

# 6 STEPS TO ASK YOUR STAFF TO STAY



We all know how hard it is to find good staff, so it's crucial you keep the 'good ones' with you as long as possible. This is where stay interviews come into play. Haven't heard of them? Business consultant CHARLOTTE RIMMER explains.



There are 3 main forms of interview; the "are you going to be right for my business?" interview, the "you're leaving anyway, so please tell me what you think could be improved or addressed in my business?" and the "Stay Interview".

Most people are familiar with the first two, but the final one is equally important and often has the best ROI. It is easy to spend 80% of your time managing staff who may not be happy or need guidance. What about those key staff members who are loyal, highly productive and always put their hand up to help? Surprisingly, these are the staff members who are often ignored. Not because they need to be but because they don't yell the loudest as they're busy working.

A stay interview is a meeting set by a manager to review and discuss the staff member's responsibilities and job satisfaction. I recommend you review your team first. Work out who your key staff are and why. How did they respond in their interview for the role? What are their strengths?

## A stay interview needs to include 6 key steps:

1. Preparation: a review of interview and weekly catch up notes, a mutually convenient time and location
2. A good understanding of the role the person is in, and what their next step may be
3. An example of what they think they're good at
4. An example of where you think they could be developed
5. A realistic idea of what you will be asked

and what you can deliver  
6. A conclusion, an action, a date to review the discussion

Let's take the first step; preparation. It is poor management (and laziness) to think that you can review a person's strengths and weaknesses by thinking about it while making a cup of tea prior. It is most important that you know the start and other significant dates of your staff members. There is nothing more soul destroying than hitting an anniversary when someone else in the team is recognised, and you're not. It also requires reflection and is a prompt to put the groundwork in before the meeting.

Consider starting the meeting with "you've been with us since ... and I'd like to talk about your role and what you most enjoy at work".

Can you offer a career path? If so, where could this person go to next? And what do they need to do to get there? If not, then why else are they working for you? Proximity to home, flexible hours, great products, training?

I sat in a great stay interview recently, where the manager Jenny\* ran the meeting with a strong sense of collaboration. She talked about Heather's\* obvious strength in training other team members and congratulated her. She thanked her for always being supportive and offering to help when Jenny was absent or working on the business. She then spoke about Heather's weakness in dealing with difficult conversations, e.g. she has avoided asking a staff member why a client's paperwork hadn't been completed thoroughly.

Jenny acknowledged that with only 5

people, there wasn't much of a career path for Heather. But instead, she would schedule 2 hours paid a month to help her develop management skills, by talking about the business and offering strategies to deal with difficult conversations. Jenny was clear about the opportunities available in a small business but acknowledged the value of Heather's commitment. She asked if this was of interest to Heather and created a plan on the spot.

When Heather left the room, I asked Jenny if she was worried that she might share all this business advice with her key employee and lose her to somewhere else. Her response? "Possibly, but if I don't do something, I'll lose her anyway and she'll be disgruntled, so this is a better result for us all"...good thinking.

A stay interview takes effort, and if you're unsure of investing this time, consider the hours and cost of recruiting, training and inducting new staff members. This is considerably higher than ensuring that you dedicate a couple of hours per month to manage and mentor your best staff. Like Jenny, you may not keep them forever, but you will keep them happier for a longer time which will result in better succession planning and improved productivity.

Good managers have regular catchups with their people and make sure they know what makes them tick. They recognise the importance of staff retention and understanding what motivates their key staff.

\*Names have been changed  
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