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russell consulting

Assessing Employee Attitudes & Perceptions of Your Organization

Using Quality of Worklife Surveys & Employee
Focus Groups to Understand & Remove Barriers to
Individual and Organizational Performance



A Consulting Service of RCI



Why Assess Employee Attitudes?

The "human side" of an enterprise offers an organizational leader a wide array of challenges.



- *What motivates our workforce?*
- *Why do we have a 30% turnover rate among our support staff?*
- *How can we get people excited about our quality improvement initiative?*

Understanding and responding to these questions depends upon good information. Without clear direction, we can't do the right things.

The root causes that underlie these human resource questions can best be discovered by exploring the attitudes and perceptions that employees have towards the organization and the many aspects of organizational life.

Why Investigate Quality of Worklife?

Gathering data on how employees view the organization can help chart a direction for addressing a range of human resource challenges. Rather than simply offering a conflict management training program to deal with conflict between teams, rather than adjusting salaries to reduce the turnover of engineers, rather than making assumptions about the causes of organizational function or dysfunction . . . use data from your employees to point you in the right direction.

What's Your Alternative?

Without good data, how will you make good human resource decisions? Organizational assessments are the only way to understand how employees perceive the organization. Without assessing employee perceptions and attitudes, you would only be guessing at what employees need and how you should respond to these needs.



Methods of Quality of Worklife Assessment

Gathering Data from Employees

Assessing employee's QWL perceptions depends upon a careful investigative process that uses a variety of methods. Developing a well-crafted employee attitudes survey—or using an existing standardized survey—can help you discover a universe of clear and concise information about your employee's beliefs, attitudes and perspectives. The written survey can be a powerful instrument, giving you *quantitative* data on a variety of specific topics.

When combined with another form of data collection—such as *focus groups*—the statistical data from a survey is further enhanced by the *qualitative* data from this other form of employee assessment.

Using one or both of these forms of data collection can help you uncover underlying issues and discover different employee's perceptions of the organization.

Employee Attitude Surveys

Surveys enable an organization to collect quantitative data on employee perspectives about specific organizational dimensions. The survey allows the investigator to easily collect information on these discrete dimensions from a large employee population.

Russell Consulting uses several approaches when using surveys in its organizational assessments:

- **Job Descriptive Index (JDI)** – The JDI measures employee perceptions of six facets of organizational life: the *work itself*, *supervision*, *opportunities for promotion*, *pay*, *co-workers*, and *the job in general*. We use the standardized JDI because your employees' JDI responses can be compared to norms from the Midwest. Using the JDI results, you can compare your employee responses to these six dimensions with other employees from midwestern companies.
- **RCI Quality of Worklife Survey** – The RCI QWL Survey has been developed by RCI over the last fifteen years. This survey explores eleven different dimensions of worklife quality in its exploration of employee attitudes and perceptions. The *customized* QWL Survey used by a



specific client is based upon a selection of specific questions from more than 150 survey question possibilities.

- Our **Customized Survey** is created specifically for your organization. Based upon the unique outcomes and characteristics you wish to measure, we develop an assessment instrument that measures only those dimensions that are important to you.

The JDI, QWL Survey, and our customized surveys include several "open-ended" questions that ask employees to identify issues they are concerned about. Sample customized surveys developed by RCI are available on request.

Employee Focus Groups

Employee focus groups are another powerful *qualitative* tool for understanding the *affective* responses of employees. They are especially effective because the group process encourages the exploration of *solutions* as well as the identification of challenges. Employees are chosen by *RCI* to participate in the focus groups using a stratified random selection process.

Following the survey portion of the QWL assessment, employee focus groups can be used as a method for generating employee-centered *solutions* to the issues and challenges identified during the QWL survey process.





Defining Your Objectives

Key Questions

Assessing your organization begins with a clear definition of your objectives, needs, history, and organizational climate. *Russell Consulting* meets with your leadership or planning team to discuss your answers to the following questions:

- What organizational outcomes or characteristics do you want to measure?
- What are the major challenges facing your organization?
- What caused you to consider an assessment of employee attitudes and perceptions?
- How do you plan to use the data from the assessment?
- Have you assessed employee attitudes in the past?
- What is the perceived level of trust between the leadership and employees?
- What is your timeline for completing the assessment?
- How do you envision sharing the results with your employees?
- Do you want to survey 100% or a sample of your employees?
- What demographic data (e.g., work area, office location, years with company, etc.) will be used to analyze the survey data?



The methods, questions, timeline, and strategy for assessing the organization are defined at this meeting.

A Process and a Plan

Based upon your objectives and under the experienced guidance of *Russell Consulting*, you now have a process and a plan for assessing the quality of worklife in your organization.



The Assessment Process

Key Steps of the QWL Assessment Process

Not every organizational assessment will involve each of the steps listed below. **Your** organization's quality of worklife assessment may involve all or only a few of these steps—depending upon your objectives and the specific *plan* and *process* we define with you.

