

Stay Interview Best Practices

As you begin to implement stay interviews in your agency, keep in mind some of the following best practices:

- Conduct the interviews individually. These conversations should not occur a group setting. Employees must feel that they are the focal point and not one of many. This will help supervisors to create individualized strategies to keep their employees as well as strategies to stop or off-set reasons why employees would leave. Consider an offsite interview if possible to reduce tension/hesitation.
- Many employees may not be familiar with the concept of Stay Interviews and may view them negatively at first. It's best to start off by explaining why you are conducting the interview and what type of information you'll be discussing. Your goal is to gain insight into what motivates and frustrates your employees, what they value in the agency and how to support, develop and retain them. You want build and strengthen your relationship, and ultimately discover the key to keeping their engagement levels high.
- Avoid "Yes/No" (closed-ended) questions. Your goal is to learn specific information. The feedback you receive will be much richer by asking questions such as: Which aspects of your job make you eager to get into the office each day? Which aspects cause a feeling of dread? Why have you chosen to stay at our agency? What do you find most rewarding about your work? If you could change one thing about our division/section or about the entire agency, what would it be?
- Listen to your employees. Don't guide the conversation into what you want to hear or do. Instead, pay attention to what gets the employee excited and engaged. Take notes and stay focused on the answers you receive. Probe deeper into responses that are not clear or may have more behind them. When it is time to talk, it is not the venue to get defensive if you disagree with an employee's concerns or comments. Ask questions that puts the employee in his/her manager's shoes (how would *you* manage you?).
- Try to be creative in finding solutions that could be a win/win for the employee, you and the agency. At the same time, it is also important to be honest. If there are areas where you as a manager can't make the change possible, be clear with the employee up front.
- Do not negotiate. Remember, the purpose of the stay interview is to proactively gain useful information, show appreciation and remind employees that they are important to the agency.
- Show follow through. Make sure you have genuine intention to make changes as a result of the interview. Supervisors should let their staff know what they hope to do to make improvements, including the anticipated timelines and plans.
- One final consideration is timing. Don't wait until there's a noticeable morale problem to launch stay interviews. Making them a routine part of your agency culture will show that you are sincerely interested in boosting job satisfaction.

Sources:

<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jon-younger/the-human-element-impleme_b_259040.html>

<<http://www.talentmgt.com/articles/five-steps-to-effective-stay-interviews>>

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Stay Interview Questions

WHAT DO YOU LIKE?

1. On your way to work each day, what parts of the day do you most look forward to?
 - a. What can make a great day for you?
2. What motivation factors in your current role do you like best and that you would like “more of?”
3. What factors would you miss most if you changed your role or moved to a completely different job?
4. What do you least enjoy?
 - a. What parts challenge you more than others?
 - b. Can you tell me about any frustration factors that keep you up at night, that enter your mind while driving to work, or that cause you to dread having to come to work at all?

RETENTION (STAY FACTORS)

1. How long have you been at [Agency Name] and why do you stay?
2. If you have ever been asked by a friend or co-worker, can you tell me what reasons you gave them for wanting to stay with our agency?
3. How much does the type of work you do impact your decision to stay?
4. Can you tell me about other factors, besides the type of work you do, that cause you to enjoy your current job and work situation (including agency mission, customers, location, rewards/benefits, coworkers, management etc.), and as a result, contribute to your desire to stay.
5. Do you feel that your work makes a difference in the agency and that externally it has a noticeable impact on customers and the citizens of Ohio?
 - a. What accomplishment have you felt good about during your time here?

LEARNING/CAREER GROWTH

LEARNING/TRAINING

1. Is the agency providing you with opportunities to grow and develop as a person and as a professional?
 - a. What opportunities for self-improvement would you like to have that go beyond your current role?
 - b. How would you apply these opportunities to the work of the agency?
2. How do you learn best? By doing? By observing? By attending training?
3. Have you taken advantage of independent training opportunities either through your bargaining contract, exempt development, or some other training benefit? Why or why not?

CAREER GROWTH

1. Do you feel your talents, skills and interests are “fully utilized” in your current role?
 - a. If so, can you identify the factors that make you feel fully utilized?
2. Do you feel your time is fully and appropriately used in your current role? Why or why not?
3. Are there additional things that we can do to more fully take advantage of your talents, skills and interests?
4. Do you know what career opportunities you’d like to pursue with our agency? Within the State?
5. Do you feel those opportunities are available here?
6. Do you have a desire to move into a leadership role, and if so, what are your expectations, timetable, and concerns?
7. Are there actions that we can take to further challenge you?

FLIGHT RISK

1. What did you love in your last position that you’re not doing now?
2. Over the past year, have you had days when your frustration level was high enough that you considered leaving?
 - a. What kind of “triggers” or negative factors led to that frustration?
 - b. Can you also help me understand what eventually happened to lower that frustration level?
 - c. Are you still experiencing these triggers?
3. If you decided to leave this agency, would you stay in state employment? Why or why not?
4. What's the single most meaningful action I could take to address this issue?

HOW CAN I HELP?

1. What can I do to make your experience at work better for you?
 - a. Are there things I could do more of?
 - b. If you “managed yourself,” what would you do differently (in relation to managing “you”), that I, as your current supervisor, don’t currently do?
2. Do you feel that you have the necessary control over your job to perform most successfully and productively?
3. What kinds of flexibility would be helpful to you in balancing your work and home life?
4. If you had a magic wand, what would be the one thing you would change about your work, your role and your responsibilities? The division/section? The agency?

VALUED IN THE AGENCY

1. Do you feel that you are part of the agency’s bigger vision and mission? Why or why not?
2. Do you believe that your work has meaning?
 - a. How can we work together to make your work more meaningful?
3. Are you listened to and valued — do you feel that your co-workers and teammates listen to and respect you? Do they value your ideas, inputs, and decisions?
 - a. Would you say the same for our management team?
 - b. How can that area be improved?
4. Do you respect the amount and kind of leadership that you receive from the senior managers? Why or why not?
5. Do you trust the senior leaders? Why or why not?
6. Can you highlight any recent recognition and acknowledgment that you have received that increased your commitment and loyalty?
 - a. Are there actions that we can take to further recognize you?

Sources:

The Stay Interview - A Manager's Guide to Keeping The Best and Brightest by Richard P. Finnegan

Stay Interviews: an Essential Tool for Winning 'the War to Keep Your Employees' By [Dr. John Sullivan](#)
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<<http://hiring.monster.com/hr/hr-best-practices/recruiting-hiring-advice/interviewing-candidates/stay-interview-questions.aspx>>

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