CLIMATE AND EMPLOYEE SURVEYS

Surveys have become increasingly common in organisations over recent years, and research suggests that most large and successful organisations are surveying their employees on a regular basis. The reason why is clear as hundreds of studies have demonstrated the relationship between organisational climate, employee commitment and bottom-line performance measures such as sales growth, efficiency, productivity, and customer perceptions of service and quality. Organisational climate, for example, is the closest thing to a profit-and-loss statement of how well a company manages its people. Climate influences motivation, discretionary effort and commitment, and consequently climate is indicative of how well the organisation is realising its full potential.

In most jobs, there is a vast gulf between what employees must do to meet expectations, and what they can do if they perform at their full potential. High performance climates are characterised by individuals who routinely do "whatever it takes" to meet goals, close sales or satisfy customers. Poor climates lead people to disengage from the job, which in turn will lead to increased absenteeism, turnover, dissatisfaction, and lower productivity.

- **OUR APPROACH**

Surveys are essentially management tools to gather data to inform management decisions. They provide a thorough and detailed analysis of an organisation's current circumstances as a basis for moving forward. Our approach is tailored to the situation, and it may include a combination of questionnaires, focus groups, diagnostic workshops and interviews. We then use our consultancy expertise to recommend practical solutions to improve business performance. Typical areas of focus for surveys include:

- Identifying what is working well, and what might improve performance
- Establishing causes of high turnover and low productivity
- Collecting staff ideas for performance improvement
- Measuring causes of stress and impact on performance
- Identifying morale issues which may lower productivity
- Evaluating organisational capability, and its impact on performance

- **CRITICAL FACTORS TO THE SUCCESS OF SURVEYS**

1. The first key strategy is to start by thinking about the outcomes and the strategic relevance of the survey. It is essential to think about why the survey is taking place, and what organisational performance questions the survey data is being used to resolve. It is obviously important that the survey data generates information which will be useful and actionable, and which can be used to steer organisational strategy and organisational decision making.

2. At the start of the survey, it is important to "sell" the purpose and aims of the survey in order to get "buy-in" and to encourage many employees to participate in the survey as possible. We are very experienced in using a number of techniques to encourage staff to participate and contribute to the well-being of the organisation.

3. It is equally important to "sell" the findings of the survey in a user-friendly, accessible and action-orientated way. Historically, many surveys would result in thick books of data, and tables of numbers which few managers would have the time or patience to read and digest. Our reports are typically 4-page summaries with colour, graphics and easy-to-understand charts and headlines, and we will of course supplement the statistical data to provide a benchmark for future reference and follow up surveys.

4. As consultants with over 25 years experience, our primary focus is on the strategic objectives of the survey, and we can use the data to inform the business in a relevant and focused way about how to improve the performance of the business.

5. Well timed surveys can provide valuable, essential data for the organisation, and typically there will be a follow-up action plan which can be used to monitor how well actions are being implemented. However, in order to create a sense of pace, purpose and credibility to the follow-up actions, it is often a useful mindset to commit to a follow-up survey, so that people are held accountable for implementing the findings, and so that progress can be accurately monitored and measured.