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Newsletter

May'16

## STAFF WELL-BEING AND SURVEYS

Well-being and stress management issues are within the overall 'duty of care' that an employer owes to its employees and from an organisational management angle, wellbeing is a major factor in quality, performance, productivity and therefore business effectiveness and profit.

Where a person's wellbeing reduces, so typically does his or her performance and effectiveness.

**Across a team or entire organisation, if staff wellbeing is undermined, many key organisational performance factors can be negatively impacted, for example:**

- reduced productivity
- increased mistakes and errors
- conflict (with colleagues and up-line/downline management/subordinates)
- grievance and disciplinary incidents
- sickness and absenteeism
- low morale and negative atmosphere
- poor customer services and quality
- resignations and job terminations (causing increased staff turnover)
- poor employer reputation among staff, customers, and potential new recruits

At work particularly, pressures involving deadlines, responsibilities, task complexity, challenge, relationships, supervision, etc., can all seriously reduce our wellbeing, especially if we fail to recognise and deal with the risks.

Where workplace culture encourages a lot of competition and challenge among managers and staff, there can be a tolerance and acceptance of stress. Sometimes there is even a sense of bravado and pride in handling stress, where pressure is regarded to be motivational and thrilling. There is a fine line however between healthy motivation and unhealthy stress.

## Understanding ways to promote health and wellbeing in the workplace can help:-

Most businesses are aware of the Equality Act 2010 which made it unlawful to discriminate against people at work because of nine areas termed in the legislation as protected characteristics:

- Nominate a Wellbeing Champion or Wellbeing Team to initiate new ideas around health and wellbeing
- Organise an annual healthy “MOT” for your staff (check your Local Authority for funding around this)
- Organise activity based team building events
- Provide alternatives to tea/coffee, eg, herbal tea, juices, cold water
- Set up a smoking cessation workshop
- Seek corporate discounts with local gyms
- Purchase pedometers and consider a “steps competition”
- Organise walks during lunch break and allow an extra 15 mins once a week for those that walk so staff then have time to eat their lunch
  
- Organise alternative therapy workshops, eg, reflexology
- Encourage the use of stairs instead of the lift
- Hold regular “Keep in touch” (KIT) meetings to discuss workload etc
- Conduct 6 monthly Staff Surveys” on-line to assess staff satisfaction around various factors affecting them at work (see below).

## EMPLOYEE SURVEYS WHY CONDUCT EMPLOYEE SURVEYS?

A survey is like a performance review for your organisation. Knowing where you stand with employees enables you to identify areas for improvement. Surveys pinpoint staff priorities, showing you where you should focus your efforts.

If you already have ideas for change, it’s important to test the waters prior to implementation by asking for feedback. You may be surprised by how your employees respond. You may learn there is a better approach or a more pressing issue that needs your attention.

If you’re not aware of any areas of concern, a survey is essential. Surveys often reveal important issues you had no idea were a factor.



## WHOM SHOULD YOU SURVEY?

Make an effort to survey all staff. It shows you value everyone's opinion, whether they are managers or front-line employees. More importantly, you'll get a clearer picture of your organisation's strengths and weaknesses by seeing it from all perspectives.

## HOW DO YOU DO IT?

Third-party providers design questionnaires, administer surveys (often electronically), and analyse results with statistically significant certainty. They don't cost a lot, and third-party administration can help improve results by emphasising anonymity. Your organisation may also benefit from doing a simple paper survey in-house or using an online tool like "survey monkey" which will analyse the results for you.

When designing your questionnaire, you might ask "yes/no" or "true/false" questions, or ask participants to rank issues of importance. You may use a five-point sliding scale, or even eliminate the neutral choice, so that responses must indicate a positive or negative feeling. Be careful not to ask questions that guide respondents toward a particular answer.

Using the standardised answer choices described above will permit you to tally and analyse responses easily. It may also permit you to benchmark improvements over time. However, if your survey group is small, you may get more specific and constructive information by asking open-ended questions. Include wellbeing questions too such as "is your workload too high or about right?"; "if you had a problem at work do you feel able to speak to your line manager?"; "do you have time to take your allocated break, such as lunchtime?". Don't ask too much. Keep the survey to fewer than 30 questions.

## FOR BEST RESULTS

Be up-front with staff about how important the survey is to you. Explain that it is not a "wish list," but that you are genuinely interested in getting their input to improve the organisation. Ask them to be candid and reasonable in their feedback, and assure them that responses are anonymous and confidential. Collect completed surveys in an envelope or sealed drop box, or via a central online repository if available.

Finally, you must commit to putting the survey results to work. With a well-designed questionnaire, responses should point toward specific outcomes. It's important to your business that you act on these insights. It also shows employees that completing the surveys was worthwhile. If you solicit survey participation but don't follow up on its results, staff will respond more negatively than if you'd never undertaken the survey effort. So, if you find that you cannot act on certain suggestions, make sure you communicate the reasons why to the survey participants.

In short, use surveys to inform your decision-making about effective changes—and then act on the information those surveys reveal.

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