

## Court Employee Satisfaction

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### DEFINITION

Ratings of court employees assessing the quality of the work environment and relations between staff and management.

### PURPOSE

Committed and loyal employees have a direct impact on a court's performance. This measure is a powerful tool for surveying employee opinion on whether staff have the materials, motivation, direction, sense of mission, and commitment to do quality work. Knowing how employees perceive the workplace is essential to facilitate organizational development and change, evaluate teamwork and management style, enhance job satisfaction, and thus, improve service to the court's constituents.

### METHOD

This measure is an opinion survey of all court employees and should be conducted on a regular basis (e.g., annually). The survey questionnaire requires respondents to rate their agreement with each of 30 statements. A limited number of additional items ask respondents to identify the organizational unit and/or location in which they work. The survey can be easily adapted to include one or two open-ended questions to solicit additional written feedback and particular concerns.

#### **Step 1: Prepare the Survey**

The content and format of the survey should be standardized—the same questions, asked in the same way—so that survey results can be reliably compared throughout the court and over time. Particular attention should be paid to the second part of the survey that asks for information on the respondents, e.g., their work units, assignments, length of service, etc. This information becomes relevant when analyzing the survey results since it enables comparisons of results according to different respondent groups (e.g., newer employees compared to older, managers compared to staff, etc.).

#### **Step 2: Plan the Data Collection**

A plan should be developed for administering the survey to all court employees. Consideration should be given to whether the survey will be provided in a Web-based survey form or on paper; the Web-based survey is cost-effective in that it avoids the cost of data entry and most survey software tools provide basic analytics. The schedule should include time for advance notification explaining the purpose of the survey and assuring respondents of the anonymity and confidentiality of their responses. Sufficient time should be allowed for subsequent analysis and reporting back to the court.

### Step 3: Administer the Survey

Most organizations that survey their employees do so once a year. Surveying all employees during the same time period provides a snapshot of the entire organization, creating the potential for meaningful comparisons of the results.

The survey should be distributed in a format that maximizes participation. Web-based surveys will require that employees have Internet access. Two weeks is usually a sufficient timeframe for respondents to complete the survey. Sending a reminder in the middle of the response period can boost participation but the court can evaluate response rates and extend the time if needed.

## ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The results of the survey can be analyzed in several ways, each of which lends itself to different kinds of interpretation and insight. The first level of analysis is to compute and examine the average (mean) scores on all the individual items.

When using a five-point scale of responses, the higher the score, the more positive the respondent's view and thus, the more positively the court is perceived as doing with respect to that item. Item scores can be evaluated at the court-wide level or by work unit or location. In addition, scores can be sorted to see which items score highest and lowest.

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### Employee Satisfaction Survey

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. My work unit looks for ways to improve processes and procedures.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I am kept informed about matters that affect me in my workplace.	1	2	3	4	5
3. As I gain experience, I am given responsibility for new and exciting challenges at work.	1	2	3	4	5
4. The court is respected in the community.	1	2	3	4	5
5. The people I work with can be relied upon when I need help.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I have an opportunity to develop my own special abilities.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I understand how my job contributes to the overall mission of the court.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I am treated with respect.	1	2	3	4	5
9. When I do my job well, I am likely to be recognized and thanked by my supervisor.	1	2	3	4	5
10. My working conditions and environment enable me to do my job well.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I feel valued by my supervisor based on my knowledge and contribution to my department, unit, or division.	1	2	3	4	5
12. My court's leaders communicate important information to me in a timely manner.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I enjoy coming to work.	1	2	3	4	5
14. The people I work with take a personal interest in me.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Managers and supervisors follow up on employee suggestions for improvements in services and work processes.	1	2	3	4	5
16. My meetings with my supervisor are useful and meaningful.	1	2	3	4	5
17. When appropriate, I am encouraged to use my own judgment in getting the job done.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I have the resources (materials, equipment, supplies, etc.) necessary to do my job well.	1	2	3	4	5
19. On my job, I know exactly what is expected of me.	1	2	3	4	5
20. I am proud that I work in the court.	1	2	3	4	5
21. The court uses my time and talent well.	1	2	3	4	5
22. I get the training I need to do the job well.	1	2	3	4	5
23. I know what it means for me to be successful on the job.	1	2	3	4	5
24. My supervisor is available when I have questions or need help.	1	2	3	4	5
25. Communication within my division is good.	1	2	3	4	5
26. My co-workers work well together.	1	2	3	4	5
27. I have opportunities to express my opinion about how things are done in my division.	1	2	3	4	5
28. In the last 6 months, a supervisor/manager has talked with me about my performance/career development.	1	2	3	4	5
29. The court and its leaders are dedicated to continuous improvement.	1	2	3	4	5
30. I am treated with respect by the public.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>31. Background Information</b>					
a. In which Court Division do you work? (check one)					
<input type="checkbox"/> District 1 <input type="checkbox"/> District 2 <input type="checkbox"/> District 3					
b. How long have you been employed by the Court:					
<input type="checkbox"/> < 1 year <input type="checkbox"/> 11-20 years					
<input type="checkbox"/> 1-5 years <input type="checkbox"/> > 20 years					
<input type="checkbox"/> 6-10 years					
c. I am planning on working for the Court another:					
<input type="checkbox"/> 1-2 years <input type="checkbox"/> 11-20 years					
<input type="checkbox"/> 3-5 years <input type="checkbox"/> > 20 years					
<input type="checkbox"/> 6-10 years					

