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Foreword by Allen I. Kraut

Designing and Using Organizational Surveys

A Seven-Step Process



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Step Six: Delivering the Findings

It shall be a vexation only to understand the report.

Isaiah

Imagine the following scene. You are at work one day, and you are called in to a meeting that your manager feels will be useful and informative to you. So you put aside whatever “mission critical” work you are engaged in and head off for the meeting. Realizing that the meeting is just about to start, you gingerly walk down the hall, open the large oak door, and enter the cavernous board room. The myriad of armchairs are arranged in a crescent shape around a deep-mahogany-colored table. You take a seat on the left-hand side of the table near the front.

During the next five minutes or so, several people (some you know, some from a consulting firm) shuffle into the room and take their seats as well. A professional-looking individual enters the room, goes to the front of the table, pulls out a large report, and starts speaking in a language you have never heard before. You do not know what this person is saying. After the first few minutes of the presentation, you begin to vacillate between feeling bored and uninterested in what is being presented because you cannot understand it anyway, and experiencing anxiety every time the others in the room nod their heads in understanding and astonishment at the

speaker's comments. You then ask yourself, What does this have to do with me and my job anyway? Why am I wasting my time here when I could be doing something important? And why are these consultants getting paid big bucks for this nonsense?

This is an exaggerated version of what can and often does happen during the presentation of a complex or extended set of survey results when the delivery process has not been well managed. People in the audience can easily get confused, overloaded, or lost in their own issues and anxieties, resulting in your message not being heard at all. Keep in mind that the fundamental purpose of any survey report is to provide a clear, accurate, and appropriately detailed picture of the organization that will allow others to plan for action. In other words, although complex conceptual models, interpretations, and causal relationships are useful additions to a survey report and well worth pursuing, they should not be considered the *definitive* word or the *end result* of a survey feedback effort. Rather, these analyses and interpretations should help the end user understand and make use of the larger dataset collected. It is probably not possible to ensure that all aspects of a presentation of survey findings will be crystal clear and easily understood by everyone on the receiving end, but an effective survey presentation and accompanying report can have a significant impact on the perceived success or failure of the assessment effort, regardless of the nature of the actual results obtained. The purpose of this step, then, is to discuss the issues, options, and applications of presenting and delivering to a variety of audiences the survey results and findings obtained.

However, we would point out that despite our use of the term *delivery* in connection with survey feedback, it is often good practice (particularly at higher levels of management) to approach a results-oriented presentation from a more facilitative than expert perspective, that is, as a working session wherein the results are presented to a group of end users and then a diagnosis and series of recommendations are created jointly through discussion and debate of the issues raised. This more action-research-related approach is often

useful for building enhanced levels of commitment and support behind whatever action plans may result from a survey effort. This method of delivering feedback, however, also means that the survey results themselves need to be highly accessible and easily understood.

Understanding the Roll-Out Process

Perhaps the first and most important element to understand when beginning work on the first survey report or presentation is the roll-out process, that is, the method and sequence by which the results are to be presented to all those involved, and the role and expectations regarding this initial set of findings. This, of course, takes us back to many of the issues discussed in the first few steps on the subject of survey planning and objectives. What were the primary objectives of the survey? Who will be receiving exactly which results and under what timeframe? How is the information to be used? Because the delivery of each survey report itself is in some ways the *second half of the analysis process*, the answers to all these questions have a significant impact on the nature of the first and all subsequent reports generated.

In organizations where a survey effort has been initiated in response to some large-scale change effort or new strategic directive, the results are usually intended to be used at several different levels, starting with a global picture of the main trends and themes to senior management. This is often followed by more specific regional, directorate, departmental, or functional reports for various layers of middle and front-line management. In addition, a pared-down version of the results describing the overall findings, along with commentary or a discussion of intended responses from senior leadership, is often issued to all employees via a corporate newsletter, special publication, video, or other means within a short period as well. Table 6.1 provides an overview of the components and issues of a roll-out plan of this nature.

This same type of roll-out process is often followed by institutionalized survey systems as well, particularly when they are intended

Table 6.1. Sample Survey Roll-Out Plan.

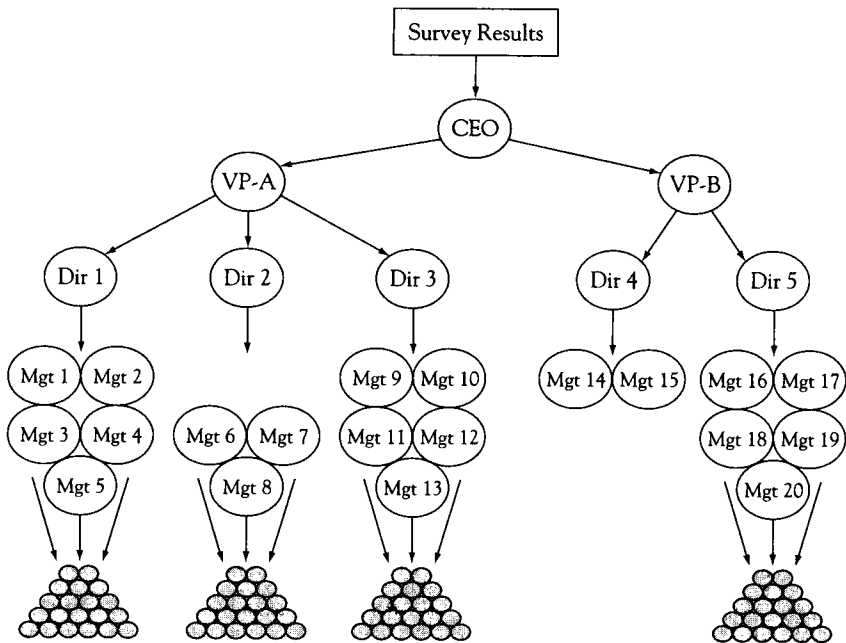
Target Group	Timeframe from Close of Administration	Objectives and Issues Involved
Survey sponsor	1-2 weeks	Present initial findings, including raw data, trends, conceptual variables, key relationships; adjust highlights and areas for emphasis before moving to more formal presentation
Executive committee	3-4 weeks	Formal presentation of key findings, themes, and interpretations; focus on conveying information in a short period of time (15 minutes to 1 hour)
Senior management	4-6 weeks	Formal presentation to all of upper management (for example, top 200 executives) group to convey key messages and gain commitment to and support of changes that may result; focus on revised version of main issues and interpretations presented to Executive Committee; timing (1 hour versus 1 day) and format (large group all at once versus small groups at different times) used for delivery may vary considerably
Middle management	4-8 weeks	Specific reports of findings based on individual actionable units, departments or functions, or managers; results must be provided with attention to existing timeframes to be used for planning and objective-setting purposes; may or may not contain extensive interpretation or customized conceptual modeling, or other types of advanced analysis for their particular set of responses

