

Season 3 | Episode 11

Stop Turnover in Its Tracks with Stay Interviews and Retention Insights



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Rob Parsons:

Welcome to Pulse, a Paychex's HR podcast, where HR professionals find insights on today's top issues and inspiration to build and lead effective teams in a healthier workplace. I'm your host, Rob Parsons.

Rob Parsons:

Hi, folks. Rob Parsons here. Welcome to Pulse. Our guest today is one of our own Paychex HR professionals, Brenton Dalgliesh. For nearly a decade, Brenton has been involved in all aspects of human resources, from recruiting and hiring to employee relations, and most recently consulting here at Paychex with businesses from all over the country, but predominantly in Michigan, where I graduated many years ago, by the way. Today, we're going to be talking about employee retention, specifically the importance of stay interviews and the use of analytics to identify employees who may be at risk. Brenton, welcome to the show.

Brenton Dalgliesh:

Thanks, Rob. Happy to be here.

Rob Parsons:

So it's funny, we've been talking. Like many of us you've found the past couple of years, working from home, going to school from home, raising two kids under five from home, to be an awful lot of time from home. How are you holding up?

Brenton Dalgliesh:

I'm well. You know, honestly, Rob, I know it's not been easy for everyone, but I definitely feel blessed to have been able to work at home. Paychex has taken great care of me. But like, getting to watch my kids walk, learn to talk, even change my fair share of poopy diapers has really been a lot of fun.

Rob Parsons:

Yeah. It's a pleasant unintended consequence, for sure.

Brenton Dalgliesh:

Yeah.

Rob Parsons:

Well, I'm so glad you're able to join us today. I love that you brought this topic to the show. Retention's a great topic. As we all know, it's better to keep good employees than constantly trying to find new ones, right?

Brenton Dalgliesh:

It's usually cheaper. Yeah.

Rob Parsons:

Cheaper, it's more productive, keeps things moving more smoothly, but it's not always easy. I know we recently published some great research on why employees leave, "Six Things Businesses Get Wrong When It Comes to Attracting and Retaining Talent." Compensation's always an issue, we know that. But I was surprised at some of the non-budgetary factors, things like educating employees on the benefits you're already offering, or just having a conversation about a career path so they know they got a future at the company. These are just straightforward communication issues, aren't they?

Brenton Dalgliesh:

They absolutely are. You know, it's probably human nature, right? I remember going back to COM 101. You're like, "The greatest myth of communication is that it occurred." Right? And so, this happens with business owners, with their employees. You just, it's super easy to forget that you need to actually talk to your employees, like actually engage with them, and find out what they want.

Rob Parsons:

That's why I love the stay interview process. It's just a great place to start and maintain those lines of communication. Can you tell us how you like to approach the stay interview?

Brenton Dalgliesh:

Yeah. Well, I think before I can jump into that, let me back up a little bit and say there's a couple ways that you can go about interviewing your employees, right? Like this survey, we all know about the anonymous survey. My preferred way is that kind of like what we're doing right now, Rob, where we're just sitting down talking one on one. The problem I have with anonymous surveys is that they tend to be anonymous and you don't know who your star performers are, like the people that your business would absolutely suffer if they were no longer there, and what they need or what they want gets lumped in with everybody else. It's really hard to sift through that data and provide the actual information I need.

Brenton Dalgliesh:

So my preferred way to do the stay interview is, like I said, what we're doing right now. I want to sit down with my employees and just ask them quite honestly, "How are you doing?" Speaking from tons of experience here, my supervisor has sat down with me a few times and said, "Brenton, how are you feeling? Do you feel like you're growing? Do you feel like you're being challenged and stretched? And if not, or if you are, what can we do to increase that, and make you feel like you're having a lot more value out of what you're getting right now?"

Brenton Dalgliesh:

And so, speaking from personal experience, those conversations are a lot of fun. Right? If we're not even opening the door to have that conversation with our employees, it probably sends an unintended message that that kind of conversation isn't welcomed here. And if that conversation's not welcome here, how do I know that you want me here, right? In the absence of information, it creates a lot of misinformation that's unintended and not desired.

Rob Parsons:

For sure, people jump to conclusions. In the absence of certainty, people jump to conclusions, and too many times, probably assume the worst. It's a great point you brought up too, this idea of this one-on-one. One size doesn't fit all.

Brenton Dalgliesh:

Right.

Rob Parsons:

Not every employee wants the same thing. Not everybody's looking for the same thing out of the job. And if you don't, if you just do that anonymous survey, you're not going to get that individual flavor, are you?

Brenton Dalgliesh:

You're not. But you can't just sit down with every employee as well, right? It sounds like I'm talking out two sides of my mouth right now, but you can't just sit down and just say, "Hey, Rob, what do you want out of the job?" if you haven't done the hard work of building that relationship, you know? If you haven't asked, "How are the kids doing? How was this past weekend?" Really simple conversations. I'm not suggesting that we go down a path of inappropriate conversation. It can be really easy to have a conversation with someone and just say, "How are you doing?" And I know that we learned all of that during COVID, how important it is to just check in on our folks, on our family, on our friends, you know, our colleagues. But that piece of COVID-19 or this past couple years should absolutely not go away. We need to continue to reach out to our friends and our family.

Rob Parsons:

And do it in an authentic way.