To facilitate the interpretation of the average scores, convert those scores to a 100-point scale by multiplying the score by 20. For example, an average score of 4.5 converts to a score of 90 (4.5 x 20) on a 100-point scale.

This approach is illustrated in the table below, where the first column “Mean Response” is the average score, expressed on a 100-point scale. The “N” column provides the number of valid responses to each item; this number may vary if not all respondents answer all questions. The “Percentages” column indicates the percentage of respondents who gave that score for the item.

### Analyzing the Distribution of Responses

	Mean Response	N	Percentages				
			Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. My work unit looks for ways to improve processes and procedures.	81	26	4	8	4	50	35
2. I am kept informed about matters that affect me in my workplace.	66	26	31	12	4	4	50
3. As I gain experience, I am given responsibility for new and exciting challenges at work.	66	26	12	23	19	15	31
4. The court is respected in the community.	75	20	5	10	20	35	30



A second level of analysis involves evaluating the average scores in light of the distribution of responses. Because the average score by itself does not tell us if the individual responses are quite similar or at extremes, there is insight to be gained by looking more closely at the pattern of responses. For example, the average score for item 1 is 81, with 85 percent of the respondents giving the item 4 (agree) or 5 (strongly agree), indicating that most staff have positive views and support efforts by their work unit to find “ways to improve processes and procedures.” Item 2, with an average score of 66, illustrates a case where there are strongly held and opposing views: 50 percent of staff “strongly agree” that they are kept ‘informed about matters’ in the workplace, while 31 percent “strongly disagree.” A next step would be to uncover the source of these powerfully divergent views, perhaps by examining whether they are linked to different work units or locations.

By contrast, although item 3 also has an average score of 66, most responses are in the middle of the distribution (scores of 2, 3, or 4), perhaps indicating most people are not consistently given “responsibility for new and exciting challenges at work.” As results are shared with staff, further conversation can help clarify the views of staff and management about this issue.

A third level of analysis can provide much more sophisticated interpretation of the results, by grouping the items into meaningful categories. The survey is designed using 30 items, each of which was carefully designed in terms of wording and meaning. These 30 items can be sorted into two main groups: items that reflect three factors that promote employee *satisfaction*, and items that reflect three factors associated with *dissatisfaction*. Factors that promote satisfaction motivate employees to do excellent work, while factors that engender dissatisfaction inhibit the ability of employees to do their best.

MEASURE



**Court Employee Satisfaction**

This analytical strategy is based on research done by Frederick Herzberg, who determined that the factors that promote satisfaction are not simply the opposite of the factors that produce dissatisfaction. Satisfaction was found to be related to opportunities to experience achievement, recognition, interesting work, increased responsibility, and learning on the job. These factors he called *motivators*.

**Mean Responses in Employee Satisfaction Categories**



**ACHIEVEMENT**

Employees need to know what is expected of them and receive timely, regular feedback on how they are doing. At all levels of an organization, employees want to be kept informed and recognized for their accomplishments.

**WORK CONTENT**

For employees to be satisfied, they need to know that the work they do is important and their tasks contribute meaningfully to the common purpose.

**RESPONSIBILITY**

Employees are more motivated to do well if they are given the appropriate freedom and authority to carry out their work in the best way possible. Employees become more satisfied when the court supports and encourages staff to grow and develop their abilities on the job.

	Mean Response
<b>Satisfaction</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>Achievement</b>	<b>82</b>
7. I understand how my job contributes to the overall mission of the court.	89
11. I feel valued by my supervisor based on my knowledge and contribution to my department, unit, or division.	76
19. On my job, I know exactly what is expected of me.	87
21. The court uses my time and talent well.	74
23. I know what it means for me to be successful on the job.	84
<b>Work Content</b>	<b>78</b>
2. I am kept informed about matters that affect me in my workplace.	80
13. I enjoy coming to work.	78
20. I am proud that I work in the court.	84
22. I get the training I need to do the job well.	73
29. The court and its leaders are dedicated to continuous improvement.	77
<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>72</b>
1. My work unit looks for ways to improve processes and procedures.	80
3. As I gain experience, I am given responsibility for new and exciting challenges at work.	66
6. I have an opportunity to develop my own special abilities.	68
17. When appropriate, I am encouraged to use my own judgment in getting the job done.	75
27. I have opportunities to express my opinion about how things are done in my division.	72

Dissatisfaction was found to be related to policies perceived as unfair, incompetent or unfair supervisors, bad interpersonal relationships, unpleasant working conditions, salaries perceived as unfair, and job insecurity. Herzberg labeled those factors *environmental* factors.