Table 6.1. Sample Survey Roll-Out Plan. (continued)

Target Group	Timeframe from Close of Administration	Objectives and Issues Involved
All employees	4–16 weeks	General messages regarding survey objectives and highlights of findings; some organizations provide all item-level responses at this stage, whereas others prefer to provide summary-level data only; senior-level commentary or response to results is recommended but not always available; timing can affect acceptance and credibility of results presented (that is, the sooner the better)

to be used for performance management and objective-setting processes. Typically, top-level reports regarding the state of the organization for senior leadership, specific actionable reports for managers to use in their planning process, and a comprehensive message for employees are provided during the roll-out process. In a large-scale organizational survey of this type, it is possible to provide not only reports for every department based on average ratings by its members but one that compares how several different departments rate one another in a variety of areas such as cooperation, integration, communication, and internal service quality. Figure 6.1 illustrates this cascading approach to survey feedback delivery.

In comparison other types of survey efforts may be more limited to a top-level report only by design (for example, by including very limited demographic questions in the instrument). In these situations, unlike in the top-down approach, it is probably best to be as comprehensive as possible regarding the results and interpretation presented to end users. These assessment applications are typically aimed at gathering information relating to a specific topic (for example, effectiveness of communication systems, use of performance

Figure 6.1. Cascading Survey Feedback Delivery Process.

appraisal systems, general morale and satisfaction) for consideration by some action-oriented group or task force.

The final point here concerns the issue of timing. As we stated in Step Five, most people's interest in seeing the results of the survey start to rise from the moment they complete and return their questionnaire until after about two months, when it begins to decline sharply. As with the data analysis stage, timing is very important during the report preparation and delivery stage. What can be considered an acceptable timeframe varies from one organization and its particular culture to another and from one individual to another, based on such variables as relevance and importance at the time of the survey and perceived ability for change on the part of management. However, the level of interest, commitment, and value associated with the survey results obtained does tend to follow this pattern most of the time. Although some organizations have closed the delivery gap to a mat-

ter of days, this is not typical and can be problematic in settings where messages will require cascading (for example, in conjunction with a diagnostic effort where senior management's response to the major issues raised is likely to be incorporated into the report in some manner). In our experience, a few weeks lead time is an appropriate and acceptable window for the majority of survey situations.

Regardless of what we feel is appropriate, it is important that the practitioner or survey team involved take enough time in the analysis and reporting stages to provide a clear set of messages in an accessible medium for the intended audiences. Whatever the time required for the report delivery and roll-out process, this information should be clearly communicated to all potential end users (including employees) so that people know when they can expect to receive some feedback. As we emphasized in Step Three, communication is very important during this portion of the process as well.

Preparing the Survey Report

The objectives, timing, and audience of a survey report have a significant impact on the format and contents of the materials ultimately generated. But a number of standard elements are part and parcel of almost any type of survey report; these are listed next and described in detail in the sections to follow.

1. Cover page
2. Executive summary
3. Introduction to the study
4. Review of preliminary research
5. Method of research
6. Survey results
7. Conclusions and recommendations
8. Appendix

Source: List adapted and expanded from Rea and Parker, 1992.

Although this next section is based on the assumption that a paper or an overhead-based (for example, PowerPoint or Excel) survey report will be provided, most of the concepts inherent in good reporting apply equally well to on-line or Web-based documents. Our bias, however, is to provide individuals with hard copies of some form. Based on our experience, we believe that people need to touch, feel, respond to, and make notes on their survey results in order to personalize them and take ownership of the findings.

