



Post-Recession Recruiting And Retention

An Interview with **Dr. Beverly Kaye**, Founder and CEO, Career Systems International

Every once in a while you are presented with an opportunity that requires little other than a simple and resounding **YES** on your part. This was the case last week when I had the opportunity to interview [Dr. Beverly Kaye](#), author of [Love 'Em or Lose 'Em](#). (If you recall, *Love 'Em or Lose 'Em* was the subject of [last month's book review](#) in Hire View Magazine.) Through that review, I was connected with Dr. Kaye, and discovered that she would be in Dallas for a presentation. After a few emails to her team, I was not only permitted to interview her, but she invited me to an intimate preview of her new HR training product [CareerPower 3.0](#). It was fascinating.

Not only is Dr. Kaye an individual with over 30 years of experience in the HR training industry, but she is also a woman with her finger on the future of training and employee retention. I asked Dr. Kaye, during our lunch together, what direction she saw employers and employees moving in as we come out of this recession.

Tabitha: I guess my first question for you, Dr. Kaye, is where you believe this market is going. Are employers going to start hiring again? Do you think we are moving deeper into recovery?

Dr. Kaye: (Laughing) My thinking is too influenced by what I want it to be . . . and I don't know that I can separate it. But, yes, I think we are. I also think we will see hiring again; in fact, some of the research that I've read is that we are going to rehire at least 25% of the people that we have let go.

Tabitha: So let me ask you this, what about the employees that remain? You call them the "Kept On Workforce"**. These employees who have absorbed additional production expectations from lay-offs, and have lost some work-life balance – do you think they will look to move when the recovery ramps up?

Dr. Kaye: Yes, people are getting ready to move on. We [the employers] need to ask people, "What do you want and can you find it right here?" Because the moving on doesn't help anybody. It doesn't help corporate America, because they will have to retrain, retrain, retrain – and it doesn't help the person that is exiting. In other words [when you stay with a company] you build up all kinds of equity. You build up not only your financial equity, but you build up your influence equity. (For example, "I know how to get this done because I know the assistant to...") You also build a kind of skill equity. (To Tabitha) In other words, you, Tabitha, could look at a marketing job in another organization, and even though it said "marketing" [in the job description] and you have been in marketing for all these years, the very way that they do it causes you to use your skills differently. So, I think the issue is: Is the "greener pasture" actually AstroTurf, or is it real?

Employers need to ask their managers, "Have you told your people recently that you appreciate them? That you care about them?"

I write a Year-End note to every single solitary person in my organization. Something personal. I say to many people, "I want you to stay. I want you with this organization." We know that we would be less without them.

Tabitha: When people start to fill out their teams again, what kind of person do you think that they will be looking for in this new economy?

Dr. Kaye: I think that people are asking, [everyone is saying this] "Can this person deal with ambiguity?" Employers want to know, "If I give you a job, and I don't quite define it all, how comfortable are you dealing with the ambiguous parts?" This is a part of the self-powered careerist. (A new term coined by Dr. Kaye in her latest work.) The self-powered careerist will say, "Oh – wow, I can make this job match me." Whereas some people will say, "I need more definition, more definition, more definition." The truth is that some leaders are not going to be able to give the definition that some employees crave. They want them to discover and create it.

If I am not innovating, I am dead. So [as an employer] maybe one of the new characteristics I am looking for is "employee as innovator." And perhaps one of the interview questions I will ask is: "How innovative did you get back when you were out of work?" Did you decide to learn, learn, learn everything you could through this period no matter what?

Tabitha: Do people find creative ways to deal with their situations?

Dr Kaye: I think that some do and some don't. The people that I have talked to – the out of work people – respond differently. Some get in the "woe is me" stage and stay there, and some are re-inventing themselves. Some have gone back to school, some are going to every networking meeting that they can, and some are taking on small projects – from anywhere. When this is over, perhaps they will be able to thread the small projects together and give themselves a new way to showcase themselves.

Tabitha: What do you think employees will be looking for in an employer? If, say, they have been out of a job for six months, and someone offers them a job, will they jump on it? Will they care if an employer has a good reputation or not?



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Dr. Kaye: My advice to those people is: Look before you leap. There are so many ways to find out about a company nowadays, on the net. But you know, there are going to be those people [self-powered careerists] who get a job, and then make it what they need it to be. The self-powered careerist will come into a company with more of a game plan.

Generalizations are so hard to make. Some workers will stay bitter, they might come back with a chip on their shoulder, or they will be eager, or over-eager. But they are not going to buy in to the "vision, mission, and values" easily, and maybe that's a good thing. They are going to look at your vision statement and mission statement and say, "How does this play out – really?" And they are going to listen to what's "corpspeak" and what's real. What are the words that I know you are just using because you use them with everybody and they sound good?

Those on the recruiting end have done a lot of targeted interviewing and probe for examples of the competencies we are looking for. I think they [potential employees] are going to target interview *employers*. So, if in an interview, you [the employer] say, "Yes, we develop people." They are going to say, "Well, tell me how you would go about doing. . ." and you are going to have to talk about cases and talk about stories within the organization in detail.

One of the most valuable take-away's from my meeting with Dr. Kaye was her eye on the future. She is connected, to be sure, worldwide. But I had an opportunity to watch her interact with some of her clients firsthand. She has her finger on the pulse of what is going on in employment through her variety of connections in a wide-range of industries in a myriad of locations. That being said, I think the best gift we can all give ourselves at the moment, employers and employees alike is to pay attention. I think that as we search, view, and work to understand the ever-changing landscape of the of the employment world, that we will need to constantly re-tool our skills and our organizations to stay relevant. I appreciate the opportunity to have met someone like Dr. Kaye who has done so for over 30 years.