- RCI* helps communicate the assessment process to your employees. We will draft memos to your employees, present overviews of the process to the organization or to work groups, or use other methods to help employees understand the goals and methods of the assessment.
- Develop a customized written survey in concert with a specially created **QWL Design Team** from your organization.
- The employees (100% or a stratified random sample) are invited to one of several survey administration times and days.
- If called for by your organization's QWL design team, *RCI* pulls a sample of employees, supervisors, and managers to be invited to participate in focus groups.
- RCI* collects the raw data from all collection sources and prepares its analysis.
- RCI* presents its analysis of the data and its recommendations to the leadership team. *RCI* prepares an executive summary for distribution to all employees. Presentations to employee groups may also occur.





Analyzing and Presenting the Data

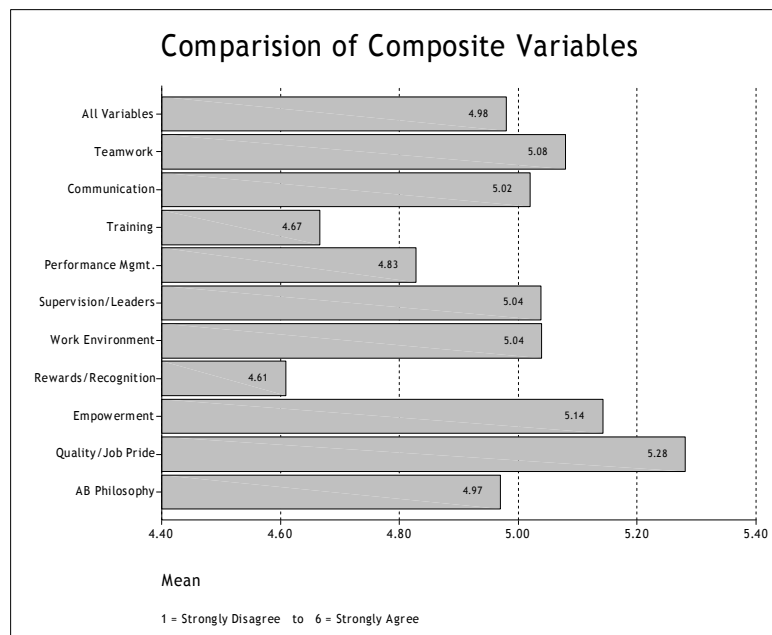
A major challenge of an organizational assessment is the seemingly overwhelming quantity of data that emerges from the process. All of this data from the employee surveys and focus groups can be intimidating. *RCI* provides the analysis that helps you focus on the right issues.

Identifying Major Themes

Russell Consulting sorts through the raw data that emerges from your assessment to uncover and identify the most critical *themes*, *trends*, and *patterns* that develop within each assessment method and across all methods.

We will focus your attention on these critical areas. While we will share with you literally all responses from all data sources, our report will be structured such that you can easily see the major issues that emerge. We will also present the data graphically so you can compare responses across work areas, months in the organization, job status, and other demographic characteristics.

This sample bar chart displays the overall employee attitudes towards each of a variety of quality of worklife dimensions.





Our Recommendations

The summary data we present to you can guide you towards making the right decisions and taking appropriate action.

Describing the Ideal: The Way It Could Be

When our summary of the data is combined with a description of the organizational ideals (the way things could be), an even clearer direction for action emerges. The organizational ideal is the condition that an organization could achieve if it consciously applies what research tells us about organizations, motivation, group process, and performance.

Our description of the organizational ideal evolves from the key issues identified by your data and is based in our understanding of group dynamics, organizational behavior, stages of team growth, theories of organizational change, psychology, industrial relations, and other approaches to understanding human behavior in the workplace.

The Recommendations

Based upon the organization's *current state* described by the data and the state the organization is capable of attaining (the organizational ideal), our report to you offers recommendations that address long term as well as immediate concerns:



- ❑ **Immediate/Quick Action:** actions you can take quickly and easily to show your responsiveness to employee concerns
- ❑ **Intermediate:** actions that deal with issues requiring more study and planning. These recommendations might involve employee task or project groups to explore strategies and solutions.
- ❑ **Long-Range:** recommendations that seek to change a major policy or influence the organization's culture. These recommendations may require additional research within or outside of the organization.



Russell Consulting: Experts in QWL Assessments

Russell Consulting offers you the most extensive survey development and quality of worklife assessment experience that you can find anywhere. Our clients include large corporations, state agencies, non-profits, and small, family-run businesses. Some of the organizations with which we have worked include a:



- Credit union
- Multi-national information technology company
- Corporation providing credit card services to financial institutions throughout the nation
- Insurance company
- Injection molding company
- National association providing support services to member organizations around the country
- State agency
- Bio-chemical manufacturing firm
- University department
- Manufacturer of luxury built-in appliances
- Family-owned business
- Home construction firm

Russell Consulting is directed by Jeffrey & Linda Russell. Jeff received his Master of Science degree in Industrial Relations from UW-Madison, where he taught Organizational Behavior to undergraduates. Jeff formally served as director of human resource programs for the Wisconsin Department of Administration. Linda has a Bachelor of Science degree in Social Work from UW-Madison, has done graduate work in rehabilitation counseling, and formerly worked as a supervisor for the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services.

Call us today to discuss a quality of worklife assessment for your organization!

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