

EMPLOYEE SURVEYS

Practical and Proven Methods,
Samples, Examples

Second Edition

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A full list of employee survey questionnaire items is available in the *Employee Survey Question Guidebook*, and industry norms for many of the questions may be licensed for an additional fee. For a full list of available services, see the insert in the back of the book or visit the web site: www.PerformancePrograms.com.

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ABOUT THE SECOND EDITION

Welcome to the second edition of *Employee Surveys: Practical and Proven Methods, Samples, Examples*. In this edition, you'll find:

- Enhanced chapter on survey planning, including a new case study
- Updated information on data gathering methods
- 51 Exhibits
- 13 Real-World Examples
- Three enhanced tables of contents, one each for chapter topics, Real-World Examples, and exhibits
- Plus the start-to-finish process description that readers enjoyed in the first edition

ALSO BY THE AUTHORS

The Employee Survey Question Guidebook, Performance Programs, Inc., 2006, ISBN 978-0-9724947-6-2

Employee Opinion Questionnaires: 20 Ready-to-Use Surveys that Work, John Wiley & Sons, 2005, ISBN 0-7879-7349-1

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WHAT THIS BOOK CAN DO FOR YOU

This book gives you a real-world approach. It contains an abundance of how-to information based on our twenty years of experience in the employee survey business. It helps demystify the survey writing, administration, and feedback processes. We also provide a wealth of forms that others have found useful.

If you have decided to do a survey, you are about to make a major investment in the development, administration, and preparation of your survey results. By following the guidelines in this book you will be able to:

1. Identify your key strengths.
2. Identify opportunities for improvement.
3. Hold an effective employee feedback meeting—one in which you present results, answer questions, and brainstorm solutions.
4. Deal with difficult or unexpected results.
5. Understand how you can maintain the momentum for change.

We show which categories of questions address the elements of high-level performance. Employee surveys can and should be designed to detect how well your organization is performing on each of the seven points outlined on page 2. If you follow the process and advice given here, you are well positioned for a survey that will aid forward progress.

If you use the companion *Employee Survey Question Guidebook*, you'll have the advantage of hundreds of well-developed, proven questionnaire items. Many of them have norms, which can also be licensed.

WHAT THIS BOOK ASSUMES ABOUT THE READER

The book speaks to the survey project manager, the person who will oversee the process from concept through feedback. This person often, but not always, comes from a human resources department. In a small company the person may be an assistant to the president or an office manager. Though we refer to the “role of Human Resources” throughout, interpret this reference as it suits your needs.

We assume that readers will come from all types and sizes of organizations. We include issues faced by the very large and very small. All the same principles apply, but on a different scale.

The book is written as though no third-party survey vendors are involved, although we discuss below some advantages survey vendors can provide.

We assume you will be using a series of 50 to 100 questions and the standard five-point Likert Scale. We also discuss the value of open-ended questions. We do not address telephone interview surveys or other types of surveys.

Most other professional survey providers and we use a five-point scale in satisfaction work. This reflects the natural number of categories that most respondents use in describing their satisfaction or level of agreement with a statement.

ABOUT YOUR ORGANIZATION

Although this material will work for all types and sizes of organizations, for simplicity we refer to a four-level hierarchical organization throughout the book. In other words, our examples are written as if traditional pyramid-style business is the sole type of organization. Identify your operation's official (and unofficial) centers of authority, control, and responsibility. Then substitute their identities for references to "senior management," "division management," and "department management." Whether your organization is a non-profit, an educational institution, a small business, an association, a franchise operation, or a large multinational, you'll need to identify the key influencers and involve them. We have performed surveys for all these types of organizations and have found that the same principles apply. This book will help you understand and effectively fill the many roles that are needed for carrying out the survey process.

WHAT THIS BOOK CANNOT DO FOR YOU

There are good reasons to conduct your survey yourself, not least of which is the potential for cost savings. However, you should consider some trade-offs. If you choose to conduct your survey in-house, no book can help you with the following:

- 1. Perception of safety:** An outside research firm ensures confidentiality and anonymity. It increases the perception that the source of an unflattering rating will remain anonymous. This boosts response rates and increases the candor of the information.

2. *Process consulting:* Professional survey providers become expert in the survey process. They can review your survey plan, communications, and feedback approach. They can help you avoid administrative process errors such as ineffective presurvey communications, unclear survey instructions, unclear deadlines, and problems with survey or report formats. In our observation, the administrative process is where many in-house surveys fail. We have often been requested to step into a faltering survey process.

3. *Norms:* Many survey professionals can tell whether your results are typical of your type and size of business by supplying norms. Norms provide outside comparison for the questionnaire items on your survey. Norms are developed after a questionnaire item has been used by several organizations in similar surveys. They can lend invaluable perspective and set your expectations realistically. After several questionnaire repetitions, you can develop internal norms. These are an excellent metric for monitoring progress.

4. *Report formatting and production:* Employee survey reports should be formatted before the questionnaire is designed—they are the end point of your administrative process. They are the beginning of your all-important feedback process. The number and variety of reports you may require for your feedback audiences, however, can become daunting. We've been asked for as many as 400 different reports for a single employee survey. This is a "sleeper" issue, not expected by most in-house survey producers. Acceptable reports can be produced by many popular software packages, including Microsoft Excel. Experienced employee survey providers have usually mastered the issues surrounding these reports.

These are four of the trade-offs you make in conducting your own employee survey. Throughout the book, we'll point out ways to "do it yourself." Every DIY decision, though, has its own costs.

Employee surveys can remove barriers to high-level performance. They can help you better understand employees, improve morale, and, by extension, improve business operations. We share the process here in hopes that you'll obtain all those benefits.