



interview



irwin siegel agency, inc.
risk management services



interview

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Introduction

Employers are challenged more than ever before to find and keep employees who are reliable, personable, and qualified for the positions they hold. Each time a member of an organization departs, the organization suffers multiple repercussions—including heavier workloads for the remaining staff, overtime salaries, and the costs associated with finding, interviewing, and training replacement staff.

Turnover is inevitable. Employees are going to leave your organization for a number of different reasons. So how can you use the challenging situation of employee turnover to your agency's benefit? One of the best ways is to implement exit interviews.



The Importance of an Exit Interview

Exit interviews can be useful tools. Sometimes, employees depart for reasons out of your control. But that is not always the case. The exit interview can serve as a risk management tool and can assist with employee recruitment, hiring practices, training, and retention by allowing you to glean valuable information that can be applied to reducing future staff turnover.

Have a Plan

Your agency should have a policy regarding exit interviews. This will ensure that whoever is assigned to do the exit interview will understand its purpose.

The person doing the interview, (usually someone from the Human Resources Department) should be specifically trained for this task and qualified to give advice about payroll and benefits issues. The interviewer should be considered a neutral third-party. This means supervisors should not conduct exit interviews with their departing subordinates.

Give the opportunity for the employee to share the real reason for leaving. If the employee later sues and changes his or her story, there will be a credibility issue.



PLANNING TIPS

TIP #1

Plan to ask **general, open-ended** exit interview questions. This helps you avoid “planting seeds” in the employee’s mind about any wrongdoing in the workplace.

TIP #2

Have all necessary paperwork prepared prior to the interview. Plan to **use a checklist** rather than “winging it.” Remember, this might be the last opportunity you have to speak to the departing employee about the circumstances that led to their resignation.

Sample Questions

Here are some sample questions that may work for your agency's exit interview.

- Why are you leaving the agency?
- If you are going to work for another agency in the same field, what are they offering that we are not?
- What did you like best about your job?
- Is there anything we could have done better?
- Were you recognized for the work you did?
- Were you recognized for new ideas you had?
- Did you have the opportunity to do interesting work?
- Was the work environment cooperative, with friendly co-workers?
- Did you have the support (people, equipment, technology) to be as effective as possible?
- In what areas could you have benefited from more training?
- Did your supervisor take an interest in your career development?
- Were there adequate promotion opportunities?
- Do you feel you were fairly paid?
- Would you recommend our agency to prospective employees?
- Is there anything you would like to tell me about the workforce you think I need to know?
- Please share any other comments that would help us be a model employer in the future.



How to Handle a Laundry List of Grievances

Some employees use an exit interview as a way to express years of pent-up frustration. Do not get defensive. Listen. Recognizing their honesty could help you change some not-so-good circumstances.

Expect venting and be prepared. Let them get it out. Later, you can try to differentiate which grievances have some credibility and those that do not. Also, ask the employee who they told about their issues, or are you the first one hearing about things? That will help you determine if there are breakdowns in your supervisory reporting process. Do not try to resolve the problems during the interview. If the employee discloses concerns about harassment, allegations of abuse, or other things of a serious nature, ask them to prepare a written statement for you, since you will need to initiate an investigation.

If the employee discloses he or she is leaving because of discrimination, the employer still has the obligation to investigate and take appropriate action. Do not feel like you immediately have to give the employee a response. Follow your normal investigation processes. When the investigation is complete, follow up with a “close the loop” letter to the former employee so they know you are taking their concerns seriously (otherwise they might think nothing was ever done).



THINK ABOUT IT

How you respond to a departing employee could mean the difference between them going on with their life, or going on with their life by way of an attorney's office so they can initiate post-employment legal action against you. Exit interviews give employees an opportunity to talk to you first.

Be Prepared to Discuss...

- Information about the departing employee's last paycheck, including when and how it will be delivered.
- If the employee participates in benefits, when those benefits will end and opportunities for continuation coverage. Tell the employee what they should expect to receive in writing from the agency about benefits continuation and when they should expect to receive it.
- Arrangements for the departing employee to return agency property, including keys, agency ID, and computer equipment.
- Updates to personal information. Remind the employee to provide you with an updated address if they move before the end of the year so their next W-2 can be forwarded to them.

