

## Exit Interviews

*By Melissa Martin, Director, The Clarity Group.*

***A large number of organisations are throwing money down the drain when recruiting staff by not conducting effective exit interviews and utilising the data to refine their recruitment process.***

A recent article in HR Monthly highlights the fact that the value of exit interviews is highly underestimated. Whilst trends are changing and organisations are starting to conduct exit interviews, the output generated is not utilised effectively.

Information gathered from well constructed exit interviews can be a very valuable tool as the search for the right staff member becomes more and more difficult and the importance of retaining star staff is paramount.

One of the main issues raised by the article is confidentiality and the impact this may have on the openness and accuracy of the discussion. The article goes on to mention that “the most effective way to assure employees that their honest answers will be safe is to use an external exit interview service” (HR Monthly, February 2008).

Exit interviews are often the catalyst for employees to really think about why they are leaving. Generally employees do not spend a great deal of time considering what it is that has brought them to seek alternative employment. A skilled interviewer is therefore required in order to ensure the information received through the interview is accurate and valuable focusing on the real underlying issues as opposed to those issues which essentially relate to dis-satisfaction.

Valuable exit interviews should “point you in the right direction for action” (HR Monthly, February 2008). The questions should focus on personal experience as well as occurrences which may affect retention including induction processes, team fit, culture and role expectations.

According to Lenore Lambert, the author of the article, the five essential requirements to ensure the data you are capturing is accurate and valuable includes:

- Informant safety: departing employees must feel safe about being honest with their feedback;
- Precision of information: both qualitative and quantitative data reduces the likelihood of data being highly subjective to interpretation;
- The skill of the person conducting the exit interview: identifying when to probe further and when more meaningful information is required;
- Ensuring all interviewers are operating at the same competency level: this in turn ensures that the same amount of rigour is applied to all data collected; and
- The usefulness of the data: ensuring all exit interviews are conducted before the last week of employment. This will reduce the likelihood of no exit interview being conducted which may then result in low response rates or skew the data.

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