# Surveying Employee Opinions

*June 26 2008* - A recent survey by [**Opinion Research Corporation**](http://www.opinionresearch.com) found that many US businesses are missing out on vital feedback and ideas from their own workforces.

Opinion Research Corporation’s annual employee research survey shows that 44% of the 1437 respondents do not carry out employee surveys - compared to 47% in 2007. And almost a half (46%) of businesses that conducted surveys did not make any organizational changes as a result of employee feedback (slightly worse than the 44% in 2007).

Employee surveys were most popular in the South (57% of companies questioned) while those in the North Central region ( Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas) were the least likely (52%) to take any action following employee surveys, compared with 42% in the West.

Terry Reilly, Director of the Employee Engagement practice at Opinion Research Corporation US said:

"Your employees hold the key to your success. An employee survey gives them the opportunity to let their feedback be heard and become part of the ongoing strategy of the organization."

The research shows a strong correlation between positive employee perception and the responsiveness of an organization to employee survey feedback. 84% of workers in businesses that acted on survey feedback felt that the changes positively affected them personally - up from 74% in 2007. However, nearly one quarter (23%) of these did not think that the change was communicated well in the workplace.

US results were much better than those from a similar study in the UK where only 32% of respondents thought that change was managed effectively in their organizations - compared to 63% in the US. And only 43% of British respondents said they had the opportunity to contribute their views before changes were made to their jobs. This compared to 62% in the US.

Terry Reilly commented:

"Ineffective management of change within an organization can lead to increased uncertainty in the workforce. Offering employees the opportunity to voice their opinions before change is implemented can significantly improve employee engagement, and, in turn - the success of the organization."

## Top Themes in Employee Surveys

An analysis of employee responses to opinion surveys in 2006 found a number of recurrent themes. HR Solutions, Inc., a Chicago-based management consulting firm specializing in Employee Engagement Surveys, compiled a top 10 list of the issues that concern employees the most:

1. **Higher salaries**. Pay is the number one topic for employee dissatisfaction.
2. **Internal pay equity**. Employees are particularly concerned about 'pay compression' (defined as the differential in pay between new and more tenured employees).
3. **Benefits programs**. Particularly health/dental, retirement, and Paid Time Off/vacation days. Many employees are unhappy about the cost of health insurance, especially prescription drug programs.
4. **Over-management**. "Too many chiefs, not enough Indians" is a typical comment.
5. **Pay increase guidelines**. There should be a greater emphasis on merit.
6. **The HR department**. They need to be more responsive to employees' questions and/or concerns.
7. **Favoritism**.
8. **Improved communication and availability**. This applies to both supervisors and upper management.
9. **Over-work**. Workloads are too heavy and/or departments are understaffed.
10. **Facility cleanliness**.

Responses from written feedback can be different than verbal employee feedback sessions, according to Jennifer Rand, Principal Consultant with HR Solutions. "Most of what the consultants hear during the feedback sessions supports in great detail the themes of the written comments. The comments most prevalent are usually those things that have changed, whether negative or positive, i.e. benefits, since it is human nature to resist change," she said.

HR Solutions say that organizations should not overlook the write-in comment section of their employee survey as Quick Wins oftentimes originate from it. Quick Wins are easily implemented, actionable improvements to workplace setting or environment involving little resource investment. They can lead to immediate improvements in employee engagement and reassure employees that managers are acting on the survey findings.