

The “Keeping You” Conversation

Quick Introduction

Many businesses owners/leaders we partner with frequently worry about losing their best employees. These high performers mean so much to the team, business outcomes, and ultimately the bottom line. When a high performer decides to quit, usually it comes as a surprise and it isn't until the exit interview that the leader discovers things that could have been done to inspire the person to stay. By that time it's too late!

The “Keeping You” Conversation is a simple and extremely valuable technique that could be the very thing that influences the best people to stay. This proactive approach enables the leader to know what is valued by the high-performing employee and provides actions the leader can take so that the person doesn't even dream of leaving.

This conversation is meant to be done when the high performer has no intention of leaving and **not** when the high performer has put in a notice of resignation. It may seem strange, but the point is to take a proactive approach in keeping the best people before their foot is out the door and to give leaders direction in what to do. In other words, The “Keeping You” Conversation is a way to keep the keepers before they even think about leaving.

The Conversation

Choose a private area to have this one-on-one conversation with your high-performing employee. When you are together and ready to begin, say something like:

You are a crucial member of this team, and you matter so much to me and to this company that I can't imagine losing you. I probably don't tell you that often enough, but that's the truth. So I would like to know...

- *What do you need that will keep you here?*

- *What could entice you away?*

Be sure to listen intently and take notes on the responses of the two questions. As a result of this quick conversation, you now have an idea of what you can do as a leader to inspire your high-performing employee to stay! Remember, the action(s) you take can be the very thing that keeps this high performer with your company.

Food for Thought

When we encourage business owners and leaders to have this conversation, a lot of them are afraid of asking the two questions. The common concern is that leaders don't want to be asked something they can't provide. This is also the main reason why The "Keeping You" Conversation is not common practice. However, in our experience, the high performers' answers are shockingly simple. For example, a popular response is "I would like to have more leadership exposure." As a way to support this desire, leaders often then make it a point to provide more opportunities for the high performer to work on bigger projects and sit in on leadership meetings.

In the event the high performer says, "I would like more money," then you could say something like:

You are absolutely worth that and more and I will see what I can do about it. In the meantime, what else?

Take a chance. Sincerely ask the questions, and get excited to be the leader that keeps their best people!