

What Can You Learn About Retention From Your Best Employees?



Why do you conduct an interview? Generally you are trying to learn something about the person you are interviewing. How often do you interview someone else to learn more about yourself?

Most of the time you only interview employees when you first hire them, when you are considering them for a new project or job and sometimes when they are leaving. Many organizations understand the value of an interview to hire and an interview upon exit but how many take the time to interview a current, best performing employee to better understand why the employee remains.

A formal employee performance review process generally occurs once per year and includes some paperwork, a discussion of goals and a review of progress from the previous years goals. This process can be stressful and focuses on the performance of the employee. Changing the process to learn more about your organization can be an effective way to learn how to keep your best employees happy, motivated and onboard. In the hiring interview you are trying to gauge if an employee can do the job and will be a good fit. In the exit interview you want to understand why they are leaving. In the Staying interview you want to learn what is keeping them around so you can avoid the exit interview.

Why Do They Stay?

Frequently conversations with your best employees focus on the work in hand; updates on project status, requests for resources, problem solving head-to-heads and perhaps the occasional small talk. There are growing number of organizations who are also taking the time to ask employees to participate in a inverse performance review whereby the employee is invited to share with the organization why he/she has stayed.

Understanding why employees stay provides you the opportunity to improve and/or expand on what you do well it and identify what you do that may need some adjustments.

Informal – Formal Meeting

Take the time to identify star employees from different areas of your organization. Invite these employees to join a member of HR for a quick meeting to talk about what the organization can do to ensure a winning atmosphere that encourages employees to

continue to perform optimally. Do not make this meeting feel like an interrogation and do not focus on the negatives. Schedule a 20-minute meeting and ask your employees to tell you why they remain.

Consider these questions:

- 1) Ask for their general observations about the workplace.
- 2) Ask for their ideas about the organization.
- 3) Ask them to create a list of the positives and negatives
- 4) Ask for the 3 things they like best about working with the organization
- 5) Ask them what it would take for a competitor to lure them away
- 6) Ask what changes he/she would like to see over the next 6 months and over the next 2 years.

It can be useful to identify good things and try to make them better, expand or highlight them. Your star performers may bring ideas and insights for retention and improvements that work only for them or that may work broadly across the organization. Asking questions from several employees allows you to look for patterns and common themes.

Do not bring these questions with you on a sheet of paper, ask them and write copious notes. Select a few and memorize them. Ask them in the course of a conversation. If the employee says something ask if he/she minds if you jot down a few notes. Taking notes shows your interest, asking for permission shows respect and consideration.

Conduct a stay interview and use the information to fuel future retention efforts.