

# EXIT INTERVIEWS 101



Leveraging Employee Departures  
for a Stronger Workforce

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# INTRODUCTION

Imagine this: a disgruntled employee walks out the door, another number lost in the churn. But what if, instead of a loss, it was an opportunity? What if you could become an "Exit Interview Expert," extracting hidden gems of information from departing employees to improve your company?

Data shows the power of this approach. A recent study by People Element found that companies utilising exit interviews effectively see a **32%** decrease in employee turnover. Yet, many organisations treat departures as dead ends.

This report equips you, the early-stage HR champion, the founder building your dream team, and even the employee embarking on a new journey, with the knowledge to unlock the secrets of exit interviews. **This report isn't just about exit interviews; it's about transforming them into a powerful tool for growth.** Let's ditch the goodbyes and turn departures into "see you later's" by learning from those who are leaving. Are you ready to become an Exit Interview Expert?

# WILL EXIT INTERVIEWS HELP ME AS AN EMPLOYER?

The departure of your employees may feel like a closed chapter, but it could be the start of a new conversation. We recently polled HR professionals and founders to understand what according to them is the biggest benefit of exit interviews and below is how they responded:



**33%**

## **Gain Valuable Feedback**

Exit interviews provide a window into your company culture, work environment, and employee experiences. Whether it's concerns about workload, lack of growth opportunities, or team dynamics, exit interviews can illuminate potential blind spots and empower you to take action.

**53%**

## **Improve Company Culture**

A positive culture fosters employee engagement, productivity, and overall well-being. By understanding employee perspectives, you can make targeted changes to create a more inclusive, supportive, and thriving work environment. A positive culture fosters employee engagement, productivity, and overall well-being. By understanding employee perspectives, you can make targeted changes to create a more inclusive, supportive, and thriving work environment.

**14%**

## **Closure for Departing Employees**

While the primary benefits focus on the employer, exit interviews can also offer a sense of closure for departing employees. The opportunity to provide honest feedback can be cathartic and allows them to leave on a more positive note.



# BEYOND THE EXIT DOOR: WHY YOUR VOICE MATTERS IN THE EXIT INTERVIEW

Leaving a job can be bittersweet. There's excitement for the new but also a pang of leaving colleagues and familiar routines. One final step in the process - the exit interview - might feel like a formality. But for you, the departing employee, it's a chance to make a real impact.

## HERE'S WHY YOUR VOICE MATTERS IN THE EXIT INTERVIEW:

### Shape a Better Future for Yourself and Others

Your feedback can influence positive changes in the company. For instance, sharing your feedback about limited professional development opportunities can lead to new training programs that benefit everyone, including future employees.



### Leave a Legacy of Improvement

By sharing your experience like workload challenges or more scope for benefits and perks, you can help the company identify and improve areas that benefit everyone, including future employees.



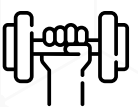
### Closure with Confidence

The exit interview is your chance to address lingering concerns and contribute to a better company culture, all while achieving closure and a clean slate for your new role with a sense of closure and confidence.



### Shine a Light on Your Strengths

The interview can be an opportunity to highlight your accomplishments and contributions during your time with the company. This can be valuable if you're staying connected with colleagues or maintaining professional relationships within the industry.



Remember, the exit interview isn't just about the company learning from you - it's a chance for you to make a positive impact and ensure a smooth transition as you move on to the next chapter in your career.

# ARE ALL THE ORGANISATIONS AROUND US CONDUCTING EXIT INTERVIEWS?

Imagine this: you're a passionate founder, building your dream team in a fast-paced startup environment. Every team member is a vital cog in the machine, and their departure can feel like a tremor through the whole operation. Unlike established companies with larger talent pools, startups can't afford to lose valuable employees without understanding why.

