

# HR Insights

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## Stay Interviews

Employers are always seeking ways to retain their valuable employees. Unfortunately, it can be difficult figuring out exactly why workers jump ship. Instead of waiting for a two weeks' notice, many employers are conducting stay interviews as a way to head off potential departures.

### What Are Stay Interviews?

Stay interviews are usually once-a-year meetings conducted with each employee and their supervisor. Unlike performance reviews, these meetings focus on an existing employee's attitude toward an organization.

Specifically, stay interviews attempt to discover the following:

- What makes an employee want to work for the organization
- What makes an employee want to stop working for the organization
- What aspects of the organization need to be addressed to make working there more attractive to employees

### Why Are Stay Interviews Important?

Stay interviews help employers discover issues before they manifest into employee departures. Moreover, they help employees feel heard by their employers—showing them that the employer cares enough about retaining them to improve workplace operations.

Giving employees this level of attention is critical, considering the tight labor market. Even if an employee is resolved to leave, understanding their motivations for doing so can help you retain other employees who may feel similarly. Stay interviews

enable you to learn this information sooner and address those issues head-on.

### What Do Stay Interviews Look Like?

Typically, managers or direct supervisors would conduct stay interviews with each of their employees. However, if the manager-employee relationship isn't great, having another person—potentially from HR—conduct the interview would be better, as its results hinge on transparency from both parties.

Since the intent is to have a frank discussion about the employee's disposition, whoever handles the interview must position it properly. Prior to and during the meeting, employees should understand they're being interviewed because the employer wants them to be happy with their work environment—not to punish them for any qualms they may have with it.

The meetings do not need to be long, but they should all happen around the same time period. This way, managers can quickly assess all the feedback and implement changes as needed. To that end, consider holding stay interviews each year when your business cycle typically slows.

### Sample Stay Interview Questions

What managers ask during a stay interview will differ depending on the organization and the employee,



but here are a sample of questions that could be asked, sorted by category:

## Questions About Motivations for Staying

- What motivates you to work here?
- What do you like most about your role?
- What's your favorite part of the workday?
- If you had to rate how happy you are with your job, what would you give it on a 10-point scale?
- Can you tell me about a good day at work you had recently?
- If a close friend asked you why you work here, what would you tell them?

## Questions About Motivations for Leaving

- What demotivates you when working?
- Can you describe a bad day you recently had at work?
- What aspects of your day make your work life harder?
- If you could choose, what aspect of your job would you change?
- What are your thoughts in the morning on your way to work?
- What do you like least about your job?

## General Probing Questions

- Do you feel appreciated?
- If you could change any aspect of the organization or your job, what would it be?
- What would cause you to consider leaving the organization?
- Where do you see yourself in five years?
- How do you prefer to receive recognition for hard work?

## Addressing Feedback

After all the stay interviews are complete, managers should compile feedback and determine aspects to focus on. It's important to take swift action, even if it's just starting a longer process. If managers sit on the feedback too long,

employees may feel like their voices were not heard and may not speak up in the future about how their feeling.

If your organization cannot implement changes for whatever reason, be sure to communicate that to employees. Do your best to offer alternative solutions so employees know that their feedback was seriously considered.

## Conclusion

Stay interviews are a way to show employees that you value their work and are committed to improving their work lives whenever possible. It's important to reaffirm the purpose of the interviews so employees feel welcome to share their feedback, regardless of how negative it may be. Keep in mind that it's better to hear tough feedback before an employee leaves than when they're out the door.

Speak with QBS to learn about other workplace strategies that can help you retain valuable employees.