

EXIT INTERVIEWS – Tool to Help Retain Talented Workforce

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ABSTRACT

An exit interview is a survey conducted with an employee who is leaving an organisation. The purpose of exit interview is to take feedback from employees in order to improve aspects of the organization, better retain employees, and reduce turnover. Employees quit their job for many reasons. Some reasons are not under the control of employer but, the majority of reasons why employees quit their job are under the control of the employer. The employer should conduct exit interviews to know the reasons why employee is leaving the job, so that employer can influence the employee for not leaving the job and remain in the organisation. Best way to retain employees is to stay in touch with them. Finding whether their needs are met or not, whether they are happy with their job, whether their problems are solved, whether they are getting proper feedback from their boss? The present paper states the benefits of exit interview and to know the reasons behind employee exit.

Keywords: *Exit Interview, Employee, Employer.*

I. INTRODUCTION

An exit interview is a survey conducted with an individual who is separating from an organization or relationship. Most commonly, this occurs between an employee and an organization, a student and an educational institution, or a member and an association. An organization can use the information gained from an exit interview to assess what should be improved, changed, or remain intact. More so, an organization can use the results from exit interviews to reduce employee, student, or member turnover and increase productivity and engagement, thus reducing the high costs associated with turnover.

An exit interview is a tool that assesses:

- What drives an individual to leave an organisation
- The aspects the employee valued
- What the individual thinks needs to improve in order to increase employee engagement, performance, and loyalty.

The exit interview fits into the separation stage of the employee life cycle (ELC). This stage, the last one of the ELC, spans from the moment an employee becomes disengaged until his or her departure from the organization. This is the key time that an exit interview should be administered because the employee's feelings regarding his or her departure are fresh in mind. An off-boarding process allows both the employer and employee to properly close the existing relationship so that company materials are collected, administrative forms are completed, knowledge base and projects are transferred or documented, feedback and insights are gathered through exit interviews, and any loose ends are resolved.

In the past, exit interview data was being collected by the organization but not much was being done in terms of interpreting the data and making it actionable. Today there are metrics, analytics, benchmarks, and best practices that help organizations make sense of and use the data towards proactive organizational retention programs. Recently an array of exit interview software has been developed and popularized. These programs facilitate and streamline the employee separation process, allow surveys to be completed via the web, make separation and retention trends easy to identify, and amass actionable data which can increase organizational effectiveness and productivity. Additionally, some of these programs make it possible to quantify data gleaned from the surveys to more accurately understand why employees are leaving the organization.

II. COMMON EXIT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Common questions include reasons for leaving, job satisfaction, frustrations, and feedback concerning company policies or procedures. Questions may relate to the work environment, supervisors, compensation, the work itself, and the company culture.

"What are your main reasons for leaving?"

"What did you like most/least about the organization?"

"What, if improved, would have caused you to stay at the organization?"

"Would you recommend the organization to others as a good place to work/study/join?"

III. METHODS FOR CONDUCTING EXIT INTERVIEWS

There are various methods of conducting exit interviews, each with their benefits and disadvantages with regards to the depth of participation, various biases that may happen, or the format of the information gathered.

1. Voice - base of exit interview

A voice interview can be conducted by an internal agent (i.e. an HR department) or an external agent (i.e. HR exit interview consulting firm). Questions are normally asked in a structured order. Voice interviews allow for higher complexity and depth of participation than other methods, because it allows the interviewer to pose follow-up questions, capture ideas through tone indications, probe for answers and clarifications, and ask for examples. However, this allows for bias on the part of the interviewer and the interviewee. This bias can represent itself in the way a question is asked and the length of an answer to a question.

2. Paper

Exit interview taken in paper form allows interviews to be conducted with those who do not have Internet access, and allows for the option of anonymity. However, it takes longer to receive feedback, and respondents who are not literate would find it difficult to use this medium. Information must also be entered into a tracking system manually for this medium.

3. Web - based Exit Interview

Interviews conducted through a Web interface have the advantage of having a high reliability, flexibility, and privacy, as it is completed by the respondent. The exit interview would also be accessible at the convenience of the respondent, anywhere where the respondent can find Internet access, and they would receive quick feedback.

However, a respondent would not be able to complete the interview if they do not have Internet access and may find it difficult if they are not literate or have sufficient technical knowledge.

4. Interactive Voice Response

IVRs are reliable methods of taking exit interviews because they are accessible by phone, a very widespread and reliable technology. However, IVRs have fallen out of favour due to the cost effectiveness of web based options that yield data at similar or higher quality. In comparison to other options, it is difficult to get rich data from an IVR, or to adjust and change it, since any changes require new voice recordings to be made.

