

5-2007

# Establishing exit interview best practices

Russell Granderson

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ESTABLISHING EXIT INTERVIEW BEST PRACTICES

By

Russell Granderson

B. S., Bryant & Stratton College, 2005

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

Of the University of Richmond

In Candidacy

for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

In

Human Resources

May, 2007

Richmond, Virginia

# ESTABLISHING BEST PRACTICES FOR EXIT INTERVIEWS

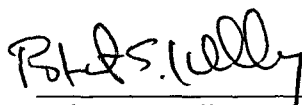
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2007  
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## **Abstract**

The looming retirement of the baby boom generation will increase recruiting cost and intensify the war for talent. Recent studies have shown that employee retention will be the primary business concern over the next five to ten years. The transformation of a perfunctory exit interview into a powerful recruiting and retention tool could supply a strategic advantage over competitors. Exit interviews provide an opportunity for organizations to glean valuable insight within their ranks. Prior research investigating the validity of the exit interview has shown that departing employees are uncomfortable and reluctant of revealing candid feedback during in-house interviews. The methodology of this study includes interviews with businesses listed on FORTUNE “100 Best Companies to work for,” along with human resource professionals and organizational leaders from the private sector and local police departments. Their collective responses suggest that outsourcing exit interviews in conjunction with follow-up questionnaires are best practices.

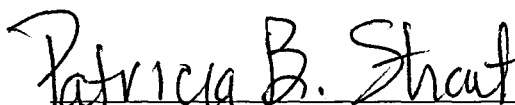
## Approval Page

I certify that I have read this thesis and find that, in scope and quality, it satisfies the requirements for the degree of Master of Science.



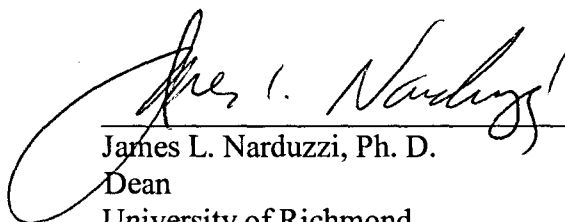
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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

In 1943 The Midwestern Area American National Red Cross started using exit interviews because qualified personnel were hard to come by and every resigning employee retrieved saved them money (This, 1955). The Midwest office employed 300 workers at headquarters and 500 other professional and clerical employees in 16 states. They placed the responsibility for exit interviews in the personnel office because they were neutral, more skilled in such interviews, and knew the job vacancies within the organization, if the employee could be dissuaded from resigning and was transferred (ibid., 58).

That year one of their installations with a staff of six had five resignations in one year. The exit interviews were held by their immediate supervisor because of the distance involved. All five men noted different reasons for leaving which were completely unrelated to the supervisor or his supervision. However, the Red Cross suspected that the supervisor was to blame, but had no data or evidence to prove it (ibid., 59). Since this occurrence, similar scenarios have likely been repeated countless times in every industry.

The evolution of exit interviews has been slow. Until recently, they were viewed as perfunctory sessions filled with double talk and happy speak. However, today in the “war for talent” companies are fighting for the same people. Gaining understanding as to why employees leave may provide a strategic edge.

## **Rationale for Selection**

Since the beginning of the 1900s the United States has gained a 3 percent net addition to the American workforce twice (Losey, Meisinger, Ulrich, 2005, 23). Once at the beginning of the twentieth century due to a large mass of immigrants, and when post World War II baby boomers entered the workforce in the 1970s and 1980s (ibid.,). The Bureau of Labor and Statistics (BLS) has projected that between 2010 and 2020 the workforce annual growth rate will dwindle to just .4 percent, the lowest in more than a century. Today HR managers report that their workforce is maturing and expect a disproportionate number of workers will reach retirement age in the next ten years (Meisinger, 2006).

Employers may soon face challenges due to an improving job market, expanding economy and a diminishing labor pool. The looming retirement of the baby boom generation will cause an excess demand for talent, drive up recruiting costs and force organizations to rethink how they maintain their workforces (ibid.,). In fact, in a recent study more than 70 percent of HR managers said that employee retention is a primary business concern. Of those managers, 40 percent reported an increase in worker turnover during the 18 months prior to October 2005 (see Appendix A).

However, many employers do not take full advantage of the opportunity to collect valuable data from exit interviews; which could be used as a powerful retention tool. In a 2002 study conducted by Human Resource Executive Magazine, 96 percent of HR managers reported conducting exit interviews with employees leaving voluntarily, yet just 4 percent use a systematic method of collecting and tabulating the exit survey findings.

Reasons for Selecting the Specific Topic. Exit interviews are typically conducted by the human resource department of an organization with an employee who is voluntarily resigning. One purpose of the interview is to gather structured data for improving working conditions and retaining employees. Exit interviews give managers a key opportunity to get an accurate read on the pulse of an organization, providing insights that can be used to stem further turnover (Westcott, 2006). Information from exit interviews can also be used to diagnose organizational problems such as ineffective training practices, inconsistencies in appraisal systems, faulty supervision procedures, to uncover competitive compensation issues, and to discover problems in general working conditions (Drost, O'Brien, Marsh, 1987). This topic is important to me because candid feedback, if addressed objectively, can raise morale and help create a more productive working environment for those who choose to remain with the Chesterfield Police Department.

Today's labor market is comprised of low unemployment and a new generation of employees that no longer expect to remain with the same company for long. It is an idea referred to as the new compact, signaling that expectations of job longevity have changed. Employment is now a mutual agreement between the employer and employee that suggests the arrangement must meet the needs of both parties. Once either party determines that the benefit in the relationship has ended, the relationship will dissipate (Yeager, Hough, 1998, 14).

### **Purpose of the Study**

This research study identifies best practices for exit interviews in today's tight labor market. These suggested best practices provide an incisive cutting edge process to



aggregate data and to transform it into strategic decision-making information to improve employee retention.

### **Research Questions**

This research investigation focuses on answering the following primary and subsidiary questions:

#### **Primary Question:**

1. What are the best practices for exit interviews?

#### **Subsidiary Questions:**

1. How should the exit interview data be aggregated?
2. How should the exit interview results be disseminated?

### **Significance of the Topic**

Today employers face a myriad of personnel challenges due to a decreasing labor supply. According to a poll conducted by the *Wall Street Journal* and SHRM (2006), 78 percent of workers currently employed said they were likely to start or to accelerate a job search as the economy improves (Meisinger, 2006). In the same poll, 65 percent of executives said they were actively looking for new employment, compared with 47 percent of non-management workers and 45 percent of middle managers (ibid.,)

An April 2006 Society for Human Resource Management report stated, “future employers may soon face major challenges with employee turnover and retention” (ibid.,). President and CEO of SHRM Susan Meisinger noted “it’s evident that HR professionals need to focus on retention strategies-starting right now (ibid.,).” One such strategy is using voluntary exiting employees as consultants. Not only does the exit

interview assist with finding why people leave an organization, but it also as a assists in identifying consistent trends, patterns, and themes.

Personnel turnover is the precursor to numerous costs. Departing employees often take with them valuable knowledge and expertise gained through experience. Some of these costs include exit interview time and administrative requirements, payout of unused vacation time, and cost of overtime for co-workers asked to fill in. Replacement costs include advertising, processing of candidates, interviewing and selection, and finally training (Mitchell, Brooks, Holtom, and Lee, 2001). Estimated employee turnover cost range from 50 to 60 percent of an employee's annual salary (Taylor, 2005). Excessive employee turnover is often cited as a key barrier to high quality service. In addition, turnover reduces the productivity of an entire work unit/team, particularly as a result of uncompensated extra workloads, the stress and tension caused by turnover and, as a result, a decline in morale (Gray, 2004).

With the already difficult challenge of recruiting qualified applicants in the police profession and an increasingly limited labor supply, much emphasis may be warranted on retention. One key advantage that can be utilized in the war for talent is a solid exit interview process. When voluntary employee turnover does occur, every opportunity can be seized through a thorough exit interview process to obtain valuable insight. Although they are departing, in many cases these employees may still have a connection with friends that remain and genuinely want to see improvements occur (Westcott). Organizations that follow through on improvements could lay the ground work for a boomerang effect where a high performer returns one day (ibid.,).

