



Employee satisfaction survey a time to reflect

By: Christian Moises, News Editor | September 7, 2011

New Orleans-area employers should take note of the results from CityBusiness' annual employee satisfaction survey, a critical component of the nomination process for the Best Places to Work event.

This year's results, which can be found by clicking [here](#), show reason for concern.

Companies submitting nominations for the event run the gamut from hospitals to schools and energy companies to nonprofits. They employ anywhere between five and 8,000.

Nominees are asked to send the survey to their entire staff roster so all employees have the opportunity to rate their company based on 19 questions. All replies are kept confidential.

The selection committee uses the survey results to supplement a lengthy nomination form submitted earlier in the process that looks at all aspects of employee life including salary, paid time off, health care benefits and intangible perks. The Best Places to Work process has evolved over the years from asking companies to submit a random set of employee email addresses to allowing all staff members to rate their company so "happy" staff members are not "randomly" selected to complete the survey.

A handful of companies submitted a nomination but did not want to send the survey to their entire roster, resulting in disqualification. One company went as far to say it didn't want to rock the boat among employees.

Survey results are not released to the public and are only used to complete the selection process. But whether it's to be considered a Best Place to Work or just allowing employees to voice their opinions — good or bad — knowing what your staff needs to remain productive and happy is vital to a company's bottom line.

While a majority of the 3,511 employees who responded rated their company as excellent, there were several questions where employees showed their dissatisfaction.

Nearly 10 percent of respondents consider employee morale poor, and 32.6 percent believe their company's emphasis on time away from work is just average. The only category to rate higher than 45 percent under the excellent header was tangible benefits, such as pay, 401(k) and health care coverage.

Local employees are almost on par with the national scene, according to the national Society for Human Resource Management's 2010 employee satisfaction survey.

Of the 606 employees nationwide to rank the most important aspects of their work environment, job security was first with 63 percent of the vote, followed by benefits at 60 percent and opportunities to use skills and abilities at 56 percent. Compensation/pay was fifth at 53 percent, and flexibility to balance life and work issues came in 10 with 42 percent.

Mark Schmit, SHRM director of research, said the Best Places to Work survey results aren't surprising.

As companies hunkered down and cut back during the recession, a lot of the perks were eliminated, he said.

"Employees are feeling a bit beat up now because the conditions ... have not been all that employee-friendly, and the problem is they don't have a lot of options," Schmit said, referring to companies reducing staff during the recession and not expanding during the recovery.

"We've definitely seen that as a trend," he said. "People are holding back from hiring and they've laid off. The work doesn't go away, it just gets shifted so people end up working more."

Schmit said the association's 2011 survey will be released in October, but he doesn't expect too many changes from last year's results.

That forecast is very much in line with the Best Places to Work survey numbers, which showed a shift from excellent last year to more scattered results in the above average and average categories.

Whether that's because more employees had access to the survey or those who are participating are letting it all out, employers need to take the numbers seriously — and listen to their employees.

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Measuring up

Part of the Best Places to Work nomination process includes a publication survey sent to the employees of all nominated companies. Candidates analyzed the survey over time to determine where they stand on the following issues:

Issue	Excellent	Above average	Average	Below average	Poor
Tangible benefits (salary, 401(k), health care, etc.)	46.3%	37.1%	20.2%	4.2%	2.2%
Staff development	41.9%	37.7%	22.7%	6.2%	4.5%
Employee pay with industry change	41.9%	35.0%	19.2%	4.9%	1.0%
Employee job satisfaction	42%	31.9%	18.9%	6.2%	1.7%
Employee pay (in line with the company)	41.2%	31.2%	18.7%	6.7%	1.4%
Job environment, job satisfaction	40.6%	33.0%	20.2%	4.0%	4%
Employee autonomy and independence	38.4%	33.1%	20.7%	4.0%	4.3%
Flexibility of employee	38.4%	30%	21.6%	4.0%	1.6%
Employee on personal development	38.3%	32.3%	21.8%	4.7%	1.9%
Recognition of employee performance	37.5%	30.0%	20.5%	7.5%	3.5%
How well company "lives down what it preaches"	36.1%	30.7%	20%	7.9%	4.3%
Communication between employees and management	36.1%	30.7%	20.1%	8.9%	3.5%
How well employee values problems in the workplace	32.3%	31%	21.7%	7.6%	1.4%
Employee and management employee ideas	31.7%	30.4%	22.1%	8.1%	1.4%
Employee morale	31.5%	31.1%	20.4%	7.9%	1.4%
Tangible benefits (see includes: gross pay, etc.)	31.1%	37%	24.6%	6.9%	1.4%
Responsibility employee organization	30.6%	31.6%	20.5%	7.6%	4.9%
Employee on personal time away from work	28.1%	28.3%	22.8%	7.9%	4.9%
How quickly to respond	28.1%	28.1%	20.4%	8.1%	8.1%

Click on the image above to see the expanded version of the 2011 Best Places to Work employee satisfaction survey results.