



# University of Missouri System

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## Stay Interviews: 5 Questions to Help You Retain Your Employees

One of our most important resources is the wealth of knowledge, experience, and talent our employees bring to work each day. Stay interviews can be a powerful tool to help our organization retain and support employees by promoting:

- Engagement and authentic connection
- Proactive, intentional, forward thinking
- Solutions based on individual employee's needs

**Get started** by emphasizing that the focus will be on things you and they can directly influence (although you will listen to all concerns).

*"I'd like to focus on things that I can help you with each day to be engaged in your work. My hope is that you want to stay with the university for a long time."*

### The three most important skills of leading a stay interview:

#### Listening



Enter the meeting with a commitment to listen and digest what you've heard. Strive to listen 80% of the time vs. talking 80% of the time. Repeat back what you hear.

#### Probing



Probe to learn more and to show you care with phrases such as "Tell me more," "Give me an example," and "How important is this to you?"

#### Taking Notes



Notes should capture key points, emotional words, and important quotes. You'll eventually use these notes to formulate a solution.



[The Power of Stay Interviews for Engagement and Retention](#), Richard P. Finnegan



[The Stay Interview: A Manager's Guide to Keeping the Best and Brightest](#), Richard P. Finnegan



[Expert Insights on Employee Retention](#), various

### Interested in learning more?

Questions? Contact [learningdevelopment@umsystem.edu](mailto:learningdevelopment@umsystem.edu)

Adapted from Richard Finnegan's Original SI5 and our colleagues at [MU Health Care](#)



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### 1 *What do you look forward to at work each day?*

This brings employees into the here and now. It emphasizes:

- What employees like about their current job.
- How they see themselves and their role.

Gain additional insight by asking:

- *What do you like about your current job?*
- *Can you give me an example?*
- *Who do you look forward to working with the most?*

### 3 *Why Do You Stay here?*

- While appearing simple at first, asking why employees want to stay with our organization opens major doors for discovery.
- Some employees have never pondered their answer; keep probing.

Gain additional insight by asking:

- *Tell me more about why that is so important to you.*
- *Is that the only reason you stay or are there others?*
- *If you narrowed your reasons to just one, what would it be?*

### 5 *What can I do to make your job better for you?*

- While this question sends out a net for all remaining topics, it ultimately can provide meaningful feedback.
- Avoiding defensiveness is crucial. Word spreads quickly if a leader cannot take feedback, and remaining stay interviews become short and fruitless.

Gain additional insight by asking:

- Do I tell you when you do something well?
- Do I say and do things to help you do your job better?
- What are three ways I can be a better leader for you?

### 2 *What are you learning here and what else do you want to learn?*

- Invite employees to share desires regarding development and careers; focus on skills.
- Some are ambitious to advance, some curious to learn more, others are satisfied where they are.

Gain additional insight by asking:

- Which other jobs here look attractive to you?
- What skills do you think are required for those jobs?
- What skills would you have to build to attain those jobs?

### 4 *When is the last time you thought about leaving? What prompted it?*

- Everyone thinks about leaving sometimes, so a directly worded question brings a much-needed conversation into the light.
- When an employee last thought about leaving tells us the urgency, and what prompted it tells us why.

Gain additional insight by asking:

- Tell me more about how that happened. Who said what?
- How important is that to you now on a 1–10 scale?
- What's the single best thing I can do to make that better for you?

One important phrase to have in your back pocket during the conversation:

*"Tell me more..."*