IV. PURPOSE OF EXIT INTERVIEWS

Exit interviews can provide vital clues on various organizational aspects like working conditions, interpersonal relations, pay packages, policies, etc. An exit interview offers an opportunity to:

- Find out the actual reasons for an employee's resignation.
- Gather trustworthy data on problem areas, in order to help the management take remedial actions.
- Retain a talented employee by finding the reasons for his dissatisfaction and agreeing on feasible solutions.
- Encourage good relations with the departed employee.

V. REASONS WHY EMPLOYEES QUIT?

1. Relationship with boss

Employees don't need to be friends with their boss but they need to have a relationship. The boss is too much of an integral part of their daily lives at work for an uncomfortable relationship. The boss provides direction and feedback, spends time in one-to-one meetings, and connects the employee to the larger organization. To have a toxic relationship with the person an employee reports to undermines the employee's engagement, confidence, and commitment.

2. Bored and unchallenged by the work itself

No one wants to be bored and unchallenged by their work. If you have an employee who acts as if she is, you need to help her find her passion. Employees want to enjoy their job. They spend more than a third of their days working, getting ready for work, and transporting themselves to work. Work closely with employees who report to you to ensure that each employee is engaged, excited, and challenged to contribute, create, and perform. Otherwise, you will lose them to an employer who will.

3. Relationships with co-workers

When an employee leaves my company, every email that is sent to the whole company, to say good-bye, includes a comment about passionate co-workers who the employee cares about and will miss. Second only to an employee's manager, the co-workers with whom he sits, interacts, and serves with on teams, are critical components of an employee's work environment.

4. Opportunities to use skills and abilities

When employees use their significant skills and abilities on the job, they feel a sense pride, accomplishment, and self-confidence. They are participating in activities that they are good at and that stretch their skills and

abilities even further. Employees want to develop and grow their skills. If they're not able to do this in your jobs, they'll find one where they can. This includes opportunity. If an employee can't see a path to continued growth in their current organization, they are likely to look elsewhere for a career development or promotion opportunity.

5. Contribution of work to the organization's business goals

Managers need to sit with each reporting employee and discuss the relevance of the employee's job and key contributions and deliverables to the overall strategy and business plan of the organization. Employees need to feel connected and that they are part of an effort that is larger than just their job. Too many managers assume that the employee will receive the communication from executive staff and make this leap. They don't. They need your help to understand and connect their job to the bigger picture. If they're not part of it, you'll lose them.

6. Autonomy and independence

Organizations talk about empowerment, autonomy, and independence, but they are not something that you can do to people or give them. They are traits and characteristics that an employee needs to pursue and embrace. You are responsible for the work environment that enables them to do this. They are responsible for doing it.

7. Meaningfulness of job

Ah, yes, meaningful work. We all want to do something that makes a difference, that isn't busy work or transactional work, and that contributes to something bigger than ourselves. But, managers must help employees see where their work contributes to the execution of deliverables that make a difference in the world.

8. Organization's financial stability

Financial instability: a lack of sales, layoffs or reduced work hours, salary freezes, successful competitors highlighted in the news, bad press, employee turnover, mergers and acquiring companies, all lead to an employee's feeling of instability and a lack of trust. Employees who are worried tend to leave. Make every change and potential change transparent. Let them know how the business is doing at all times and what the organization's plans are for staying on track or recovering in the future.

9. Overall corporate culture

While it's not the top item on employee lists, the overall culture of your company makes a difference for employees. Does your organization appreciate employees, treat them with respect, and provide compensation, benefits, and perks that demonstrate respect and caring? Is your work environment for people conducive to employee satisfaction and engagement? Do you provide events, employee activities, celebrations, and team building efforts that make employees feel that your organization is a great place to work?

10. Management's recognition of employee job performance

Many place employee recognition further up the list, but this is where recognition scored in a recent Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM) survey of employees. While recognition is important, it is not among employees' chief concerns. A lack of recognition can affect many of the above factors, especially culture, but it's

probably not the deciding factor in an employee's decision to leave your organization. Provide a lot of genuine appreciation and recognition as icing on the cake for employee retention.

VI. BENEFITS OF CONDUCTING EXIT INTERVIEWS

- shortening and improving effectiveness of the recruitment process
- reducing employee absenteeism
- sustaining or raising organisational performance through potential
- increase employee engagement and alignment, and
- reducing possible litigation issues.

VII. WANT TO STOP THEM LEAVING?

- In the first instance, make sure the person is in the right job -match talent and training to the role
- Provide feedback on performance - regular communication is critical
- Be available to your team
- Treat all employees with fairness and respect
- Help team members to balance work and home life.

