

Beverly Kaye

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## Coaching for Engagement

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The following excerpt was taken from [Profiles in Coaching: The 2004 Handbook of Best Practices in Leadership Coaching](#), edited by Howard Morgan, Phil Harkins, and Marshall Goldsmith.

**Beverly Kaye** is a nationally recognized expert in organizational, management, and career development, and founder and president of Career Systems International. She is author of *Up Is Not the Only Way* and co-author of *Designing Career Development Systems*, as well as a popular resource for national media such as *The New York Times*, *Time*, *Fortune*, and a variety of professional magazines. *Love 'Em or Lose 'Em*, co-authored with Sharon Jordan-Evans, is a best seller that taught managers practical strategies (A to Z) key to engaging and retaining employees. Their new book, *Love It, Don't Leave It* (Berrett-Koehler, September 2003) provides employees with similar A to Z strategies to find satisfaction right where they are. She is reachable through Career Systems International by phone at (800) 577-6916 or on the internet at [www.careersystemsintl.com](http://www.careersystemsintl.com).

*"Behind every successful person, there is one elementary truth. Somewhere, some way, someone cared about their growth and development."*

—Donald Miller

Whether the economy is good or bad, organizations need the capability to retain their people and keep them engaged. Research into the retention of star employees shows that people don't leave organizations for money; they leave because no one is concerned about their learning and growth. Coaching is an excellent means to demonstrate that kind of concern in a purposeful way while meeting pressing business challenges. In whatever form it is delivered – internal, external, or through the manager – coaching can be applied to develop and retain current employees while growing future leaders. It is also a highly effective tool for sustaining teaching and learning.

We believe coaching falls into two main areas, both centered around talent. We coach managers on developing their people; and we coach individual employees on how to take charge of their careers within the framework of the organization. These two forms of coaching are especially valued by those organizations which are becoming more thoughtful, systemic and innovative with their talent development and retention strategies. Both forms align with our belief that a good career is one that engages your passion in an organization which supports your learning and growth.

Managers have a huge impact in retaining and engaging people. Employees want a relationship with their managers. They feel engaged by their work and cared for by their organizations when they are able to have open, honest, two-way conversations with managers about their abilities, interests and options. They need managers who listen to their perspectives, offer their own points of view and provide encouragement, guidance and development opportunities.

We have identified five skills fundamental to managers who want to succeed as career coaches. Such manager-coaches need to:

**Listen**

In order to engage the employee, grow and develop them in a meaningful way, and maximize their potential, a manager must create an open dialogue with employees. The purpose of this conversation is to help employees identify their core values, work interests, marketable skills and career concerns.

**Level**

Managers must provide employees with honest, candid feedback about performance. They also need to suggest specific actions for improvement.

**Look Ahead**

A good manager, like a good mentor, helps the employee look beyond the current situation to identify future opportunities in line with their aspirations. This means the manager is thinking about the development needs of the employee in those terms, and also helping the employee understand the organization's strategy, culture and politics.

**Leverage**

Managers help people identify options for development and career growth within the organization.

**Link**

Managers help people develop detailed learning assignments and formal plans to move their career aspirations from vision to action.

When people feel that their managers care about their development, they also believe that the organization cares. It's the feeling of engagement, hand-in-hand with directed development, that is so valuable to organizations in getting the most out of people, while retaining and growing future leaders.

Despite the critical role managers can play in development, individual employees are ultimately responsible for their own career satisfaction. For that reason, we also coach employees on how to take charge of their professional destinies in line with the possibilities that exist in their organizations.

Employees, at any level, need to be pro-active in managing their careers and development opportunities. We coach people to assess their own skills and behaviors, discover their aspirations and link those goals with a development plan aligned to the organization's overall objectives. Some of that coaching is done on-line, some in workshops, and some through a process of collaborative development in which employees team up to support each other's career action plans. The purpose is to enable employees to go after their own job satisfaction and take responsibility for their lives.

This kind of coaching is effective in many different forms. Organizations can choose among various delivery strategies to meet their specific objectives. Some focus on training managers to become coaches. Others gain a better return on investment by developing internal coaches or hiring outside experts.

Regardless of approach, our philosophy is that organizations should recognize coaching as a tool that can be used with a broader base of employees than most people usually consider. Most coaches and most organizations typically focus only on high potentials. Doing so, they miss engaging, developing and retaining those who are critical in supporting the stars.

There's a tremendous amount of buried treasure in organizations. Many employees (not on the hi-po list) feel ignored in the organization's headlong rush to focus on its stars. We think that managers and organizations should look wider and deeper in identifying their key employees. The definition of a star, in our view, is anyone who the manager would miss if they should happen to

leave the organization. Thinking in those terms, organizations should reconsider which employees provide a valuable contribution through top-performance. If retaining those people is critical to your success, then you'd better find some way of engaging them in learning and development to experience deeper career satisfaction.

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This excerpt was taken from *Profiles in Coaching: The 2004 Handbook of Best Practices in Leadership Coaching* (pages 82-84), edited by Phil Harkins, Marshall Goldsmith and Howard Morgan. This almanac of trends and best practices captures the state of the coaching industry today as well as the emerging issues shaping tomorrow. It features interviews with thought leaders and practitioners; essays that define best practice coaching in the areas of leadership, strategy, individual transitions and organizational change; the latest thinking on how to select and partner with a coach for maximum impact; detailed analysis of trends shaping the future of coaching; as well as benchmark data of organizations using external coaching today.

For information on Beverly Kaye and Career Systems International, call (800) 577-6916, or visit the website at [www.CareerSystemsIntl.com](http://www.CareerSystemsIntl.com). If you'd like to order *Profiles in Coaching* or have questions on the handbook, call (781) 402-5555 or e-mail [Info@Linkage-Inc.com](mailto:Info@Linkage-Inc.com).