



# LOVE IT

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# DON'T LEAVE IT

26 Ways to Get What You Want at Work

BEVERLY KAYE and SHARON JORDAN-EVANS



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## PREFACE

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**To:** Anyone Who Works

**From:** Bev and Sharon

Do you ever think work would be great *if only*:

- ✓ you had more career choices?
- ✓ you had more time with your family?
- ✓ you were paid more?
- ✓ you didn't work with a jerk?
- ✓ you weren't so bored?
- ✓ you had unlimited access to chocolate?

Do you ever think the grass must be greener somewhere else? Well, you're not alone.

Too many people leave their jobs because something is wrong, or something is missing. They leave physically, by walking out the door. Or, they leave psychologically, by withdrawing their energy and commitment but staying put. And later, many regret their departures (of both kinds).

What if there were another option? What if it were possible to achieve or regain love for your work? (And we do mean love, not just like.) What if your work were something you looked forward to each day? What if it tapped your enthusiasm?

Used your creativity? Made you feel appreciated? (Are you thinking, “Fat chance?”) But, really, what if work could truly deliver the goods? We think it can.

Workplace satisfaction is a two-way street. Yes, it demands effort from your manager and from the leaders of your organization. (We wrote our previous books based on that premise.) But it also demands initiative and effort from you.

We believe, quite passionately, that positive change is not only possible but well worth your effort. We feel certain that with a few well-chosen steps, you can get more of what you want, right where you are.

We asked over fifteen thousand people why they stayed in their organizations. The top five stay factors across all industries were:

- exciting, challenging work;
- a chance to learn and grow;
- great people to work with;
- fair pay; and
- a great boss.

Which of those factors matters most to you? Which would you like a little more of? We hope this book will make “getting it” a little easier.

We’ve based the hints, tips, and tools you’ll find throughout the book on our research and our interactions with thousands of working people worldwide. You’ll also find five key messages woven throughout the chapters:

*What you want could be found right where you are.* Perhaps all you need to do is get clear about what’s missing and go after it. Look inside before you jump outside. Master the art and science of asking for what you want.

*You're in charge.* You are ultimately responsible for your own workplace satisfaction. Don't expect your manager to be a mind reader or your organization to be solely responsible for your happiness. Others do have a role to play. But the bottom line is, you're in control, and it's up to you to fix what's wrong or find what's missing.

*There are (at least) twenty-six ways to take the initiative.* Of course, there are different strokes for different folks. That's why we've identified dozens of potential action steps. We've arranged them alphabetically, all for your consideration.

*Don't wait.* That "lovin' feeling" may not find you. You may have to find it! Instead of "settling" for work that doesn't work for you, take steps now to improve it. Don't wait for someone else to take the first step.

*Double-check those greener pastures.* Too often we leave for greener pastures elsewhere only to find Astroturf. The new workplace may have the same, or different (sometimes even worse), challenges, frustrations, and disappointments. Check it out before you decide to go.

Here's what we'll deliver in return for your time and attention:

*Actions:* We've amassed tips, tools, and hints and organized them into easy-to-access chapters. We suggest you read the "Ask" and "Buck" chapters first. Then move to the others that capture your interest. And if you've read them all, have tried the ideas they suggest, and still feel you can't get what you want, reread the last chapter to ensure your next choice is the right choice.

*Stories:* Countless people we surveyed, worked with, talked with, or coached gave us these ideas. We heard success stories, "I messed this up" stories, and "I wish I had" stories.

Find the ones that might help solve your dilemma or provoke your own creative thinking.

*T-shirt truth:* Ever read the message on someone's T shirt and say to yourself, "Boy, ain't that the truth?" Well, we do this all the time, and we've collected some for this book. We searched closets, memories, airports, bars, beaches, and barbecues. We narrowed it down to twenty-six that make our points.



Seen on the Riverwalk in Spokane, WA.

Think of this book as a maintenance manual for working adults seeking to tune up a significant portion of their waking lives. We invite you to return to it again and again. Dog-ear the corners; highlight the ideas that hit home. We wrote it because we truly believe you can **get more of what you want right where you are.**



**P.S. And we'd love to hear how it turns out.  
Send your stories to [www.loveitdontleaveit.com](http://www.loveitdontleaveit.com).**

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Finally, this book would never have come to fruition without all those who read *Love 'Em or Lose 'Em* and inspired us (and challenged us) to write a similar book for employees. Many read early versions of our manuscript and convinced us that we were on the right track. We want you all to find more of what you *really* want, *right where you are.*

# INTRODUCTION

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## If it doesn't get better, I'm outta here!

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We've all felt that way at some point in our lives. The feeling could be about work, marriage, friendships, learning a new sport, or perfecting a new skill. Or, it may not feel that extreme. You might just have a subtle sense of dissatisfaction or a mild yearning for a change. Everything could be right with your work—except for just one thing.

In the workplace, these feelings can cause you to head for the door (leave physically) or cause you to stay put but shut down (leave psychologically—turn down your energy, your *oomph*.)

