

International Bestseller - Over 500,000 Copies Sold

Fourth Edition - Updated throughout to Help You Engage and Retain Talent

# LOVE 'EM OR LOSE EM

GETTING GOOD PEOPLE TO STAY

26 Engagement Strategies for Busy Managers



BEVERLY KAYE AND SHARON JORDAN-EVANS

an excerpt from

***Love 'Em or Lose 'Em:  
Getting Good People to Stay***

by Beverly Kaye and Sharon Jordan-Evans  
Published by Berrett-Koehler Publishers

---

# Contents

Preface xi

Acknowledgments xvii

Introduction: A.J.'s Exit 1

- 1  **ASK** What Keeps You? 7  
Do you know what they want?
- 2  **BUCK** It Stops Here 20  
Who's in charge of keeping them?
- 3  **CAREERS** Support Growth 27  
Are you building their future or are you in the way?
- 4  **DIGNITY** Show Respect 37  
Do they know that you respect them?
- 5  **ENERGIZE** Energize the Job 46  
Do your people have to leave to find growth and challenge?
- 6  **FAMILY** Get Friendly 53  
Avoid making your employees choose between work and family life.
- 7  **GOALS** Expand Options 62  
There are five career paths other than up.

- 8  **HIRE** Fit Is It 73  
Make a match or start from scratch.
- 9  **INFORMATION** Share It 86  
Do you have it? Do you hoard it?
- 10  **JERK** Don't Be One 95  
Are you one?
- 11  **KICKS** Get Some 105  
Are we having fun yet?
- 12  **LINK** Create Connections 113  
If you build them, they will stay.
- 13  **MENTOR** Be One 123  
Are they learning from you?
- 14  **NUMBERS** Run Them 133  
Calculate the cost of loss.
- 15  **OPPORTUNITIES** Mine Them 140  
Will they find them inside or outside?
- 16  **PASSION** Encourage It 149  
Help them find the work they love—without leaving.
- 17  **QUESTION** Reconsider the Rules 159  
Which will you keep: the rules or the people?
- 18  **REWARD** Provide Recognition 169  
Which matters more: praise or pay?

- 19  **S**PACE Give It 183  
Are your people on a short leash?
- 20  **T**RUTH Tell It 196  
The truth hurts—or does it?
- 21  **U**NDERSTAND Listen Deeper 205  
When you tune out, you lose out—and they move out.
- 22  **V**ALUES Define and Align 215  
What matters most?
- 23  **W**ELLNESS Sustain It 223  
Are they sick or tired?
- 24  **X**-ERS AND OTHER GENERATIONS Handle with Care 233  
They are different. Can you keep them?
- 25  **Y**IELD Power Down 247  
Give it up to keep them.
- 26  **Z**ENITH Go for It 255  
Test your Retention Engagement Index.

Top Ten Pushbacks 263

Got More? 267

Notes 279

Index 287

About the Authors 297

---

## Preface

# Love 'Em or Lose 'Em—Talent War Edition

Talent is everything. As a manager, you know that. You need your talented people to stay with you. These people are critical to your success. They are the heart and soul of your organization. And your competitors want them!

So how will you keep them engaged? Excited about coming to work and performing at their peak? How will you get them to stay (both psychologically and physically) while others try to entice them away? *Love 'Em or Lose 'Em* will show you how.

We've written this book *to* and *for* managers. Busy managers. People who are doing more with less and find that time is their most prized commodity. It had to be brief and to the point. Yet it had to make a strong argument, backed up with data and full of easy-to-do recommendations.

Three core messages recur throughout the chapters:

- Regardless of economic ups and downs, your best people have choices about where and for whom they work. You need them to choose you.
- You, as a manager, have more power and influence over the engagement and retention of your people than anyone else.
- There are easy-to-implement, inexpensive, research-based strategies (A–Z) you can use to keep your talented people engaged and on your team.

## Why Do You Care?

Why are you interested in this book? Our hunch is that you're faced with at least one of these challenges. Which concern you?

