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Making Internal Surveys Work

Time and effort is needed to survey clients or employees. But how you manage the survey **results** is also important. Surveys almost always point out weaknesses. Typical reactions are:

It's Not True

People challenge the data collection method, the motives of those collecting it, the questionnaire, how many people filled it out (too few—not a valid sample; too many—stuffing the ballot box), etc. A well constructed survey run by an external party will overcome these objections.

Even If True, It Doesn't Apply

Our employees are different, our customers are different, our industry is different—so the results don't apply and no change is necessary. To combat this, the person who commissioned the study needs to set the expectation that the results will be acted upon.

If It Applies, Let Me Solve the Problem

Even if people accept the results, they may say, "Fine. Leave me alone to solve the problems." But everyone doing as little or as much as sh/e desires will often result in the good getting better and the poor getting worse. A body that coordinates improvement commitments is helpful to address this.

For a survey to actually improve your organization, people need help working through their initial reactions.

Frances

Frances is now a regular guest columnist for the Canadian HR Reporter. Her next feature: *At the Table*. A platform for ranting!

Did you know? McGill University professor Henry Mintzberg doesn't believe MBAs make good managers—MBAs see management as generic rather than rooted in a context. He also believes the Japanese management model of building slowly first highlighted in the 1980s still has valuable lessons.

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