EXIT INTERVIEWS: FROM MYTHS TO BEST PRACTICES

As a HR Consultant, my focus is to create engaged, more productive workplaces.

One tactic that can drive this result is by conducting exit interviews and taking action to address concerns that are raised by exiting employees. However, there are some unfortunate, yet common myths that surround exit interviews.

Myth #1 – Some employers do not conduct exit interviews as they believe, **"it's too late once they're gone."** This frame of mind can harm your organization if you are not thinking about the bigger picture. The goal of exit interviews is to find out why people leave and to figure out what you can do to prevent others from leaving; not about preventing that particular individual from exiting the organization.

Myth # 2 – Overconfident employers may say **"I don't need to ask; I already know why they left."** While employers may assume that they have a clear understanding of why individuals leave, until they ask, they cannot know for sure. Until you provide a formal method for individuals to respond to questions surrounding their work experience and why they are choosing to leave, you may misunderstand the reasons for turnover in your organization.

Myth #3 – There is also a common fear that **"they won't tell the truth anyways,"** leading employers to undervalue exit interviews. However, studies show that individuals are even more honest during an exit interview than they are in an employee satisfaction survey. This should be a huge wakeup call for employers who are not conducting exit interviews out of fear of dishonest responses.

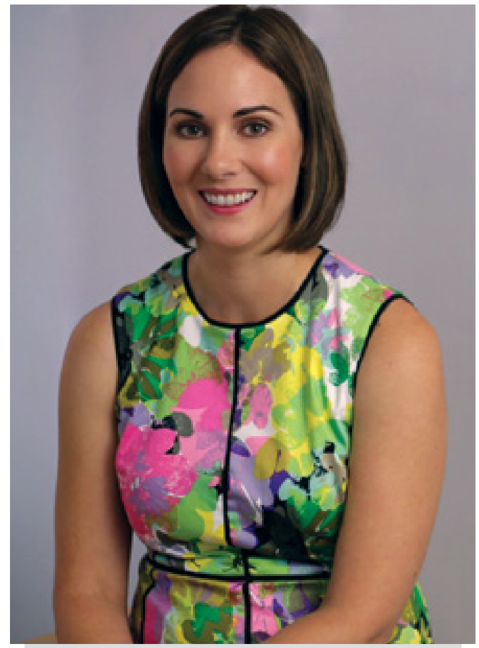
Now that the Myths are revealed, WHY and HOW do you properly conduct an Exit Interview?

Exit interviews are intended to take lessons learned and make any necessary improvements (e.g. training, job redesign, compensation review). Exit interviews are also about finding out why people stay, and what people like most about working with your company, so you can remain consistent and reinforce what you are doing right.

Best Practice #1: Timing is crucial. Experience and research shows that the most effective time to conduct an exit interview is between three days prior to when an individual leaves and three days after they are gone. Any longer than three days, the individual is less likely to feel a connection with the organization and the information they provide may not be as insightful

Best Practice #2: The number and types of questions that you ask is also important. Ask too few questions, and the individual leaving may feel cheated of their chance to share their story; ask too many questions and the individual is more likely to abandon the survey or interview. Generally, **between 30 and 50** questions is a comfortable number. You want to be able to gather information on why they are leaving, as well as information about job satisfaction and supervision and support while on the job.

Best Practice #3: The method of the interview can be in person, over the phone, paper survey form, or online. There are pros and cons of each, however, with the increased convenience of technology, **online exit surveys** are increasingly more popular due to low cost, higher response rates, easy tracking and convenience. However, don't forget to include text boxes by every question so that more detailed responding is available. Also, participation in an exit interview must be voluntary, and individuals should be offered the choice to be either anonymous or identified in their responses.



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HR solutions offered include on-call HR advisory, exit interviews (online and phone) policy/employee handbooks, employee assessments, HR training, HR strategy, workplace culture reviews, retention programs, and compensation design and analysis.

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One of the end goals of exit interviews is about taking what is learned and focusing efforts on making any necessary improvements...