Cover Page

The first and probably most obvious element of any survey report is the cover page. It does not have to be overly complicated, but it does have to convey the key information necessary to differentiate it from the myriad of other reports, studies, handbooks, manuals, and other assorted papers that are typically generated by and for organizations. Even if the information contained within is highly intuitive, a report without a cover is often seen as just another pile of paper waiting to be thrown out. Unlike the old adage, a book is often judged by its cover and, therefore, the way this report looks and feels is important. If time and budget allow, it is often useful to consult someone with expertise in designing cover graphics to help you put together a look that is both easy to read and user friendly. In terms of content, the minimum items to include here are

- A title that is both clear and succinct and that identifies the subject or content area of the study
- The names, affiliations, and complete contact information for each of the principal authors
- The date and status of the report delivered, that is, the initial draft, revised report, final version for the management committee, or senior management, and so on

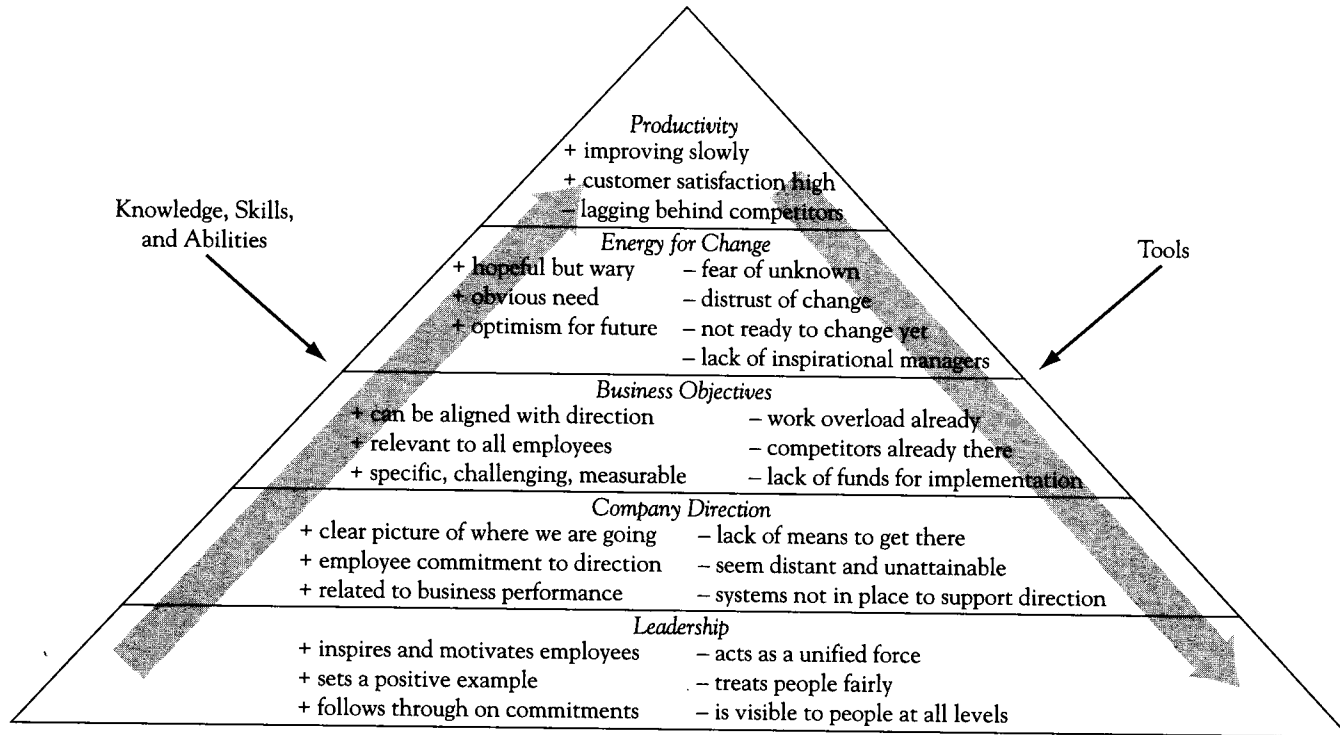
Executive Summary

The next element, which is the first content-related section of the report, is the executive summary. The purpose of this section is to provide a short and concise summary of the main findings, themes, relationships, and issues identified in the data analysis and interpretation phase. Often somewhere between three to six pages in length, this section is designed to convey the most important messages to the reader in a quick and easily digestible manner. It should be thorough enough so those who have time to read only the summary will still be relatively well informed about the main findings. Even if the report will not be presented to executives, this condensed version of the findings is useful to have available to anyone picking up the report. Thus, as might be expected, this section is one of the most challenging and time-consuming elements of a report to prepare, particularly if done well. To this end, the executive summary is usually based on an item-level analysis such as the highest and lowest questions, with some elements of conceptual or trend analyses woven in. Sometimes this is done solely through the use of explanatory text, as in the following example:

Employees were less positive about the organization's communication of strategic plans, plans for growth, and success, and how their organization differs from others with the same services.

Also, employees expressed concerns about the organization's interest in employees in terms of their welfare and people's attitudes toward their work. Employees do not experience open communication in the workplace. Specifically, they do not feel comfortable expressing their thoughts and opinions openly and do not see knowledge being transferred throughout the organization in a timely manner.

Figure 6.2. Sample Executive Summary.



Regarding leadership, employees expressed little trust in senior management. They do not see senior management as inspirational or in touch with employees at their level.

Finally, organizational members gave the lowest ratings on items concerning restructuring and reorganization. Employees do not think that the rationale behind structural changes and reorganization has been effectively communicated (lowest-rated item 2.9). They also do not believe that structural changes have been effectively managed.

In other cases a graphic or model might be used to help summarize the issues (see Figure 6.2 for an example of the latter). The executive summary usually ends with an overview of the details to follow in the rest of the report. In some instances, when the audience might be in need of a bit more direction, it may be appropriate to include some additional interpretive elements and possible recommendations as well. As we noted earlier, however, this type of highly directive information is less likely to encourage active participation and internalization on the part of the recipient, resulting in a potentially weakened impact of the results.

