
Conducting an Effective Exit Interview

An exit interview is not necessarily for the same purpose as a “stay interview” (intended to convince a good employee to stay) nor a “termination interview” (a session in which the employee is informed of the end of employment).

An exit interview, normally conducted prior to the departure of an employee, can serve both the departing employee and the employing church in the following ways:

1. It gives the departing employee an opportunity to express suggestions and concerns, and if necessary to “vent” in a healthy way.
2. It gives the employer an opportunity to affirm the employee and to end the relationship well. Even in cases where tensions between employee and employer may have existed, it allows both the opportunity to end the relationship in a more positive manner, if both are willing.
3. It gives a potential opportunity for improving the working environment at the church through the feedback of the exiting employee, which can improve the effectiveness of the entire team and reduce the chances of losing quality employees in the future.
4. It affords an opportunity for the employer and employee to bring a working relationship to an end using the C&MA document A Call to Excellence.
5. It communicates to employees both that the church is a caring and compassionate environment and is serious about its human resource practices.
6. It can help identify topics of need for training of employees in the future.

Some of the more common reasons given by workers for their departure from an employer have included:

- Feeling unappreciated or unrecognized for their contributions
- Discontent with treatment by their supervisor or for poor supervision
- Conflict due to differences and personality issues with their supervisor
- Little or no opportunity for growth or advancement within the role
- Desire or need for better income and less inequities
- Lack of fit in the role
- Growth while in their role has produced desires for a different job role

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To make the exit interview as helpful as possible, keep the following in mind:

- Show strong interest in why quality employees may be quitting. Not all turnover is good turnover.
- It may be advisable to have the exit interview conducted by someone other than the employee's direct supervisor since that relationship may bias the effectiveness of the interview.
- Introduce the interview to the employee as an opportunity for the church to address potential problems and create a better environment for their employees. This can also be helpful in reducing stress on an employee if they see the exit interview as being solely focused on them.
- Give assurance of confidentiality in their statements so that no one beyond the interviewer will be able to identify the comments with that exiting employee.
- Keep the interview relatively brief and simple with a few basic questions.
- An exit interview conducted by one interviewer is adequate and avoids the possibility of the employee feeling intimidated and ganged up on by multiple interviewers.
- Be aware that an employee leaving for other another employment opportunity may give more forthright and open answers than those who say they are leaving for personal reasons and may fear repercussions in their job search by being truthful (e.g. in a reference from the employer).
- Asking the employee to summarize their employment situation at that church prior to your asking specific questions may preempt some of your questions which are answered in that summary.
- Following the interview, assess the information but destroy any interview documents or notes and assure the employee no record will be kept on file and the information will be used anonymously. In assessing the information from the interview, be alert to patterns or prevailing themes which may emerge.

A few examples of good exit interview questions could be:

- How would you describe how you were treated on this job, especially by your supervisor and fellow workers?
- To what extent do you feel your work was recognized and appreciated?
- Did you feel you received the kind of training and assistance you needed in order to carry out your role? What might have helped?
- How would you describe morale on this church team and why?

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- How would you describe the balance of the workload assigned to you?
- Do you have suggestions as to how to make this church a better environment for its workers?
- How would you rate the evaluation/appraisal process for employees and how could it serve better?
- How did your actual duties match your job description and expectations?
- Were there any policies or practices in the work environment that frustrated you or could be improved?
- Were communications between staff and within the church helpful or lacking, and how might it be improved?
- What advice would you give to the person replacing you?
- What could we have done to keep you on staff here?

Potential Employer Checklist

While situations may differ, an employer checklist for an exit interview and post-interview may potentially include at least any or all of the following:

- Resignation letter is received (if appropriate)
- Exit interview is scheduled, completed, and exit interview notes are recorded in employee's personnel file
- Employer property is collected (e.g. keys, cell, credit card, laptop, electronic and physical files, books, training materials, etc.)
- Benefits are cancelled
- [Record of Employment](#) and [Employee Data Form](#) completed Final pay is distributed, including any unpaid overtime, vacation pay, and expenses reimbursed
- Final recognition is planned (e.g. farewell party, announcement)
- Forwarding address for employee is recorded
- Employee's email address, computer login, and voicemail access are removed from media, phones, and network
- Employee reminded of obligations to signed confidentiality agreement and A Call to Excellence for keeping confidential any information about the church, congregational members, or other parties gained through employment
- Future relationship of the employee to church and staff is clarified
- Reference letter is written (if requested and appropriate)
- Appropriate vendors are notified of the change
- Paid subscriptions for the employee are cancelled

Potential Employee Checklist

As the employee plans for the exit interview and departure, the following employee checklist may be helpful to the departing staff member and may vary depending on the role and context.

- Resignation letter has been provided to employer (if appropriate)
- Agreement to exit interview has been established
- All properties belonging to the employer are returned (e.g. keys, cell, credit card, laptop, electronic and hard files, books, training materials, business cards)
- Passwords, codes, and keys for accessing church property or information has been supplied to the employer
- Necessary paperwork or contacts have been made to cancel benefits and retirement contributions
- Receipts for any unpaid reimbursable expenses have been submitted and unpaid overtime and vacation pay have been discussed and agreed upon
- Thought has been given to leaving well and ending on a positive note
- Discussion has clarified the future relationship of the employee to the church and staff
- Letter of reference has been requested from the employer if desired
- List of vendors or others associated with the employee in their role who need to be notified of the change has been discussed with the employer
- Forwarding address has been given to employer

Some of the information contained in this document was adapted from an article on the website www.nfib.com called "10 Steps for Conducting an Effective Exit Interview".