

ON THEIR WAY OUT INTERVIEWS

Employee retention in today's tight market is a tough job no matter how you look at it. You know and I know all those other companies are competing for your precious workforce. It's in your firm's best interest to determine the motivation behind a valued employee's decision to leave - preferably before the liberation of that employee. Their reasons might include cash incentives, higher compensation, better benefits, or an insatiable desire to join the big top. Regardless of all the sound reasoning, as the employer you deserve and should want to know why. On their way out interviews is the perfect - and often times the only occasion for you to pinpoint why your valued employee is now motivated and has considered leaving your firm.

Granted, an employee has no obligation to you or your firm to disclose his or her precise reasons for leaving. In fact, most people recognize that it's in their best interest to not burn the bridge and just make a smooth and graceful exit. Often times this leads to an uncomfortable, short, semi-candid on their way out interview. However, on the other side of the spectrum, some individuals will use the opportunity to capitalize on and to vent some of those previously restrained frustrations about the workplace environment. The key is, you can learn a lot from this uncomfortable situation if you allow

this formerly loyal and valued employee sufficient time to talk it out with you. If you are able to extract legitimate facts and information, you might be able to implement minimal changes that could offer leadership some new ideas, direction and guidance, which may prevent other employees who might consider leaving in the future.

It is important to keep the interview short, but at the same time allow the employee to state everything and anything regarding their separation. Assure the employee that anything discussed during the interview would not be used against them. You should relax, take some notes, and try to learn from this experience. You should also be prepared with some of your own questions such as:

- ✚ Why are you leaving?
- ✚ What were your favorite and least favorite things about your position with the company?
- ✚ How did you feel about the leadership and management in your department?
- ✚ How would you describe the working environment in your department?
- ✚ Do you have recommendations for improvements that might help morale or production?
- ✚ How did you feel about your compensation, incentives and benefits package?

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Make sure that you gather some general feedback from the employee. Once the interview is over, you should immediately determine whether or not you would consider ever rehiring this employee (assuming they would ever re-apply). You won't always gather a wealth of information from the on their way out interview, but it's important for you and the company to use the information you gathered to improve the working conditions and environment at your firm.

Ask yourself a few questions.

- ✚ Is this employee a valued, loyal, essential, integral part of the team where their contributions will surely be missed?
- ✚ Would it be disruptive to the organization to now be required to go to the marketplace to replace them?
- ✚ Would replacing them require a lot of time (probably overtime), expense, training, and cooperation of others to cover the employees' responsibilities?

In any case, if the answer is yes, then you may want to consider a counter-offer or immediately contact and retain your preferred executive search partner.

The truth of the matter is, people come and go all the time. Low unemployment affords today's work force the luxury to consider numerous and desirable career enhancement opportunities. You won't always be able to retain every employee, but you can always make an attempt to improve the workplace and learn from those who were once loyal to you so that others don't follow. On their way out interviews are just one of the many methods you can utilize to retain your valuable human capital.



You have our best wishes and regards for continued success.

John C. Colson, President