The exit interview has evolved over the past several years. Previously, departing employees sat down with their immediate supervisors and discussed their reasons for leaving. This method provided highly guarded answers, defensive responses, and other inaccurate information due to fear of reprisal (Pounds, 2006). In other cases, there was fear of “burning bridges” or getting bad references for future employment. In addition, the timing of the interview was often scheduled on an employee’s final day at work when many other things occupied his mind (ibid.,).

In recent years, an advance in technology has improved the exit interview process and when compared to employee turnover cost, it has become a very viable and attractive option. Departing employees can answer survey questions conveniently from their own home through the use of the internet. They can also answer more honestly and add other valuable information anonymously through a neutral third party. The data is standardized and can be tracked more accurately, which can signal problem areas that need to be addressed.

In short, the steadily improving job market and a shrinking labor force have intensified the war for talent. Exacerbating the problem for employers is that departing employees often take with them valuable knowledge and expertise gained through experience. Excessive employee turnover is often cited as a key barrier to high quality service. One advantage that can be utilized in the war for talent is a viable exit interview. The synchronization of technology and a thorough exit interview could provide an innovative and competitive advantage in recruiting and retention.

Reasons for Selecting Organization. The author has been a member of the Chesterfield Police Department for 9 years. Since 1924, the Chesterfield Police Department has

prided itself on providing justice and exemplary service to the citizens of Chesterfield. The outstanding reputation of this department continues to grow because of its ability to meet new challenges, achieve higher goals, and hire exceptional employees. However, the police department has the ability to raise the level of its employee performance and morale, while increasing retention efforts by monitoring and emphasizing the results of exit interviews.

Exit interviews are different than other employee feedback surveys because departing employees feel liberated to be forthcoming with their views. In most cases, exit interviews provide honest feedback that can help create a better working environment. Positive changes made as a result of exit interviews can directly increase retention.

### **Significance of the Topic**

Exit interviews can be a good first step in collecting valuable information for identifying ways of keeping high performing employees. Conducted properly, exit interviews provide information on market rates, determining if work-life balance is an issue, improving processes and systems, feedback on leadership, training, work environment, employee motivation, and retaining valued employees. However, collecting information is only a portion of the exit interview process. The success of exit interviews hinges on whether information about the departing employees is collected in a structured way and then channeled back into the business or simply forgotten (Manley, 2005). Possibly the worse mistake to be made is to conduct an exit interview and then do nothing with the collected information. When serious issues are raised, necessary steps are expected to make changes (ibid.,).

## **Delimitations**

The topic of exit interviews was chosen to increase retention. This study is an analysis of the current Chesterfield County Police Department exit interview process. The idea is to develop and make recommendations to implement a more useful and inexpensive means of communicating feedback through voluntary exit interviews. This research will be limited to 12 businesses and organizations across several industries, both locally and nationally recognized. Hopefully, the proposed process could be used for the entire Chesterfield County Government.

## **Client**

The Chesterfield County Police Department was founded in 1924. It currently has 457 full time employees with 32 vacancies. At this time the department is understaffed. The Chesterfield County Police Department serves an area of 446.5 square miles and has seen a population increase of over 2.75 percent since 2005, bringing its total to 299,000 people. The mission of the Chesterfield County Police Department is to provide a professional and unbiased response to the needs of the community. It is the department's goal to establish a partnership with the citizens in achieving a "First Choice Community through Excellence in Public Service."

It is the vision of the Chesterfield County Police Department to continue to provide quality service to the community as a nationally recognized leader among law enforcement agencies, utilizing state-of-the-art information and policing technologies, attracting and maintaining professional employees, consistently improving our quality of training, and demonstrating innovation and operational flexibility.

The Chesterfield County Police Department is a hierarchal structured organization. It is commanded by the Chief of Police, Colonel Carl R. Baker. There are two Deputy Chiefs who oversee the four different bureaus of the police department (see Appendix C for a complete overview of the organizational chart).

## CHAPTER 2

### Research of the Literature

This chapter will cover the past use of the exit interview, its current functions, and previous study of its validity. This section will also offer personal opinions concerning this highly necessary business tool.

The high cost of employee turnover and the shrinking labor pool has led to increasing concern over employee retention. Previous research has concluded that it is difficult predicting employee turnover. One systematic approach to the problem is the use of exit interviews. An exit interview is typically a meeting between at least one representative from a company's human resources department and a departing employee. A structured exit interview is comprised of a series of questions that are asked of every person who is interviewed allowing the collection of the same information about each interviewee.

The benefits of exit interviews are multifaceted; they include a means for diagnosing organizational problems, for detecting unfair business practices, for uncovering competitive compensation issues, for locating faulty supervision procedures, for understanding ineffective training practices, for identifying inconsistencies in appraisal systems, and for discovering problems in general working conditions (Drost, 1987).

Functions of the Exit Interview. The basic purpose for collecting exit data is to assist management in detecting employee problems or organizational events that may either foster or reduce employee turnover (Giacione, Knouse, & Montagiani, 1997). Departing employees are often willing to share information that can be constructive in figuring out the pros and cons of the workplace their comments can give management insights into what it's really like to work in the firm (Shannon, 2006).

The exit interview was not initially begun with the intention of retaining employees. It was used basically to create better public relations, to check on the soundness of initial selection procedures, to uncover poor personnel practices, or to identify specific sources of job dissatisfaction and unsatisfactory supervisors (Lefkowitz, Katz, 1969). A hidden purpose of the interview is to help employers avoid expensive litigation down the road, caused by disgruntled employees. "The key to getting useful information is to treat the departing employee as a trusted adviser rather than a traitor and to keep the interview session relaxed and conversational" (Westcott, 2006).

Perhaps one of the greatest advantages to an exit interview in the police profession concerns the topic of knowledge and safety. Officers who decide to change careers or retire often possess implicit knowledge in performance of their jobs. Also, unfinished cases that need further review and are reassigned to other officers for more investigation do not have to be restarted. Robert Cenek supports this idea when he states:

The concept of exit interviewing has been revisited and expanded as a knowledge management tool, as a way of capturing knowledge from leavers. Rather than simply capturing human resources information, the interview also aims to capture knowledge about what it takes to do the job. Vital knowledge is not lost to the organization when people leave and the learning curve of new people joining the organization is shortened.

Ultimately, the decision to participate in an exit interview is left to the employee. Departing employees must consider if they will benefit from participating and if the employer is serious about improving working conditions. Employees also run the risk of the information falling into the wrong hands and ruining references or revealing negative



information during a background check. Some employees also question why their employer waited until they were leaving to ask their opinion.

Two-way communication is important. Officers who have left or were planning to leave the police department have stated that minor inexpensive adjustments have weighed in their decision-making. Some did not think police work was what they thought it would be. Others did not feel valued and some others did not feel they had a voice in even the smallest decision making. Leigh Branham, (Levin, 2007) author of *The Seven Hidden Reasons Employees Leave*, furthers this thought:

Surveys of managers reveal that more than 85 percent believe employees leave for “pull” reasons, such as “more pay” or “a better opportunity.” Yet in focused-post exit interviews conducted by interviewing experts, more than 80 percent of employees cite “push” factors related to poor management practices or dysfunctional cultures.

Since retention is believed to be the hot buzzword of the second half of the decade, many see the potential strategy of the exit interview to become a significant tool in retaining high performers, reducing turnover, obtaining accurate data and gathering implicit organizational information, and maintaining anonymity. Some forces that have influenced these improvements include:

1. Analytical research exposing the weaknesses and flaws of the past exit interview processes raising question of its validity.
2. A projected labor and skill shortage by the year 2020.
3. Technology advances, which have improved the accuracy of the data and has increased employee anonymity and convenience.
4. Turnover and expense

Each of these forces is explored in the following section.

## Validity of the Exit Interview

Earlier research on the validity of exit interviews revealed significant differences in respondent's reasons for leaving their organization first given and follow-up questionnaires months' later (Lefkowitz, Katz 1969, Henrich 1975). The study revealed that 59 percent of those who voluntarily left reported different reasons than previously recorded to their organizations. Lefkowitz and Katz concluded:

The tendency to clam up is illustrated best by the fact that all of those, who at the time of the exit interview, said they were signing "for no specific reason," later report specific reasons for their resignations. Unavoidable terminations appear to be the only kind about which exit interviews elicit accurate information (Lefkowitz, 1969).

