



Not conducting exit interviews on your departing employees? You should be!

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Why? Exit interviews are valuable tools for employers to acquire information from departing employees. A well-structured exit interview process encourages departing employees to be candid in sharing their knowledge and observations about the way the organization conducts its business. Employers can benefit from a departing employee's observations on the organization's culture by learning about how mistakes are viewed and whether people feel comfortable speaking up about issues that arise.

Exit interviews are also an essential component of a thorough compliance program, which is important in every trade but crucial in the health care industry. Exit interviews may alert the organization to undetected compliance issues and potential whistleblowers. For that reason, departing employees should be asked if they are aware of any unreported compliance issues. Further, it is valuable to learn about the employee's experience with reporting compliance issues, to the extent they have done so, which can be achieved by asking the departing employee if he or she understands *how* to report compliance issues and whether he or she felt comfortable doing so. Moreover, what happened *after* the employee reported the issue(s)? Was the concern adequately addressed by the appropriate people?

Finally, exit interviews can reveal human resources issues that may not be widely known (or may not be known to management). A good exit interview allows the departing employee to feel comfortable enough to share observations on the leadership styles of his or her supervisors and colleagues, and these observations may help the employer better train and retain its current work force. Exit interviews provide information to the employer that is not easily found elsewhere.

Overall, information gained in exit interviews can help the organization better itself. The departing employee may never have been openly asked “how would *you* improve the organization?” The opportunity to share the employee’s insights is not only a benefit to the employer but also makes the employee feel valued on his or her way out the door.

Who should be interviewed? Employers should consider an exit interview for any departing employee in a supervisory or management position. Programs that include exit interviews for not only departing senior managers but also for a level or two below senior management often elicit the most detailed and helpful information. In addition, employers should consider exit interviews for those employees in sensitive or high-risk positions, such as coders and quality reviewers.

Who should conduct the interview? The benefits of an exit interview hinge upon the willingness of the departing employee to be candid in the discussion, which is one reason why it is helpful to have an experienced third-party individual conduct the exit interview. In addition, third-party interviewers have the benefit of having no bias in the interview, allowing for a better flow of information and reporting.

Authors

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