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# Stay.



The Stay Interview  
“How to” Guide



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## What is a Stay Interview?

A 1:1 meeting between a direct Leader and their team member to pro-actively discuss what they like about the organization - why they Stay. They are also given the opportunity to talk about what the organization/leader could do better and identify any risk factors that might entice them to leave.

## How often should you conduct Stay Interviews?

For a newly onboarded employee, check in with them after 3 months. After that, a good rule of thumb is after 6 months.

Once you've held the initial Stay interview, the leader and employee should align on a retention action plan with agreed upon check in dates. Be sure to put these dates in your calendar and be sure to complete agreed up on actions.

If you have an established team and you've never conducted a Stay interview, start immediately.

## Who should participate in Stay Interviews?

Stay interviews are best done by the Direct Leader since they have the biggest sphere of influence on the employee's experience.

Any employee you wish to retain should be given the opportunity to have a Stay Interview.

A caveat, if the Leader is struggling to establish trust with the employee, or the organization doesn't offer psychological safety, it is better to engage a 3rd party to conduct these interviews and help you first re-establish trust in the leader/organization.

### What are the benefits of conducting Stay Interviews?

Done well, Stay interviews are a pro-active way to catch issues before they become problems. They will reduce attrition, improve employee engagement, establish trust, bring to light bigger themed concerns, and improve employee motivation.

There are tremendous cost saving and productivity benefits.

### What's the key to a successful Stay Interview?

Here are a few guidelines...

01.

There should be a time scheduled specifically to do the interview. Clearly, let the employee know the purpose of the meeting about a week ahead of time so they can prepare. Do not mix it with other matters.

02.

They should be done 1:1 in a private setting, not rushed, and free of distractions.

03.

Trust is paramount. The employee must both feel safe to speak openly, and trust that you will action their feedback. If your employee has little to offer, it is likely trust is a factor.

04.

There can be NO retribution for an employee who is open about their feelings.

05.

Some structured questions are a good start but be sure to give room for the employee to expand and discuss what's on their mind – it's their interview. Make sure you are clear in understanding their concerns – so don't be afraid to dig deeper.

06.

For anything that comes up that is generic – like “you always give John the better projects” or “you always make me feel bad in front of the team” – be sure to compassionately ask the employee for specific examples so you understand why they feel this way. Do this without being defensive.

07.

At the end of the meeting, you and the employee should align on and document next steps. Do you need to follow up with your leader or hr? Commit to it and put a date beside it.

08.

Always follow up to a committed, even if you don't have the answer yet yourself.

09.

You may not be able to 'fix' all issues. When this is the case, be sure not to avoid or put off the topic but respond to it transparently, with the rationale provided.

10.

Don't be afraid to challenge HR or your Leader if they dismiss a concern – especially if it's coming up as a greater theme from your team, it's worth further investigation. Do your best to have your employee's back.

### What should I include in a retention action plan?

Basically, you want to keep track of your discussion with your employee and the commitments you've made and keep the document in a shared space. It's a way to keep you both honest and also to make sure you don't let things slip through the cracks. Failure to follow up can hurt your credibility. It also gives the employee some ownership/accountability in their action plan.

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A good action plan is straightforward – it simply documents agreed upon actions/follow up and includes:

