

# I Love It Here

How Great Leaders Create Organizations  
Their People Never Want to Leave

by **Clint Pulver**



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## THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

The most successful leaders practice a defined list of principles, and they practice them on a constant, consistent basis. They understand all of this:

In this summary of business and leadership expert Clint Pulver's *I Love It Here: How Great Leaders Create Organizations Their People Never Want to Leave*, you'll learn about all of these principles in-depth and how you can apply them in your organization, whether you're an already-thriving organization or looking to take the next step towards your future.

## IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- How to change the way you interact with your employees and organization to become a mentor first, manager second.
- How to hire the right people so that when the time comes, you actually want to retain them.
- How to spark feelings of possibility and ownership in your organization and its people.
- How to plan for disaster and keep your plans simple enough to be executed on consistently.

## A Single Moment in Time

According to the Work Institute's 2020 Retention Report, 27 percent of U.S. employees quit their jobs in the previous year. And, among those, 78 percent left for preventable reasons, such as scheduling problems, a desire for more positive relationships with management, a lack of growth opportunities, or dissatisfaction with compensation and benefits. That's a lot of people quitting because of a disconnect between what they need and what their employer is providing.

### What if we could change that?

What if we could bridge the gap between employees and employers by having a genuine conversation with both? What if we could understand the needs and feelings of employees, then bring those needs to organizational leaders so they'd have real data to draw from? With such a bridge in understanding, both employers and employees would benefit.

Using this information, employers could implement new strategies. And those strategies would actually work, because they would target the true needs of the employees. This is the missing link that could solve the disconnect between employers and their employees—real honest answers to real honest questions.

### Are You the Problem or the Solution?

Disengaged employees will undermine your workplace and make it impossible to build anything close to the kinds of cultures of top-performing organizations, and the financial consequences are not to be overlooked, either. "According to Gallup, disengaged employees have 37% higher absenteeism, 18% lower productivity and 15% lower profitability, writes Karlyn Borysenko in Forbes. "When that translates into dollars, you're looking at the cost of 34% of a disengaged employee's annual salary."

And having loyal and engaged employees makes work more enjoyable for everyone, along with any benefits it adds to your bottom line. Don't we all want to work with people who like their jobs and who respect and appreciate both their co-workers and their employers? Don't we all want to feel valued in the place where we spend so much of our time?

Here's what we know: If your employees don't feel valued, and if they don't share—or even know—your company's vision and how it helps them live a more fulfilling life, they will go elsewhere. Your job as a leader is to show them—every day—why they should stay. That comes down to making sure

they're engaged, and that's what you'll learn throughout the rest of this book summary.

## Creating Your Dream Team

In order to retain the right people, you have to start by hiring the right people. This ultimately comes down to four basic principles.

### Hire the right person, not the convenient person.

Don't settle on the wrong employee or person in a leadership role in order to meet a looming deadline. This is a backwards view of the workplace, in which deadlines are more important than the work you're striving to accomplish. When you hire an employee as quickly as possible because your workload is too much, you're using short-term thinking to create a long-term problem—an employee who's not suited for the role they're in.

### Hire internally when possible.

The smartest place to look for a new hire is within your own company. More often than not, companies hire from the outside because they believe it will save them money. But this discourages employees from seeing any future growth within the company, which in turn discourages them from their work. This will lead to even greater costs down the road.

### Hire for the ABCs: attitude, behavior, and character.

Skills and expertise can be trained. Attitude, behavior, and character are much more difficult to train. In the past, hiring managers have focused on where candidates have worked and what they've done, how many degrees they have, and where they went to school. But the world is changing, and creativity, adaptability, collaboration, teamwork, and communication skills are now considered more essential than any training.

### Let your employees focus on what they do best.

Exceptional leaders understand that hiring and developing great employees is about putting people in the places where they'll shine, and where their strengths and passions can best serve the work they do. It's always evident when an employee is shining where they stand—working in their element and doing what they do best.

## The Mentor Manager

Good leadership requires empathy—this is wisdom that has been espoused by human relationship experts from Oprah Winfrey to Daniel Goleman. A manager’s ability to relate to and connect with their staff is as important to an employee’s engagement as that manager’s level of expectations and standards. Together, these two components have been a common thread in the four types of managers we find across virtually every organization.

In fact, these two factors—their level of connection to their employees, and the level of expectations/standards they set for their employees have been so commonly linked to successful workplaces in our research that we now use them to assess managers.

Connection is the link that forms when people experience a consistent, high level of trust, love, empathy, kindness, and care. This link can look different for each person and each relationship—some want to share their life dreams, others are more private but still appreciate being valued for who they are. (You can show interest without prying; take your cues from each person, and remember that developing relationships takes time.) The spectrum of connection is limitless, and always unique.

In addition to connection, employees value clear expectations and an understanding of the rules and standards. It’s safe to say that most employees are familiar with their job descriptions when they enter an organization. Unfortunately, however, many don’t know the finer details of what’s expected of them. Yes, their job titles might be clear, but if new hires don’t receive the orientation and training they need, then the logistics of why, when, and how they’re supposed to take care of their duties might remain a mystery. Your expectations can be as high or as low as you want them to be, but if they are not clear, your ship will sail nowhere.