After the Interview

Follow the rules of common courtesy. Thank the former employee for their service and wish them well. Shake their hand and escort them to the door. It is important that people leave feeling respected, and good about what they contributed to the agency.

Write a memo for the personnel file after the exit interview. Include what was discussed. This will be critically important if the interviewer needs to reference the information in the event of legal action.



Have a procedure for sharing the information you gathered. Exit interview data is only as good as how it is organized, analyzed, and implemented.

- Scrutinize all exit interview data together. Individual exit interviews can be interesting, but when viewed together, they take shape as a powerful management tool, helping to identify trends.

- Use the data to determine what your agency is doing right and where you may be off track. Organize data into meaningful categories to help you identify what business practices you should keep doing and what you should consider changing. Examples of categories include:

Work/Life Balance

i.e. hours of work, family commitments, time off, lifestyle issues, etc.

Career Potential

i.e. opportunity or lack of opportunity for job growth and development, career path, etc.

How the Agency Measures Up

i.e. working conditions, pay, benefits, recognition incentives

Management

i.e. management/supervisory interactions with staff, etc.



Organize the data you collect and share it with the senior management team. The agency should have a plan to use this data to maintain practices that work and develop plans to remedy those that do not.

Analysis + Action = Increased Retention!

Your reporting mechanism does not have to be ultra-sophisticated. It just needs to be something you can use to convey information to senior management on a regular basis.

Other Things to Consider

Exit interviews should be reserved for voluntary resignations, since layoffs and involuntary terminations for cause will require a special approach.

Extend the offer for an exit interview, but do not force it if the employee is unwilling. It is okay for the agency to have an expectation that all departing employees participate in the exit interview process, but legally you cannot force the employee to meet with you. Note in their personnel file your attempts to schedule the exit interview and their declination.

Confidentiality is critical. Just because the employee is leaving does not mean their business should be public knowledge.

The information collected can give an agency a unique perspective on its performance and employee satisfaction. Exit interviews can serve as early warning systems for problems brewing in the workplace. With the number of plaintiff's attorneys eager to initiate employment-related lawsuits, you will find that if you do not talk to your departing employees, someone else will.

Notes



Notes

About Irwin Siegel Agency, Inc.

Irwin Siegel Agency, Inc. (ISA) is a leading insurance and risk management organization serving the Human Service field and insures service providers in 50 states. ISA continues to set the standards of quality, innovation and value when it comes to developing new programs that meet the dynamic nature of the Human Services field.

We are here to support your efforts of supporting others, to provide the products and coverages your facilities need, to develop and share risk management tools and services to protect, while maintaining the compassion and education that holds ISA above ordinary insurance providers

Insurance coverages include General Liability, Professional Liability, Property, Inland Marine, Crime, Umbrella and Commercial Automobile. Additional coverages are available for Directors & Officers, Volunteer Accident, Youth Protection, Environmental and Pollution Liability, HIPAA Protector, and Workers' Compensation.

Are You Covered?

Some relevant products available through ISA include:

- Employment Practices Liability
- Employee Benefits Liability
- HIPAA Coverage (Health Insurance Portability & Accountability Act)
- NetProtect 360 - Network Security, Privacy Liability, and Identity Theft Coverage

Availability may vary by state

Sample of Available Resources

Printed Publications

- Compliance and Ethics: A Guide to the Development of a Compliance Program
- Safety Committee: A Guide to the Development and Implementation of an Effective Safety Committee
- The Board: An Overview of Responsibilities for Non-Profit Board Members

Flyers & Bulletins

- Avoiding Workplace Violence
- Key Control
- Workers' Compensation: Tips to Reduce your Workers' Compensation Insurance Costs

Video Lending Library

- Sexual Harassment for Management
- Discrimination: Nobody Wins
- Conflict Resolution - Strategies for Helping Staff Successfully Resolve Conflicts with Each Other

Partner Programs

- Online Training
- Background Checks and Screening Services
- Vehicle Incident Monitoring

And much more...

**Contact our Risk Management Department
for additional resources and partner services**

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