

Meghan M. Biro: [00:00](#) In the words of the great poet Cher, "Do you believe in life after love?" All right. Now I'm not wanting to pick fights with the legend or anything, but who says that there has to be a time without love at work? Yeah, that's right. Today on WorkTrends, we're speaking with author and speaker Steve Farber about why you should try and bring some love to work, and I'm not talking about the kind that gets you reported to HR. Okay?

Meghan M. Biro: [00:38](#) Welcome to the WorkTrends podcast from TalentCulture. I'm your host, Meghan M. Biro. Every week we interview interesting people who are re-imagining work, and join us on Twitter every Wednesday 1:30 PM Eastern using the hashtag WorkTrends. Today's WorkTrends podcast is sponsored by Smart Search. Be sure to visit them at [www.aps2k.com](http://www.aps2k.com) to learn more about their new version 21 interface and all the excitement it's creating in the old applicant tracking software space.

Meghan M. Biro: [01:12](#) Let's look at the news first. You know we're big on AI here at work trends, so I was absolutely fascinated to read an article in the Harvard Business Review about researchers who used machine learning to study when employees would quit a job. You know what? The machine learning was actually pretty darn good at figuring it out. I think it ties perfectly to our topic today. It's so important to know who is disengaged at work, right? Who's just not that into you, so you can get to work smothering them with love, or maybe figuring out how to reengage them. We're going to dig deeper with today's guest.

Meghan M. Biro: [01:55](#) Our guest today is Steve Farber. Steve's a speaker, a leadership coach, and an author whose newest book has just been released. It's called Get This: Love is Just Damn Good Business. Now I know for some of our listeners out there love is a four letter word as well, but I think Steve's trying to change that. Steve, welcome.

Steve Farber: [02:17](#) Well, thank you Megan, but I think no matter how you slice it, love is always going to be four letters.

Meghan M. Biro: [02:21](#) Love is always going to be. There's a lot of other four letter words out there too.

Steve Farber: [02:25](#) Exactly. Yeah.

Meghan M. Biro: [02:26](#) Where are you right now?

Steve Farber: [02:28](#) I'm in San Diego.

Meghan M. Biro: [02:29](#) Now, nice.

Steve Farber: [02:30](#) Yeah, it's not a bad place to be now.

Meghan M. Biro: [02:33](#) Do you live there?

Steve Farber: [02:34](#) Yeah. Yeah. This is where I live. I'm not here by accident. I moved here with conscious intent about 20 years ago. Yeah. I love it here. When you do this kind of work, you just got to be near an airport, so why not live in San Diego?

Meghan M. Biro: [02:49](#) You've been doing this kind of work for quite awhile.

Steve Farber: [02:52](#) Many, many years.

Meghan M. Biro: [02:53](#) Many years. You and I know, you and I have a lot of the same friends out there in the world of work. You and I were just catching up in the green room. It's a small world, huh?

Steve Farber: [03:05](#) Yeah. I've been at this in one form or another now for 30 years, and it's been a great journey. I've had the opportunity to work with just about every kind of company and just about every kind of industry and traveling all over and getting a lot of exposure to really great leaders and really... Can I say this nicely?

Meghan M. Biro: [03:28](#) No. You don't have to. I was just going to say Steve-

Steve Farber: [03:28](#) Not so great leaders?

Meghan M. Biro: [03:29](#) Nice is also a four letter word, and we can just take that off right now and just get real with each other. I mean, there's a lot of really crappy leaders out there, right?

Steve Farber: [03:38](#) We can learn as much if not more from them as we can from the great ones.

Meghan M. Biro: [03:41](#) Yes, we can. As I just mentioned, the title of your new book is Love is Just Damn Good Business. Love really isn't a word we associate with business, unfortunately. What do you mean by love being good business?