Lefkowitz and Katz's research was later followed by further study on the accuracy of the exit interview. Henrichs (1975) found that similar to the results previously noted, exit interviews conducted by company management yielded different information from that obtained through follow-up questionnaires or by exit interviews conducted by consultant. While the major termination reason was most often uncovered during the company exit interview in most cases either additional reasons or entirely different primary reasons were identified through consultant interview or survey approach. Henrichs concluded:

It appears that the company exit interview is especially deficient in identifying terminating employees' dissatisfaction and conflict with management, or that if the dissatisfaction is identified; it is not included on the report of the interview forwarded to company headquarters. In addition, the overall intensity of dissatisfaction is not evident in the in house interviews, but it is reflected in the interviews by the consultant (ibid.,).

In both studies, researchers determined that terminated employees were reluctant to be honest because they did not want to burn any bridges behind them, they may have wanted employee references, and they found it more comfortable to "let sleeping dogs lie" than to discuss uncomfortable material.

Also cited was the need for extensive training in interviewing techniques for those whose responsibility is to conduct the interview. Henrich concluded that managers conducting the exit interview were not completely objective. He wrote, "In addition to lacking skill and training in interviewing, they may be personally involved in the factors surrounding the individuals' decision to leave, and a certain amount of defensiveness and selective perception is inevitable" (ibid.,).

Much like conducting a criminal investigation, the interviewer would likely benefit by asking a high number of opened ended questions, by maintaining objectivity and focusing on the true reasons of conducting the interview, and by actively listening to all responses and asking follow up questions. When possible he should ask for examples of the incidents that made the employee leave and what could be some alternative solutions.

Other variables that could distort accuracy are the interviewer's unwillingness to probe too deeply for fear of uncovering details that would cast their organization in a bad light (Campion 1991), fear that negative responses would affect co-workers job security (Giacalone), the possibility that the collected feedback would not be utilized for changes regardless, and undefined categorical reasons listed on the questionnaire.

If the concerns of exiting employees were made public throughout the police department, it would demonstrate that there is genuine interest in taking corrective action where it is needed.

## **Labor Pool Shortage**

Based on the results of two separate studies conducted by SHRM and Monster.com,

Meisinger wrote:

The steadily improving job market and coming retirement of the baby boom generation are on a convergence course, potentially resulting in an expanding economy restrained by a shrinking labor pool—a scenario likely to produce an excess demand for talent, drive up recruiting costs, and force organizations to rethink how they maintain their workforces.

Changes in both the national growth rate of the U. S. population and labor force participation rates have created a steadily growing labor force that, compared with 1950, is today more older more diversified, and increasingly made up of women. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) projects that the high growth rate of the labor force in the last 50 years (1950-2000) will be replaced by much slower rates in the next 50 years. Between 1950 and 2000 the growth rate grew at an annual rate of 1.6 percent per year. Growth rate projections from 2000-2050 are expected at just 0.6 percent annually.

The books *Workforce 2000* (Johnson and Packer, 1987) and *Workforce 2020* (Judy and D' Amico, 1997) describe how the net additions to the U. S. workforce will decrease dramatically through 2020. The BLS projects a continual annual growth rate of 1.1 percent until 2010, which will spiral further down to around 0.4 percent by 2020. Following the attacks of September 11, 2001, U. S. immigration laws have been more aggressively enforced which has had a negative effect on workforce additions.

Some of the key changes in the labor force which will occur are gender structure, age, race and ethnic composition. Women were a major factor in the high growth rate between 1950-2000, increasing their share from 30 to 47 percent. The aging baby boom generation is expected to make up a large proportion of the labor force in the next few

years. The 55 and older age group is expected to increase 20 percent by 2020. The share of minorities in the work force is projected to expand substantially.

The share of white non Hispanics is anticipated to decrease from 73 percent in 2000 to 53 percent in 2050, with the Hispanic population doubling their share from 11 to 24 percent.

This extrapolation is significant because the demographics in the police profession are not typically comprised of high numbers of women, minorities, nor older employees.

### **Technology Advances**

Employees are generally more honest if they can remain anonymous. Using company intranet or a web based method of data collection relieves supervisors and HR representatives from the time lost through scheduling and interviewing, tabulating results, maintaining accuracy, and removes interviewer bias. The standardization of completing a survey on line provides a consistent set of core questions, which ensures comparability throughout the organization across time exposing trends and patterns. Results are easily monitored allowing strategies to be developed for setting targets for turnover reduction (Gray).

The disadvantages of using the internet in contrast to a face to face interview is that a computer screen does not allow for observation of nonverbal information, such as appearances, facial expression, and gestures; clues given to an interviewer to probe further. Also, a face-to-face interview allows for more elaboration and adds clarity. According to some studies, "Body language comprises 55 percent of the force of any response, whereas the verbal content provides only 7 percent.

## Turnover

Personnel turnover is the precursor to numerous costs. Departing employees often take with them valuable knowledge and expertise gained through experience. Some of these costs include exit interview time and administrative requirements, payout of unused vacation time, and cost of overtime for coworkers asked to fill in. Replacement costs include advertising, processing of candidates, interviewing and selection, and finally training.

The complexity of employee turnover is broad and consists of both tangible and intangible costs. One study estimates replacement costs alone are over \$10,000 for about half of all jobs, and 20 percent of all jobs are over \$30,000 (Schmitt, 1999). Replacement costs may include advertising, training, interviewing time, pre-employment assessments and relocation costs.

Excessive turnover can also affect the quality of service provided. "Turnover reduces the productivity of an entire work unit/team, particularly as a result of uncompensated extra workloads, the stress and tension caused by turnover and, as a result, a decline in corporate morale" (Gray, ).

Simply viewing an organizations raw voluntary turnover data can be misleading. There are likely some employees who have left willingly whom the department may not have wished to retain due to their performance. This type of turnover is considered functional. Alternatively, dysfunctional turnover occurs when an above average employee leaves whom the department would have preferred to keep. It is considered dysfunctional because these employees are high performers and have made positive

contributions to the department. Dysfunctional turnover weakens organizational effectiveness.

If managers assume that a certain number of turnovers will occur each year regardless of any change or implementation, they may not realize when actual underlying problems exist. Therefore additional expenses are paid perennially.

## CHAPTER 3

### Research Chapter

This research study seeks to identify Best Practices for exit interviews in today's tight labor market. These suggested Best Practices provide an incisive cutting edge process to aggregate data and transform it into strategic decision-making information.

#### *Research Questions*

##### *Primary Question:*

1. What are the Best Practices for exit interviews?

##### *Subsidiary Questions:*

1. How should the exiting employee data be aggregated?
2. How should the exit results be disseminated?

#### **Research Methodology**

Structured interviews were conducted with randomly selected private sector businesses, neighboring police departments, and businesses listed on the 2007 FORTUNE 100 top companies to work for in determining best practices for exit interviews. Careful thought was given to develop the types of questions that would be asked during the interview. In establishing Best Practices, questions were developed to compile information about exit interviews such as: how the interview is used, who conducts the interview, when is it scheduled, and what is the number one reason people leave your company (see Appendix D). Other questions were developed to elicit personnel strategies such as: what decisions have been made as a result of the interview, what new strategies have been implemented to increase retention and reduce turnover, and what measurable percentage has the interview had on retention. All of the same



questions would be given to respondents across several different industries.

Before interviews could be held, approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the protection of Human Subjects at the University of Richmond. The IRB was provided with selected interview questions, which were later, used during my sessions with HR professionals, managers, and other organizational leaders. Approval was granted by the IRB to conduct the interviews, thereby furthering my research on best practices for exit interviews.

Administering the Survey. Colonel Baker, Chief of Police for Chesterfield County, was contacted and advised of this research topic, methodology, and ultimate goal of implementing best practices for our own department following its conclusion. Permission was granted to consult with Kristin Brown, who is the Chief Human Resource Manager. The intention of this meeting was to become familiar with the in-house exit process. Ms. Brown discussed the exit interview process for police employees while answering the same survey questions that would be presented to other respondents of this study. As with all the respondents, before initiating each interview session, the purpose and explanation of my research was given. Each respondent was provided with an informed consent letter which explained that his or her responses would be kept confidential (see Appendix E).

The Chesterfield County Police Department conducts voluntary face-to-face exit interviews with outgoing officers, which may be scheduled at anytime during the officers last few days on the job. The officer completes a structured survey and submits it to the counties HR office. The process has been enhanced of late from within the police

department. Much more emphasis is placed on the exit interview. It is used in conjunction with yearly climate surveys to identify trends and for retention purposes.

