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Free to Flow and Fly

*When you are free from fear,
you are free to flow in the faith
and positive affirmation that
"Something good is just about
ready to happen, and I can help
make it happen." Such unabashed
self-efficacy and upbeat self-talk
soon becomes the new team-talk
and high-performance standard.*

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Savvy individuals take one look at the fear in the other person's eyes and realize they have done something to create this unfavorable reaction. They also know that it now falls on them to restore the conversation. They're in a position of power, they've probably caused the fear (even if they've been on their best behavior), and they'll have to fix it.

DO: To restore safety (and kill mindless deference) you might say: "I don't want to force my view on you. I really want to come up with an idea that serves us all well. My plan might cause problems with your team, and I'd love to hear any objections you might have."

Notice how these words help restore safety by establishing mutual purpose, softening your position, inviting differing opinions, and playing devil's advocate. This doesn't come naturally. You must fight your tendency to increase your attack at the first sign of fear. If you want to nip deference in the bud, you have to find a way to create safety.

As you enter a high-stakes conversation with a subordinate, you'll likely offer up a hefty load of deference unless you create safety. And since others are likely to avoid disagreeing with you directly and openly, you'll have to pay close attention to subtle signs.

First, watch for each pause. Hesitancy will be your first warning. If a pause is followed by a visible drop in confidence and half-hearted support, assume others have differing views but are holding back. Invite their opposing views. Explain that you want to hear all sides.

If the other person finally suggests an opposing view, embrace the information. Don't attack it. You can make your points later. For now, encourage others to clarify their opinions. Value criticism—it's your best tool for continuous improvement. Thank the other person for his or her candor and ask for details.

If you see fear in others' eyes, take this as a cue not to step up your debate tactics, but to step out of the conversation and restore safety. Don't pound your point home. Instead, establish mutual purpose. Share your good intentions. Make it safe for others to speak openly and honestly. **LE**

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ACTION: Pick up on these four clues.

Retaining Talent

How are you faring?



by Beverly Kaye and Sharon Jordan-Evans

WHEN DEMAND FOR TALENT OUTSTRIPS supply, you're in a talent war.

When you compete for top talent and hope they'll stay longer, you're in a talent war. When jobs go unfilled, a talent shortage brings productivity to a halt.

In recent years, previously productive people became disillusioned and disengaged, as management stopped focusing on engaging and retaining their best workers and said, "Quit whining—just be glad you have a job."

But a new Talent War is underway, driven by three factors: 1) healthier economy and brighter job market (more options); 2) unhappy employees, with updated resumes and packed bags; and 3) changing demographics. One-half of the 76 million Baby Boomers will be retiring in the next decade. The number of workers between the prime working ages of 25 and 54 will shrink, causing a shortage in skilled workers.

Do you feel the competition for talent? Certain mitigating factors *could* ease the pain of the New Talent War. Fewer workers will be needed as: companies outsource jobs, technology advances, productivity improves, skilled workers immigrate, and some Boomers delay their retirement.

Still, there will be great upheaval in the workplace as talented people leave to find better jobs or to retire.

Engage and Retain

How can you engage and retain your people? Either *love* them or lose them.

- **Love:** Treat employees fairly and respectfully. Thank them. Challenge and develop them. Care about them, and you will engage and retain them.

- **Lose:** Loss is just as serious when talent retires on the job as when they leave. Re-engage your talent and ensure that they're bringing their heads and hearts to work.

Good people include your solid citizens, as well as your high-potentials. Stars are people at any level who add value. Encourage talented people to stay with the enterprise (if not your team). Talent will be the differentiating factor in the competitive battle ahead.

Three Areas of Emphasis

Our engagement and retention strategies cover three critical areas.

1. Focus on employee development, learning and growth. Find ways to develop workers' talents. Enrich and enliven employees to increase the time they spend on desirable and innovative



work. Identify opportunities for them to move vertically and laterally. Link them to mentors, coaches, leaders or colleagues who offer support.

2. Cultivate a style that inspires loyalty. Ask employees what they want from their work and what it takes to keep them. Provide

feedback—clearly, truthfully, and respectfully—and listen carefully. Provide clear direction. Identify and correct negative behaviors. Look for meaningful ways to reward people. Hold managers accountable for retention.

3. Create a work environment that people love. Create a culture of inclusion—valuing not only differences of race and gender, but thoughts, experiences, and attitudes. Let fun happen. Share information freely and regularly. Seek input from your people and listen to what they say. Give people space—providing the freedom to get the job done in ways that work best for them.

If you will act on these suggestions, you'll increase the odds of engaging and keeping your talent. **LE**

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ACTION: Take steps to retain talent.