- The healthier economy and brighter job market spell more options for good workers.
- You have some unhappy employees, with updated resumés and packed bags.
- Half of your workers will be eligible to retire in the next decade. You don't know where their replacements are.
- Your industry (or geography or job function) is especially hard-hit—not enough talent to draw from.
- You're growing and the shortage of skilled talent impedes that growth.
- The workforce has changed, and most employees (research says 70 percent) are poised to take the next good opportunity, even if they're not actively looking for another job.
- Unwanted turnover is costing you a fortune.
- (add another)

Whatever your challenge, you want quick, effective strategies for engaging and retaining the talent you currently have. You've come to the right place.

## Four Important Words

Readers of our book (this is our fourth edition) have loved the title *Love 'Em or Lose 'Em: Getting Good People to Stay*. But it's not just a catchy title. The words drive the heart of our message. Here's how we're using these words:

- LOVE** Treat employees fairly and respectfully. Thank them. Challenge and develop them. Care about them and you will engage and retain them.

- LOSE** Loss is just as serious when talent retires on the job as when they leave to join a competitor.
- GOOD** Consider your solid citizens, not just your high-potentials. Stars are people at any level who bring value to the organization.
- STAY** Encourage talented employees to stay with the enterprise (if not your own department). Talent will be the key differentiating factor in the competitive battle ahead.

## Research Base

Our perspective is based on data collected from numerous industries and organizations. We use exit interview information, focus groups, and the Internet. We (and dozens of helpers) continually scan newspapers, journals, and books.

We ask the question “What kept you?” everywhere.

Our analysis of that data helped us form the original 26 strategies and chapters A–Z. We’ve continued to build on that original research. We’ve now met with more than 100,000 managers from large and small companies around the world. We’ve listened, consulted, provided training, and learned from them. Our “What Kept You” database is continually updated (more than 17,000 respondents by October 2007). All of this helps us refine and expand our engagement and retention strategies.

Now we’ve distilled those findings into improved retention strategies that give you the crucial competitive edge.

## What’s in This Book? And What’s New?

We intend *Love ’Em or Lose ’Em* to be both timeless and timely. Timeless in the sense that the suggestions throughout the book should work as well in 1999 (first edition) as in 2020 (we plan to be around!). And timely in the sense that we update the stories, statistics, and workplace views regularly and design them to be relevant for you as a manager *now*.

In the fourth edition we've *updated* key components of the book that readers find especially useful, including

- Practical “to do” lists
- Multiple business examples about what worked to engage and retain talent
- The story of one employee (A.J.) and his (or is it her?) reasons for leaving
- Real-life “alas” stories about “the fish that got away”

We've added two *new* features:

- Top Ten Pushbacks from managers who've tried the *Love 'Em* approach
- Got More? statistics, stories, and quotations for readers who wanted more depth

We've *kept* the navigation tools in the book that readers find helpful:

- Helpful “go to” icons linking to more ideas about what interests you most
- A retention/engagement index (REI) in the Zenith chapter to guide your learning

## Make This Yours

We wrote *Love 'Em or Lose 'Em* to make your life easier. To help you in a real-time, day-to-day way. We wrote it because you make such an impact on the lives of your workforce. That's an awesome responsibility that deserves all the help and support it can get.

- ✓ Use this as your guidebook—as you would a vehicle maintenance manual.
- ✓ Return to it again and again.
- ✓ Dog-ear the page corners.
- ✓ Use a highlighter on what matters most to you.
- ✓ Put a bookmark in key chapters, and leave the book on your own manager's desk!

✓ Personally commit to implementing just one chapter.

Remember, your attention to retention is critical. You know who your stars are—the ones you cannot afford to lose. They are your talented, committed employees—“high-potentials” and solid citizens alike. *Love 'Em or Lose 'Em* will help you keep your good people engaged and on your team!

# Introduction

---

## A.J.'s Exit

*I quit.*

*I'm giving you my notice.*

*I found another opportunity.*

*I've accepted another offer.*

*Can we talk?*

If any of the above strikes fear in your heart or makes your stomach sink, you are not alone. Anyone managing or supervising others, whether in a skyscraper, a coffee shop, or a volunteer group, reacts with dismay to statements like these—especially when the people saying them are critical to your team.

