



A Case Study On How Employee Engagement Surveys Can Drive Success

Few metrics are more relevant to a company's success than how their employees view their work. High employee engagement can increase a company's ability to attract and retain talent. Employees who feel positively toward an employer's mission and vision are more committed to their work, and more likely to endorse the company and its products. In short, companies with engaged employees are stronger: research shows as much as a 10% increase in customer ratings, a 20% increase in sales, and 21% higher profitability.¹

Retailers need to pay special attention to employee engagement: labor is typically a retailer's largest operating expense, and part-time hourly store employees have the highest turnover rate of any employee segment, with over 75% in tight labor markets.³

“ Simply put, engaged employees produce better business outcomes than other employees do—across industries, company sizes and nationalities, and in good economic times and bad.”

GALLUP²

A key tool in understanding what is important to your employees is an annual engagement survey. Not only do employee surveys provide concrete data to measure satisfaction over time, they can point to improvements in business operations from the staff who are most closely connected to the customer. Done correctly, employee surveys can also provide profoundly meaningful ways for employees to feel heard on a breadth of topics, from operations and inclusiveness, to management and communication.

Measure What Matters

In mid-2020 All The Best Pet Care (ATB), a pet retailer in the Seattle, Washington area, contacted the Members Services team at the Pet Sustainability Coalition for assistance with an employee engagement survey. Steady growth has accelerated at ATB in recent years, and given the natural challenges that come with expansion ATB wanted to know how their employees were feeling and their recommendations for improving the business. Said Betsy Hall, Training and Education Manager: “With all the change we want to give employees a voice, hear what is most important to them, measure what matters and learn what areas are ripe for improvement.” The timing was noteworthy: management was also concerned about the wellbeing and attitudes of their employees in light of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and civil protests occurring in the Seattle, WA area at the time.

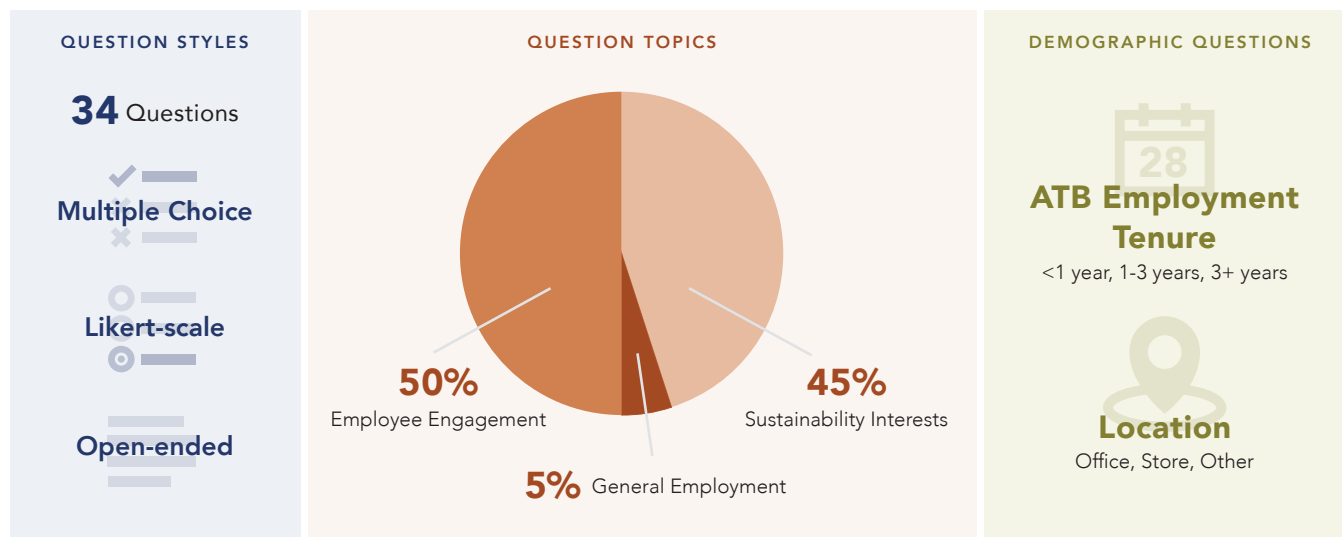




Using their PSC membership project credits, Hall and Deb Wilson, Co-CEO, enlisted PSC's Member Experience Team to develop and administer their survey. Said Wilson: "PSC's help was critical. They have a core competency in these surveys, they understood what was important to us and made the process incredibly smooth." Hall agreed: "By having PSC administer all stages of the survey we could assure our employees total anonymity, which meant we were getting candid feedback. PSC reviewed the data, provided us with a detailed report, taking out any real or perceived bias in interpreting the results."

DEVELOPING THE SURVEY

ATB's survey started with a project kickoff meeting with the PSC team to clearly articulate their goals and objectives. ATB wanted to thoughtfully measure employee engagement and satisfaction, both in 2020 and moving forward on an annual basis. This included understanding what employees loved about being a "Bestie," what was important to their growth and development, and where they saw opportunities for the company to improve.