Introduction to the Study

The third main section in a survey report is the formal introduction to the study. This is where the relevant and important background information is presented. It should be written with the assumption that this section is the true entry point to the rest of the document (in case the executive summary is removed). To this end, topics to be described here include

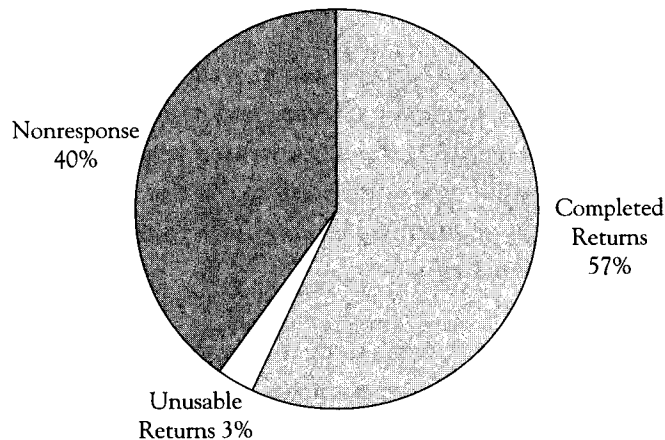
- Who participated in the study (for example, the characteristics of the survey respondents, including the rate of return, some detail regarding background information,

whether the survey was a census or a sample [see Figure 6.3])

- Why the survey was conducted (provide the problem statement or issues that led to the use of a survey, as well as the specific survey objectives)
- When the survey was conducted (the total length of time made available for responses, including the open and close dates; be sure to note the use of initial communications and follow-up reminders during administration)
- How the survey was conducted (give some detail on the method(s) of administration chosen and why)

Note that this section is not meant to provide a complete listing of all the details of the survey process. This will be done later in the report. Rather, enough specific information should be provided in a relatively short series of pages so that the validity and credibility of the assessment process, and therefore the findings obtained, are readily demonstrated to the reader.

Figure 6.3. Survey Response Rate Information.



Review of Preliminary Research

With the introduction complete, it is now appropriate to provide significantly more detail regarding the level of preliminary work that was conducted and used to design and develop the current instrument (and conceptual model if appropriate). Because this section is often used more as a reference tool than a main source of information regarding the survey results per se, it should contain as much detail as is available and relevant. Elements that would be relevant here include

- Supporting information available on the nature of the specific problems facing the organization that prompted the survey effort
- Relevant background information relating to other organizational change efforts, strategic initiatives, restructuring, financial performance, and cultural issues
- Summaries of prior surveys, research studies conducted, consulting projects, or other types of written reports related to this initiative
- An overview of the methodology and results highlights of any focus groups, interviews, or related preliminary data collection
- Information on any pilot surveys conducted, test cases, and associated refinement efforts used to finalize the instrument
- Source information and descriptions of any key articles, books, guides, or other external references used; the nature of the role of any related professional expertise or other types of outside sources consulted
- Information regarding main areas of consensus and conflict regarding key issues and decisions made

Method of Research

The purpose of this section is to move the discussion forward by describing the survey administration process and subsequent analysis plan in significant detail. Once again, because this section is more likely to be used to answer specific questions than to provide results, it should be as complete and informative as possible. Mirroring what was covered briefly in the introduction to the study, information provided here should include a detailed outline of the administration methods:

- Who was involved in the design of the instrument and what their roles were
- Who administered the instrument (internal staff, external consultants)
- How employees received the instrument (describe all methods if more than one was used)
- When and what types of presurvey communication efforts were used
- When and what types of follow-up measures were employed
- Who was involved in crafting the communications
- How the sample was selected and verified as being appropriate and accurate
- How names and contact information for the sample or census were identified and adjusted when necessary
- How returns were tracked and processed

Also relevant is an overview and definition for each of the statistics and approaches used during the data analysis and interpretation stage. Of course, if any write-in questions are to be reported,

this section would also include an overview of the process by which the comments were content analyzed (and integrated into the findings or analyzed separately) as well.

Detailed Survey Results

After all the background, supporting documentation, and details on administration, it is time to present the detailed survey findings to the end user. As one might expect, this section is the longest in any survey feedback report. It usually contains the following elements:

- Summary scores for all grouping variables used (based on the organization's core values, management competencies, strategic objectives, or some set of key conceptual variables based on an organizational model, framework, or the results of a complex statistical analysis)
- Means or percentages for each item included in the survey (including the specific wording of each item is highly recommended)
- Comparison values or delta (change) scores if relevant (for example, between a prior survey and the present one, or between the larger organizational norm and the current one for some business unit, region, function, or department)
- Content analysis of focus group findings (including themes, frequencies, and sample quotes for each)
- A subsection containing the complete responses to all descriptive or background items

Approaches to how the information is presented in this section may vary considerably, given the myriad of graphic and reporting software available today (some practitioners prefer using frequency

tables or presenting data displaying percentages of favorable responses as described in Step Five), but the basic idea is to provide all the information in a comprehensive but user-friendly manner. This means displaying the data using a combination of formats such as tables, bar charts, pie charts, line graphs, 2×2 matrices, and even model-related graphics.

