

Stay Interviews: A guide to conducting them

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Employers may use a stay interview to collect actionable information about what workers appreciate and what may need to improve. Employers can decide what patterns occur in employee responses by conducting stay interviews with as many workers as possible. According to a recent [Wall Street Journal report](#) backed up by [hard data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), employees are leaving in droves. The stay interview is an excellent method for retaining employees. The stay interview inquires as to why workers want to work with an organisation. According to Richard Finnegan, author of the cleverly named book [The Stay Interview](#), the benefits are numerous.

Employees who do not trust their bosses are the most likely to leave, according to results from hard data research. Stay interviews are the most effective practice for establishing trust and therefore the most effective retention method. On the surface, the stay interview tends to be a carbon copy of the exit interview, focusing on the aspects of the work that people like rather than those that they hate. That is worthwhile, but the stay interview is much more useful because it provides managers with the information they can use to inspire and attract individual employees rather than groups of employees. Stay interviews help businesses obtain useful feedback from their employees and decide whether their retention efforts need to be adjusted. What are stay interviews and how are they conducted?

What are stay interviews?

A stay interview, contrary to common opinion, is not a one-on-one conversation in which you try to persuade a leaving employee to stay. A stay interview, on the other hand, is an in-person meeting with a long-term, high-performing employee in which you try to discover the aspects of their job and your business that keep them coming back day after day. A stay interview is used to find out what causes a great employee to disengage and leave the company, as well as to build trust between managers and their direct reports. A stay interview allows you to avoid recurrent issues, while an exit interview allows you to learn from your mistakes. Employees are planning to change jobs in the next year in [42% of cases](#), so now is the time to act.

The one caveat to staying interviews is the culture of your business. Employees must trust management for stay interviews to be fruitful and provide truthful input. In-person interviews are possibly not the best way of gathering input if the organization's culture prioritizes hierarchy and isolation between senior leadership and employees. Before two-way contact becomes a

necessity. Stay interviews would be ineffective before two-way contact becomes a key principle and a part of the culture. A stay interview is a conversation between a manager and an employee intended to understand what motivates workers to stay with a company and what areas need to be improved.

A stay interview is preferable because it allows you to ask current employees why they want to stay with your company. The outcomes of a stay interview will help you figure out where your company can change right now and how to keep your most valuable employees. When workers identify what they enjoy about their current job, they will learn a lot about what your company or department is doing well. The stay interview is an opportunity to establish trust with employees while also determining the level of employee satisfaction and engagement in a company. Employee satisfaction surveys are superior to stay interviews because they allow for two-way dialogue and the opportunity to ask questions and follow up on ideas.

They also deal with current employee satisfaction and complaints, rather than how they felt last month, quarter, or year. If you want to perform stay interviews with your staff, do so with caution. These interviews are useful for finding areas that need improvement if your company has a culture that promotes open communication and employee engagement. Stay interviews will not provide useful information if the company lacks confidence and open communication. Staff turnover, attendance, overall revenue, and profitability all indicate whether or not the company is ready to conduct stay interviews. If you're not sure, anonymous employee satisfaction surveys may be a good place to start. You'll need to restore confidence in your organization's environment before you can perform successful stay interviews.

How to conduct stay interviews?

More than half of respondents in a [recent survey of human resources executives](#) conducted by global outplacement and executive coaching company Challenger, Gray & Christmas, Inc. said their businesses were either conducting stay interviews or expected to do so shortly. In another survey of around 100 human resources executives, it was discovered that 27% of organizations were already conducting stay interviews to minimize turnover. A further 24% of respondents stated that they plan to conduct such interviews

Stay interviews are more successful when conducted on an as-needed basis rather than on a fixed timetable. The following is a guideline when scheduling and conducting your stay interviews to ensure they are productive.

Who should conduct stay interviews?

The employee's direct boss should conduct the stay interviews. This contributes to the development of a strong relationship based on confidence and open communication, and an employee's relationship with their boss has a huge impact on their decision to stay. According to research, the most common explanation for workers quitting is a lack of confidence in their boss.

Who should receive stay interviews?

Your stay interview program should concentrate on the most tenured, high-performing employees; they've been with your organization the longest, and obviously, there's something that's stopped them from coming back. Stay interviews, on the other hand, should be performed across the board with all workers, unlike exit interviews, which are less interested in knowing why disengaged employees want to leave. What is the reason for this? People remain for a variety of reasons. You must understand what makes your organization attractive to each person to prevent workers from leaving.

Where should you conduct a stay interview?

You want to make the employee as relaxed as possible, similar to an exit interview, so they'll be more willing to provide honest feedback. Ask the employee where they'd like the interview to take place if possible, and be flexible with the venue — they may want to get out of the office and go for a stroll, or visit a nearby coffee shop, so accommodate their requests when you can.

