

## **Surveys, Surveys, Surveys!**

**They want us to do one whenever we buy something, complain about something, go anywhere near the internet, join anything or even try anything! So why would we want to do one at work!**

We're all familiar with the axiom "if you can't measure it, you can't manage it." It's the one businesses apply to sales, customer satisfaction and finance but often not to employee engagement. Why is this? Now more than ever it should be a business priority to manage employees. This is easier to achieve if you can find out what they are thinking.

There are many reasons why businesses are reluctant to conduct employee surveys including management apathy regarding listening to employees, the fear of what employees really think and the belief that employee surveys create more issues than they could resolve.

However, employees will always have concerns and not identifying these just preserves the status quo. Ignoring minor issues means they often become major issues over time and ultimately harder to manage.

### **What makes a good survey?**

- Focus on performance improvement e.g. more engaged employees, more satisfied customers and even becoming a more profitable or successful business.
- Getting beyond the emphasis being on 'satisfaction' and focusing on how to use the data for strategic purposes. A survey should help identify ways in which the employer can realise the greatest gains from its people. Survey questions should be designed to assess whether employees understand the business strategy, whether they believe in the company's vision and values, and whether they are engaged with the organisation itself.
- Use of valid and reliable measures without which you end up with meaningless results and have wasted a great deal of time, effort and money.

### **Communication**

- Many organisations ask how soon they can have their survey 'up and running'. Of far greater concern is the communication behind the survey. Employees who get an unexpected survey in their inbox on a Monday morning with no advance communication as to its purpose or how the results will be used, are often not likely to respond.
- The critical communication source is undoubtedly the head of the organisation, who must demonstrate a commitment to the survey process and a personal desire to act on the results.
- The next most important communication source is those people who communicate with staff on a daily basis - the organisation's line managers and supervisors.

## Post Survey

- Post survey intervention efforts are most effective when they are focused. We've all heard of the 80-20 rule. Just as 80 percent of a company's sales typically come from 20 percent of its customers only a few of the aspects of the workplace measured in the survey will have the biggest impact on employee engagement.
- If you want to engage people more, leverage off these key drivers rather than attempt to fix all the low scoring questions. Go beyond just looking at the survey results to identify these key drivers. Statistical analysis of the data should be an integral element of any employee survey as it helps identify what's important and what's not.
- One of the biggest mistakes companies make is to conduct a workplace survey, receive the results and then do nothing. This can be more damaging than not doing the survey. It creates scepticism to ask people for their opinion and then do nothing. The survey should be a starting point not an ending point.
- The most effective way to see action in an organisation following a survey is to create an action plan with clear accountabilities. The survey should be seen as an essential business process and KPI, and post-survey actions should be seen as a business response to the things that need to change.

Today's workplace surveys have a strategic focus in identifying the connections between employee experiences and engagement levels with bottom-line performance. Employers using workplace surveys as a valuable business tool are able to use them as a source of competitive advantage because it allows them to effectively manage their most important asset - their workforce.