



Stay Interview Guide



Stay Interviews

Have you ever had an exit interview and thought, “why didn’t they ask me these questions sooner?”

A Stay Interview is basically an exit interview, well before a resignation occurs.

In these one-on-one conversations, you will ask questions like these:

- What do you like most about your job / working here?
- What can feel frustrating about your job / working here?
- What would make your job / working here even better?
- What kind of opportunity might make you consider leaving?

Check out our complete Stay Interview Guide, including suggested questions, conversation guide and sample script.

Cultivating Honesty in Stay Interviews

These conversations can be awkward at first – for employees and for you as a manager. The more you have them the more trust you will build. In the meantime, you can actively cultivate honesty by considering these techniques:

- Keep your commitment to meeting with the employee – do not reschedule.
- Offer your full attention during the conversation.
- Don't get angry or offer a different perspective if you disagree; simply listen.
- Don't overpromise and underdeliver on solutions.
- Take personal responsibility if you believe there is something you have done to cause an issue.

And, of course, trust is built over time in everything you do. So, continue to ask for feedback, follow through on your commitments and recognize and reward employees for their honesty.

Timelines

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Before

- Ask for 15–20 minutes of the employee’s next 1:1 or suggest a dedicated meeting.
- Let them know you care about retaining them at your company and want to better understand what keeps them here
- Encourage them to be honest

During

- Remind them why they are valued. Emphasize their strengths, why their work is critical, and/or what you believe they are capable of.
- Thank them in advance for being honest; commit to listening well and following up.
- Ask: What do you like most about the company and/or your role?
- Ask: What would make the company and/or your role even better?
- Ask: What is frustrating about the company and/or your role?
- Ask: What might make them leave the company?
- Close the conversation by agreeing on anything that is important to follow up on (i.e. action you may be able to take to address a concern, etc.)
- Thank them for their honesty and encourage them to come to you if anything changes about their outlook on the company

After

- Jot down notes to ensure you remember the details of their feedback.
- Reflect on and document your conversation and action items.
- Identify small/easy changes you can make to improve the employee’s experience and act quickly.
- Think about who can offer additional support, mentorship, or recognition.
- Do not overcommit where changes are out of your control or hard to implement.
- Partner with your manager or HR if you need additional support.

Sample Script Stay Interview Guide

Open

"I wanted to take a few minutes to just check in with you on how things are going. It's important to me that we are always checking in on your experience at our company. You are valuable to the team and I really appreciate the thoughtfulness you bring to your work and the great ideas you bring to our team. I am here to listen and there are no wrong answers. I would appreciate your honesty and will do my best to act on anything you share. I won't likely be able to solve everything, but I do want to know what might be getting in your way."

Discussion

Let's start with what's working well.
What do you like most about working here?

What do you think would make it even better?

What are the most frustrating parts of your job right now?

Now hopefully you haven't thought much about leaving, but can you imagine the kind of things that would make you want to leave?

Are you experiencing any of those things now?

If someone called with your dream job – something you couldn't say no to – what would it be?

What skills might you gain here to help prepare you for that dream job?

Close

Thank you so much for your candor and for trusting me with this information. I know we talked about getting you more exposure to new skills, so I will get back to you with some ideas on how we can do that.

I know it can be hard to dig into these topics – how did it feel for you? I hope this won't be the only time we can discuss these things. Please come to me – or HR or other trusted leaders – if you would like to share other ideas or concerns.