

## Why Do an Exit Interview?

### Exit interviews can be as insightful as recruitment interviews...

Employees leave organisations for many reasons and conducting an exit interview can provide information about why an employee is leaving. An exit interview gives you a prime opportunity to gather intelligence on what is going on in the business and often they provide key insights into how things can be improved for increased business performance, as well as helping you understand why people really are... or are not attracted to working for your business.

Sometimes the circumstances as to why an employee leaves can't be influenced by the organisation, however often the situation is something the organisation can have an effect on. As the war for talent continues businesses often find losing an employee comes at a great cost to the organisation. This can include the loss of skills and organisational knowledge, the cost of investment in training and the cost of replacing the employee which includes recruitment and selection. If we wish to avoid losing employees and incurring the associated costs, information gained from the exit interview not only tells a business why an employee is leaving but how (if it can be prevented) to avoid a repeat of a negative situation.

There are occasions where an employee leaving can be beneficial to an organisation. For example, it could provide the opportunity for new skills to be brought into the business to meet a new business need; or allowing a high performing employee to replace a poor performing employee. It gives a business the opportunity to make positive changes, for example, restructuring or re-designing jobs to meet business objectives. In these circumstances the costs of replacing the employee do not come into play but it is still useful to gain feedback from the departing employee about their experience working for the organisation.

Following are just some reasons why an employee may leave an organisation:

- Change in personal circumstances e.g. moving out of the area, change in family circumstances
- Illness or incapacity
- Accepting employment with another organisation (the exit interview can tell us why the employee decided to look for another job e.g. higher pay, job dissatisfaction, better hours, opportunity to receive more training/education, career advancement or higher level of responsibility)
- The employee may feel aggrieved by some action taken by the organisation
- Difficulties with a co-worker or boss
- Stress
- Retirement
- End of employment agreement e.g. redundancy, fixed term or poor performance or misconduct

To ensure the most effective use of an exit interview, advise the employee of why the organisation wants them to participate and what the information will be used for. Advise the employee that what they say will not prejudice their remaining time in the business or any reference the business may provide. By doing this the employee will feel more comfortable about being up front with their feelings, opinions and ideas without the worry of negative repercussions. Some employees may still feel uncomfortable about talking to the organisation in this way, so where necessary provide other mechanisms for this information to be gathered e.g. completing a questionnaire even if it is after the employee has left or perhaps use an external person to conduct the interview.

Once an organisation has decided to use this process to gather insightful information, the key is to use it to positively impact on future business performance. The information needs to be analysed and recorded in such a way that any trends can be spotted and then communicated to the right people so that any necessary actions or changes can be made. Exit interview information completes the full circle, so ensure that any relevant information is incorporated as part of the recruitment and selection process for new employees, and so the never ending, but continuously 'improved' cycle starts again!