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How to help your manager help you

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The management literature is full of advice for those who want to deliver effective performance reviews.

So with all the good intentions, why do so many surveys find that employees are so miserable?

The disconnect is real, says consultant Beverly Kaye, co-author with Sharon Jordan-Evans of the book *Love It, Don't Leave It: 26 Ways to Get What You Want at Work* (Berrett-Koehler, 2003).

If you want to get something out of a review, Kaye says, don't expect your manager to guess what it is; she will usually guess wrong. Instead, enter the session with very clear ideas about what you want and how to ask for it — whether it's a job shift, a training programme or a request for a change in your boss's behaviour.

Managers, for their part, need to coach employees to understand that declaring "I'm feeling dissatisfied" won't get much reaction, Kaye says, whereas offering a set of proposals will get an immediate response.

"The biggest mistake is coming with demands," says Kaye. "Instead, go in and say, 'Here's my problem, and here are three ideas I have for fixing it.' This way, you are giving the boss space." — Angelia Herrin is executive director of new business development at Harvard Business School Publishing and a journalism instructor at Harvard Extension School

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