

case | study

Success Stories From Buck Consultants

Measuring Employee Engagement and Building a High-Performance Workforce

"This company provides an atmosphere that is worth dedicating your day to."

– Comment from Surveyed Employee

CLIENT ISSUE

A large and highly successful U.S. food distributor with more than 3,000 primarily warehousing and transportation employees wanted to measure the elements and drivers of its culture — considered by the CEO to be the firm's most important competitive advantage. The company retained Buck Consultants to conduct an employee engagement survey to measure three specific aspects of its work environment:

- The level of employee engagement
- Select drivers of engagement
- How well the dimensions of its core organizational values were embedded in the company

The company also saw improving its culture and driving higher levels of engagement as means of meeting its key business objectives: successfully integrating acquisitions, retaining a market leadership position, and continuing strong revenue and profitability growth.

SOLUTION

Buck worked with the top management team, especially the CEO and VP of Human Resources, to understand the demographics of the company's workforce, its business model and desired culture, and its strategic objectives for conducting an employee engagement survey. The Buck team designed and conducted regular employee surveys of the workforce using a tailored questionnaire focused on engagement, the organization's desired cultural hallmarks, and drivers of engagement and culture. Buck has conducted the employee engagement survey seven times, administering it in paper-and-pencil form because of the nature of the work and the workforce.

RESULTS

The response rate for each of the surveys was typically between 70 percent and 80 percent, peaking at 88 percent in the most recent survey in 2009, providing very reliable results. The surveys, and management's follow-up action planning, have led to improvement in every major indicator of employee engagement in subsequent surveys. In addition, measures of the hallmarks of the company's desired culture have also improved in subsequent surveys.

What Else Employees Say About a Company that Really Engages Them

"This is a wonderful, caring company to work for."

"I love this company and as it grows I am able to be a part of the changes and challenges that come along."

"Wonderful company, very fulfilling job ... I'm thankful every day that I work here."

"I love coming to work each day and working with great people in a great company."

"You feel like you want to work hard for this company because of how it treats us and its great core values."

"I like that performance is what counts around here and that it leads to more pay and more opportunities."

"I like working for a company where my performance matters and helps the company succeed."

The keys to the success of the engagement surveys in helping drive higher performance in this company are top management's commitment to the survey process and to using the results as an integral part of performance management. The survey results were used in an extensive follow-up action planning process, with location- and function-specific accountabilities designed to drive change, including:

- Increased management training and focus on employee development
- Development of gender/racial diversity initiatives including a women's leadership council, a diversity leadership group, and a formal mentoring program
- Development of a five-year strategic plan to improve benefit satisfaction while containing costs; overall satisfaction with benefits rose from 42 percent to 63 percent over seven years
- Lower product and fuel waste, increased employee productivity, and reduced inefficiency
- Increased frequency and readability of employee communication — and a requirement that managers be held accountable for communicating effectively

The surveys have elicited superlative comments from employees (see sidebar).

Not coincidentally, the company's financial performance indicators have all shown positive movement since we began conducting this survey.

CONTACT US

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