

**TITLE: Help Them Grow or Watch Them Go (2019)**

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Reviewed by Jan Rudge

**My Story:**

I have been interested in how industry addresses similar challenges to those we are challenged with in education. It was a Forbes webinar during spring half term this year that introduced me to these authors under the heading of, “We are humans, not resources.”

**Why do I think this is a great book?**

School leaders, like many other industries, are having to do more with less. Leaders become skilled at finding ways to reduce costs, time, and other resources below levels you ever imagined were possible, as they navigate unprecedented uncertainty and complexity. The unknowns outnumber the knowns today. Yet we look to our leaders for clarity and direction in an increasingly unpredictable environment.

We are called upon to continuously improve standards. ‘Good enough’ isn’t, and we are called upon to deliver the next big thing. Most organisations believe that if they’re not moving forwards, they’re sliding backwards. No matter how long, hard, or smart you work, there is a critical need to help others grow.

Careers are developed one conversation at a time, over time. When it comes to the leader’s role in development, talk (and listening) is the most precious and results-driving commodity you have to share. Questions are a powerful tool. Add the spirit of curiosity, and you’ve got an unbeatable combination.

But let’s face it—curiosity doesn’t come quite as naturally or easily to us as adults and reinforces a laser-like focus on what we think we want to know.

Curiosity is not just informative—it’s also transformative. People recognise and respond deeply to genuine curiosity on the part of their leaders (and their coach). It leaves them feeling cared for, valued, validated and like they matter—all of which fuels stronger relationships, retention and results.

**The Key Learning**

What if...

... school staff really owned their own careers?

... a leader’s job was to facilitate conversations rich with insightful questions that would guide others toward greater awareness and action?

... these conversations were shorter, more frequent, and occurred within the natural flow of the work?

... you didn’t pressure yourself to have all the answers?

What about you?

Do you....

See people as interesting, complex, and multidimensional?

Pick up on cues that employees are ready for something more?

Spot strengths that can be used in different or unusual ways?

See multiple ways of getting work done?

Squeeze learning from nearly every experience and interaction?

Cringe when you hear someone say, "But that's not how we do it around here"?

View job descriptions as helpful guidelines rather than handcuffs?

Take pleasure in finding ways to maximize talent?

Feel energized by thinking outside of the box?

Resist seeing the world in terms of round pegs and square holes?

### **Final comment**

This is not a book about coaching, but the approach taken by these authors is most certainly coach-like and leads to a non-directive coaching approach. Keeping our great teachers, support staff and leaders in our school or in the school system is essential if we are to provide the best education we can for the young people we serve. Maybe this is the reason why, increasingly, school leaders are looking for better ways to conduct performance management in their schools.