

Member's Quarterly

Winter 2026 Edition

Perspective

Employee Surveys

Great tools if you are prepared to listen

I must admit that I'm not the biggest fan of employee surveys. They can be overused, misused and more often than not, ignored. But when done right, with proper preparation and good follow-up, they can be another valuable tool in your management arsenal.



Sharlene Rollins
RPR
Manager,
Administration

First, if you are not really interested in finding out what your employees think, why bother surveying them? If you already have a good sense of where your employees are and if they are energetic, engaged and motivated, maybe you don't need to take their pulse through an employee survey. On the other hand, if you really want to know what your workforce thinks about what's going on inside the organization or get their views on a new plan or project, it might make sense to survey them. If done well, you will get greater insight on their views and attitudes that can identify problems and lead to solutions or even better, head off potential problems.

You should NOT ask unless you are prepared to listen and then act. Here are a few ideas to consider.

When was the last time you conducted an employee survey? If it wasn't too long ago, maybe in the last two years, you can use the information gathered at that time as a benchmark to see whether things are improving or not. Many organizations set up a team to design the survey and let them develop the survey questions together. One basic rule that you should consider is to keep the survey as short and as simple as possible. A good employee survey should take no more than 20 to 30 minutes to complete. Getting buy-in from employees before the survey goes out is crucial. There should be employee representation on the design team. Employees should get advance notice that the survey is coming and what you are hoping to learn from it. In order to get the best possible information and data, employee surveys should be both anonymous and confidential. There should not be any attempt later to try and figure out 'who said what'. That will hinder participation in any future employee survey.

HR can be given the responsibility to collect the survey data and prepare a preliminary report, but sometimes HR is not seen as completely impartial by employees. That is why many organizations use a third party to collect and analyse the data. This ensures that the information is looked at in a fair and unbiased manner. Management should receive the results first before results are disseminated. This is mostly to protect the anonymity of the process and to weed out any comments that may be made about a particular manager.

Senior managers and HR can then have an open and honest discussion about the findings and plan the next steps. Regardless of the results, the information collected should be shared as much as possible with the employee group. They need to see that their voices were reflected and that they can trust the process. After an initial discussion across the organization about the survey results, a plan can be developed to implement changes as required or requested, within financial and other limitations. There also needs to be a way to track progress on any required changes and updates provided to employees.

Sharlene Rollins is Manager, Administration for IPM [Institute of Professional Management].