

## Exit Interviews: How to Do Them Well

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*Exit interviews* are important because they offer a deeper look at your workplace culture, day-to-day processes, management solutions, and employee morale. The purpose of an exit interview is to assess the overall employee experience within your organisation and identify opportunities to improve retention and engagement (Spencer, 1986). Having a clear set of standards in place when conducting *exit interviews* can also play an essential role in risk management. When employee issues are addressed justly and effectively within the workplace, there is no need for external investigations, litigation, or bad publicity to follow. When completed in a consistent and standardised way, these interviews can help you foster positive relationships and a welcoming working environment (Miller, 2018).

### **Advantages of Conducting *Exit Interviews***

- They may give insights into problems in the organisation that was not otherwise obvious. For example, they may highlight problems with specific managers (Miller, 2018).
- This can be a chance to ask employees any last-minute questions related to the job handover—which may allow for a smoother transition.
- An *exit interview* may be a chance to have an open conversation about what could be changed to get the employee to stay or to consider coming back at a future date. Even if it only serves as a way for the employee to say his or her peace, it could give a more positive spin to the final days at the organisation by having that opportunity.
- *Exit interviews* can be a one-stop-shop of sorts; this time can be used for things beyond getting input. It can be a time for the employee to return employer-owned equipment. It can be a time for the employer to provide final paperwork (including the final salary, if required at this time) and information about benefit continuation.
- They could allow HR to gain information about the reasons behind employee turnover, which may help to reduce turnover in the future if the information is acted upon (Miller, 2018).

### **How to make the most out of your *exit interviews***

One way an organisation can identify areas needing improvement to retain employees is through an *exit interview*. An *exit interview* is a way of assessing why employees are leaving. Common denominators in dissatisfaction revealed by the *exit interview* can be valuable information to the organisation for future employee retention and employee relations (Melcher, 1955). Giacalone and Duhon (1990) stated that the exit interview can be used "as a tool to uncover organizational characteristics that may contribute to employee turnover." Hilb (1978) commented that the goal of the exit interview is "getting objective information about an employee's reasons for leaving. The strengths and weaknesses of the company and the job (Diagnosis Function) and realistic suggestions for improvement (Therapy Function) should also be discussed.

- Monitor and act on reasons for turnover - Identify the root causes of turnover for different employee segments of the workforce and create a targeted retention plan.
- Revisit exit data for rehires - Use previously completed exit interviews for returning employees to address past roadblocks.
- Add market intelligence to your recruitment strategy - Understand which employers are your primary recruitment competitors and which aspects of those employers are most appealing to employees who leave.
- Use the information to coach managers - For managers who have unusually high levels of turnover, exit data can be used as feedback to coach managers on their management style.

## **10 Exit Interview Questions Examples**

The idea behind conducting exit interviews is to understand why the employee is leaving the organisation. Please remember that exit interviews are not designed to guilt-trip employees who intend to leave the organisation. Use this opportunity to capture data about them and possibly find ways in which the organisation can improve.

Below are some objective questions that can guide in how you can conduct your next or first *exit interviews* (Vanderbilt, 2020).

1. What ultimately led you to accept the new position?
2. Management is often a key factor in an employee's decision to leave. Were you satisfied with the way you were managed?
3. Why did you begin looking for a new job?
4. Did you feel that you were equipped to do your job well?
5. How would you describe the culture of our company?
6. Can you provide more information, such as specific examples?
7. If you could change anything about your job or the company, what would you change?
8. Management is often a key factor in an employee's decision to leave. Were you satisfied with the way you were managed?
9. How can our company improve training and development programs?
10. Did you have clear goals and objectives?

## **What to look out for when conducting *exit interviews***

While conducting *exit interviews* is a great idea, one small mistake may result in things going wrong. These need to be carefully planned over a few days or weeks if necessary. Below are some pointers to look out for or avoid when exit interviews are close by being conducted (Miller, 2018).

- Employees may be fearful of burning bridges, which may mean they have little incentive to be completely open. In other words, the process may be a waste of time and not garner any real insights.
- If the situation surrounding the employee's departure is tense, the exit interview may be tense, too. It could be spreading tension and creating unnecessary difficulty without necessarily having

a clear benefit.

- Even if actionable information is found, if there's no process in place to follow up and make changes, the point will be lost. *Exit interviews* need a formal structure and process to follow for improvements to occur in the coming days, weeks, and months. (And if there are revelations that require follow-up, like harassment allegations, for example, there will need to be resources allocated to do so immediately.)
- An exit interview may be seen as “too little, too late” by an employee who is leaving, and it could engender frustration that it took leaving to be asked for an opinion. In other words, there's a chance it could create or further ill will.
- If word gets around that employees who leave are giving input that is never acted upon, that could decrease morale among the employees who stay.

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