

Employee Satisfaction



EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION

In a competitive world with the need for businesses to be more streamlined and productive a company can often find itself with a workforce working under pressure resulting in low moral and high staff turnover. The benefits of a company having a highly motivated workforce can be considerable and the two goals of having a workforce that is both motivated and productive should not be regarded as being mutually exclusive to one another.

Left unattended employers run the risk of alienating their employees, events can cause employee frustrations to boil over resulting in employers finding themselves on the back foot, faced with a problem that cannot be ignored.

NEED

There are many reasons why employees may be dissatisfied with their job and more often than not staff frustration is channeled into a demand for higher salaries and less hours. Employers, who tackle these issues head on, making it all about salary and hours, will often find themselves dealing with the symptoms and not the root cause.

REASONS FOR SURVEYING STAFF

Workforce turnover is expensive. New hires must be trained, which hampers an organization's overall productivity. Meanwhile, the customer relationships that are left unattended by departing employees must be managed by a smaller group of people. This is why companies go to great lengths to retain their workers. Studies have shown that using surveys to solicit ideas from your staff encourages them. They feel valued, engaged, and satisfied with their respective jobs. As a result, they are less likely to leave.

By surveying your staff and encouraging their feedback, your company can take advantage of their unique insight. Managers have discovered that those who report to them can offer an invaluable perspective regarding day-to-day processes and customer relationships. It is not uncommon for an employee to submit an idea that evolves into a successful new product.

Another reason to periodically survey your staff is that it improves the communication process throughout an organization. A top-down structure in which communication flows only one way discourages workers from sharing their ideas. That prevents managers from leveraging suggestions which can only come from people on the front lines of the business.

Online surveys solve this problem. You can use them to tap into a reservoir of fresh ideas from employees who are intimately familiar with the daily operations.

STEPS IN DESIGNING AN EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION SURVEY

STEP 1 - IDENTIFYING THE NEED

The reasons an organization would need a survey are as wide and they are long. Listed here are a few of the common reason why employee satisfaction surveys are conducted.

Event Driven

- If your organization is about to embark, or is going through, a change management program employee surveys can assist in managing the change, measuring the effectiveness of the change, help to deliver a 'message' and gather valuable feedback throughout the change cycle.
- For organizations that are experiencing rapid growth employee surveys can monitor internal communications and management structures to ensure that employees are aware of their reporting and management responsibilities.
- Where an organization is suffering from poor moral brought on by either internal or external influences an employee survey can be used to identify the specific concerns of employees so those concerns can be properly addressed.
- Where there is an increase in turnover of staff employee surveys can help an organization identify the underlying cause of employee unrest and through their findings help find solutions.

Periodically

- As part of a periodic assessment, surveys will help an organization review their personnel and monitor on an individual level job satisfaction, training and career development.
- Employee surveys also offer senior management the opportunity to look at the soft underbelly of their organization to confirm that their 'top down' view of the organization matches the reality and 'bottom up' perspective.
- With the help of employee surveys an organization can establish good employer/employee communication that will in turn bring both direct and indirect benefits.

STEP 2 - MANAGEMENT BUY-IN

Management buy-in is always desirable for any initiative and many will argue that it is essential to ensure a successful employee survey, however, in some instances the

findings of an employee survey can lead to kick-starting a management that has grown complacent and detached from their employees.

Some organization may be fortunate in that the senior management recognize and drive the need for employee surveys, while in others the management may need to first be convinced of the direct and indirect benefits an employee survey will bring.

The level of management commitment to an employee survey will have some bearing on the nature of the survey and to some extent will help determine what questions are to be asked and the manner they are asked.

A management that is supportive of the initiative may require feedback on specific areas of the business or they may give the go ahead because they feel confident that the results will only confirm that the level of employee satisfaction throughout the organization is high.

In nearly all cases it is good practice to at least try and get management to buy-in to the employee survey from the very start as they have a lot to gain and are in a position to effect any change that is later identified as being required.

STEP 3 - DESIGNING THE SURVEY

Designing a good survey will take some time and effort but by following the basics of survey design and concentrating on the 'need to know' questions and removing the 'nice to know' a survey will rapidly take shape.

Determining the exact questions that should be asked will be entirely dependent on the individual organization, its structure and the previously identified primary need and objectives of the employee survey.

When considering what questions to ask consideration should be given to how the results are to be analyzed. For example there may be a desire to ask for individual comments but these types of answer formats can be very time consuming and cumbersome to analyze and should therefore be avoided or used sparingly.

With online surveys it is generally better to do a few smaller surveys than one very long survey as the longer the survey the higher the drop out rate will be.

STEP 4 - TESTING

Say What You Mean And Mean What You Say

When checking the survey you need to consider the survey from the viewpoint of the respondent, you may know what you mean by each question but will the questions be clear to the employee?

Allow The Employee To Answer Truthfully

For closed questions where the employee will be required to choose from a number of available responses have you allowed the employee to answer accurately? Make use of

responses like 'Don't know', 'No comment' or 'Not Applicable' where you have made the question mandatory but the employee may not be able to answer.

Consider allowing the employee to include an 'Other' answer but also appreciate that 'Other' answers will add to the complexity when analyzing the survey results.

Don't Require a Response To Questions That May Not Have One

Check that for any questions that you have made mandatory you do require an answer, for example open questions such as asking for additional comments should not be mandatory unless you definitely require the respondent to write a comment.

