

An Excerpt From

***Love 'Em or Lose 'Em 5<sup>th</sup> Edition***  
***Getting Good People to Stay***  
***26 Engagement Strategies for Busy Managers***

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

International Bestseller – Over 600,000 Copies Sold

# LOVE 'EM or LOSE 'EM

A series of five yellow five-pointed stars of varying sizes, arranged in a diagonal arc from the top right towards the bottom left, positioned behind the title text.

**GETTING GOOD  
PEOPLE TO STAY**

26 Engagement Strategies for Busy Managers

Fifth Edition – Updated Throughout to Help You Engage and Retain Talent

BEVERLY KAYE AND SHARON JORDAN-EVANS

## **More Praise for *Love 'Em or Lose 'Em***

"You just have to love *Love 'Em or Lose 'Em*. This charming, clever, practical, and user-friendly book is a great desk-side coach for anyone who manages people."

—**Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Chair and Director, Advanced Leadership Initiative, Harvard University**

"Talent matters. Few dispute this truth. But keeping great talent continues to be a challenge for many companies. This marvelous book offers numerous specific tools and hundreds of examples of how to care for people. *Love 'Em or Lose 'Em* is the best treatise on retaining talent available."

—**Dave Ulrich, Professor, Ross School of Business, University of Michigan, and coauthor of *HR from the Outside In: Six Competencies for the Future of Human Resources***

"Fantastic, fun, and practical coaching advice! This stuff works! Great for executives to use with their teams—and buy for their managers! Buy it! Use it! Share it! Keep good people."

—**Marshall Goldsmith, author of *Mojo: How to Get It, How to Keep It, How to Get It Back If You Lose It***

"The manager-employee relationship is the difference between retention and turnover. Good leaders know how to hold on to their team members by striking a balance between leadership and management. The trick is to publicly praise employees for their victories and privately coach them on their opportunities. *Love 'Em or Lose 'Em* helps create the foundation for doing just that."

—**Ken May, former President and CEO, FedEx Kinko's**

"At First Data, the *Love 'Em or Lose 'Em* concepts have become an integral part of our ongoing global retention and engagement strategy and one of our most widely attended manager training programs. The book is full of practical employee engagement strategies, coaching, and advice that can be easily applied by any manager and applicable to employees at all levels. With the additional global perspectives in this newest edition, the relevance of the *Love 'Em or Lose 'Em* messages is now truly boundaryless."

—**Michelle Prince, Vice President, Human Resources, First Data**

"A great read! Having had the opportunity to spend two days in a 'Love 'Em or Lose 'Em' seminar, I am a believer! It makes no difference what business you are in (corporate/government/military), people are the single most important part of an organization, and they are at the core of the success or failure of an organization!"

—**William (Bill) Pickavance, former Vice President for Launch and Recovery Systems and Florida Site Executive, United Space Alliance**

"I'm a big fan of the 'stay interview' and its power; nothing speaks louder than a manager who genuinely cares. That's just one great idea from this latest edition of *Love 'Em or Lose 'Em*, which should be on every manager's bookshelf or tablet or smart phone!"

—**Rebecca Ray, Senior Vice President of Human Capital, The Conference Board**

"I have long believed love is at the deepest center of leading oneself and others, and to find a book that provides specific and practical ways for managers to pay attention to their talent is truly a gift. How one leads is a choice, and in this gem of a read are powerful reminders of how managers can show up and be present to their people, particularly if they want to bring out the best in others, keeping them engaged and inspired to stay and contribute to their fullest potential. This book deserves to be read at least once a year or kept nearby as a guide."

—**Teresa Roche, Vice President and Chief Learning Officer, Agilent Technologies**

"I found the authors' approach to be very practical with many ideas I can put to use immediately. This book helped me adjust my understanding of American management principles."

—**Hiroyuki Hirano, General Manager, Suzuyo & Co., Ltd**

"I've been so impressed with the millennials entering our workforce around the world. This book is full of great tips for getting their best discretionary effort—love them and you will be a beloved manager."

—**Tina Sung, Vice President, Government Transformation and Agency Partnerships, Partnership for Public Service**

"Ever since the first edition, *Love 'Em or Lose 'Em* has been a great source of inspiration to me. I warmly recommend this pragmatic book to anyone who manages others—and especially to those who still believe that talent retention is all about money, which it is really not! This book offers a powerful and engaging way to achieve active and sustainable talent retention. And it's exciting to see that it works all across the globe!"

