

Why you need to be doing Exit Interviews

By Natalie Peace, Owner of Booster Juice, Summit Shopping Centre

How many jobs have you quit over your lifetime? What would you have said if you had been asked about your reasons for leaving?

Chances are, you had lots of valuable insight that could have helped your former employer, if they cared to ask. The brave ones always ask, because they know how much they can learn from an employee who is no longer afraid to say exactly what they didn't like about the job. OK, so not everyone is going to be totally honest--we're all told to be nice and not burn bridges, no matter how much we want to say "take this job and shove it".

As an employer, it's important to encourage staff who are leaving to be as open and clear as possible about why they no longer want to work with you. If you want to have any hope of retaining loyal, skilled, hard-working employees in the future, you have to find out why people are leaving you.

Yes, they might have simply found a more fitting opportunity for their needs, or a better-paying one, or they're pregnant or moving or they won the lottery. You can't do anything about those reasons, nor should you want to. Be happy for those who are moving on for positive reasons. Hopefully, if you are doing a great job as a leader, you played some roll in helping them develop the skills they needed to get that next dream job. (And if they're leaving because they won the lottery, just hope they remember your contribution then too!)

You need to find out if someone is leaving because:

- They feel micromanaged, and don't have a sense of autonomy
- They aren't creatively challenged or stimulated
- They don't have any fun at work
- They have unmanageable conflicts with you or other employees

- They feel your business is disorganized and poorly managed
- They're overworked and stressed out
- They don't feel recognized or appreciated

It will probably hurt to hear those things, yet you absolutely need to know about them so you can address what you are doing as a leader. Yes, the employee might be seeing things that aren't actually there. They might be overly sensitive. They might simply dislike your expectation that they actually have to work to earn their paycheque. But what if they're right? What if the problem really is with your management style, your business, or with other staff members?

Of course, I advocate maintaining regular check-ins with your staff so you can uncover any issues before they become so big people are willing to quit over them. But you need to be open to hearing a perspective that you may not have otherwise tuned into on your own, and have a good heart-to-heart with everyone who leaves. At the very least, this will give you an opportunity to apologize for anything you could have done better, and get their feedback on how to change things going forward. Not only does this help you improve your business and keep the rest of your staff happy, it also allows your departing employee to feel heard, understood, and appreciated. It is your inherent responsibility as a leader and key decision maker in your business to put your ego aside and be willing to take responsibility for making your business the best it can be.

For more business tips and tools, check out Natalie's blog at PeaceandProfit.com

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