Steve Farber: [03:55](#) Yeah. Love and business are typically not words that you hear uttered in the same sentence publicly anyway. When you sit down one on one with executives and leaders and people that do really great work, you actually do hear the word quite a bit. I

don't know how many times I've had a scenario where I'll be sitting with an executive and I'll say, "You know, so tell me about your team." "Oh, I love them. I love my team. They're fantastic." Then he or she will tell me why. Then I can ask the same question to the same person in a different context or in a different format. Like for example, in public, in front of their team, and then asked the same question. The answer is, "Oh, they're great."

Steve Farber: [04:36](#) I think we've been conditioned to believe that love has no place in business, but when you cut through the conditioning, what I've seen over and over again throughout these 30 years that I've been wandering about is that not only is love not inappropriate in the context of business, it really is at the core of what great leadership is and is at the core of any great thriving competitive business. It's not love in in the the sentimental soft, fluffy kind of way. It's more in the lines of love as a business practice, as a discipline versus a soft abstract feeling. That's the difference. That's the key. What does it look like in the way you do business is the exploration that this book is about and that my work has been about for quite some time.

Meghan M. Biro: [05:21](#) What made you decide to write a book about bringing love to the workplace? Question number one. Question number two: is this your first book?

Steve Farber: [05:31](#) No, this is my fourth book.

Meghan M. Biro: [05:32](#) That's what I thought.

Steve Farber: [05:33](#) Yeah. My first, I've been writing about this since my first book first came out in its first edition in 2004, so my first book was The Radical Leap, followed up by The Radical Edge, and then a book called Greater Than Yourself. The Radical Leap presents a framework for leadership, or what I call extreme leadership, which stands for love, energy, audacity, and proof. I've been out there teaching this, writing about this consulting on this basis for almost 20 years. This book is the first time I slapped it on the cover.

Steve Farber: [06:10](#) Right. In other words, it felt like it was time to come front and center with this, because it really is at the core of everything that I do. I believe it presents a really tremendous competitive advantage. If you were to go to my website, if you go to SteveFarber.com, it's changing now a little bit because of the new book, but you didn't see Steve Farber, The Love Guy.

- Meghan M. Biro: [06:31](#) Thank goodness, by the way.
- Steve Farber: [06:31](#) It's Steve Farber.
- Meghan M. Biro: [06:32](#) Thank you, Steve. You've spared all of us. The audience and I are grateful for that.
- Steve Farber: [06:38](#) Yeah. Yet that's the core of what I teach, so it doesn't take long to find that. Doesn't take long to dig into it and see that that's really the foundation of it, but I wrote this book in this way to bring the conversation front and center, because my experience, Megan, is that you say that most of us are not accustomed to this or most of us don't don't like this word, love associated with business. I actually don't believe that's true. In my experience, I can't prove this by the way, but it seems to me that most people already know that love is just damn good business, but most people think that most people don't think that that's true.
- Meghan M. Biro: [07:16](#) That's so funny. I'm like, "Wait a minute. Hold on. I need more coffee." I think. What did you just say? No, I get it.
- Steve Farber: [07:22](#) Most-
- Meghan M. Biro: [07:23](#) Yeah. No, I mean, yeah. Yes. Okay. I'm going to say yes, Steve, but I'm sorry. I'm just going to have to be real with you for a minute. This people do want to go to fluffy when they hear love, or people want to go to something more well intimate in nature, shall I say? Which I don't think there's anything wrong with it just to level set with you. I think it's called culture. I'd like to wake up every morning frankly, and be in love with just about everything I'm doing, including the people around me. I think it's human to feel that way, but I do think that we've been conditioned, to your point, to want to feel a certain way about business, right?
- Steve Farber: [08:01](#) Yeah, exactly. That's exactly right. Actually, we've been conditioned to believe that love has no place in business, that somehow business should be a purely, purely rational endeavor. It's not personal. It's business. That that kind of a thing. I get it and I understand it. In some contexts, that's true if we interpret love in a particular way that says, "If I love you, then Andy, everything's cool man. You know it's all right. You can do what you want, because I love you. If you don't want to show up for work, that's cool."