—**Michael Zollinger, Head HR Generalists, Swiss Re**

"Marriott's global engagement strategy includes asking associates worldwide about their work environment and then providing resources to guide them through the key drivers of engagement and retention in the workplace. As a global resource in Marriott's engagement strategy, Kaye and Jordan-Evans once again provide a powerful, globally inclusive book that is both impactful and relevant . . . practical, associate-centric ideas that work!"

—**Steve Bauman, Vice President, Global Learning Deployment, Marriott International**

"If you need a practical and effective way to retain and engage your talent, look no further than *Love 'Em or Lose 'Em*: the A to Z for managers and leaders who care about their employees enough to take action that delivers results. Having witnessed, firsthand, the power of the 'stay interview' and the impact of simply asking employees what will keep them in the organization, I know the rewards contained within *Love 'Em or Lose 'Em* are easily attained. Finding talent can be hard in today's competitive world. Keeping that talent can be deceptively easy."

—**Andrew Buckingham, Head of Global Learning and Development, Genzyme UK**

"Our global strategy is based on recruiting and developing the best talent. Retaining and engaging that talent on a global basis is crucial to every manager's business goals. *Love 'Em or Lose 'Em* has become their playbook. Our managers believe in the concept and their behaviors are consistent—it has become part of our lexicon. And most importantly, employees are responding!"

—**J. Craig Mundy, Corporate Vice President, Enterprise Learning & Talent Management, Ingersoll Rand**

"*Love 'Em or Lose 'Em* has significantly contributed to our business in Latin America by setting ground rules and providing practical tools and techniques to our leaders who constantly transform our organization. The wonderful principles in this book have raised our sensitivity on how to interpret our associates' needs, and once put in practice, they have enabled powerful results. It is a very dynamic and updated consultation book I have valued throughout my career at Pepsico."

—**Carolina Lazarte, Human Resources Director, Latin America North, D&I LAB, Pepsico Latin America Beverages**

**LOVE 'EM**  
or **LOSE 'EM**

*Other Berrett-Koehler books by:*

*Beverly Kaye and Sharon Jordan-Evans*

**[Love It, Don't Leave It: 26 Ways to Get What You Want at Work](#)**

*Beverly Kaye and Julie Winkle Giulioni*

**[Help Them Grow or Watch Them Go](#)**

# LOVE 'EM or LOSE 'EM

GETTING GOOD  
PEOPLE TO STAY

Fifth Edition



BEVERLY KAYE AND SHARON JORDAN-EVANS



Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.  
San Francisco  
*a BK Business book*

## Love 'Em or Lose 'Em

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*To my beloved parents. Abe and Mollie Kaye truly lived a seven-decade love story. They inspired me personally and professionally throughout my life and are truly missed!*

—Bev

*To my kids and their kids. You continue to teach me what “lovin’ ‘em” is all about. I do love you!*

—Sharon

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# LOVE 'EM OR LOSE 'EM

## A PROVEN APPROACH TO LEADING

### **It's a power button ...**

For over a decade we've watched leaders at all levels and in all parts of the globe 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.

### **... not a toggle switch**

In contrast, we've seen leaders lose talent regularly and unnecessarily. In some cases these not-so-successful leaders 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." In every case, they failed to use the love 'em approach.

So what is the love 'em approach in a nutshell? It's a mindset, a philosophy of dealing with people and a way of effectively managing them. Some people told us the word *love* would not be accepted in the business world.

We tried, and we failed to find an alternative—another word that stood for so much. Love 'em leaders genuinely care about their people. They appreciate, nurture, grow, recognize, challenge, understand, and respect them. And they believe this *is* the job of being a leader.

In contrast, *non-love 'em* leaders are more apt to ignore their employees, tell them what to do and when to do it, expect obedience, fail to respect them, thank them, challenge them, care about them. Ultimately, they believe the love 'em approach is *not* part of their job.

## What's the payoff with the love 'em approach?

You might wonder why you'd bother to care more, listen more, develop more. What's in it for you? For the organization? Whether you manage one or hundreds of people, our research and others' definitely show that you can influence those things that keep people engaged, on your team, and producing at their peak. You have more power and influence in the employee engagement and retention equation than anyone else! And engaged, highly productive employees help you, your team, and your organization excel.

## Four important words that drive the message

Readers of our book (this is our fifth 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**

*It's easy. Treat employees fairly and respectfully. Listen to them. Help them get what they want and need. 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.*

*Consider your solid citizens, not just your high-potentials. Stars are people at any level who bring value to the organization.*

A Proven Approach  
to Leading

**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

Global research supports this approach. We use exit interview information, focus groups, and the Internet. We (and dozens of helpers) continually scan newspapers, journals, and books. We deliver the love 'em message to managers worldwide, and we learn *directly from them and from their employees*—what works and what doesn't.