When should you conduct a stay interview?

A stay interview does not take place immediately after an employee begins working for you, nor should it take place at the same time as an annual examination. For the stay interview to produce useful results, the employee must be thoroughly settled into their job and accustomed to the workplace. Aim to hold a stay interview with each employee once a year, but make sure it's not tacked on to a performance review. All stay interviews should be done within a few days or weeks of one another. That way, you can act quickly on the information you've gathered, ensuring that employee input isn't ignored for too long.

How long should a stay interview last?

The duration of a stay interview can range from 20 minutes to an hour. A stay interview should be more carefully tailored to the person than an exit interview, which has a predetermined list of questions to get through. Again, workers stay for a variety of reasons, so take as much time as you need to learn about their happiness and grievances.

Tips for Conducting Stay Interview

Here are a few tips for conducting stay interviews:

- **Wait to interview new hires until they've had some time to get to know the job.** But don't wait too long—new hires are often more vulnerable to turnover because they have less invested in the organization. Consider conducting these interviews more than once in the first year of tenure with the organization, and annually thereafter.
- **Let employees know in advance the intent behind these meetings.** If they're aware that you're looking for their honest input, they'll have the chance to give thoughtful answers and insights.
- **Keep the discussion completely separate from performance reviews or other types of meetings.** (This is about the employee's needs, not about the employee's performance.)
- **Use the opportunity to express how much you value the employee.** This is a great time to communicate the organization's appreciation for their work.
- **Ask questions from both sides of the topic.** Ask about what makes the job one they want to keep, and also ask about what frustrations they have with the role or the organization.
- **Be sure to have methods in place to follow up on the information obtained during these interviews.** The only thing worse than not even asking what employees need is to ask and then completely ignore the answers. When making changes as a result of the information gained in these interviews, be sure to communicate about it—employees need to know their concerns were heard and are being addressed.
- **Pay attention to company culture before you begin.** If your organization does not have a culture of openness and trust, employees may view these interviews warily, and they may not be as forthcoming. If this is a concern, consider working on incrementally improving the company culture and sticking with more anonymous means of soliciting feedback until you're more confident that the opportunity to give feedback openly will be welcomed. That said, stay interviews can help to build trust, as long as the organization is transparent and sincerely acts upon the feedback given to show the employees their input is valued.

Sample stay interview questions

During their first three to six months on the job, new employees should have at least two stay interviews. At least once a year, in conjunction with their annual evaluation, established employees should have a stay interview. The employee's direct boss should conduct the stay interviews. This contributes to the development of a strong relationship based on confidence and open communication, and an employee's relationship with their boss has a huge impact on their decision to stay. According to research, the most common explanation for workers quitting is a lack of confidence in their boss. Some of the typical stay interviews questions include:

- **WHAT DO YOU LOOK FORWARD TO AT WORK EVERY DAY:** Dive right in and find out what motivates and excites workers about their jobs, the business, and their daily lives.
- **WHAT DO YOU DREAD ABOUT WORK EVERY DAY:** A stay interview aims to find out not only what your employees like about working for you, but also any complaints they might have that could lead them to look for work elsewhere.
- **WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE WAY EMPLOYEES ARE RECOGNISED:** 20% of companies with a culture that emphasizes employee recognition have [a 31% lower turnover rate](#). You must properly understand your people in a way that resonates with each person to keep them around. This question will help you understand how robust your employee appreciation program is and recognize various methods of acknowledgement that resonate with employees by asking it throughout stay interviews.
- **HOW WOULD YOU RATE YOUR WORK-LIFE BALANCE? HOW COULD IT BE IMPROVED:** Work-life balance, in addition to employee recognition, is a significant retention factor: [27% of people report leaving their job](#) due to a lack of work-life balance. Work-life balance must be changed if employees arrive early, stay late, and work into the wee hours of the night. To give workers more flexibility, consider adopting a [work-from-home program](#).
- **WHAT DO YOU ENJOY ABOUT THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE TO YOU? WHAT DO YOU DISLIKE:** Nobody wants to be stuck in their job. It's critical to make employee development a core component of your company culture, in addition to clearly defining career pathways and offering opportunities for advancement. After all, [94% of workers](#) say they would remain in their current position longer if they thought their employer was investing in their professional growth.
- **WHEN WAS A TIME, WITHIN THE PAST YEAR, THAT CAUSED YOU SIGNIFICANT ANXIETY OR FRUSTRATION:** The answers to this question will assist your team members in identifying notable and serious issues. Then, inquire about the root of the employee's anger in the situation. Inquire about the solution after they've clarified the problem: Is it possible for you to pinpoint what happened to make you relax? This set of questions is aimed at determining what motivates workers to leave. This set of questions would examine what motivates workers to leave and what stops them from

doing so.

