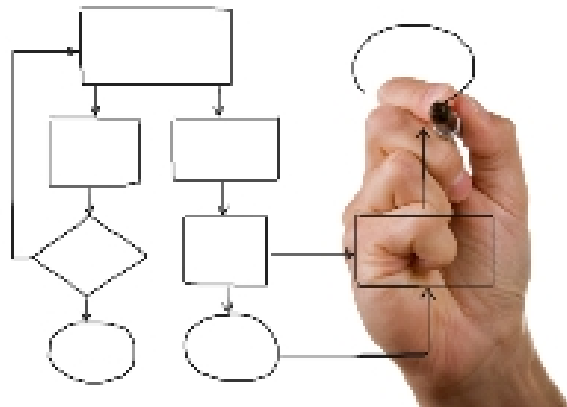


The Ten Rules of Organisational Surveys

- A Support Document for
Survey Project Managers/Coordinators



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THE TEN RULES OF ORGANISATIONAL SURVEYS

- 1 Begin with an end in mind – clarify objectives.**
- 2 Change how the organisation is lead and managed.**
- 3 To win, engage the appropriate weapon.**
- 4 Manage and maintain confidentiality.**
- 5 Be proactive – provide “leading indicators of effectiveness”.**
- 6 Manage the process strongly – build bridges.**
- 7 Add value – turn data into information by providing meaning.**
- 8 Benchmark to track competition and to continuously improve.**
- 9 Develop Action Plans.**
- 10 Obtain tangible results.**

The Ten Rules for Organisational Surveys

Introduction

Several important sources of information (databases) are available to managers for the operation of their business: budgets, profit and loss (or income and expenditure), customer (or client) satisfaction and organisational/employee engagement survey data. Surveys provide valuable information for business strategy due to the important links between employee and customer perceptions of performance¹. In particular information can highlight areas of organisational effectiveness that, when actioned, will enable improved delivery to the market. Surveys can also be used to measure culture and to assess areas for productivity and service improvements². Here are some guidelines to maximise the benefits for your organisation.

1. Begin with an End in Mind – Clarify Objectives

Organisational employee surveys need to tap into the strategic and core information needs of an organisation. Standardised surveys will produce limited implementation unless they are customised to meet your information needs. A critical step during preliminary research is for the organisation to be clear about the survey's purpose. Beginning with an end in mind enables managers to consider their strategic issues and to galvanise their specific information needs.

Focus groups, consultations with managers and issuing a short checklist of available Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) can assist establish your organisation's specific objectives and needs.

2. Organisational surveys are usually about changing how your organisation is led and managed

All organisational effectiveness models place leadership and management in the driving position³. Some senior managers believe organisational problems emanate from employees without realising that employees work within the culture, structure and work requirements established by their managers. Surveys may be about measuring employee attitudes and perceptions, however, a customised survey is also a valid measure of organisational effectiveness. It will enable improvements to be made to leadership, management, supervision, internal service quality and organisational culture.

3. To win, engage the appropriate weapon

Having “Begun With an End in Mind”⁴, you then need to know what you want to achieve for your organisation, what you think are the major obstacles and then ensure that the appropriate actions (interventions) are applied.

To elicit the requisite information, you may require one of the following:

- ⇒ **Organisational Effectiveness Survey:** How effectively does your business deliver to the market? Is your organisation “Built to Last”⁵? This is measured by questions relating to Values, Vision, Long Term Nature and Purpose.
- ⇒ **Organisational Culture Survey:** Is there a consistent and aligned set of beliefs and assumptions that influence behaviour across the group or organisation? Does the degree to which these shared beliefs and assumptions facilitate (are in line with) the organisation’s strategic objectives (brand promise and attributes)?
- ⇒ **Leadership and Managerial Effectiveness:** Is there a need to evaluate the Leadership, immediate manager/supervisor effectiveness and to feed this information back constructively to improve management style and performance?
- ⇒ **Employee Engagement Survey:** To what extent are your employees engaged with the Organisation? What are the issues by Division that can assist improve motivation and retention? This is measured by questions relating to Promote (Say), Commitment (Stay) and Exceed (Strive).
- ⇒ **Internal Service Quality Survey:** How effective is the internal customer service of your departments in the areas of internal customer focus, total quality, service improvement and skill deployment?
- ⇒ **Customer (client) Satisfaction Survey:** What is the market’s perception of your products/services? Are your staff focused on sales? What is your employees’ awareness level of competitor activity?

Your organisation/employee survey can include a range of the above issues and thereby consolidate your design, administration, analyses, feedback and action planning efforts. Making annual comparisons of progress for each department/branch is then possible. This is the single most important benefit from surveying.

