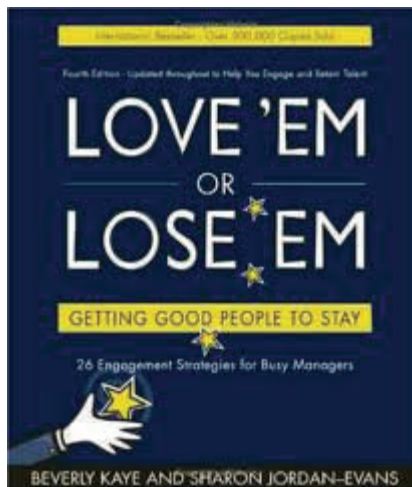


Love 'Em or Lose 'Em

Employers have it easy right now. We are all working in a candidate-heavy market, so when a position opens up, we can select from a bevy of qualified candidates, picking only the cream of the crop for our teams. Terrific.

But what will happen as the recovery begins to speed up? How will employers keep the star players they were able to acquire in a down economy? What will keep our top-performers on board when companies begin to hire again? Will our core employees be wooed away with money? Time off? Reputation? (Gasp) Flex Time? Will they steal away our best and brightest with something we could have offered them? It's something to think about.

This week I bought a copy of [Love 'Em or Lose 'Em: Getting Good People to Stay](#) by Beverly Kaye and Sharon Jordan-Evans. Their employee retention research was collected from 17,000 workers who have job longevity. The book is well-structured, easy to read, and created to help busy managers make a significant difference in lowering attrition rates. They give examples of both good and bad experiences when it comes to retention, lay out the ABC's of 26 engagement strategies, and give you exercises to implement what you have read. (My personal favorite is the chapter for the letter J; **Jerk: Don't Be One**, complete with a handy-dandy jerk assessment.)



Talent is Always In Demand

First, Kaye and Evans stress that managers need to cultivate a talent-focused mindset. Talent is a valuable asset in any economy, and this one is no different. Talent is the difference between a company that functions and a company that thrives. This quote from the book says it all:

"Disney paid \$7+ billion for Pixar today (January 25, 2006). We already own the rights to several Pixar characters. Basically we paid \$7 billion for the 400 brilliant, creative people who work there. You see, we all (our companies and us) have access to the same technology. We all have access to money. The only differentiator is the people. We paid \$7 billion for the people, and what we hope they'll be able to create for and with us in the future." ~Disney Executive

Keep the Main Things the Main Things

Most people are interested in the same things. Respect, opportunity for growth, job satisfaction, connection, time with family, etc. We want the same things. They seem intrinsic to human needs in the workplace...why then do so many corporations get it wrong?

In my last job, I had the opportunity to visit Southwest Airlines during their Halloween celebration. It was amazing. Teams worked together to create the best decorations and costumes, and everyone was having fun. Aside from the festivities, let me tell you three things I noticed about their employees:

1. They were happy to be working for Southwest, and all were grateful for the opportunity they had been given at the company.
2. They identified with and worked toward company ideals and goals. They were tapped into the larger vision of Southwest Airlines and it showed.

3. All of the employees that I met, from security, to the dock workers, to the executive team exhibited a level of self-respect, respect for others, and respect for their work.

Tell Me What You Want, What You Really, Really Want. . .

The first step to valuing your employees is finding out what makes them feel valued. This book suggests that managers simply ASK their A-players, "What keeps you here?" Revolutionary. What? No high-level executives sitting in a conference room speculating about what they think will make their peasant population leap with joy?

Nope. What would happen if we sat down with our top performers and asked them what makes them stay...or what would make them leave? It could be surprising.

"Our work, our relationships, and our lives succeed or fail one conversation at a time. While no single conversation is guaranteed to transform a company, a relationship or a life, any single conversation can".

~ Susan Scott, author, Fierce Conversations: Achieving Success at Work and in Life, One Conversation at a Time

The information in Love 'Em or Lose 'Em is deceptively simple. There are no magic predictive graphs inserted or abstract studies done by human resource professors in a psyche lab, but there are **practical** ideas and real-life examples that can help you ramp up your reputation for being a choice employer. The time to act on retention is now. Your top performers will be the foundation of your team as hiring speeds up in the coming year. Don't lose your leaders...Value them. Engage them. Motivate them...Keep 'em.