

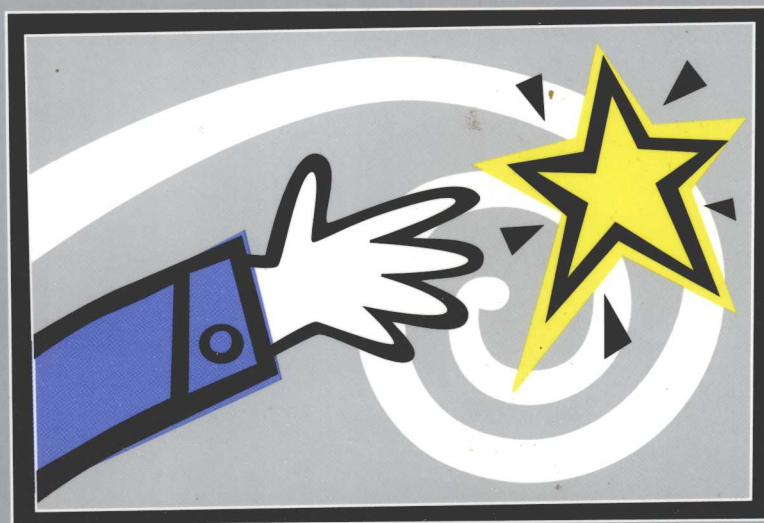
Wall Street Journal Bestseller

LOVE 'EM

OR

LOSE 'EM

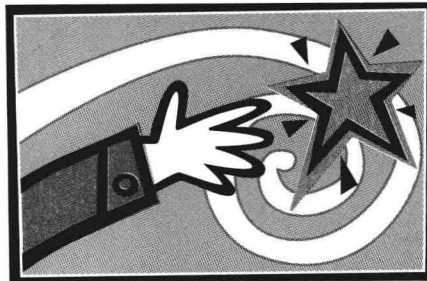
GETTING GOOD PEOPLE TO STAY



BEVERLY KAYE AND SHARON JORDAN-EVANS

LOVE 'EM OR LOSE 'EM

GETTING GOOD PEOPLE TO STAY



BEVERLY KAYE AND SHARON JORDAN-EVANS



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Preface

We believe that managers and supervisors have the most critical role to play in winning the race for talent. We also believe that many managers and supervisors are abdicating this role because they feel that the key retention strategies are out of their hands. Many think it is largely about money, perks and benefits—areas over which they have no control. We know that is not the case.

So we decided to write a 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.

And so we began our research. We spent about two years collecting focus group information in companies of all sizes and with employees of all levels. We conducted the same research in diverse groups of friends and professional colleagues. The key question we asked led us to the first chapter in this book. We asked: “What kept you?” We compared and contrasted the data with a key factor list until we were convinced that most of the keys to retaining talented employees are in the control of the manager. We also worked the Internet. We collected information from newspapers, journals, books and stories from folks we met along the way. All of the data was then divided into our 26 alphabetical categories. The names of those categories (chapter titles) shifted until we found ones that held all of the data.

We also used a continuing series of focus groups—H.R. professionals, managers and supervisors, pals, relatives, clients, spouses and airplane seatmates—to test all of our ideas. We debated. We revised. We

influenced. We agreed. And the final set of 26 chapters/strategies that appear in this book surfaced.

To make the book as practical and useful as possible, we include these elements in each chapter:

1. **To Do Lists.** The what and why of the race to retain talent are mostly known; we never get enough of the how-tos.
2. **Alas Stories.** We've included our own collection of "the-fish-that-got-away" stories. These "alas" tales are all true and draw on our combined 40 years of experience in a great variety of organizations nationally and internationally.
3. **One Employee's Exit.** A.J., our ubiquitous ex-employee (and yes, we mean for you not to know A.J.'s gender, age or job title) appears in each chapter to let you know how that particular strategy (or lack of it) influenced one individual's decision to leave.
4. **Company Examples.** We've included examples from retention work that we have done with our own clients. We also pulled stories and examples from the literature (newspapers, journals, popular magazines).
5. **Go To Icons.** Most chapters include at least one recommendation of another chapter that amplifies or augments a key point. This enables you to skip around to find the ideas that are most relevant and important to you.

The Manager's Role

Much of the advice and content points in the 26 chapters will not be new to you. But their use as retention strategies might be. We are passionate about the fact that you *do* make a difference, and we try not to mince words.

We Want You To ...

- ✓ Use this as your guidebook.
- ✓ Return to it again and again.
- ✓ Dog-ear the page corners.

- ✓ Use a highlighter on what matters most.
- ✓ Put a bookmark in certain chapters and leave the book on your *own* manager's desk!
- ✓ Personally commit to implementing just one chapter!

Our bottom line is that *Love 'Em or Lose 'Em* will make your life easier. It will help you in a real-time, day-to-day way. We wrote it for you, because you make such an impact on the lives of your workforce—an awesome responsibility that deserves all the help and support it can get.

Acknowledgments

Our husbands (both engineers) are great. They care about our careers, our decisions, our “un-decisions” and us. This book would not have been possible without their patience, support and ideas. Thank you, Mike and Barry.

We are both lucky to be moms. Our kids' support, excitement and cheerleading gave us a never-ending stream of encouragement. Lindsey, thanks for your patience on all those nights when I said, “Just give me ten more minutes—I'll be right there.” Travis, Shelby, Matt and Kellie, thanks for bringing such joy into my life. Your successful, happy lives remind me of what matters most.

This book came alive because of the many wonderful friends, siblings (one of us has a twin who was a great and faithful reader and critic), and professional colleagues who thought with us and fought with us as we outlined the main concepts of this book.

