

By Teri Traaen Ed. D.P.A
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One of the most undervalued tools in the management of human resources is the use of a 'stay interview'. Simply put, it is what is described in the title - an interview to determine why and what compels an employee to 'stay' in place. The critical use issue for this tool is that the most effective use is 'not' during a probationary or annual performance management process or merit review setting. It is best used as an ongoing conversational method for determining what, on a regular basis, is attractive to each employee. It also provides insight into what could be enticing to future employees about the knowledge, skills, and abilities contained within each organizational job description.

Building on this data can lead to partial or full reorganization of divisions and/or units as well as cross functional partnering and team driven activities within any organization. The most often detailed reason that leaders and managers of others do not use a 'stay interview' is dread of learning that an employee is currently in place 'only' because they have not yet secured the next location to work. This level of candor is often hard to receive and harder yet to address by the interviewer. Therefore, the ultimate goal in the use of this tool is that leaders and managers of others are required to reflect in a very candor way upon the realities of the culture and climate of the their organization and if necessary move to craft a new environment that will sustain employees beyond the mandatory need to stay for uninterrupted income.

Are you using this tool? What will you as a leader need to change about your style/the organization itself in order for this tool to be an ongoing part of the lives of everyone on the current payroll? Will hesitation in making these changes contribute to a healthier organizational climate (or just provide an avoidance technique for the short term)? Hard questions deserve straightforward answers.