

37. How to Conduct an Exit Interview

1 OVERVIEW

Employers should try to carry out an exit interview with employees who resign to establish the true reason that are leaving. This is important management information to collect and may help to identify and address problems in the workplace.

2 WHY CARRY OUT AN EXIT INTERVIEW?

To find out why someone is leaving and address any workplace issues

People leave organisations for a range of reasons. Some of those reasons are entirely personal to the individual's circumstances (such as relocation to another area) and these reasons will be out of your control.

However, in other situations there may be feedback that you can gain from the leaving employee. It is important that you understand the reasons individuals leave and to take steps to address issues where possible.

There may also be trends and patterns that begin to emerge. For example, you begin to notice that employees are leaving for career progression, then action should be taken to review this area.

It gives the employee a chance to give feedback

The exit interview gives the employee the opportunity to air any concerns, discuss them and to part on good terms.

Some employees may want to say how much they enjoyed working for you. Giving an employee a chance to give feedback will leave them with a sense of having been valued by you and the business.

To inform the decision to recruit a replacement

The person who has been doing the job is best placed to comment on whether the job description accurately reflects what they have been doing and other key elements around the job. The exit interview is an excellent opportunity to find out about the job in practice and this information can feed into the job description and person specification and considerations for recruiting a replacement.

There are occasions when it may not be appropriate to conduct an exit interview.

- When an employee has been dismissed it would not be appropriate to conduct an exit interview.
- When an employee has been made redundant this will need to be dealt with sensitively.
- Where the employee is taking voluntary redundancy it may still be appropriate to obtain feedback on their experience of working for your business and take the opportunity to thank them for their service. If the redundancy is carried out on a compulsory basis this may not be appropriate.
- Where an employee is retiring, it would be appropriate to hold an exit interview. This also provides a good opportunity to learn about their experience of working for you.

3 HOW TO CONDUCT AN EXIT INTERVIEW

In order to conduct an effective exit interview, try to ensure the following points are covered:

- The exit interview is often conducted by the manager of the employee or a HR representative.
- The exit interview is often carried out during the notice period, but consider the timing. If it is too soon after the employee has handed in their resignation, they may not feel able to be honest as they will still need to work throughout their notice period. If it is on their last day, they may be too busy with a handover and other leaving arrangements.
- The exit interview should be conducted away from the work area and in a private area with no interruptions.
- The exit interview should ideally be carried out in person and the discussion is often accompanied by a questionnaire. The questionnaire is sometimes given to the employee before the exit interview to give them time to think about their answers.
- Explain the purpose of the exit interview and how the information received will be used.
- Follow the exit interview questionnaire. Asking the questions set out in the questionnaire ensures a consistent approach and helps you to analyse the answers given and notice any patterns emerging.
- Be aware that, depending on the reasons the employee is leaving, it may be difficult for the employee to answer the questions. Do not press for answers where the employee does not want to respond.
- Try to avoid leading questions and answering questions for the employee. Ask open questions and prompt for additional information if necessary.
- Maintain regular eye contact with the employee to show you are listening to their answers.
- Avoid giving defensive responses to something the employee has said.
- Avoid asking questions that are unrelated to the job and organisation and may be seen as personal. The employee needs to see why a question is being asked.
- Thank the employee for their time and wish them well for the future.

4 NEXT STEPS

- Develop an exit interview questionnaire to use during exit interviews.
- Consider giving the employee the exit interview questionnaire prior to the meeting so they have an opportunity to consider their responses beforehand.
- After the exit interview, take steps to address any issues that were raised where necessary.

5 FACTSHEETS TO HELP

- Employee Leaver Checklist

6 FOR MORE ADVICE AND INFORMATION

ACAS - (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) free and impartial information and advice to employers and employees on all aspects of workplace relations and employment law. www.acas.org.uk

Achieve in Bath & North East Somerset - free recruitment support, advice and help. Matching job seekers, employers and course providers to help employers recruit, train and retain employees. www.achieveinbathnes.co.uk

Future Bright - free help & support for businesses and employees to realise their full potential. Provide access to training and development, workshops and networking. HR support to promote career progression and best practice to attract and retain staff. www.futurebright.org.uk

Bibliography - this fact sheet was produced by Rathbone HR Solutions in association with Cool Ventures Ltd in December 2018 with content sourced from; HR Inform (www.hr-inform.co.uk), ACAS (www.acas.org.uk), CIPD (www.cipd.co.uk), the pensions regulator (www.thepensionsregulator.gov.uk/en/employers), HMRC (www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-revenue-customs), the Information Commissioner's Officer website (www.ico.org.uk)



Created for Future Bright by Cool Ventures - Business Support in Bath, Bristol, Wiltshire, Gloucestershire, South Gloucestershire and throughout South West England www.coolventures.co.uk