

Ask Before They Quit

12 stay interview questions for leaders who want to understand what keeps good people - and what may be pushing them out.

Do not wait for the exit interview to learn what was fixable.

A stay interview is a focused conversation with a current employee about what is working, what is wearing them down, and what could make it easier to stay and do good work. It is not a performance review, a promise that everything will change, or a substitute for responding to known problems.

1 What part of your work makes you most want to stay?

2 What part of your work takes more out of you than it should?

3 When do you feel most supported here?

4 When do you feel like you are carrying too much alone?

5 What gets in the way of doing your best work?

6 Is there anything you have stopped bringing up because you do not think it will change?

7 What do you wish your supervisor understood better about your work?

8 What would make your workload feel more sustainable?

9 Where do you have enough autonomy, and where do you feel unnecessarily constrained?

10 What would make you more likely to recommend this organization as a place to work?

11 What is one thing we could change in the next 30 days that would matter to you?

12 If you were seriously considering leaving, what would most likely be driving that decision?

How to Use the Conversation Well

The quality of a stay interview depends less on asking every question and more on whether the employee believes the answer can be spoken safely and heard seriously.

BEFORE

Choose a private setting. Make clear that this is not a performance review. Explain why you are asking and what you can and cannot promise.

DURING

Listen longer than you explain. Ask follow-up questions. Do not debate the employee's experience or rush to defend the organization.

AFTER

Separate what you can fix now, what requires a larger decision, and what you cannot change. Close the loop so the employee is not left wondering what happened to what they shared.

Close the loop

After the conversation, sort what you heard into three buckets. This prevents a thoughtful conversation from becoming another collection of concerns with no visible response.

CHANGE NOW

Something within our control that we can act on quickly.

EXPLORE

Something that needs more information, resources, or a broader decision.

EXPLAIN

Something we cannot change right now, but we owe the employee a clear explanation.

ONE QUESTION NOT TO SKIP

“Is there anything you have stopped bringing up because you do not think it will change?”