

Manager Involvement in Career Development

■ By Beverly Kaye & Beverly Crowell

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It's time to heed the headlines and take notice of career development. Now, more than ever, employees want opportunities to learn, grow and develop. Get stingy with those opportunities and you may see employees leave – physically or psychologically. A manager's ability to contribute to an organization's mission and, ultimately, the bottom line is determined by his or her ability to attract, retain and develop today's knowledge workers. The golden nugget of retention is not pay; it's a satisfying career. But what's at the heart of satisfying careers? It may surprise the busy manager.

In the newest research white paper by Career Systems International and the Sharon Jordan-Evans Group, nearly 2,000 people were surveyed and asked the question, "What matters most at work?" The results revealed that employees want much of what managers have the ability to provide.

Opportunities to:

- **Learn**
- **Grow**
- **Develop**

Employees Want:

- *Exciting and challenging work*
- *A supportive manager*
- *To be recognized, valued & respected*
- *Career growth*
- *Learning and development*
- *Flexible work environment*

They want exciting and challenging work; a supportive manager; to be recognized, valued and respected; career growth, learning and development; and a flexible work environment. While pay is important, those surveyed ranked it behind the top five factors.

So, what does the data say to the busy manager? Simply put, you matter. In an age where organizations are telling employees, "You own your career," it may be easy to forget the role of the manager in this process. True, employees ultimately own their career and the energy they dedicate to it, but managers are not off the hook. They are the support and often the connection to the resources and opportunities that can help move employees from the knowing to doing.

High engagement starts with career development. It can help managers balance individual career needs with organizational requirements. Career development involves assessing gaps, seeking feedback to improve capabilities, mining for career opportunities, and developing talent.

LEADERSHIP/MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT

Managers can create a development environment and in doing so, make a huge impact in retaining and engaging their talent. What employees really want is a relationship with their managers, whereby they can have open, honest, two-way conversations about their career options.

Employees who “own their careers” are looking to managers to listen for their skills, interests and values. They want managers who level with them about what’s working and what’s not – what is getting in the way of their career success and how they are perceived in the organization. Managers can elevate the conversations about careers by helping employees look ahead to what’s changing in the world of work and what it may mean for their career plans. At the same time, employees are seeking guidance on what career option is the most relevant, enticing, attainable, and can be leveraged in the organization. Finally, employees need managers who will link them to the people, resources and information to help them activate their development goals as they navigate their career.

Managers can build such a work environment where

teams can thrive, remain competitive, and develop specialized knowledge or skills. Managers can construct the pipeline for the flow of talent in an organization. If they build the pipeline, the employees will traverse it. When employees feel their manager cares about developing their talent, they also believe the organization cares. Their commitment, engagement and discretionary effort increase – along with it, productivity and profitability. ■

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