

Exit Interview: A Way to Learn from Departing Employees

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ABSTRACT

Exit interview is a meeting which the management calls when an employee departs. For an employer exit interview is a way through which he can learn about the reasons behind an employee's departure. Based on that interview an analysis may help in organizational improvement. A good exit interview yields productive and useful information regarding the organization which may further help in accessing and improving the working environment in all its aspect. In the earlier times exit interview was not a popular practice. Many present employers do not conduct exit interviews as they think of it as a useless tool. They say that such interviews are difficult to undertake and do not yield and useful result. It is also said there is big money involved in exit interviews while there results are confusing. Despite all this, exit interview is a unique concept and one of its own kind. They provide chance to the organization to analyze the opinion of the departing staff members and improve itself. The main objective of the present study is to understand the concept of Exit interview and also explain the methods, process, advantages and disadvantages of exit interview.

1. Introduction

The most important asset of an organization is its employees. Large amount of money and time is spent, a lot of energy is used whenever any organization hires its employees. Again their training, coaching and management further require a lot of time and money. Eventually in an organization, it is the employees of the organization who bring success and recognition to it. The success of management directly reflects in the success of its employees. As employees grow the organization grows. But many a times despite various efforts of an organization, its employees leave it or to pursue some other careers. There may be several reasons behind such outflow of employees. Generally in his resignation letter an employee does not state the actual reasons behind his departure. Here comes the role of exit interview. Exit interviews are also termed as departing employees' confessional interviews. Outgoing employees are those who are not fired or laid-off but they resign voluntarily. Exit interview is an effective method which organization can use to find out the real reasons behind the resignation of its employees. This may further help the organization through which it can manage and improve performance of individuals as well as the organizations. Exit interviews provide valuable inputs to the management as to how to improve retention of talent staff members and uplift the working environment and work culture. Earlier exit interview were considered as futile once so they were not conducted regularly. It was considered that asking an employee- "why do you want to leave" is of no use. Filling the vacant position at the earlier was the priority of the employer instead of avoiding the potential vacancies. The reason behind this approach was that there is ample number of unmanageable and non productive workers in the market and such workers may not remain in the organization. As the time has passed the value of exit interviews is being well understood by the organizations.

With regard to the perspective of departing employee through an exit interview he can give some useful and

constructive feedback while leaving on a positive note and maintaining mutual respect with other employees. Blaming someone, revengeful arguments, recriminations and bad behavior may result into destroyed relations for ever. Being helpful fair objective and calm is as helpful as possible. Whenever in future, if somebody wishes to rejoin the same organization, good relations and mutual respect will always help. One may have to face ex-colleagues and managers in future also. If a person has left on a positive note it will be very easy for him to face them in future. Exit interview is great way to leave as friend and not enemies.

2. Review of Literature

Hossian et.al. (2017) concluded that exit interview can actually help organizations to retain their employees for long run. The researcher revealed that exit interview plays an important role in works like change in job profile, changing organization culture, and increased retention of skilled employees.

Nigam & Mishra (2014) resulted that there are many personal and professional reasons for employee exit from an organization such as health, stress, safety, self employment, travelling, insecurities, fear, delay in decision making, lower growth opportunities etc. It was concluded that exit interview is much helpful in reducing the employee turnover.

Bharthvajan (2014) concluded that exit interview is the best way to retain the best talent in the organization. A proper feedback of the departing employees can help to resolve the key issues and helpful in retaining the best employees. Exit interview is a process of decreasing the turnover rate of employees in an organization.

Hussain and Ravindra (2013) revealed that exit interview provides overall information about management style of a company. Exit interview has many advantages as it is helpful in

changing management style, changing employees' opinion about their job, minimizing the legal risk and save time and money. Exit interview is very effective and useful. It can improve the working environment and increase employee retention of an organization.

3. Objectives of the study

- To understand the concept of Exit Interview.
- To study the methods, process, advantages and disadvantages of Exit Interview.

4. Research Methodology

This research is descriptive in nature. The present research is mainly based upon secondary data and information which has been collected from various sources such as national and international journals, internet, newspapers, books, websites and business magazines.

5. Goals of conducting Exit Interviews

5.1. Understanding employees' perception towards the job

Exit interviews help the organization to understand what employees think about the job including work culture, job design, co-worker and working condition. It will result into increased employee motivation and effectiveness.

5.2. Encourages innovation by getting ideas

If during such interviews, any departing employee give some suggestion and if the organization feels like accommodating that suggestion in an innovative and improved way, then it will be beneficial for the employees, organization and the entire industry.

5.3. Uncovered organizational issues

There may be several issues which are unfavorable for the employees. Exit interviews helps the organizations take corrective steps and make the organization more employees friendly.

5.4. Getting knowledge of managers' abilities

These interviews help the organizations to identify efficient and positive managers and differentiate them from the toxic ones. The organization may further provide better training and undertake initiatives for having better management.

6. Methods of conducting Exit Interviews

6.1. In-person exit interview method

In this interview, an individual meeting is conducted between an HR representative and each departing employee. Such interviews give a personal touch to the process and help in providing useful and personal information to the organization. On the other hand, during such interviews employees may not feel comfortable and are afraid to speak their mind out. These interviews are too time consuming and it is relatively difficult to get the desired result as tracking each verbally received information is difficult.