- Meghan M. Biro: [08:38](#) It's unconditional.
- Steve Farber: [08:38](#) That's not love. In other words, we equate.... It's not the kind of love that I'm talking about. We tend to equate love with weakness, lower expectations, et cetera in business. In every other aspect of our lives, to your point, we want it. We want the love our kids. We want them to love us. We want to love our spouse. We want them to love us. We want to love our friends. We want them to love us. Then we go to work and suddenly it no longer applies. It doesn't make any sense.
- Meghan M. Biro: [09:06](#) How boring. It's boring.
- Steve Farber: [09:06](#) Well of course it is. I mean, honestly, just look at it this way. Would you rather, do you think you're going to do better work, if you're miserable at work or if you love your work? I mean, who's going to tell me, "Yeah. Listen, the conditions for me to thrive will be a absolute misery and a horror. Horror would be good too, just dreading going to work"?
- Meghan M. Biro: [09:26](#) I mean what we're talking about is building a culture of fear, which a lot of leaders and companies are guilty of frankly, and political leaders. Let's throw them shall we into the mix. I mean, but fear can only motivate for so long. That's the reality there.
- Steve Farber: [09:43](#) Yeah. I don't know that fear actually motivates in the greatest sense of the word. It gets you to do stuff right now to to protect yourself. Here's the thing. Let's just put this in purely business terms. Okay? We should all know by now as business people that our competitive advantage comes from our customers or clients loving what we do for them. In other words, we should know by now that if they say they're satisfied with us, that's not enough. There's no competitive advantage that comes from satisfaction. We want our customers to love our product, our service, the experience of working with us. That's where the payoff comes from. That's where the money comes from. That's where the word of mouth comes from. That's where the loyalty comes from, et cetera. We can all agree on that.
- Steve Farber: [10:23](#) What I'm suggesting is that we need to back that up another couple of steps. In order for that to happen, in order to create an experience for customers that they're going to love in a meaningful and sustainable way over time, we have to create a culture that people love working in. That's the ideal scenario. If we can create a culture that people love working in where the expectations are high and the standards are high, not only do

we have a better chance of creating that experience for our customers, but we're going to attract and retain the best possible talent.

Meghan M. Biro: [10:49](#) Okay. I mean, Steve, this is all fine and dandy, but let's get tactical, shall we? What can leaders do to do this more in the workplace for starts? Then I've got some more questions.

Steve Farber: [11:01](#) Yeah. I'll give you a specific example, because the truth is there are thousands of ways to do this. It's a matter of putting our attention on it, again, with conscious intent. There's a company that I've been telling their story quite a bit lately because it's such a great example, and it's not a particularly sexy industry. There's a company in Jacksonville, Florida called Trailer Bridge.

Meghan M. Biro: [11:27](#) I'm sorry. I'm just like... I'm going to giggly mood Steve Trailer Bridge?

Steve Farber: [11:32](#) Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Meghan M. Biro: [11:33](#) I love it. I want to hear more, and I'm being serious now. That's cool.

Steve Farber: [11:40](#) Let me tell you this, Megan. I have said the words Trailer Bridge many times, because I tell the story a lot.

Meghan M. Biro: [11:46](#) Really?

Steve Farber: [11:47](#) Yeah.

Meghan M. Biro: [11:47](#) Trailer Bridge.

Steve Farber: [11:48](#) I have never heard anybody giggle in response to the name of that company.

Meghan M. Biro: [11:54](#) You've finally met your match.

Steve Farber: [11:56](#) Trailer Bridge? That's hilarious.

Meghan M. Biro: [11:58](#) It is fun... Oh, come on. The places we can go with this.

Steve Farber: [12:01](#) It is not like goofy zone. I mean Goofy Zone would be... Anyway, trailer bridge is a shipping company, a shipping logistics company. They're based in Jacksonville, Florida. They ship containers of stuff primarily from the mainland to Puerto Rico

and Dominican Republic. They've been in business for 30 years, and their past is toxic. Right. What I mean by that is, they had terrible customer scores. They had terrible performance. They went bankrupt. They burned through four CEOs in three years. They burned through four heads of HR in the same period of time.