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 built on that original research, meeting with more than half a million managers from large and small companies around the world. We've listened, consulted, provided training, and learned from them. We continually update our “What Kept You” database (more than 18,000 respondents). All of this helps us refine and expand our engagement and retention strategies.

## What's in this book for you?

**Love 'Em is universal.**

*The suggestions throughout the book should work as well in India as they do in Idaho, with appropriate customization for cultural, language, or individual differences.*

**Love 'Em is timeless.**

*The love 'em approach works as well in 2020 (we plan to be around!) as in 1999 (first edition).*

**Love 'Em is timely.**

*For the fifth edition, we've updated the stories, statistics, and workplace views so that they are relevant for you as a manager now.*

Updated content for you:

- Practical to-do lists
- Multiple business examples about what worked to engage and retain talent around the globe
- Real-life “alas” stories about losing solid performers

New for you:

- More stats, stories, and cultural references from global contributors
- A *ponderable* at the beginning of every chapter, to introduce key themes and to spark your thinking
- A “Calling All Managers of Managers” section in the back matter, to highlight what leaders can do to strengthen the engagement/retention skills of the managers who report to them

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

- Helpful “go to” icons linking to more ideas about what interests you most
- A retention/engagement index (REI) to guide your learning (moved to the beginning of the book so you won't miss it!)

## 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.

- ★ Create and implement your own, unique version of the love 'em approach.
- ★ Use this as your guide—as you would use a GPS.
- ★ 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 the key message of just one chapter. Start by reading Ask and Buck—then go anywhere you want.

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A Proven Approach  
to Leading

## Bottom line: make the love 'em approach your daily practice

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.

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. 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.

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# HOW TO READ THIS BOOK

How do *you* like to read a book? Start at the beginning and read to the end? Start at the end, and then circle back to the beginning? Skim, scan, and then dive in when a topic really grabs your interest? Any of these approaches will work fine with *Love 'Em or Lose 'Em*.

In any case, we'd recommend you read Ask and Buck early, as these two chapters support all the others. They introduce you to the love 'em approach, teach you how to hold stay interviews, and get you thinking about the crucial role you play in the engagement/retention challenge.

We also suggest you take just a few moments to check out your beliefs about managing, engaging, and retaining others by completing a manager self-test called The Retention/Engagement Index (REI). The results will direct you to chapters you might want to read soon.

## What's Your REI?

Research shows that your perspectives and beliefs about managing others and the resulting actions you take can predict the likelihood that talented people will not only continue to work for you but will bring their discretionary effort to work each and every day. They'll help you and your organization do what you're trying to do!

This survey allows you to evaluate your beliefs and mindsets about engaging and retaining the people you can least afford to lose.

Use this scale to rate yourself (1–4) on the extent to which you believe or act in the ways listed here.

1 = Always/Definitely Yes

2 = Often/Frequently

3 = Sometimes/Occasionally

4 = Never/Definitely No

To what extent do you ...		Score (1-4)
A.	assume that employees should and will tell you what they want from their work?	
B.	believe that retention is a job for HR or compensation professionals?	
C.	regard employees' careers as their business, not yours?	
D.	take for granted that employees know you respect them, and therefore you don't need to show it?	
E.	think employees should tell you if they are not feeling challenged in their work?	
F.	expect employees to leave their personal lives at the door and feel only their business lives are your concern?	
G.	avoid discussing career options with employees, especially when promotions are not readily available?	
H.	hire primarily based on functional or technical skills?	
I.	give information to employees on a need-to-know basis only?	
J.	think you are here to get the job done, that employees don't have to like you?	
K.	believe you are not at work to have fun?	
L.	fear that if you introduce employees to others in your network, they might be enticed away?	
M.	feel that you don't have time to mentor?	
N.	have only a vague idea of what it costs to lose talented people?	
O.	tend to hoard good people instead of helping them seek other opportunities?	
P.	agree that we don't have the luxury of loving what we do?	
Q.	fail to question policies for the sake of your employees?	
R.	deem good work to be its own reward?	
S.	think that if you don't control the who, how, where, and when, the work won't be done right?	
T.	avoid giving negative or corrective feedback to your employees?	

To what extent do you ...		Score (1–4)
U.	consider yourself too busy to be a good listener?	
V.	view employees' values as their own business and therefore seldom discuss them?	
W.	believe that employee wellness initiatives are frills?	
X.	think that generational differences are irrelevant in the workplace?	
Y.	believe employees should usually wait for you to tell them what to do?	
Z.	maintain that employee engagement and retention are not critical leadership skills and you don't need to spend time improving them?	