4. Manage and Maintain Confidentiality

People are understandably concerned about confidentiality. Check the procedures your consultant has in place to guarantee this. Statistical reports should have an agreed minimum number of responses before they are prepared. Your views on confidentiality need to be set out in the Management Briefing Notes⁶ and explained in the introductory section of your survey questionnaire.

When staff find that confidentiality is demonstrated during the first survey, response rates will improve significantly for subsequent surveys.

5. Be proactive – provide “leading indicators of effectiveness”

Anticipate the problems before they become serious issues. When a successful organisation carries out a survey, it is the acid test of pro-activity. Remember that surveys provide leading indicators of organisational performance that will affect your organisation or division down the track (e.g., employee engagement, customer service, supervisory effectiveness, etc.). This is in contrast to financial accounting which prepares and reports on a lagging basis.

An organisational self-assessment is challenging because it will uncover areas for improvement. It is important that managers react to this by finding out why those perceptions exist and respect the fact that perceptions are “reality” to those who hold them.

Organisations will only show the commitment to look at issues if they are in a highly competitive situation or if they are underperforming. Otherwise, no one wants the discomfort of “looking in the mirror”!

6. Build Bridges - Manage the process strongly

It is important to manage the survey process strongly from the outset. This is necessary to ensure success, as senior and middle management will play a critical role in the success of the survey.

To build commitment to the survey process, ownership of the results and to obtain a high response rate, the following steps are recommended:

1. Facilitate focus groups with a cross section of staff in order to identify organisational issues that require further information. Administering focus groups is optional, since many HR staff will already possess this knowledge.

2. Survey Briefing Notes⁶ to be prepared and issued for the information of managers, supervisors and staff. These will provide further details on the purpose of the survey, confidentiality, completion timing, feedback arrangements and the action planning process.
3. Distribute a Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) Checklist⁷ to the senior management team to find out their specific information needs. This will guide the survey design and importantly assist with gaining 'buy-in'.
4. Management should be kept informed when survey drafts and the initial summary data becomes available. This will help to build commitment which will be critical for the action planning phase.

7. Add Value – turn data into information by providing meaning

Computers and statistics can produce much data. Data is turned into information by giving it meaning. It is therefore critical that the survey consultant add value to the data before presenting to management.

Data can be turned into information in two main stages:

- 1. Executive Information System⁸ (EIS)**, where value adding summarised reports are provided to senior management electronically or physically. For an organisational survey, this could include:
 - Overall Organisational Results
 - Competitor Analysis and Benchmark Report
 - Key Drivers of improvement
 - Comparative divisional or departmental survey results
 - Continuous improvement monitoring
- 2. Operational Information System⁹ (OIS)**, where each division or department receives a package of information relating to their own results. This could include:
 - Overall divisional/departmental results
 - “Roll-out” (of results) Strategy
 - Each division/department’s demographic results
 - Open ended reports of general comments made
 - Action planning program (includes manual)
 - Continuous improvement monitoring

8. Use External Benchmarks to track competition

There will be several KPIs where you will need to obtain a comparative benchmark with other organisations in your industry, state (or by function, IT, Sales) in order to provide an external perspective. To monitor progress, there are simple methods to indicate graphically whether a department's KPIs have remained static, improved or slipped. Monitoring improvement provides management with a measure of the action taken by the various departmental managers. It is therefore important to support these managers between surveying and resurveying, which leads to rule nine.

9. Action Planning (remember: Begin with an End in Mind!)

Since survey research is a means to an end, it is important to know where to draw the line to avoid "paralysis by analysis". Yet sufficient analysis and information must be supplied to demonstrate the survey's integrity. An external consultant must be able to provide statistically reliable questions, analyse data and provide value-adding information in user-friendly reports.

Therefore, organisational surveys should result in practical and profitable outcomes through the implementation of a rigorous action planning phase. Action Planning needs to take place at four levels: The Executive Committee, divisional management, departmental/branch manager and functional management (e.g. human resource, marketing, IT).

10. Obtain Tangible Outcomes.

For example:

- ⇒ Surveys must measure specific core KPIs across the organisation in order to provide external benchmarks for your industry.
- ⇒ Survey information must provide information to support the organisation's strategic issues (e.g. sales focus, competitiveness, cost awareness) in addition to operational staff issues.
- ⇒ Survey information must also effectively measure and track your organisation's expectations.
- ⇒ Survey information will assist you to realign your organisational culture to a stronger customer (member, client) focus.
- ⇒ Monitor the strengths and style of your management team as perceived by their colleagues. Feed that information back and ensure that action plans are put in place.

⇒ Strengthen your organisational culture to enhance performance. Five recent Quantum client case studies have demonstrated a strong correlation between an effectively operating business and customer satisfaction, hence reinforcing the value of customised organisational surveys.