VIII. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Stewart (1998) States that if the marketing community is to adopt the prescriptions of the relationship marketing school of thought, more knowledge and understanding of relationships is required. The base of knowledge is growing and there is now greater appreciation of the processes germane to healthy relationships, such as trust, satisfaction and commitment. Much less attention has been paid to the negative aspects such as relationship breakdown and ending. This paper addresses the neglected area of the ending of customer-bank relationships or customer exit. Interviews were conducted with bank customers who had recently used the exit option. Content analysis of the customers' stories was used to generate a model of the customer exit process. As reported here, the research took the perspective of the customer. This shows that customers end bank relationships after an involving process of problem(s), effort, emotion and evaluation. A discussion of the findings concludes that banks need to develop relationship management systems and skills.

Colgate and Norris (2001) Explains a model of the potential outcomes from service failure. Results are utilised from interviews with business banking customers who have recently encountered a service failure. The results show that service recovery is only one of the reasons a customer may stay or exit a service organisation after a service failure. Other factors, such as barriers to exit and loyalty, are just as prevalent in the decision-making process. A model of service failure, which was generated through the results of the research, is presented in the discussion section of the paper.

Bhatnagar (2007) describes talent management and its relationship to levels of employee engagement using a mixed method research design. The first phase was a survey on a sample of 272 BPO/ITES employees, using Gallup q12 or Gallup Workplace Audit. Focus group interview discussion was based on reasons for attrition and the unique problems of employee engagement. In the second phase, one of the BPO organizations from the

phase I sample was chosen at random and exit interview data was analysed using factor analysis and content analysis. The results were in the expected direction and fulfilled the research aims of the current study. In the first phase low factor loadings indicated low engagement scores at the beginning of the career and at completion of 16 months with the organization. High factor loadings at intermediate stages of employment were indicative of high engagement levels, but the interview data reflected that this may mean high loyalty, but only for a limited time. In the second phase factor loadings indicated three distinct factors of organizational culture, career planning along with incentives and organizational support. The first two were indicative of high attrition. The present study indicated that a good level of engagement may lead to high retention, but only for a limited time in the ITES sector. The need for a more rigorous employee engagement construct is indicated by the study. Practical implications for retention in the BPO/ITES sector are referred to.

Bharthvajan (2014) The organizations are conducting exit interviews to gather data for improving working conditions, to find out the underlying reasons for employee turnover and also for retaining talented employees. This article focuses on the concept of exit interviews, their purpose, who should conduct, how to conduct, when and where to conduct and also how to use the data collected from exit interviews for the benefit of the organization. The art of putting the right man in right place is perhaps the first in the science of management, but the art of finding a satisfactory position for the discontented is the most difficult.

Chien (2015) Communication is a critical element of the exit interview in Business. However, studies about communication process in the exit interview, particularly from the employee's perspective, are limited. This study aims to explore how communication strategies are used in exit interviews and what factors affect communication strategies in exit interviews, with a focus on politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory. Data were collected through the in-depth interview with six media practitioners in Taiwan. The main findings are: politeness strategies are used in exit interviews diversely; positive politeness and negative politeness strategies are applied to maintain the relationship between the organization and the departing employee; relationship, power distance, and personality play a significant role in politeness strategies choice; advanced preparation is helpful for communicating about expressing the intention to leave.

Mitchell et al. (2015) The competition to retain key employees is intense. Top-level executives and HR departments spend large amounts of time, effort, and money trying to figure out how to keep their people from leaving. This article describes some new research and its implications for managing turnover and retention. These ideas challenge the conventional wisdom that dissatisfied people leave and money makes them stay. People often leave for reasons unrelated to their jobs. In many cases, unexpected events or shocks are the cause. Employees also often stay because of attachments and their sense of fit, both on the job and in their community. We discuss these ideas and make recommendations for integrating them into a comprehensive retention plan.

IX. CONCLUSION

Exit interviews can be used to find out if an employee is moving to another employer which can enable organisations to amend their HR strategy to target, attract and retain the employee. Employers use the

information gained from exit interviews to save money by assessing what should be improved or changed to reduce employee turnover. Traditionally this "separation" was a time consuming process but automated exit interview methods are quick, simple to administer, do not require both respondents to be in the same place at the same time and allow an HR representative to simultaneously reach multiple, geographically dispersed employees. A well-designed plan of exit interview has the potential to become a valuable tool to help retain the talented workforce and to resolve their key issues. It's expensive to recruit a new employee. Why not expend the effort necessary to retain the employees that you have already painfully recruited and hired.

An organisation can use the results from exit interviews to reduce costly turnover and increase staff productivity and employee engagement.

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