



**EUROPEAN  
RENTAL  
ASSOCIATION**



# **EXIT INTERVIEW**



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1. Exit Interviews</b>	3
The benefits of exit interviews	3
„Alright, I’m convinced. But how do I conduct an exit interview properly?“	4
The structured exit interview	5
Case Study	6
The questionnaire	6
The worst-case scenario	7



Template structured  
Interview

## 2. EXIT INTERVIEWS

### *Exit interviews*

#### *Why they are essential to your company's future and how to conduct them successfully*

Each and every termination of employment, each and every employee's resignation is tough for any company to endure, prompting a plethora of questions, consequences, and labours. Nevertheless, these hardships are worth it if dealt with correctly, for each end of a relationship carries multiple insights in itself. Consequently, HR should be eager to make full use of this potential by conducting exit interviews or at least by asking the former employee to complete a questionnaire about the reasons why he or she has decided to leave.

As competition for talented employees becomes fiercer than ever, finding and retaining them becomes increasingly crucial to a company's success. One HR manager we spoke to eluded to this quite simply, stating that "the harder it becomes to find qualified applicants, the more important it is to retain the ones you currently have." So, when an employee does decide to leave, it really is best practice to find out why.

In this article, you will find some information and advice on the benefit of exit interviews, how best to conduct them, and how to deal with the worst-case scenario: sensitive details, such as unethical or illegal practices, being the reason behind resignation.

#### *Are they worth the time and resource costs? The benefits of exit interviews.*

Of course, exit interviews seem to be a little high risk: they are expensive, need a specialist to conduct them, and are a time-consuming activity. So, why conduct them at all? Because the benefits you can expect outweigh the costs.

Firstly, you are able to enquire about the true reasons why someone has decided to leave your company. By doing so, you can get a sense of any harmful trends in your personnel long before they appear and, being equipped with this new knowledge, you can tackle and solve them. This reason alone should suffice to close the case in favour of exit interviews.

Secondly, you get an insight into how your company and its labour culture is perceived by your employees. Does it correspond with the official company's directive? Do employees have the same opinion and objectives on your company as your leadership does? Most of the time, an employee leaving a firm has a different opinion on company rules, work ethics, their colleagues, leadership, and morale—so why not welcome this unwanted but nonetheless useful opportunity for an impromptu survey?

The most important maxim in this whole endeavour is to always treat the leaving employee politely and do not view him or her as the enemy simply because they quit. In return, your calm might be rewarded with valuable information on how to improve your HR.

In conclusion, here are the benefits you can expect from conducting exit interviews:

- You gain a better understanding of the reasons your employee has left the company.
- You can leverage the information for an in-depth analysis of problems concerning employee satisfaction.
- You gain a deeper insight into how to improve your HR strategy in order to retain employees.
- Unfair, unethical, or illegal practices—like discrimination, sexual harassment, or fraud — got of a leaving person might be uncovered.

## 2. EXIT INTERVIEWS

*„Alright, I’m convinced. But how do I conduct an exit interview properly?”*

There are several methods to choose from. Each has its own advantages and disadvantages— there is not a single best method. Let’s have a look at each of them closely so that you can decide which method best suits your purposes:



A dialogue between you and your former employee — ranging from formal to informal



A structured exit interview




A questionnaire

There is hardly a need to set down guidelines for how to have a conversation with your former employee, so let’s focus on the two more systematic approaches to the topic: a structured exit interview and a questionnaire.

## 2. EXIT INTERVIEWS

*The structured exit interview: what is it?  
What are its advantages? What are the downsides?*

A planned and deliberate interview has the obvious advantage of enabling you to focus directly on your former employee's needs, his or her wishes upon leaving the company, complaints, worries, and experiences. Furthermore, you can always interject during the interview by asking follow-up questions or by correcting any blurred details. The main topics covered in the exit interview according to the company we interviewed are **how the employee feels about the extent of collaboration, the team relationship, the management team, and the working conditions**. The HR professional conducting the interview attempts to **cover**  whether the company's values were fully upheld throughout the employee's time at the company.

Something else to consider here is the **pre-interview process**. The HR manager we spoke to explained that the **termination of the employee contract is confirmed before any exit interview is scheduled. At this point, the former employee is sent the interview questions in advance in order** that they can prepare appropriately.