By “critical,” we don’t mean just your top performers or your “high-potentials.” We mean the “solid citizens,” too—those who show up day after day to reliably do their work. They are necessary to the success of your unit and your peace of mind. They are the steady, dependable employees whom you simply cannot afford to lose. They are your stars.

Like A.J.—a critical and solid performer making a competitive salary and working for an organization that has a good future. On the next page, you’ll find the exit memo from A.J. to the department manager and the manager’s manager.

Read it. Underline the points that resonate. Could this happen to you?

---

**INTEROFFICE MEMO**

---

**To:** Carlos and Madeleine  
**From:** A.J.  
**Re:** Exit Interview

Today I received the Exit Interview form from Human Resources. I put the form aside. It didn't ask the right questions for me, so I'm writing this letter instead. I still feel bad about leaving our company. I liked working with you and our team. I just couldn't stay. Maybe my letter will help you to prevent this from happening again.

Carlos, I think you are an effective manager. You complete projects, achieve goals, and accomplish everything through a talented group of employees. All of these were rewarding while I was still learning our business. Unfortunately, you got too busy to pay attention to the little things—like saying good morning. Or trying to delegate assignments so that we could learn something new. Instead, under pressure, you always took the short-cut and gave the work to people who had experience. How can anyone grow if they don't have a chance to learn? We talked a few times about the chance for me to attend training classes or to prepare and present our plan to the executives, but those chances never materialized. A year later, I began to understand that they never would happen.

Madeleine, I have always admired you. You provide great leadership and direction to Carlos and our team and our colleagues in the division. When I first joined the company four years ago, I was so impressed by our mission statement and corporate values. I hoped to have a long and happy career here.

I have to say I became disillusioned and disengaged over time. I really decided to leave in the last two months. We worked so hard on that last project. I rescheduled my vacation. The whole team put in extra hours. We produced quality work on time, achieving all objectives. Then the company decided not to implement the plan. I could even understand that

decision, knowing how fast change happens here and in any business. But no one took the time to let us know. We continued with implementation for three weeks before we heard the rumors that the project was canceled. We would have understood if you'd come to our area and told us. Instead we were angry and disappointed.

It is true that my new position pays a higher salary, but I'm not leaving for money. I need to work in a place where I can make a contribution and people treat each other with respect. Sadly, my work didn't seem to make a difference here.

Thank you for all you taught me. Please remember that thoughtful planning, honest and continuous communication, and basic human respect go a long way with your employees.

I wish you every success.

---

## Prevent Talent Loss—The “How To” Is in This Book

Have you ever had an employee like A.J.? A solid contributor, someone you really could not afford to lose, but who left anyway? How many times have you said:

“If I'd only known.”

“Why didn't they tell me?”

“Why didn't I see that coming?”

“The answer was easy. I could have fixed that.”

“Why didn't I ask?”

Some frustrated disappointed employees could do worse than leave you. They might quit and stay.

Managers ask us how they can prevent both kinds of employee losses. The answers are in this book. After a decade of testing, we now know it works. The big idea here is that successful managers (those who engage and retain good people) have a talent-focused mind-set. And they maintain that mind-set through economic highs and lows.

## Cultivate a Talent-Focused Mind-set

Talent is everything. You've heard it before. Do you believe it? Is it true in your field? Your workplace?

*Disney paid \$7+ billion for Pixar today (January 25, 2006). We already own the rights to several Pixar characters. Basically we paid \$7 billion for the 400 brilliant, creative people who work there. You see, we all (our competitors and us) have access to the same technology. We all have access to money. The only differentiator is the people. We paid \$7 billion for the people and what we hope they'll be able to create for and with us in the future.*

—Disney executive

So, assuming we agree it's all about the people, the question then is, "How do some managers and some companies hang on so well to their talent, while others have a revolving door?"

For the past decade we've watched managers use a *love 'em* approach to building loyal, committed, productive teams. All that in an era when some said (incorrectly) that loyalty is dead. Their employees cannot be enticed away by a 10 percent raise or a gym or a massage on Fridays. They *love* their jobs, their teams, their bosses, and yes, their companies. And because of that, their companies win.

