Tips for Measuring Impact and Staff Satisfaction

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According to the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), an organization's responsiveness to employee feedback leads to higher retention rates, lower absenteeism, improved productivity, better customer service, and higher employee morale. This job aid offers basic strategies and resources for conducting common types of employee surveys.

Types of employee surveys

The following types of employee surveys can provide critical information about employee perceptions that can be used to improve the workplace:

Climate surveys measure employees' views, attitudes, and perceptions of the organization. They are also known as opinion or satisfaction surveys.

Culture surveys assess the extent to which employees' views and experiences align with the organization's understanding of the shared values, beliefs, practices, and behaviors that define the work environment.

Engagement surveys measure employees' commitment, motivation, sense of purpose, and passion for their work and for the organization.

Preparing to conduct an employee survey[1]

Before conducting an employee survey, assess your organization's readiness to receive and integrate employee feedback, and develop clear processes for analyzing and utilizing survey data. Consider the questions below when preparing to conduct an employee survey. It may be helpful to convene a working group that includes a cross-section of employees to assist in answering them.

- What do you want to learn by conducting the survey?
- What are you looking to measure, and why?
- Who will develop the questions?
  - Will the survey be managed by internal staff or an outside vendor?
  - Will select employees be involved in survey design and/or participate in a pilot survey?
- What will you communicate with employees about the survey, and how?
- Which employees will be asked to participate in the survey?
- When will you conduct the survey?
  - Are there periods of time you should prioritize or avoid?
- How will survey results be communicated?
  - How will you ensure responses are kept confidential?
- Who will identify and implement needed improvements surfaced through survey results?
- Are there any policy or legal issues to consider, including any labor contracts?

When selecting employment survey questions, use this list of sample questions as a place to start.

[1]This section has been adapted from multiple Tools for Transformation developed by Robert Gass and managed by Change Elemental.

Keep in mind these principles as you conduct your employee survey:

- **Build ownership.** From the outset, engage employees in owning the survey process.
- **Make it safe.** Employees need to feel safe in sharing their honest opinions. It is critical that employees feel that their confidentiality will be protected throughout the survey process.
- **Gather multiple perspectives.** Make sure the sample size is adequate and that the data you collect presents a well-rounded perspective.
- **Strive for validity.** The survey design and process should be well-documented; use validated questions when possible. Likert scales (e.g., numerical scales registering degree of agreement or disagreement with a given statement with 5 or 7 options) can help create benchmarks to measure later progress. Open-ended questions can help explain the why for employees' numerical answers.
- **Watch for observer bias.** Findings may be impacted by your choice of questions and the way you phrase them. Before you begin, learn about your own biases and strive to compensate for them. Avoid forming theories early in the survey process, which may lead you to unconsciously select data to fit your conclusions.
- **Take care with the reporting process.** Receiving feedback can be a vulnerable experience, especially when there are surprises in the survey data. Be thoughtful in how you report survey results to different audiences, including the organization's leadership and employees. Be clear in your commitments to making needed improvements that surface through survey results.

Using the results of an employee survey

Once employee survey data has been collected and analyzed, it is important to close the loop and be accountable to your employees. Reporting on employee surveys should be an iterative process. If you convened a working group to support survey design, don't forget to re-engage them at this point. Consider these recommendations as you work with your team to process and utilize the results of your survey:

- **Review the survey results with leadership first**, especially if survey results are surprising, or may be difficult to hear.
- Develop **written reports and/or summaries** that provide an opportunity for employees to review and digest survey results.
- Develop opportunities for **in-person employee review and discussion** of survey findings. This may help leadership better gauge employee reactions and impact.
- Consider conducting **individual interviews and focus groups** if additional data would help you contextualize survey results and/or develop recommendations.
- Develop and communicate **recommendations** for how you will address the opportunities and challenges identified through the survey findings.
- Develop and communicate a detailed **plan for implementation** of recommendations, including responsible parties, timelines, and progress reports.

This publication was supported by the Office of Women's Health (Grant ASTWH200090). The views expressed do not necessarily reflect the official policies of the Department of Health and Human Services; nor does mention of trade names, commercial practices, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.