

“...Don't tell no lie about me and I won't tell no truths about you.” - Kendrick Lamar.

Employee Satisfaction Survey's: When Truth, Trust and Transparency Collide

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Helping organizations turn trust into measurable ROI.

Employee Satisfaction Surveys sometimes feel like reading a gossip magazine — think *The Inquirer* for the workplace. Each page reveals a little more about each leader and their function, like flipping through a classified document. And if you're "lucky," you'll stumble across a comment that pressure-tests your own understanding — the kind that makes you question whether transparency is something your organization values or merely advertises.

"We celebrate diversity, but leadership still looks the same. Promotions go to people who 'fit the culture,' which somehow always means the same type of person."

— Signed by a frustrated team member

At first glance, you might label this as a DEI issue — and it may very well be. But like any puzzle, anchoring too quickly into one corner without seeing the whole picture can lead you to a premature conclusion. Sometimes what looks like a "diversity problem" is really a leadership visibility issue, a bias in promotion processes, or a culture that confuses comfort with inclusion.

A 2019 Gallup survey found that only three out of ten employees strongly agree that their opinions count at work. The other seven? They either (a) don't feel safe sharing the truth for fear of retaliation, or (b) believe nothing will happen even if they do.

So what's an HR professional supposed to do?

Your starting point is understanding *why* employees disengage from the process in the first place. That's where the real journey begins. Simple enough, right?

Piecing the Puzzle Together

Understanding employee data can sometimes feel like solving a puzzle — everyone's got a piece, but few know how to put it together. Real problem-solving takes more than numbers; it takes awareness, honesty, and a bit of nerve.

Here's what I've learned matters most:

Spatial Awareness — Step back and see the whole picture. A low score in one area might be a symptom of something deeper — culture, leadership, or clarity.

Curiosity — Ask better questions. Not “Why are they unhappy?” but “What’s happening around them that we’re not seeing?”

Self-Monitoring — Watch your bias. It's easy to interpret data through your own narrative. Pause before you defend, dismiss, or spin.

Strategic Planning — Don't collect data you won't act on. Turn insights into next steps and make someone accountable for them.

Collaboration — Stop treating surveys like HR's problem. Bring others into the analysis — it builds buy-in and better decisions.

Communication — Be clear and human. Explain what you learned and what's changing. People don't need spin; they need context.

Ownership — **This part's on you.** The data doesn't fix culture — leaders do. Own the story, own the solutions, and model the change you want to see.

When leaders use these competencies, they stop playing defense and start leading with curiosity. Transparency isn't about showcasing the best results — it's about owning the real ones. That's where trust (and real progress) starts.

Own it Buttercup!

I cried when I saw my survey scores — I mean, the *ugly* cry. My somewhat adult children peeked around the corner and whispered, “...so I guess Mom's not cooking tonight.” They have a knack for keeping it real even during the heaviest moments.

I was frustrated, embarrassed, and heartbroken that my team felt so disheartened by their experience. Deep down, I knew they were struggling — and that I had missed some of the signs.

Sure, there were plenty of factors outside my control, but I couldn't absolve myself from the results. They were mine, and I owned them wholeheartedly. I was the leader.

So, I sat down with my team for an honest, uncomfortable conversation — one that required vulnerability. I shared the raw data with everyone, not hiding the good, the bad, or the ugly. Together, we talked openly about what we could realistically change and where we needed to rebuild trust.

Once the meeting wrapped, my Slack and inbox blew up — messages of love, support, and “I felt that.” It reminded me that when you show up as human first, people respond in kind. That kind of connection? It means everything.

The Truth Always Tells

Here's the thing about employee surveys — they tell the truth whether you like it or not. You can polish the presentation, spin the narrative, or even cherry-pick the metrics for a leadership deck, but your employees already know the truth.

Organizations can earn external recognition or even awards for their culture, but if the internal reality doesn't match the narrative, employees always know. Lasting success isn't built on polished presentations — it's built on trust, accountability, and honest reflection.

At the end of the day, shareholders don't benefit from a pig in lipstick — they benefit from teams who feel heard, respected, and trusted enough to keep delivering. Because when the truth is told — not hidden — employees stay, culture strengthens, and performance compounds.

And if you ever doubt that, just remember: if your employees aren't telling you how they feel in the survey they're probably telling it somewhere else — like Reddit.

Just say'n!

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