

The PPA Guide to Stay Interviews

Retaining top and diverse talent is a critical challenge for organisations. With increasing competition for top talent and the growing importance of diversity and inclusion in the workplace, organisations need to prioritise employee retention and engagement to maintain a competitive edge.

Retaining talented and diverse employees not only helps to build a strong and innovative workforce but also saves costs associated with turnover, such as recruitment and training expenses.

Stay interviews are one way for organisations to proactively engage with employees and address their needs and concerns to improve employee satisfaction and retention.

What's the purpose of stay interviews?

The purpose of stay interviews is to proactively engage with employees to understand their current job satisfaction, identify their needs and concerns, and explore opportunities to improve their experience and retain them within the organisation.

Stay interviews are different from traditional exit interviews, which are conducted when employees have already decided to leave the organisation.

By conducting stay interviews, organisations can gather valuable feedback from their employees and take action to address their concerns and improve employee retention. The goal is to create a positive and supportive work environment where employees feel valued, supported, and motivated to stay and contribute to the organisation's success.

Who holds stay interviews?

To ensure the effectiveness of stay interviews, it is recommended that those conducting the interviews are not line managers of the employees being interviewed and ideally not in the same team or department to enable objectivity and a degree of separation.

The recommended interviewers are members of the people team, mental health first aiders, in-house recruitment team members, and talent managers who are responsible for talent wellbeing. These individuals are trained to conduct effective stay interviews and have the necessary expertise to identify and address employee needs and concerns.

To ensure that the outcomes of the stay interviews are shared and acted upon, a member of the management team and a senior HR person should sponsor the initiative and be responsible for collating the outcomes and arranging them into themes that can be turned into actions. By involving the right people in the stay interview process, organisations can ensure that employees feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and that the feedback is acted upon to improve employee retention and engagement.

When do you hold stay interviews?

Stay interviews should be conducted at regular intervals throughout the year to enable proactive identification of employee needs and concerns. To ensure sufficient coverage, at least 70% of the whole workforce should be interviewed within a 12-month period. It is also important to prioritise interviews for members of the team perceived to be vulnerable, a flight risk, or with specific needs or recent changes that might require additional support.

For larger organisations, stay interviews might need to be conducted quarterly, while for smaller ones, twice a year would enable sufficient coverage. It is essential to note that stay interviews should not replace appraisal cycles or employee experience surveys, and when communicating the stay interviews, organisations should make this clear.

How do you hold stay interviews?

Here are some tips on how to conduct effective stay interviews:

1. **Keep the interviews short:** Stay interviews should be brief and last for approximately 15-20 minutes. However, interviewers should be mindful that they may lead to lengthier conversations, and they should allow time for overruns.
2. **Maintain confidentiality:** All discussions in stay interviews should be kept confidential. However, interviewers should raise any concerns with the HR team for safeguarding purposes.
3. **Be prepared to direct talent to relevant resources:** Interviewers should ensure they are equipped to direct employees to relevant resources should they need to.
4. **Use open-ended questions:** Use open-ended questions to enable honest and direct feedback. Here are some suggested questions:
 - Do you consider yourself to have a protected characteristic?
 - Does your team enable you to be yourself and are you supported to thrive?
 - Do you feel you get enough recognition?
 - Do you feel positively challenged by the work you are assigned?
 - Would you say you have enough tasks to do?

- Over the past year, how would you rate the support you receive from the agency on a 1-10 scale score? Ask why the person has given that score. (Having a score enables organisations to track progress over time)
5. Follow up: After the interviews, each interviewer should write up the themes that have emerged and share them with the management and HR sponsor. They will then ensure proactive action is taken to address the key themes.

What to do with the information gathered

After conducting stay interviews, the interviewer should write up the themes that have emerged and share them with the management and HR sponsor. They should then ensure proactive action is taken to address the key themes.

Some of the actions that can be taken based on the information gathered from stay interviews include policy review, manager training, review and amend resourcing approach, review and update reward strategy, and grievance resolution. It's also important for the agency to communicate any changes that will be taking place as a direct result of the stay interviews to encourage the participation of more staff in future sessions.