So, how did you do? Here is how to make sense of the test, gauge your overall strength as a love 'em manager, and decide which chapters to read first.

1. **Highlight beliefs or behaviors for which you scored a 1 or 2.**
2. **Turn to the corresponding A-Z chapter.**
3. **Pick up some hints and tips about how to increase your effectiveness in those areas.**

Now, note how you're doing overall by adding up your total score and using these interpretation guidelines:

**High 80–104:** *Good job. You have the love 'em mindset and are probably taking many of the actions needed to engage and retain your talent.*

**Medium 53–79:** *Beware. You're at risk for losing your best people. Some may have already left you. Take stock and take action before you lose more talent.*

**Low 26–52:** *Look out! You're at high risk for losing talent—you might even have a "swinging door." Your beliefs and corresponding actions (or inactions) may be standing in the way of having engaged people who want to stick around and work for you over time. You need to take immediate, focused action.*

This book exists to help you increase your score—the one you just gave yourself in this self-test—and the one your employees give you every day.

When your REI goes up, so do your talented employees' job satisfaction levels, motivation, and loyalty.

Time to dive in!



ONE

# Ask

## WHAT KEEPS YOU?

*Ponder this: Do you know what they really want?*

When do you think most leaders ask questions like “What can I do to keep you?”

You’re right: it’s in the exit interview. At that point it’s typically too late. The talented employee already has one foot out the door!

Have you ever wondered why we ask great questions in exit interviews but neglect to ask early enough to make a difference? Love ‘em leaders do ask. They ask early and often, they listen carefully to the answers, and they link arms with their talent to help them get more of what they want, right where they are.

## Conduct Stay Interviews

A crucial strategy for engaging and retaining talent is having conversations with every person you hope will stay on your team. We coined the term *stay interview* to describe those chats. If you hold stay interviews, you'll have less regrettable turnover and fewer exit interviews!

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?" Managers 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?)

## Guessing Is Risky

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

3

ASK  
What Keeps You?



*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!*

Asking has positive side effects. The person you ask will feel cared about, valued, and important. Many times asking leads to stronger loyalty and commitment to you and the organization. In other words, just asking the question is an effective engagement and 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 using 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 request for a raise or a promotion. They might not be able to deliver on those kinds of requests. Then what?

Next time a talented employee 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 stand up for them.
4. Ask, "What else?"

Here's how the discussion between Charlie and Ken could have gone if Ken had 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 could have 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 might have responded with his interest in getting to know the senior team—and Charlie was ready to act on that one immediately.



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.

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

Remember that this is not an interrogation—it’s a conversation, and hopefully one in an ongoing series of conversations. 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.

Be honest. If you’re not in the habit of having dialogues like these, it could feel strange—for you and perhaps for them. Tell them you *did* read a book or attend a course about engaging 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. You might even choose to admit that the love ‘em approach sometimes feels awkward, even uncomfortable (like a new pair of shoes). That “name it to claim it,” forthright action can be just what’s needed to build trust with the talent you hope will stay and play on your team.

## To Do

- ★ Ask each employee what will keep him or her at your company or your department.
  - ★ Make a note in your computer or smartphone for every employee’s answer.
  - ★ Every month, review the 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 18,000 people why they stayed in an organization for “a while” (yes, it’s a relative term). Our findings confirm what many others (e.g., Blessing White, Gallup, Towers Watson, Sirota) have learned about the most common reasons employees remain at a company (and what will help retain them). The items recur throughout every industry and at every level. The differences between functions, levels, genders, geographic regions, and

ages are minor. Here are the top 13 responses listed in order of frequency of response as of November 2013.

1. Exciting, challenging, or meaningful work
2. Supportive management/good boss
3. Being recognized, valued, and respected
4. Career growth, learning, and development
5. Flexible work environment
6. Fair pay
7. Job location
8. Job security and stability
9. Pride in the organization, its mission or product
10. Working with great coworkers or clients
11. Fun, enjoyable work environment
12. Good benefits
13. Loyalty and commitment to coworkers or boss

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 updated findings and multiple demographic breakdowns, go to our website, [www.keepem.com](http://www.keepem.com) and click on the "What Kept You" link.

## A Word about Pay

Some of you immediately noticed the fact that fair pay lands in seventh place on this list. Here is what we know about pay. If employees see compensation as noncompetitive, unfair, or simply insufficient to sustain life, their dissatisfaction levels will go up. 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, even fair pay won't keep people who are unhappy in other key areas.

