

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT & RETENTION CONVERSATIONS

When people are empowered and excited about their work, their productivity, morale, and business performance increase significantly. Additionally, engaged employees are more likely to stay with an organization, even when opportunities arise for better pay elsewhere. A Gallup study indicated that 89% of employers believed talented staff quit to earn more money; however, only 12% of employees reported leaving a job for higher pay. By contrast, 75% of employees reported that they left a job due to their relationships with their supervisors.¹

As a leader, you can enhance employee engagement and encourage people to stay by addressing three areas that get to the heart of what really matters to them and drives job satisfaction: 1) meaningful work², 2) supportive work environment³ and 3) personal development and recognition⁴.

Plan periodic meetings (approximately every 2-3 months) with each of the full-time employees in your work area to discuss each of the three drivers of job satisfaction mentioned above. Also, take the time to discuss your employees' intentions on staying with the department. Even though these types of conversations may seem time-consuming, in the long-run they save managers the time, money, and frustration of recruiting, training, and onboarding new staff. Some studies have shown that retention conversations can reduce turnover by up to 72%.⁵

Here are some guiding questions to inspire your conversations:

Meaningful Work

1. What about your job makes you want to jump out of bed in the morning? What makes you want to hit the snooze button?
2. What are you passionate about? What's your dream job?
3. How do you contribute to our department's success? What questions can I answer about that?
4. What would make you feel more empowered in your job?
5. Tell me about something you have done over the last few months that exemplified our department's mission & values. Can I share this with my supervisor?
6. What would you like to know about our department, our competitors, or our University that would be helpful to you?
7. Have you encountered any challenges over the last few months that were frustrating to you? What can I do to help you overcome those issues in the future?
8. What have you felt good about accomplishing in your job and in your time here?

Supportive Work Environment

1. How do you work best?
2. What makes for a great day at work? Why?

¹ Hogan, Maren, "Top 5 Reasons Why People Quit Bosses, Not their Jobs," *PeopleFluent*, September 15, 2014, Accessed from <https://www.peoplefluent.com/peoplefluent-blog/blog/people-don%E2%80%99t-quit-jobs-they-quit-bosses>

² Keane, Jim, "Meaningful Work Should Be Every CEO's Top Priority," *Harvard Business Review*, November 5, 2015, Accessed from <https://hbr.org/2015/11/meaningful-work-should-be-every-ceos-top-priority>

³ Kurtessis, Jim, "Creating a Supportive Workplace," *Society for Human Resources Management*, March 9, 2017, Accessed from <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/behavioral-competencies/relationship-management/pages/creating-a-supportive-workplace.aspx>

⁴ Roberts, Hywel, "Development is key to staff retention, according to research," *HR Magazine*, July 1, 2014, Accessed from <http://www.hrmagazine.co.uk/article-details/development-is-key-to-staff-retention-according-to-research>

⁵ Miller, Jennifer, "12 questions to help you conduct effective stay interviews," *SmartBrief*, July 15, 2014, Accessed from <http://www.smartbrief.com/original/2015/07/12-questions-help-you-conduct-effective-stay-interviews>

3. What change would make the biggest difference in your work or work environment right now?
4. What ideas do you have about the way things are done around here? What could we implement to make our work more efficient and effective?
5. Over the last few months, have you experienced any moments where you wished you had the authority to fix a problem, but didn't? How can I help you make immediate decisions on things that could positively impact our customers?
6. Have I said or done anything over the last few months that seemed inconsistent?
7. Do you feel that work is fairly distributed between you and your peers? How can I help distribute work more fairly?
8. What ideas do you have for ____? What do you think about _____? What decisions would you like me to seek your input on in the future?

Personal Development and Recognition

1. How do you like to receive credit for a job well-done? Have there been any successes that I haven't given you credit for where credit is due?
2. What do you like to be recognized for? How would you rather not be recognized?
3. Who would you like to have informed about your good work?
4. What kind of job do you want after this one? How can I help you gain the knowledge, skills and experiences you need to get there?
5. Where have you personally struggled over the last few months? How can I help you gain the skills and competencies to overcome that struggle in the future?
6. What types of associations, publications, conferences, courses, or other growth opportunities would be beneficial to you?
7. What is something you feel you have really progressed on over the last few months? May I share your successes with my supervisor?
8. What types of tasks, duties or responsibilities have not been delegated to you, but you think you could accomplish?

Retention

1. What would make you feel more successful in your job or career?
2. How do you envision your future here?
3. How are you feeling about where you are and where you're going in your career?
4. How much of an impact is ____ having on your intention to stay with us?
5. How are you feeling about your current position/assignments?
6. Given your valuable experience and expertise, I'm concerned that you could be approached by another organization. What can we do to keep you?
7. When have you felt the most satisfied with your current position? When have you felt the least satisfied with your current position? How can I help eliminate the things that make you feel unsatisfied?
8. What would make a difference for you?
9. Who can I introduce you to outside of our work area that would be beneficial to your career?

For more information about engaging and retaining staff, consider enrolling in a course offered by UNM Employee and Organizational Development. Search [Learning Central](#) for keywords such as: retention, engagement, motivation, coaching, and performance.