

# FOR OR AGAINST?

TWO HR PROFESSIONALS TACKLE A TOPICAL DEBATE EACH MONTH.

## Q SHOULD EXIT INTERVIEWS BE CONDUCTED INTERNALLY OR EXTERNALLY?



### INTERNALLY

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There's no question that exit interviews are an important part of off-boarding employees, and conducting them in-house is the way to guarantee that the business and the employee feel the benefits.

Each exiting employee is an opportunity to gain valuable insight into what works and what doesn't within an organisation. The most meaningful, well-thought out questions will come from someone who is already embedded within office culture. They will have an intimate knowledge of the company and can discuss relevant points in a more coherent and meaningful manner than an outsider.

Once a business regularly undertakes exit-interviews internally, they can start to standardise questions and create benchmarks to track trends among all exiting people. If specific issues are consistently raised, an in-house interviewer is in a better position to act on what exiting employees are saying and implement changes because they are closer to the issues at hand.

There are many ways to garner information. Surveys or an automated system that tracks employee answers, phone or formal face-to-face interviews work well, too. Ultimately, it's those open-ended questions that will get the best results: What could we do to improve? What are your reasons for leaving? It needs someone with empathy to perform these, which is hard to outsource.

It also ends the worker's employment period on a high note. When an employee can voice their concerns and leave knowing the company took time to listen to or read his or her feedback, that goes a long way towards building goodwill.



### EXTERNALLY

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It's not that internal HR professionals shouldn't be involved in exit interviews, but they add more value by debriefing high-quality exit reports and focusing on the results.

There are three reasons why exit interviews should be conducted externally. First, completion rates are much higher when an external provider conducts them. We surveyed businesses in 2010 and found that external providers achieve an average completion rate of 66 per cent compared to 50 per cent internally. As a benchmark, the vast majority of our clients have completion rates in excess of 90 per cent.

Additionally, more than half of organisations that conduct exit interviews internally have no reporting capability, which makes it difficult to pull out the information needed to make meaningful changes to business practices.

Finally, the accuracy of data collected is improved. You need to make it as safe as possible for people to tell the truth. A percentage of employees will censor themselves if they think someone internally will see their answer, but with external providers, feedback on exit interviews is protected by privacy law.

Most HR professionals are not trained in how to conduct an exit interview; only 20 per cent of organisations provide this type of training. Answers need to be specific enough to be useful and coded accurately, and interviewers need to get to the root cause of resignation decisions. It's also important for interviewers to have objectivity and not 'lead' interviewees with their own perceptions, which can occur with interviewers from an organisation.

**WHAT IS YOUR OPINION?** Continue the discussion on AHRI's LinkedIn discussion group.

If you have a topic that you'd like to see debated, email your suggestion to [hrm@mahlabmedia.com.au](mailto:hrm@mahlabmedia.com.au)