### Sparking the Possibility

We don’t always have a clear understanding of what’s in front of us or what lies within ourselves—until, that is, someone changes our perception. Once our perception is changed the way we view and internalize information also changes. Our reality begins to shift, and our behavior follows suit. You have the opportunity to change the perception and shift the reality of the people who work with you and for you. You can be someone’s transformation agent.

If you think of worth and potential as two locked boxes that sit inside each person, what then are the keys? Helping

someone recognize their own worth takes recognition. And allowing someone to realize their potential requires giving them lots of opportunities for growth.

You can remind an employee of their worth simply by recognizing them for a job well done. Or you can go further and show them recognition on a deeper level: I see you. Likewise, you can help your employees see their own potential—and help them reach it—by giving them opportunities to take on new challenges and expand their skill set.

Without recognition and opportunities for growth, your employees’ ability to find worth in their work and see their potential for success is greatly dampened. As their Mentor Manager, you are responsible for creating an environment where these qualities can be encouraged and fostered.

## Keep It Simple

Of all the practices we have seen implemented by exceptional bosses, one of the greatest is a consistent effort to keep things simple. And this effort extended to every aspect of their oversight: business model, mission statement, even down to their personal life. The art of simplicity has been a major key to their success and their overall ability to lead, and it’s had a huge impact on the lives of their employees. The people we interview at these companies who say they love their jobs always mention the simplicity of the culture, the leadership, the direction of the organization, and their job responsibilities.

### Give Them the Wheel and Let Them Drive

Ownership is a game changer. When employees take ownership of their work, it completely changes the way they treat the business they work for—and the way they treat its money. There’s a shift in perspective that takes them from “I work here” to “I’m building something here.”

When a person takes ownership, things matter more. They become more driven and motivated, take more initiative, and seek creative and innovative ways to improve what they’re doing. When an employee is invested in their work in this way, they no longer coast or go through the motions; they become more intentional about their time and experience, and they’re more present each day. The working environment becomes positive, productive, and uplifting—even for managers. In short, a company with employees who are given the opportunity to take ownership is a company that is moving forward.

## Always Be Flying the Airplane

A pilot knows that every plane, flight, and situation is different. It's similar to mentorship in the workplace. One of your goals as a leader should always be achieving and maintaining healthy stability for your employees. You should constantly be asking yourself: "Are they stable— are they in a place where they can continue to grow and thrive in their work environment?" Because, as a leader, not only do you get to help create that work environment, you are also responsible for sustaining it. You want to keep your employees here, both physically and mentally—to keep them from quitting emotionally or from actually walking out the door. So, like the doctor, like the pilot, observe and adjust: check status-evaluate-determine needs-create action plan-check status-evaluate-determine needs- -create action plan... and so on. Constantly, for each employee.

## Brace for Impact

If your organization weathered a crisis, like the COVID-19 pandemic, analyze what worked and what could have been done better. If you're leading a new organization (or one that's new to you), start scenario planning now for the next personal, local, or national crisis. How flexible are your sick leave and bereavement leave policies? What kinds of work could be done remotely? How well do you pay your employees? Is it enough so they can create cushions of their own? When someone needs help beyond what you can provide, do you have a network of professionals you can refer them to? Look at your financials; make a business continuity plan; run emergency drills; do whatever it takes to get as prepared as you can.

## Your Personal Board of Mentors

Typically, a public company will have something called a board of directors. This group is made up of trusted

advisors who have been elected by senior members of the company. They can come from inside or outside the ranks, and they're primarily responsible for the oversight of the company's progress. They weigh in on major decisions, and bring advice, wisdom, and guidance. This board is key to keeping the company moving forward.

If you want to keep moving forward, you'll need your own kind of board of directors. Not a formal corporate board, with official roles and duties and a row of head shots listed in your annual prospectus. This is your personal board of directors—call it your "board of mentors."

The people you choose for this board don't necessarily need to be affiliated with your company, nor would they have any legal or contractual authority over company decisions.

They're simply a group of people, hand-selected by you, who you feel inspired by or want to emulate. These are the people who you turn to when you need advice, or who can provide you with a challenging or unique perspective that you can't see yourself.

## Small Things over a Long Period of Time

Being a mentor and a leader is a role that should not be taken lightly. I can't think of another position that gives you as much opportunity to influence the lives of others for the better. You have the chance to create connections with your people in a way that will have a lasting and powerful effect on who they are and who they become.



**Clint Pulver** is a professional keynote speaker, author, musician, pilot, and workforce expert. Known as the leading authority on employee retention, Clint has transformed how corporations like Keller Williams, AT&T, and Hewlett Packard create lasting loyalty through his work and research as the Undercover Millennial. He has been featured by BusinessQ Magazine as a "Top 40 Under 40," and, as a professional drummer, he has appeared in feature films and on America's Got Talent. In 2020, Clint won an Emmy Award for his short film *Be a Mr. Jensen*, which tells the story of how a single moment in time—and one particular mentor—can change the course of a life.

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