- **WHEN WAS A TIME, WITHIN THE PAST YEAR, THAT YOU VIEW AS A “GOOD DAY” AT WORK:** Asking about a recent good day at work as an alternative to the previous query will reveal what the employee likes about their employment. They may describe a successful day as being noticed for their project success, being able to work from home, or not having to deal with a specific employee. Finally, the boss should be able to tell which aspects of the job or office have a positive effect on the employee's day-to-day life and which do not.
- **WHAT DOES YOUR DREAM JOB LOOK LIKE:** Due to the broad nature of this issue, employees will be forced to respond in whatever way is most appropriate and impactful to them. If an employee defines their ideal job as one that they can quit at the end of the day, they most likely do not have that luxury right now, and you should take notice to assess and enhance your work-life balance. Alternatively, an employee may state that their ideal job is a cross-functional role requiring frequent contact with coworkers, implying that they are likely feeling isolated in their current position.
- **WHAT DID YOU LOVE ABOUT YOUR LAST POSITION THAT YOU NO LONGER HAVE:** Get into the specifics of the employee's job duties and obligations. What is their new position do they dislike, and what do they wish they could keep from their former position? The answers to this question will assist managers in determining how they can enhance their direct reports' day-to-day experience.
- **WHAT DID YOU LOVE ABOUT YOUR LAST EMPLOYER THAT YOU NO LONGER HAVE:** The answers to this question would almost certainly take into account your company's culture, versatility, office climate, and employee perks and benefits. Combine answers to create a comprehensive picture of your shortcomings as a future employer. Then you will start addressing the most common issues and making significant changes to your office.
- **WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT ON YOUR WAY TO WORK:** The employee's change in attitude as they enter the office will be reflected in their answer to this query. If they're satisfied and enthusiastic about their jobs, their thoughts would ideally be optimistic. Alternatively, they can not even consider jobs. When an employee has negative thoughts about and/or while driving to work, this may mean dread and frustration, which is cause for concern.
- **WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT ON YOUR WAY HOME FROM WORK:** Likewise, the employee's answer should preferably convey a positive attitude toward work, but not necessarily toward leaving it. Of course, at the end of the day, people are eager to get back to their lives outside of the workplace, but you don't want the five o'clock whistle to be a long sigh of relief. You just don't want the workers to leave frustrated or upset by the day's events.
- **WHAT CAN I DO TO MAKE YOUR EXPERIENCE BETTER:** A direct manager should perform a stay interview because they are in the best position to effect improvement for the employee. A stay interview's three goals are as follows: 1) Find out what your employees like about your company; 2) find out what they don't like about your company, and 3) strengthen two-way contact between management and employees. This question addresses all three goals by allowing the employee to articulate what they

want in their job, as well as what they are currently dissatisfied with, and encouraging them to build confidence in the organization.

Use the above questions to start collecting valuable employee feedback during stay interviews. However, to convey your appreciation for the candidate and their value to the company, you must actively listen to what they have to say and ask thoughtful follow-up questions.

The effectiveness of stay interviews

Stay interviews are being used to keep staff involved and reduce turnover. Here are some examples of how stay interviews have reduced turnover:

- Through introducing stay interviews, a Florida hospital was able to minimize overall turnover by 37% and nurse turnover by 70%.
- Stay interviews helped a retirement group increase employee satisfaction by 100 per cent in the first 180 days.
- A call centre saw a 20% reduction in call centre employee turnover.

Using stay interviews, you can directly inquire about what is going well and what is not in terms of employee satisfaction. This allows you to fix any remaining problems until they become a major problem. More broadly, if several workers are experiencing the same problems, you might want to consider whether organizational-level improvements are appropriate. Furthermore, just sitting down with employees and having a conversation with them helps to establish a degree of confidence with them. Although few companies currently perform stay interviews, according to [DeLoatch](#), there is increasing interest in the practice: “A Challenger, Grey & Christmas study revealed that only 27% of companies conduct them, with another 24% interested in introducing them.”

“You don't know what you have until it's gone,” as the saying goes. The stay interview is a great way to stay in touch with your employees' perceptions of the company and their position within it and to help you address any problems before they become a source of employee turnover. Stay interviews help you to assess how your top performers feel about your business and find ways to keep them on board. Stay interviews can also help managers recognize areas in which employees' talents are underutilized and build opportunities for them to shine. Use what you've learned from the stay interviews to help the business improve for the better. By putting what you've learned from stay interviews into practice right away, you'll be able to improve company culture and create an atmosphere where everybody can do their best work.

Stay interviews will help keep highly respected workers on the job by reducing turnover. They do so by allowing HR to gather valuable information that can be used to predict when those workers will leave an organization. As a result, if you're an HR professional looking for a way to boost employee satisfaction, the stay interview is gold. It's easy to use, reliable, and inexpensive.

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