

DRIVING INNOVATION

WHAT CAREER CONVERSATIONS DO EMPLOYEES WANT?

HOW REFRAMING CAREER-DEVELOPMENT TALKS CAN HELP YOU RETAIN YOUR BEST EMPLOYEES AND HELP THEM SUCCEED.

BY: FRANCINE HARDAWAY

Year after year, surveys find enterprise employees dissatisfied with how they are being supported in their careers. In fact, most of them not only do not feel supported, they often feel downright thwarted. You can see it on websites like Glassdoor, where a company I once worked for is reviewed as

...not great for relationship-building/team-building. Not everyone is always promoted from within. Managers are more concerned with how they look when promoting someone, as opposed to promoting the people who can do the job. But in the end... it's the stress of the job that'll do you in, combined with the ridiculous rating system. It's too easy to get a "Meets Expectations" regardless of whether you are working your tail off and achieving, or slacking because you've been there too long and are burned out, and need a BETTER challenge.

According to Julie Winkle Giulioni, the co-author with Beverly Kaye of *Help Them Grow or Watch Them Go*, the statistics around employee engagement are scary. Too many employees are burnt out and disengaged. Since engagement drives the willingness to put out discretionary effort, a high percentage of the work population is just going through the motions like the "human resource" quoted above.

"Once things improve a bit more, we're going to see a mass

exodus from these big companies," says Giulioni. Even now, while the job market is still tumultuous for most people, the best and brightest people are always sought after, and in danger of being stolen out of their jobs for more promising paths to career development.

Kaye and Giulioni, who both have deep expertise in corporate career management, decided to write their book because they have also seen what's necessary to reverse this trend, and how easy it would be for managers to keep their best and brightest. The central theme of this books is how managers and leaders can reframe career development and make it a consistent feature in the workplace, not just quarterly or annually.

The best leaders already practice these simple skills, which are common sense, and have nothing to do with the forms and checklists used my most managers to handle the quarterly or semi-annual reviews they find so taxing. Those supposedly "helpful" systems actually hurt the process, because they're so onerous for managers that by the time they're finished giving all their reviews, they themselves are burned out and only too willing to put their team members in the deep freeze between formal opportunities.

As a result, both employees and managers ask themselves why career development never takes place; after all, it is just a matter of simple mutual respect. "Talk is the most precious and result-driven commodity managers have to share."

Kaye and Giulioni have reframed the feedback loop into a series of short conversations between employer and employee, about five minutes long. They can start as a question you ask an individual employee that causes her to pause and reflect, or a piece of immediate feedback that encourages further thought.

These short pieces of feedback are called "hindsight conversations," and should eventually involve not only an employee and a manager, but also anyone else who can check the perceptions of either. Managers should be encouraging employees to give feedback to each other.

Career development involves being able to harness the future, so the authors also recommend "Foresight Forums." Unlike most career conversations, which are one-on-one, these are done in a group, to spark new insights and awareness among team members. They're also an efficient way to offer suggestions and share your perceptions as a manager.

Tools like hindsight conversations and foresight forums help you grow employees into new roles within the business, and arm them with information they'll need to get promotions. Together, hindsight and foresight should help employees gain insight. The question you ask an employee when he or she tells you something but asks you for feedback should encourage that employee to pause and reflect, coming to his own insight.

"You're going to have a career conversation with an employee anyway," says Giulioni. "Why not take the extra minute to cause a pause and focus it toward career growth?"

[Image: Flickr user [Jay Verspeelt](#)]



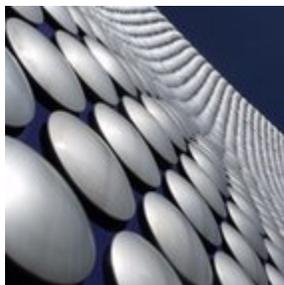
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