In contrast, we've seen managers lose talent the moment the economy lights come back on. These not-so-successful managers matched their engagement and retention efforts to economic highs and lows. In the good times, when jobs were plentiful and talented people had choice, managers offered perks, praise, and promotions.

In bad times, these leaders developed a cavalier attitude about their employees. Many felt—and some actually said—"Quit whining—be glad you have a job." They piled on the work, removed the praise, and froze the pay. Their best people readied their resumés, logged on to Monster.com, and waited for the first chance to jump ship. And the managers were stunned when it happened.

Dr. Phil, television's popular psychologist, would say to those managers, "So how did that work for you?" Not so well.

## Bottom Line

The *Love 'Em or Lose 'Em* approach to engaging and retaining talent is not something you turn on and off, syncing to the latest economic blip and the corresponding concern about keeping talent.

It works best when it's authentic and perennial, when you clearly believe in it and demonstrate it daily in your actions with the people you want on your team.

*This page intentionally left blank*



---

## What Keeps You?

*They never asked.*

—A.J.

Why do we ask great questions in exit interviews but neglect asking early enough to make a difference? Instead, we brainstorm. Human resource specialists and senior-level leaders ponder the question. Special task forces and consultants conduct research. They benchmark other organizations in related industries, all in a quest for the answer. Eventually, they create *the* strategy, *the* master plan. What are they trying to do? Engage and hold on to key talent—the employees, knowledge workers, associates, and technical or functional specialists who do the work and keep your company successful.

All that effort, time, and money may be well spent. But we have noticed that the obvious is often overlooked. Have *you* ever asked your employees what keeps them at your company or what might entice them away? If not, why not?

### Ask—So You Don't Have to Guess

When we suggest asking employees why they stay or what would keep them, we hear, “You’ve got to be kidding,” “Isn’t that illegal?” or “What

if they give me an answer I don't want to hear?" We dance around this core subject usually for one of three reasons:

- ✓ Some managers fear putting people on the spot or putting ideas into their heads (as if they never thought about leaving on their own).
- ✓ Some managers are afraid they will be unable to do anything anyway, so why ask? They fear that the question will raise more dust than they can settle and may cause employees to expect answers and solutions that are out of the managers' hands.
- ✓ Some managers say they don't have the time to have these critical one-on-one discussions with their talented people. There is an urgency to produce, leaving little time to listen, let alone ask. If you don't have time for these discussions with the people who contribute to your success, where will you find the time to interview, select, orient, and train their replacements?

## The Dangers of Guessing

What if you don't ask? What if you just keep trying to guess what Tara or Mike or Marilyn really want? You will guess right sometimes. The



### *Alas*

*A senior manager told us of an employee who was leaving his company. On her last day, the senior manager, who was upset at the loss, expressed his disappointment that she was leaving. He wished her well but said, "I wish there were something we could have done to keep you," assuming that her direct supervisor had asked what would make her stay. But the supervisor hadn't asked, and something could have been done. The employee said she would have stayed if she could have been more involved in some of the new task forces, as she felt the participation was vital to her goal of growing her career. It was a request that would have been easy to fill—if only he had known!*

year-end bonus might please them all. Money can inspire loyalty and commitment for the near term. But if the key to retaining Tara is to give her a chance to learn something new, whereas Mike wants to telecommute, how could you ever guess that? Ask—so you don't have to guess.

Asking has positive side effects. The person you ask will feel cared about, valued, and important. Many times that leads to stronger loyalty and commitment to you and the organization. In other words, just asking the question is a retention strategy.

## How to Ask

How and when do you bring up this topic? How can you increase the odds of getting honest input from your employees? There is no single way or time to ask. It could happen during a developmental or career discussion with your employees. (You do hold those, don't you?) Or you might schedule a meeting with your valued employees for the express purpose of finding out what will keep them. One manager sent the following invitation to give his key people some time to think and to prepare for the conversation:

---

### YOU ARE INVITED TO ATTEND

The next step in your continued development.

You make a difference and I value your contributions.

Let's discuss some things that are important to you and me:

*What will keep you here?*

*What might entice you away?*

*What is most energizing about your work?*

*Are we fully utilizing your talents?*

*What is inhibiting your success?*

*What can I do differently to best assist you?*

Please schedule a meeting with me within the next two weeks to discuss this and anything else you'd like to talk about.