SUSTAINABILITY IS PART OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Since PSC had been working with ATB on a variety of sustainability goals, the PSC Member Experience Team also recommended integrating several sustainability questions into the survey. While managers may not think sustainability is related to employee engagement, research shows that corporate commitment to sustainability improves employee satisfaction and retention.⁴ “PSC recommended including questions on sustainability, and at first we weren’t sure about this because on the surface it seemed so different from employee engagement,” said Hall. “But it turned out to be really important. It was fascinating to see how employee engagement and sustainability intersected. It showed us that the priorities of the staff leaned heavily toward the environment, well-being and community.”

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BETSY HALL

LAUNCHING THE SURVEY: ADVANCED NOTICE AND MAKING IT EASY TO PARTICIPATE

The ATB management team gave employees several notices prior to the survey launch, setting the stage for the importance of the endeavor. ATB explained the survey goals, confidentiality, the overall timeline for distributing the results, and how they planned to act on the findings.

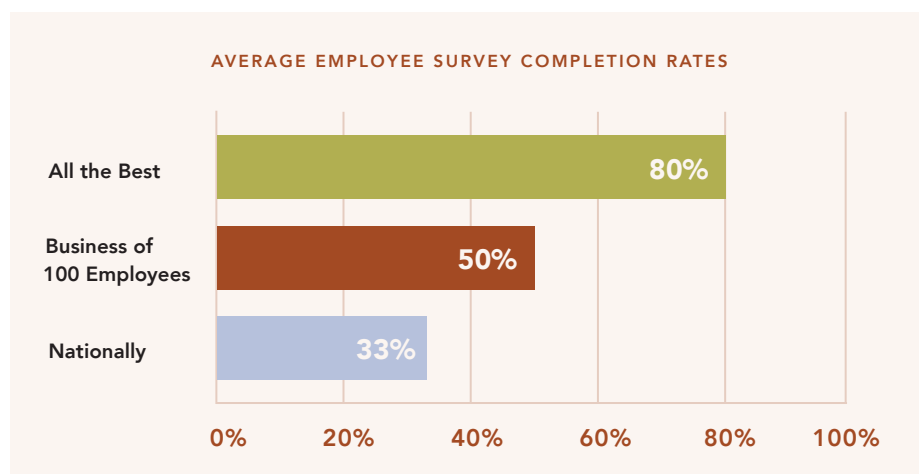
PSC outlined the conditions that are essential for conducting a successful employee survey: employers need to ensure that all employees are included and have easy access to the survey. Survey translation is sometimes necessary for non-native speakers, and hourly staff should be paid for the time to complete the survey. All employees must be able to complete the survey in a confidential, ‘safe space.’

All The Best office personnel had easy access to computers and store staff were provided shared laptops onsite and were allowed paid time to complete the survey. Warehouse and other staff had access to the survey via shared computers.

Responses indicated a desire for more frequent opportunities for employee feedback.

WHAT IS SUCCESS?

Participation benchmarks are useful to understand when setting goals for an employee survey, and tools can help to increase participation. National averages for completion of employee engagement surveys are only 33%⁵ and for a company of ATB’s size, a 50% completion rate is considered average, and 70% is good.⁶ ATB aimed for a response rate of 80%. In some cases companies can successfully increase employee response rates by offering incentives such as gift cards. ATB considered incentives but ultimately believed they could achieve this without encouragement.



PREPARING AHEAD FOR POST-SURVEY ACTION

Employee surveys raise expectations and it is critical to begin planning for action so that you can move quickly after the results of a survey are in. PSC had coached All The Best on the importance of immediate action after the survey was completed. "Doing nothing or moving slowly after the survey will have negative impacts, so we always advise companies to allocate key stakeholder time and budget after a survey to act on what they learned," said PSC Melissa Bauer, Director of Sustainability.

" Make sure you have a communication strategy planned ahead of time and expect to devote time and budget to implementing action plans. The hard work of the survey really started after our results were in."

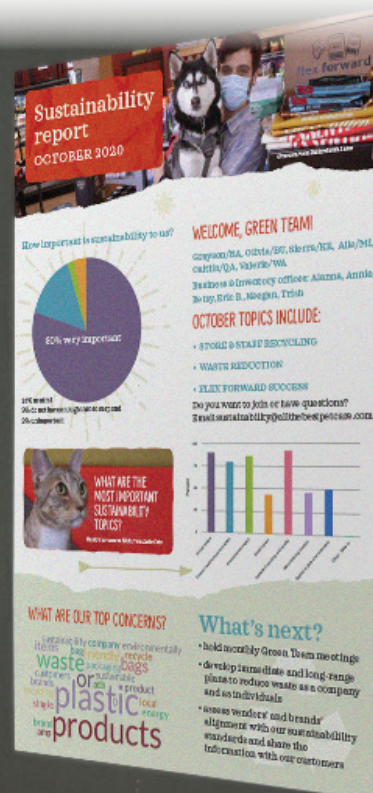
DEB WILSON, CO-CEO

Consequently, while the survey content was being prepared, All The Best mapped out a communications and action strategy, including budgeting for resources to take action on their employees' feedback.