Brenton Dalgliesh:

Yeah.

Rob Parsons:

Not just because we're supposed to or it's what our manager told us we have to do.

Brenton Dalgliesh:

100%, yeah. And people can always tell what authenticity looks like.

Rob Parsons:

Yeah, for sure. Another reason I like that, how you brought this retention conversation to us is this idea of the technology side of things. How a good HCM system with good analytics can help you anticipate turnover challenges and improve retention outcomes. Tell me a little bit about that because it seems pretty nebulous to a writer, someone who lives on the soft side, like myself.

Brenton Dalgliesh:

Yeah. It's definitely the product of a lot of hard work by our developers to create something that will hopefully be very simple to use. But the thing about it that I've been using when I've been talking to my clients to explain it is, you know, how do you know if it's raining outside? Stick your hand out the window and feel. How do you know if it's going to be raining outside? You turn on the news or the weather channel, or you go to your weather app and you look see what's the probability that it's going to rain today. This, this tool is very similar to the weather app, right? Is there a high likelihood that it's going to rain today? Is there a high likelihood that this employee might leave? And if so, why? And can we do anything about it? And by all means, we can absolutely do something about it.

Rob Parsons:

So this is a tool in Paychex Flex right in the platform available to all the Paychex clients?

Brenton Dalgliesh:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Rob Parsons:

What kind of data does it look like, to help look at, to help give that kind of... prediction I'm sure is too strong a word, because we know the weatherman's half the time, but at least giving you a sense of what might be coming.

Brenton Dalgliesh:

I hope this is slightly better than the weatherman. But yeah. No, you're 100% right. It's looking at a lot of data factors across multiple entry points, looking at you know, people all across the country based on statistical analysis, regression, linear regression. There's a lot of really smart people that I can only just pretend to understand what they're saying when they talk about this, right? You know, the data is valid, but it's, you know, sometimes it doesn't rain when it's projected to rain, right? We really just don't want our clients stuck outside in a rainstorm without a jacket or an umbrella, unprepared.

Brenton Dalgliesh:

What you can do with this, you can have a conversation with an employee. It's kind of basically we've been talking about this whole podcast is sit down with the employee, ask them what they want. You don't have to say, "Hey, I saw on my Flex tool here that you might be thinking of leaving," because you know, that's not a helpful way to start that conversation. But just making sure that you feel valued and respected, appreciated here is ultimately going to ... Even if that person had no desire to leave, once again, just knowing that you feel that way about them makes them want to stay even more.

Rob Parsons:

It's a great way even just to spur you to be a little self-reflective. I think the days are gone where we can just hang a "Help Wanted" sign out the window and expect people to flock in droves to our place. We've got to assume that employees are expecting a level of trust, a level of care, a level of the quality with the employer, and the fact that you're reaching out, like you said, does make a difference.

Brenton Dalgliesh:

100%. Just knowing someone cares is, at the end of the day, makes the biggest difference. I know, Yeah. Speaking from personal experience, it's huge. I have an amazing manager that has always been very supportive of me. And so, thank you, Paul, for always being awesome, just a quick shout out there. It means so much to so many people to be, just to ask.

Rob Parsons:

That's great. And it's also, I got to think one of the things that makes Paul a great manager ... And I'll give a shout out to Karen. I have a great manager as well. It's not just "I care," but it's "What can I do?" It's active. It's not a passive-

Brenton Dalgliesh:

You're right.

Rob Parsons:

"Oh, how are ...?" It is a very, "Can I clear any roadblocks? What do you want to get done? Do you need? ... Are you feeling stagnated? Do you need some job skilling? Are you looking for a career?" I mean, it's an understanding, a conversation that has some serious layers to it as well. Correct?

Brenton Dalgliesh:

Absolutely. Yeah. Just like if you were to do a survey, right, but you never did anything with what the data was saying, if you never follow through on what you say. Yeah, actions matter, and so 100% you need to be the kind of person that has a high commitment to follow through, hold yourself very accountable. Yeah.

Rob Parsons:

Accountable is one of my favorite words right now. Any last thoughts to share with our audience, Brenton?

Brenton Dalgliesh:

I would say this. I don't think you mentioned it, but this tool is free for all of our clients, I guess included, but it's free. So I guess I'd leave it there. Let's go check out the weather a little bit.

Rob Parsons:

Yeah, I love it. Let's check the weather. And if you do have an HR professional on your side, they can be your meteorologist and help you interpret those results. That's for sure.

Brenton Dalgliesh:

Yes, we absolutely can.

Rob Parsons:

Well, Brenton, thank you so much for joining the podcast today. I really appreciate you being on.

Brenton Dalgliesh:

Thanks, Rob. Happy to be here.

Rob Parsons:

Thank you to our listeners for joining. You can find articles on stay interviews, on workforce analytics and on that ebook, "Six Things Businesses Get Wrong About Their Employees," all on Paychex WORX. That's paychex.com/W-O-R-X. It's a great resource. If you haven't been there yet, check out the site. There's just all kinds of great content there for you. And, as always, we'd love to hear from you about what you want from this podcast. So please visit payx.me/pulsetopics to submit guest ideas and topic ideas. That's P-A-Y-X-dot-ME/pulse topics. Thank you all, and please stay happy and healthy.

Announcer:

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