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IT'S UP TO US

Australia's
new Minister for
Aged Care on
a mission
for change

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ACCPA
Aged & Community Care Providers Association

Use staff attrition to your advantage

Why did an employee resign? Do you know the real reason?

The aged care sector is in crisis. The Committee for Economic Development of Australia forecasts 'worst-case scenario' workforce shortages, reinforcing the fundamental need for aged care service providers to recruit and retain workers.

To use staff attrition to your advantage, any time a worker decides to leave, the employer has an opportunity to solicit feedback from that person and potentially make improvements to improve its appeal for current and future workers.

Exit interviews

An exit interview is a one-on-one discussion with a staff member who is exiting the organisation, normally facilitated by the human resources department or someone who is not in the direct reporting line. Interview questions are designed to encourage the exiting employee's feedback on their experience working in your organisation and their reasons for leaving. It is also their opportunity to raise any organisational issues which contributed to them making the move.

Participation in exit interviews should be voluntary and encouraged by the employer as a component of the organisation's quality and improvement processes. Information collected during the exit interview is confidential but should be used constructively by the employer. For example, if the feedback you receive from an exit interview is broad but concerning, relating to things like poor management or a toxic culture, these red flags should prompt an employer to undertake a cultural review process.

What is a cultural review?

A cultural review is a proactive process that helps shed light on the values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours shared by the people in your workplace, and provides a safe outlet for them to reveal any tensions or concerns.

For independence purposes, an external human resources advisor can facilitate the cultural review to make an objective assessment of the team culture, identifying and mitigating any red flags or common themes. With this information, employers can consider their options for improvement.

There are several ways to conduct a cultural review. An online survey is a practical way to canvas a large group of employees, while a more personalised option is a stay interview.

Stay interviews

Stay interviews are confidential one-on-one discussions designed to understand what motivates your employees to come to work each day, how they are supported in performing their roles, and how you can continue to retain them as valued members of the team.

A stay interview also gives each team member the opportunity to speak confidentially about any concerns they may have, or any areas where they would like to see change and improvement in the workplace.

Employers should consider engaging an external human resources advisor to facilitate stay interviews due to their independence.

Workplace investigations

If the feedback you receive from an exit interview or a stay interview refers to a specific incident or serious issue, such as harassment or bullying, it's important that the employer takes this feedback seriously and responds promptly by initiating a workplace investigation. The investigation can be conducted internally but due to resources and skills availability within the organisation, an independent workplace investigator may be more suitable.

Taking urgent action to investigate serious incidents or grievances in a fair and confidential manner is not only the employer's legal obligation, but is also a signal to your workforce that feedback will be listened to, complaints will be taken seriously, and inappropriate behaviour will not be tolerated.

By using best-practice human resources processes and asking the right questions, aged care providers have the opportunity to shift the narrative from staff attrition to strengthening teams. Aged care providers who need support in these areas can contact an experienced human resource and workplace relations advisor for expert advice and support.

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