

# Increasing Retention Through Stay Interviews

As companies try to increase hiring and retention in this current environment of labor shortages and high turnover, conducting stay interviews can be a helpful resource to maintaining current staff.

## What is a stay interview?

While a stay interview may sound like a last-ditch effort to keep a resigning employee, it's actually a proactive tool for taking the time to talk with long-term staff about the parts of their role that keep them coming to work every day. A stay interview serves to reveal what makes a great employee stick around or move on. These discussions can also be a great tool for building trust between managers and their direct reports.

A stay interview is a chance to gain information and insight into the pros and cons of working with your company, and enables leaders to make changes, or enhance benefits, that encourage employees to stay long-term.

During the interview, which should be informal and friendly, managers have an open conversation with current employees to assess their job satisfaction as well as why employees are "staying" with your company. During a stay interview, you may ask your employees several questions with the goal of learning both what makes your company a good place to work as well as what may need improvement to increase employee retention.

There are several benefits of conducting stay interviews, including that these interviews can:

- ▲ Show your employees that you care about their thoughts and feelings regarding work.
- ▲ Assess the health of your company culture.
- ▲ Help you build trust with your employees.
- ▲ Create an inexpensive tactic to increasing retention.
- ▲ Increase the communication between you and your employees.
- ▲ Allow for a mutual conversation between you and an employee regarding their current stance on work.



- ▲ Give you viable information needed to make positive changes within the workplace.
- ▲ Provide you with patterns and data related to your employee turnover rates.
- ▲ It addresses problems that the company may have been unaware of.

The following are steps you can take to conduct the most effective stay interviews:

1. Schedule stay interviews ahead of time and detail what to expect.

Send an invitation to your employee and let them know that you are scheduling a "stay interview" with them in advance of the meeting – don't spring the interview on them randomly. Be open about the reason for the discussion and let them know what they can expect during your chat. This sets the tone for having a meaningful conversation and gives employees time to prepare for the interview and ensures they are not taken by surprise when called in for a stay interview.

2. Conduct stay interviews in a comfortable environment for employees.

Choose a quiet and neutral area to perform the interview/discussion. Rather than in an office behind

a closed door (which could be intimidating), have the meeting take place in a more casual setting such as a break room, outside seating area or shared office space. The more comfortable employees feel during stay interviews, the more likely they are to be willing to answer questions and communicate in a positive and helpful way.

### 3. Be smart about the questions you ask.

Asking the right questions during the stay interview may be the most important component of the process. The questions you ask should be beneficial to both your company as well as the employee and should be asked in a way that encourages employees to be open and honest. Your questions should also portray that you care about the employee's opinion and that what they say will be taken seriously.

### 4. Show your appreciation for the employee and their time.

One of the best ways to make an employee feel welcomed and willing to share about their experiences with the company, is to make sure that you let them know how much their work, efforts and time are appreciated. This is also a great time to express gratitude for their willingness to participate in the interview and provide such valuable information.

### 5. Follow up after the interviews.

Following up with employees after the interview shows that you appreciated their time and that you were truly listening during the interview. A follow-up email with a mention of something specific discussed should suffice.



### 6. Use the information gathered to make positive changes.

Don't just gather information and file it away – use the employee's feedback to initiate positive changes that address areas of weakness that could lead to turnover. Additionally, work to enhance and strengthen items that the employee noted as reasons for remaining an employee with the company. Decide how you will use the information ahead of time and then take action as soon as the interviews are complete to show employees you are serious about their feedback and improving the company where needed.

### Sample Stay Interview Questions

In an effective stay interview, managers ask standard, structured questions in a casual and conversational manner. Interviews should take less than half an hour.

The following are questions you may ask during a stay interview. You should have several open-ended questions on hand. It's important to listen and gather ideas from the employee about how you and your organization can retain him or her.

- ▲ What is the most exciting part of your job?
- ▲ What aspect of your job do you wish you could change?
- ▲ What factors contribute to you doing your best work?
- ▲ What do you look forward to when you come to work each day?
- ▲ What do you like most or least about working here?
- ▲ What keeps you working here?
- ▲ If you could change something about your job, what would that be?
- ▲ What would make your job more satisfying?
- ▲ How do you like to be recognized?
- ▲ What talents are not being used in your current role?
- ▲ What would you like to learn here?
- ▲ What motivates (or demotivates) you?
- ▲ What can I do to best support you?
- ▲ What can I do more of or less of as your manager?
- ▲ What might tempt you to leave?