---

Regardless of when you start this dialogue, remember to set the context by telling your employees how critical they are to you and your team and how important it is to you that they stay. Then find out what will keep them. Listen carefully to their responses.

## He Dared to Ask

*Charlie set up a meeting with his plant manager, Ken, for Monday morning. After some brief conversation about the weekend activities, Charlie said, “Ken, you are critical to me and to this organization. I’m not sure I’ve told you that directly or often enough. But you are. I can’t imagine losing you. So, I’d like to know what will keep you here. And what might entice you away?”*

*Ken was a bit taken aback—but felt flattered. He thought for a moment and then said, “You know, I aspire to move up in the organization at some point, and I’d love to have some exposure to the senior team. I’d like to see how they operate—and frankly I’d like them to get to know me too.” Charlie responded, “I could take you with me to some senior staff meetings. Would that be a start?” Ken said, “That would be great.”*

*Charlie delivered on Ken’s request one week later.*

## What If—

### **What If You Can’t Give What They Want?**

Most managers don’t ask because they fear one of two responses: a raise or a promotion. They might not be able to deliver on those kinds of requests. Then what?

Next time one of your talented employees asks for something you think you might not be able to give, respond by using these four steps:

1. Restate how much you value them.
2. Tell the truth about the obstacles you face in granting their requests.

3. Show you care enough to look into their requests and to go to bat for them.
4. Ask, “What else?”

Here’s how the discussion between Charlie and Ken could have gone if Ken asked for a raise.

Following Charlie’s question about what will keep him, Ken replied immediately, “A 20 percent raise will do it!” Now, some managers will say things like, “Are you kidding? You’re already at the top of your pay range.” That response shuts down the dialogue and makes a key employee feel less than key. Charlie was ready for this possibility, though. Here is how he responded to Ken’s request for a raise, using the four-step process.

1. “You are worth that and more to me.
2. I’d love to say yes, but I will need to investigate the possibility. I’m honestly not sure what I can do immediately, given some recent budget cuts.
3. But I hear your request. I’ll run this up the flag pole and get back to you by next Friday with some answers and a possible time line for a raise.
4. Meanwhile, Ken, what else matters to you? What else are you hoping for?”

Ken responded with his interest in getting to know the senior team—and Charlie was ready to act on that one instantly.

Research shows clearly that people want more from work than just a paycheck. When you ask the question “What else?” we guarantee there will be at least one thing your talented employee wants that you can give. Remember to listen actively as your employees talk about what will keep them on your team or in your organization.



see UNDERSTAND

### **What If You Ask What They Want and They Say, “I Don’t Know?”**

Remember that this is not an interrogation or a test. It’s okay not to know. Some people will be surprised by your questioning and need

some time to think about it. Let them think, schedule another meeting, and set the stage for an ongoing dialogue about your employees' wants, needs, and career goals. Engaging and keeping your talent is a process, not an event.

### **What If They Don't Trust You Enough to Answer Honestly?**

Discussions like these build trust. Ironically, discussions like these *require* trust. If your employees are afraid to answer your questions for any reason, you may need to build a trusting relationship with them before you can expect honest, heartfelt responses. Try to discover why trust is missing in the relationship, and purposely act in trust-building ways. Seek help from colleagues, human resource professionals, or coaches.

### **What If They Question Your Motivation or Smile and Say, "What Book Did You Last Read?"**

Be honest. If you're not in the habit of having dialogues like these, it will feel strange—for you and perhaps for them. Tell them you *did* read a book or attend a course about retaining talent, and you did it because they matter to you. Tell them you honestly want to hear their answers and you want to partner with them to help them get what they want and need.

We call these crucial conversations with treasured employees “stay interviews.” If you don't take time for stay interviews, you'd better make time for exit interviews.



### **TO DO . . .**

- ✓ Ask each employee what will keep him or her at your company or your department.
- ✓ Make a note in your computer for every employee's answer.
- ✓ Every month, review the cards or notes and ask yourself what you've done for that employee that relates to his or her needs.

