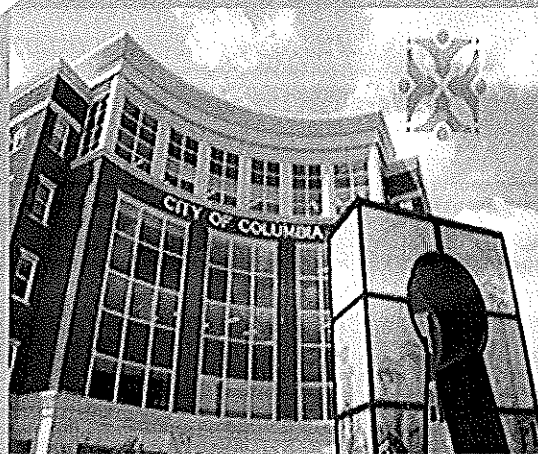




**CITY OF COLUMBIA 2013
WORK FORCE ENGAGEMENT
ASSESSMENT**

POST SURVEY ANALYSIS AND IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY



Project/Contract 00041155
Between city of Columbia, MO
and
Charles Sampson, PhD
Principal Investigator
Harry S Truman School of Public Affairs
University of Missouri
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Executive Summary

In January 2013, the city of Columbia contracted with Dr. Charles Sampson, a professor in the Harry S Truman School of Public Affairs to conduct an Employee Opinion Survey among the city of Columbia, Mo employees. The survey is intended to provide data in support of its' desire to create an environment that supports engaged high-performing employees; enables the city to recruit, retain and compete for talent; and ensure retention of institutional knowledge. The city has developed strategic objectives that maintain a total compensation system that is internally fair and externally competitive which cultivates a learning culture to improve job performance, enhances capacity and leadership skills, and seeks innovative ways to recognize high performing employees, improve employee satisfaction and strengthen employee engagement. Initiatives and performance measures have been established to assure attainment of the workforce strategic planning priority.

The concept of "employee engagement" has continued to garner importance in the public sector and private sector organizational literature. Employee engagement is present in an organization when employees feel vigor, dedication, and immersion in their work duties; engaged employees demonstrate enthusiasm, commitment to success, and persistence in duties (Bakker, et al., 2006). Employee engagement is one of the top drivers for organizational success.

The 2013 survey is intended to provide benchmarks which allow measurements toward goal attainment on select organizational behaviors that bridge the pathway to workforce engagement. Survey results will facilitate a means of collecting empirical data on one of seven strategic priorities, i.e., the workforce strategic priority. Careful analysis of the results can move the city in the direction of assessing the extent to which a culture of

engagement is perceived to exist among city employees. Such analysis can also identify the level of employee engagement and job satisfaction present in city employees. Additionally, the data provide a point of departure as the city and the department of Human Resources plots a strategy to meet the challenges uncovered in the survey.

Three phases, Two Focus Groups

The survey was conducted in three distinct phases. The first phase consisted of the contribution of two focus groups. The Journey 2 Excellence committee provided vision and leadership that reflects the wisdom and guidance from supervisors and upper management. For more than 24 months, the J2E has assisted strategic planning, which lead to, identification of core values. This vision and core value identification process was a deliberate and carefully designed exercise which culminated in a series of retreats and meetings.¹ The work of J2E worked in concert with members of the city council and the city manager brought about the language that became the updated mission and vision statement for the city. A second focus group consisting of non-supervisory employees brought views of non-supervisory members of the workforce to the issue of engagement. Each group worked at the initiation of the Columbia city manager and the director of Human Resources for the city of Columbia. The second phase was the work of master's degree students at the University of Missouri². Their contribution consisted of a review of the literature in the area of workforce/employee engagement. The class perused scholarly contributions published in peer reviewed journals for the purpose of determining present day practices, theories, and concepts which shed light on the topic of employee engagement. The term "Engagement" was operationalized to convey a "heightened level of ownership where each employee wants to do whatever they can for the benefit of their internal and external customers and the success of the organization as a whole". The work of the two focus groups and the graduate students in the Truman School of Public Affairs HR course worked to pre-test and develop a 59 item survey

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1. The first focus group consisted of middle managers, department heads and office of city manager representatives who formed a Journey to Excellence committee (J2E) for the city of Columbia
 2. The survey instrument and literature review were the work of students in at the University of Missouri enrolled in the spring 2013 course of Human Resource Development and Management, a master's level course in the Truman School of Public Affairs.

instrument. Once the content was finalized it was electronically uploaded by the Institute of Public Policy in the Truman School at MU. Electronic and paper copies were made available during the period April 1, 2013 through April 15, 2013. The rate of return is satisfactory, seven hundred ten of the 1302 (55%) of the employees, returned the survey instruments.

