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Evaluating Employee Attitudes & Perceptions of Your Organization

*Improving employee understanding and support for
company goals and objectives begins with an
assessment of your internal customer.*

Why Conduct an Employee Survey?

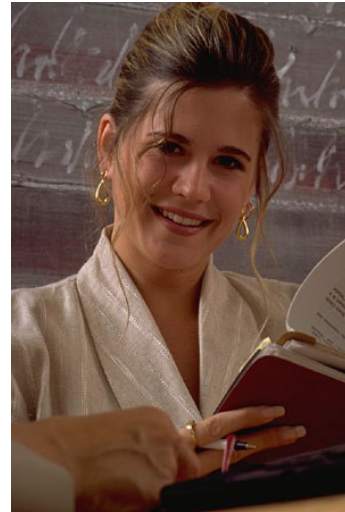
Several factors serve as the catalyst for undertaking an employee attitude survey. Clearly, it is incumbent upon management not to assume, but to ensure, that the quality of work life, attitudes, and skill-set of employees meet or exceed the demands of the organization.

Moreover, managerial attention in most companies has long focused on the importance of employee attitudes. Numerous studies indicate that high satisfaction levels among employees lead to high productivity. The measurement, understanding, and monitoring of employee attitudes towards the work place and job-related functions have therefore emerged as important managerial activities.

The data which are generated provide a useful perspective on employee understanding and support for company objectives, as well as insights into employee attitudes towards the company, the workplace, management and coworkers, and employee pay, benefits, and training.

The main value of a structured survey is that the data lend themselves to rigorous statistical analysis, which can aid in showing inter-relationships among various factors such as age, tenure, department, or position.

Finally, because more and more employees believe they have a "right" to participate in any decisions that have an impact on their jobs, the survey process can alleviate many organizational problems. It can also facilitate the process of coping with change proactively, rather than reactively.



Organizational Needs Driving the Decision to Conduct a Survey

For most clients, the decision to undertake a survey is often driven by one or more of the following organizational needs:

- 1. The need to facilitate feedback and decision making.**
Data gathering efforts can help assess how various policies and are being accepted by employees and how effectively they are being implemented.
- 2. The need to diagnose organizational problems.**
Data that is gathered systematically can help explain employee problems such as turnover and absenteeism and resistance to organizational change.
- 3. The need to improve communication.**
Survey feedback can provide a useful way to establish an on-going two-way communications program with employees. Because surveys are conducted with the highest degree of confidentiality, employees are more willing to share their true feelings about sensitive issues with management.
- 4. The need to develop better managerial training programs.**
The data gathered from an employee survey can assist in developing training programs that address critical workplace issues and help managers work more effectively with their employees.

In-House versus Consultant Survey Development

Attitude surveys can be conducted by either in-house professionals or external consultants. Using in-house staff is often unwise for a variety of reasons:

Confidentiality

Because confidentiality is one of the most significant guarantees for obtaining accurate information, any doubts employees have about where the information will go and who will be identified can subsequently bias the data. If personnel do not feel that their responses and their anonymity will be safeguarded during the survey process, they may choose not to be completely truthful about questions or they may omit some items.

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Research Experience

It is also vital that those developing a survey and analyzing the data have experience in research procedures and statistical procedures.

If management determines to enlist the aid of an outside consultant, the following checklist can help ensure that both the company and the consulting organization agree on the broad purposes and specific elements of the survey.

- What are the goals of the relationship?
- Are the roles of the client and the consultant understood and agreed upon?
- What kinds of data will be collected and how will they be gathered?
- Who is responsible for survey administration? How will the survey be administered?
- Who will have access to the data? What form will this access take?
- How will the data be used? What types of reports will be produced? What statistics will be reported?
- How will feedback be handled? How will results be communicated to employees?
- What are the estimated time periods for the various activities?
- What resources will be provided by the client? What resources will be provided by the consultant?
- How will the project be evaluated?

An Outline of the Survey Process

To ensure development and administration of a survey that meets company objectives, Emerge Communications recommends the following 8-step process:

Step 1 -- Research consultant entry into the organization

Step 2 -- Preliminary survey discussions with management.

Step 3 -- Meetings with selected groups of employees.

Step 4 -- Development of a draft survey.

Step 5 -- Discussion of survey draft with Human Resources. Revisions as needed.

Step 6 -- Survey administration. Surveys returned confidentially to the research consultant or data posted to secure database via the Internet.

Step 7 -- Data entry and analysis by research consultant.

Step 8 -- On site verbal presentation and discussion of survey results with management and employees. Written report and consultant's recommendations to Human Resources and Senior Management.

Major Categories of Survey Questions

An initial analysis of the organization and its work-related activities will take place before a survey is designed. The fit between company goals, structure, employees, and decision-making systems will be assessed. Discussions by the research consultant with key personnel, continued familiarization with the company, and interaction with staff will also help develop an accurate survey.

In most cases, the research consultant and Human Resources staff will meet with managers and employees to obtain a more complete overview of issues that are of primary importance. These meetings will emphasize to employees the confidentiality of the process and enlist their support for the survey. Their input helps to develop a more accurate and insightful survey instrument.

