



TenStep Supplemental Paper

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Exit Interview - A Tool

Employees who intend to leave their present company are by and large satisfied with their jobs. They often leave only because they feel they are not valued. A majority of the employees who feel this way say it is demonstrated by the fact that management fails to either ask for or listen to their opinions.

There are a variety of ways that management can choose to convince employees that they are genuinely listening, and most importantly, responding. However, the critical factor is that management must actually listen and respond.

Many companies use exit surveys and interviews as a tool to enhance organizational effectiveness. Robert Hoffman, the principal CEO of HR Advice, which helps guide employees and employers on HR issues, says several factors influence the positive impact of exit information. These include:

Goal of the process. Companies should have a clear idea of what they hope to accomplish by implementing a formalized exit assessment process. The primary objective should be to foster an environment of open communication, which will continually improve behavior within the organization. Secondary agendas, including identification of performance issues, reasons for poor morale or changes needed in job content, should be recognized before the employee leaves the organization.

Organizational readiness. The best HR tools are wasted if they are introduced at the wrong time in an organization. Employers should be aware of the receptivity of the company when introducing the exit process. Environments with mistrust, changing cultures or excessive management turnover may strain the usefulness of exit information. Departing employees may be unwilling to disclose information, or provide misleading information as an attempt to disguise true feelings about the company.

Timing, documentation and responsibility. Companies should decide how to conduct the exit interviews. Should you conduct an in-person interview or just hand out a form? When should the information be collected - when it is fresh in the minds of the departing employee or weeks later, when they have reflected on their experience? Should an outside firm be used to maintain confidentiality, or can the HR department be trusted with the information? The answers to these questions should be based upon your objectives and the resources available within the company.

Application of results - Possibly the most critical factor in the assessment of exit information is the use of the results. A mechanism to communicate and summarize the results to managers and key employees is recommended. The company should use the information to influence job content, policies, training programs, feedback mechanisms and operating structure consistent with the objective of continuous improvement.

The positive impact of these factors can be seen when organizations implement them for better performance.