So if your talented people do not feel challenged, or grown, or cared about, a big paycheck will not keep them for long. Researchers over time have found this to be true. Frederic 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.

## A Word About Culture

How do cultural differences play out in this crucial, foundational engagement strategy—the stay interview? We asked colleagues, book reviewers, and clients around the globe and here is what we heard.

- The majority said, "It will work here just as well as in the United States."
- One colleague said, "Barriers to 'asking' in Asia are magnified because the culture demands respect for elders and leaders. Even if asked, most employees do not feel free to share issues that may reflect negatively on their boss."
- A Chinese proverb reads, "A man of honor will feel ashamed by a single question to which he does not know the answer."
- A consultant reported, "In more hierarchical cultures like that of Japan and Korea, asking questions is not traditionally encouraged. If the boss were to say, 'What do you think?' the subordinate would say, 'Yes.'"

If you manage others in a culture where asking is not accepted or recommended, you'll need to find a work-around. Some managers have used anonymous surveys or tasked someone else with the "asking." However you

seek to learn about what your talented employees really want, it is crucial that you do gain that information.

## 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?”

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 one change in your current role would make you consider leaving this job?
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?

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9. What makes for a great day?

ASK

What Keeps You?

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.

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## Bottom Line

Stop guessing what will keep your stars happy and on your team. 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.

To simply *ask* 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!





TWO

# Buck

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## IT STOPS HERE

*Ponder this: Who's really in charge of engaging  
and retaining your best people?*

This sign was on President Truman's White House office desk, and Truman popularized the now-familiar phrase. Every culture has its way of saying do not pass the buck. In Chinese it goes like this, 责无旁贷, and it translates to "No shirking of responsibility."



When we ask supervisors and managers how to keep good people, many immediately respond, "With money." Research suggests that a majority of managers truly believe it's largely about the money. These managers place the responsibility for keeping key people squarely in the hands of senior

management. They blame organizational policies or pay scales for the loss of talent. Or they point the finger at the competition or the location. It's always someone else's fault.

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BUCK  
It Stops Here

Well, the truth is, *you matter most*. If you are a manager at any level, a front-line supervisor, or a project leader, you actually have more power than anyone else to keep your best employees. Why? Because the factors that drive employee satisfaction, engagement, and commitment are largely within your control. And the factors that satisfy and engage employees are the ones that keep them on your team. Those factors haven't changed much over the past 25 years. Many researchers who have studied retention agree on what engages or satisfies people and therefore influences them to stay: meaningful and challenging work, a chance to learn and grow, fair and competitive compensation, great coworkers, recognition, respect, and a good boss. Don't you want those things?



*There's nothing I can do about our brain drain. The competition is offering more money and better perks. We don't stand a chance.*

—Manager, retail pharmacy

You *do* stand a chance. Your relationship with employees is key to their satisfaction and decisions to stay or leave. Consider this:

- Research by the Gallup Organization found that at least 75 percent of the reasons for voluntary turnover can be influenced by managers.<sup>2</sup>
- Watson Wyatt reported that the relationship with the supervisor/manager was the top-ranked reason employers gave for why employees leave an organization, cited by 31 percent of respondents.<sup>3</sup>
- A Conference Board consolidation of 12 major studies on employee engagement found that all studies agreed that the relationship with one's manager was the strongest drive of all.<sup>4</sup>

- A Center for Creative Leadership/Booz Allen Hamilton study found that among those who strongly agreed that they work for a manager who cares about their well-being, 94 percent said they intend to stay with their current employer. Of those who strongly disagreed that their manager cared about their well-being, just 43 percent planned to stick around.<sup>5</sup>
- Research by the authors (over 18,000 respondents) found that most retention factors are within managers' influence.

The evidence is clear. The buck stops with the manager. That reality is taking hold in organizations across the globe. Managers who think engagement and retention are somebody else's job need to think again.

*In our exit interviews, for those who are honest, the major reason people leave is conflict with their manager. That needs to be dealt with, and those relationships need to be strengthened. Most managers do not see creating a retention culture as their responsibility. They do need to own this responsibility and be held accountable to create and maintain this culture.*

—CEO, nonprofit firm in Singapore

## It's Up to You

Be a love 'em manager. A good boss who cares about keeping good employees will help them find what they want from their workplace. We're not saying you carry this responsibility alone. Senior management and your organization's policies, systems, and culture have an impact on your ability to keep talented people. You may have human resource professionals who can help support your efforts. Even your employees have a role. (See our book *Love It, Don't Leave It: 26 Ways to Get What You Want at Work*.)