6.2. Paper and pencil exit interview method

Paper and pencil method of exit interview is used through a form provided to the employee on his last working day or by

mailing such form to his home. It is the primary method of exit interview. This method is less time taking as compared the others exit interview methods. Employees may feel comfortable while sharing information on a piece of paper than to a human being. Although the return rate of such forms is very low. The compilation and tracking of such received data is very difficult and consumes a lot of time.

6.3. Telephonic exit interview method

These interviews are either conducted by an HR representative or by some third party over telephone. It is easier to put more questions during such interview as conversation is generally short and crisp whereas it becomes expensive if done through a third party consultant. Through such interviews it is hard to achieve high participation rate and employees are usually reluctant to share sensitive or negative information on the phone.

6.4. Online Exit interview method

Exit interview conducted with the help of internet is called online exit interview. It has the advantage of flexibility, privacy and high reliability. By this method departing employees become comfortable in sharing information by using computer. Employees do self service in giving the response. In this method the participation rate of departing employees will be double than other methods.

7. Exit Interview process

- 1) After an employee gives notice of his departure the HR team collects his detail and thereafter contacts him.
- 2) After such contact a member of the HR team will ask the employee to participate in the exit interview process either through face to face interview or through online survey.
- 3) If the employee is ready for face to face interview, he will first be asked to complete the survey and then will later be called for face to face interview.
- 4) The employees not contacted before them leaving the city, the HR team will contact them and will ask them to participate in the paper version or the online version of the survey.
- 5) The result from the above said interview will be put to analysis and final result will be taken out.

8. Advantages of Exit Interviews

8.1. Time saving

A lot of time which is used during replacing and retraining of employees is reduced. It also saves the time spent on making a dynamic team again and also the time spent on redistributing the work which the departing employee used to do. The time spent on recreating a good company culture is also saved.

8.2. To know the reasons behind the departure of employees

Through exit interview we can easy diagnose the reason behind the departure of employees. We can also discover any

hidden agenda, if any and if seems appropriate this may contribute in reversing the decision of outgoing employee.

8.3. Reduce litigation risk

While taking on the departure process of the outgoing employee, it is becoming extremely important to fulfill every possible requirement of the process in order to avoid any future litigation.

8.4. Help in getting key information related to job

Any employee having experience of the job is the best person to describe the required improvements in that particular job and the details to the jobs. He can also tell the skills and capabilities required for undertaking that job. Such an improve job description will help the company in future to reduced employee turnover and a better plan for induction and succession of employees.

8.5. Increases attention towards business

A good management is the one which rather than wasting time on incoming and outgoing of employees pays more attention towards the business of the organization. It helps in improving the current and future situation of the business.

8.6. Increase the morale and satisfaction of the staff

When an organization shows concern about the departing employee's welfare then it is perceived that the organization is concerned about welfare of the employees in general. This has a very positive effect on the staff. Exit interviews may also ensure that the departing employee will remain on good terms with the organization and his attitude towards the organization will be favorable in future also.

8.7. Increase retention of employees

If negative trends and aspects of a company are identified and corrected then the organizations are able to increase employee retention and satisfaction of the employees.

8.8. Saving productivity losses

When an existing employee leaves his job then at times it becomes difficult for the organization to find his replacement in time to avoid potential productivity loss. If no desired replacement is found then it may lead to loss of time, customers, productivity and orders. Exit interviews can save such losses.

8.9. Review of recruitment and selection process

Exit interviews are the reliable source of accessing and reviewing the selection process of the organization. Through this, it can be identified whether a wrong person was chosen as an employee or the manager does not have required management skills.

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9. Disadvantages of Exit Interviews

9.1. Expensive

Exit interviews are expensive to be conducted. One of the costliest factor is the salary of the person who conducts the interview. It also includes the money and time required for preparation and conduct of the interviews. Thereafter codification of results followed by their usable analysis also requires money.

9.2. Biasness

Many times exit interviews are conducted by employees of the same organizations. Hence it is possible that due to some personal equation with any departing employee person conducting such interview may present a biased report of the interview. Such exit interview is of no use to the organization.

9.3. Large data may create difficulty

If at one point of time, many exit interviews are going on at different locations then it becomes difficult for recorders and interpreters to record and interpret the whole data precisely. A large data, if recorded or interpreted mistakenly may create ample confusion and difficulty in getting the desired result.

9.4. Real facts may not come out

When an exit interview is conducted, one cannot rely every fact revealed by the departing employee since it is possible that such employee has very little trust remained in the organization and its people. Even if a good amount of trust is still there, employees may have difficulty in verbalizing each aspect of the job and they may prefer to remain silent on many points.

10. Conclusion

Exit interview is a way through which the best can be retained by the organization. It has potential to change the environment and climate of any organization by making changes in various aspects like those in management style, value recognition, job description, employee satisfaction etc. A departing employee may not be happy with the organization or its environment. His genuine feedback may help the organization to make the required changes and stop potential vacancies. Exit process has become as important as the hiring process. A properly designed exit interview is a valuable tool to help the company in achieving its growth and stability along with happy employees. if handled in a professional and a positive way exit interviews become asset of an organization and very useful in achieving organizational goals. The need is to use the results of such interviews in a constructive way and not as once negative comments.

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