Note that such **interviews should be conducted by skilled employees of yours**; meaning that you need to hire an exit interview specialist. Otherwise, you will run the risk of your exit interviews not being very effective. Additionally, be aware that your former employee's supervisor should not conduct such an interview. Your former employee might not be as frank with their ex-boss than with a neutral person, especially if their former supervisor's behaviour might be the reason for leaving. If you wish to benefit from an exit interview, create a safe space for your employee in which they feel able to speak bluntly and openly. The company's representative that we interviewed explained that **all exit interviews they carry out are conducted by an HR professional**.

How about the **physical environment in which the interview takes place**? Firstly, find a quiet place—where no one else can hear or see what you are talking and with whom. This again serves to corroborate the former employee's impression of being in a safe space in which confidentiality is held in high esteem. Assure your ex-employee of your discretion, for example, by promising to keep the interview protocol separate from his or her employee file. The HR professional we interviewed explained that all exit interviews within the company are in fact opened by a disclosure of discretion. Secondly, try to complete the interview within a timeframe of 30 to 90 minutes.

You might also consider conducting the interview over the telephone. But keep in mind that this form of communication deprives you of so many nuances, such as your ex-employee's facial expressions and the proximity between two human beings sitting in front of each other, which often leads to more honesty and frankness.

After the interview, file the protocol so that later you can compare it to similar cases. Collecting a broad spread of data is paramount if you are striving for a good corporate culture.

The only downside of exit interviews—and you might have guessed it already—is that they do consume a considerable amount of resources: your exit interview specialist costs money, the interview itself requires some dedicated time, as does the post-processing, and so on. The company we interviewed determines the exit process for each employee on a case-by-case basis. The key factor is the time period for which they were employed, which is considered alongside their skill-set and how much detriment their resignation causes to the company overall.





## 2. EXIT INTERVIEWS

### Case Study

The company we interviewed has an average of 33 leavers each month, which includes apprentices and retirees. If they decide to go ahead with an exit interview, the HR professional they hire works with a partially structured and partially unstructured interview in order to gather as much information as possible. The reasons currently being identified as the main factors in employees choosing to leave are career and developmental issues, but it would also seem that there are differences between the generations arising. Amongst the younger generation, the company is noticing challenges due to overall shorter employments and project-based contracts. Currently, there are no initiatives in place with the goal of attracting ex-employees back to the company.



#### *The questionnaire: what should it look like in order to serve your purposes?*

A cheaper alternative to a structured exit interview would be a questionnaire designed to be completed by the leaving employee. The questionnaire will be handed to them, and once completed, it will be evaluated by an HR specialist of yours. The advantage lies in its convenience: once conceptualised, the questionnaire can be

infinitely reused without an intervening variable like the subjectivity of two different interviewers. Thereby, it guarantees comparability. Its negative lies in the very fact that the whole exit process will be documented solely on paper: no personal contact, difficulties in following up on a topic, and no personal connection.

Your questionnaire should include open questions and polar questions (yes/no questions).

What are the criteria that constitute a good exit questionnaire? We propose these attributes as the highest priority:

- impartiality
- reliability
- validity
- scaling
- normalisation
- test efficiency
- utility
- reasonableness
- unforgeability
- fairness

To elucidate the matter at hand, we will concentrate on just two of them: impartiality & reasonableness.

Impartiality is key for maintaining the questionnaire's independence and integrity despite being utilised by individual humans with different agendas. The questionnaire's results ought not to be corrupted either by the person conducting it or by the one evaluating it. These negative influences should be prevented by entrenching a standardised test format and by choosing a scaling model which enables you to quantify results. Also, make sure that you set up a standardised categorisation of your test results in order to make them commensurable and therefore interpretable.

What is meant by reasonableness and why does it matter? You cannot interrogate an ex-employee excessively nor can you ask questions too delicate or personal. When conceptualising your exit questionnaire, you should always ask yourself: does this questionnaire stress my former employee physically or mentally? Furthermore, you should ensure that the questionnaire can be completed within a reasonable amount of time, meaning that it should be completed by the end of day, not at home. Ideally, your former employee can finish it within half an hour.

## 2. EXIT INTERVIEWS



### *The worst-case scenario*

*What to do if misconduct, sexual harassment, or any other illegal or unethical behaviour is reported?*

Seek and you shall find—sometimes even inconvenient stuff. Although it might be stressful to deal with, be thankful for the opportunity to shed some light on obscure affairs because it might prevent your company from being caught in a scandal. So, how best to deal with such sensitive issues?

First of all: treat the matter seriously. If allegations are made, they must be followed to wherever they lead. In the end, the whole affair might turn out to be innocuous, but maybe not. But you owe your former employee the respect of not ignoring his or her observations, feelings, or experiences. That's why you should ask about every detail and listen carefully.