- A specific action.
- A due date.
- An owner

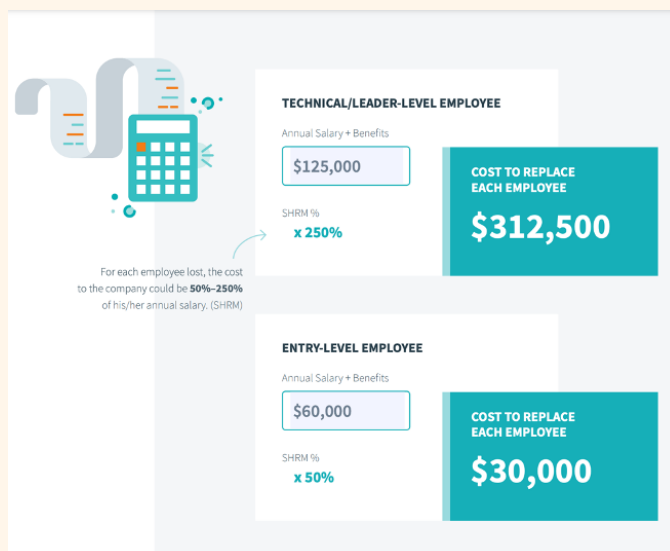
## Sample Action Plan

<u>Action</u>	<u>Owner</u>	<u>Date</u>
Create a business case for MS Excel training including costs, ROI, benefits	John	June 23, 2023
Review business case	James	June 30, 2023
Submit for approval or rework	James	July 3, 2023

What they want is expensive. We can't afford it.

Before you dismiss things as too costly, consider the following:

- It costs 30% of a junior role's salary to replace them.
- It costs up to 400% of a specialist's role to replace them.
- It is costing you 34% of a disengaged person's salary to keep them every year.



Source: [Linked In/Gallup](#)

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A question to consider – if the employee were to quit today because you didn't meet the request, would you re-consider the request knowing they have an offer and you're for sure going to lose them?

If so, you're effectively playing a game of "chicken" with your employee – hedging your bets that they won't actually leave.

This is a bad practice.

Countering when an employee gives notice is futile. At this point, the employee is disengaged, and you've already lost them. Offering them what they previously asked for and were told "no" to hurts your credibility, and is too little, too late.

Usually, when employees stay under these circumstances, they quickly become disengaged again and will likely leave within 6-9 months.

If you'd be willing to give it to them when they quit, it is much better to give it to them before they disengage.

### So are you saying I should just give my employees everything they ask for?

Of course not. This is a discussion – not a hostage situation.

Not all requests are reasonable. Just be mindful not to be dismissive as a knee jerk reaction. Thoughtfully, consider the request and don't 'react'.

Be patient with your employee.

There is an element of this that comes down to effectively managing employee expectations and clearly being able to explain why meeting a request may not make sense for the employee or the company.

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This may be an opportunity to teach your employees about how to pull together a business case and give that to them as a stretch assignment.

Or let's say a new employee with minimal experience wants to be promoted into a senior role right away that they are not qualified for – you'd walk them through the fact they do not yet have the skills, what the career path is to get there and then use that as an opportunity to help them get started to develop these skills.

### What questions should I ask in the Stay Interview?

Here are some questions to get you started but be mindful to take the employee's lead. You may need to ask more open-ended questions to get to the root of the problem or understand it further.

- What do you look forward to when you come to work each day?
- What do you like most or least about working here?
- What keeps you working here?
- If you could change something about your job, what would that be?
- What would make your job more satisfying?
- How do you like to be recognized?
- What talents are not being used in your current role?
- What would you like to learn here?
- What motivates (or demotivates) you?
- What can I do to best support you?
- What can I do more of or less of as your manager?
- What might tempt you to leave?



## When Should I bring in a 3rd party?

If your employees are not opening up to you, there is likely something going on in terms of trust, fear of repercussion, or psychological safety.

If this is the case, it makes sense to bring in a neutral 3rd party to assess the situation. This could be your leader who can do a “skip level” meeting, HR, or a 3rd party vendor, like Stay.

## I’m a Leader of Leaders and I think one of my Leaders’ appears to be struggling.

- Are people coming to you about a Leader?
- Are you seeing attrition from a specific team?
- Do you have a Leader with engagement survey scores far below organizational average?
- Do you suspect there’s an issue with one of your teams?

Don’t ignore your gut or the data.

Involve yourself before the problem gets worse. You can start by conducting Skip level meetings to dig into the problem, or better yet, engage a 3rd party who specializes in team diagnostics.

At Stay, we know how to establish trust with your team, quickly get to the root cause of problems, and provide you with simple, tactical actions and advice that will help you with your situation .

**Contact Stay today to schedule a complimentary consultation call.**