

Stay Interviews and “Help Me Help You Help Us” Conversations

David Lee, HumanNature@Work

“Every better result you want requires having a better conversation”

To Make This Work

1. Servant Leadership – “My job is to help you do your best and be your best.”
2. Listen to Understand vs. Listen to Respond
3. People Care About People Who Care About Them
4. It’s Not About Motivating, It’s About Not De-Motivating
5. Less Talking, More Asking, and More Listening

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Stay Interviews

Stay Interviews – A conversation between a manager and employee about what makes them want to stay and what would make them want to leave. Rather than wait until an exit interview to find out why an employee is leaving (or never knowing) Stay Interviews enable managers to get the information they need to prevent unwanted turnover.

Examples of Stay Interview Questions

1. What about your job do you like the best?
2. What about your job do you like the least?
3. Are there other things that...if they were different...would make you more jazzed about coming to work?
4. Of the jobs you've had, what one were you most excited to go to and why?
5. What are you most passionate about when it comes to work and your job?
6. What's your dream job...and what about it makes it a dream job for you?
7. If you were to leave this job and company, what would you miss the most?
8. What makes for a great day at work here? (or...ask for a recent example)
9. If you had a magic wand, what would be the one thing you would change about your work, your role, or your responsibilities?

The Five Best Stay Interview Questions

(according to Dick Finnegan, author of *The Power of Stay Interviews*)

1. What do you look forward to each day when you commute to work?
2. What are you learning here? Want to learn?
3. Why do you stay here?
4. What could cause you to leave us?
5. What can I do to make your job better for you?

(Note: I highly recommend watching [The Power of Stay Interviews with Dick Finnegan](#) on YouTube.)

“Help ME Help YOU Help Us” Conversations

Why “Help ME Help YOU Help US” Conversations?

This type of conversation goes beyond Stay Interviews both in terms of content and philosophy.

Think of the term “Stay interviews.”

It communicates the message “What can I do as your supervisor, and what can we, as the employer, do to get you to stay?”

While it shows you value the employee—which is obviously an important message—it also has a begging, beseeching tone.

It makes it seem like the employee is doing you a favor by staying.

Begging Employees Sends the Wrong Message

Having this psychological “posture” is a great way to foster a self-focused, entitled, “So what have you done for me lately?” mentality in employees.

Taking this beseeching psychological posture enables the employee to forget that the reason they were hired and the reason they have a job is because they provide value—or should be providing value—to their employer.

Because we’re in a job seeker’s market, it might feel like employees *are* doing you a favor by staying.

However, regardless of whether it is a job seeker’s or an employer’s labor market, the relationship between you, the employee, and your employer should always be win/win/win.

“Help ME Help YOU Help Us” Conversations

It should be a relationship where each party does their best, provides the most value to all parties, and has gratitude for what each party brings to the relationship.

Underlying Principles of “Help ME Help YOU Help US” Conversations

1. Supervisors account for 70% of an employee’s level of engagement, according to Gallup’s research. Thus, supervisors are the most important “lever” when it comes to boosting productivity, quality, morale, and retention. This means supervisors need to become experts at knowing what motivates each employee and what approaches and practices bring out the best in each. They can’t find that out just by thinking about it. They have to ask.
2. The only reason to hire, and retain, someone is if they make a contribution that exceeds what they are being paid. Employees and their supervisor need to work together to make that contribution as big as possible.
3. The employee should see their supervisor and their employer as their customers and—just like world class businesses do—they should focus on delighting their customers. The employer and supervisor should view employees as customers, and focus on delighting *them*.
4. As part of seeing their employer and supervisor as customers, employees need to know how they can best serve them and help them get what they need, as should employers and supervisors do with employees.

“Help ME Help YOU Help Us” Conversations

5. All of the above is, in the end, in the service of helping the organization thrive and make the biggest, best contribution to the world as possible.

Thus, “Help ME help YOU help US” conversations focus on how each party can serve each other and contribute to the organization succeeding. These conversations also make it clear that the relationship is collaborative, rather than one party trying to please the other party.

Components of “Help ME help YOU help US” conversations:

1. Stay Interview Questions
2. Questions Around The Key Drivers Of Employee Engagement, including:
 - a. Meaning and Purpose
 - b. Opportunities to Learn and Grow on the Job
 - c. Sense of Community and Belonging
 - d. Valued as an Individual
 - e. Opportunities to Grow Leadership Skills
 - f. Etc.
3. Questions Related to Management Style Preferences & Feedback, Such As:
 - a. Preferred way of getting feedback
 - b. Preferred level of oversight and autonomy
 - c. Preferred way of showing recognition and appreciation

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4. Other Questions Related to Ways the Supervisor and Employer Either Enable or Thwart Employees From Doing Their Best Work
5. Questions Related to:
 - a. Current organizational issues
 - b. Ideas on improving processes and initiatives
 - c. How the organization can attract, retain, and engage talent more effectively
 - d. Other

Minimalist Variations

1. “How are things going?”
2. “Is there anything I can do to help?”
3. “How are you doing about whatever situation or challenge has come up?”

Messages You Want to Communicate In These Conversations

1. "I care about you"
2. "You're valuable"
3. "This is a collaborative effort"
4. "I want and need your candid feedback"
5. "It's safe to speak candidly"
6. "We want to focus on the things we can do something about."

Possible Verbiage

Introducing the Idea

"I went to a seminar recently (or I read an article recently) on the importance of conducting employee retention and engagement conversations and wanted to start doing that with each of you, since I don't want you to leave, and I DO want you to be happy and do your best work.

So...I want to get your feedback on what you like about working here, what can be improved on, and how we can work together to make this the best possible work experience, and...help you do your best work...

So...with that in mind...I'll shoot you out the questions I'll be asking ahead of time so you can be thinking about them, and then I want to meet with each of you individually."

Related Resources

[How to Conduct “Help ME help YOU Help US” Conversations](#) – a video

[How to Keep Your A-List Talent From Exiting Stage Left](#) – a video

[This Cut Turnover by 41%, Everything Else Made Zero Difference](#) – short blog post along with the excellent video by Dick Finnegan on Stay Interviews

[How to Engage Employees in Candid Conversations](#)

[Three Critical Conversations that Boost Employee Engagement](#)

[Three Employee Engagement Boosting Conversations Every Manager Should Have](#)

[Let’s Talk for a Change!](#) – 45 minute recording of keynote (downloadable MP3)

For articles on employee engagement, go to www.HumanNatureAtWork.com/ee

For more articles on having the conversation, go to:
www.HumanNatureAtWork.com/cc



About David Lee: David Lee is the founder and principal of HumanNature@Work. He's an internationally recognized authority on organizational and managerial practices that optimize employee performance, morale, and engagement. He is also the author of "Managing Employee Stress and Safety," as well over 100 articles and book chapters. You can download more of his articles at HumanNaturAtWork.com, contact him at david@humannatureatwork.com, or connect with him on LinkedIn at www.linkedin.com/in/davidlee-maine. If you have questions feel free to reach out: 207-571-9898 or david@humannatureatwork.com.