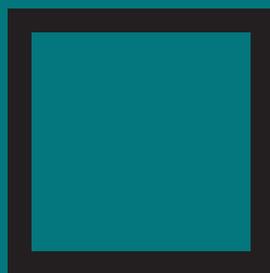
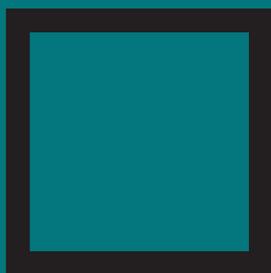


# 10 STAY INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

YOU CAN USE NOW



# INTRODUCTION: WHY USE STAY INTERVIEWS?

**TODAY'S TALENT ACQUISITION LANDSCAPE IS SOMETIMES CHARACTERIZED AS A FIERCE BATTLE OR A VIOLENT STORM TO BE WEATHERED—BUT RECENTLY, RESEARCH SHOWS THAT IT BENEFITS COMPANIES TO LOOK INWARD, ALLOCATING THE SAME ATTENTION AND CARE TO EMPLOYEE RETENTION AS IS TYPICALLY USED FOR RECRUITMENT AND HIRING. FOR MANY KEY POSITIONS, OFTEN THE BEST HIRE A BUSINESS CAN MAKE IS NONE AT ALL. KEEPING AN EXISTING EMPLOYEE ENGAGED, AND/OR PROMOTING INTERNALLY ALONG A CAREER PATH, WILL FREQUENTLY YIELD EQUAL OR BETTER RESULTS TO A NEW HIRE, AT A FRACTION OF THE COST.**

In fact, a CAP study showed an average **turnover cost of around 20% of an employee's salary**, excluding executives and other senior positions, across a wide variety of industries and job types. Complex jobs which require highly specialized training consistently skew higher than this, and high-paying jobs at senior levels can yield even more extreme replacement costs, up to 213%. For companies experiencing a high degree of unexpected turnover, these financial losses are multiplied.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile, the marketplace is struggling to give employees reasons to stay. Adjusted for inflation, the annual salary increase for the average employee in the wake of the recession is only around 1 percent, and incentive programs are often de-emphasized. Therefore it's no surprise that a culture of **"how long do I wait before jumping ship?"** has taken hold for many low- to mid-level employees.<sup>2</sup>

Additionally, more jobs than ever before are being filled by virtual/remote employees who rarely step foot in an office, and many businesses simply have not adapted to their unique needs in fostering engagement and retention.

Retention initiatives may cost time and money to implement, but they represent a sound investment when weighed against the costs of losing and replacing key talent. One simple and cost-effective step in this direction is to **start conducting "stay interviews."** While the traditional exit interview is conducted in the manner of an autopsy—determining why employees decided to leave—a stay interview takes a proactive approach, attempting to uncover what can be done to encourage them to stick around. Unlike an annual or quarterly performance review, a stay interview is not conducted from the perspective of the employer evaluating an employee's past performance, but the employee's unique perception of his or her work environment.

Recent advances in predictive retention analytics have made it more practical than ever for managers to keep an ear to the ground and conduct stay interviews for crucial talent "flight risks" before it's too late. Typically conducted one-on-one with a manager or as a written questionnaire, these interviews should feel informal, encouraging an honest dialogue.

**This guide contains ten sample questions you might find in an effective stay interview.**

1. <https://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/CostofTurnover.pdf>

2. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/cameronkeng/2014/06/22/employees-that-stay-in-companies-longer-than-2-years-get-paid-50-less/>

