

Manager as Coach



Together — 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? 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?
- 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

You'll need to engage in real conversation to help your employees get very clear about the gaps.

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!

What can "They" Do?

Let's face it – Managers are busy! When approached about owning retention, engagement and workplace satisfaction, they nearly all say, "What about *them*? Don't employees have a role as well?" The answer is a resounding YES! Workplace satisfaction should be a two-way street. Yes, it demands effort from the manager and from the leaders of the organization. But it also demands initiative and effort from employees themselves. It's everyone's responsibility to create a dynamic and rewarding work environment.

To get greater satisfaction at work,

employees can take action in four key areas:

- **FACE UP** – You're in charge. Each of us is ultimately responsible for our own workplace satisfaction. Analyze your current level of satisfaction – take stock, take ownership, take responsibility and be accountable. What have you done lately to improve your satisfaction... with peers, with the environment, with relationships? What equity have you already built in your current job? How can you get the best return on that investment?
- **FOCUS IN** – What you want could be right where you are. Get clear about what you want or what might be missing – then go after it. Look inside before jumping to the outside. Examine what you need to be happy and fulfilled, explore what you can do, and then go for it.
- **FORWARD MARCH** – Don't Wait. Instead of settling for work that doesn't work for you, you can take steps to improve it. Organize your thoughts, make them objective – do all the thinking you want, but if you don't come up with actionable plans, you can't march forward.
- **FOLLOW THROUGH** – There are ways to take charge. Look at the future and create your own roadmap to success. Consider working with a team of peers to continue your action plans, working together to identify new ways to find meaning and satisfaction on the job. Commit to a process to continue to find more satisfaction right where you are!

It sounds so simple and of course it's not. We humans are complex and

successful managing, as we know, is 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 together... it can happen!

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 WSJ best-seller, "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. Her company provides innovative programs internationally for both managers and employees, to increase satisfaction, reduce turnover, build loyalty, and as a result, improve productivity and profitability. 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 organization effectiveness.

For reprint permission or more information about Beverly Kaye and Sharon Jordan-Evans, contact Career Systems International at (800) 577-6916 or HQ@csibka.com. 🙌