Yet, because of what research tells us about *why* people leave their jobs and organizations, you still have the greatest power (and responsibility) for keeping your talented employees.

*“Bosses matter to everyone they oversee, but they matter most to those just beneath them in the pecking order: the people they guide at close range, who constantly tangle with the boss’s virtues, foibles, and quirks. Whether you are the CEO of a Fortune 500 company or the head chef at a restaurant, your success depends on staying in tune with the people you interact with most frequently and intensely.”*

*Linda Hudson, CEO of BAE Systems, got this message after becoming the first female president of General Dynamics. After her first day on the job, a dozen women in her office imitated how she tied her scarf. Hudson realized, “It really was now about me and the context of setting the tone for the organization. That was a lesson I have never forgotten—that as a leader, people are looking at you in a way that you could not have imagined in other roles.” Hudson added that such scrutiny and the consequent responsibility is “something that I think about virtually every day.”<sup>6</sup>*

## To Do

- ★ Start with a conversation—a “stay interview.” Learn about your talented employees’ goals and what they love (or don’t love) about their work. Don’t stop with one chat. Talk (and listen!) daily, weekly, monthly. Develop a true relationship with every single person you hope to keep on your team.
- ★ Hold “Alas Clinics”—opportunities to talk with others about talented people who have left your team lately. Why did they go? What role (if any) did you play in their leaving? How can you prevent more unwanted turnover?
- ★ Think about who might be “loose in the saddle” (about ready to leave you); talk with them *soon*, and collaborate with them to get more of what they want and need from you, from the team, from their jobs.
- ★ Go big picture. Ask yourself, “What kind of work environment do I want to create?” Then figure out what you need to do in order to make that vision come alive. Then—go do it!



GO TO

Numbers

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## So They Go

So what? Can't you just replace them? You might be able to replace your key people, but at what cost? Most retention experts agree that replacing key talent will cost you two times their annual salaries. And replacing "platinum" workers (those with specialized skills) will run four to five times their annual salary.

Even if you can afford to replace them, will you be able to find skilled replacements?

*You think 1999 was a bad time to be hiring? That year was only a footprint for what we'll see in the future. We'll be facing the worst labor shortage in our lifetime within the next five years.*

—Jeff Taylor, founder, Monster

The demographers and workforce pundits disagree. Will we be short millions of workers in the coming decades or have plenty to go around? The mitigating factors to talent shortages (globalization/offshoring, technology advances, delayed retirement, immigration) are so many and so complex that some feel a crystal ball would do as good a job as the experts when it comes to projecting the answer.

What we do know is this: the labor market is changing, and in many segments there aren't enough *skilled* workers to fill the jobs open today, let alone support a growing economy. Notice what's happening in your own backyard. Do you have plenty of people, with exactly the right skills, to step in when you lose a key contributor? Or is there a current or pending talent shortage in your industry, geography, or job function?

## On the Line

Most of you are in charge of certain assets. You are held accountable for protecting those assets and for growing them. Today, your most critical assets

are *people*, not property. Outstanding people give you and your organization a competitive advantage. Regardless of the job market, you no doubt want to hold on to your best.

Are you accountable for selecting and keeping talented people? We have heard of a CEO who charged \$30,000 to a manager's operating budget because he needlessly lost a talented person. The buck really did stop there!

We're not suggesting that managers be punished when their people are promoted or move on to learn something new. You will inevitably lose some talented employees occasionally, especially as they pursue their career dreams. But we do recommend that managers be held accountable for being *good managers* and for creating a retention culture where people feel motivated, cared about, and rewarded.

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## Bottom Line

The retention buck really does stop with you. We are not ignoring the impact of senior management, organization policies, and individual employees' attitudes and actions. But we know you have great power to influence your talented employees' decisions about staying. Conduct stay interviews with every employee you hope to engage and keep on your team. Find out what they want and help them get it! Show that you care about them and their needs. Remember them. Notice them. Listen to them. Thank them. Love them or lose them.





THREE

# Careers

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## SUPPORT GROWTH

*Ponder this: Are you helping build their future,  
or are you in the way?*

Our research and that of many others around the globe consistently find that having career opportunities is one of the primary reasons people stay and *produce*.

*In Asia, you must provide career opportunities to grow or your talent will walk away. People will leave corporations they do not feel aligned with. Compensation is not always the driving force. Development opportunities are.*

—Member of Asia-Pacific Talent and Diversity Council, Conference Board

Yet, far too many managers steer clear of career conversations. They worry about opening a Pandora's box. If these leaders fail to have ongoing chats with their talented people, they stand a far greater chance of losing them—either physically or psychologically.

