

Understanding Why People Leave

In today's tight labor market, distributor managers have been tasked with finding ways to keep employees from seeking greener pastures. But don't think that once an employee tenders his/her resignation, all is lost. Managers often overlook a very important tool for discovering what keeps employees happy and satisfied: the exit interview.

By interviewing departing employees, you can ferret out key information regarding their satisfaction with their positions, working environment, pay, benefits, co-workers, etc.—information that you can use to help prevent other employees from leaving your company.

Before The Interview

Ask departing employees to fill out a pre-interview form as a springboard to a more productive exit interview. An example has been included for your own application. The answers on the form won't tell the whole story, but they will be useful for preparing specific follow-up questions for the exit interview itself. The form should cover basic questions like these.

- ▶ What are the primary reasons why you decided to leave your position?
- ▶ What did you like most about your job? Least?
- ▶ How did you feel about working with other employees in the department?
- ▶ In what way did this job fail to meet your career objectives?
- ▶ What would you have done differently if you'd been the manager?
- ▶ How would you evaluate your own performance?
- ▶ What part of dealing with other people did you find most frustrating?
- ▶ How would you rate your pay and benefits?
- ▶ How would you rate the training you received?
- ▶ If you could have made any job changes, what would they have been?
- ▶ Do you feel you were given ample opportunities for advancement?
- ▶ How would you rate your overall working conditions?
- ▶ Have you already accepted another job? If so, in what areas do you find your new job more attractive?

Interviewing employees to find out what will make them decide to stay or go doesn't have to occur only after the employee has decided to go. Try conducting a so-called entrance interview. With all new hires, take the time to find out what they expect from their jobs and the company.

Use this information to formulate employee-specific motivation strategies throughout their tenure. If and when an employee decides to leave, you can also compare the information from both the entrance and exit interviews.

During The Interview

It's important to make departing employees feel comfortable enough to answer your questions openly and honestly. You can do this by telling them how much you regret losing them. You can also reduce employees' defensiveness by making it clear what the interview is meant to accomplish; that is, you want to find ways in which the company can improve. Don't forget to state that anything they say during the interview will not be held against them or influence references. Finally, explain that you'll be taking notes so that key points are remembered.



Here are some examples of follow-up questions you may use during the exit interview, depending on how an exiting employee has filled out his/her pre-interview form.

1. What could have been done to make your job more interesting?
2. What skills do you most enjoy using and why? Were you able to use them in your position here?
3. What do you think you'll enjoy the most about your new job?
4. What made you unhappy about your job? In what ways do you think your new job will be an improvement?
5. Why do you feel your opportunities were limited here?
6. Do you feel you were given the necessary training to prepare you for promotion?

After The Interview

When the interview is over, go over your interpretation of what the employee said. Make sure they have a chance to ask questions, and most of all, thank the employee for their time and willingness to cooperate.

Remember, no amount of exit interviewing will help unless you investigate and act on the information you uncover. Share your findings with the appropriate people and make changes to policies or programs when necessary.

Try this: Some managers have found that conducting an exit interview while an employee is still on the payroll limits the productiveness of the interview. Feelings may be running high and employees may be afraid of burning bridges and tainting references. To solve this, you may want to try waiting one to three months after an employee leaves before conducting the interview. This way, the individual will feel more comfortable being honest.

Feel free to contact your Human Resource Consultant regarding the development of an effective exit interviewing process.

The updated Human Resource Management and Compliance Manual is now available.

Contact NWSA Headquarters to order your copy today!

Learn of ways at controlling employee turnover in your company.

Dan Golombieski
NWSA Human Resource Consultant

J.L. Nick & Associates, Inc.

4934 Peach Street
Erie, PA 16509
(814) 864-4052 (Voice)
(814) 864-1283 (Fax)
jlneck@erie.net (E-mail)

XYZ Company

Exit Interview Form

Employee: _____

Date: _____

Department: _____

Manager: _____

To Be Completed By The Employee:

1. What is your reason for leaving XYZ Company?

2. How did you feel about the quality of supervision you received?

3. How did you feel about your level of pay in relation to the job you had?

4. What did you think of the benefits programs offered?

EXIT INTERVIEW FORM

(Continued)

5. What were the things you liked most about working here?

6. What were the things you liked least about working here?

7. What changes would you suggest to make this a better place to work?

Reviewed By

Employee

Date

Date

When completed, the above responses are reviewed with the employee to ensure understanding. This form is then included in the employee personnel file.