- Question 1: “What do you like about your job?”**  
**Why ask?** It’s best to start simple and set a positive tone. Regardless of industry, position or employer, asking someone to isolate the aspects of their job that they enjoy is the first step toward encouraging them to stay. You might be surprised to find that your employees’ feedback isn’t what you’d expect, which can clue you in to tasks or responsibilities they might enjoy taking on in the future. The extent of an employee’s answer to this question is also the easiest way to gauge the severity of any potential retention issues.
- Question 2: “Can you tell me about a good day of work you had recently?”**  
**Why ask?** Whereas the goal of first question is to obtain an assessment of an entire job, this question encourages employees to recollect a specific memory of a positive experience in the workplace. If the individual can paint a clear picture of a recent day on the job they enjoyed, take detailed notes on as many aspects mentioned as possible. This can serve as a baseline—tell your interviewee that you want to learn what you can do to make every day more like that one. If an employee is unable to answer this question, this indicates an extremely low level of engagement or active disengagement. He or she may already be considering other job opportunities.
- Question 3: “Do you feel you’re being used to your full potential in this job?”**  
**Why ask?** This question, which invites a simple yes-or-no answer, can reveal an enormous amount of useful information as the interviewer asks follow-ups. A “no” answer isn’t necessarily indicative of a lack of engagement, but can reveal a wide range of sentiments with regard to harnessing an individual’s full potential. Maybe he or she has specific skills that simply aren’t being utilized, or is hungry for more specialized training. Maybe it’s just a matter of assigning more responsibility. This question is great for prompting action managers can take to engage employees on a personal level. A “yes” answer, on the other hand, is highly indicative of an engaged employee that is likely to stay.
- Question 4: “Is there something new in particular you want to learn this year?”**  
**Why ask?** As a follow-up to inquiring about potential, this question serves two purposes: one, it can provide a simple and direct route for a retention push for employees (can you offer to cover a training course? Secure them a spot on a special inter-departmental project that is relevant to their interests?), and two, it puts them in a frame of mind to imagine continued employment at your organization. Even if they don’t have a specific answer offhand, imagining what one might want to learn if given the opportunity can be a powerful mindset.
- Question 5: “Do you feel you are appropriately recognized for your contributions?”**  
**Why ask?** At this point, you can begin to transition the interview from positive “stay factors” to “pain points” or “frustration factors”—those aspects which might explain an employee’s desire to leave his or her job. Recognition, meaning a reward or public acknowledgement of accomplishments, is a good place to start as it is consistently linked to engagement and higher retention.<sup>3</sup> If the interviewee feels they haven’t been adequately recognized, take notes on how they would like to be. This could form the basis of a new reward incentive structure, motivation program, or peer recognition initiative. The question is also very relevant to virtual employees, who may feel less recognized than their in-office counterparts.
- Question 6: “Do you have the right resources to perform successfully?”**  
**Why ask?** Sometimes, disengagement or the desire to leave can be linked directly to a resource problem. Employees may feel overworked due to inefficiencies or hamstrung by inadequate systems or processes. Virtual employees in particular can have unique resource needs, lacking access to office resources that are often taken for granted. Follow-ups to this question might reveal that streamlining certain everyday procedures or hiring an intern to help with administrative tasks could do wonders in terms of improving an employee’s work environment, but they may have felt afraid to bring these things up unprompted.
- Question 7: “Do you feel like you’re in the know when it comes to company information or departmental changes?”**  
**Why ask?** Feeling disconnected from the rest of the company can be a significant contributor to disengagement and turnover. Again, virtual employees may be disproportionately affected by this issue, as working from a completely different geographic location—and especially a different time zone—than the rest of their team can result in an “out of sight, out of mind” effect. If your interviewee feels chronically uninformed or left out, study new methods of delivering team information that ensure everyone is included.
- Question 8: “Can you describe a recent frustrating experience or day on the job?”**  
**Why ask?** Asking this can often cut directly to the key factors that contribute to your interviewee’s likelihood of leaving. Again, instead of asking for general descriptions of the job as a whole, you’re inviting them to zero in on a specific memory that you can use an example of what your team should strive to avoid.
- Question 9: “Do you feel as though you are treated with trust and respect in your position?”**  
**Why ask?** This is a great way to address major issues related to team engagement without pointing fingers. A sensation of mutual respect, especially when it comes to supervisors and senior leadership, plays a pivotal role in overall engagement, and its absence can be a major contributor to employee flight risk. Framing the question in this way offers employees the chance to voice their concerns about how these factors might be corrected if they plan to stay with your company. This can sharpen your understanding of the team atmosphere and morale, and contribute to potential retention initiatives that might engage multiple employees beyond the interviewee as well.
- Question 10: “If you had the power, how would you change your day-to-day job to be more enjoyable?”**  
**Why ask?** This question also aims to get at the core frustrations and pain points an employee may be experiencing, but also brings the conversation back around to a positive and constructive angle for fostering retention. Encourage employees to imagine “a perfect world” or “their dream job” and describe what could be done to bring their current situation more in line with these desires. If even just one or two of the resulting suggestions could be practically implemented, it may keep your interviewee from leaving. Note that some individuals may feel uneasy being asked to “play manager” in this context; reassure them that you’re looking for honest opinions. The good news is that those employees who are seriously considering leaving will be very likely to be truthful and offer actionable criticism.

Remember, you can tailor your stay interview questions to the specific job and individual in question. Don’t be afraid to encourage interviewees to speak candidly, and keep in mind that while you might not always like what you hear. In the long run, this feedback will save your business time, talent, and money.

3. <http://www.workforce.com/articles/20131-companies-recognizing-importance-of-recognition-rewards-recognition-providers>