

TRUE STAR LEADERSHIP™

STAY INTERVIEWS: The stay interview is a proactive approach to help your organization retain employees by understanding why individuals are staying and what, if anything, might entice them to leave. The information gathered during the stay interview process can improve job postings, recognition programs, and organizational retention incentives.

STAY INTERVIEW PROCESS: Stay Interviews should be conducted on an annual basis with those employees who continue to perform at high levels and are genuinely engaged in the organization's mission, i.e., your best employees. They should be conducted by their direct supervisors who have been adequately trained in asking curious questions and active listening.

The supervisor should send a calendar invite explaining to the employee that they would like to better understand the employee motivation to stay with the company and what frustrates them the most about the present working conditions. The goal is to better understand why the individual is staying in the organization, what their friction points are, and how the manager can support them.

It is essential as the manager is questioning the employee that they listen to what the employee is saying verbally and non-verbal and dig deep into their answers to ensure they are getting the root cause of why the employee continues to stay with the organization. As a word of caution, it is critical that the manager not project their thoughts about the organization on the employee by giving them time to answer the questions independently. For example, an individual may say they stay at the organization for the money. However, most likely, they could earn the same level of money elsewhere, so what makes them remain beside the money. Is it their commute? Is it the company culture? Is it their teammates? It is how they are valued?

The process should be informal, and although below is a list of questions, it is more important to be curious to learn as much as possible about why the employee is staying. As challenges arise in the stay interview, the manager should engage the employee in the problem-solving process to develop solutions even before the interview is over. The manager should be adept at capturing the answers so all the responses can be tabulated together and trends and opportunities can be found.

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Questions:

Positive Work Traits

1. On your way to work each day, what parts of the day do you most look forward to?
2. What would you miss if your job changed or your responsibilities shifted?
3. If you could change one thing about your job, what would it be?
4. What would make your job more satisfying?
5. Where do you find the most challenge in your job?
6. How do you know when you have been successful?

Retention:

- What factors make you want to stay with the organization?
- 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 and, as a result, contribute to your desire to stay?
- In talking with your friends or family, what reason do you give them for staying with our organization?
- How much does the type of work you do impact the reason you want to stay?
- How do you know you are making progress at work?

Learning and Career Growth:

1. What are you learning at work?
2. What opportunities are you taking advantage of to grow your skills?
3. Do you feel your talents/skills are being "fully utilized" in your current job? If not, what other ways could you help the organization?
4. How do you envision your career path growing at our company? Do you know what skills, knowledge, and ability you need to achieve this goal?

Flight Risk:

1. When did you last consider leaving the organization? What prompted it?
2. What causes friction in your everyday job that makes you frustrated?
3. What did you love about your last job that you are not doing now?
4. How do you personally deal with the day-to-day frustration of the job?
5. What might tempt you to leave now?

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Support:

1. What roadblocks are getting in your way from being successful?
2. What can I do to better support you?
3. What can the organization do to better support you?
4. What tools, knowledge, or ability would help you do your job better?
5. What system/process changes would help you do your job better?
6. Do you feel that you have enough control of the factors to make you successful at your job?
7. How can I help you have better progress toward your goals?

Final Questions:

1. If you could change one thing about this organization, what would it be?
2. What else should I know?
3. How do you like to be recognized for your efforts? Public or Privately?
4. How often should we touch base to make sure you have everything to be successful in your job?
5. Who else do you think would benefit me to talk to to learn more about how the team sees the organization?

Note of Caution: *The employee will supply feedback about the organization or the manager. The manager cannot respond defensively. They should ask follow-up questions to understand precisely the employee's point of view better. Although the manager may disagree with what the employee is saying, what matters most is that the employee is sharing their perspective. By listening, we can start working to better understand beyond our viewpoint.*

Data must be collected on the interviews and correlated together to get a complete understanding of why individuals stay at the organization and what can be improved to retain them in your organization. It also helps to understand better the "type" of employee whom the organization wants to hire.

Resource:

The Stay Interview by Richard Finnegan

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Stay Interview Checklist

- Create a list of employees who are engaged in the mission of the organization and perform at high levels
- Schedule a one-hour meeting with them
- Review proactive listening skills
- Interview Employees
- Ask questions about
 - *Positive Work Traits* - On your way to work each day, what parts of the day do you most look forward to?
 - *Retention* - What factors make you want to stay with the organization?
 - *Learning and Career Goals* – What opportunities are you taking advantage of to grow your skills?
 - *Flight Risks* – What causes you frustration daily?
 - *Support* – What support do you need to do your job well?
 - *Recognition* – What recognition do you like to receive?
- Compile the information into the trends you heard during the interview
 - Why are people staying?
 - What would cause someone to leave?
- Decide what actions the organization can take to increase employee retention
- Create an Action Plan start with the easy and build to the hard
- Take Action
- Repeat regularly