Our preference with regard to reporting detailed survey results of this nature is to provide mean scores in the form of bar charts, grouped by specific content areas. Aside from the bar itself, these charts will always contain at least (1) the end points of the rating scale used, (2) the specific wording of the question and its item number on the instrument, and (3) a numerical form of the mean score. Other options include a comparison point (such as the prior year's score, or the norm for the larger organization when using lower-level reports, or perhaps even an external benchmark score if particularly relevant and meaningful), as well as some indication of the total range of responses obtained (for example, using a line or providing a percentile score, or listing the highest and lowest scores for a given area). Figures 6.4 through 6.6 provide sample charts depicting these basic types of displays.

Figure 6.4. Sample Bar Chart with Summary Scores for Main Content Areas.

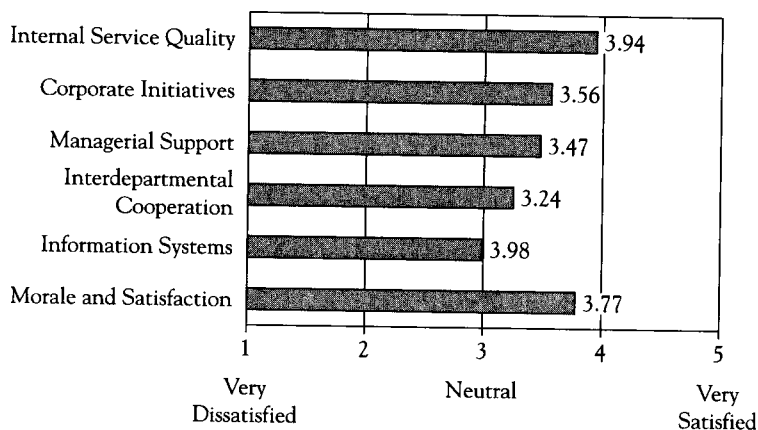
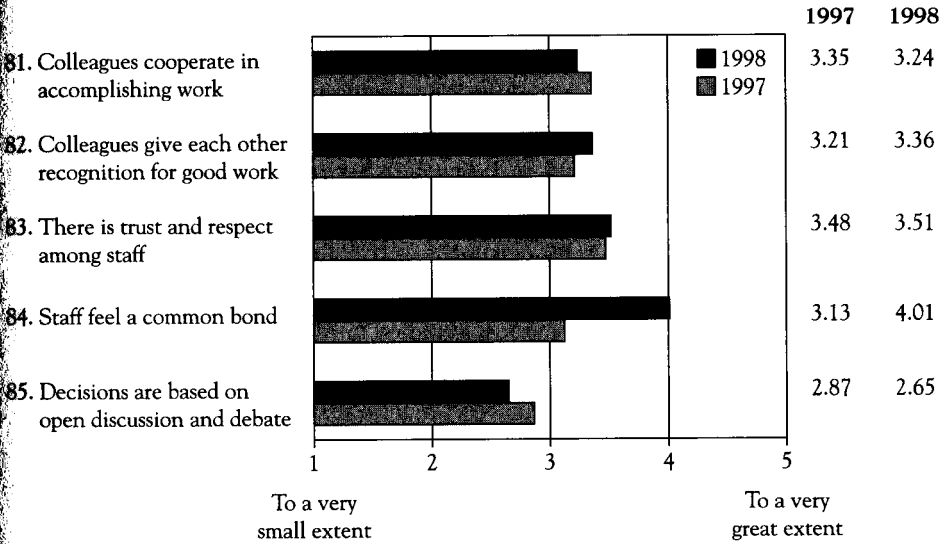
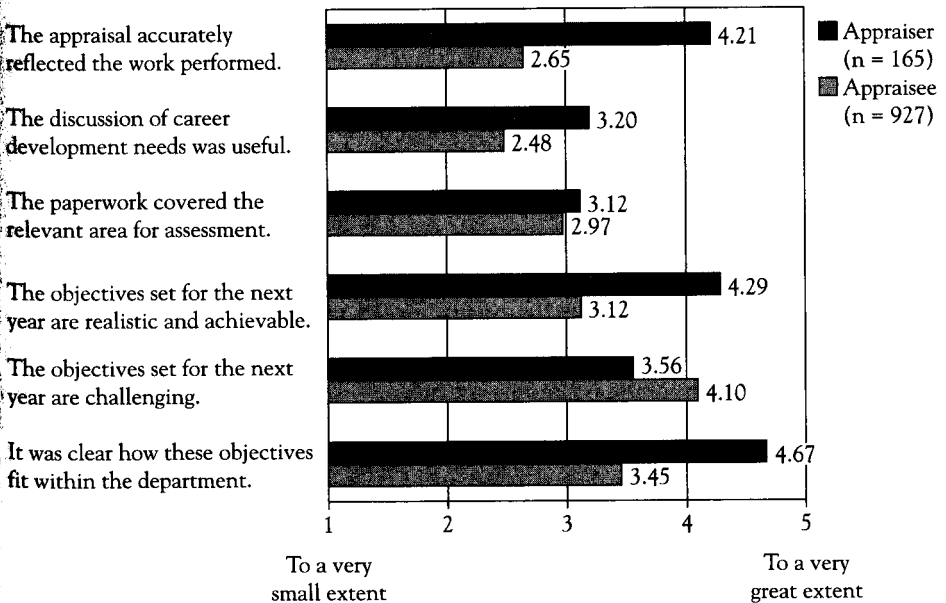


Figure 6.5. Sample Item-Level Chart with Comparative Data Provided.**Figure 6.6. Sample Chart Comparing Responses for Two Specific Groups.**

In reviewing these examples, it is useful to note that the anchors depicted for the lower end of the extent scales are slightly different from those described in Table 2.4. We used "To a very small extent" for scale point 1 here, as opposed to the previous example of "To no extent"). Although either form is an acceptable response option, we prefer the less extreme option in practice because it tends to yield greater variability in responses. Some people find it more difficult to select response options with absolutes in them such as "never" and "always."