Method/Approach

Using exploratory factor analysis we generated a rotated component matrix, identified factors loading at the .500 threshold and eight factors emerged: 1) **Two-way (supervisor-employee) communications**, i.e., the extent to which employees believe supervisors listen to them; the extent to which there are processes in place for employees to interact with co-workers, and the extent to which there are opportunities for effective responses that generate clear, compassionate and timely communication to build awareness, share information and innovative suggestions; 2) **Tops-down communications**, i.e., existence of written and verbal directives intended to convey directions for communicating city policies and guidelines 3;) **Public Service Motivation**, i.e., the extent to which City employees take their work as a “calling” (Perry, 1990) ; 4) **Core Values and trust**, i.e., ideals that characterize the City’s dedication to fairness and become elements of workforce democracy that effectuate public service delivery via a viable workforce; the extent to which City employees expect superiors, colleagues and themselves to be ethical, reliable and dependable, also referred to as employee trust in leadership; 5) **Teamwork**, i.e., the work done by several associates with each employee doing a part and all subordinating personal prominence to the efficiency of the whole; 6) **Career Development Opportunities**; i.e., the extent to which employees perceive opportunities for professional growth and development; 7) **Resource Adequacy**, i.e., the extent to which the City provides tools to employees to get the City’s work done and in so doing, develops and empowers employees to serve the community to the best of their ability; and 8) **Relations with co-workers**, i.e., the extent to which members of the work force value colleagues as crucial to successful work goal attainment. The survey items that did not reach the .500 threshold are not currently included in the analysis.

What the data say about a Culture of Engagement

All the respondents in this survey are public servants who provide voices from various vantage points that tell of the culture of engagement in the workforce. They tell us that the city has a workforce that prides itself in its public service motivation; has healthy supervisor–employee communications, and effective strategic communications. Most believe that there are opportunities for career development, and they value teamwork and relations with co-workers and the resources needed to perform their jobs are adequate. Most, however, do not believe the city's core values have been realized. The majority of the work force questions whether their pay is fair and competitive and whether the promotion process is fair.

Never-the-less, the findings in this study indicate that culture of engagement is somewhat present for employees at the City of Columbia. For each dimension of the culture of engagement, the average response is greater than 4 (neutral). There is some variation among job family and among dimensions. Average public service motivation is high among all job families while core values and trust, teamwork, and career development opportunities have the lowest score among all job families. The latter suggests that the City faces a challenge related to enhanced provision of development opportunities. Arguably, this perceived “lack” serves as a barrier to improving the culture of engagement within the workforce.

OLS regression models provide some results that point to disparities between job families in perceived culture of engagement. Officials/administrators and professionals perceive significantly higher levels of engagement across several dimensions relative to their counterparts, though the results are not necessarily substantial in all cases. For example, professionals report, on average, a 0.22 higher perception of teamwork relative to all counterparts; they report, on average, a 0.47 higher perception of resources relative to their counterparts.

I also note that certain job families, including protective service, public works, skilled craft service maintenance, have significant declines in perception of several dimensions of culture of engagement relative to their counterparts. In fact, protective service members report an average of 0.51 less in the perception of values/vision relative to counterparts. These disparities suggest that job families perceive their workplace culture differently. More importantly, this perception generates a management challenge for the city.

Notable Limitations and Lessons

There is at least one noteworthy limitation: The absence of viable external validity, i.e., what other (a) municipal governments, (b) similar size workforces (c) treatment variables and (d)

measurement variables lend to understanding of these findings. This study was specifically designed according to the organizational composition of the City of Columbia, and specified even more by the information gleaned from focus groups in the data collection period. Although many mid-sized municipalities use the same system of job classification and contain similar cultural elements, more tailored surveys may be needed to test our theories elsewhere. Never-the-less, this report suggests appropriate directions for human resources practices in the public sector. City of Columbia public sector managers can begin to identify what constitutes a culture of engagement and ensure that cultural conditions are optimal for employees to be engaged and satisfied. The dimensions of a culture of engagement provide a starting point, but there may be other elements that promote employee engagement depending on the organization. Ultimately, a culture of engagement can lead to positive and fulfilling outcomes for public servants and the populations they serve.

