

# A Review of Literature on the Effectiveness and Applicability of Exit Interviews

Reynaldo B. Maranan Jr.  
Ph. D in Education (Ongoing),  
University of Batangas, Philippines  
Saudi Aramco Industrial Training Department

**Abstract:-** Are exit interviews mere worthless expressions of formalities? Banking on the significance of communication in organizational settings, exit interviews can be a great source of valuable information that the company can use in its planning and performance evaluation. However, for exit interviews to be useful, careful planning and design should be made to make sure that they will make any difference to lessen chances of losing skilled employees and to reduce attrition rate.

**Keywords:-** exit interview, attrition, communication, performance evaluation.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Human resources remain to be the most essential asset of any organization. They are basically the people who work for the company and also called the workforce of the organization, business sector or the economy. Through the employees' efforts, the organization's goals are realized and actualized, a fact that cannot be refuted by anyone. The company will not be able to operate properly if human resources are not managed and treated fairly (Sands, 2021).

However, for one reason or another, employees decide to leave the company. The reasons are varied like the need for more challenges or higher salary. Employees may also feel uninspired and look for a better work environment and resign as a result or worse, they feel they are not valued. Another reason could be the lack of better management relationship or the lack of job growth and career advancement. The resignation can be because of some company policies or simply the need for a work-life balance (Indeed, 2021).

Whatever the reason may be, leavers need to be shown respect and appreciated by communicating with them before they leave. In a study conducted by Brown and Hurley (2009), they quoted Bob Veazie when he said that the boxes on his organization chart might more accurately be depicted as webs of conversations. They agreed on the vast wealth of knowledge waiting to be learned from all members of the organization as opposed to the few great minds the management usually listens to.

The same principles apply when employees leave most especially on the aspect of transfer of the valuable tacit knowledge that cannot be simply enumerated in a bunch of turnover notes. Letting an employee leave without communicating with them properly is an act of burning a bridge (Srinivasan, 2016).

At this juncture, this review of literature aims to prove the effectiveness and therefore highlight the importance of exit interviews as an indispensable communication tool. Furthermore, through the review literature, it shall describe how exit interviews are to be done in big and small organizations.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND DISCUSSION

In a study conducted by Javhav (2017), he highlighted the amount of money and resources that are invested to hire, coach and manage an employee. He contended that when an employee resigns, it should be emphasized that the company must know the reason of the departure and this can be done during the exit interview, which should be viewed as a unique and constructive process that is **as important as the pre-employment interviews**.

Nonetheless, exit interviewers need to design the conversation as authentic as possible. Gordon (2011) revealed the possibility of inauthenticity of the results of exit interviews despite its known popularity since the 1920s. The truthfulness and value of the interview depends on the information that the employee would be willing to disclose as the reason of the separation. In this study, a so-called Lamiell's dialectic process can be referred to measure the interviewers sense of authenticity and inauthenticity about the leaving employee.

Sengupta, et al (2018) made use of the term employee off-boarding in their study. Highlighting the challenge of talent acquisition and retention for companies, they also mentioned the seemingly obvious rise of attrition levels. They prescribed that exit interviews be conducted during the last days of the employee to capture and analyze the genuine reasons and work on the shortcomings, which can result in lower turnover rate and enhanced organizational commitment. According to Harris (2000), management practitioners must approach exit interview as value- adding experiences and not as distasteful chores to be endured.

Aqil and Memon (2020) for the sake of the same line of discussion answered the question if exit interviews are mere display of formalities. In the study, they concluded that indeed opportunities present themselves when leaving employees and the management representative engage and communicate. The study proposed a model to ensure the effectiveness of the exit interview process and recommended strict enforcement of confidentiality, deliberation of the questions to be asked and a well-structured plan to use the collected feedback into well-communicated practice. Hossain,Himi& Ameen (2017)

likewise promoted exit interviews as a way to retain skilled employees. Using case studies as their methodology, they investigated the strategic use of exit interview data to look into company policies and its effect on employee retention. Furthermore, Everett&Groysberg(2016) mentioned in their Harvard Business Review article that it is crucial to figure out why people are leaving and that the most useful tool that few leaders pay attention to is the exit interviews.

Meanwhile, Giacalone, et. al, (1997) wrote that distortion of exit interview data can be prevented by motivating honest answers by activating three factors: positive equity, capricious reasons, and negative equity and

that three factors can prevent honest answers. These are negative consequences, personal and situational reasons, and objectivity. Frase-Blunt(2004) pointed out the three purposes of exit interviews. These include to learn how the company improve itself, to appreciate the employee for his service and make him feel good about it and if possible to make them stay. The authors believe how leaving employees are emotionally attached to their decision to leave and will react differently to the exit interview. Nonetheless, the consensus is to make good use of the information gathered in the company’s planning and performance evaluation.