The best approach to providing detailed findings is to present the primary results obtained, with only one or two other types of comparative data points included if absolutely necessary. Because the primary objective of most survey reports is to convey information rather than specify a complete solution, it is often better to keep interpretation to a minimum. Too much data or too much interpretation in this section can make the results less clear and subsequently diffuse their impact. Although these points have already been made in the data analysis and interpretation process in Step Five, it is worth repeating them here; they can also affect the overall delivery of the survey findings. Similarly, although at times it may be tempting to display all the responses obtained using a series of cuts by important demographic variables such as region, gender, function, or ethnicity, the survey practitioner is required to take a stand here and concentrate on the results as much as possible. Focusing on these types of detailed cuts too early in the process presents two problems: (1) potential isolationistic and subsequent dismissal of various sets of findings if they tend to hold for only certain groups, and (2) data overload and disengagement with the main findings. If the objectives of the survey are to assess the impact of some set of interventions on several different groups, then this type of approach is probably warranted. For the sample data displayed in Figure 6.6, for example, it is preferable to provide the average responses from both the appraisee and appraiser perspectives in order to highlight the clear differences

in perspectives on the usefulness of the appraisal process between the two groups of users.

Because the purpose of the survey effort in Figure 6.6 was to assess and respond to these discrepancies, providing a total summary score of both sets of responses would probably have obscured these results (particularly given the differences in sample sizes). In most cases, however, this level of comparative information is best left to future analyses and then as a summary of general trends only; at the least it should be a low-key listing in the appendix so that the overall findings and trends can be fully examined, understood, and acted on before people move into the more detailed and complex data.

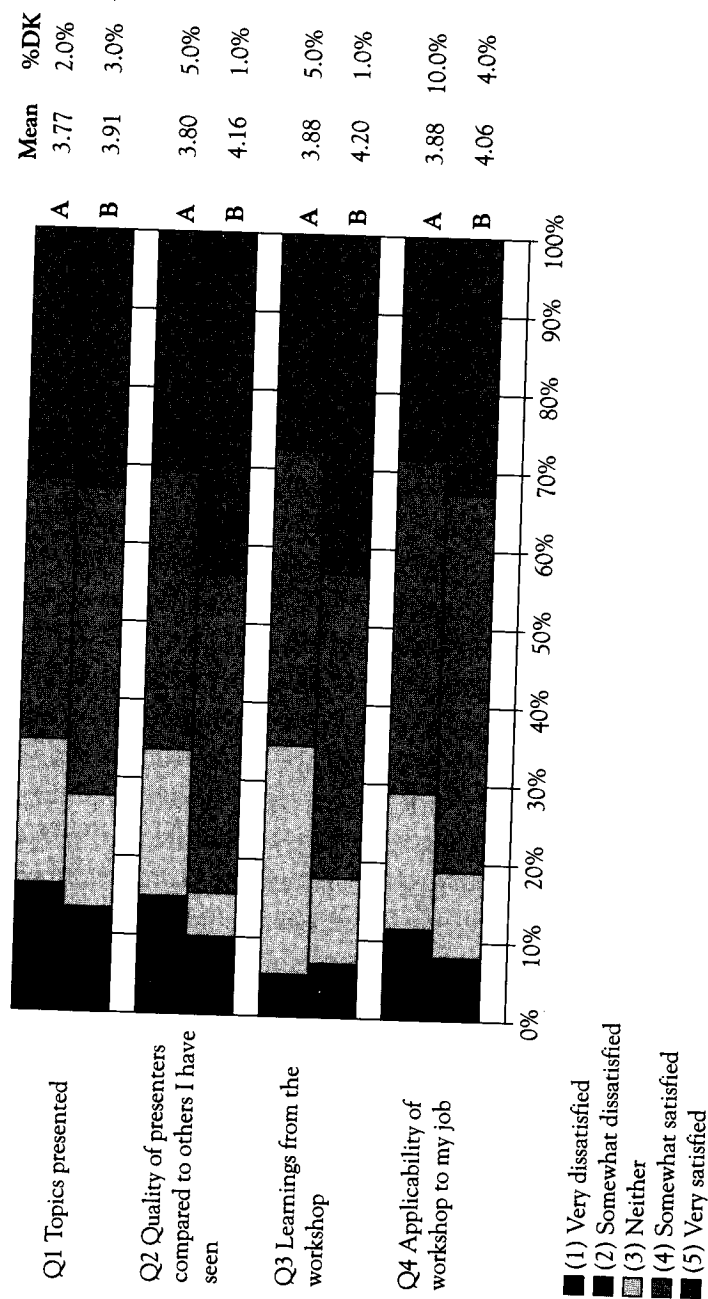
In some cases, however, such as with items of varying degrees of nonresponse or when working with an organization whose culture is steeped in data analysis, it may be necessary to err on the side of providing more rather than less information. Figure 6.7 provides an example of this type of approach based on a satisfaction survey conducted for an executive leadership program.