Some of the most notable improvements have occurred from the exit interview process such as repairs to compression issues, compensation increases, and a new policy that allows an officer to return within a year without the loss of any seniority.

Chesterfield County ultimately wishes to create a boomerang effect for high performers.

While acknowledging that officers do occasionally leave, the police department would like to make improvements from employee feedback, in preparation for a possible return.

### **Best Practice**

Best Practice is a management idea which asserts that there is a technique, method, process, activity, incentive or reward that is more effective at delivering a particular outcome than any other technique, method or process. The idea is that with proper processes, checks, and testing, a project can be rolled out and completed with fewer problems and unforeseen complications (wikipedia, 2007).

The success of the exit interview relies heavily on the candor and motivation of the employee, the training of the interviewer, the accuracy of the feedback, and the follow-up interviews or questionnaires. Best Practice in this study has been established through interviews with human resource managers, organizational leaders, and subject matter experts. The managers and leaders included in this survey are varied across several different industries. Since it is predicted that retention will be a top priority for all organizations and that everyone will be at war for the same people, this survey also includes competition outside of the police arena. FORTUNE 100 companies are included

because they commonly differentiate themselves by established best practices, treating their employees well, and have low turnover.

Interpreting the Results. The results of each individual question will not be discussed. Only the questions that could add value to the Chesterfield County Police Department exit interview process will be reviewed. The first question of the interview asked the respondents does your company conduct exit interviews. Eleven of the twelve respondents, 92%, indicated that they performed some form of exit interview or survey. Only one respondent answered that no interview or survey existed; however, a process is currently being considered (see Figure 1).

Does your company conduct exit interviews?

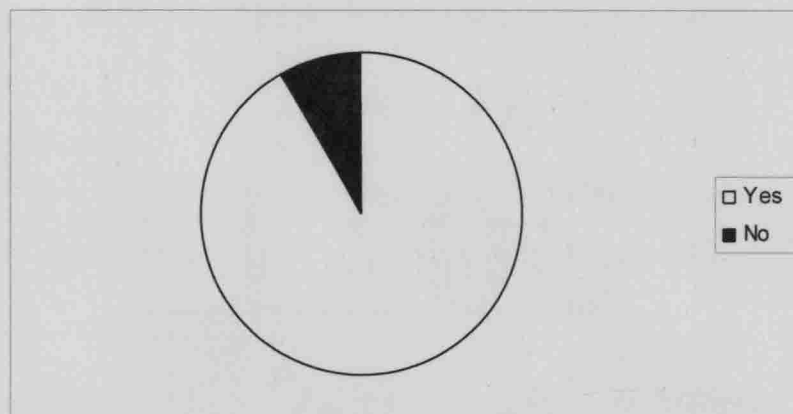


Figure 1. Results of Survey Question Number One

Question three asked the respondents who conducts the exit interview. Most respondents, 66.6 %, indicated that someone in human resources or upper management conducted the interview. Two, or 16.6%, asked employees to submit their exit survey as they were leaving, and one respondent requested that their employees return their survey by mail (see Figure 2).

Who conducts the exit interview?

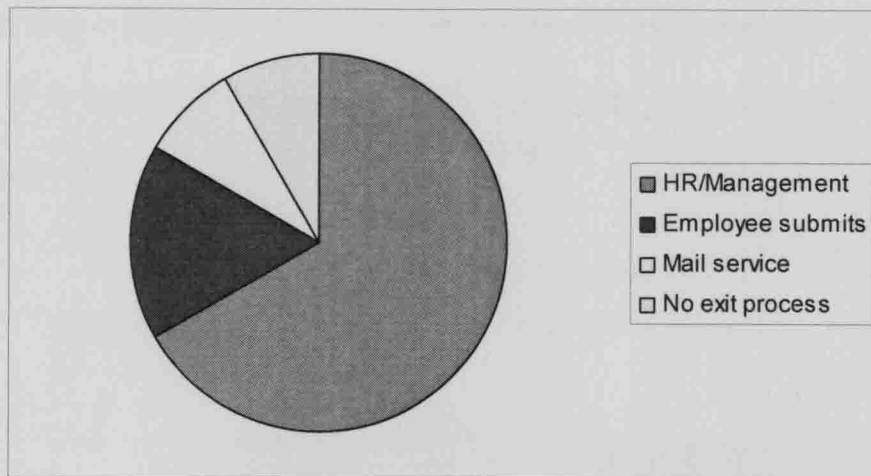


Figure 2. Results of Survey Question Number Three

Question seven inquired what is the number one reason people leave their company. Most respondents, 33% or four, answered low salary. It was followed by career change 16%, relocation 16%, layoffs 16%, job dissatisfaction 8%, and retirement 8% (see Figure 3).

What is the number one reason people leave your company?

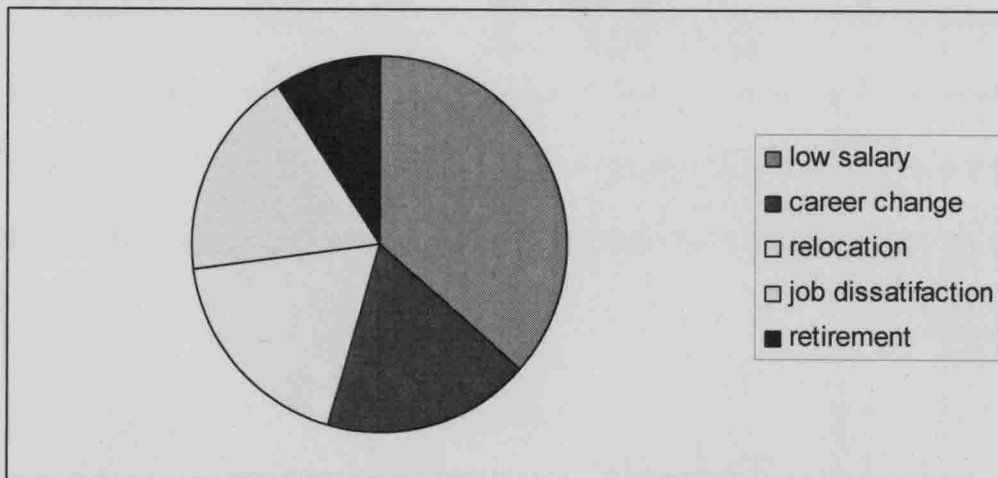


Figure 3. Results of Survey Question Number Seven

Question eight asked how the data results were collected. Six respondents, or 50% , said that their organization used a computer database to track employees' responses. 41.6%, or five respondents, relayed that exit information is tracked manually (see Figure 4).

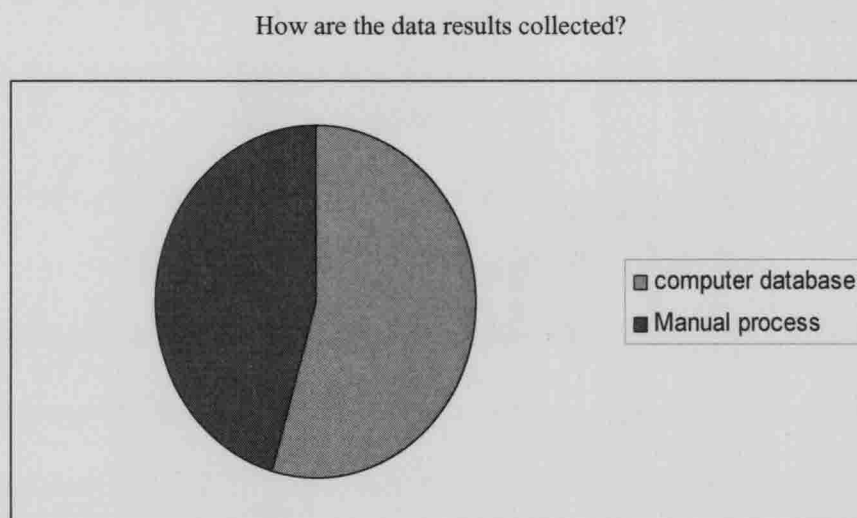


Figure 4. Results of Survey Question Number Eight

Question nine asked how the exit interview is used. 41.6%, or 5 respondents said the interview was used to improve culture issues. 16.6%, or two, said it was used to monitor trends, or for retention. While one, or 8%, said it was used to measure performance. One respondent, 8%, advised most of his company employees were fired (see figure 5).