Special thanks to Nancy Breuer, who helped give us a common voice, and to Tara Mello, who was indispensable and was the first to say, “You've got a book here.” We were fortunate to have Diana Koch, who provided the critical supervisor perspective, and Marilyn Greist and Cindy Miller, who brought a never-ending stream of creativity and support. Tracy Mitchell, our illustrator, captured through art what was in our minds. Her illustrations brought our words to life. Matt Evans, our Web master, lent us his skills and know-how so we can stay in touch with all our readers.

No book comes to life without a support team. We would not be where we are without our eagle eye, Lynne Kleeger, or our artistic eye, Liliana Gallelli. Finally, we need to acknowledge the great ideas that came to us from Milo Sindell, Katherine Reynolds, Mary Ammerman, Pamela Janke and Stan Bass.

More kudos to Steve Piersanti and his talented and dedicated band of professionals at Berrett-Koehler, who told it like it was and is, who *know* their stuff and *do* their stuff terrifically well. Steve can tell you how much more work you have to do—when you thought you were finished—and actually make you excited about doing it. Truly, you have all become partners in this effort. Thanks.

A tremendous thanks in advance to those whose work just begins when the writing is finished: our crackerjack team of marketing professionals and our extended family, the talented and steadfast Career Systems International team. Grateful thanks to Kay, Nanci, Yolanda, Marilyn, Jill, Lenore, Judy, Alan, Rosalind, Janis, Tenora, Mike, Helen, Art, Ray, Bev B. and Marc.

Finally, Bev thanks Sharon for never ever leaving well enough alone (groan) and for hanging on to the “we can make this better” philosophy until . . . it really was.

Sharon thanks Bev for being ever true to her commitments and for partnering as only a genuine professional and friend can.

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 strike fear in your heart or make 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. We mean the people who are necessary to the success of your unit and your peace of mind. They are the good, talented employees that you simply cannot afford to lose. They are your stars.

Like A.J. A critical and solid performer. Making a competitive salary. 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 shortcut 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 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 around 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 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.

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?"








Well, don't knock your head against a wall. Scan the 26 chapters in this book. Pick out a few that capture you because you have a hunch they relate directly to you or to one of your people.

And if you have no idea what would really keep your talent, then start with the first chapter, **Ask: What Keeps You?**









And if you're not convinced that this problem is in your area of responsibility, then read Chapter Two, **Buck: It Stops Here.**

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Chapter 1



What Keeps You?

They never asked.

—A.J.

The brainstorming continues. Human resource specialists and senior level leaders spend countless hours pondering 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? Hold on to key talent—the employees, knowledge workers, associates, technical and/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. Has anyone *asked* your employees what keeps them at your company? Has anyone asked what might lure key talent away? Have you? If not, why not? Why do we ask great questions in exit interviews, but neglect asking early enough to make a difference?

Ask—So You Don't Have to Guess

When we suggest asking employees why they stay or what would keep them, we hear reactions such as: “You’ve got to be kidding.” “Isn’t that illegal?” “What if they give me an answer I don’t want to hear?” We

dance around this core subject for fear of putting someone on the spot or putting ideas into someone's head (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 manager's hands. And there is another reason: Time. Many managers say that their time is totally consumed by the business at hand. There is an urgency to succeed, leaving little time to listen, let alone ask. If you fall into this category, you are missing a secret of how to succeed: through asking.

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 Christmas 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.



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 higher-level meetings, as she felt they were 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 that leads to stronger loyalty and commitment to you and the organization. In other words, just asking the question is a retention strategy.

3

ASK

What Keeps You?

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?) In that context, you could simply ask: "What would make you want to stay here? What might lure you away?" Be understanding and listen actively to the answers you receive. Does the person want a chance to grow and learn, or will a promotion and big title keep him with your company? Is it something else?

After you listen, you need to respond. What you say is critical. Responses like "That's unrealistic" immediately halt the dialogue and your employee will be unlikely to open up again. And he or she may go so far as to start a job search.



see UNDERSTAND

Another Way to Ask

Maybe you are uncomfortable with the direct question, What will keep you here? And perhaps your employees are hesitant to answer. If so, ask in a more comfortable way. Try this:

TO DO ...



- ✓ Think back to a time when you stayed with one organization for a fairly long time. "Long" is a relative term and may mean twenty years or three years, depending on who you are and the type of work you do. You can think about this company or a previous employer.

What kept you there? Jot down two or three major reasons why you stayed as long as you did.

This question might be easier for some employees to answer because it describes previous times in their lives and avoids current needs and wants. What kept them before is most likely to keep them on your team today.

They Dared to Ask

The Story. A high-tech company in Silicon Valley decided to ask. It asked in a different way, for a specific group of talented people, but for the same reason. It wanted to target its retention efforts, to give people what really mattered to them and thereby hang on to these employees. Here is how it worked.

The organization recognized that a group of employees was at great risk for leaving the company. The employees, who were being trained to implement a new business integration software system, would soon become hot commodities to many other companies, due to their new training and experience. Calls from headhunters came in even during the early stages of their training. The company realized quickly that it could lose key assets if it wasn't careful; in other companies eight out of ten newly trained specialists left during or immediately following implementation. Most reportedly left because they were offered big bucks by the competition or consulting firms.

The Method. Rather than guess at retention remedies and approaches, the company began by asking employees exactly what would keep them and what would lure them away. Three external consultants conducted confidential interviews with each of the individuals in the "at-risk" group. The responses were candid and provided exactly the information the company was seeking. People knew what they wanted, and it was not always money.