Steve Farber: [12:36](#) They were there at their gasping their last breath, and the board tapped one of the managers, guy named Mitch Luciano, asked him to take over and turn the place around. He took on the challenge, but he didn't take on the title of CEO in the beginning because he said, "For one thing, there's too much baggage associated with that because we get a new CEO every 10 minutes around here. I will earn the title of CEO, I'll take the title of president," and he told his board, "I'm just warning you, this is going to be different, and you've got to let me do it the way that I want to do it." It's going to be different because Mitch is a lovely guy. He's coming from the place of how do I operationalize love in this turnaround?

Steve Farber: [13:17](#) In other words, how do we create an environment that people are going to love working in, and how are we going to change our performance in the marketplace as well? The first thing was he noticed... He did hundreds of things. I'll tell you a couple. The first thing was he was coming from a place of belief in his people, right? He believed that they had the right team for the most part. Some people needed to go. There's tough love in this as well. He said, "I've got to create an environment. These people need to get to know each other better," because the way everything was set up in terms of hierarchy, this was a small company at the time, 120 people, everybody had their own office. Everybody had their own title. Everybody was buried in their cubicles, and everybody walked around with name tags on.

Steve Farber: [14:02](#) He said, "We're a company of 120 people. We should at least know each other's names," including himself. He got rid of the name tags. Now on the one hand, that's symbolic. Now we're saying, "If we really... Listen, if we loved each other, we would know each others names, right?" He did some things with the physical environment, symbolic and structural. For example, they built a couple of communal areas because they'd never had that before. Borrowing ideas from the classic Silicon Valley kind of approach, foosball tables and ping pong tables and that kind of a thing. They bring in a food truck once a week and buy lunch for the whole company, so people can gather together

and get to know each other and eat together. They lowered the height of the cubicles so people can actually see each other.

Steve Farber: [14:44](#)

He challenged all of his managers. Actually he made it a mandate that even though we have a history of hoarding information is the way that he described it-

Meghan M. Biro: [14:51](#)

I love it.

Steve Farber: [14:53](#)

We have to start sharing information. Now, why would you share information? You are interested in everybody's success, not just your own, and you're interested in our success as a company. There were people on his management team that absolutely refused to do that, and they were let go. That's where it started. Then they started to ask this question, or at the same time they were asking the question about their relationship with their customers. Here's where it gets into really kind of the proverbial brass tacks, and I'm sure they shipped many brass tacks out of it. They looked at their customer policy, and they had this longstanding policy that said they would not ship a container... The container would not leave the dock until it was at least 75% full, because if it was less than 75% full, they would lose money on that shipment.

Steve Farber: [15:41](#)

Think about that from the customer's perspective. You're shipping a car to Puerto Rico for your family, and you tell them it's going to be there on a particular date, and then the company tells you now it's not because we're not full enough. We couldn't get enough people to ship stuff on this container, so you're going to have to wait. They looked at that among other things and they said, "All right, let's ask this question. If we loved our customers, what would we do?" The answer when you put it in that context is pretty clear. We would sail. Yeah, but we're going to lose money on the shipment. So what? We said we're going to sail on that particular date, so we sail.

Steve Farber: [16:15](#)

Right then and there they said, "We will sail always no matter what, unless weather, that kind of thing." Those are a few things. Let me just fast forward and give you the punch line, because we could talk about this one case study for hours. Now, they have been voted number one and number two a couple of years in a row best place to work in the city of Jacksonville. The last two years of this company, since they've turned this place around, the revenue of the last two years of this company is greater than the previous 25 years of the company combined. They're winning all kinds of awards. They are expanding all



throughout the country. They're just killing it, man. I mean they're lighting it on fire. If you ask Mitch and if you ask his senior team essentially what is it that you're doing? They will tell you that they're operationalizing love and the way they do business.