Which of the following barriers keep *you* from opening up this topic?

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- No one, let alone me, knows what the future holds.
- It is just not the right time.
- I'm not prepared.
- I wouldn't know what to say.
- We've just reorganized. It will be a while before anyone knows anything about career possibilities.
- I would never open something I couldn't close.
- I don't know enough about what's outside my department to offer advice.
- I don't want anyone blaming me if they don't get what they want.
- Why should I help? Nobody ever helped me.

CAREERS  
Support Growth

What your employees really want are two-way conversations with you to talk about their abilities, choices, and ideas. They want you to listen. They may not expect you to have the answers, but they expect and really want to have the dialogue.

Talking to your employees about their careers does take time and may seem like a tough assignment. You may want to start with employees who have expressed concern about their careers or with employees who show signs of becoming disengaged from their work. Prioritize and take one step at a time. Your efforts will pay off in productivity and retention.

What if you thought about career conversations as one of the perks of your job?

*When I look at the wonderful people who work with me in my department, and the many, many talents they possess, I can do nothing short of helping them become better and better. I am privileged to be in a position to encourage their growth...and when they grow, I feel blessed that I somehow played a small part.*

—Director, Surgical Services for a major health care firm

Five steps you can take routinely will build your talent pipeline and support your employees' search for a good career fit.<sup>7</sup>

**Step 1: Know their talents.**

**Step 2: Offer your perspective.**

**Step 3: Discuss trends.**

**Step 4: Discover multiple options.**

**Step 5: Codesign an action plan.**

## Step 1: Know Their Talents

The primary objective of career conversations is to gather information that will tell you more about your employees. It is not always easy for them to talk about their skills, values, and interests. Some will think of it as bragging, or they'll fear appearing disloyal if they discuss career goals beyond the current job. (Many managers in Asia report this to be a challenge—how to hold an honest career discussion, given cultural norms and values that support humility and loyalty.)

The ultimate goal is to ask questions about your employees' unique skills, interests, and values. The toughest part is to listen while they answer, as a diligent researcher would. Probe, inquire, and discover more.



## To Do

Try asking these questions, and then probe each answer more deeply:

- ★ What makes you unique in this organization?
- ★ Tell me about one of your accomplishments that makes you particularly proud.
- ★ What are your most important work-related values? Which values are met and not met at work?
- ★ If you had to choose among working with people, data, things, or ideas, which mixture would be most satisfying? Why?

Get curious. Ask good probing questions (avoiding ones that give you only yes or no answers), and you'll gain a deeper understanding of what really matters to your employees. Be patient with people who've never had a boss ask these kinds of questions and might be uncomfortable responding initially.

## Step 2: Offer Your Perspective

Help your employees reflect on their own reputations, on the feedback they've gotten from others, and on the areas they need to develop. And give them honest feedback regularly.

Think back to the last performance review you gave. It probably was based on past performance and connected to that employee's raise. Development feedback is different. It is future oriented and focuses on areas where the employee can improve.

Employees want specific feedback with examples of their performance and the effect on their future goals. Have them seek out colleagues at all levels who will give them a more realistic self-portrait to help them develop faster and smarter. And remember—development feedback includes good news as well as corrective input!



## To Do

Include these questions in your conversation:

- ★ What is the most helpful feedback you have received? How did it change your behavior? How did you apply that to your work?
- ★ In which areas do you wish I would give you more feedback? How can I help you feel more accomplished and successful at work?
- ★ Which of your team skills are most valued by your colleagues? How do you know? Based on their feedback, which skills do you hope to improve?

Think about all the awkward conversations you've had with employees whose career goals are simply out of sync with reality given their strengths and weaknesses. Our hunch is that *the absence of honest feedback kept them out of sync*. Employees continually tell us that they want straight talk. Want to keep them? Level with them.

## Step 3: Discuss Trends

Help your employees consider their options by encouraging them to look beyond your department, to detect shifts and changes that might impact their careers. Think about your company's growth areas and limitations as well as emerging skills the industry will require. Share this information with your employees. Helping your employees see what's down the road is a sign of respect, even if it isn't all good news.



