



## **Employee Retention: Five Things I've Learned from Exit Interviews**

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Exit interviews are a common practice when an employee vacates their job. They are a constructive way for the employee to provide feedback about the company, feedback about their specific job, promote change or improvement, and air any grievances. But what are we actually doing with the information compiled during these exit interviews?

Often this information is just placed in their employee file and forgotten about, even when we have the best intentions. But what if we really used this information to its fullest as opportunities for growth within our company?

In my years of conducting exit interviews, there has been a theme of five main takeaways:

#### **Lesson One: Provide Thorough Onboarding and Training**

Too many times we hear of new employees complaining about their former employer's training program, or lack thereof I should say. Generally, a new employee is provided anywhere between a few hours to a couple of days of training, then they are thrown into the thick of things and expected to sink or swim in their new role. First, this doesn't exactly show that we value them as an employee. We are not setting them up for success in their new role or providing them with the necessary tools to feel confident. Second, it doesn't show that we value their role in our organization. Take for example a client service representative. If we do not give them adequate training, it doesn't show that we value our client experience very highly. By doing this, employees are often left with an unsuccessful feeling and usually a general distaste for their new job.

The same is true for onboarding. Really welcoming your new employee to the team can go a long way. Give them introductions with each staff member and time to get to know them and about their individual role within your company.

By providing thorough training and onboarding, employees are shown early on that they are valued and that your company also values their role in your organization.

## **Lesson Two: Show Appreciation**

Not receiving enough appreciation is a common complaint. I hear, "I don't feel appreciated" way too much, especially in this field. Let's face it, we're busy and often understaffed which can make it difficult to find quality time to show appreciation. But it's so important we find the time to do this. Instead of trying to show blanket appreciation (appreciation that's a one-kind-fits all) ask your staff how they best feel appreciated. It will likely look different for each individual team member. For some it might look like verbal praise after a job well done, for others it might look like a small treat or reward, and for others it might look like time away from work. It's key to find out how your staff best feels appreciated and to follow through with that type of appreciation and to give it frequently.

## **Lesson Three: Provide Feedback**

I often hear from employees that they do not feel they were provided enough feedback about their performance. When I dig deeper, it actually becomes clear that they may not recognize feedback when they are receiving it. Staff tends to equate a formal annual review with feedback and little else. It goes without saying that feedback should not be held back and saved for an annual review. In fact, it should be given regularly. Employees desperately crave knowing how they are performing, whether it's good or has room for improvement. They can't fix what they don't know and our inherent nature as human beings is to do a good job. Set your employees up for doing a good job by providing them with constant feedback – both positive and constructive. You may even frame it with, "I'm going to give you some feedback..."

## **Lesson Four: Support a Good Manager-Employee Relationship**

It's well known that employees don't quit a job, they quit managers. Employees can generally overlook things in a company they don't always like or agree with, but when it comes directly from their supervisor or manager, it's much harder to overlook. Now I'm not saying become close friends with all your employees. What I am saying is have an open door for them and support them in the ways they are asking for it. For some this may mean just general job support, but for others, having a manager that cares about them on a personal level, listens to them when they need to vent about home life, and is generally there for them in times of need is highly valued. I know our lives as managers get busy, but make the time for frequent one on ones with your staff members. You will find that just as your team members are unique individuals, they will use those one on one times uniquely as well. Get to know your employees and work to support a good working relationship with them.

## **Lesson Five: Conduct Stay Interviews**

Stay interviews are a great way to get feedback from employees you may not get under any other circumstance. Stay interviews are generally conducted to help understand why employees choose to stay at their jobs and what might cause them

to leave. By conducting stay interviews with your employees on a semi-regular basis, you can actually better retain those employees. For instance, let's say an employee says at their stay interview they don't feel they have received feedback about their performance and go home every day unsure if they are doing a good job or not. This is the opportunity for you to change this. You control this. You can provide feedback in that moment and also schedule regular touch bases for you to give more constant feedback. By learning about this employee's complaint during a stay interview versus an exit interview, you are able to implement change and retain this employee – which as we know is far better than losing them and having to recruit, hire, train, etc. a new employee.

Exit interviews are often a bittersweet opportunity to get valuable feedback and information. It's important we use this information in some way to benefit our companies and our employees.