

Improving Survey Participation

Our customers frequently ask us for ideas to improve participation. We know that the best ideas are those that have been tested in the field. So recently we spoke to DOC survey leads with participation rates ranging from 60–99% about what works for them.

Take Action on Survey Results

Believe it or not, those with the highest rates (85–99%) seemed to have the smallest survey processes. They did not plan big events or give out large incentives. What they have done instead, and more importantly, is follow through on the results of their survey, and advertise to employees that they have done so.

We know from experience that when employees feel their opinions don't matter, they don't participate in surveys. They wonder why they should waste their time if nothing will happen. Conversely, participation rates soar when employees know the results are taken seriously by seeing:

- follow-up meetings or focus groups to discuss the results
- action plans
- implementation of those plans
- communication about the process

St. Elizabeth Health Partners in KY provides proof this method works. Not only have their participation rates climbed since they started to focus on their survey results - their DOC scores, patient satisfaction scores and Gain Sharing

rates have dramatically improved as well.

After each round of the survey every department is expected to develop their own action plan for the Drivers, based on their own unique circumstances. The department heads submit their ideas for review to their VP. Once the plan is approved, the departments put the ideas into action. They can verify their progress when the next round's results are reported. Employees are kept informed of the entire process and help implement the action plans.

CHW System Office, Southern CA CBO noticed the same thing. They found that when they really started paying attention to their survey results, employee participation dramatically improved. Last round it was 99%!

The Power of Peer Pressure

Unfortunately, the power to put these plans into action is not always in your hands. However, there are things you do have the power to control. Rather than having a large-scale survey event

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Proven methods:

- Follow through on results
- Prove to employees they are being heard
- Use peer pressure
- Take it to the departments
- Track participation
- Advertise
- Make it fun



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where employees can anonymously take your free cookies and scoot out the back, try bringing the survey to a smaller group at a department meeting. You may notice that the power of peer pressure can work in your favor.

At Mercy Medical Center-Redding their president made it clear his goal was 100% participation. They tracked participation by department, which increased the interest of managers since they were ultimately accountable. Departments who achieved 80% participation were rewarded with coffee mugs. The mugs were a nice incentive that employees enjoyed. However, the peer pressure effect and manager accountability probably had more to do with the increased participation. As a result of their actions, the hospital overall achieved 80% participation last round.

Advertise and have fun

St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center in Phoenix achieved 71% percent participation last round with a full scale advertising campaign. In fact, their campaign was successful in not only advertising the survey, but in building team spirit and pride throughout the hospital.

St. Joseph's took the idea of 'product placement' and ran with it. They decided to put the DOC survey in the minds of employees for the 15 weeks leading up to the survey date by creating buttons for everyone to wear. The buttons mentioned the survey and had different themes such as Dignity or Communication. They handed out a new button every week which employees started to collect and wear with pride. The buttons were so popular that

their DOC lead was asked for one while in recovery from surgery! To reinforce the advertising they hung huge posters with a picture of each button on the walls of the hospital.

To get the employees even more involved they ran a contest for ideas for a new button. The prize was a trip. Out of 300 entries the winning idea was Pride and may become the theme for their next survey campaign.

Keep in mind

Every facility is different so you should tailor your survey process to meet the needs and tone of your facility. If you already have an established process in place and are getting the results you want, it is certainly not necessary to make a change. However, it never hurts to see what is working at other sites. Who knows, maybe your site will be featured in our next participation newsletter.

For a copy of our previous participation newsletter, please contact Deme Sanford (dsanford@newmeasures.com).