How is the exit interview used?

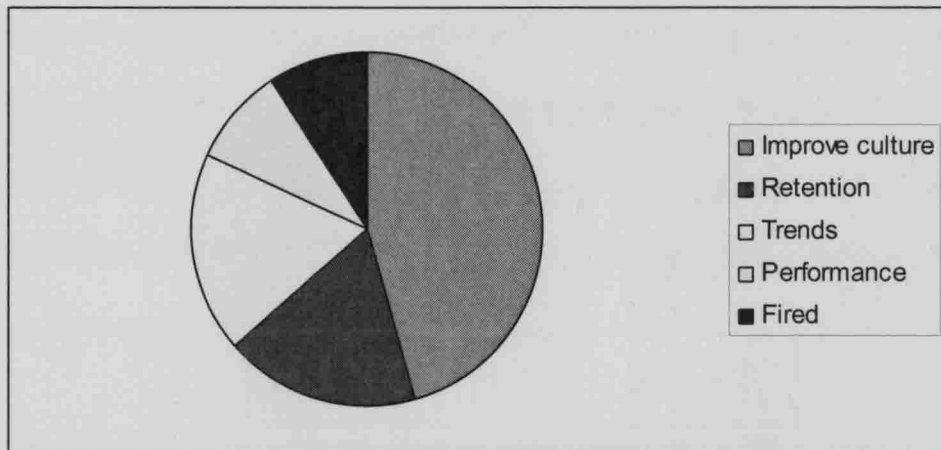


Figure 5. Results of Survey Question Number Nine

Question eleven asked what strategies have been implemented to increase retention and reduce turnover based on interview results. Most respondents, 58% or seven, said that nothing has been used, 25% or three, replied that bonus pay or a form of employee recognition program was initiated, and 8% or one, answered that an off-site focus group was started (see Figure 6).

What strategies have been implemented to increase retention and reduce turnover?

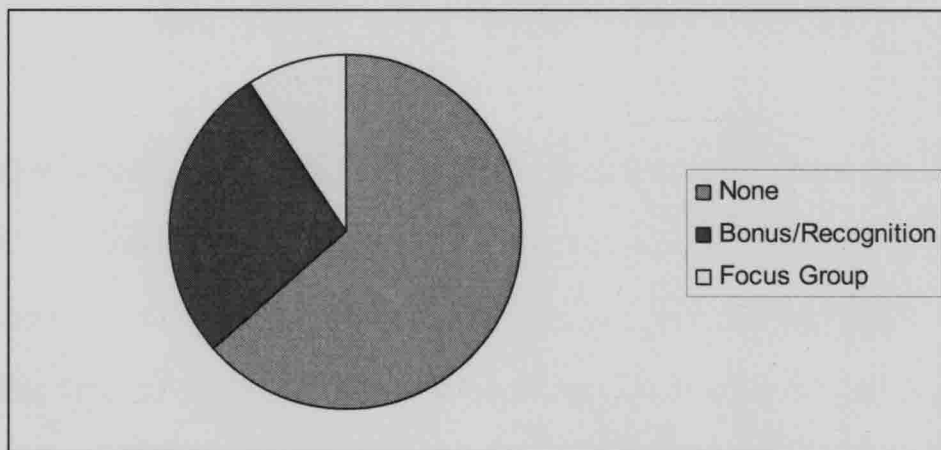


Figure 6. Results of Survey Question Number Eleven

Question twelve asked can you describe a practice that has been changed based on interview results. Six respondents, or 50%, said there have been no changes. Two respondents, or 16%, said it either started or there were improvements in their employee development program. Two respondents, or 16%, said there were changes made to their employee exit process or form. One respondent advised there were changes to their employee assistance program (see Figure 7).

Can you describe a practice that has been changed based on interview results?

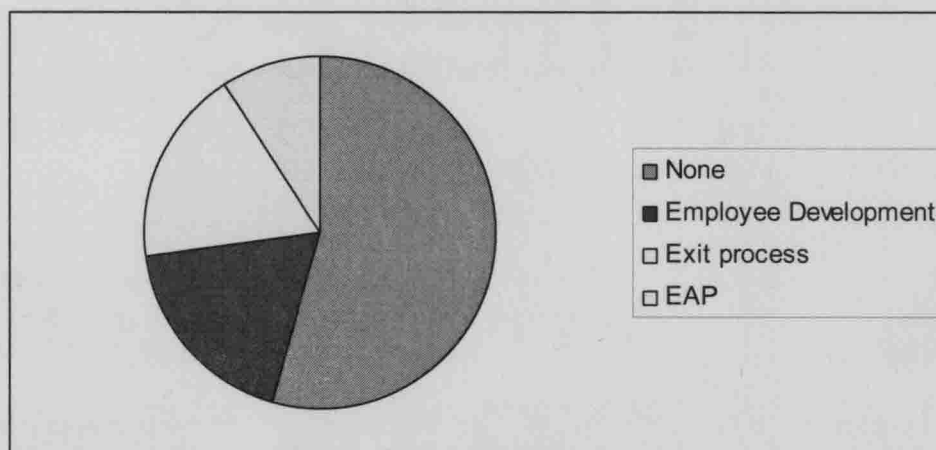


Figure 7. Results of Survey Question Number Twelve

Question thirteen inquired what changes you can recommend to make your interview more useful. Four respondents, or 33.3%, advised they would start or continue to use the exit interview as a retention tool. Two respondents, or 16.6%, said they would reconstruct their exit interview form. Two respondents, or 16.6%, said they would make their survey questions computerized to be completed by employees. Two respondents, or 16.6%, said they were unsure what changes could be made. One respondent, 8.3%, advised he would use results to improve his organizations culture.

Operational Variable	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable Yes / No
(1) Does your company conduct exit interviews?	Police Fortune 100 Government Agency Private Sector	3 2 3 3 1
(3) Who conducts the exit interview?	Police Fortune 100 Government Agency Private Sector	HR, uniformed management HR lead manager HR manager, mail-in Executive Team leader, other than immediate supervisor
(7) What is the number one reason employees leave your organization?	Police Fortune 100 Government Agency Private Sector	Relocation, low salary Career advancements Low salary, culture Low salary, job dissatisfaction
(8) How are the data results collected?	Police Fortune 100 Government Agency Private Sector	Automation, uncollected Database Database, uncollected Filed in-house
(11) What strategies have been implemented to increase retention and reduce turnover based on results?	Police Fortune 100 Government Agency Private Sector	Salary increase Bonuses Employee recognition Focus group, Culture improvements
(12) Can you describe a practice that has been changed based on results?	Police Fortune 100 Government Agency Private Sector	Career development, compression issues None EAP confidentiality None
(13) What changes can you recommend to make your interview more useful?	Police Fortune 100 Government Agency Private Sector	Advertise seniority plan Change to online survey Redesign exit form, Management review results Management review results, Redesign exit form

Table 3-1

Operational Variables = Each interview question was asked the same way to each respondent

Independent Variables = Police, Fortune 100, Government Agency, Private Sector

Dependent Variable = Respondent reply



### **Analysis of threats to internal validity**

A multiple group threat pre-existed in that police departments and government agencies are not normally comparable to FORTUNE 100 companies or other private sector businesses, especially in terms of organizational structure and budgeting constraints.

There is also a possible degree of social threat. Some respondents may have felt pressured; answering guardedly and in theoretic terms. With possible consideration that superiors would obtain the results of the survey.

### **External Validity**

The survey findings can be used across all industries. Exit interviews provide a low cost means of collecting feedback.

Interviews Conducted. The following section covers a brief synopsis of selected interviews. The interviewees are business leaders of a local city, Wal-Mart, CarMax, and a Virginia county police department. They were selected from a population of local governments, from the private sector, from FORTUNE 100, and from police departments.

One of the interviews was conducted with the human resource manager of an entire local city jurisdiction, who is also responsible for performing exit interviews for each employee. She has a vast knowledge and experience of HR functions, working in lead roles in other local surrounding counties.

The first subject was whether or not the exit interview was mandatory. She stated that while the interview was considered to be voluntary, the outgoing process for an employee would lead through her office. She said many of the exiting police officers would

volunteer feedback on their experience to her, on condition that she not record their responses while they were present.

