

ENTER THE EXIT INTERVIEW

Strategies for dealing with employee departure



IF YOU VALUE THIS MEMBER OF STAFF, THIS IS NOT THE CONVERSATION YOU WANT TO HAVE ON A MONDAY MORNING (OR ANY OTHER MORNING FOR THAT MATTER). SHOCK, DISBELIEF, ANGER, CONFUSION AND SELF-REFLECTION ARE SOME OF THE EMOTIONS THAT WOULD FLASH THROUGH YOU IN A MILLISECOND BEFORE THE LETTER OF RESIGNATION EVEN HITS YOUR DESK. TAKE A COUPLE OF DEEP BREATHS.

ASSUMING THE EMPLOYEE HASN'T WALKED OUT OR DISMISSED FOR GROSS MISCONDUCT, THE EXIT INTERVIEW (OR THE LEAVING INTERVIEW AS IT IS ALSO CALLED) IS AN IDEAL OPPORTUNITY TO REFLECT ON PASTIMES WITH THE EMPLOYEE TO REALLY UNDERSTAND WHY THE EMPLOYEE HAS COME TO SUCH A DECISION. FURTHERMORE, THE KNOWLEDGE ACQUIRED FOR THE REASON(S) FOR LEAVING CAN BE TRANSLATED INTO USEFUL INFORMATION ALLOWING YOU TO TRANSFORM ORGANISATIONAL ASPECTS OF THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE, PROCEDURES, SYSTEMS AND MANAGEMENT APPROACHES, IF INFORMATION PERTAINING TO SUCH AREAS IS FORTHCOMING.

TWO THINGS ARE CERTAIN HERE. FIRSTLY, THE EMPLOYEE IS DEFINITELY GOING. SECONDLY, YOU'RE WONDERING WHY. IS IT THE PAY? IS THE GRASS GREENER ON THE OTHER SIDE? WAS IT BECAUSE OF WHAT YOU SAID AT THE STAFF MEETING? MAYBE YOU NEVER GOT AROUND TO CONDUCTING THE PERFORMANCE REVIEW. STOP TORTURING YOURSELF AND TAKE TWO DEEP BREATHS. YOU DON'T HAVE THE ANSWERS AT THIS POINT, BUT IT'S WORTH FINDING OUT. ENTER THE EXIT INTERVIEW TO REVEAL ALL.

NATURALLY, NOT ALL DEPARTING EMPLOYEES WILL WANT THIS OPPORTUNITY, NOR WILL ALL EMPLOYEES FEEL COMFORTABLE DIVULGING CRITICAL INFORMATION THAT MAY PERHAPS BE SEEN AS AN OBSTACLE TO SECURING A GOOD REFERENCE. HOWEVER, SOME BASIC STEPS IN MANAGING THE EXIT INTERVIEW SHOULD BENEFIT THE ORGANISATION AND PREVENT YOU FROM HAVING TO CONDUCT ANOTHER ONE TOO SOON.

1 HAVE A SPECIFIC NUMBER OF QUESTIONS FOCUSED ON FACTS AND SEEK TO EXTRACT INFORMATION THAT YOU CAN ACT UPON TO IMPROVE THE ORGANISATION. IF THE EMPLOYEE REVEALS DISSATISFACTION OR POINTS FINGERS AT SOMEBODY INCLUDING YOURSELF, DO NOT TAKE THIS AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO CAST BLAME BACK. YOU ASKED THE EMPLOYEE TO TAKE PART, YOU HAVE MORE TO GAIN THAN THEY DO. EXIT INTERVIEWS SHOULD BE VIEWED AS A SPARKPLUG THAT FUELS CHANGE THROUGH A COST EFFECTIVE AND HONEST INFORMATION SOURCE WHERE OUTSIDE CONSULTANTS ARE NOT NEEDED.

2 AVOID BRINGING OUT DESTRUCTIVE AND HOSTILE COMMENTS AND BEHAVIOURS. LEAVE THEM IN THE PAST AND TRY AND CREATE AN ATMOSPHERE WHERE THE RELATIONSHIP ENDS ON A GOOD NOTE.

3 TRY AND LISTEN MORE THAN TALKING. RESIST THE TEMPTATION TO AGGRESSIVELY DEFEND OR ARGUE YOUR VIEWS. THEY ARE NOT RELEVANT. INSTEAD, ASK OPEN QUESTIONS, AND ASK HOW THE EMPLOYEE MIGHT SUGGEST CERTAIN IMPROVEMENTS. ASK IF THERE IS ANYTHING THAT MIGHT HAVE CHANGED THEIR DECISION TO LEAVE.

4 REFRAIN FROM ENTERTAINING COMMENTS THAT FOCUS ON DEFAMATORY REMARKS ABOUT THE STAFF AND DO NOT PUT THE DEPARTING EMPLOYEE IN AN UNCOMFORTABLE SITUATION BY ASKING ANY 'WHO' TYPE QUESTIONS.

5 RECORD THE INFORMATION IN A STRUCTURED WAY. EXPRESS APPRECIATION TO THE DEPARTING EMPLOYEE INFORMING THEM THAT YOU WILL ACT ON THE COMMENTS AND THAT THE CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM HAS BEEN RECEIVED MOST FAVOURABLY. IF THERE ARE ANY OUTSTANDING MATTERS OR HANDOVER ISSUES, THIS IS A GOOD TIME TO CLARIFY SUCH MATTERS. WHEN CLOSING THE INTERVIEW, EXPRESS REGRET THAT THE EMPLOYEE HAS DECIDED TO LEAVE AND THANK THEM FOR THEIR TIME AND EFFORTS WITH YOUR ORGANISATION.

6 AND DON'T FORGET, MAKE SURE YOU WISH THEM WELL IN THEIR NEXT JOB AND FINISH OFF WITH A FRIENDLY HANDSHAKE!!