

## CONNECTING SURVEYS TO THE BOTTOM LINE

Communication Management

Most communication surveys pose questions about how well messages have been understood and how effective different communication channels are. What surveys usually lack are questions that link the communications you manage to employee behavior – the questions resulting in bottom-line improvements. Here are two examples of communicators who used surveys to analyze behavior and build a business case for their budgets.

### 1. Connecting communication to a company sales goal

A division of Pharmacia Corporation identified five goals last year. One goal was to increase sales of their highest profit margin product, and they exceeded this goal. They did this without increasing the advertising or PR for this product, and without changing the sales incentive plan. The method used to increase sales was increased internal communication, especially with global marketing employees.

To measure this, Wendy Kouba, Senior Director of Global Internal Communications, wanted her survey to include questions designed to correlate employee communication with achievement of the goal. The survey asked questions at three levels.

1. Attitude – how informed did employees feel about the goal?
2. Knowledge – with what ability did employees identify an incorrect element of the goal from three possible choices?
3. Outcome – how much impact did employees think communication had on the achievement of the goal?



The results were quite compelling, as illustrated in Figure One.

- 55% said they felt well or very

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- well informed about the sales goal (only 37% felt informed about other goals).
- 62% knew the right answer on the knowledge question about the goal (only 29% to 46% answered knowledge questions about the other goals correctly).
- 54% believed communication was either the main reason or a major reason the goal was achieved.

The numbers were even more compelling among the global marketing employees – the primary target of the communications.

- Although only 56% of the global marketing employees felt as well informed about the goal as other employees, 78% answered the knowledge question about the goal correctly.
- 78% of the global marketing employees believed communication was a major reason the goal was achieved.

### 2. Showing a publication's impact on the bottom line

PacifiCare Health System (PHS) recently completed a readership survey about their publication, *Inside PacifiCare*. The survey questions probed traditional “satisfaction” issues such as content, length, design, and tone. However, the PHS survey also asked the audience how reading *Inside*

*PacifiCare* affects the way they do their jobs. That's a money question that illustrated how the publication affects the bottom line.

- 53% said it helps them do their jobs (influencing productivity and quality).
- 80% said it helps them talk with customers in a more knowledgeable manner (influencing customer satisfaction, customer retention and new sales).
- 81% said it helps them feel more positive about the company (influencing employee satisfaction and retention).

The numbers on two of these items were even more favorable for the sales and marketing subgroup, who generate revenue for the company.

- 63% said it helps them do their jobs.
- 89% said it helps them talk with customers.

These results, along with other findings in the survey, have helped Tracey Kincaid, VP of Organizational Communications, show a return on the company's investment in the publication.

In conclusion, when you next conduct a survey, don't just ask about your audience's satisfaction with your activities. Connect your output with your organization's outcomes.

Figure One: Communication's impact on reaching a Pharmacia sales goal

