

Stay Interviews: A Retention Tool All Managers Need to Use



Are your employees engaged?

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

How can that be changed? Be proactive.

Stay interviews

Used along with regular employee engagement surveys, stay interviews can curb turnover by addressing employee satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) more effectively.

While stay interviews will give you actionable information to help reduce the chance of unexpected departures, they will also increase awareness to employees' varied motivators, reminding you that work situations preferred by one employee may be the exact reason another would take the first available exit ramp.

For example, you may learn that a salesperson looking for new ways to make contacts would be thrilled by occasional workdays helping with community service projects. Another might tell you that flexible work hours are golden, or that working from home one day a week would be really appreciated. Information like this is so much more valuable to learn during a stay interview than during an exit interview.



Unfortunately, exit interviews fall into the too-little, too-late category. However, "stay interviews" are a great way to proactively address issues early on and help keep valuable employees onboard instead of watching them walk out the door.

During an employee's exit interview, the real reasons for leaving are often soft-pedaled around to avoid further conflict, providing little insight as to why the decision was made to leave.

On the contrary, stay interviews identify concerns long before employees start sending resumes to the competition. Proactive, progressive companies use stay interviews to keep a pulse on top performers and their degree of engagement.

The following questions are examples of what could be asked in stay interviews:

- 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 and opinions are welcomed?
- To what extent do you feel our company is open to change?
- To what extent do you feel recognized (by upper 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 were the most satisfying for you and why?
- 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 you like to do, but have been hesitant to ask? What would you like to stop doing, start doing, or learn to do?
- As your manager, what is one thing I could do that would make working here better for you?
- What would tempt you to leave our company?
- What is the top reason you stay with our company?


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Keep in mind that stay interviews are not performance review discussions. One-on-one stay interviews are meant to uncover the motivation and engagement level of your employees and can be done once a year, perhaps as a “midpoint checkup” between a regular employee annual review and engagement survey.

The key for managers is to act on the information provided during the stay interview. If nothing is done differently as a result of the feedback, this worthy retention tool will quickly be seen as a worthless waste of time. Don't let that happen! Keep your top talent happy and engaged by proactively conducting regular stay interviews and responding to their concerns and motivations.

MRA's HR Hotline can help you!

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