



Stay Interview Implementation Guide: The R.E.T.A.I.N. Framework

Stay Interviews are a powerful tool in the modern corporate landscape, offering a proactive approach to employee retention and engagement. Unlike exit interviews, which gather insights when it's too late to retain an employee, Stay Interviews allow organizations to address concerns, leverage strengths, and foster loyalty before valuable talent considers leaving.

The benefits of implementing a robust Stay Interview program include:

1. **Improved Retention:** By identifying and addressing potential issues early, organizations can significantly reduce turnover rates.
2. **Enhanced Engagement:** Stay Interviews demonstrate that the organization values its employees' opinions and experiences, leading to increased engagement and productivity.
3. **Targeted Development:** These interviews provide insights into employees' career aspirations, allowing for more tailored professional development opportunities.
4. **Cultural Insights:** Regular Stay Interviews offer a pulse check on company culture, helping leadership understand and shape the employee experience.
5. **Predictive Power:** Stay Interviews can help identify trends and potential issues before they become widespread problems.

The R.E.T.A.I.N. framework outlined in this guide provides a structured approach to implementing and maintaining an effective Stay Interview program. By following these steps, organizations can harness the full power of Stay Interviews to create a more human centered workplace.

R - Ready Leadership

Define the Purpose and Goals of Stay Interviews

1. Clearly articulate the primary objectives of your Stay Interview program. These might include:
 - Reducing turnover rates
 - Improving employee engagement scores
 - Identifying and addressing potential retention risks
 - Gathering insights for talent development strategies
2. Set SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) goals for your Stay Interview initiative. For example:
 - Reduce voluntary turnover by 15% within 12 months of implementing the Stay Interview program.
 - Increase employee engagement scores by 10 points in the next annual survey.
3. Align Stay Interview goals with broader organizational objectives to ensure strategic relevance.

Secure Leadership Buy-In

1. Prepare a compelling business case for Stay Interviews, including:
 - Potential ROI based on reduced turnover costs
 - Case studies or success stories from other organizations
 - Alignment with company values and culture initiatives
 - Opportunity to gather feedback/data for employee programs, policies and experiences
2. Schedule a presentation for senior leadership to outline:
 - The purpose and goals of Stay Interviews
 - The proposed implementation process
 - Required resources
3. Address potential concerns proactively, such as:
 - Time investment from managers and employees
 - Confidentiality and data security measures

- How insights will be acted upon
- 4. Secure a visible champion from the senior leadership team to advocate for the program.

Assess Available Resources and Capabilities

1. Conduct a thorough assessment of internal resources:
 - HR team capacity for program management and data analysis
 - IT systems for data collection and analysis
 - Training resources for managers and interviewers
2. Identify any skill gaps within the organization that may impact the Stay Interview process.
3. Evaluate the budget available for implementing and maintaining the Stay Interview program.
4. Assess the organization's change readiness and cultural fit for Stay Interviews.
5. Identify areas where external support might be beneficial, such as:
 - Program design and implementation consulting
 - Interview training and coaching
 - Data analysis and reporting
 - Technology solutions for Stay Interview management

E - Engage Employees and Establish Questions

Select Target Groups for Interviews

1. Determine the scope of your Stay Interview program:
 - Organization-wide implementation
 - Pilot program with select departments or teams
 - Focus on specific employee segments (e.g., demographics, recent hires, critical roles)
2. Consider factors such as:
 - Strategic importance of roles or departments
 - Readiness of certain groups or teams

- Current turnover rates or engagement scores
 - Gaps in advancement and pipeline
 - Career stage (e.g., early career, mid-career, senior level)
3. Develop clear and transparent criteria for selecting participants if not implementing organization-wide.

Determine Appropriate Group Size

1. Consider the organization's size, structure, and resources when determining the number of employees to include in each round of Stay Interviews.
2. Balance the desire for comprehensive data with the practical constraints.
3. For larger organizations, consider a phased approach, starting with key departments or roles and expanding over time.
4. Aim for a sample size that provides statistically significant insights while remaining manageable.