**This is where exit interviews become your secret weapon.** While larger companies might view them as a formality, for startups, they're a lifeline to crucial insights that can propel future growth. Here is how to crack the exit interview code and transform goodbyes into valuable learning opportunities:

## HOW DO I ACE AT CONDUCTING EXIT INTERVIEWS?

### Keep it Casual (But Professional)

Ditch the boardroom meeting format. Try to start with an icebreaker and have a much more candid conversation. A relaxed atmosphere encourages honest conversation.



### Focus on Open-Ended Questions

Instead of "yes or no" prompts, ask questions like "What did you enjoy most about your time here?" or "What could we have done differently to support you?"



### Listen Actively and Show Appreciation

Thank the employee for their contributions and demonstrate genuine interest in their feedback. This fosters trust and encourages honest responses.



# WHAT SHOULD YOUR EXIT INTERVIEW BLUEPRINT INCLUDE?

We've ditched the boardroom and embraced a casual conversation for your exit interview. Now, let's unlock the treasure chest within your experience! Here are some engaging questions, categorised by key areas, to spark a candid dialogue:

## IDENTIFYING MISALIGNMENTS:

### Professional & Insightful

#### Matching Expectations:

Reflecting on the interview process, is there anything we could have done to better communicate the role's responsibilities and expectations?

**Shifting Priorities:** "Have the company's goals or priorities shifted significantly since you joined? Did this change your overall experience?"

### Fun & Engaging

**Reality Check:** "If you could give your pre-startup self one piece of advice about what this company is really like, what would it be?"

**Movie Mismatch:** "Let's imagine the company culture is a movie genre. Did the reality live up to the trailer, or was it a different film altogether?"

## OPPORTUNITY COST & GROWTH:

### Professional & Insightful

**Career Trajectory:** Thinking about your professional development, did you feel this opportunity offered the right balance of growth and challenge?

**Success Perception:** On a scale of 1-10, how confident were you in the company's overall trajectory for success? "What factors influenced your rating?"

### Fun & Engaging

**Startup Superpower:** "If you could invent a 'growth superpower' to enhance your experience here, what would it be and how would it help?"

**Crystal Ball Choice:** "Imagine you have a crystal ball - if you knew then what you know now, would you have chosen a different path? Why or why not?"

## PEOPLE & TEAM DYNAMICS:

### Professional & Insightful

**Collaboration Comfort:** "Describe your ideal teamwork environment. Did you feel comfortable collaborating with your colleagues?"

**Leadership Feedback:** "Is there any constructive feedback you'd like to share about your leadership experience here?"

### Fun & Engaging

**Teamwork Tune:** "Imagine your dream team collaboration tool. What features would it have and why would it be awesome?"

**Honest Analogy:** "If you could describe your relationship with your manager /colleagues using an analogy (think "partners in crime," "a well-oiled machine," or maybe "a hilarious improv show"), what would it be and why?"

**Remember:** These are just springboards for a conversation. Follow up on interesting points, encourage elaboration, and most importantly, listen actively. By focusing on open communication and genuine appreciation, you'll gain a deeper understanding of your employees' experience and unlock valuable insights to shape the future of your startup.

## ADDITIONAL TIPS:

- Close the interview by reiterating your appreciation for their time and feedback.
- Ask if they'd be open to staying connected and providing occasional updates on their career journey.
- Maintain confidentiality and let the employee know how their feedback will be used for improvement.

# THE ART OF LISTENING: HOW TO RECEIVE CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM DURING EXIT INTERVIEWS?

Exit interviews, ideally, are a chance for departing employees to offer honest feedback and for employers to gain valuable insights. But what happens when that feedback is negative, critical, or even accusatory? It's natural to feel defensive or discouraged. However, remember, this is a golden opportunity to learn and improve. Here are some tips for navigating the sting of negative feedback in exit interviews:

## HERE'S WHY YOUR VOICE MATTERS IN THE EXIT INTERVIEW:

### Take a Deep Breath and Listen Actively

It's easy to get caught off guard by negativity. Resist the urge to interrupt or explain yourself. Instead, take a deep breath, maintain eye contact, and show the employee you are genuinely listening. Use body language that conveys openness, such as leaning in slightly and nodding. This demonstrates respect and encourages them to elaborate.



