

WORKFORCE HORIZONS

Planning Tomorrow's Workforce Today

Louisiana Department of Civil Service

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QUOTE OF THE DAY

“Success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he has overcome.” – Booker T. Washington

SOME TIPS ON EXIT INTERVIEWS

Turnover has always been a concern for organizations, but is even greater with today's shrinking workforce. Employees leave jobs for many reasons. Some are work-related; some are personal. Employers are primarily interested in work-related reasons dealing with such matters as compensation, benefits, opportunities for promotion or development, employee / supervisor relations, etc. However, there can be some extension into the “personal.” For example, an employee may leave for the personal reason of needing more time to take care of children or an aging or ill parent. Such a personal need might be addressed by a change in work policy allowing more flexible arrangements such as flextime, working part-time, telecommuting or job sharing.

In any case, an employer wants to know why employees are leaving so it can better retain and attract productive employees. Exit interviews can provide feedback on organizational policy and supervisory

strengths and weaknesses and help identify areas needing improvement. Below are some exit interview recommendations for agencies adapted from materials developed by the state of Iowa.

1. Inform managers, supervisors and employees about the exit interview process. Make sure they know what to expect and why it is important. Make sure employees do not feel caught off guard or threatened by the process.
2. Through staff meetings or other means, keep employees and managers informed on a regular basis of important trends or metrics resulting from the exit interviews; encourage them to suggest improvements (either in operational policies in order to reduce turnover or in the exit interview process itself to make it more efficient and effective).

3. Send the employee an exit interview questionnaire to fill out a few days before his last day on the job and before any face-to-face interview. If you intend to do a face-to-face follow-up interview, set up a time and place for the interview when sending the questionnaire.
4. Do a face-to-face interview if at all feasible. Although some organizations rely on a questionnaire only, that practice suffers from a number of drawbacks. The interview allows you to go over the questionnaire and clarify or ask follow-up questions. It also gives the employee a chance to bring up matters not included on the questionnaire.
5. The face-to-face interview should be done by a non-biased third party. The most important factor in the exit interview is to get truthful results. Therefore, the interviewer should not be someone the employee will be intimidated by. In no case should the direct supervisor of the employee do the exit interview. It is probably best if someone outside the chain of command over the employee does the interview (e.g, the Human Resources Director). Some organizations even contract with an outside consultant to minimize the intimidation factor.
6. The interviewer should be able to listen without judging. *The interviewer should not attempt to defend the organization even when the employee's comments are extremely negative.* That is one reason for contracting with a third-party outside the organization to do

the interviews. It is usually difficult for someone in the organization to resist trying to defend it against an angry employee.

7. The interviewer should take notes to document any specifics heard from the employee. This also demonstrates to the employee that his comments are being taken seriously.
8. The interviewer should hold confidential any comments the employee does not want shared with his supervisor or other managers. The information gained from the exit interview should never be used in any way that would harm the departing employee. With the employee's permission, his comments may be shared with his supervisor or managers. Again, the goal here is to encourage openness in the employee's responses. If the employee feels that his comments may be used against him, he will be reluctant to speak his mind.
9. Keep information gained from the exit interview separate from the departing employee's personnel file.
10. Develop a method of compiling metrics to sum up results from many exit interviews to discover trends or factors contributing to turnover.
11. Ask the departing employee for feedback on the exit interview process itself once the interview is concluded.

In addition to the exit interview conducted by the agency, Iowa's equivalent of the Department of Civil Service tracks turnover

and sends a Departure Survey to the departed employee approximately sixty days after they have left. This is used primarily to identify statewide trends as opposed to identifying more specific issues a particular agency may need to address. However, since employees may regard the Department of Civil Service as more unbiased, it serves as an additional incentive for openness in employee responses.

WHO WANTS TO FIRE THE BOSS?

According to a recent *Gallup Management Journal Survey* almost 25% of U.S. employees would fire their boss if they could.¹ The crucial factor appears to be employee engagement. Those who are engaged have strong relationships with their bosses. Those who are actively disengaged are the ones who most want to fire their boss. The research found that nearly 25 million workers are actively disengaged resulting in reduced productivity costing the U.S. economy \$382 billion.

COMPOSITION OF THE MULTI-GENERATIONAL WORKFORCE

There are four generations comprising the current workforce. An article in the Winter 2007 issue of *Public Personnel Management*² reports the breakdown as follows:

Veteran / Traditionalist (born 1929-45) – 63 million
Baby Boomer (born 1946-64) – 78 million
Generation X (born 1965-79) – 48 million
Generation Y (born 1980-99) – 80 million (expected)

Since not all Generation Y persons are old enough to have entered the adult workforce yet, the 80 million figure is projected based

on the number that will eventually enter the workforce.

Interestingly the expected shortage of employees caused by the small size of Generation X relative to Baby Boomers may be relieved somewhat in the near future as more of Generation Y enters the adult workforce. If the projections for Generation Y are accurate, Generation Y will eventually provide as many workers as the Baby Boomers.

WORKFORCE PLANNING MAXIM OF THE DAY

“By themselves, character and integrity do not accomplish anything. But their absence faults everything else” – Peter F. Drucker

¹Kranz, Garry. “Gallup Survey: Nearly 25% of Employees Would Fire the Boss.” *Workforce Management*. (2/6/08)

²Crumpacker, Martha and Crumpacker, Jill. “Succession Planning and Generational Stereotypes: Should HR Consider Age-Based Values and Attitudes a Relevant Factor or a Passing Fad?” *Public Personnel Management*. Volume 36, No. 4, Winter 2007.

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Purpose: The purpose of the Workforce Horizons is to educate readers about workforce planning issues and best practices, inform them about upcoming Civil Service workshops and training related to workforce planning and to provide practical job aids to assist agencies with workforce planning.

Comments and submissions: We welcome questions about workforce planning and suggestions for improvements to the newsletter as well as submissions of articles about what your agency is doing in workforce planning. Questions, comments, and requests to be added to the distribution list for the newsletter should be sent to the editor.

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