*I was present and accounted for, but not very productive. Now I realize how demoralizing it was for me, my colleagues, my friends, and even my family. Every work-week felt like a month, and my self-confidence sagged. I'll never do that again. I've learned to identify problems early and take some action to improve things. Life is too short to dread Mondays.*

Some of us give it a lot of time before we get to the point of departure (sometimes too much). Some of us give it too little time and move on too quickly.

*I left for greener grass and found it had its own set of problems. I came back a year later. This place isn't perfect, but I'm more willing now to work out problems rather than leave.*

Some of us take control of our own workplace satisfaction. We expect to enjoy our work, our colleagues, and our organizations and we're willing to go after those things that matter most to us.

And others just wait.

### *Are YOU Waiting?*

Waiting for your boss to go?

Or for the economy to not be so slow?

Waiting for someone to bring fun to your work?

Or for that colleague to stop being a jerk?

Waiting for HR to chart your career?

Or for a leader to calm that downsizing fear?

Waiting for an assignment that's exciting to do?

Or for your manager to make work better for you?

Waiting for your organization to really care?

Well, guess what?

Waiting simply will not get you there!

Are you willing to stop waiting? If so, you'll get some quick, effective alternatives from the chapters ahead. We hope you'll give them a try.

## **What's Love Got to Do with It?**

Tina Turner asked a good question. If "it" is "work," our answer is "everything." If work takes the better part of our waking lives, we'd better be in love with it or else be prepared to

lead a miserable—or at minimum, boring—life. When we love our work, we unleash energy, creativity, and commitment. We look forward to the day, our teammates, the environment, the boss—the whole package. We don't want to press the snooze button. We feel productive. We feel a sense of accomplishment. We learn. *And* we feel satisfied.

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

- *Skill equity*: The knowledge, the 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. And, on top of that, the retirement, investment, or bonus funds, insurance, memberships (even perks such as a parking space), all in return for your know-how and commitment.

## Looking for Love in All the Wrong Places

Sometimes we leave our workplace equity behind (too quickly) without considering how much it is, how long it will take to rebuild it, or how heavily discounted it may be somewhere else.

*I get together with some of the old gang from where I used to work, at times just for the laughs I miss. They say that with the new leadership team, things are actually a lot better.*

✧

*I've got more freedom here, but I've got more stress, too. It's all a trade-off. Nothing is perfect.*

✧

*I got a raise and a new challenge with each of my four moves. That was great. But subsequent raises (and challenges) came very slowly and once I even went backward. Now my friends who hung in at the same place over the years are retiring with great packages. I'm wondering what I really gained.*

✧

*Yes, I look around every so often. But the truth is, I love having a sense of roots. This place is like a second family to me. I know the people and they know me. They've been with me through thick and thin.*

All too often we depend on others to keep us from leaving, or we simply give up too quickly.

*It's up to my manager to make me happy.*

✧

*They won't give me the power to get what I want here.*

✧

*It's easier to leave than to work it out.*

✧

*I'm about to retire soon anyway. I'm past the point of needing to love my work.*

Comments like these can contain at least a grain of truth. Managers do have a role. The lack of power does get in the way. The problems may be so huge that leaving is easier. Sometimes leaving does make sense.

But often, it doesn't.

## Shift Happens

Work lives are constantly changing, just like our personal lives. Sometimes, just when you really love it, shift happens. Things change with your work, your leaders, your boss, your colleagues, your clients, your organization, the economy, the competitor, the world. And things change with you. The terrific boss moves on, the company is acquired, you get tired of the work you've been doing, or the direction of the organization shifts—right before your very eyes.

When that happens, instead of disengaging or jumping ship:

*Read “Ask” and “Buck.”*

*Then scan the table of contents*

*for the chapters that best fit your situation right now.*

Take an idea from a story, try a checklist, or answer some of our interview questions. What's one attitude adjustment that you're willing to try? What's one small step that makes sense? Now, read another chapter.



**You either get what you want or take what you get.  
We believe you can get what you want where you are.  
Do you?**



## And You May Receive

If you don't ask, you're less likely to get what you want. It seems so simple. Yet for some reason, people hold back. They expect their bosses to read their minds. Some just settle for less and bring half 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 want a little more of something. And the best way to get that something is to ask.

*What you don't ask for stays the same.*

—Unknown

## They Want to Hear from You

If you are a solid performer, your managers want to know what will keep you engaged (satisfied, productive) and on the team. They don't want to lose you, physically or psychologically.