Check You Will Be Able To Analyze The Data

Check through the survey again but this time looking at how the results of the survey will be analyzed. Consider how you are likely to want to analyze the survey data, have you asked the right questions to be able to perform detailed analysis? For example if you wanted to view the detailed response data from the perspective of the different genders, or maybe departments, check you have asked the employee to indicate their own gender and/or department.

Don't Ask Anymore Questions Than You Need To

Consider all the questions in the survey and look for questions that are not 'need to know'.

STEP 5 - PROMOTING AND DEPLOYING THE SURVEY

Where all or the majority of employees have access to the internet or company intranet deploying the online survey is as easy that ABC, either via email or by establishing a link to the survey from your own website or Intranet.

Where there are some or many employees that do not have direct access to the internet there are a number of alternatives that can be used from issuing the survey in printed form, providing a shared terminal or giving them an incentive to complete the survey at home.

Anonymous Responses?

There is a choice to allow all surveys to be completed anonymously. Allowing a survey to be anonymous may encourage employees to speak their minds enabling the survey to provide 'a warts and all' report, in turn giving management an opportunity to address underlying problems before they become serious.

However, allowing anonymous comments also allows employees to be more cavalier and flippant with their responses. Some organizations would therefore only want to consider comments where employees are prepared to stand by their convictions and that will also provide an opportunity to follow up the specific concerns of individual employees.

The decision to allow anonymous responses or not will, among other factors, be down to the individual organization, the specific nature of the survey, the surrounding circumstances, the management style and the existing employer/employee relationship.

STEP 6 - ANALYZING THE RESULTS

There are no hard and fast rules for analyzing the data. Much depends on the individual survey, the questions asked and the number of responses.

Most surveys will benefit from many of the results being displayed in graphical as well as tabular form.

When first analyzing survey data often a number of 'headline' results will immediately stand out that will provide you with a general overview and, providing the right questions have been asked, give you an instant assessment of the mood throughout the organization as a whole.

Where the results give areas of concern a more detailed analysis may be advisable. For example if employees were asked if they felt the organization provided equal opportunities to both genders and 25% gave a negative response it would be useful to know the gender split of the organization and also to look at what the gender split was of the 25% that answered negatively. Was the negative view shared by employees of both genders, evenly spread throughout the organization, or of a particular gender from a particular department?

There is a method of reporting that presents the result data in tabular and/or graphical form allowing those who are interested in the results to view the raw data.

Often used as a compliment to the first, another method is to interpret the results and provide an analysis of the data and offer a view as to what the meaning is behind the results, what circumstances may have contributed to the results being as they are and, where the results indicate a negative, what initiatives could be taken. Such analysis if done by a single individual is likely to be very personal, if done by a committee it is still likely to be objective and therefore open to interpretation.

STEP 7 - FURTHER ACTION

Probably the most important step is the last. An employee survey will either confirm that the perfect organization exists or it will highlight areas that are less than perfect by identifying individual and common concerns.

It may be that further more detailed surveys are required that target specific areas. For example the survey may reveal that employees working in a particular department are collectively unhappy, but the reasons for their dissatisfaction may not be clear. A smaller, specifically targeted follow-up survey may help reveal the root causes.

When employee surveys are periodically run an organization that has taken steps to address issues will see their efforts reflected in subsequent survey responses. Almost all

organizations have some problems and it helps an organization's moral to see that a channel is available that will allow problems to be highlighted, addressed and resolved.

TIPS FOR GETTING SURVEY COMPLETED

Without the proper preparation or incentive, employee satisfaction surveys can be viewed as a big waste of time. If employees don't understand why they are being asked to fill out the survey, chances are they won't take them seriously.

Here are four tips for motivating your employees to truthfully fill out satisfaction surveys.

1. PROVIDE AN EXPLANATION.

One of the best ways to get employees to fill out satisfaction surveys is to explain to them why you want them to do so. Employers should reassure employees that the survey results:

- are meant to help them and create a better working environment
- will be carefully considered by the employer
- will be used to implement changes to programs that are not working very well

2. PROMOTE CONFIDENTIALITY.

Make sure to communicate that all survey responses are anonymous and will not be reviewed at an individual level. Employees need to know that they will not be viewed any differently due to their responses and that the purpose of the survey is to improve the workplace, not monitor individual feedback.

3. IMPLEMENT CHANGES MENTIONED IN THE SURVEYS.

The best way to motivate employees to fill out surveys is to actually show progress in areas they pointed out as needing improvement. Nothing is more disheartening than pouring your heart and soul into something you believe will enact change, and not seeing any difference in the way things are run. If you want employees to continue to fill out surveys, they will need to see that those surveys aren't a waste of time.

4. GIVE EMPLOYEES THE OPPORTUNITY TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL INSIGHT.

While it is important to create a well-structured survey, it is equally important to allow employees to bring up issues that are close to them. By incorporating some open-ended questions, you enable employees to provide insight on topics you may have not considered. Their comments and personal experiences may help bring to life some of the areas in need of improvement.

SUMMARY

These guidelines are intended to help an organization conduct successful employee satisfaction surveys, they are however, only a guide.

Each organization is different in style and structure and the organizations 'personality' will go some-way to influencing the tone and nature of the survey and organizations will have many different circumstances and primary reasons for conducting a survey. It is therefore being advised that organizations should consult experienced consultants / practitioners in the domain of satisfaction measurement to design their satisfaction assessment strategy.

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