



Workforce Insights

Employee Satisfaction Surveying



THE CALL
CENTER SCHOOL

Overview

One significant factor in your call center's success is how happy and satisfied the employees are. Employee satisfaction has an extremely high correlation with customer satisfaction and that makes sense. The happier your employees are, the better they're going to treat your customers. They're also more apt to show up for work and be on time, as well as more likely to adhere to processes and give their best efforts. But if they're not happy, you have a call center with absenteeism and adherence issues, poor productivity, and lackluster service. Therefore, it's vitally important that you know what their level of satisfaction is and what key issues and factors are driving discontent so you can address them promptly.

Despite the significant correlation between employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction, fewer than half of call centers do regular employee satisfaction surveys. Most

centers do track turnover and look at factors cited in exit interviews, but by then it's too late. The time to ask questions is before they leave, while you still have the ability to evaluate problems and make changes that can impact their satisfaction and retention rate.

Another problem is that for those organizations that do perform employee surveys, these are often the generic employee surveys from the HR Department that everyone in the company receives and these surveys simply don't address all the unique factors that impact satisfaction of call center staff. It's important to do your own call center employee surveys where you can ask about all the issues impacting their feelings about their job. Uncovering and directly addressing employee concerns will improve retention, increase staff satisfaction, and ultimately improve productivity and service.

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Employee Survey Design

In our *Workforce Insights* survey, there are 60 – 100 questions posed to frontline call center staff in order to get a comprehensive view of what life is like in the call center. The following outlines a partial set of questions in each of ten critical categories and discusses some of the important factors that impact satisfaction.

One of the most important factors in getting good results from your employee survey is to administer it in a way that assures anonymity. You want candid responses from your staff so you can get to root causes of dissatisfaction, but in order for them to respond completely truthfully, the staff need to be completely sure that their survey responses are indeed anonymous. The survey, whether done on paper or online, should include an introduction that reinforces this anonymity and urges them to respond truthfully and candidly about their perceptions and feelings.

Employee Demographics

You'll want to ask questions that provide you insights into the makeup of your workforce to see if there are any significant trends by age, by type of call handled, by length of time on the job, and so on. Here are a few of the questions to ask and what to look for in your results.

What is your age? Define enough groups to shed light on any age-related issues, but not so many age brackets that would pinpoint certain groups. For example, if you have only two employees over 60 years of age, rather than having a 40-50 and a 60-70 age group, you may want to collapse this into just one "over 50" group.

How long have you worked for the company? Sorting on this question defines issues that may be more bothersome for your brand new staff who aren't feeling comfortable on the job yet and may have issues with training programs, access to coaching, or a dislike for their new work schedule. On the other hand, it's interesting to see what the issues are for more senior staff to gauge satisfaction with compensation, schedules, growth opportunities, etc.

How many jobs have you had prior to your current position? Sorting on this question may result in a different perceptions from the more stable staff compared to employees who have job-hopped around from position to position and often are a bit more critical of current work practices.

What is your level of education? This question provides an interesting comparison as you look at satisfaction with training and development provided within the company as well as how compensation or recognition programs are meeting their needs.

Most surveys will include several demographic questions so you can sort responses by age group, type of work done, length of time on the job, etc. However, you should be careful that your sorting does not get to such a granular level that you can identify an individual's responses simply by their demographic profile. For example, if you ask questions about age, length of time on job, and type of calls handled and there's only one or two people under 20 years of age who have worked in the center doing less than six months handling a certain type of call, you would essentially be able to pinpoint a single employee's set of responses and the promise of anonymity is broken. Just be careful about your demographic sorting and take care not to report and publish results that can point to any small group or single individual.

What is the size of your team? Sorting on this question sheds some light on some of the factors that may contribute to satisfaction of small team sizes versus larger teams where there is not as much individual attention.

What types of contacts do you handle? It's interesting to see the difference in satisfaction levels of staff handling primarily sales calls versus service versus technical support, etc. While all the staff in your center may handle the same type of call, you may wish to compare how your staff compare to staff in other centers handling the same type of call. This question can also be used to ask about channels of communication handled to see the different responses of your staff handling calls compared to web chat or email or back office work.