## Why Most Say They Stay

We've asked over 17,000 people why they stayed in an organization for "a while" (yes, it's a relative term). Our findings confirm what many others have learned about the most common reasons employees remain at a company (and what will help retain them). The items come up again and again throughout every industry and at every level. The differences between functions, levels, genders, and ages are minor. Here are the top 20 responses listed in order of frequency as of October 2007 (Note: 91 percent of respondents listed at least one of the first two items among the top few reasons they stayed, and 98 percent listed at least one of the first three):

1. Exciting work and challenge
2. Career growth, learning, and development
3. Working with great people
4. Fair pay
5. Supportive management/good boss
6. Being recognized, valued, and respected
7. Benefits
8. Meaningful work and making a difference
9. Pride in the organization, its mission, and its product
10. Great work environment and culture
11. Autonomy, creativity, and sense of control
12. Flexibility: work hours, dress, and so on
13. Location
14. Job security and stability
15. Diverse, changing work assignments
16. Fun on the job
17. Being part of a team
18. Responsibility
19. Loyalty, commitment to the organization or coworkers
20. Inspiring leadership

How do your employees' answers compare with the list? Find out what truly matters to them by asking. Then create customized, innovative approaches to retaining your talent.

By the way, if you'd like to see the complete "What Kept You" survey data, including multiple demographic breakdowns, go to our Web site, [www.keepem.com](http://www.keepem.com). You'll also find late-breaking results from our "Engagement Edge" survey, a tool that measures engagement and retention inside organizations.

## A Word about Pay

Some of you immediately zeroed in on the fact that fair pay lands in fourth place on this list. Here is what we know about pay. If it is seen as non-competitive, unfair, or simply insufficient to sustain life, it will be a large dissatisfier. Your talented people will become vulnerable to talent theft or will begin looking around for something better, especially in a favorable job market. But here's the rub. While it can be a huge dissatisfier if inadequate, it won't keep people who are unhappy in other key areas.

So if your talented people are not being challenged, or grown, or cared about, a big paycheck will not keep them for long. Researchers throughout the years have found this to be true. One named Herzberg found in the 1950s that pay is a "hygiene factor"—make sure it's there or it will be noticed!<sup>1</sup> So, do what you can as a manager to influence your organization's compensation programs. Be sure they are competitive and fair—then focus on *what else* you can do to keep your talent.



---

### TO DO . . .

- ✓ Look back at the list of reasons people stay and ask yourself which of these you can influence.
  - ✓ Check all those that you believe are largely within your control. If our hunch is correct, you will find that you can influence many more than you may have thought.
-

## Beyond “Why Did You Stay?”

15

ASK

What Keeps You?

Most of this chapter focuses on the questions “What keeps you?” and “What might entice you away?” But there are many other questions you might ask. For a decade now, we’ve collected managers’ favorite stay interview questions. Here are the top 13.

### Stay Interview Questions

1. What about your job makes you jump out of bed in the morning?
2. What makes you hit the snooze button?
3. If you were to win the lottery and resign, what would you miss the most about your job?
4. What would be the one thing that, if it changed in your current role, would make you consider moving on?
5. If you had a magic wand, what would be the one thing you would change about this department, team, organization?
6. As your manager, what could I do a little more of or a little less of?
7. If you had to go back to a position in your past and stay for an extended period of time, which one would it be and why?
8. What do you need to learn to work at your best?
9. What makes for a great day?
10. What can we do to make your job more satisfying?
11. What can we do to support your career goals?
12. Do you get enough recognition? How do you like to be recognized?
13. What do you want to learn this year?

Let these ideas serve as catalysts for your own thinking. Create a list of your favorite questions. Ask them of your talented people. And ask again, listen carefully, and customize your retention efforts.

Many of our readers told us they took our stay interview ideas to unique times and places. Here are a few of them:

## **Orientation**

One large medical center decided to have all managers conduct stay interviews immediately after bringing in new employees. Manager instructions included these points: Find out from new employees what motivates them and what will cause them to stay on the job. Begin getting to know them as individuals. Ask questions about what is important to them and why they accepted the position. Show respect for their previous experiences, and encourage them to provide insight and suggestions from their fresh perspectives.

