

Employee Exit Survey Best Practice Guidelines

1. Take the process of employee exit surveys seriously at your organization and get a commitment from senior management that they will support and encourage the exit survey initiative. Employee exit surveys should become an integral point of the employee experience at your organization.
2. Name an administrator who will oversee and be responsible for the employee exit system at your organization. Our experience tells us that exit systems with a committed coordinator get higher participation among departing employees than do more “laissez-faire” systems.
3. Use the exit system process as a learning tool, since departing employees are often in a great position to give constructive feedback and criticism based on their work experience.
4. It is essential to invest the effort needed to ensure high quality employee survey results. Not only will poor quality surveys cost you time and money, it may mean that you'll get meaningless data. This can make you to spend more time and money addressing issues that are not actually going to reduce your staff turnover.
5. Use your employee survey process to get a clear understanding of how much of your voluntary turnover is preventable and how much is non-preventable. This number represents an essential piece of information that should be the fundamental basis of your exit survey data analysis.
6. Don't take the results from your employee exit surveys personally and don't try to “explain away” any of the negative findings that you may get. You should use this information as an opportunity to make changes within your organization to improve the work environment for your current employees.
7. Throughout the exit survey process, treat your departing employees with professional courtesy and respect.
8. Use an outside, unbiased source to conduct your employee exit surveys and to understand the reasons why your employees are leaving. Research shows that departing employees are more reluctant to reveal the real reasons for leaving when interviewed by either their supervisor or someone from HR, since they do not want to risk “burning their bridges” with representatives of the organization they are leaving.
9. Be very clear with your employees that the information provided in your exit surveys will not result in any repercussions. Comments made in exit surveys should never be used to prevent any employee's opportunity to be re-hired. There should never be any sense among your employees that their exit survey answers could be used against them.
10. Conduct your employee exit surveys in a consistent manner and following an established protocol. In too many organizations, exit interviews are conducted haphazardly and the data is often not collected in a centralized database, making effective analysis almost impossible. If feasible in your organization, an online survey tool is a great way to collect employee exit survey data in a systematic way. Online surveys also encourage departing employees to give honest and valid answers.

11. Take this opportunity to collect a form of “competitive intelligence” from your departing employees by finding out what organizations they are joining and how their new pay levels and/or incentives compare to what they were receiving at your organization.
12. Encourage all voluntarily departing employees to complete an exit survey, so you can be sure that you’re getting a full picture of the reasons for leaving. Dissatisfied and/or angry employees often appreciate the opportunity to share their concerns in a safe environment and these findings can help point to changes needed within your organization to resolve the chronic problems leading to turnover.
13. To get the highest level of participation, conduct the exit surveys *before* the employee leaves the organization. You’ll still get accurate information while avoiding the severe drop-off in participation that occurs after employees are gone. For more information, see our note on Employee Survey Participation here.
14. Ensure that your employee survey captures the vital information you need from your departing employees. The survey should include the right balance of rating questions, which will let you track changes and compare results across different parts of your organization, and open-ended commentary questions, since these can help you understand the circumstances leading up to your employee’s decision to leave.
15. Keep your employee exit survey simple and straightforward but also make sure that the questions asked can vary based on the specific employees being surveyed and/or based on the previous answers given by that employee.
16. The ideal length of an online exit survey is about 10 minutes in total. This length will let you collect a good amount of information from your departing employees without causing fatigue or frustration.
17. The process you use to collect employee survey data should not only be easy and straightforward from the employee’s perspective, it must also incorporate a reporting tool that lets you easily access the data. The reporting tool should help you develop intelligent insights from your employee survey results.
18. You should not only commit to collecting employee exit surveys in a systematic way but you must also carefully analyze the information collected to determine what action you can take to address the main reasons why employees are leaving. It is essential to act on the results and use the information to gain insights into your corporate culture, the dysfunctional aspects of your organization and what opportunities there are to retain your “top talent.” Creating a strategic Action Plan based on this information should help you reduce employee turnover within your organization. Insightlink can help with our *Exit Survey Analysis Guide*. Contact Lara Fordis at lfordis@insightlink.com or at 1-866-802-8095 ext. 705 to learn more.
19. When you implement changes within your organization because of employee exit survey findings, tell your employees why you are making these changes. Knowing that your organization takes exit findings seriously will not only encourage future participation but will help make the knowledge that your organization listens to employees become part of the overall employee experience. This important development will ensure that you’ll get lots of open and honest ideas, suggestions and critiques from your employee exit system.