

The Importance of Employee Feedback

From postcards on the table at your favorite restaurant to letters after a brief hospital stay tucked in with your prescriptions, surveys represent the most effective way to secure an honest answer to: How did we do? More recently, these surveys have made their way into the workplace, providing a method of gauging employee attitudes at the office.

Spending 40 hours or more every week with the same people, there's no question what type of outlook you want these people to have. A positive employee with a can-do attitude takes the prize every time, and not just because of how pleasant it makes things in the workplace. Happy employees create a more efficient office, primarily by sticking around.

Toby Velte, former CEO of FireSummit, Inc., knew the way to his employees' heart, and it wasn't increased pay. He recognized that his employees were after more than just compensation; they wanted to be happy while they were at the office. He obliged with supplying a game room, free soda, and network video game sessions.

"We paid 15 percent less than other companies," said Velte. "But ... I never had one person quit." Knowing what his employees wanted gave Velte a leg up in limiting turnover, one of the worst sieves of company profits. With estimates of turnover costs at 150% of the employees' yearly salary (more for newer employees or management), it makes sense to make the effort to find out what makes your company culture tick, and how to open the lines of communication with employees. In the end, it means keeping the customers happy, which starts with employees excited to be at the office.

Clients, after all, have an uncanny ability to know the general manner of everyone they come in contact with. Be it the smile in the employees' voice, the relaxed way in which the employee deals with the customer, or just a bit of a sixth sense, that attitude flows through and affects the overall relationship. Surveys have shown that customers who feel a kinship with a company will remain loyal customers, and it follows that maintaining that connection stems from creating a positive work environment.

Surveying employees about their impressions of their employer is the best indicator of the overall culture in a company. This culture

will permeate every aspect of the organization affecting co-workers and clients alike. But just surveying a company's employees isn't enough.

Velte made sure that he knew where he stood compared to his competitors as well as what his employees expected in the workplace. Competition is fierce in today's market, and companies who pay attention have an edge over those working in a void. With headhunters cold calling lists of employees in every industry these days, knowing what's offered by the competition can go a long way toward heading off expensive employee turn over.

The cost of employee dissatisfaction can be remarkable, and many companies try to prevent the loss of employees by throwing money at them. While it may work for a little while, the undermining factors will go unnoticed, resulting in throwing more money at the problem. With employee surveys, however, it can be easier to see where the money should be going, and often companies find that their costs go down significantly.

Employee surveys are one of the necessary steps in identifying problems and opportunities for improvement. Then, using these survey results and a benchmarking database, a company can determine what the trends are for their industry, and where they stand compared to their competitors. There's a reason, after all, that Fortune magazine publishes a "Best Companies to Work For" edition every year, and that pay is only one factor that they consider.

About the Author:

Dr. Stringer, Founder of <http://www.nbrii.com> has over 20 years of experience in survey design and implementation and a doctoral degree in organizational psychology and quantitative methods. She has authored numerous articles and publications about surveys, training, and employee and customer satisfaction.