*I wish he had just asked. I would have said, "Let me see what I can do for you. Let's brainstorm how this might work—for you and for others." Instead of asking, he jumped ship. I am so disappointed. We needed him. He had a great future here.*

How ready are you to hold an honest, possibly courageous conversation with your boss, a colleague, a senior leader? How willing are you to ask for what you really want? Here's how someone did just that:

*I considered quitting my job rather than asking for time off to participate in an overseas service/study program. It just seemed like too big a request. I thought the answer would be no, especially since our department has been so stretched and stressed lately. But I love this job, and my boss is great. I didn't want to leave. I got some coaching from a friend, created a plan, and just went for it.*

*I told my boss I was a little nervous about a request I had. But I explained the opportunity in detail, told him what I thought I would gain from it and also what I believed he and my team might gain. For example, I believed I would return with new leadership skills and a more global perspective. In our line of work, both could be valuable assets.*

*I described seven barriers or downsides of my sabbatical and asked him to add to the list. Then I shared some potential solutions to many of those barriers. An example was finding and training an intern to cover much of my workload while I was gone. I also promised to brainstorm solutions to every other barrier with him and my team.*

*When I was done, he simply said, "Yes." I sat there in shock. He told me he was impressed with my thoughtful approach and my courage (he knew how nervous I was). I thanked him that day, and many times since. We worked on the details over the next two months. I took my trip and came back to work refreshed, energized, and more capable.*

*My boss and I are both glad that I asked, rather than leave that job. The way I thank him now is by doing my best at work.*

Who do you need to ask? And for what? How will you go about it? Try the following steps.

## Step 1: Get Crystal-Clear about What You Want

*I had this gnawing feeling of dissatisfaction. I would have talked to someone about what I wanted, but first I had to put my finger on it. I'm clear now. I want to feel recognized for what I do here—and I don't mean more money (although that would be nice). I want my boss to say "Thank you" more often. Not just thanks in general but specifically thanks after I've worked late or done a great job on a project. I need to know she values me and my work.*

So, what do you want? Get to the bottom of it. **Interview 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 the 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 period of time, which one would it be and why?

The answers to these questions will reveal what you want. Other chapters in this book will help you further clarify your “wish list.” **Reread “Ask” after reading them.**

## Step 2: Consider Who, When, and How You'll Ask

Who can deliver what you want? Consider these people:

- ✓ Those with information you need
- ✓ Good listeners and advice givers
- ✓ Decision makers (your boss?)

How and when will you approach them? Consider their preferences:

- ✓ Should you request the conversation by e-mail, voice mail, or face-to-face?
- ✓ Is it best to meet early in the morning or over lunch? Monday or later in the week?

How will you open the conversation? Consider these guidelines:

- ✓ Get to the point. Thank the person for his or her time and say you have a request to make.
- ✓ 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.** Is *fear* in the way of asking? Fear of what? The answer? The person? Something else?

*I remembered reading somewhere that I should 'face the fear and do it anyway.' I think the author meant if it's not*

*life threatening. So, after a few sleepless nights and several rounds of practice with my friend, I just went for it. It wasn't nearly as frightening as I thought it would be. I got out of there with my life, and I'm optimistic about getting what I want.*

It's simple. To get more of what you really want at work, face your fear, plan your approach, and go for it.

*Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear, not absence of fear.*

—Mark Twain

- ✓ **Your boss's (or other decision makers') mind-sets, constraints, or concerns.** Those you ask are often bound by rules, policies, guidelines, and cultural norms. And they're concerned about fairness.

*I knew he'd be worried about my teammates and their reactions if he said yes to my request. I listed three ways I thought we could handle that concern. He came up with another. Together we dealt with the team in such a positive way that they were actually happy for me. They are also happy to have a boss whom they know will listen to them when they want something!*

Anticipate the problems and potential barriers to your request and present ideas for solving them. Seek solutions that work for you, them, and the team.

- ✓ **Lack of WIIFT (what's in it for them?).** Before you go to your request granter, stop and identify the WIIFT. Ask yourself, "What's in it for that person to grant my request? How will she benefit? Is my request a 'piece of cake' or really difficult to grant?" WIIFT in hand, now you're ready to ask.

*I wanted to learn from her. I knew it was probably the last thing she'd want to do, meet with another grad student. She was so busy and rarely in the office. So, I offered three hours of research time in exchange for one hour of her time with me. She paused a minute and then said, "Yes, what a great idea."*

Find the WIIFT and you'll increase the odds of getting a yes.

## And If the Answer Is No?

Despite your careful planning and strategic thinking, you'll no doubt encounter a no now and then. Listen to the reasons for the no. Then:

ask again (in a different way or at a different time)

—or—

ask how *you* can help make it work (brainstorm possibilities)

—or—

ask someone else (can someone else help with your request?)

—or—

ask what's possible, if not this

—or—

ask when it might be possible, if not now

—or—

ask what you can do to improve the way you're asking.

Don't give up.

*The best advice I ever got was from a salesman. He said every no he received got him closer to the inevitable yes.*

And when they say yes, *thank them*—with words and in continued great performance.



People tell us that in hindsight, they wish they had asked for what they wanted. Or they wish they'd asked in a more effective way, so a decision maker could have worked with them to make it happen. Asking is key to every chapter and central to the philosophy of this book.

Don't expect others to take the first step. Don't make them guess, because most often, they'll guess wrong.

Be clear. Be prepared. Be collaborative, and then  
*ask for what you want.*

**If you don't ask for what you want,  
you'll simply have to take what you get.**



Seen at the Rose Bowl Flea Market in Pasadena, CA.