TaxStache
BUSINESS EDITION

Keep Your People.
Know What They Cost.

Two tools from this week's issue: the questions that surface a retention problem before it costs you someone, and the worksheet that shows you what a new hire actually costs, beyond the number on the offer letter.

Built to be printed, filled in, and reused.

Stay Interview Question Bank

Run these before someone's already looking, not after. Pick 3–4 questions per conversation — this isn't a form to read off, it's a starting point.

WHO AND WHEN

Start with long-tenured employees, high performers, and anyone you'd struggle to replace. Run these once or twice a year, outside of performance review season — mixing the two makes people perform instead of answer honestly.

Category	Question	What it reveals
Engagement	What part of your work makes time fly, and what part drags?	What to protect and what to fix
Growth	If you could change one thing about your role right now, what would it be?	Friction, before it becomes a resignation
Manager fit	What's something I could do differently that would make your job easier?	Direct, actionable feedback on you
Recognition	Do you feel like your contributions are noticed here — and by the right people?	Visibility gaps you can't see from the outside
Flexibility	Is there anything about how or when you work that isn't working for you?	Easy fixes that are easy to miss
Retention risk	What would make you start looking elsewhere?	The most direct signal you'll get — ask it plainly

TURN WHAT YOU HEAR INTO ACTION

If they mention...	Try...
No path to growth	A simple title ladder, shared and revisited — doesn't require a promotion every year, just visible next steps
Rigid hours or workload	Flexibility or a redistributed project, not a raise — it fixes the actual complaint
Pay feels arbitrary	A plain explanation of how comp decisions get made — ambiguity causes more resentment than the number
“I might leave,” directly	A real conversation now, and consider a structural retention tool (deferred comp, retirement match, equity) — see this week's issue

NOTES FROM THIS CONVERSATION

True Cost of an Employee Worksheet

Salary is the number on the offer letter. Run it through this before you post the job to find the number that actually leaves your bank account.

STEP 1 — THE WAGE

Annual salary (or hourly rate × hours × 52)	$ ____________

STEP 2 — MANDATORY PAYROLL TAXES

Employer FICA (7.65% of wages)	$ ____________
FUTA (effective ~0.6% on first $7,000, most states)	$ ____________
SUTA (your state's rate × taxable wages)	$ ____________
Workers' compensation (quote for this job class)	$ ____________

STEP 3 — BENEFITS YOU ACTUALLY OFFER

Health insurance (employer share)	$ ____________
Retirement match or contribution	$ ____________
Paid time off (wage × % of year as PTO)	$ ____________
Other (equipment, software seats, etc.)	$ ____________

STEP 4 — YOUR REAL NUMBER

Wage (Step 1) + taxes (Step 2) + benefits (Step 3)	$ ____________
÷ Annual salary (Step 1)	÷ ____________
= Your loaded cost multiplier (rule of thumb: 1.25–1.4x)	____________

WHY THIS MATTERS BEFORE YOU POST THE JOB

A commonly used rule of thumb (MIT's Joseph Hadzima) puts the fully loaded cost of a W-2 employee at 1.25–1.4x their base salary. BLS data puts benefits alone at roughly 30% of total compensation on average. Multiply the salary you're considering by 1.25 before you commit to a number — then decide if the role still pencils out. Most of this is deductible, but the cash still has to be there.