

Stay conversations: learning why people stay before they leave

A stay conversation asks a current team member what keeps them, what would make them leave, and what they would change. It is a conversation, not an evaluation, and its value depends on what the supervisor does afterward.

Why it matters

Exit patterns arrive too late to act on. Stay conversations surface barriers while there is still time, and they signal that a person's experience matters.

Content

Before. Tell the person what the conversation is and is not. It is not a performance review and nothing said will be written into a record. Offer to hold it in whatever setting works for them.

During. Ask open questions. What do you look forward to here? What would make you consider leaving? What have you wanted to say that you have not had a chance to? What would you change about how work is assigned or recognized? Listen more than you speak.

After. Choose one thing you can change and tell the person what it is. If a pattern appears across several conversations, take the pattern, not the names, to your leadership or Equity Director.

Boundaries. If the conversation raises a complaint about a named person, harassment, or discrimination, stop and connect the person to the confidential channel. Do not investigate and do not record it here.

Next steps

- **Team climate action plan template** — program page </library/ja-climate-action-plan>
- **When a question needs a human, and which human** — program page </library/pn-when-to-escalate>

Practice paths this supports

- Workplace culture and team climate