

# PERSONNEL NOTEBOOK

## For Your Most Important Resource—The Human Resource

*Prepared By:*

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## EMPLOYEE SURVEYS - THE ULTIMATE COMMUNICATION

Back in the mid 1930s, General Electric Corporation (GE) called in a consultant to do a study about productivity. As an experiment, the consultant increased the lighting over the production line by 10%, and found that productivity for the month increased! So the following month, they increased the lighting by another 10%. Productivity increased again! Management was overjoyed at discovering the value of a little lighting.

The following month the lighting was *decreased*. Productivity increased again! GE was stymied. They turned to the consultant and asked, "Just what did we find out?" The consultant replied, "It's not the lighting, it's the attention!"

### Why Survey

And that's one major part of the value of employee surveys. Employee surveys, if handled right, can create a new bond, a communication, a partnership that produces a mutual effort to steer the company in the most successful direction. Of course, the GE experience was based on productivity. When we think of employee surveys, we tend to think of attitude surveys. We want employees to tell us how they feel about things and the problems they have.

### What To Survey

A survey calls to everyone's attention a series of issues or concerns requesting employees to share the solution process. It elevates issues above the gossip and grapevine to a level of information and opportunity for change.

Instead of trying to out think or manipulate employees, cheat! Cheat by going directly to the people who already have the answers about

employee problems, fears and values. Go to one of the best sources about ways to be more productive, eliminate bottlenecks or how to make things run more smoothly. Go to your employees.

Although you can survey about anything, for practical purposes, there are three major types of surveys.

1. The employee attitude (or Human Resources (HR)) survey. This survey usually covers benefits, pay, company policies, etc.

2. Operation survey. This survey deals with improving methods, productivity, efficiency, profitability.

3. Strategy Survey. This deals with company values, mission, philosophy, marketing, long range goals.

All of these are wonderful tools used by companies all over the world to join the interests, direction, focus and abilities of the whole company, not just the executives.

We are going to focus on the first type of survey. The HR or attitude survey. But in the process we can include some of the other interests.

Usually a company decides to conduct an employee attitude survey after a difficult or stressful period. A big cutback in jobs, the loss of a major contract, a merger or a serious accident. That's good, but you should be doing surveys regularly, at least every 12 to 18 months. Some companies do six (6) a year, some do it after every change, or contract or seasonal rush.

So, when designing your survey, first start with those items you most want to know about. Recent

incidents, current issues, future directions, benefits, working conditions, etc. Ask yourself, "Why do I want to know this?; what am I going to do with the answers?; what if the answer is X?; what if the answer is Y?"

Don't try to change the whole world at one time. Remember, whatever you question, employees will focus upon. If they see problems, they will expect to see change. Although you should be prepared to deal with a problem, you don't want to revolutionize every function of the company at once. Try to identify the root causes of issues. If employees aren't working together is it just a personality clash or is there some inequity, unfairness, imbalance in how employees are treated.

### **How To Survey**

Keep it simple--you'll get more response. Employees are suspicious of complex, bureaucratic or legalese language.

Employees are generally a little more intelligent and fair than we give them credit for. If you are approaching your survey with the idea of creating "happy employees," you are selling them short. You don't want to lead them into a whirlpool of "How happy are you today?; what can I do to make you more happy?; can I eliminate every problem or concern you have?" You don't want to create that arena. Don't try to eradicate every ill. Employees want to be centered on "successes." the tone and atmosphere that they will most center around and participate in are the processes of success. Although you want to deal with problems, focus more so on issues and questions that lead to success. For example, rather than ask what benefits would make you happier, you might ask, what benefits do you think would attract good employees, or are there any changes we could make to our benefits that would help reduce employee turnover?

Every survey needs to be customized to your company. The survey sample in this issue is generic and should be used to help you create your own, but it can be used as a good start. Try not to raise expectations for immediate changes.

Keep it employment based, not personal, or political. If handled correctly, you will create an in-house consulting group.

Beyond the questions you create, leave ample space for questions like, "Is there any other issue you would like to cover," or "Please add any comments you would like," or "Is there any way to improve this survey for future use?"

Lastly, before initiating the survey, you need to assure that you are not viewing this survey as a distraction or a nuisance or one of those HR feel good projects. This is a legitimate and excellent management tool that can give you as much and maybe more value than hiring a professional consultant.

Items to consider for questions/evaluations:

- Benefits (list individually)
- Pay
- Supervisors
- Bottlenecks
- Company ethics
- Customer/client service
- Company pride
- Teamwork
- Training
- Bonus/incentive programs
- Recognition for good work
- Performance evaluations
- Technical support
- Career development
- Fairness
- Work schedules
- Quality of work
- Company policies
- Safety
- Communications
- Employee involvement
- New ideas
- Ways to improve
- Feedback
- Wheel spinning

- What I like most about the company
- What I like least about the company
- Changes I would like to see

A committee should be in charge of the survey to explain it, to administer it and to collect the data.

Before launching, review each question and test it. What does a "yes" response mean? What does a "no" response mean? Will you understand the answer?

Do you need to provide anonymity to the participants? Although employees are more comfortable being anonymous, it creates problems on the survey to eliminate all items that might lead to identity. In some cases, anonymous is best. However, most surveys merely "brass it out." That is, they ask for department, rank, sex, age bracket, employment length, etc. The survey will be far more useful if it can be broken into demographics. If anonymity is not necessary, then you can also number the questionnaire sequentially.

