

## EXIT INTERVIEWS

### What is an Exit Interview?

An exit interview is a discussion that allows a departing employee and their agency to exchange information, usually on that employee's last day of work. Typically, the exit interview is an opportunity for the employee to explain their reasons for leaving and provide feedback about their experience working for the organization.

### BEST PRACTICES & TIPS

- Exit interviews should be conducted with all exiting employees, regardless of performance level or reason for leaving (e.g., transfers out of agency, resignation, involuntary termination) because all employees may be able to provide valuable insight into workplace issues and potential solutions.
- However, if an employee will need a reference (e.g., has not been offered another position), it is usually best to just meet briefly (see fourth bullet) and ask the questions in a post-exit interview 2-8 weeks after the employee leaves. Employees who will need a reference are less likely to be candid, which can steer you in the wrong direction. Let the employee know that you would like to contact them later.
- Exit interviews should be conducted by a 2<sup>nd</sup> line or 3<sup>rd</sup> line manager, not the direct supervisor. This helps ensure employees know that the information they provide will be given serious consideration. Be sure to let employees know the process for how the information provided will be used.
- Conduct exit interviews as soon as employee gives notice. This allows for time to reschedule, if necessary, or to schedule a follow-up meeting. Often, exiting employees haven't had time to reflect on their *real primary reason* for leaving and are willing to talk more later after having time to consider some of the questions.

## EXIT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

**1) Why did you begin looking for a new job?**

This question provides insight into whether there was a specific trigger that sparked the search that could be addressed.

**2) What ultimately led you to accept the new position?**

This question allows you to contrast what your agency offers compared to another organization.

**3) Did you feel that you were equipped to do your job well?**

The question may provide information you can immediately use by helping you better retain the employee you hire next.

**4) How would you describe the culture of our agency? Follow-up by asking for specific examples.**

This question may help you identify trends regarding real concerns. Identifying trends can also help you separate legitimate concerns from the personal opinion of employees who are emotional or feel negatively about your agency. Follow-up by asking for specific examples which may reveal problems that can easily be fixed.

**5) What could have been done for you to remain employed here?**

This direct question will give employees an opportunity to open up where they may have been afraid to before.

**6) Did you share your concerns with anyone in the agency prior to leaving?**

This question points back to your culture and whether your employee felt comfortable to share concerns with superiors or coworkers. The key here is to understand if you promote an environment where employees feel safe and comfortable to voice their opinions.

**7) If you could change anything about your job or the agency, what would you change?**

This question will help the employee focus in on the biggest or most important reason they're leaving your agency. This is also a non-confrontational way to encourage them to reveal the real reason they're leaving, as it isn't asking what they didn't like, but what they would change. It shifts their answer from a complaint to a suggestion, which many people feel more comfortable providing.

**8) Management is often a key factor in an employee's decision to leave. Were you satisfied with the way you were managed?**

Use this question to understand if there are any issues or direct problems to help you take preventative measures from losing future talent.

**9) Did you have clear goals and objectives?**

Employees don't like feeling like they're just a cog in the machine. This question will let you know if the employee felt that their work mattered and helped drive towards a greater goal.

**10) Did you receive constructive feedback to help you improve your performance?**

Employees don't want to feel like they're stagnant. Understanding their personal objectives and helping them improve their skill sets should be a key area of focus.

**11) How can our agency improve training and development and career growth opportunities?**

Asking employees for their suggestions on how to improve career growth can be invaluable.

**12) Would you consider coming back to work here in the future? In what area or function? What would need to change?**

Find out if employees would ever consider coming back. It could be that they just want to gain experience in a particular role, or something else that could be provided down the road. Regardless, this is great information to have if different roles of interest open up.

#### Additional / Optional Questions

- What led you to accept your current position with our agency?
- Were your expectations of the job and this agency met? If not, why?
- What, if anything, do you wish you had known before you took the job?
- How well were your talents and skills used in the completion of projects?
- Was your career path and future with our agency made clear to you?
- What were the positive aspects about your job, manager, and/or the agency that caused you to stay as long as you did?
- What do you consider to be the biggest challenge this agency now faces and needs to overcome?
- In your opinion, what were the top three barriers to productivity in your job or division/work unit?
- What would you suggest to management to make our agency a better place to work?
- What advice would you give your replacement?
- Would you recommend this agency to others as a place to work? Why or why not?
- Would you consider re-employment?
- What, if anything, could have been done to prevent you from leaving?
- Do you have any objection to our sharing your comments with management?
- Did you find your new job, or were you recruited?
- Did you witness any violations of laws or policies?
- Were you a victim of any type of harassment or bullying?
- Were you ever asked to do anything unethical?