



# Best Practices

FOR EXIT STRATEGIES



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While exit interviews come at the heels of an employee leaving your organization, they can present a hidden opportunity for HR Leaders. When approached the right way, exit interviews can be used to gather information, boost working conditions for employees, and improve company culture, but that doesn't mean they're always easy.

There are many reasons why people change jobs. Sometimes, those reasons have nothing to do with your organization. But other times, the employee's departure is the direct result of a hostile work environment, unsafe working conditions, harassment, or a lack of competitive benefits. All of these can be addressed, but the company must know about the problem to solve it. An exit interview provides that opportunity.

To help you make exit interviews a positive experience, here are four practical strategies for HR leaders to conduct an effective exit interview.



## 1. Select the Right Interviewer

The purpose of an exit interview is for a company to understand why an employee is leaving. This way, the company can make the necessary adjustments to prevent other workers from experiencing similar drawbacks and giving notice.

Exit interviews should provide employees with a safe environment to share their thoughts without the worry of repercussions. If the person conducting the exit interview is the employee's direct supervisor, it's unlikely the employee will feel comfortable sharing the truth behind their departure, even though they're leaving.

Instead, choose a member of the HR team to conduct the exit interview. This will create a neutral, comfortable environment for the employee to open up about why they're leaving and hopefully generate useful information.

## 2. Communicate the Purpose

Tell the employee why an exit interview is being held and who will hear the information shared. If employees understand your intentions and why they're being asked to participate in an exit interview, they'll be more likely to be active participants.

If the person conducting the interview is genuinely interested and transparent, the employee will be more likely to provide unfiltered feedback. If the interviewer is merely checking a box and running through a standardized list of questions, an employee might feel this exercise is merely procedure and not worth their time.

## 3. Keep It Broad

The purpose of an exit interview is to ascertain the truth behind why an employee is leaving the organization. To do so, it's important to not ask about certain individuals, entertain office gossip, or ask the employee to reconsider their departure. Employees will likely be hesitant to share information going into the exit interview, especially before the purpose of the conversation has been communicated.



If questions pertain to specific individuals or instances, then the employee might feel a case is being built against them and raise their guard. Remember, just because an employee is leaving the company, it doesn't mean they aren't worried about future references and severance benefits.



## 4. Process the Feedback

Once the exit interview is complete, you'll likely have a new data set of information that can be used constructively, but that data will be worthless if you don't know how to process it. The first thing to do is document what was said. Write everything down and compare it with the feedback from previous exit interviews with employees in the same role or under the same department head. Examine the responses for trends.

Then, regardless of the positive or negative nature of the feedback, it's important to share the information and any concerns you've extrapolated with the correct people. Being transparent and proactive can help address internal issues in any company before they devolve or worsen. As an HR Leader, know who those people are before the interview takes place so you're prepared to handle matters swiftly.

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**Anytime someone exits the company, there is always the potential for temperatures to rise. But understanding the purpose behind an employee exit interview, choosing the right interviewer, and knowing how to process the feedback will help you create a comfortable environment for an impactful conversation that can improve working conditions for current employees.**