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Development of the categories of survey questions is the single most important part of survey development. Although specific categories vary from company to company, most questions fall into one of the following nine areas:

- 1) Overall organization (feelings and commitment)
- 2) Compensation issues (pay and benefits)
- 3) Job security
- 4) Management (policies and behavior)
- 5) Immediate supervisor (relations with)
- 6) Advancement issues
- 7) Co-worker and interpersonal relations
- 8) The job itself (characteristics, demand, satisfaction)
- 9) Employee demographics (gender, age, tenure, location, etc.)

Data Analysis and Reports

After survey data has been collected, edited, and coded by the research consultant, a number of statistical routines will be conducted, including distribution and cross-tabulation of responses.

While some of the statistical methods are technical in nature, the purpose of developing quantitative data is to provide management and employees with meaningful, understandable, and actionable information. Throughout the final report, charts and graphs are used to show information and relationships among data.

Some of the statistical tools used by research consultants like Emerge Communications include --

Basic Descriptive Statistics to show the degree of dispersion or variance in responses. Other descriptive statistical routines will include confidence intervals, mean and standard variation, etc.

Frequency Distributions to show the number and percentage of employees who answer in each of the available categories.

Cross-Tabulation to show possible differences among different groups of employees, in part based on demographic information such as

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department or business unit, age, sex, length of service, or rank in the company. For example, are employees in one area of the company more satisfied with their jobs than those working in another? Do men and women perceive equally the opportunities for career growth? Do communications issues vary depending on business unit, age, length of service, etc.?

After the data have been summarized, the information then will be interpreted for its organizational significance and meaning. In some instances, the interpretation will be relatively easy and will require little more than reading the data tables to explain certain relationships. In other cases, when more complicated relationships are involved, interpretation will require both quantitative data and creative insights into the nature of the company.

Recommendations and “Next Steps”

Survey results are typically reported back to the organization through a combination of management and employee reports. All survey participants should receive some information about the survey data. Depending on company preferences, budgets, and technological resources, reports can be delivered in print, email, or multimedia formats.

For survey feedback to be effective, it should embody the following characteristics:

- *Timely.* The effectiveness of the survey in addressing organizational concerns is reduced as time passes.
- *Relevant.* The information reported should be relevant to the issues of concern to management and employees.
- *Clear.* Feedback should be easily understood and presented in non-technical language.
- *Descriptive.* The information presented should be specific and detailed, and also unbiased.
- *Open.* The feedback data should not be considered an end in itself but as a starting point for discussion and problem resolution.

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Written Reports

Reports from employee research companies like Emerge Communications typically include --

Introduction. A brief explanation of the purpose of the survey process, its objectives, and how the survey was developed.

Overview. A summary of the results and key findings, the themes which emerged from the data.

Discussion of Major Issues. A fuller presentation, including charts and graphs as appropriate, of the major categories of data such as relationship with management, pay and benefits, stress, coping with change, etc.

Concluding Comments. A discussion of how the organization compares with other companies.

Distribution Data. Distributions of how employees responded to closed-ended questions, presented in tabular form.

Development of An Action Plan

Companies have numerous options in developing an “action plan” or “next steps” following survey administration. One approach which has produced exceptional results for some clients combines follow-up discussions with company executives and an ad hoc survey review group.

The Survey Review Group is typically made up of employees, supervisors, and senior managers from various areas of the company. The Survey Review Group, working cooperatively with the Executive Team, has two major tasks:

- 1) To review survey data and identify "actionable" issues.
- 2) To recommend follow-up activities.

The combined efforts of the Executive Team and the Survey Review Group help to ensure that results of the survey are used wherever possible to improve the quality of work life for employees and to assist the company in implementing its strategic plan.

Why Choose Emerge Communications?

Custom Surveys Designed To Meet *Your* Specifications

Unlike some online employee research firms, we work closely with your organization to design the perfect employee survey that meets your needs. We have hundreds of tested survey questions that can serve as the basis for your survey, or we can create an entire custom survey for your company. Once we begin, we conduct a preliminary internal review with you and other key personnel to insure that your survey accomplishes the research objectives established by you.

Complete Implementation and Administration

Emerge Communications handles the entire survey implementation -- from distributing surveys to your employees, receiving them at our office to ensure confidentiality, email reminders to increase participation levels, as well as all data entry and coding. *We also offer the convenience of online as well as traditional print surveys.* The entire survey process can run from two weeks to approximately one month from start to finish.

Outstanding Analysis and Reporting

Emerge Communications does not create automatically generated statistical analyses and reports, as do many competing survey services. We provide you with a complete statistical analysis of the responses to each question, plus detailed distribution tables and cross-tabs. Results are fully illustrated with custom-designed tables and charts. Finally, our report to you includes a professional commentary organized by key issues, along with a professionally-prepared introduction and summary. For most clients, we meet on site in order to personally present our findings, answer questions, discuss issues, and make recommendations on "next steps."

Fifteen Years of Employee Survey and Research Experience

For over 15 years, we have created insightful, actionable employee surveys that help management better understand their employees and use those insights to create effective employee communications and development programs.

For more information about Emerge Communications, please visit our web site at www.emergecommunications.com or call us toll-free (800) 609-6487