Meghan M. Biro: [17:07](#) Love it. I mean really, I just said love it, and that came naturally.

Steve Farber: [17:12](#) Of course. You're going to find that you're going to hear that word a lot more than you think you do. The other thing right along the same lines. If you can imagine, this was a place that people hated working not all that long ago. You can imagine how much money they had to spend on a recruiters to get people to work there. They spend no money on recruiters anymore, because their own people are their best recruiters because they love working there. They've actually put their employees through recruiting skills training, because they're always talking about place. "You should come work here." Well let's get the right people in the door. Not just because you want to want to work with your aunt Jane or your friend, but let's teach everybody how to recruit, and they've saved untold amounts of... I mean they can tell you how much money. I don't know what it is, so I'll say untold amounts of money, and it just goes on and on.

Meghan M. Biro: [18:01](#) Steve, what you're really talking about is behavior modeling. Why is that so important for leaders, employees and everybody in there, right? Everybody in the game of culture and making business work. Let's throw in HR professionals, recruiters. You can throw everybody into this batch called working for the same goal. Talk to us about how behavior modeling plays into this.

Steve Farber: [18:27](#) Well, we've called it any number of things over the years. Behavior modeling, leading by example, walking your talk, practicing what you preach. It's always critical. from a leadership perspective, so for example if you look at at Mitch at trailer bridge, it wasn't enough for him to go out there on his first day as the de facto CEO and say, "Okay, we're all going to love each other now." He had to demonstrate it. He had to model it. One of the ways that he does that, he writes a personal... First of all, he had to learn everybody's names himself, right?

Meghan M. Biro: [19:02](#) I love that. I love the whole name tag example.

Steve Farber: [19:06](#) It's very simple, isn't it?

Meghan M. Biro: [19:08](#) It's so simple, right? We miss it. Why do we miss this humanity? Right?

Steve Farber: [19:13](#) The thing is when you start exploring this through the right question filter, which is how can I create an environment that people are going to love working in, it sets a higher standard. It's a very different question from how do we engage people, how do we motivate people? It's going to lead to the same place. Don't get me wrong, but asking the question, framing it up in that way raises the standards and the expectations, and it brings out a different answer. That's how he arrived at that. It seems so obvious once you hear it, but he had to model it himself. He had to learn their names. He sits down every morning and looks at who's got a birthday, and he writes a personal birthday card. He will tell you that if somebody comes and knocks on his office door and says, "Hey Mitch, do you have a minute?" He knows that it's not going to be a minute, and he always says yes.

Steve Farber: [20:05](#) He invites them in. He turns off his computer. He spins his chair around, looks at them across from chair to chair and says, "Tell me what's up." It's things like that. It's our own personal example. By the way, that's critical no matter what our position or title is. It's critical coming from Mitch, who's the CEO in this case who's turning the place around, but it's true for all of us, whether we're CEO or not. We have an influence on the culture around us. We have an influence on the culture of our team, on the culture of our project, whatever it might be. If I want this place to be a certain way and this team to behave a certain way, then I've got to be the walking, talking, living, breathing example of exactly what I'm hoping other people will do. That's where it all starts. That's what leadership is.

Meghan M. Biro: [20:47](#) Let's switch things up for a minute. We've been talking a lot about love. I read this great LinkedIn article you posted called How to Love What You're Doing if You Don't Love Your Job, can you break this down for us on how this is possible?

Steve Farber: [21:01](#) Yeah. Listen, the ideal scenario is that we love our work, but let's first of all, let me be clear. I'm not suggesting that it means loving everything about our work and that everything is flawless and that every aspect of our work is just an absolutely joy. I mean, I love my work, but I don't love airports. I don't love the mechanics of marketing. I don't love numbers, but there are things that I have to do that I don't love in order to do the work that I love. The technical term for that is called being an adult,

right? This is about finding that kind of that core. If I ask the question, why do I love this work, this business or this position that I'm in, and the honest answer is, "Well, I don't, that's a valid answer." This isn't about pretending and putting on a happy face. It's about the buzzword of the day of course, is authenticity for all the, all the right reasons.

