

# DEVELOPMENT

## Love It, Don't Leave It

How to get the job you want without leaving the job you have.

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Do you ever think work would be great if only

- you had more career choices?
- you spent more time with your family?
- you were paid more?
- you didn't work with a jerk?
- you weren't so bored?

Do you ever think the grass must be greener somewhere else? Well, you're not alone. Too many people leave their

jobs because they feel that something is wrong or missing. They leave physically by walking out the door, or they leave psychologically by withdrawing their energy and commitment. Later, many regret those departures. What if there were another option? We think there is.

Workplace satisfaction is a two-way street. Yes, it demands effort from your manager and the leaders of your organi-

## The Equity Question

The longer you stay with a job, the more you build forms of equity. Consider the equity you've built in your current job.

**Skill equity:** the knowledge and know-how that you've developed over time.

The special capabilities and competencies that bring you respect for a job well done and enable others to count on you.

**Social equity:** the friends and colleagues you've gotten to know (they often feel like family) or the customers you enjoy interacting with.

**Influence equity:** the ability to get your ideas heard, the connections you've learned to use, the resources that others make available to you so you can get your job done.

**Financial equity:** the dollars you get for the job you do. Also retirement, investment, or bonus funds; insurance; memberships; even perks such as a parking space. All of the tangible rewards of your know-how and commitment.

zation. But it also demands initiative and effort from you. Ultimately, you choose your career, your boss, your team, and your organization. You decide your length of stay and determine the quality of your work. Accept that responsibility, complete with its challenges, and you'll get more of what you want from your work and your workplace.

### If it's to be, it's up to me

Consider how you've taken charge of your work life lately. How many of these statements apply to you?

- I've evaluated carefully and listed in detail what I like and dislike about my job and workplace.
- I've looked at performance reviews and identified steps I could take to improve.
- I've chatted with a colleague or peer about work and what I want from it.
- I've clearly evaluated my role in a workplace dilemma or dissatisfaction.
- I've explored and listed all options for improving my workplace satisfaction.
- I've identified what's possible to change and what isn't, given my company's culture, leadership, or rules.
- I've taken a risk by talking to people who might be able to help me or by trying something new.

If you haven't taken any of those steps, what's stopping you?

### Beware the blame game

It's so easy to blame. For many of us, excuses and finger-pointing are a knee-jerk reaction. But remember that when you point a finger, three other fingers are pointing back at you. Blaming seldom gets us what we want and need. It's up to you to get your dream job. Start by asking for what you want.

### Ask, and you may receive

If you don't ask, you're a lot less likely to get what you want. It seems so simple, but for some reason people hold back. They expect their bosses to read their minds. Some just settle for less and bring half of their hearts (or brains) to work. Others decide it's easier to leave than to ask. Most people eventually realize that no matter where or with whom they work, at times they will feel as if something is lacking. The best way to get that something? Ask.

Are you ready to hold an honest, courageous conversation with your boss, a colleague, or a senior leader to ask for what you really want? Here's how to do it.

**Step 1: Get crystal clear about what you want.** Figure out what that is by interviewing yourself:

- What about my job makes me jump out of bed in the morning?
- What makes me hit the snooze button?

- If I were to win the lottery and resign, what would I miss most?
- What would be the one change in my current role that would make me want to stay for a long time?
- If I had a magic wand, what would be the one thing I would change about my department or team?
- If I had to go back to a position in my past and stay for an extended time, which one would it be and why?

**Step 2: Consider who, when, and how you'll ask.** Who can deliver what you want? Think about people with information you need, good advice givers, and decision makers.

How and when will you approach those people? Consider their preferences: Will you request the conversation over email, by voicemail, or face-to-face? Will you meet with them early in the morning or over lunch? Monday or later in the week?

When you open the conversation, get to the point quickly. Thank the person for his or her time and say that you have a request. Lay it out and be specific. What do you need? Advice? Feedback? A new challenge?

**Step 3: Identify the barriers, then bulldoze them.** Barriers to asking come in all shapes and sizes. Here are some of the most common.

- Fear. Fear of what? The answer? The person? Something else? It's simple: To get more of what you want at work, face your fear, plan your approach, and go for it. Mark Twain said, "Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear, not absence of fear."
- Your boss's or other decision makers' mindsets, constraints, or concerns. People you ask are often bound by rules, policies, guidelines, and cultural norms. And they're concerned about fairness. Anticipate the problems and potential obstacles to your request, and present ideas for solving them. Seek solutions that work for you, managers or executives, and the team.

- Lack of WIIFT (What's In It for Them?) Before you contact the requester, stop and identify the WIIFT. Ask yourself, What's in it for her to grant my request? How will she benefit? Is my request easy or difficult to grant? If you know WIIFT, then you're ready to ask.

### When the answer is no

Despite your careful planning and strategic thinking, you'll no doubt encounter a no sometimes. Listen to the reasons, then try one of these alternatives:

- Ask again in a different way or at a different time.
- Ask how you can help make it work; brainstorm possibilities.
- Ask someone else who might be able to help with your request.
- Ask what's possible, if not this.

- Ask when, if not now.
- Ask what you can do to improve the way you're asking.

Don't give up. As one salesman said, every *no* he received got him closer to the inevitable *yes*.

Our engagement and retention research has taught us that many employees think they have no choice but to leave. Some never stop to interview themselves about their workplace satisfaction or lack thereof. Others know what's wrong or missing, but they fail to ask for what they want. Instead, they disengage and wait for things to change.

What about you? Are you, like many of your colleagues, operating in overdrive, doing so much and running so fast that you're not thinking about requirements for your own satisfaction? If

so, we hope you'll stop long enough to consider the ideas suggested here. Think about what you want and need. Plan for how you will ask for it. Then, do it.

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