

Effective Exit Interviews

Interviewer's Guide

Use this meeting to uncover the reasons an employee chose to leave your company. Seek feedback that helps your organization make the changes necessary to prevent unwanted employee turnover in the future.

Purpose:

To learn how your organization can improve the employee experience going forward, leave the relationship with this ex-employee on a positive note, and identify if/how/when it may make sense to re-engage.

Expected Outcomes:

- A shared understanding of what attracted the employee to a new role, and
- A list of suggested improvements to your company's employee experience

Tips for Exit Interviews

Exit interviews provide an important opportunity to gain informed and sometimes brutally honest feedback. To maximize your chances of getting the most useful information, follow these tips.

Who to Interview

Seek to interview everyone who leaves voluntarily. Do not schedule exit interviews for people who are laid off, terminated, or furloughed.

When to Schedule Exit Interviews

Consider conducting exit interviews 1 - 2 weeks after the employee has left. The upside is that they typically feel more free to talk openly without fear of repercussions. The downside is that you can no longer rely on them to participate once they leave your employment.

Who Should Conduct the Interview

The most effective exit interviews are conducted by the manager once removed (i.e. the manager of the employee's manager), a neutral manager or employee mentor from another department, or a third party consultant. Because exit interviews can be emotionally charged, the person conducting the interview should have training in active listening and how to stay calm in highly emotional conversations. Exit interviews completed by HR or the employee's direct manager will often inhibit the employee from being completely honest.

How to Capture Feedback

Consider requesting a written exit interview via a short survey, then following up with a verbal exit interview at a later date. The written interview will help you prepare for the verbal interview and creates a useful resource for detecting trends across multiple exit interviews.

The interviewer will need to capture notes during the verbal interview so they can share this critical feedback with the people in the organization that can act on it. Seek to capture notes informally during the interview, then submit the key insights where they can be reviewed in conjunction with feedback from other exit interviews. As you prepare to share this feedback, remember that employees can be more candid when they know you will take steps to protect their confidentiality.



What to Expect

It is very common for employees to say that they are leaving because the new job offers a pay increase or a “better opportunity.” While this may be true, do not take these statements at face value.

Research shows that while employees do often receive pay increases in their new role, they typically don’t go looking based on pay alone. And you may need to ask more questions to uncover what that “better opportunity” entails.

The research shows that employees most often leave jobs for these reasons:

- Lack of trust or respect for their manager
- Micromanagement on the part of their manager
- Lack of flexibility in where and when they do their job
- Commute time
- They do not find their role challenging or stimulating
- Their workload has become unmanageable
- They do not feel appreciated or valued
- They do not see career advancement or the opportunity to learn new skills
- Bullying/harassment
- They are not inspired by what the company does
- The company’s values do not align with their own or they have observed behavior that is incongruent with the company’s stated values

The sample questions listed below will help you uncover feedback related to these common concerns.

How to Lead the Interview

The bulk of interview should feel like an informal conversation, with a lightly formal start and end.

1. Opening: Greet the employee and explain:
 - The purpose for the exit interview
 - Expectations around confidentiality
 - How the information they share with you will be used and shared within your organization
2. Ask questions and take notes. See the sample questions and tips below.
3. Thank the employee and confirm next steps.
Repeat what you heard as the top reasons the employee left, and ask them to confirm that you understood them correctly. Then, repeat your explanation about how the information will be handled internally. Finally, thank them for their time and for their feedback.

Sample Questions

This list of questions was derived from over 5,000 exit interviews. These questions are meant to be a guide only. Listen intently to the feedback you're receiving and let the conversation go where it needs to go to get to the crux of why the employee is leaving.

Tip: Any time you receive a negative reply, ask: Why not? What could we have done better?

1. Why did you start looking for another job?
2. What attracted you to the job you are taking over others you may have looked at?
3. What could we have done better to keep you?
4. Would you ever consider coming back to this organization? What would need to happen for you to do so?
5. On a scale of 1 - 10 (10 being best), please rate your overall experience working here. What did you enjoy the most? What did you enjoy the least?
6. On a scale of 1 - 10 (10 being best), please rate your ability to use your skills, abilities and experience in your work for our organization.
7. What percentage of time were you able to do work that you were good at and loved?
8. Did you have all of the tools, resources, and equipment you needed to do your job well?
9. Were you given adequate training to do your job well?
10. Was the job what you expected when you were hired?
11. Did you feel like you knew how to be successful in your job and how your success was measured?
12. Do you feel like this job helped to further your career?
13. Did you feel that your job was important?
14. How often were you praised when you did good work? All the time, Frequently, Sometimes, Never?
15. Were you given honest feedback about your performance?
16. Do you feel like you were listened to when you had new ideas or disagreed with something?
17. How would you describe this organization's culture?
18. How would you describe your manager?
19. Given the opportunity, would you work for your manager again?
20. How likely are you to recommend this organization to your friends?
21. What else would you like to tell us? Please feel free to be as honest as possible.

Useful Resources

You can find more excellent resources from Ignite Global on their website:

www.igniteglobal.com