Meghan M. Biro: [21:54](#) For all the buzzword people out there, we're playing buzzword bingo today with Steve, right?

Steve Farber: [21:59](#) Authenticity is really at the core of all of this, so if you put it aside as a buzzword and think of it as a reality, this isn't about faking it. A good question to ask... If I ask the question, why do I love my work and I don't, I can ask a question this way. Well, what do I love about it? Can I find something in this mix that I'm really passionate about? Maybe it's my team. Maybe it's the technology that I'm working with. Maybe it's this customer project that I'm on, and if I can put a little bit more attention on that and just first of all, just acknowledge it, that's a good place to start. Then it gets into is there a way that I can more fully demonstrate that?

Steve Farber: [22:46](#) Why do I love this? I could be working... I'm just picking and picking a general scenario. I'm working on a project, and I'm working on it for a particular client, and I really dig this client. I mean, I love what they do. I think our solution can really help them. They're a pleasure to work with. Allowing myself to acknowledge that feeling, then brings me to the next question, which is, how can I better show that? How could I better demonstrate that? Similar to what Trailer Bridge with their customers. It changed their policy. Is there something that I could do in this project that's going to demonstrate that even more? It's starting with what you have, and a really nice way to do that is just, depending on how deep in this you are because it can feel very despairing where I'm looking around and going, "I just can't find anything that I love about this place and I'm miserable."

Steve Farber: [23:33](#) Chances are that you're in the wrong place. That's possible. In which case, a career move might be a good idea, but before you jump to that conclusion, it's really helpful just to take a few minutes and sit back and reflect on why you took this job to begin with. Was there something that really tripped your trigger in the beginning that maybe you've lost sight of or it's dissipated over the years?

- Steve Farber: [23:57](#) For example, I see this a lot. I do a lot of work with educators, and I see this a lot with teachers. They start teaching school because they love kids and they have this what's cynically referred to as starry-eyed idealism as to what's possible. Then over the years it gets beaten out of them because of the bureaucracy and the politics and the limited resources and all kinds of reasons. Then you have a teacher that started out for all loving kids and loving teaching who finds themselves working at this job because they get the summers off. Sometimes just recalling why I did this to begin with can start to bring that back, and then take an inventory of the things that you're really grateful for and the things that you enjoy doing, because sometimes the negative overshadows the things that we do enjoy to the point that we don't even realize that we enjoy them anymore.
- Meghan M. Biro: [24:48](#) Yeah, that makes a lot of sense, Steve. Just to sit back, stop, look and listen, and just look inwards and ask yourself those questions. You have an assessment our listeners can take to find out if they're bringing love to work. Can you tell us how our listeners can do that?
- Steve Farber: [25:05](#) Yeah, so if you go to a loveisgoodbiz, B-I-Z, .com, you'll see kind of an overview of of the new book, and there is a a self assessment on there that... It's just, it's a starting point, right? It's a reflection tool. It's looking at the elements of LEAP that I mentioned earlier, love, energy, audacity and proof. We have them broken down into more kind of behavioral descriptions and so forth, and it'll give you a sense of where you are and make some recommendations to you as to how to take that to the next level. It's a good reflection tool. It's a nice starting place.
- Meghan M. Biro: [25:39](#) Well listen, Steve Farber, thank you for showing us that there are four letter words out there that we can use at work.
- Steve Farber: [25:47](#) That's been my pleasure, Megan. I really appreciate it.
- Meghan M. Biro: [25:55](#) Let's keep the conversation going. Join us for our WorkTrends Twitter chat. We are going to be on the Twitters with Steve Farber on Wednesday, October 30th 1:30 PM Eastern 10:30 AM Pacific. Join us to talk about bringing more heart emojis into the workplace. Yeah, and by that, I mean love. If you'd like to get our Twitter chat questions in advance, sign up for our news letter at talentculture.com.

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Meghan M. Biro:

[26:28](#)

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