

Employee Feedback:

Are you creating a better workplace or opening a can of worms?



Organizations can profit from employee feedback. Employers may discover whether employees enjoy their jobs, consider themselves making a contribution and feel valued, and consider themselves part of a team or the bigger picture. Surveys will identify employees' feelings about managers and other company leaders, what benefits they value and much more. If, however, you are not dedicated and equipped to analyze the survey data and act on the feedback – you may be opening a can of worms that will ultimately negatively impact your organization.

Asking for employees' feedback is one of the best ways to empower employees. Not responding to that feedback can de-motivate and actually contradict the company's intentions, which are usually to create a more optimal workplace. So, how can we best utilize employee feedback?

Acknowledge

Whether you've conducted employee surveys, conducted personal interviews or even featured a "suggestion box" in your office, acknowledge and thank your employees for their feedback. Some of them may have stepped outside their comfort zone to give your company open and honest feedback. Acknowledging their contribution to the process will go a long way. Conversely, not acknowledging or giving credit where credit is due will discourage employees to pass up the opportunity to share feedback in the future.

Reward

Employees that feel they have contributed to the company's success with their ideas and suggestions may remain loyal to the company and be motivated to make their ideas work. For some employees, public acknowledgement may be reward enough. Feature them in your company newsletter, make an announcement at an all company meeting or send a special email to all employees about that idea and its originator.

Others may be more motivated to come forth with ideas and suggestions when a small prize is on the line. Consider hosting an "idea" contest to gain insight on possible solutions for an issue your company is facing. After all, who is closer to the heart of company issues than employees themselves? When feedback is especially critical, consider offering a catered lunch, extra vacation day or another prize if the company reaches a certain level of participation. Remember, employees are more likely to give honest feedback when offered anonymity.

Take action

Use employee feedback to improve company policy, procedures or culture. If employees complain about poor management, offer your managers feedback and training. If they complain about minor issues such as office temperature or lack of a microwave in the break room – fix it! If they offer suggestions on much bigger issues, decide whether you are willing to take their suggestions or even pieces of them to begin company improvement. Request specific examples from employees so you may pinpoint very specific issues and efficiently improve them.

Announce results

Promptly announce all results or changes that have occurred due to employee feedback. When employees hear that their feedback is driving results, they will continue to provide it and will be more invested in the process.

Receiving feedback from employees can be enlightening and beneficial to your company's culture and mission. In order to reap the maximum benefit from feedback, remember to acknowledge and/or reward it, take action and announce results in a timely manner. Your employees will continue to offer feedback when they feel it is used constructively.