The interviewee is very progressive when it comes to fixing problems that are uncovered during the exit interview. For example, following her interviews she directly contacts the city managers office when there is an urgent need to make reparations. While identifying low pay and culture as the chief reason people leave her jurisdiction, the interview has been a catalyst for change. For example, when several officers left within a short period of time, each pointed out discrepancies with the same supervisor. The interviewee was able to identify the supervisor and make recommendations for additional training.

Another example occurred when several officers cited during their exit interview that low pay was the reason they were leaving. As a result, a new pay scale was introduced for officers, which was based on a 1 percent increase for each year of experience.

The interviewee was asked that despite their apparent success, how she could make their exit interview process better. She recommended a formal structured exit survey on the city intranet completed by the employee, would likely increase accuracy and be more convenient.

The next interview was with a district manager of the world's largest retail store, Walmart. He is a recently retired army supervisor with many years of leadership and people management experience. He feels that gaining feedback is so important for his business that they insist on a no quit policy. That is, if an employee leaves without two weeks notice he cannot be rehired. Although the exit interview is not mandatory, it is highly encouraged. The interview is used to fact find why employees leave.

The interviewee said his company developed a strategy from results of exit interviews specifically to increase retention. He said focus groups now meet off site and invite employees to speak about their concerns, with corporate managers in attendance. Also implemented was a program called "listen to ten." Each month store managers solicit ten volunteering employees to give their comments or questions, which are then forwarded to corporate office; an open door policy that explicitly states that if any employee has an issue he can speak with anyone in the company without the use of a hierarchy. Finally, a policy called the "sun-down" rule. If an associate notifies a concern to anyone in management, the manager must call him back before sun down.

The interviewee was not complacent and realized that there may be changes to make during the process. For example, he would like to see a better set of survey questions, which will probe through superficial answers. He also advised the entire process should be reviewed annually. Finally, he wanted to make the exit survey multilingual to accommodate the already large and increasingly growing Hispanic employee population.

The next interview was conducted with the Lead Human Resource Manager of a FORTUNE 100 company. When asked about the main reason people leave her company she responded with a very interesting answer, "career advancement." Very noticeably, it was not the usual response of career change. Career advancement means that those employees are climbing higher by taking the next step up. A career change may imply a lateral move or even a step down. At that moment, it was realized that the confidence and culture of the company was different from many of the others that were interviewed.

The interviewee explained that exit interview data was entered into the company's database and used strategically to improve company performance. She said the

interview results have led to company wide behavioral and process changes. However, she explained that in reality, the moment an employee announces that he plans to leave, the exit process informally begins. Managers confer with employees to find if they truly want to leave and how they can retain them. If an employee is in a key position which can affect the financial operation of the business he may be asked to leave shortly following notice.

The interviewee said that their exit process could possibly be improved by making the exit survey available on line instead of the face-to-face interview currently held. She felt that it would be a faster process, be convenient for employees, and would save valuable time to management.

The next interview conducted was with a lieutenant of a local police department assigned in human resources. One of his main duties was to hold exit interviews with departing officers. He said his interviews were held on the last day of employment according to his counties policy and that the employee was allowed to decline. Nevertheless, he said most volunteered to vent their frustration.

The interviewee said the most given reasons officers left his department was low salary with court issues following a close second. He said that he discovered through his interviews that most new officers like their salary when they began. Later, when they get married and start a family the salary normally does not grow with the new family, then salary becomes a financial burden.

Court issues followed low salary. He said that officers who were assigned to the midnight shift were regularly scheduled for court at different times of the day. This became a significant problem because officer safety, morale and performance would

obviously decrease if they were returned to work without proper rest. Like other police departments, they are at the mercy of court scheduling.

The interviewee said that their exit data was compiled into a database for and transformed into useable statistics to address the issues that have been brought to light. For example, two major employee gripes were illuminated by the exit survey; they were their non-existence of a career development plan and the take home car policy. He said previously new officers were basically earning the same pay as seasoned veterans. The discrepancy caused problems within the ranks. He said when enough officers complained during their exit process, a career development plan was initiated.

The interviewee cited another problem issue that was addressed was their take home car policy. Previously no one could drive a vehicle home who lived outside of the county for any purpose. This criticism was captured during the exit process. The lieutenant said the revision has been changed to a case-by-case basis. For example, a forensic technician on call after regular work hours does not have to return to the police station to obtain a vehicle before proceeding to a crime scene. Now they can respond directly to the scene from their place of residence, saving additional time officers spend on scene and money.

When I asked the interviewee what he would change about the exit interview process he stated he would make it a recruitment session instead. He said he would try to do what he could to get leavers to stay. He added that his command staff was very interested in the comments each departure gave.

Findings. Based on this writer interviews with various human resource managers and personal research study of exit interviews, there are several suggestions this writer would make to the Chesterfield County Police Department. First, officers may not feel

comfortable speaking with supervisors or in-house human resource personnel about why they're leaving, which could lead to withholding valuable feedback. Second, officers would likely feel as though information was anonymous if they completed a standardized survey by intranet, thus decreasing the opportunity for interviewer misinterpretation and loss of objectivity. Third, a recommendation to make the exit survey recordings centralized so that others can see something is being done with the results. Fourth, incorporate a supplementary follow-up questionnaire as part of the exit process to be distributed at a later date.

### **Limitations of the Study**

There is the possibility that even more innovative exit tools are already in use by FORTUNE 100 companies. However, contacting the right personnel insider that would conduct an interview for this study proved extremely difficult. There were constant referrals to company websites, which were of little use concerning this topic. In requesting specific information such as the number one reason why employees leave, it appeared to catch some of the interviewees off guard. There are questions if some of the responses contributed to this study were truly accurate.

## Chapter 4

### The Application Chapter

#### **Introduction**

Over the course of this study, information was collected from human resource managers, organizational leaders, and personal research on the topic of exit interviews. This chapter reviews the findings and answers the primary and two subsidiary research questions of this study.

#### **Implementation: Tactics and Strategies**

With consideration given to the responses from 12 selected human resource managers and organizational leaders, and the review of the literature, there are some inexpensive options available to the Chesterfield Police Department to maximize the effectiveness of the exit interview. These changes require that the agency consider weighing the benefits of insider feedback and knowledge against complacency and status quo.

#### ***Short Term Recommendations***

In the short term this writer recommends that the agency evaluate its current exit interview process against the industry best practices. What must be considered is whether or not the police department will welcome constructive criticism at any cost. Also of consideration is what will be done with the results. How much determination and effort will be made toward improvement once feedback is received?

#### **Research Questions**

The purpose of this research study was to develop best practices in today's tight labor market. In order to accomplish this objective, the study responded to one primary and two subsidiary questions. After interviewing several human resource managers and

organizational leaders, best practices were established from their responses in conjunction with this writer's personal research study on available factual information.

## **Review of Findings**

### **Primary Question: What are the Best Practices for exit interviews?**

Best Practice 1: Outsource the exit interview to a neutral third party:

Careful thought should be given to outsourcing the exit interview process to a neutral third party. As prior research by Lefkowitz, Katz, and Henrich has proven, most exiting employees are concerned about burning bridges, offending a former supervisor, or getting a bad employment reference for their next potential job. This naturally could cause them to hold back on their true feelings as they depart. Expert Leigh Branham (Levin, 2007) has commented:

No matter how well a company representative may have been trained [on conducting exit interviews] there will always be those departing employees who do not feel comfortable opening up with any representative of the organization.

A non affiliated party does not have an ax to grind and has become an inexpensive alternative.

Best Practice 2: Make the exit survey available on-line and managed by an outside firm

Establish a website through a neutral host so that employees can complete the exit interview wherever they feel comfortable. This is convenient and would keep employees anonymous and encourage freedom to provide honest feedback. Being anonymous is important because it allows an employee to share his true experiences of former supervisors, work environment, duties, processes, and organizational culture. There is also less chance of data error caused by misinterpretation or defensive interviewers. This feedback would help identify organizational problems such as ineffective training



practices, inconsistencies in appraisal systems, faulty supervision procedures, to uncovering competitive compensation issues, and discovering problems in general working conditions.

