

Don't Be Caught Off-Guard: Stay Interviews Are a Smart Retention Tool



Exit interviews often fall into the too-little, too-late category. You may—or may not—learn why a valuable team member decided to leave, and there's no opportunity to proactively address issues that could have kept that employee engaged and within your ranks. How about implementing “stay interviews” instead?

Stay interviews aren't just for HR. They are a worthy tool for managers and supervisors to use as part of their regular performance/touch base discussions to help improve engagement among their staff.

To maintain goodwill with the company, during exit interviews outgoing employees often soft-pedal around reasons for departure, providing little insight to improve retention. In contrast, stay interviews identify concerns long before team members start sending resumes to the competition. Proactive, progressive companies use stay interviews to keep the pulse of top performers, helping maintain a high-performance workforce. With stay interview information in hand, you can take steps to increase workers' level of satisfaction and degree of engagement.

Engaged employees are deeply involved in their work, willing to give discretionary effort, and are loyal to the employer. They also make a direct, positive impact on the organization's bottom line. National studies and MRA's regional data show that only about one-third of employees are engaged.

You may learn that a salesperson looking for new ways to make contacts would be refreshed and excited by occasional workdays helping with community service projects. Another might reveal that flexible work hours are golden. Or that working from home one day a week would help maintain enthusiasm. Information that is so much more valuable to learn now than during an exit interview.



Be proactive. Stay interviews, used in conjunction with regular employee engagement surveys, can curb turnover by addressing employee engagement more effectively.

Stay interviews will give you some actionable information to help reduce the chance of unexpected departures. Stay interviews will also increase sensitivity to employees' varied motivators, reminding you that work situations quite acceptable, or even preferred, by one employee may be the exact reason another would take the first available exit ramp.

Stay interviews could include questions like:

- What parts of your job make you feel like you are doing important and meaningful work? How often do you feel that way?
- To what extent do you feel your suggestions are welcome?
- To what extent do you feel our company is open to change?
- To what extent do you feel recognized (by management, by supervisor/ manager) for your contributions at our company?
- Do you generally feel in the loop with what's going on?
- Do you feel that you have sufficient opportunities to develop professionally?
- Which projects that you have worked on in the last six months were the most satisfying for you and why?
- To what extent do you feel you can speak your opinions without negative consequences?
- How well do you feel communication is disseminated from the top of the company?
- Do you feel that you have the ability and resources to make things happen?
- If someone were to ask you about our company's culture, how would you describe it?
- What would tempt you to leave our company?
- What is the top reason you stay with our company?


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These one-on-one interviews are also a natural “mid-point checkup” between regular employee annual reviews or engagement surveys. Consider implementing a survey to establish a solid baseline of engagement and uncover strengths and opportunities to improve. Taking steps to address issues that a survey uncovers can lead to stronger employee performance, an employee’s willingness to go the extra mile, and increased retention. Now that’s “staying” power!

Take proactive measures to keep your top talent. Don’t wait to hear those dreaded words, “I’m leaving.” Work instead to hear, “I’m staying.”

MRA’s HR Hotline can help you!

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