It should be noted that while these demographic questions are noted in our list here first, these types of questions should not be the first questions in a survey. They typically do not engage the survey respondent and may even create suspicion on the part of the employee that the survey is anonymous. Demographic questions usually belong at the end of a survey and the questions should be prefaced by wording that assures the respondent that the questions are just for sorting and trending and are not meant to be used to identify the individual taking the survey.

Nature of the Work

Include questions about the nature of the work they do and their attitudes toward their job overall. These are the types of questions that you'll typically want to include at the beginning of the survey as a "warm-up" to the questions asking about more specific issues.

How would you describe the work you do? Use a descriptive adjective scale that may begin at one end with "boring and monotonous" to "predictable with some variety" to "a wide variety of work". This is an important question given that many call center employees cite the boring nature of the work as a primary dissatisfaction factor.

How would you describe the level of stress of your work? Use a scale to assess stress levels from "very stressful" to "never stressful". It is interesting to see the spread of responses here from staff doing exactly the same kind of work.

How satisfying do you find the work that you do? Use a scale from "not at all satisfying" to "extremely satisfying" as one of the main scores of satisfaction on the survey. Although they may find the work itself satisfying, some other factors may be causing dissatisfaction with the job

overall and those may be fixable. However, if they simply don't find the work satisfying in any way, no matter how good the other factors are, it will be difficult to keep them happy in the long run.

What is the most satisfying aspect of the work you do? Include here a wide range of potentially satisfying components of the job, including providing support to customers, resolving difficult questions, overall work environment, relationship with team members, compensation, etc. It provides an interesting look at what is keeping your staff happy.

How do you think the rest of the company sees the value of the call center's contribution? This question sheds some light on how they perceive the call center is viewed by the rest of the company – as a low level job or vitally important as a customer-facing entity.

External Influences and Concerns

Maintaining a work/life balance is a common concern of employees everywhere and the call center is no exception. Include some questions about how their call center job impacts or is impacted by outside concerns.

Where is your primary work site? Here's another important sorting question. You'll want to see the difference in responses from those staff that work in the traditional call center compared to those working from home. Surveys show some significant differences in satisfaction between these two groups as you might imagine.

How far do you commute to work each day? This question may provide some insight into the "wear and tear" factor for some employees who spend a significant amount of time getting to and from work each day.

To what degree does your job allow you to provide care for others in your household? Variations of this question can help identify those where daycare, medical care, or other special support issues are an underlying source of stress or concern.

To what degree does your job allow you to participate in outside activities? This question uncovers some of the frustrations some employees may have about work schedules and the inflexibility inherent in call center scheduling. It is interesting to analyze these responses against some of the scheduling questions.

How would you describe your work/life balance? This is another question that serves as an encompassing look at how the job fits in with their home life and other activities.

Training and Development

The training that employees receive, or fail to receive, can be either a huge supporting factor or one causing dissatisfaction. You'll want to include questions that gauge perceptions about initial and ongoing training, including not just content, but how it's delivered (classroom, e-learning, reading, side-by-side, etc.)

To what degree do you feel your job duties were sufficiently explained to you during the hiring process?

Believe it or not, many employees find themselves surprised by the nature of the work they're expected to do once training is complete. It's good to know if your HR and other interviewers are painting a true picture of call center life during the hiring process so there are no surprises.

Was the initial training sufficient to equip you with the skills and knowledge needed to perform your daily work?

Versions of this question can ask about time allotted as well as the training content, training materials, trainer capabilities, etc.

How effective were the various kinds of delivery methods during your initial training?

This question provides a useful look at how initial training could be im-

How satisfied are you with the level of ongoing training and development you receive?

Versions of this question can ask about how often and in what way ongoing training needs are assessed, as well as how ongoing training is delivered (frequency, delivery methods, etc.)

How satisfied are you with the communications and general information flow in the center?

Versions of this question should gauge satisfaction with both the frequency of internal communications, forms of delivery, completeness, etc.)

Performance Metrics

Call centers have many measures of performance in place, as outlined earlier in this paper, and some of them are specifically measures of individual agent performance. Some employees feel comfortable and satisfied with these individual and team metrics, while others view them as biased and unfair, serving as a source of dissatisfaction. It's important to gather the perceptions of your staff related to these measures of performance as some may warrant re-thinking if they are being done in an unfair way or not supplying relevant information.

