

The Manager as Developer

A Critical Coaching Competency

By Beverly Kaye



When talent believes the organization places a high priority on their development, they feel valued – productivity and commitment increase along with customer and employee retention.

Today's business world is characterized by globalization, increasing competition, an ever-accelerating pace of change, an overabundance of information, a never-ending technology revolution, a growing number of mergers and acquisitions, layoffs, and a declining talent pool. In this chaotic world, a business can only *survive* if it can attract the “best and the brightest” to its workforce. It can only *thrive* if it continues to grow and develop, while retaining, the talents of its workforce.

When studies are conducted to find out what employees value in a job, career (opportunities and development) always appears among the top three, typically before the expected answers of pay and benefits.

Our 20 years of research in career development has shown that managers can create a development environment and in doing so, make a huge impact in retaining and engaging their talent. What employees really want is a relationship with their managers, whereby they can have open, honest, two-way conversations about their abilities, interests, and options. They want managers to listen to their perspectives, offer their points of view, and provide encouragement.

A leader's ability to contribute to an organization's mission, and, ultimately, the bottom line is determined by his or her ability to attract, retain and develop today's knowledge workers

In keeping with our philosophy of simplicity counts “big time” with today's busy managers, we have identified five skills, fundamental to the process of coaching talent in managing and developing their careers:

- ✓ **LISTEN:** To get peak performance from your employees, to help them grow and develop in a meaningful way, to maximize their potential and to get them to want to stay, you have to really get to know them as individuals. Create an open climate to dialogue with employees to help them identify their career values, work interests, marketable skills and career concerns – assist them to understand and articulate what they want from their careers.
- ✓ **LEVEL:** Provide employees with on-going, open, honest and candid feedback regarding performance, reputation and career goals – suggest specific actions they can take to improve in these areas.
- ✓ **LOOK AHEAD:** Provide information about the organization, the profession and the industry – help employees understand the strategies of the organization, as well as the cultural and political



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One of the highest critical success factors to an organization's survival – let alone continuing success – in the global economy is its ability to develop and engage the talent it needs

realities. Looking ahead means that you and your employees have to look beyond departmental borders and comfort zones, to seek information that may impact development needs or career aspirations.

- ✓ **LEVERAGE:** Help talent identify multiple and realistic options for their career growth and development within the enterprise and work with them to formalize career development plans.
- ✓ **LINK:** Help talent develop detailed learning assignments and action plans to move their career aspirations from vision to action.

While each of these skills has its own unique focus and direction, they build on one another to form a comprehensive model for career development conversations and coaching between managers and their employees. Managers can build a work environment where teams can thrive, remain competitive, and develop specialized knowledge or skills. Managers can construct the pipeline for the flow of talent in an organization. If they build the pipeline, the employees will traverse it. When employees feel their manager cares about developing their talent, they also believe the organization cares. Their commitment, engagement and discretionary effort increase – along with it, productivity and profitability.

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Beverly Kaye, author of classic career development book *Up is NOT the only Way* (revised, Davies-Black, 1997, co-author of bestseller *Love 'Em or Lose 'Em: Getting Good People to Stay* (Berrett-Koehler, 1999 & 2002) and *Love It, Don't Leave It: 26 Ways to Get What You Want at Work* (Berrett-Koehler, 2003) is internationally recognized as one of the most invested, knowledgeable and practical professionals in the area of Talent Management.

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