This format emphasizes direct comparisons among *response percentages* for various categories rather than on *mean scores* as in Figure 6.5 and 6.6. Although only two groups are shown here side-by-side (workshop "A" and "B"), this format can accommodate multiple subgroups of this nature. In the end, the choice of the appropriate chart type depends on (1) the type of data being presented, (2) the nature of the key findings, (3) the ease of interpretation of these findings, (4) the client's or the survey consultant's familiarity with a specific format, and (5) personal appeal.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Now that the data have been described in great detail, the end user is ready to consider your insightful interpretive comments, conclusions, and any potential recommendations for action you might have. This is the place to highlight the main themes, trends, and relationships that resulted from the data analysis stage.

Figure 6.7. Satisfaction with Executive Leadership Workshop.



Examples of this type of information might look something like this:

Summary of differences—direct customer contact versus internal staff:

- Employees with direct customer contact indicated greater understanding of the mission and goals of the change effort. They also rated senior leadership more positively.
- However, these employees rated the company's structure, employee support systems, and their managers' behavior more negatively.

Summary of differences—length of service:

- Employees who have been working in the company for two years or less are far more likely to be optimistic about positive change occurring as a result of the organization survey. Employees working five years or more are more likely to be pessimistic.
- Although all three categories of leadership (senior management team, region-division senior management, and area directors) are rated highly by new employees, a clear difference in the ratings given to area directors and other senior management develops quickly after that and persists throughout each length-of-service category. Ratings of leadership are lowest among employees who have worked in the company for a longer period of time (three years or more).
- Employee morale and feelings of empowerment and satisfaction decline as length of service increases. Ratings of the job itself remain relatively consistent, however, lending weight to the validity of external causes for the drop in satisfaction.

Besides highlighting key trends, conceptual models and advanced statistics often influence the contents of this section as well, although this may or may not be made apparent to the reader. Figure 6.8 and Table 6.2 provide examples of how one of these more complex analyses based on the results of a multiple regression procedure can be used to describe key levers for change in a report. As you will see,

the numerics involved in this analysis are not presented (compare this presentation, for example, to the more complete but perhaps less easily understood model detailed in Figure 5.5).

Regardless of the level of complexity used in the analysis process, however, this section also provides the survey team (and ultimately the sponsor as well) with the opportunity to recommend various alternative courses of action as a result of the issues identified. There is often some repetition of highest and lowest ratings—areas that were mentioned most often or most aggressively in the write-in responses or those pertaining to specific content areas of interest. The only other main elements that might be included in this section are some additional information regarding future roll-out plans for lower levels in the organization as well as possible opportunities for future research or study.

Here are some sample recommendations that can be included in this type of report:

Structure: implement a series of devices to enhance marketing and sales integration:

- Integrate annual business plans so that there are overlapping objectives.
- Involve marketing in the sales planning process.

Figure 6.8. Key Levers for Change.

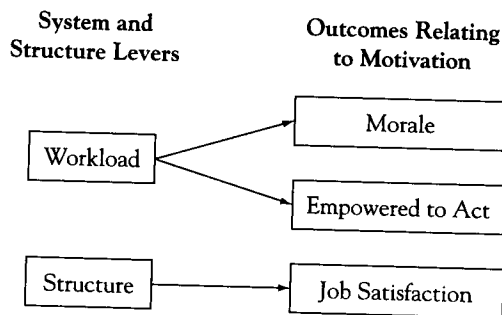


**Table 6.2. Key Levers for Change:
Individual Performance and Motivation.**

Because the motivation section of the survey contains a number of different questions pertaining to various aspects such as morale and feelings of empowerment, these specific items were examined independently to identify key levers for change. The following graphics represent the primary levers (that is, the single most important predictors) for enhancing each aspect of employee motivation.

Workload	Structure
Q91. Branches have sufficient staff support during peak periods.	Q48. Structure is decentralized; people are encouraged to take initiative and have authority to act.
Q92. Information gets to the right people at the right time.	Q49. Structure helps business performance.
Q93. People are rewarded for serving their customers to a very great extent.	Q50. The current organizational structure helps different departments cooperate and work together effectively.
Q98. I do far less paperwork than I used to 12 months ago.	Q51. Employees have the authority and latitude they need to serve their customers.
Q99. Formal systems and processes enhance our ability to work effectively.	

Source: Adapted from Rea and Parker, 1992.

- Negotiate quarterly the objectives and priorities of the functions together.
- Institute and promote joint training and development workshops.
- Involve sales staff more in key marketing processes (for example, product brainstorming, marketing strategies, quarterly merchandise planning).
- Periodically conduct cross-functional team-building exercises.

- Use temporary or permanent marketing and sales task forces to get work done.
- Reinforce marketing and sales integration whenever possible and reflect it in criteria for succession planning.

Of all the sections in a survey report, however, the recommendations probably change the most depending on when it occurs in the roll-out process and to whom the results are being presented. The first preliminary sharing of the results with the survey sponsor, for example, probably provides for the most open and uninhibited series of conversations regarding the results. But when presenting a set of survey findings to senior management for the first time, it is often prudent to avoid overemphasizing this section because this group often wants to think about and reflect on the implications and recommendation of the results themselves. The conclusions and recommendations presented to this group are likely to be very different in tone (and perhaps even in content) from what this group might want communicated to all employees in some type of corporatewide document. Similarly, in many individual reporting situations such as departmental or functional groupings, the purpose of a feedback presentation may be to develop a series of recommendations and action planning steps based on a joint discussion and interpretation of the data displayed in the detailed survey results section. However, we have seen departments in some organizations take a completely analyzed and fully interpreted set of survey results for their specific area, and create a totally independent communication piece with their own conclusions and recommendations for distribution to their people.