Develop Format and Core Interview Questions

1. Determine format for the interview (i.e in person, virtual, survey)
2. Create a set of standard questions that align with your Stay Interview objectives. Consider categories such as:
 - Job satisfaction and engagement
 - Career growth and development
 - Work environment and culture
 - Mentorship and connections
 - Management and leadership
 - Work-life alignment
3. Ensure questions are open-ended to encourage detailed responses. For example:
 - "What aspects of your job do you enjoy the most?"
 - "If you could change one thing about your work experience so far, what would it be and why?"
 - "How do you see your career progressing in our organization?"

4. Include questions that address potential retention risks:
 - "What would make you consider leaving our organization?"
 - "Why do you enjoy working at the organization?"
 - "What specific aspects impacted your decision to stay at this organization and not leave for other opportunities?"

Announce the Stay Interview Initiative

1. Develop a comprehensive communication plan, including:
 - Initial announcement from senior leadership
 - Follow-up communications from talent team
 - FAQs to address common questions and concerns
2. Use multiple communication channels to ensure wide reach:
 - Organization-wide emails
 - Intranet or internal communication platforms
 - Team meetings and one-on-ones
 - Town halls or all-hands meetings
3. Clearly articulate the purpose and benefits of Stay Interviews for both employees and the organization.
4. Emphasize how Stay Interviews benefit employees:
 - Opportunity to share thoughts and ideas
 - Platform to discuss career aspirations and development
 - Mechanism for addressing concerns proactively
 - Demonstration of the organization's commitment to employee satisfaction and growth
5. Provide examples of how insights from Stay Interviews might be used to improve the employee experience.
6. Clearly communicate the confidentiality measures in place:
 - How information will be stored and who will have access
 - What level of anonymity can be expected in data reporting
 - How insights will be used without compromising individual privacy

Set Clear Expectations for the Process

1. Outline the Stay Interview process step-by-step for employees:
 - How participants will be selected (if not company-wide)
 - Commitment from senior leadership and expectation of participation
 - Typical duration and format of interviews
 - What to expect during the interview
 - How feedback will be used and acted upon
2. Provide a timeline for the Stay Interview initiative, including:
 - When interviews will be conducted
 - When employees can expect to see results or actions
3. Clarify what is expected from employees during the process:
 - Honesty and openness
 - Constructive feedback
 - Willingness to engage in follow-up discussions or actions

T - Talk and Listen

Select and Train Interviewers

1. Identify potential interviewers based on criteria such as:
 - Strong interpersonal and communication skills
 - Ability to build trust and rapport
 - Objectivity and lack of bias
 - Understanding of the organization and its goals
 - Positive feedback regarding mentorship
2. Develop a training program for interviewers, covering:
 - The purpose and importance of Stay Interviews
 - Effective interviewing techniques
 - Active listening skills
 - Handling difficult conversations or sensitive topics
 - Tactics for identifying and overcoming unconscious bias
 - Note-taking best practices

- Confidentiality and data protection protocols

Schedule Interviews

1. Determine the optimal frequency for Stay Interviews in your organization (e.g., annually, bi-annually).
2. Create a scheduling system that ensures all eligible employees are interviewed within the designated timeframe.
3. Aim for 20-30 minute sessions to balance depth of conversation with practical time constraints.
4. Consider the following when scheduling:
 - Workload peaks and troughs in different departments
 - Employee preferences for time of day
 - Adequate preparation time for both interviewer and interviewee
5. Send calendar invitations with clear information about the purpose, duration, and location of the interview.
6. Provide employees with any pre-interview materials or questions to reflect on in advance.

Create a Comfortable Environment During Interviews

1. Choose a private, neutral location for the interview to encourage openness.
2. Ensure the space is free from distractions and interruptions.
3. Consider offering the option of virtual interviews for virtual employees or those who might feel more comfortable in that format.
4. Begin the interview with casual conversation to help the employee relax.
5. Reiterate the purpose of the Stay Interview and the confidentiality measures in place.

