

Site Contents

[Home](#)
[The Buzz](#)
[Research Center](#)
[Community Center](#)
[Your HR Career](#)
[Legal Insight](#)
[HR 101](#)
[Workforce Tools](#)

Search

Go

[Workforce Magazine](#)

[Log In](#)
[Edit My Profile](#)

[Free Newsletter](#)
[About The Site](#)
[Feedback/Questions](#)

[Ad Info](#)

Feature: Leverage Exit Interviews to Collect Key Knowledge

Real HR. Real Impact.
WORKFORCE

Leverage Exit Interviews to Collect Key Knowledge

You can find out a lot about a job, not just a departing person, says columnist Pamela Holloway.

By Pamela Holloway

Headhunter Nick Corcodilos calls exit interviews "The cockroaches of the HR world: No one knows why they exist, no one can justify or eliminate them, and they will likely survive into the third millennium."

Although I agree with Nick on most things, I'm not ready to give up on this one just yet. Sure, there are things we need to do to improve the process, but there's also some real potential here.

What if we used the exit interview opportunity to collect not only the basic HR stuff, but also knowledge about what it takes to do the job? Information that could be used to staff the job, improve the organization, and help incumbents and candidates.

■ In doing exit interviews with Help Desk staff, we learned the tricks people used to calm down angry people. ■

And what if we used exit interviews as one of a series of "cradle-to-grave" interviews done to collect knowledge? Like the UK Post Office, for example, who developed--and use frequently --a method called 3E. (TM)

The three E's are Entry, Expert and Exit. Highly skilled (and well-trained) interviewers focus on capturing key knowledge from people in the organization. Exit interviews are important, but they're not the only time employees are asked for

Feature Contents

1. [Tips and Techniques for Effective Exit Interviews](#)

Make it about them, and avoid those 10-page surveys.

input.

How it Differs

How does a knowledge-focused exit interview differ from a traditional exit interview?

In a knowledge-focused interview, you may collect the typical HR information, but your primary focus is on knowledge -- knowledge that would be helpful to the next person in the job or to others in the organization with similar roles and responsibilities. The kinds of questions you'd ask might include: "What did you do? How did you do it? Why did you do it? What skills and competencies are most critical?"

Done correctly, these types of exit interviews are a win-win for both the organization and the exiting employee. The questions enable the employee to articulate their unique contributions to the organization, and in doing so, feel better about leaving, and better about the organization.

Look Under the Hood

If you do only one thing to change the way you do exit interviews, ask the kinds of questions that will get to the heart of what the job is all about and what it takes to do the work.

In doing exit interviews with Help Desk staff, we found that two of the most important competencies for the job were: 1) the ability to calm an angry customer, satisfy their needs quickly and have them leave happy; and 2) the ability to deal with the high noise and activity level in the work setting -- to be able to think and deal with customers on the phone amidst all the ruckus.

We also learned the tricks people used to deal with the noise and calm angry people. We learned this information by asking employees what frustrated them most.

This is the kind of stuff you'll want to learn about

This is the kind of stuff you'll want to learn about your employees' (former employees) jobs.

Pam Holloway is a writer and consultant passionately committed to helping organizations make the most of their number one asset -- People! She can be reached at pam@aboutpeople.com

Next Article: [1. Tips and Techniques for Effective Exit Interviews](#)

Make it about them, and avoid those 10-page surveys.

[Features Archive](#)

Related Topics:

[Assessment and Testing](#)

Copyright © 1995-2000 [ACC Communications Inc.](#)

All Rights Reserved. [Terms of Use](#) [Privacy Statement](#)