Appendix

The final element to a standard survey report is the appendix (or if more than one, the appendixes). The appendix is probably the easiest section to write (after the cover page), and it is likely to be large. This is where the practitioner provides any and all additional materials that might be relevant to the survey effort. The appendix usually contains the following kinds of items:

- A sample copy of the survey instrument used (if no hard copy was used, then a listing of the specific items and associated scales would be substituted)
- Copies of all important communications (for example, cover letter mailed with survey, reminder and follow-up letters, e-mails, postcards, print screens of Web pages, information sheets provided, and on-line instructions)
- List of key contributors to various stages of the process (for example, task force members, survey sponsor and team members, or participants in the item-design focus group or interviews)
- Content analysis information about write-in comments (if not included in the detailed survey results section or if more detail is warranted)
- Any other supplementary documents such as additional listings of numbers by specific groups

Balancing Expectations and Reality

The presentation and delivery of feedback results is in and of itself a relatively straightforward process. Assuming that most of the issues and components described are adequately addressed, one more set of issues needs to be discussed. These pertain primarily to the ethics and responsibilities inherent in the survey feedback process itself.

First, survey practitioners and the survey team should realize that any data collection process, regardless of the content to which it is directed, has the potential to raise anxiety and fear on the part of respondents and end users, and even the survey sponsor. Between the formal costs and resources associated with the conduct of a survey effort and the emotional energy and heightened awareness and expectations of a response to organizational concerns among respondents, it is very likely that the results will be met with some resistance and anxiety when presented and even further on in the process. For

example, most individuals go through a four-stage process commonly known as S-A-R-A when receiving any kind of feedback. Based loosely on the well-known writings of Elisabeth Kübler-Ross (1970) regarding the grieving process, in survey work S-A-R-A is meant to represent the four stages of Shock, Anger, Rejection (or Resistance), and Acceptance. (Some practitioners also include an H in the model for Hope.) Presenting survey recipients with this simple framework at the outset of a feedback delivery meeting often helps them through the initial stages of the process by showing them that their initial reactions are normal. To this end the survey practitioner needs to help manage and work the client, sponsor, or end users through these concerns in a productive manner. This means creating survey reports that temper negative findings and areas for change with positives and strengths, even when there may appear to be few or none. It also means preparing the client for difficult ratings and helping the client accept the results for what they are rather than allowing them to defensively dismiss the ratings as being invalid, unimportant, or beyond management's ability to respond.

A second issue here regarding professional conduct concerns the extent to which the survey practitioner maintains his or her integrity in the delivery process regarding (1) the reality and validity of the interpretation of the data obtained and (2) adherence to the original contract regarding the confidentiality of responses. It should be clear from the discussion here and in Step Five that there is never a perfectly correct interpretation for any given set of survey data (you're trying to communicate a compelling story after all), but it is possible for people to completely misinterpret, intentionally obscure, and even falsify certain types of findings and outcomes based on their own idiosyncratic view of the results. The latter is probably not too common in practice, nevertheless people often put their own spin on a set of survey results when preparing to convey them to others in the organization, particularly in situations where a powerful group other than the survey team (or practitioner) takes control of the communication and action planning process. In these situations, the onus

is on the survey professional to ensure that end users and employees receive an appropriate set of findings and interpretation that accurately reflect the data obtained, at least on some level. It is only fair that everyone who participated should receive some acknowledgment and feedback for their efforts and that the feedback should be accurate, meaningful, and easy to understand.

Similarly, it is the ethical responsibility of the survey practitioner to protect the level of confidentiality of the individual responses obtained, regardless of the pressures placed on them by the client or other powerful groups interested in exploiting the survey results. For example, if respondents were promised confidentiality at the level of a twenty-person minimum per individual report, then all requests exceeding this limit (for example, for a department with eleven responses) from the client, survey sponsor, or even senior management should be rejected. The only solution here would be to provide the data in question, combined with some other smaller set to reach the minimum allowed. Once again, this is one of the benefits of using an external agent to collect and analyze the survey responses because it provides a buffer between senior management and the data protection mechanisms. For many external survey experts, the only way their raw survey data may be obtained is through a successful legal action.

Checklist for Step Six

1. Determine the roll-out process; decide on the method and sequence by which the results are to be presented to all those involved (see Table 6.1 for a sample survey roll-out plan). Usually rolling-out results include some kind of cascading process. At a minimum, however, the following elements should be considered in any roll-out plan:
 - What target group will receive the survey results?
 - What is the timeframe from the close of administration to reporting?

- What are the objectives and issues involved in rolling-out survey results?
2. Prepare the survey report. A completed survey report should contain each of the following elements:
 - Cover page: name of survey, date of survey, creator(s) of survey
 - Executive summary: brief narrative of findings in summary form
 - Introduction to the study: who participated, when and why the survey was conducted
 - Review of preliminary research: background information, methods overview, research
 - Method of research: how the survey was designed and how the results were collected
 - Detailed survey results: exact findings of survey, usually by item or summary dimension
 - Conclusions and recommendations: recommended actions based on findings
 - Appendix: cover letters, the survey instrument itself, list of contributors
 3. Balance expectations and reality.
 - Always remember that any data collection process has the potential to raise anxiety and fear on the part of respondents, end users, and even the survey sponsor.
 - Maintain your integrity in the delivery process regarding (1) the reality and validity of the interpretation of the data obtained and (2) adherence to the original contract concerning the confidentiality of responses.
 - Protect the confidentiality of the individual responses obtained, regardless of the pressures by the client or other powerful groups interested in exploiting the survey results.