



Retention interviews

A strategy to keep your best employees engaged and happy

Retention interviews, also known as “stay” interviews, are a proactive strategy for learning what’s most important to employees, what frustrates them, and what is within your control to make the work environment more enjoyable. They provide important insights for helping you make strategic decisions about what to implement, reinforce and change.

With the cost of replacing an employee around 20 percent of his or her annual compensation (senior level and highly technical positions exceed 200 percent!), having a proactive plan to retain your best employees makes good business sense.

Annual conversations between a supervisor and key employees, retention interviews reveal patterns that contribute to employee engagement and job happiness, and also uncover factors that contribute to employees wanting to exit.

There is no standard list of questions

to ask. However, it is important to limit the number of questions to allow you to finish in an hour, or the allocated timeframe.

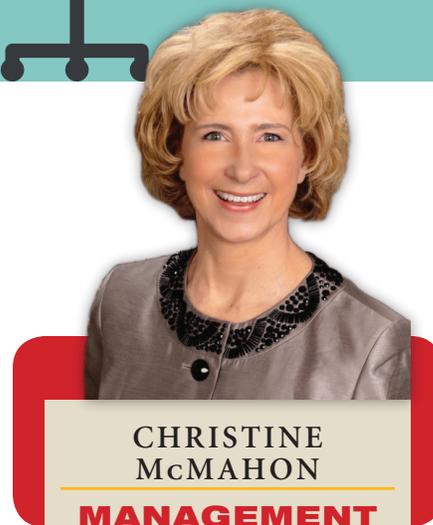
Here’s a general idea of how to structure the conversation, along with some sample questions:

Opening statement

Position the discussion by saying: “I appreciate the opportunity to have this conversation with you. As one of our key employees, I would like to ask you some questions about your work and the work environment at (name of company) that will help me and the leadership team better understand what you like most about your current role and how we can best support your continued success.”

Enjoyment

“Help me to understand the factors that contribute to you enjoying your cur-



rent job and work situation (including co-workers, responsibilities, compensation/rewards, management, etc.)? What would make you more passionate, committed and loyal to your position (or the team or the company)?”

Retention

“When you tell others about your position and what you like most about working for (name of company), what do you tell them? What makes you want to stay at (name of company)? What would cause you to consider leaving (name of company)? Have you thought about leaving in the past 12 months?” If yes, “What caused you to stay?”

Making a difference

“Do you feel that your contribution makes a difference for the company?” If yes, “How so?”

Strengths

“Are you able to fully utilize your strengths in your current position? Can you give me examples of when the company best utilized your strengths? Can you give me examples of when the company didn’t utilize your strengths well? How can we as a company better leverage your strengths and talents?”

Being heard

“Do you feel heard and valued for your ideas, inputs and decisions?” If not, “How can we do a better job?”

Being managed

“If you were in my position and were responsible for managing you, how would you best support your success?”

“Feedback provides positive affirmation that you are doing a great job. It also provides direction to let you know when you have a blind spot or when you need to readjust. From your perspective, are you receiving the level of feedback that you need to excel in your position?”

Dream job

“If you were given the opportunity to redesign your current role, what would you include in your ‘dream job’ list?”

“If you had the authority, how would you change your position to be more enjoyable?”

Career advancement

“Is there a position (or set of responsibilities) that you would like to have in two years?”

“Describe what you define as positive learning experiences. Could we be doing more to support your learning? Your growth? Your leadership?” If yes, then ask, “What would you like to learn or experience?”

Challenge

“Challenges can be good and bad. Good when they stretch you to grow; bad when they exhaust you and deplete your energy. Can you describe the most challenging and, likewise, exciting aspects of your job? Do you feel that you are adequately challenged?” If not, “How can we do a better job of challenging you?”

Closing statement

Thank the employee for being open, honest and thoughtful in how she re-

sponded to your questions. Also let her know that you will take her input into serious consideration, in addition to the feedback you will receive from other employees. Let her know that you value her commitment and contribution to the company and that she makes a difference. Conclude by talking about what you plan to do with the information gathered and what she can expect moving forward.

Retention initiatives are a proactive strategy for keeping your best and most valued employees engaged. They require some, but not a lot, of time to implement, and when weighed against the cost of losing and replacing key talent, it becomes a time investment rather than time spend. Valuable information is gained directly from the employee about what’s important to him, so those factors can be reinforced and roadblocks can be eliminated. This sends a powerful message to employees that says, “We’re listening and we care.” ■

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