

Manager as Coach

You Can Close the Satisfaction Gap

By Beverly Kaye and Sharon Jordan-Evans



Here is yet another mandate from your senior leaders. In addition to producing more with less, you're now supposed to be a coach to your talented, hard-to-replace employees. You're expected to develop, engage and retain them. Easier said than done.

You've been armed with lists of mission critical competencies and accompanying developmental remedies. Your stars have been *360-degree-feedbacked* to death. You know what to focus on with them now. Or do you?

While you're busy trying to close competency gaps, some of your best people are thinking about jumping ship, throwing in the towel, opening a yogurt stand. They know there must be greener grass --- out there --- somewhere.

What is wrong?

Is It a Competency Gap or a Satisfaction Gap?

When we ask your talented employees (in focus groups, surveys, or coaching sessions), "How thrilled are you with your work? What's great about it? What's missing?" The answers include, "I love my work except for ----"

- ✓ the pressure – to produce, conform, innovate."
- ✓ the jerk I work with (or report to)."
- ✓ the lack of time for family, health, fun."
- ✓ the boredom, repetition, lack of challenge."

The answers are as diverse as the people. But there's a commonality too. In every case there is either something wrong or something missing. If you hope to engage and retain your key people, it's not enough to search for and close *competency gaps*. You'll need to dive in, diagnose and work to close the *satisfaction gaps* as well.

Define Satisfaction

One employee wants autonomy and another craves recognition. Others want a promotion or work/life balance. What thrills us at work is as unique to each of us as our fingerprints. Spend time with your employees to clearly define what rings their chimes. Ask them to rate those desired work parameters on a 1-5 importance scale. Drill down to the detail and push for a lengthy list. These questions might help you:

- ✓ What about your job makes you jump out of bed in the morning?
- ✓ If you were to win the lottery and resign, what would you miss the most?



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- ✓ If you could go back to a job or organization in your past and stay for an extended period of time, which one would it be and why?
 - ✓ Which of your job tasks would you like to do more of?

The answers to these questions will help your employees identify those aspects of work that matter most to them. And their answers will also help you match their needs to the opportunities in your workplace.

Rate the Work

Once the satisfiers are delineated, ask your employee to rate the current work and workplace against each of those parameters. To what degree does this work meet the desired parameter? How does it fall short?

Analyze the Gaps

If your talented employee wants a new challenge and has been stuck in a redundant, repetitive job for months, the gap is apparent. It's not always that obvious though. You'll need to engage in *real* conversation to help your employees get very clear about the gaps.

Close the Gaps

Once you've identified the satisfaction gaps with your employees, you're armed and dangerous. Team with them to create dozens of possible solutions (sometimes work-arounds) to their dilemmas. Test-drive a few. See what works and what doesn't. Then try another.

Note: The above steps depend on a trusting relationship between you and your employees. If you have that --- great. If you don't --- build it -- now!

It sounds so simple and of course it's not. We humans are complex and successful managing is, as we know, part art and part science. Sometimes your most talented people must move on to be satisfied and successful. Often, though, they don't. They can get exactly what they want, right where they are. And you can help them do that.

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Beverly Kaye and Sharon Jordan-Evans are authors of the best-selling retention book, Love 'Em or Lose 'Em: Getting Good People to Stay (Berrett-Koehler, 1999 & 2002). Their new book, Love It, Don't Leave It: 26 Ways to Get What You Want at Work (Berrett-Koehler, 2003) provides the employee side of job satisfaction, retention and engagement. Bev is founder and CEO of Career Systems International, Scranton, PA and a leading authority on career issues in the workplace. She is a highly regarded speaker on talent management issues and author of the classic Up Is Not the Only Way (Davies Black). Sharon is a prominent speaker, author and certified executive coach. She is president of The Jordan-Evans Group, a company dedicated to increasing organizational effectiveness.

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