The committee should control the questionnaire to assure that duplicates are not being created. However, I have never seen a case where that was done. Keep controls, but don't overemphasize any fear of dishonesty.

You can allow the employee to take the survey home, but that will assuredly mean employees (by phone or in person) will discuss, agree and sway opinions or answers beforehand. It's best if each employee responds on their own. So you may find that passing them out in the morning and collecting them in the afternoon, or stopping work for one or two hours to conduct the survey is best.

After the survey, tally and analyze the answers. Now is when you'll be glad you kept the questions simple, now is also when you'll wonder why you asked this question at all.

Although there is, at this point, a whole science of material on how to analyze the results and how to create the changes, we aren't going to explore that now. The key message and the most important one after deciding to do the survey is to respond quickly and thoroughly.

Sit with the committee and anyone else you want to include. Analyze what you've learned. Decide what response and changes will result and issue a report to your employees.

The smaller the company, the quicker the response needs to be. But in no case more than 30 days. Most companies distribute the survey and then either have an all employee meeting to discuss the results or ask for feedback/response to the results.

Future surveys should be regularly conducted and concentrate more on Type 2 and Type 3 surveys, operational and strategic issues.

These are the people with whom you have chosen to work. Your company is what they are. As they change, your company changes. Don't you want to know what's going on in there? Don't you want them working on the problems, too?

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# ACME WIDGET & SERVICE COMPANY

## EMPLOYEE SURVEY

### **DEMOGRAPHICS**

1. Sex:
  - Female
  - Male
2. Age Group:
  - 18-30
  - 31-40
  - 41-50
  - 51-60
  - 61 & above
3. Time With Company
  - 6 months or less
  - 6 months to 1 year
  - 1 year to 5 years
  - 5 years to 10 years
  - 10 years to 20 years
  - 20 years and above
4. Department you are in:
 

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### **YOUR JOB**

**Key:** (1= Agree Strongly, 2= Agree, 3= N.A./Neither  
4= Disagree, 5= Disagree Strongly)

		←	Agree	Disagree	→
1. My job makes good use of my skills and abilities	1		2	3	4 5
2. I like the kind of work I do	1		2	3	4 5
3. My job description accurately describes my job	1		2	3	4 5
4. I am adequately trained for my job	1		2	3	4 5
5. I am regularly informed as to how well I am doing in my job	1		2	3	4 5
6. My department has enough people to do the work	1		2	3	4 5
7. I am expected to work overtime regularly in order to get the job done	1		2	3	4 5

**Key:** (1= Agree Strongly, 2= Agree, 3= N.A./Neither  
4= Disagree, 5= Disagree Strongly)

← **Agree** Disagree →

8.	I like the amount of overtime I get	1	2	3	4	5
9.	I plan to stay with the company for at least another year	1	2	3	4	5

**PAY**

1.	How do you rate the amount of pay you get on your job?					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Very good					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Good					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair/average					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Poor					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Poor					
2.	People here who are better performers get better pay	1	2	3	4	5
3.	To the best of my knowledge, the pay levels here are as good as similar companies in the area.	1	2	3	4	5

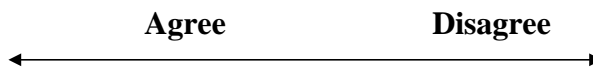
**BENEFITS**

1.	The benefits available to me meet my needs	1	2	3	4	5
2.	To the best of my knowledge the benefits here are comparable to similar companies in the area	1	2	3	4	5
3.	I believe the following benefits are adequate and fill my needs:					
	Medical	1	2	3	4	5
	Life insurance	1	2	3	4	5
	Dental	1	2	3	4	5
	Vision	1	2	3	4	5
	Pension	1	2	3	4	5
	Savings or 401(k) plan	1	2	3	4	5
	Sick leave	1	2	3	4	5
	Vacation	1	2	3	4	5
	Educational assistance	1	2	3	4	5

**YOUR SUPERVISOR**

1.	My supervisor is a good manager in terms of management and technical responsibility	1	2	3	4	5
2.	My supervisor is a good manager in terms of people skills & people respect	1	2	3	4	5

**Key:** (1= Agree Strongly, 2= Agree, 3= N.A./Neither  
4= Disagree, 5= Disagree Strongly)



3. My supervisor listens to my ideas or opinions about the job 1 2 3 4 5

**TEAMWORK**

1. The morale in my group is high 1 2 3 4 5  
2. We work well as a team 1 2 3 4 5

**SAFETY**

1. My work environment is safe 1 2 3 4 5  
2. Management responds responsibly to safety problems 1 2 3 4 5  
3. Safety devises such as guards and warnings are used in my work 1 2 3 4 5

**THE COMPANY**

1. This is a good place to work 1 2 3 4 5  
2. The company is open and honest with employees 1 2 3 4 5  
3. The company is fair in employee dealings 1 2 3 4 5  
4. I believe the company uses an open door policy 1 2 3 4 5  
5. The company is committed to quality service and products for its clients 1 2 3 4 5

**POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

1. The written rules of the company are available to me 1 2 3 4 5  
2. I know where to go to get information on rules and procedures 1 2 3 4 5

**NARRATIVE**

On the next page add any comments or expand your opinions on any topic you choose.