*Lenore was exactly what our organization needed. She was young and wanted to use her technical as well as managerial skills, wanted to develop business, and in fact had already brought some in. She decided to look for a new job when she heard that there were some changes coming in our organization, and she realized she didn't know what would happen to her. She said that her first manager was great at coaching and keeping her in the loop, but that she had recently been moved to work for another manager who had shown no interest in her career. So with the threat of impending change, and a manager who didn't seem to care, she took an offer at a small start-up company. She was clear that it was not the salary and benefits that drew her. It was the hope of a better manager, one who would keep her "in the loop" and care about her career. The exit interview lasted 90 minutes. I asked her if she would reconsider. She declined.*

—Human resources manager

Clearly, a good career conversation with her new manager could have influenced Lenore's decision to look for other opportunities.

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CAREERS  
Support Growth

## To Do

Ask yourself if your employees know what the trends are in these areas:

- ★ The major economic, political, technological and social changes taking place that will have the greatest effect on your organization
- ★ The opportunities and problems ahead
- ★ The areas changing the most in your industry
- ★ How their profession will be different in the next two to five years
- ★ What really counts for success in your organization
- ★ Which websites, trade publications, journals, and organization newsletters provide information on industry and business trends
- ★ What new opportunities are available (e.g., international assignments, new businesses opening within the organization)

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You don't have to take this all on your own shoulders. For example, you could have each person on your team research one of these areas and bring it to the next staff meeting for discussion. But you do have to ensure that your employees know what's going on in your organization. By suggesting others who can provide additional perspectives on these and other issues, you open channels for your employees and give them a closer look at the key business needs of the organization. Have you done this lately?



Goals  
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## Step 4: Discover Multiple Options

Help your employees consider multiple career goals while they grow within their current positions. When employees analyze their potential development goals in terms of business needs and the strategic intent of the organization, everyone wins.

Caution! The employee is still primarily responsible for his or her career. Our suggestions do not mean *telling* the person what to do. Instead, offer choices for employees to analyze and consider.

Offering choices is important, but sometimes difficult. For generations, the only acceptable career direction has been up. (Actually, that is still often true in many cultures and companies.) But there are at least five other ways employees can move their careers along. You can help your employees consider options like these:

- Move laterally (a change in job, but not necessarily a change in the level of responsibility)
- Explore (requires answering questions like “What else can I do?”)
- Enrich (seeds the current job with more chances to learn and grow)
- Realign (reconciles the demands of work with other priorities, or readies them for another area)
- Relocate (yes, leaving the organization if the work simply cannot match a person’s skills, interests, or values)

You can give your employees permission to discover the possibilities based on their interests, what they value, and what they can contribute to the organization.

The more options your employee identifies, the better. Exits and disengagements occur when an employee’s only goal is thwarted.

## To Do

Help your employees answer these challenging questions:

- ★ Do you have enough information about the organization's current activities and plans to select several career goals?
  - ★ How can you get the information you need?
  - ★ Have you considered all available directions in selecting your career options?
  - ★ Do your options adequately cover a variety of scenarios?
  - ★ Should you select more career options?
  - ★ Are your goals compatible with organizational goals and plans?
- 

Once you have helped your employees look at options so that not all of their plans reflect the vertical mindset, they will feel as if they have more leverage to manage their own careers.

## Step 5: Codesign an Action Plan

Codesigning action steps will increase commitment to a career plan. Consider all of the steps the employee would have to take to realize the best career goals, and then develop contingency plans for each. Then, if one is blocked, you already will have laid out other paths together.

Help your employees identify the obstacles to each path. Then brainstorm ways around the obstacles. During the process, help them to remember and maximize the assets they already have.

*Leaders will have to learn what the successful conductors of the symphony orchestra have long known: The key to greatness is to look for people's potential and spend time developing it.<sup>8</sup>*

## To Do

Try asking any or all of these questions. The answers form the action plan.

- ★ What skills would you need to gain to help you achieve your goals?
  - ★ What abilities do you already have that would help you toward any of your goals?
  - ★ Who is in your network already who might open a door for you?
  - ★ What training could I make available to fill the gaps you see?
  - ★ What kinds of on-the-job development could help you move closer to several of your options?
- 

Remember, your job is to help your employees identify the skills, development opportunities, and knowledge areas required for each alternative. Your job is not to build their plans but to support them.

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## Bottom Line

Employees have one thing in common: they want to know that someone cares about their careers. And that someone should be you if you want engaged, productive people on your team. Help them find opportunities to sculpt their careers according to their own unique wants and needs. When you do this, you'll find your best employees will want to stay a while and build their careers in *your* organization.



An Excerpt From

***Love 'Em or Lose 'Em 5<sup>th</sup> Edition***

***Getting Good People to Stay***

*26 Engagement Strategies for Busy Managers*

by Beverly Kaye and Sharon Jordan-Evans

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