

## Exit Interviews

By Stephen H. Jordan, Esquire

Most employers understand the importance and legal need to know what they may ask and how they may inquire about various issues from a job applicant in an interview for employment. Just as important, when an employee decides to move on, employers should conduct an exit interview with that employee.

Exit interviews give departing employees an opportunity to share insights on their work experience, which the employer can then use to effectively reduce turnover.

The first and primary concern of employees is that comments made during the exit interview remain confidential. Otherwise, they may fear retaliation and may not be as honest or forthright about their experience at the company. To ensure confidentiality, employers may want to consider using an outside firm. In this way, departing employees can be completely candid about their work experience.

Employers should conduct exit interviews of employees from each department of the company. If only certain departments are targeted, it sends the message to employees in other parts of the company that their views are not important. It is particularly important to interview departing upper-level employees. The company can determine where the employee is going to work and in what capacity, enabling the company to take steps to protect confidential information or trade secrets.

Exit interviews can also pinpoint potential legal red flags. While most complaints may not rise to the level of a legal issue, employers are given the opportunity to correct poor management practices and questionable policies. If an employee reveals in an exit interview that he or she was harassed or felt discriminated against, the employer has a duty to fully investigate the complaints and handle them immediately.

There is much to be learned from departing employees. Information they provide should be handled with sensitivity and without reprisal. Employers can then use the insights and views provided by the employee to correct problems, improve operations and ultimately minimize turnover.

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