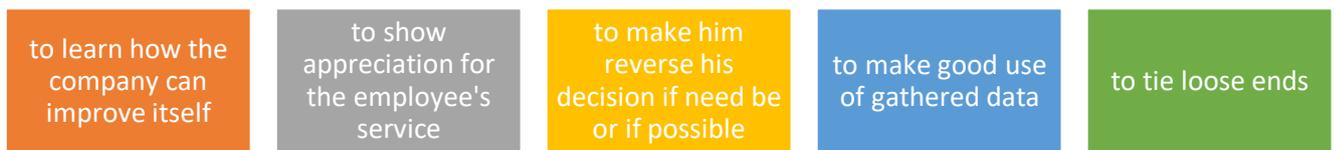


Fig. 1: Purposes of Exit Interviews

Here is a list of questions that can be asked during the exit interview (Serrat, 2017 paraphrased)

1. What experiences were satisfying/not satisfying during your employment?
2. What extra tasks would you have accepted?
3. How was your onboarding? Was it adequate? Was the organization helpful in the onboarding process?
4. What suggestions can you give with regard to our organization’s onboarding activities?
5. Did we give you enough training to address your training needs?
6. Which training activities were really effective/ ineffective?
7. Which training activity did you think you should receive but did not receive?
8. What is your feedback regarding the company’s performance evaluation?
9. How will you describe your relationship with the management?

10. How will you describe the working conditions in the unit?
11. How can we reduce the stress levels among employees?
12. Did the unit give you enough motivation to perform better?
13. What opportunities did the unit miss to motivate you to become a better employee?
14. Were you successful in transferring explicit and tacit knowledge to your colleagues?
15. Who among your colleagues do you see have great potentials?

Based on the reviewed literature, it can be surmised that exit interviews can be an effective communication tool that if employee resignation is inevitable, the company can still gain from the experience it had with the departing employee. However, careful planning should be made to make the process really participatory.



Fig. 2: Exit Interview Process

Indeed, it cannot be avoided that exit interviews would have their share of criticisms. However, Garretson& Teel (1982)maintain that a number of managers believe that exit interviews play a significant role in decreasing the attrition

rate and that the value the organization will get out of it depends on how much effort is exerted to prepare and process the information that is gleaned.

### III. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This article intended to bring to the fore the importance of exit interviews especially for employees who leave the company voluntarily. While it is an accepted fact that employees react differently to the exit interviews because of the emotional attachment they have for their decision to leave, it is still worthwhile to gather valuable information from any employee. The success of the exit interview depends on how it is planned and designed and how data is stored and later analyzed for the company's objective use.

### REFERENCES

- [1.] \_\_\_\_\_ (2021) "16 Reasons Employees Leave Their Job" Indeed. Accessed through <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/reasons-employees-leave>. March 25, 2022.
- [2.] Aqil, R., & Memon, S. B. (2020). The exit interview in Pakistan's IT and banking industries: Mere formality or catalyst for change? *Global Business and Organizational Excellence*, 39(2). <https://doi.org/10.1002/joe.21986>
- [3.] Everett, S., & Groysberg, B. (2016). Making Exit interview counts. *Harvard Business Review*, 94(4).
- [4.] Frase-Blunt, M. (2004). Making exit interviews work. *HR Magazine*, 49(8).
- [5.] Garretson, P., & Teel, K. S. (1982). The exit interview: Effective tool or meaningless gesture? *Personnel*, 59(4).
- [6.] Giacalone, R. A., Knouse, S. B., & Montagliani, A. (1997). Motivation for and prevention of honest responding in exit interviews and surveys. *Journal of Psychology: Interdisciplinary and Applied*, 131(4). <https://doi.org/10.1080/00223989709603531>
- [7.] Gordon, M. (2011) The dialectics of the exit interview: A fresh look at conversations about organizational disengagement. *Management Communication Quarterly*.
- [8.] Harris, D. H. (2000). Benefits of exit interviews. *IEEE Engineering Management Review*, 28(3).
- [9.] Hossain, M., Himi, S., & Ameen, J. (2017). Strategic Use of Exit Interviews: The Art of Retention. *Asian Journal of Economics, Business and Accounting*, 2(4). <https://doi.org/10.9734/ajeba/2017/33095>.
- [10.] Jadhav, R. (2017) Exit Interviews- A Unique Chance to Analyze the Opinions of Departing Employees. *Splint International Journal of Professionals*.
- [11.] Sand, L. (2021) "Why are human resources important?" Breathe. Accessed through <https://www.breathehr.com/en-gb/blog/topic/business-process/why-is-human-resources-important> March 25, 2022.
- [12.] Sengupta, M., Sengupta, N., & Bandopadhyay, K. (2018). Unravelling employee off-boarding: The magic of exit interview. *International Journal of Research in Economics and Social Sciences (IJRESS)*, 8(1).
- [13.] Serrat, O. (2017). Conducting Exit Interviews. In *Knowledge Solutions*. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-0983-9\\_115](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-0983-9_115)
- [14.] Srinivasa, A (2016) "How To not Burn Your Bridges in a Business" *Business 2 Community*. Accessed through <https://www.business2community.com/strategy/not-burn-bridges-business-relationship-01676954>. March 25, 2022.
- [15.] Veazie, B. Quoted in Brown, J. & Thomas Hurley (2009). *Conversational Leadership: Thinking Together for a Change*. The Systems Thinker.