### Acknowledge and Thank Them

Even if the feedback is tough to hear, express appreciation for their candour. Say something like, "Thank you for sharing your honest feedback. I know this can be difficult, and I appreciate you taking the time to help us improve." This shows you value their perspective and are open to learning from their experience.



### Avoid Going Defensive

It's tempting to defend yourself or the company when faced with criticism. However, resist the urge. Focus on understanding their perspective. Ask clarifying questions to get a better grasp of their experience. For example, "Can you tell me more about what made you feel that way?"



### Don't Make Promises You Can't Keep

In the heat of the moment, you might be tempted to offer solutions or promises you can't keep. Avoid making guarantees you can't deliver on. Instead, acknowledge their concerns and explain how you'll take their feedback into consideration.



### Take Action, Not Just Notes

Don't let negative feedback gather dust in a file. Analyse it alongside other exit interview responses and identify recurring themes. Then, develop a plan to address the most pressing issues. This demonstrates your commitment to addressing employee concerns and fostering a culture of continuous improvement.





# WORDS FROM THE WISE

Building a strong exit interview process is crucial, but where do you begin? We tapped into the wisdom of seasoned HR professionals to bring you their practical experience and advice for you to implement an effective exit interview process for your organisation.



## **Swati Srivastava**

Director HR @ Gameskraft

**In my experience, exit interviews are most meaningful when employees feel secure in providing honest feedback without fear of repercussions. Creating a trustworthy environment is crucial; this can be achieved by ensuring confidentiality of the conversation; be it recorded via 1:1 connect or through system tools.**

**At Gameskraft, we believe that conducting post-exit interviews can provide deeper and more authentic insights. The goal is to use this feedback constructively to drive positive change, demonstrating to the team that their input is valued and acted upon.**



## **Nisha Ali**

People & Culture @ Stage OTT

Instead of waiting for the last day, have a 'stay' conversation with an employee the moment they give notice. It's a great way to hear their honest thoughts and see if there's anything we can do to keep them happy.

Have another exit interview 10 days before the exit and one last exit interview on the last working day. This check-in allows you to see if an employee feels differently with respect to their feedback and retention at different points of time during their notice period.

Sometimes resignations are impulsive, and these check-ins give them a chance to change their mind if they realize it wasn't the best decision.

Ask employees if they would refer their friends and families to the organisation and identify your ENPS. Identify structured questions that you want to ask the employee. In case you don't get responses, ask them questions on a linear scale and ask them why they would give a specific rating to those areas.





## **Shubhi Tripathi**

Senior HRBP @ Bureau

Over nearly a decade of building startups, I've found that exit interviews can significantly influence an organisation's overall image. They have the power to transform a negative experience into a positive one and vice versa. It's crucial to approach these interviews with empathy and genuine interest in the feedback shared for which a twofold exit interview process is essential. First, when an employee expresses their intention to leave, engage with them immediately to understand the triggers behind their decision. Discuss their growth expectations and why they believe staying may not be the best choice. Share this feedback with stakeholders to address concerns and prepare for their replacement.

An effective HR Business Partner should anticipate these signs before the official communication. Study their peers and seek feedback on cross-team support, processes, and leadership. Avoid being defensive and be open to all feedback, as every exit provides learning opportunities for both parties.

# We Got You Covered!

We understand the bringing an effective exit interview process in place along with logical analysis can be a daunting task, but don't worry. We got you covered. At MetaMorph, we believe in helping founders and HR unlocking the power of exit interviews. We help startups craft insightful questions, create a safe space for honest feedback, and translate it into actionable change.

**For any more queries, you can reach out to  
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