If the incident was not reported when it occurred, ask your ex-employee why he or she decided against it. Avoid blaming them. Their decision might indicate something bigger at play—toxic power structures within their department, for example. Carry out a comprehensive investigation on the matter. If there is justified evidence for misconduct, sanction the penalty for the wrong-doer appropriately.



 **DANIELWALZER**

**Daniel Walzer**

Wachtelweg 6  
88316 Isny

Tel +49 7562 6090420  
Mobil +49 170 2036872  
Mail [daniel@danielwalzer.de](mailto:daniel@danielwalzer.de)

Internet [danielwalzer.de](http://danielwalzer.de)  
facebook [facebook.com/drwalzer/](https://facebook.com/drwalzer/)  
news [blog.danielwalzer.de](http://blog.danielwalzer.de)



European Rental Association

Avenue de Tervueren, 188A, 4th Floor, Postbox 4, 1150 Brussels  
Tel + 32 2 761 16 04  
eMail [era@erarental.org](mailto:era@erarental.org)  
[www.erarental.org](http://www.erarental.org)





**EUROPEAN  
RENTAL  
ASSOCIATION**



# **TEMPLATE STRUCTURED INTERVIEW**





# TEMPLATE STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

## *Disclaimer and Introduction*

Please ensure a safe and comfortable environment with the interviewee. If you do the interview via phone, please make sure that the person can speak freely.

We are very aware that this type of conversation can give rise to aggravating emotions or memories. By conducting this exit interview, we hope to assure you that we appreciate any honest feedback which may help us to develop continuously. We will not exclude the possibility that you might return to the rental company XY. Above all, we hereby assure you that all information provided during our interview will be kept confidential and won't be related under any circumstances to your personnel file of rental company XY.

Most of the following questions will be answered using a scale format to make it quick and easy for the interviewee to respond. The main topics covered in the exit interview, according to our research external and internal to the equipment rental industry, are: **how the employee feels about the extent of collaboration**, the relationship with the team, the management team, and the working conditions.

# TEMPLATE STRUCTURED INTERVIEW



## *Extent of collaboration*

- What made you look for another opportunity in the first place?
- How easy was it for you to leave XY Rental? (scale: 1 very easy, 10 very hard)
- To what extent does the reputation and image of XY Company reflect reality? (scale: 1 not at all, 10 completely)



## *Team relationship*

- What was the best part of your job here?
- How was the collaboration with your direct colleagues?
- What would be your suggestion to increase the level of motivation in the team?
- How would you describe the relationship between team members? (scale: 1 very bad, 10 very good)



## *Management team*

- How was your relationship with your manager?
- Did you feel your work was fairly acknowledged by the management?
- What three things could your manager improve?
- How fairly do you feel you were treated? (scale: 1 very unfairly, 10 very fairly)



## *Working conditions*

- Job and conditions
- At the start of your employment, to what extent do you feel the information you were given reflected the reality of the position? (scale: 1 nothing was true, 10 The position was what I had been promised)
- To what extent do you feel that you were kept up to date on new developments and company policies? (scale: 1 not at all, 10 everything was transparent)
- Were you given the necessary tools to succeed at your job? (scale: 1 not at all, 10 everything was available)
- Please can you describe your best and worst day working in your role? (or a & b)
- What did you like the most about your job?
- What would you have changed about your job?
- Discrimination
- Did you have to face any unacceptable situation or behaviour like discrimination, sexual harassment, or fraud? (Y/N. If yes, please provide further details.)
- Are there any other unresolved issues or additional comments?



## *Future Perspective*

- What does your new company/position offer that made you decide to leave company XY?
- If you had a friend looking for a job, would you recommend us? (scale: 1 never, 10 yes, as a first option)
- Under what circumstances, if any, would you think of returning to our company?
- Can we contact you if we have any opportunities in the future?
- Is there anything else you would like to add?

# TEMPLATE STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

## *Conclusion*

Thank you very much for your time in taking part in this exit interview. We wish you all the best in your new position. Please feel free to contact XY at any time for relevant employment questions and information.

## *Annotation*

If you need to shorten the interview, ensure to keep the scale-based questions.

To keep the interview as short as possible and numerically valuable, we suggest adding questions which can be answered using a numerical scale. We recommend a scale rating of 1 to 10 to provide enough space for variance in the leavers' impressions. A reduction to a scale of 1 to 6 could still be useful. Ideally, responses should be even numbers to eliminate a tendency to retract to the middle. The higher number of points should reflect satisfaction.

It is also always recommended to include a free-form option in addition to a scaled answer.