Practice Active Listening During Interviews

1. Give the employee your full attention, maintaining appropriate eye contact and open body language.

2. Avoid interrupting or finishing the employee's sentences.
3. Use verbal and non-verbal cues to show you're engaged (e.g., nodding, saying "I see" or "go on").
4. Paraphrase or summarize key points to ensure understanding.
5. Start with broader questions and narrow down based on the employee's responses.
6. Ask follow-up questions for clarity, such as asking for examples.
7. Be prepared to go off-script if the employee brings up important issues not covered by your standard questions.
8. Be comfortable with silences, allowing the employee time to think and formulate responses.

Take Notes Without Disrupting Flow

1. Explain to the employee up front that you'll be taking notes to ensure accuracy and follow-up.
2. Use shorthand or keywords rather than trying to transcribe the entire conversation.
3. Focus on capturing key points, action items, and direct quotes that illustrate important insights.
4. If using a laptop or tablet for notes, position it so it doesn't create a barrier between you and the employee.
5. If possible, type up your notes soon after the interview so that you have better recall.

A - Analyze Feedback

Compile All Interview Data

1. Develop a system for organizing and storing Stay Interview data, ensuring confidentiality and security.
2. Create a standardized format for interview notes to facilitate easier analysis.
3. Ensure all interviewers submit their notes promptly after each interview.

4. Cross-reference interview data with relevant employee information (e.g., department, tenure, role) for more nuanced analysis.

Identify Common Themes and Unique Insights

1. Review all interview data to get a holistic view of employee feedback.
2. Use qualitative analysis techniques to identify recurring themes across interviews.
3. Look for outliers or unique perspectives that might provide valuable insights.
4. Consider using text analysis software for larger datasets to help identify patterns and themes.

Recognize Patterns Across Interviews

1. Analyze themes and insights by department, team, or other relevant groupings.
2. Identify any company-wide trends that emerge from the data.
3. Look for variations in responses based on factors such as:
 - Employee tenure
 - Demographics
 - Job level
 - Department or function
 - Location (for multi-site organizations)
4. Compare patterns with previous Stay Interview data (if available) to identify changes or consistent issues over time.
5. Compare patterns across available industry data (i.e NALP Foundation Stay Study)

Prioritize Findings by Urgency and Potential Impact

1. Identify "quick wins" that can be addressed rapidly and with minimal resources.
2. Highlight critical issues that may require immediate attention or significant resources to address.

3. Consider the long-term strategic implications of various findings.

Compare Results with Other Employee Data

1. Cross-reference Stay Interview insights with data from other sources to look for correlations, such as:
 - Employee engagement surveys
 - Performance reviews
 - Exit interviews
 - Turnover rates and reasons
2. Use this comparison to validate Stay Interview insights or identify areas requiring further investigation.
3. Consider how Stay Interview data complements or challenges existing assumptions about employee satisfaction and engagement.

I - Implement Changes

Develop Specific, Actionable Plans Based on Findings

1. For each key findings or themes, brainstorm potential actions or solutions.
2. Prioritize actions based on:
 - Potential impact on employee retention and engagement
 - Alignment with organizational goals
3. Identify resources required for each action (e.g., budget, personnel, technology).
4. Develop a timeline for implementation, including milestones and check-in points.

Assign Responsibilities and Timelines for Each Action Item

1. Identify key stakeholders for each action item (e.g., HR, department managers, senior leadership).
2. Assign a primary owner for each action item who will be responsible for driving implementation.

3. Determine supporting roles and responsibilities for each action.
4. Set clear deadlines for each stage of implementation.
5. Create a system for tracking progress and accountability.

Communicate Appropriate Results and Plans to Leadership

1. Prepare a comprehensive report summarizing key findings, proposed actions, and expected outcomes.
2. Develop a presentation for senior leadership that highlights:
 - Critical insights from Stay Interviews
 - Proposed action plans and their alignment with organizational goals
 - Resource requirements
 - Implementation timeline and milestones
3. Be prepared to answer questions and provide additional context or data as needed.
4. Seek formal approval and commitment from leadership for proposed actions.

