writes on business and technology for leading publications and is author of Not Just a Living.