THE RESULTS AND HOW ALL THE BEST TOOK ACTION

ATB's advance preparation for the survey paid off. While response was voluntary, ATB's goal of 80% participation was easily attained, and fully 82% of respondents provided additional comments in the open-ended fields.

To move quickly Betsy Hall and the team developed a thorough plan to share the survey results after the survey was completed. Their strategy was to begin with managers first, and empower the managers to share the results with their teams. Recognizing the value of repetition and the importance of consistency of messaging, they did not limit reporting to managers. They developed communication plans in multiple formats, including email, staff meetings and onsite posters in multiple locations in employee common areas at all business locations.



The All The Best's survey results focused the company's attention in four areas:

1 IMPROVED COMMUNICATION

Inter-departmental communication, particularly communication between the stores and corporate office, surfaced as a theme, particularly in the open-ended text sections. "With our growth we knew there were pressures to improve communication internally. While this was not a surprise, the survey surfaced useful strategies to consider and deploy," said Wilson.

ACTION

- Developed of guidelines and standards around email etiquette
- Launched Culture Amp, which offers anonymous survey tools as well as online coaching tools for managers
- Implemented a human-resources information system

2 COVID-19

Not surprisingly, many people mentioned COVID-19 in the survey response, with many recommendations in the open text areas. Extra support during the pandemic was an identified need.

ACTION

- Increase store staffing during the pandemic
- Provide extra PPE and sanitation materials
- Implement distancing and mask mandates
- Articulate ATB's clear goals to prevent Covid-19 in all work sites and retain staff during pandemic

3 INCREASED COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The survey results showed a strong desire held by employees to help the communities around them, especially regarding social impacts. This was especially true among employees at the store-level. "This was one of the bigger surprises," said Wilson. "We didn't know just how much the staff valued involvement in their local communities." In fact, local community impact was ranked highest to ATB employees, including support of the neighborhoods they work in and improving the lives of pets in their local community.

ACTION

- Support small and minority owned businesses in the communities where ATB stores are located
- Increase support of local rescues and pet shelters



4 SUSTAINABILITY

All The Best has been actively pursuing sustainability goals, yet the survey surprised management in revealing strong passions and skills in sustainability among employees. Over 80% of the employees indicated they believed sustainability was “very important.” Employee’s top priorities: plastic waste reduction, vetting suppliers, animal welfare, and reducing ATB’s environmental footprint.

An exciting result of the survey: “We were amazed to learn how many of our employees had specific skills and experience in sustainability, which emphasized the need to create a Green Team,” said Hall. “We have a win-win-win: we are giving employees growth opportunities with the Green Team, we are benefiting from untapped passion and experience, and we are making concrete improvements in our environmental standards.”

ACTION

- Launched employee sustainability “Green Team”.
- Created a monthly sustainability newsletter to help communicate ATB’s priorities and success
- Partnered with one of their distributors to collect clear monoplasic bags for joint recycling
- Goals set:
 - Reduce overall waste
 - Become B-Corp Certified



What is a Sustainability ‘Green Team’?

A sustainability team is a cross-functional group of employees that works to educate, inspire and empower employees around sustainability. A Green Team may identify and implement specific solutions to help their organization operate in a more environmentally sustainable ways. Visit the PSC Tool Kit for tools on creating a Green Team.

[VISIT THE PSC TOOL KIT FOR TOOLS ON CREATING A GREEN TEAM](#)

CONCLUSION

Handled correctly, employee surveys are a powerful means of assessing—and increasing—employee engagement. Survey findings may be pleasantly surprising, like finding untapped talents and passions. Feedback may also present difficult conversations and more challenging opportunities with respect to communications or employee needs. Regardless of the findings, companies will benefit from conducting employee surveys on a regular basis, and in being prepared promptly act on employee engagement.

If you are considering an employee engagement survey, visit our toolkit for basic templates of employee wellbeing and sustainability surveys. **PSC also provides survey customization, administration and interpretation services to its members.**



Contact Us to Start A PSC-administered Employee Survey

 INFO@PETSUSTAINABILITY.ORG



1. <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/236366/right-culture-not-employee-satisfaction.aspx>; APRIL 12, 2017; The Right Culture: Not Just About Employee Satisfaction BY JIM HARTER AND ANNAMARIE MANN
2. <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/236366/right-culture-not-employee-satisfaction.aspx>; APRIL 12, 2017; The Right Culture: Not Just About Employee Satisfaction BY JIM HARTER AND ANNAMARIE MANN
3. Korn Ferry of Top US Retailers, Nov 2019
4. [Environmental Performance Boosts Employee Productivity, Network for Business Sustainability, September 15, 2015](#)
5. [10 Employee Survey Statistics by Trelise Mansfield, March 29, 2019](#)
6. [Culture Amp by Jason McPherson Environmental Performance Boosts Employee Productivity, Network for Business Sustainability, September 15, 2015](#)
7. [10 Employee Survey Statistics by Trelise Mansfield, March 29, 2019](#)
8. [Culture Amp by Jason McPherson](#)