Share a Summary of Insights and Planned Actions with Employees

1. Develop a communication plan for sharing results and actions with employees.
2. Create a summary document or presentation that outlines:
 - Key themes from the Stay Interviews
 - Actions the organization is taking in response to feedback
 - Timeline for implementation
 - How employees can stay informed or involved in the process
3. Use multiple channels to share this information (e.g., all-hands meetings, email updates, intranet posts).
4. Emphasize the value of employee participation and how their feedback is driving positive change.
5. Be transparent about which suggestions can be acted upon immediately and which may require longer-term planning.

Implement Quick Wins to Show Responsiveness

1. Identify actions that can be implemented quickly and with minimal resources.
2. Prioritize these "quick wins" for immediate action.
3. Communicate these immediate changes to employees, linking them directly to Stay Interview feedback.
4. Celebrate early successes to build momentum and demonstrate the value of the Stay Interview process.

Begin Execution of Longer-Term Strategies

1. Kick off longer-term initiatives according to the established timeline.
2. Set up regular check-ins with action item owners to monitor progress.
3. Develop a system for tracking and reporting on the status of various initiatives.
4. Be prepared to adjust strategies based on initial results and ongoing feedback.
5. Continuously communicate progress on longer-term initiatives to maintain employee engagement and trust in the process.

N - Navigate Future Strategies

Integrate Stay Interview Insights into HR Strategies

1. Use Stay Interview data to inform and refine various HR processes and strategies, such as:
 - Recruitment and onboarding
 - Learning and development programs
 - Performance management systems
 - Compensation and benefits plans
 - Advancement and promotion processes
 - Succession planning

2. Incorporate Stay Interview insights into your organization's employee value proposition.
3. Use findings to shape your employer branding and internal communication strategies.
4. Align Stay Interview data with other HR metrics to create a comprehensive view of employee experience and engagement.

Plan for Regular Stay Interview Cycles

1. Determine the optimal frequency for conducting Stay Interviews (e.g., annually, bi-annually).
2. Create a rolling schedule to ensure all employees participate in Stay Interviews at regular intervals.
3. Consider implementing "pulse" check-ins between full Stay Interview cycles to maintain momentum.
4. Develop a system for tracking participation and ensuring no employees are overlooked in the process.

Gather Feedback on the Stay Interview Process Itself

1. Develop a short survey or feedback mechanism for both interviewers and interviewees to evaluate the Stay Interview process.
2. Collect feedback on aspects such as:
 - Clarity of purpose and expectations
 - Comfort level during the interview
 - Relevance of questions asked
 - Perceived value of the process
3. Analyze this feedback to identify areas for improvement in your Stay Interview program.

Refine the Process for Future Rounds

1. Based on feedback and lessons learned, identify aspects of the Stay Interview process that can be improved.

2. Update interview questions to address emerging themes or organizational priorities.
3. Refine interviewer training based on common challenges or areas for improvement identified.
4. Continuously improve data analysis and reporting processes to provide more actionable insights.
5. Adjust the scope or focus of Stay Interviews as needed to align with evolving organizational goals.

Implementing a robust Stay Interview program using the R.E.T.A.I.N. framework can significantly enhance your organization's ability to engage and retain top talent. By systematically gathering and acting on employee feedback, you create a culture of open communication, and continuous improvement.

The success of your Stay Interview program depends on several key factors:

1. Leadership commitment and visible support
2. Thorough preparation and training for all involved
3. Consistent execution and follow-through on insights gained
4. Transparent communication throughout the process
5. Integration of Stay Interview insights into broader HR and organizational strategies

Remember that the R.E.T.A.I.N. framework is cyclical and iterative. Each round of Stay Interviews should build upon the last, refining your approach and deepening your understanding of your employees' needs, aspirations, and concerns.

By making Stay Interviews a cornerstone of your talent management strategy, you position your organization to not only retain valuable employees but also to create a workplace where people feel heard, valued, and motivated to contribute their best. This, in turn, drives organizational performance, innovation, and long-term success.

The Alliance is here to help you create successful Stay Interviews and other retention strategies. Partner with the Alliance by using your member resources: the [Resource Library](#), [Strategy Calls](#), [Policy Reviews](#), [Advisory Hours](#) and [Signature Seminars](#). To discuss specific strategic advice/resources, contact [Manar Morales](#).