## Mean Responses in Employee Dissatisfaction Categories



### SUPERVISION

The critical role of effective supervision requires good leadership skills and the ability to treat all employees fairly and respectfully.

### WORK CONDITIONS

Working conditions, including work space and the tools for the job, shape the interactions of employees with the public and the ability of staff to get their job done.

### INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS

The level of camaraderie and teamwork in the employee's immediate work group is a key factor.

### Dissatisfaction

Mean Response  
**76**

#### Supervision and Relationship w/ Boss

73

- |   |    |
|---|----|
| 9. When I do my job well, I am likely to be recognized and thanked by my supervisor.                            | 77 |
| 15. Managers and supervisors follow up on employee suggestions for improvements in services and work processes. | 68 |
| 16. My meetings with my supervisor are useful and meaningful.   | 77 |
| 24. My supervisor is available when I have questions or need help.  | 83 |
| 28. In the last 6 months, a supervisor/manager has talked with me about my performance/career development.      | 60 |

#### Work Conditions

72

- |  |    |
|--|----|
| 4. The court is respected in the community.  | 68 |
| 8. I am treated with respect.  | 76 |
| 10. My working conditions and environment enable me to do my job well.                       | 80 |
| 18. I have the resources (materials, equipment, supplies, etc.) necessary to do my job well. | 70 |
| 30. I am treated with respect by the public.   | 67 |

#### Interpersonal Relations

82

- |  |    |
|--|----|
| 5. The people I work with can be relied upon when I need help.                     | 86 |
| 12. My court's leaders communicate important information to me in a timely manner. | 78 |
| 14. The people I work with take a personal interest in me.                         | 80 |
| 25. Communication within my division is good.                                      | 84 |
| 26. My co-workers work well together.  | 83 |

Since the factors that contribute to satisfaction are different from, and not merely the opposite of, factors that cause dissatisfaction, court management must pay attention to both sets of factors. This survey generates management information that can help develop strategies for addressing the issues identified in the analysis of responses.

In this example, the court can see that Work Conditions is scored the lowest of the factors contributing to Dissatisfaction, while Responsibility is scored the lowest among the factors related with Satisfaction. One possible interpretation of these data is that the employees believe they work well together, but they do this despite poor work conditions and limited responsibility. Court management can now formulate a strategy: the court might decide to take advantage of the apparently high level of teamwork (Interpersonal Relations score) to seek staff suggestions for improvements to work conditions, thereby mitigating the main factor creating Dissatisfaction. In addition, the court might decide to address the main issue of Satisfaction, the desire to

be allowed to take more responsibility, by initiating discussion with staff of the underlying issues. This analytical strategy can be extended to see how the responses on each factor of Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction vary by work unit or by length of service.

## OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS

The survey is designed so that it can be completed in a reasonable amount of time and provide information with value to court management. The addition of one or two open-ended questions can supplement this approach and demonstrate management's willingness to listen. One such item is: "What could the court do to help you be more productive and better serve the court's customers?" Courts have been advised of such things as the need for a cell phone use policy at work, the need for more cross-training, including employees in the evaluation of supervisors, and other useful suggestions.

## Terms You Need to Know

**Confidentiality:** The court should maintain ethical standards of confidentiality. This means not only ensuring that the administration of the survey provides for anonymity (e.g., the survey form does not ask for the respondent's name), but also that the analysis of results is done at the level of groups of employees or of the court as a whole. For example, knowing that a respondent works in Finance and has been employed by the court for over 10 years may be enough information in some courts to identify that person to others. Care must be taken to ensure that the reporting of results does not violate the assurance of confidentiality.

**Dissatisfaction:** An employee's feeling about their workplace, based on environmental factors including policies perceived as unfair, incompetent or unfair supervisors, bad interpersonal relationships, unpleasant working conditions, salaries perceived as unfair, and job insecurity.

**Mean:** The average value of a set of numbers, equal to the sum of all the values divided by the number of values. For example, to obtain the mean value of the set of numbers 3, 4, 5, first calculate the total  $(3+4+5) = 12$ , then divide  $(12/3 = 4)$ .

**Satisfaction:** An employee's feeling about a workplace, based on motivating factors including opportunities to experience achievement, recognition, interesting work, increased responsibility, and learning on the job.

**Valid Responses:** Responses that should be counted for purposes of analysis. For example, missing or nonsensical responses are not counted.

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Project Directors: Brian Ostrom and Daniel Hall  
Series Editor: Richard Schauflier  
Senior Contributors: John Doerner, Ingo Kellitz, and  
Shauna Strickland  
Information Design: Neal Kauder, VisualResearch, Inc.



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