

## **Walking Out with Tact Exit Interviews**

*Excerpts from an article by Mary Jacobs – Dallas Morning News*

It is increasingly common for companies to ask employees to participate in exit interviews before they leave a job. Should you agree to this “potentially unpleasant” task?

Exit interviews are voluntary. Legally companies can’t withhold a paycheck or otherwise compel departing employees to do them, but there are good reasons to cooperate. According to a survey which tallied responses from 150 senior executives at the nation’s 1,000 largest companies, your remarks can make a difference. More than three-quarters of executives surveyed said they “always” or “somewhat frequently” act on information gathered during exit interviews. This might range from improving food in the cafeteria to literally having management people removed from their positions. Leaving on good terms might also open doors for your next job, particularly if your supervisor is willing to give a positive reference.

At a minimum, find out exactly how any comments you make will be used and whether your remarks will be kept confidential—before you agree to the interview. Also, consider carefully before signing any written statements summarizing the comments you make in an interview.

### **Remember, you are in control.**

For the best results, persons participating in exit interviews should:

- ♦ Keep comments accurate and professional.
- ♦ Avoid personal attacks on individuals.
- ♦ Offer feedback that can lead to improvements in policies and procedures, department structure and corporate culture.
- ♦ Offer positive feedback as well as constructive criticism, which will give your comments more credibility.

### **What are the frequently asked questions of exit interviews?**

According to a recent survey, the most common questions are these:

1. Why have you decided to leave the company?
2. How would you describe the work environment, and how can we improve upon it?
3. Does management respond to employee concerns in a timely and thoughtful manner?
4. Do you think management adequately recognizes employee contributions?
5. What was the most satisfying thing about your job? The least?
6. Did you receive enough training and support to do your job effectively?
7. Under what circumstances, if any, would you consider returning to the company?

Is it risky to participate in an exit interview? If you handle the interview well, probably not.