Which metrics used to measure your individual performance do you perceive you can control or influence?

Provide the full list of metrics used to measure individual performance in your center and then see how the staff feel about their control over their own performance statistics. Supply the full list and include "don't know" as one of the options since there may be some they were unaware were even on the list.

What is your level of satisfaction with how your performance is measured?

Stress that they are commenting on the way in which measurement happens, not with their individual scores. Versions of the question can address frequency of the measurement, previous notice of what to be measured, understanding of scoring system, etc.)

Do you think performance measures are applied fairly in your center?

Versions of this question will gauge how the staff feel about the overall fairness of the measures themselves as well as how they are actually applied.

How effective is your supervisor or manager at providing feedback to you about your performance and coaching for improvement?

This question gives some insight about how performance metrics are actually being used for continuous improvement.

What do you perceive management cares about most with respect to your performance?

This can be an interesting question if a list is provided with a variety of options including quantitative, productivity measures such as call volume or handle time, along with service measures such as quality scores or customer satisfaction, or first call resolution. It is sometimes eye opening to see what agents perceive as the main focus of their efforts compared to management's primary objective. This is a good question to see if the performance measurement process is inadvertently sending the wrong message about what is most important for frontline staff to deliver.

Work Schedules

A huge cause of dissatisfaction in many centers is the scheduling process overall and for some individuals the actual work schedule itself. Questions in this area can uncover some changes that may be needed in the scheduling process.

How are work schedules assigned in your call center?

It is interesting to see the difference in satisfaction in centers that schedule by seniority, by an equal rotation, or by performance. Including a “don’t know” will point out those staff that have no idea how the scheduling process works.

How satisfied are you with the following components of your schedule?

Include a rating scale for various aspects of the work schedule, including but not limited to days of week worked, start time, lunches, breaks, length of shift, etc.

How satisfied are you with the following components of the scheduling process in your center?

Include a rating scale for various aspects of the workforce planning process, including but not limited to: schedule predictability, frequency of schedule bid, assignment process, availability of trades, overtime availability, time off availability, part-time availability, variety of shift options, vacation request process, time-off request handling, etc. This is one area where it is useful to benchmark your own scheduling practices to other centers to see how you compare and where changes in the process may be justified.

How fair do you perceive the current scheduling practice to be?

It is interesting to see the scale of answers to this question sorted by how the schedules are created as outlined above.

What is the schedule adherence goal you are asked to follow?

This question is useful for sorting if there are different goals by group and can also uncover instances where staff are unaware of the goal or how it is measured.

How do you feel about the expectation for schedule adherence in your center?

This question gauges how reasonable staff feel about rules for adhering to work schedules.

Do you feel about the process for recognizing schedule adherence?

Variations of this question can gauge perceptions about both positive consequences for good adherence as well as the discipline or negative consequences for non-adherence.

How do you feel about the administration of the attendance policy in your center?

This question can uncover a variety of responses and feelings about fairness of the policy itself as well as how the management team enforces it.

Supervisory Support

These questions will uncover some critical factors with job satisfaction. It is said that employees don’t leave companies – they leave leaders. One of the biggest factors in satisfaction and retention can be the employee’s relationship with his or her immediate supervisor, so questions about this relationship and support must be included.

How would you rate the performance of your supervisor in each of the following areas?

Include a rating scale for each of the following areas and any others you feel pertinent to the employee/supervisor relationship: training assessment, call review, coaching, addressing schedule concerns, addressing personnel issues, communications, being a voice to management, escalated call support, motivating the team, motivating you personally, communicating performance goals, performance counseling, general mentoring and support.

What is your perception of how consistently the supervisors and managers in your center address performance management and personnel issues?

This question can ascertain how much variation there may be in how your supervisory team functions.

Compensation and Rewards

This section of your survey may be much like the questions on the general employee survey, addressing perceptions about overall compensation, benefits, and the reward and recognition system.

Do you feel fairly paid for the work that you do? Utilize a scale ranging from “very unfairly paid” to “very fairly paid” to gauge overall satisfaction. You may want to separate salary and benefits and perhaps treat bonuses or additional performance-based pay separately.

