

DON'T ASK FOR FEEDBACK IF...

A company with major morale issues was encouraged by a consultant to implement an employee opinion survey in order to identify the areas within the company that were contributing to their morale problem. The company contracted with a third party organization to both administer the survey and submit a summary report of the findings. So far so good, right?

What was previously identified (prior to the survey) as a big part of the company's problem was ineffective leadership and poor top-down communication. The consultant hoped to use the data from this survey to not only validate the problem to the executive team but also as a measuring point from which to compare future results.

The good news is that the company agreed to go through with the survey. The bad news is what the company did with the results afterwards...or more accurately, what they didn't do.



Let me begin by stating the obvious. You never want to seek out feedback if you are not willing to do something with it. In fact, there's probably no better way to insult your employees than to ask for their feedback and then to simply disregard it or do absolutely nothing with it.

As expected, the results of the employee opinion survey were dismal. The scores were well below the national average in just about every category, and rock bottom in the areas of leadership, communication, morale and compensation.

And to make matters worse, the CEO decided to not share the results with the employees for fear that it would only add fuel to a fire that's already burning. In other words, he wasn't willing to embrace the feedback and act on it because that would be admitting that a morale problem does in fact exist; and then something would have to be done.

This isn't that unusual. Total transparency and openness is difficult for individuals, let alone companies.

For the record, here's what I think should have happened (at a minimum):

- A third party (be it the consultant or the company who conducted the survey) needed to oversee the whole process from beginning to end.
- The company should have gone out of their way to thank all of their employees for participating and to provide a "summary" of the results.
- Equally important, the company needed to present an action plan for how they were going to address the results.
- Along with the action plan, opportunities for employee involvement should have been created to support this phase.
- A timeline for reporting out to the company should also have been developed that includes ongoing progress reports.

When we ask for feedback, be it as an individual or a company, we have a responsibility to hear the feedback, acknowledge it, and respond to it. Failure to do these three things is disrespectful to the

process and to the people who took the time (and risk) to provide the feedback. Worse still, the people who initially participated will no longer trust such requests in the future. You are better off not asking than to ask and do nothing.

-Greg "Geese" Giesen