### **Best Practice 3: Implement a supplementary follow-up questionnaire**

A recommendation of incorporating a supplementary follow-up questionnaire, which is performed at a later date and can be tabulated and controlled by an outside firm. As Lefkowitz, Katz, and Henrich concluded in two separate studies, exiting employees' primary reasons for leaving were different in the in house interview as compared later when surveyed by a supplementary questionnaire months after leaving. Often employees who do not feel comfortable providing feedback at the time of separation will feel more relaxed a few months later when they have transitioned to their new job and are not concerned about getting a good reference. This step provides an option to compare their primary reason for leaving given at the time of departure with the responses given on the follow-up. Incentives to complete the questionnaire such as movie tickets, or other coupons could be utilized to increase the response rate. The value of the feedback would be well worth the inexpensive cost.

### **Subsidiary Question 1: How should the interview results be aggregated?**

Many organizations are failing to recognize the value of a systematic approach to collecting information from exit interviews. To obtain an accurate analysis, the interview should be universal comprised of all the voluntary departures as opposed to an extrapolation of a random sample. The data should be gathered and collated in a structured manner by sticking with a core set of questions and facilitating comparability throughout and across time. Make sure interview questions are designed properly to

increase the accuracy of findings. Ask several open-ended questions which will allow employees an opportunity to include their own comments

The results should be aggregated for the organization as a whole. Passing on information to decision makers based on one or two employees surveys could be misleading and irresponsible. Rather, use the data as a way to identify trends, patterns, and themes.

**Subsidiary question 2:** How should exit interview results be disseminated?

According to Branham (Levin, 2007) only 30 percent of companies report ever taking corrective action based on exit interview results; he adds, "There we have one more reason why most companies are not employers of choice." The results should be shared with senior leaders, key decision-makers, and drivers of change. Reports should be made in both summary and detailed form (prepared by a third party that conducted the surveys) pinpointing trends and suggesting ideas for corrective action.

In this writer's opinion, centralization would give the department a chance to demonstrate that positive change is taking place. Centralization would show employees that the police department feels strongly about solidifying its image while strengthening its culture. Outgoing comments and improvements could be posted on the department's intranet for officers to view at their will. There would be minimal cost to institute this idea and since all employees are familiar with the intranet, no additional training is necessary.

## **Long-Term Recommendations**

The Chesterfield County Police Department would benefit by initiating a comparative analysis of the reputable third party specialist in the local area to conduct its exit interviews. They are more likely to possess critical skills and to understand the processes required for successful exit interviews. Senior leaders within the department should relentlessly emphasize the values of the Chesterfield Police Department while continuing to improve its culture.

Obtaining data on-line. If outsourcing the exit interview to a third party is not an option, this writer feels that the department could capitalize by utilizing its own technology department. As a possible alternative or in conjunction with face-to-face interviews, a secure web site could be established through Chesterfield County's very own technicians. The aggregated results of such could be posted on the intranet for members to view along with possible recommendations to fix problems areas.

Disseminating results. If senior leaders are not on board with utilizing results of exit interviews to fix problems, adjust training, and enhancing processes, then this powerful tool will remain just another stop on the way out for an exiting employee. Burying the results within a file cabinet or fearing to pass on candid feedback to decision makers is equivalent to sticking your head in the sand and hoping no one will notice. One must realize, that an exiting officer will have to decide if providing honest feedback will benefit him and will the department actually use it anyway.

## **Dissemination**

The author plans to schedule a meeting with Colonel Baker for discussion of the findings of this research. If it is determined that he has possible considerations in using or implementing any or all of the recommendations, the results of this research will be presented to Kristin Brown who is currently the Human Resource Administrator for the Chesterfield County Police Department.

If the recommendations are implemented by the Chesterfield Police Department and found to be a success, then the entire county government should hopefully share its benefits. When the final paper is completed, it is planned to submit this research to those other law enforcement agencies that graciously provided their time and thought to this study.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusion

#### Summary

The Bureau of Labor and Statistics (BLS) has projected that between 2010 and 2020 the workforce annual growth rate will dwindle to just .4 percent, the lowest in more than a century. Today HR managers report that their workforce is maturing and expect a disproportionate number of workers will reach retirement age in the next ten years. Employers may soon face challenges due to an improving job market, expanding economy and a diminishing labor pool. The looming retirement of the baby boom generation will cause an excess demand for talent, drive up recruiting costs and force organizations to rethink how they maintain their workforces.

One powerful tool that can be used to improve employee retention is the exit interview. However, many employers do not take full advantage of the opportunity to collect valuable data from exit interviews. In a 2002 study conducted by Human Resource Executive Magazine, 96 percent of HR managers reported conducting exit interviews with employees leaving voluntarily, yet just 4 percent used a systematic method of collecting and tabulating the exit survey findings.

Exit interviews are typically conducted by the Human Resource Department of an organization with an employee who is voluntarily resigning. One purpose of the interview is to gather structured data for improving working conditions and retaining employees. Exit interviews give managers a key opportunity to get an accurate read on the pulse of an organization, providing insights that can be used to stem further turnover (Westcott). Information from exit interviews can also be used to diagnose organizational

problems such as ineffective training practices, inconsistencies in appraisal systems, faulty supervision procedures, uncovering competitive compensation issues, and discovering problems in general working conditions (Bruce, 1988; Drost et al., 1987). Exit interviews are different than other employee feedback surveys because departing employees feel liberated to be forthcoming with their views. In most cases, exit interviews provide honest feedback that can help create a better working environment. Positive changes made as a result of exit interviews can directly increase retention. Today's labor market is comprised of low unemployment and a new generation of employees who no longer expect to remain with the same company for long. It is an idea referred to as the new compact, signaling that expectations of job longevity have changed.

The success of exit interviews hinges on whether information about the departing employees is collected in a structured way and then channeled back into the business or "simply forgotten" (Manley, 2005). Possibly the worse mistake to be made is to conduct an exit interview and then do nothing with the collected information. When serious issues are raised, necessary steps are expected to make changes (ibid.).

Today employers face a myriad of personnel challenges due to a decreasing labor supply. According to a poll conducted by the *Wall Street Journal* and SHRM (2006), 78 percent of workers currently employed said they were likely to start or accelerate a job search as the economy improves (ibid.). In the same poll, 65 percent of executives said they were actively looking for new employment, compared with 47 percent of non-management workers and 45 percent of middle managers (ibid.).

Personnel turnover is the precursor to numerous costs. Departing employees often take with them valuable knowledge and expertise gained through experience. Some of these costs include exit interview time and administrative requirements, payout of unused vacation time, and cost of overtime for co-workers asked to fill in. Replacement cost includes advertising, processing, interviewing and selection, and finally training of candidates (Mitchell, Brooks, Holtom, and Lee, 2001).

Since retention is believed to be the hot buzzword of the second half of the decade, many see the potential strategy of the exit interview as becoming a significant tool in retaining high performers, reducing turnover, obtaining accurate data, gathering implicit organizational information, and maintaining anonymity. Some forces that have influenced these improvements include: analytical research, a projected labor and skill shortage by the year 2020, the high cost of turnover and technology advances.

Earlier research on the validity of exit interviews revealed significant differences in respondents' reasons for leaving their organization first given and follow-up questionnaires months later (Lefkowitz, Katz 1969, Henrich 1975). The studies revealed that 59 percent of those who voluntarily left reported different reasons than previously recorded to their organizations. Henrichs (1975) found that similar to the results previously noted, exit interviews conducted by company management yielded different information from that obtained through follow-up questionnaires or by exit interviews conducted by a consultant. While the major termination reason was most often uncovered during the company exit interview, in most cases either additional reasons or entirely different primary reasons were identified through a consultant interview or a survey approach.

At the beginning of this study three questions were posed. The primary question: What are the Best Practices for exit interviews? Additionally, to two subsidiary questions: How should the exit interview data be aggregated? And how should the exit interview results be disseminated?

Structured interviews were conducted with randomly selected private sector businesses, neighboring police departments, and businesses listed on the 2007 “FORTUNE 100 Top Companies to Work For” to determine Best Practices for exit interviews. Careful thought was given to develop the types of questions that would be asked during the interview. In establishing Best Practices, questions were developed to compile information about exit interviews such as: how the interview is used, who conducts the interview, when is it scheduled, and what is the number one reason people leave your company. Other questions were developed to elicit personnel strategies such as: what decisions have been made as a result of the interview, what new strategies have been implemented to increase retention and reduce turnover, and what measurable percentage has the interview had on retention.

