

HR insights

Exit Interviews

Exit interviews are conducted by Human Resources when an employee is leaving the company. Some employers limit these interviews to employees who are resigning or retiring voluntarily, but some will conduct them for terminated and/or laid-off employees as well. The circumstances of the situation will likely dictate the appropriateness of an exit interview.

Typically, an exit interview can take two forms: face-to-face or a written questionnaire. Each has its own benefits and drawbacks. A face-to-face conversation may offer opportunity to delve deeper into topics and ask follow-up questions, but also may limit responses if the exiting employee is intimidated. Conversely, a written questionnaire may make the employee feel more comfortable and uninhibited, but can also be limiting due to its inflexible format.

What is the Value of an Exit Interview?

Exit interviews can be a valuable resource for a company to improve employee satisfaction and retention. There may have been issues with company policies, culture, personnel, management or ethics that caused the employee to leave the company; this is valuable information in deciding how to improve the company to avoid turnover. In addition, departing employees may suggest process improvements or training tips to help the position function more smoothly in the future. Employees who are leaving the company are often more likely to be candid in their responses,

because they no longer fear repercussions. However, if the company-employee relationship ended negatively, it is important to be mindful that the exiting employee may exaggerate or misrepresent their answers out of anger or disappointment.

An essential point to remember is that exit interviews are only as valuable as the company makes them. Many employers conduct exit interviews but then do nothing with the potentially beneficial

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information they gathered. In order for them to be effective, employers must take action to correct or improve problem areas that have been brought to their attention. By analyzing exit interview responses as an aggregate rather than individually, it may be easier to identify common areas of dissatisfaction.

Exit interviews can also uncover harassment or other legal concerns, and allow the employer to take action before the former employee turns to litigation. If the employee perceives that their claim is being taken seriously and that action will be taken, they may not pursue legal action. Also, it is always important to fully

document the interview and any steps taken thereafter in case the former employee does sue the company for any reason; the information gathered in the interview could possibly protect the company against the former employee's claims.

What Questions Should be Asked?

Having a structured set of questions is important to compare different people's answers against each other. But if the interview is face-to-face, remember to

allow for flexibility and ask follow-up questions to ensure thorough answers. Here are just a few ideas for relevant and appropriate questions to ask:

- Why have you decided to leave the company? (Only if they left voluntarily)
 - Have you shared your concerns with anyone in the company prior to this?
 - Was one incident responsible for your decision?
- What did you like and dislike about this company?



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- What did you like and dislike about your position?
 - What would you change about either?
- How was your relationship with your manager/supervisor?
 - What could they have done differently or better?
- Did you receive adequate training to do your job properly?
- Did you receive adequate feedback on your performance?
- Were your manager's expectations of you clearly articulated?
- Did anyone in this company discriminate against you, harass you or cause hostile working conditions?
- Would you consider working for this company again in the future? Would you recommend it as a good place to work for your friends and family?
- Do you have any other suggestions or recommendations for areas we could improve?
- If applicable, also consider asking questions about their perception of company culture, values, ethics, management styles, benefits and any other relevant topics. Don't forget to explore their answers and ask follow-ups – make it a conversation, not an interrogation.

Feedback is Always Important

Though the exit interview process can be very valuable to employers, it should not be the only time that employees are asked to provide feedback. The best way to retain employees is to make sure they are currently satisfied and attempt to remedy any dissatisfaction before they leave the company. Offer frequent opportunities for feedback through surveys, department meetings or suggestion forms.