



The Survey Process

Some organizations may not currently have survey processes. Organizations that do have survey processes may be disappointed with their results, as they are often managed in a way that fails to achieve substantial results.

The disappointment is often from the fact that the survey results are not used for anything beneficial, and the ratings themselves fail to provide much useful information. It stands to reason that if people see that time spent providing suggestions and ideas is used to better their work life, then they will enthusiastically participate. However, management will need to be diligent about ensuring that people are not wasting their time in providing the feedback, either because next steps aren't taken or the actions aren't communicated to people in a way that sufficiently reflects attentiveness to their feedback.

When I see managers struggle with the follow-up portion of the survey process, it generally reflects their attitudes about their relationships with their team members. Lack of attention may not mean they have a bad attitude about people, but it can mean that they aren't thinking of the need to tend to their relationships with people as a part of a healthy workplace.

Surveys often fail to make use of the data in a manner participants appreciate. The following process is designed to show you how to fully listen to the issues and ideas of the participants, while keeping the larger group fully informed as to what is transpiring in the communication process. However, before even implementing the steps below, it's important to keep in mind that the burning question for survey participants is "What will be done with my feedback that makes this worth my time?"

Step 1: Develop survey questions that meet the objectives in the process. Ensure clear objectives are identified in creating the questions. Do not collect needless data.

Step 2: Conduct surveys with a goal of at least 50% participation. Surveys can be administered during employee meals or celebrations to increase participation.

Step 3: Communicate results to all participants to make them aware of overall feedback and that further evaluation is being performed to create responses and actions.

Step 4: Make sure the leadership team constructs follow-up questions based on the results and survey comments.

Step 5: The written comments and ratings on the questions are only the beginning of this listening process. Hold small focus group discussions with approximately 10% of employees who took the survey to talk about the survey results and gain more insights about employee concerns.

Step 6: Based on your conversations with employees, gather their ideas about possible actions that could be taken to improve their situation in the workplace. The action items need to be put into some type of written format so they can be tracked over time.

Step 7: Communicate action plans to all participants and other interested parties. The action plans need to be simple and include timelines for employees to track the program against them.

Step 8: Communicate progress with action plans to participants and other parties.

Step 9: The survey process needs to be repeated with some frequency to monitor changes in ratings, as well as to continue the conversations with employees about concerns in the workplace.

For many organizations, the survey process is one of the only two-way communication vehicles they have in their workplace. I have often found that managers don't see the survey tool as important because getting the current workload done hasn't required them to better understand employee viewpoints. I cannot emphasize enough that optimizing people's abilities in the workplace requires a range of two-way communication options; surveys are a good foundation for measuring your progress with communications.

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