Rank ordered responses by factor analytic loading

Question	N Valid	Missing	Mean	Factor Analytic Loading
I think it is important to perform at my highest level even if I don't receive recognition for my performance.	699	11	6.42	Public Service Motivation
In my daily duties I can accomplish my tasks easily without breaking rules and regulations.	674	36	5.99	NS
I am encouraged to provide excellent customer service.	696	14	5.96	NS
I understand how my work contributes to the good of the City of Columbia.	677	33	5.92	Public Service Motivation
I like my job because the work is meaningful.	693	17	5.89	NS
I have an annual performance evaluation.	698	12	5.76	Two-way communications
My immediate supervisor has fair expectations for my performance.	690	20	5.74	Two-way communications
I know what is expected of me at work.	699	11	5.71	Two-way communications
I like my job because it serves the public interest.	674	36	5.7	Public Service Motivation
My supervisor encourages me to be ethical and honest in completing the tasks assigned to me.	675	35	5.66	Two-way communications
The relationship that I have with my co-workers allows me to do my job well.	691	19	5.63	Two-way com/relations with co-workers
My immediate supervisor listens to me.	704	6	5.6	Two-way communications

I am proud to work for the City of Columbia.	693	17	5.6	Public Service Motivation
I am satisfied with the way that my immediate supervisor and I communicate with each other.	704	6	5.58	Two-way communications
I have trust and confidence in my immediate supervisor.	687	23	5.57	Two-way communications
I feel satisfied when completing my daily duties.	673	37	5.53	Public Service Motivation
The relationship I have with my immediate supervisor helps me to do my job well.	699	11	5.47	Two-way communications
My coworkers are committed to doing quality work.	691	19	5.39	NS
In my department training on customer service is provided.	689	21	5.37	Tops-Down Communications
I can easily get guidance when faced with an ethical problem.	690	20	5.36	NS
My immediate supervisor is consistent when administering policies concerning employees.	689	21	5.33	Two-way communications
I have adequate materials and equipment I need to do my job.	672	38	5.29	Resource Adequacy
I am encouraged to learn from my mistakes.	680	30	5.24	Two-way communications
When I started my job, I was given useful information about the required knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to complete the job successfully	701	9	5.19	NS
In my job small matters do not have to be referred to someone higher up for a final answer.	685	25	5.19	NS
I believe my coworkers are committed to the goals of my department.	678	32	5.15	Relations w co-workers
My work hours are sufficient to allow me to have a good family and community life.	678	32	5.13	NS

I would recommend the City of Columbia as a good place to work to my family and friends.	676	34	5.11	Core Values/Trust
I have the authority to change my work processes to get the job done.	679	31	5.03	NS
I trust my supervisors to help me keep my job.	685	25	5.02	Two-way communications
I am informed about city wide policies on information that is important to me.	702	8	4.99	NS
It is easy to evaluate success or failure at my job.	679	31	4.95	NS
I feel that my job description accurately reflects my daily duties and responsibilities.	702	8	4.89	NS
I am encouraged to work in groups to complete assigned duties.	697	13	4.89	NS
There is a culture of openness at work.	703	7	4.82	Two-way communications
I get coaching from my immediate supervisor to help me do a better job.	680	30	4.81	Two-way communications
My department uses its budgeted funds efficiently.	671	39	4.79	NS
I have opportunities at work to learn and grow.	680	30	4.76	NS
My opinions seem to count at work.	704	6	4.74	NS
There is someone at work who encourages my development.	680	30	4.74	Career Development
I receive helpful feedback on my job performance regularly.	698	12	4.73	Two-way communications
There is a formal process to report and solve problems in my workplace.	691	19	4.69	NS
I have the opportunity to receive formalized training for my job.	682	28	4.66	Career Development
My department uses its personnel effectively.	670	40	4.57	NS
In the last month, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work.	703	7	4.56	NS
I feel that the total benefits package is adequate.	670	40	4.5	NS

I would prefer to work for the City of Columbia even if offered employment elsewhere.	678	32	4.46	Core Values/Trust
In my department we celebrate birthdays, anniversaries, and other achievements.	666	44	4.18	NS
Rules, administrative details, and "red tape" do not make it difficult for new ideas to receive attention.	704	6	4.05	NS
My supervisor has talked to me about my career path.	680	30	3.86	Two-way communications
Morale in my department is better when I compare it to this time last year.	683	27	3.81	Teamwork
My department uses a goal-setting process that I helped shape.	667	43	3.73	Teamwork
I feel that my pay is fair.	668	42	3.7	Core Values/Trust
*My immediate supervisor seems more concerned that I follow procedures than if I do a good job.	683	27	3.65	NS
The city's policies for promotion and advancement are fair.	682	28	3.65	Core Values/Trust
When I started my job, I was given information about the city's strategic plan.	697	13	3.61	NS
I receive a competitive wage for the work I do.	684	26	3.55	Core Values/Trust

* This is a negative question. So, a mean of 3.65 suggests that people generally disagreed with the statement, which is a positive result.