This study concluded with some best practices for exit interviews. As prior research by Lefkowitz, Katz, and Henrich has proven, most exiting employees are concerned about burning bridges, offending a former supervisor, or getting a bad employment reference for their next potential job. This naturally could cause them to hold back on their true feelings as they depart. As a result, this writer recommends outsourcing the interview to a neutral third party. As expert Leigh Branham (Levin, 2007) has commented:



No matter how well a company representative may have been trained [on conducting exit interviews] there will always be those departing employees who do not feel comfortable opening up with any representative of the organization.

To obtain an accurate analysis, the interview should be universal comprised of all the voluntary departures as opposed to an extrapolation of a random sample. The data should be gathered and collated in a structured manner by sticking with a core set of questions and facilitating comparability throughout and across time. The results should be aggregated for the organization as a whole. Passing on information to decision makers based on one or two employee surveys could be misleading and irresponsible. Rather, use the data as a way to identify trends, patterns, and themes.

The results should be shared with senior leaders, key decision-makers, and drivers of change. Reports should be made in both summary and detailed form (prepared by a third party that conducted the surveys) pinpointing trends and suggesting ideas for corrective action. In this writer's opinion, centralization would give the department a chance to demonstrate that positive change is taking place. Centralization would show employees that the police department feels strongly about solidifying its image as an employer of choice while strengthening its culture.

### **Personal Learnings**

In review of this study, it was concluded that implementing exit interview best practices would assist in gaining valuable insider knowledge and could increase employee retention. No longer a perfunctory process, the most notable businesses use this powerful tool to check the pulses of their companies. One particular interview is recalled, which was conducted during this research study. The employee assigned to the exit interview position shared her personal feelings about their exiting process. Her job

was simply to collect the exit completion forms from departing workers-- those who actually cared to fill them out. She said no one reviewed any of the exit forms, no data was collected, and the forms did not have room for anyone to write additional comments; basically it was a fruitless process. She stated further, that the company never received any feedback from its employees. The results would be the same if organizations had the best exit interview process but did not act upon the feedback. Departing employees would know ahead of time that nothing would be done to repair that which is broken.

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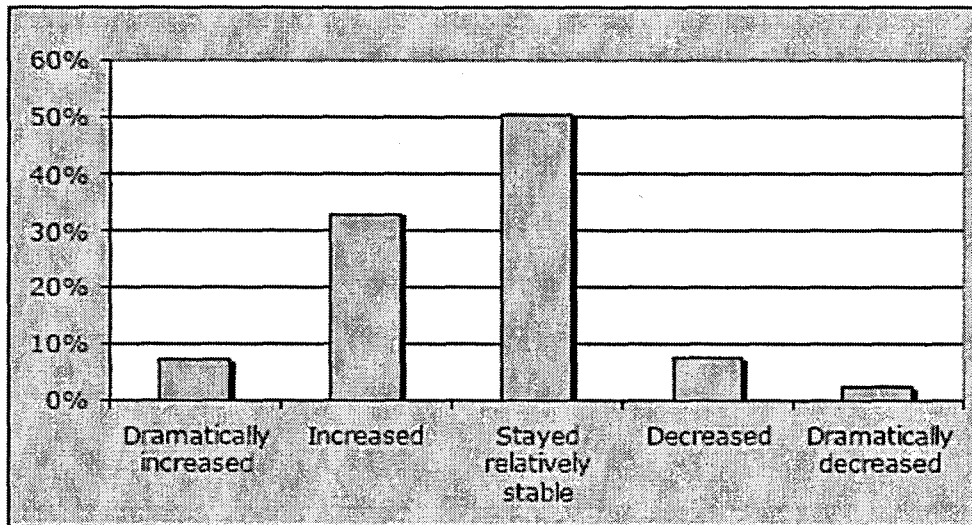
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## Appendix A



What has been the status of employee turnover within your organization over the past twelve to eighteen months?

## Appendix B

How would you rate the level of challenges facing your organization in retaining workers over the following time periods?				
	Currently	Over the next 6 - 18 months	In the next 18-24 months	Five years and beyond
Very high	15%	17%	18%	24%
High	30%	37%	36%	31%
Moderate	33%	30%	31%	31%
Low	13%	10%	10%	10%
Very low	8%	7%	6%	5%



## Appendix D

11-5-06

Structured Interview Questions

Thesis: Increase Retention Through Exit Interviews

Russell Granderson

- 1) Does your company conduct exit interviews? If no, skip to question 18.
- 2) When an employee decides to leave, what is the outgoing process?
- 3) Who conducts the exit interview?
- 4) When is the exit interview scheduled?
- 5) Is the interview mandatory?
- 6) What steps are in place to maintain employee anonymity?
- 7) What is the number one reason that people leave your company?
- 8) How are the data results collected?
- 9) How is the exit interview used?
- 10) What decisions have been made as a result of the interview?
- 11) What strategies have been developed or implemented to increase retention and reduce turnover based on interview results?
- 12) Can you describe a practice that has been changed based on interview results?
- 13) What changes can you recommend to make your interview more useful?
- 14) What measurable percentage has the interview had on retention?
- 15) What incentives have been utilized to increase response rate?
- 16) What other companies have you heard about that uses best practice regarding exit interviews?



- 17) Are you willing to provide a copy of your exit survey?
- 18) What barriers are present in your organization that prevents the use of exit interviews?
- 19) Are employees asked to leave immediately following notification of their intention to resign?
- 20) What would the changes be to start an exit interview process?

## Appendix E

### INFORMED CONSENT FORM

HR540U: Increase Retention Through exit Interviews  
Independent Research Project:  
UR Program Evaluation

Principle Investigator: Russell M. Granderson  
For: Dr. Robert Kelly  
Fall 2006

The purpose of this study is to unveil the value and multifaceted benefits of the exit interview when it is used to increase retention. I am conducting face to face interviews with HR personnel of local businesses and selected companies chosen at random on FORTUNE "100 Best Companies to work for."

Your participation in this project involves an interview. The session should last approximately 30 minutes. During the session you will be asked to answer questions involving your company's exit interview process.

The project involves no physical discomfort or risk to any participant. Steps will be taken to ensure that all information held in strictest confidence. (See description of procedures for this below in "Confidentiality of Records.")

#### Investigator

The principal investigator in this study is Russell M. Granderson. I am supervised by Dr. Robert Kelly in Department of Continuing Studies at the University of Richmond. Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact him at (804) 289-8119 or [rkelly@richmond.edu](mailto:rkelly@richmond.edu) (email).

#### Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this project is voluntary and you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation in the project at any time without penalty. If at any point you are uncomfortable answering a question that I pose, you are free to refuse comment. I will be courteous and understanding and will not pursue the matter any further. If you feel comfortable, you may volunteer information "off the record." I will not divulge the source of "off the record" comments. The information will be used for research purposes only. I will not attribute the information to you, either in this study or any other publication, paper, interview, or work.

#### Confidentiality of Records

In order to ensure the confidentiality of records I will only identify participants by numbers. The results of the study will only be reported in aggregate form.

### Participant's Rights Information

As a participant in the study, you have a right to be informed about the results of the research and how the information you have submitted will be used. If you wish, you may have the right to review the results of the research before it is presented or otherwise made public. You have the right to respond to make comments, and such response or comments will be appended to any written or digital form of the results that is made public.

If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Chair of the University of Richmond's Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Research Participants at 289-8417.

### Participants Consent

The study has been described to me and I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation in the project at any time without penalty. I also understand that, If I experience discomfort or distress during the course of the study because of sensitive issues that are raised, I am encourage to call the University's counseling center, CAPS, at 289-8119.

I also understand that the results of the study will be treated in strict confidence and reported in aggregate form. I understand that if I have any questions or concerns about this study, I may pose them to Russell M. Granderson at (804) 706-2765 and Dr. Kelly at (804) 289-8119.

I have read and understand the above information and I consent to participate in this study by signing below.

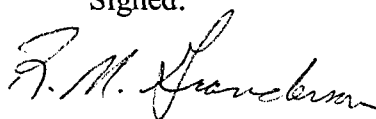
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of participant Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Principle Investigator

### The Pledge

On my honor I hereby affirm that this work was created by me. The writings and conclusions are entirely my own. I completed the research noted in this thesis, and all ideas all ideas from others are properly cited and referenced. In addition, this work is original for this class and none of it had already been written for another class nor have I received credit for this in any other class.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. M. Granderson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "R".

R. M. Granderson