

Stay Interviews

(excerpt from Marnie Green/Painless Performance)

A stay interview can be informal dialogue, in an informal setting. It can be a short conversation or a detailed exploration. The key is to ask for the employee's perspectives about their work and to listen. Here are a few questions you might use to get the conversation started:

- What do you like most about your work?
- What keeps you here?
- What would entice you away?
- What do you want to learn this year?
- What makes for a great day at work?
- What brings you down on the job?
- Is there anything you'd like to change about your job?
- What would make your job more satisfying and rewarding?
- Do you feel recognized for your accomplishments?
- What strengths or talents do you have that aren't being used?
- How do you like to be recognized, acknowledged, and rewarded for a job well done?
- What is your greatest challenge or roadblock?
- What part of working here strikes you as ridiculous?
- What would make your work more meaningful and satisfying?
- What conditions would cause you to seek employment elsewhere?
- How can I or the organization help you reach your career goals?
- What support do you need to be more effective?
- How am I doing as your supporting leader?
- What is the most satisfying part about your job right now?
- What is least satisfying about your job?
- If you could wave a magic wand, what changes would you make in the work environment?
- What makes you feel like a valuable contributor?
- What can we do to ensure we keep you with us?

What if They Ask for the Moon?

You may be tempted to avoid the 'stay conversation' because you can't deliver on what your employee asks for. Don't be afraid! You probably won't be able to say "yes" to all of the requests you hear. What you can do is validate their feelings, express your support, and assure them you'll do what you can to explore options. Avoid saying you can't meet their needs. Instead, focus on what you can do. Commit to reviewing their feedback and give them a timeline for further discussion. Sometimes, just listening is what is really needed. It is more important to know why they stay, rather than why they leave. You probably already know why they leave. Lead more stay interviews and your organization is likely to hold fewer exit interviews.