

## Business Bullet ~ How Loyal Are Your Employees?

It seems that for years we have assumed that we know what makes our employees loyal to the organization. All of the polls taken over the past twenty years point to the same thing — what type of management climate was in the organization? Do you remember the old “Does the company value me?” and “Am I an integral part of the organization?” concepts? We were all told that money was down the list in the sixth or seventh spot depending on what survey was quoted. We all worked under the assumption that the management climate and the working relationship with the supervisor were numbers one and two respectively.

Things have changed. Twenty years ago, there was two-way loyalty, your employer took good care of you, and you were loyal to them. A recent study places financial compensation as number two on the list with healthcare and other benefits first and growth and earnings potential as number three. Business executives including the Human Resource Management ranked the financial issue as number seven. This could be due to the level of these individuals’ salaries that provides them with the ability to weather some of the increased costs associated with gasoline, heating fuels and the cost of food.

Further changes from a survey of working adults conducted by Harris Interactive showed that employees ranked management climate as number four and the relationship with the supervisor as number seven. So, what happened? How could things change so fast?

One of the major issues is that the method of gaining the information from the employee is faulty in many companies. In many cases, there is no anonymity in answers, so the employee rarely will answer truthfully. This is especially true when an immediate supervisor asks the questions. Written surveys will provide some help with the anonymity as long as the employee does not have to write any comments.

In today’s business climate, regardless of the area of the country, job security is the real issue employees are concerned with. When you look at the record number of home foreclosures and the daily news of companies cutting more jobs, the employees are nervous and wondering if this could happen to them. Many have already seen friends or family suffer through job loss and foreclosure. The continued uncertainty will only exacerbate the situation for many employers.

A good way to check your own company’s employee loyalty is through surveys. This gives you the information you want and you would be able to know that it is relatively accurate.

There are several different approaches to gathering the information that you could use. The first is to provide a written survey that does not ask for any comments that has the employee rank how well they agree or disagree with the statement by filling in a box. For example:

“Do you feel that you are satisfied with the current level of compensation that you receive?”

Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	No Opinion	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

One note about the design of the question is that it should deal with feelings, not thinking. Intellectual thought is not what you are looking for. You want the emotional side of how people feel about issues and topics.

If your results show too many responses in the “no opinion” area, you have a problem with credibility and will have to consider a different way to gather the information.

The second approach is to find someone or an organization to administer and to complete an analysis of the information. Check with your CPA first; s/he may be able to do the administration and tabulation for you. If not, check with any business or professional organizations that you may be a member of. Your Chamber of Commerce or other business association may provide the service. Third, contact a company that specializes in preparing and administering employee surveys. They will provide you with a detailed analysis of the responses and in many cases will have comparative information for you from a broad base of studies that have been completed previously. The most important aspect of deciding which of these methods to use is which will provide you with the most accurate picture of what your employees feel about the company. The second most important consideration is where do you find comparative information on the same issues and topics that you have selected for your survey.

(Continued on Page 2)

The comparative information can usually be found at your business associations, Chamber of Commerce, commercial sources such as Hay Group or Harris Interactive, employer associations, staffing firms that are national in scope and permanent placement companies that you may have worked with in the past. National data may be too broad so ask for a regional data break down if possible.

Two final considerations are: one, are you going to share the information from the survey with your employees and two, are you prepared to take action on the results.

If, for example, your survey showed that 65% of your employees were strongly dissatisfied with the working environment, are you prepared to share this information and are you prepared to take some action to improve the environment? If you are not going to do anything about the information that you have received, then the question becomes why are you conducting the survey? You probably would be better off to leave things alone and continue doing business the way you always have until it becomes a major issue with your staff and you are losing people over it -- which is what you have at 65%.

You must be prepared to check your ego at the door if you are going to conduct employee surveys. An employee survey can show your employees that it matters how they feel about the company and the culture where they work. It will also provide you with important information that can make you more competitive and better prepared to adjust to the changing business climate.