## **Performance Appraisals**

The CEO of a large medical facility decided to supplement the performance appraisal system with a series of stay interview questions. He distributed the questions to all his direct reports and asked that they fill in the questionnaire before the appraisal meeting. One of his key employees said to us, “This was the best discussion I’ve had in 20 years.”

## **Start of Each Quarter**

An engineering organization has invented its own “non-touchy-feely” way to ask. Some engineering managers put the question this way:

“I’m gathering data on what it would take to maintain your longevity over time. Can you provide some data points that are important to you and their projected financial requirements?”

The engineering managers in this company built spreadsheets, listing the requirements of each of their direct reports, computed the overall cost, and submitted them for approval through their own chain of command. Approximately 75 percent of each spreadsheet submitted was approved.

## **Monthly “One-on-Ones”**

Leaders of a large financial organization asked all managers to hold “stay” interviews with all the people on their teams. They recommended 20 minutes and suggested these interviews become part of the regular monthly one-on-ones.

Managers in one organization separate the performance discussion from the development discussion. They find the chat about desires for growth and learning provides the perfect context for stay interview questions.

### Coffee or Lunch

You do take them out to coffee, don't you? One manager takes every employee out to coffee or lunch at least two times a year—for the express purpose of getting to know them and having them know him a little better. He goes to those meetings with a few of his favorite stay interview questions in mind.

*Retention is essentially an individual activity, not a group activity.*

*Our work, our relationships, and our lives succeed or fail one conversation at a time. While no single conversation is guaranteed to transform a company, a relationship or a life, any single conversation can.*

—Susan Scott, author *Fierce Conversations: Achieving Success at Work and in Life, One Conversation at a Time*

### They Asked

Thousands of managers have tried stay interviews, and many have sent us the results. Here is a sampling:

- “A 23-year veteran of our company had his resumé updated and ready to distribute. The ‘ask’ conversation, along with my follow-through on his requests, saved this key employee for my team and the organization.”
- “I learned that an employee was dissatisfied and ready to leave. He was unhappy with the job location. During the stay interview, I was able to negotiate a two-year commitment from him in exchange for my agreement to help him transfer to his preferred destination.”

- “I learned that one employee really valued information, being kept in the loop, and being asked for input. I was very glad to know this and made a commitment to this talented employee to offer those things more readily going forward.”
- “I switched the IT (information technology) component of one employee’s job to another employee, after discovering in ‘ask’ conversations with both that one disliked IT and the other wanted more of an IT role.”
- “I noticed that one quality employee seemed stressed and was not performing well. During the ‘ask’ conversation, she stated she was not interested in a promotion. I moved her primary role to a lower-profile, less-stressful desk job. She was thrilled and is now performing very well.”
- “A seven-year employee felt neglected. The ‘ask’ conversation uncovered her interests, and I rewired her job to give her more of what she wanted. I realized that, quite unintentionally, she was being overlooked and taken for granted. Now that she is doing more of what she loves, my perspective has completely changed, and I now see her skills as a huge asset to our team.”
- “I learned that a merchandiser has a desire for a career change into HR. I’m now helping this talented employee put together a road map to ensure this happens. Included on the road map is job shadowing, connections to HR decision makers, and possibly a future move into the organization.”

What if these managers hadn’t asked?



---

## BOTTOM LINE

Stop guessing what will keep your stars home and happy. Gather your courage and conduct stay interviews with the employees you want to keep. Set aside time to start the dialogue. Don’t guess and don’t assume

they all want the same thing (like pay or promotion). Schedule another meeting if they need to think about it for a while.

This may be the most important strategy in this book. Not only will asking make your talented people feel valued, but their answers will provide the information you need to customize strategies to keep each of them.

It doesn't matter so much where, when, or how you ask—just ASK!

---

this material has been excerpted from

***Love 'Em or Lose 'Em:  
Getting Good People to Stay***

by Beverly Kaye and Sharon Jordan-Evans

Published by Berrett-Koehler Publishers

Copyright © 2008, All Rights Reserved.

For more information, or to purchase the book,  
please visit our website

[www.bkconnection.com](http://www.bkconnection.com)