What type of reward would you most like to receive for good performance? It’s dangerous to think that money is the root of all problems or the end-all satisfaction solution. Some staff would prefer to receive other types of reward

for good performance, so include a list of potential rewards (like supervisor recognition, public recognition, gift cards, company merchandise, development opportunities, time off phones, etc.) they may earn for good work.

Rate the level of promotional opportunities available to you within the call center. Rank these opportunities ranging from “none” to “many”, defining if possible what some of these promotional opportunities might be.

Health and Wellness

Some final factors associated with job satisfaction have to do with the physical work environment itself and how it supports the physical and mental needs of the staff.

Do you feel your work area is well-equipped in terms of the following? Answer each with a simple yes or no, including but not limited to: lighting, workstation, seating, ergonomics, break areas, noise, temperature control, meeting space, parking, safety/security, fitness facilities, etc.)

How do you feel about the options for meals available to you during your work shift? This question allows staff to voice opinions about what is a very important topic for some staff.

How do you feel the company supports individual medical or special needs conditions in the workplace?

This question may assist you in uncovering not just some perceptions from employees, but some needed adaptations needed to accommodate special needs.

Attitudes and Commitment

It is useful to wrap up any survey with questions that summarize overall perceptions. Asking about overall satisfaction in each of the above categories can be a good way to validate survey responses, as well as get an “at a glance” look at overall perceptions.

How satisfied are you with the following? Rank each with an appropriate satisfaction scale:

- Nature of the work
- Training and preparation for the job
- Ongoing training and coaching
- Performance evaluation process
- Recognition and rewards
- Relationship with my supervisor
- Relationship with senior management
- Resources and tools to do the job
- Compensation

How is working here compared to other places you have worked? Include a scale ranging from “much worse than other jobs” to “much better than other jobs”. This question provides a useful comparison against other jobs.

How likely are you to remain with the company for more than one year? This question is a good way to gauge commitment to the job perhaps compared to other opportunities.

How likely would you be to recommend working here to a friend or family member? Just like many customer surveys ask about likeliness to recommend to others, this is an effective way to judge overall satisfaction and willingness to promote the call center to others.

Open Questions

Open-ended text based questions are useful so that staff have a chance to say what's on their minds and voice any concerns not addressed by the multiple-choice survey questions. While useful and rich in content, the more open questions, the more time it takes for the employee to take the survey and it also substantially impacts the analysis time, so think carefully about including these at the end.

Two useful questions to wrap up the survey may be:

What is the thing you like most about your job?

If you could recommend changes to senior management to make the center a more favorable place to work, what would they be?

These questions can be answered simply or in great detail and give employees a final opportunity to explain what's keeping them there or what may be driving them away.

Concluding an Employee Survey

A final consideration for employee surveys has to do with what happens after the survey. Just doing the survey and asking their opinions can have a tremendous impact on the morale of the staff. However, if the survey happens and no feedback is provided, no results shared, or no actions taken, the survey can have just the opposite effect.

Conduct the survey over a brief period of time, compile the results, and share the overall responses with your staff. Showing them the results and acting on the findings can result in a huge payback in terms of job satisfaction which translates into improved performance, better service and a better retention rate.

Conclusion – Three Measures of Success

Best of class contact centers continually gauge how well the various aspects of the operation are performing to identify strengths as well as the performance gaps and areas for improvement. Continuous improvement depends on a system of measures that point to all areas of the operation that work together to create the best bottom-line for the company, service experience for the customer, and workplace for the employee.

Plan a performance measurement system that encompasses all these views to make sure all your call center stakeholder groups are happy. Keep an eye on traditional KPIs to address the efficiency and profitability concerns of senior management, but don't rely on these reports alone. Go straight to the source with your customers and employees to ensure their needs are being met so both will stay with you for the long run.

Learn More About Employee Surveying

Are you interested in performing an employee satisfaction audit for your contact center?

The Call Center School can provide you with classes related to Customer Surveying and Employee Surveying as well as a full curriculum on Call Center Supervision that includes classes on motivation and employee retention strategies.

Penny Reynolds

Senior Partner, The Call Center School

615-812-8400

penny.reynolds@thecallcenterschool.com