If you are serious about improving your organization, your people, and their performance, you need to be serious about — and good at — “employee listening.” That’s because understanding employee opinion is critical to identifying and driving the kinds of organizational change that lead to better performance.

**Why Employee Listening?**

- It can give you a competitive advantage by focusing your efforts to improve.
- It can enhance your position in the eyes of your employees by demonstrating your willingness to engage them — and you can further enhance it by communicating what you learned and the action you intend to take.
- It can increase your effectiveness by enabling you to operate on the basis of sound information — as opposed to untested (and possibly erroneous) assumptions.

**Five good reasons for not engaging in Employee Listening — and five good answers**

We’ve heard them all before. Any of these sound familiar?

1. **We don’t want to raise expectations.** The fact is, your employees already have expectations — and those expectations aren’t always reasonable. Employee listening can help you create more realistic expectations.

2. **We’re not prepared to deal with the findings.** Avoiding the data doesn’t solve the underlying problem. It might be wise, though, to engage employees in a discussion about the issues that can be addressed quickly and the ones that will take time.

3. **We already know what they think.** Survey after survey tells us that employees believe their companies “make major decisions that affect my life without asking me.” You’ll have a hard time enlisting employees’ support for company goals when you don’t demonstrate you know or care about theirs.

4. **We’re surveyed to death.** You just may need an overall “listening strategy.” Through proper design, you can avoid bombarding employees with survey questionnaires and make the process painless.

5. **We don’t have the time or the money.** Through email and Web-based surveys, you can get data quickly and efficiently. And, it’s an investment in your human capital that can have a positive ROI in many ways.
The nuts and bolts technical stuff

If you believe that employee listening is right for you, you need a firm that can help you:
• Learn what your employees are thinking
• Make the most of what you learn

When employee survey techniques are used by someone who understands how to use them, you’ll discover ways to improve processes and performance that you may not have even considered.

Our extensive capabilities include all phases of an employee survey project, and our proven approach helps ensure that you get the information you want from the audiences that matter most to you.

Research design: We help you identify the “real questions” the survey must answer to improve your business. And, we design the research to get you the answers you seek. This may include cross sectional, longitudinal, and panel studies, as well as pre- and post- survey focus group and structured interview designs.

Sampling design: We make sure the right people are surveyed to provide you reliable results. We have experience in simple probability sampling designs (simple random and systematic sampling) and more complex sampling designs, such as proportionate and disproportionate stratified sampling, cluster sampling, and two-stage designs. The choice of sampling design depends on the objectives of the survey, the need for precision in overall and sub-group results, and the most efficient use of your resources. We also have considerable experience developing mechanisms to draw samples from available databases.

Questionnaire design: We design questionnaires with quantitative response scales and open-ended questions. In addition, we design questions using rating scales, item rankings, discrete forced choice questions, hierarchical choice models, paired comparison techniques, and trade-off-matrix exercises — all to identify opinions, preferences, priorities, options, and choices that will be the most useful to you.

Survey administration: We make sure you get the highest response rates with the most feasible data collection approach for your situation. We have extensive experience with all survey data collection methods: on-site group administration, administrative data collection, mail surveys, telephone surveys, and Web-based surveys. We can handle all fulfillment activities related to mail surveys (e.g., printing, handling, mailing), provide trained facilitators to conduct on-site group administration, provide trained telephone interviewers, and develop and host secure single-use, password-protected Web-based surveys.

Data processing: To optimize the integrity and quality of your survey data, we manage all aspects of data processing, including handling and tabulation of quantitative responses in printed questionnaires, automatic data capture from online surveys, and compilation of verbatim responses from open-ended questions.

Statistical analysis: We developed an extensive system for producing client-friendly statistical results — in graph and table formats — which can summarize question-by-question and aggregate results for a particular topic. We routinely provide statistical results for the survey population as a whole and for sub-parts of the sample relevant to the purposes of the survey (e.g., by age, by location, by business unit). And, our consultants have the necessary statistical expertise to apply to your unique needs to ensure you get the right analysis for drawing the right conclusions.

Interviews and focus groups: An employee listening process often involves interviews with senior managers and key decision-makers at the start of a project to understand critical management needs, develop consensus about the purpose and scope of the project, and gain management commitment to the process. Employee focus groups are often used up front to discover hidden employee issues that can be explored in the survey, and to gain buy-in to the survey process. They’re also frequently used after analyzing survey findings to look into emerging issues in more depth. Buck has considerable experience conducting executive interviews and facilitating focus groups for maximum employee participation and candor.

Action planning: Our consultants help clients turn survey data into meaningful action that improves the business. We work with senior leadership, line management, and employee teams to develop more effective work systems, structures, and processes to achieve higher levels of performance. Our expertise in communication, human resources, organizational change and development, employee benefits, and compensation — all of which support performance — allows you to bring the results full circle.
The right survey

Buck’s core Employee Listening Survey Suite includes the following types of surveys:
• Total Rewards and Benefits Optimization
• Health Care and Wellness
• Communication Effectiveness
• Organizational Culture
• Employee Engagement
• Retirement Planning and Benefits

The surveys we develop are customized to meet the client’s needs and deliver useful results. Below are just some of the objectives we can help you achieve through an employee listening process:
• Enhance work environment/culture/climate
• Improve communication systems
• Assess training and development needs
• Monitor organizational change
• Measure employee engagement
• Support executive vision
• Analyze staffing needs
• Reorganize department work flows
• Improve incentive pay
• Support benefit plan redesign
• Measure satisfaction with deferred compensation plans
• Assess satisfaction with total compensation/benefits statements.

Contact us

To find out more, contact us at: 1 866.355.6647 or hrconsulting@xerox.com
www.xerox.com/hrconsulting

Still not sure about employee listening? Consider a few real life examples.

A FORTUNE 200 Steel Manufacturer used a broad-based employee “pulse” survey to gauge how well the CEO’s objectives had cascaded down through individual goals at every level in the company. The survey data enabled the client to pinpoint exactly where the cascading process had been effective and where more work was needed.

A Telecom Company used what it learned about employee perceptions of value to shift dollars from its base salary budget to stem increases in employee healthcare premiums. The organization was emerging from bankruptcy and employee retention was critical. Delivering value — in the eyes of employees — was critical to success.

A Global Semiconductor Producer found out that few of its employees knew the names of its top 10 customers. As a result, the client began inviting customers in to present to employees. Customer retention and employee engagement both increased.

We can share many other stories of clients who learned things that surprised them — and then turned those findings to their advantage. The question is not whether an organization should engage in employee listening, but whether it can afford not to.