



CITY OF  
ST. CATHARINES

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## Memorandum

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**To:** Budget Standing Committee

**Cc:** Chantal Switzer, Manager Human Resources  
Jeanette Pillitteri, Director, Corporate Support Services

**From:** Cindy Pfeffer, Organizational Development Consultant, Chair  
TeamSTC Steering Committee

**Date:** November 13, 2017

**Subject:** Employee Survey

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This memo is submitted in response to the Nov. 8, 2017 request from the Budget Standing Committee for additional information on the cost of the employee survey in 2018.

Originally formed in 2013 under the name MVP (Mission, Vision & Principles) Implementation Team, TeamSTC is a group of City employees who volunteer their time and efforts to help shift the corporate culture so it better reflects the values identified in the Corporate Culture Statement.

Early in its existence the committee identified a need to conduct a professional corporation-wide employee engagement survey to provide information which could help guide these initiatives.

### **Benefits of an employee engagement survey**

An employee engagement survey allows an organization to do the following:

- **Measure employee engagement:** Employee engagement is the commitment the employee has to the organization; it means they care about their work, are more likely to go above and beyond for the organization and are less likely to leave the organization for other opportunities.

Measuring common drivers of engagement such as advancement, recognition, compensation, training and development opportunities, and leadership allows an organization to determine if employees are engaged.

- **Give employees a voice:** Surveys are a venue for open feedback and allow organizations to establish two-way communication, giving them a direct voice to the management team. This makes employees feel they have a stake in organization's success and that their opinions are valued.

- **Direct organizational growth:** Understanding how the Corporation fares in areas such as employee satisfaction, management/leadership effectiveness and working environment will provide objectives for change.
- **Benchmark against other municipalities:** Conducting a professional employee engagement survey allows the City to see how it compares to other municipalities or governments using sector-specific results compiled by company conducting the survey.

Although the resources – both financial and staff – were not available for an undertaking of this magnitude at the time, the committee felt that it was important to make an effort to survey employees in some manner. As a result it developed a survey in-house which annually asks employees general questions about their workplace environment and what type of new initiatives employees would be in support of.

### **Challenges of current employee survey**

The introduction of the survey represented a positive step in engagement efforts, as it was the first time all employees of the corporation were given an opportunity to weigh in on matters affecting their workplace culture. However it does have some challenges, which limit the effectiveness of the results.

- 1) **Low participation affects accuracy.** The TeamSTC survey is optional and as a result most employees do not complete it. This means the results do not represent the organization accurately and the uptake of initiatives based on these results are often poor. The committee has had several experiences where they have implemented something which the survey results supported, only to have it fail due to lack of interest when introduced to the entire corporation.
- 2) **Question quality does not reveal underlying issues.** While dedicated, the members of TeamSTC are not professionals in the field of survey development or analysis. The City does not have the resources to determine what questions should be asked to reveal the type of information desired or to analyze the results to fully understand the level of employee engagement and state of corporate culture which exists in the corporation.
- 3) **Number and diversity of staff requires significant effort to ensure participation.** The TeamSTC survey is available to staff in an online format, with kiosks set up at the Employee Appreciation Lunch in June, and promoted through Jostle. This approach does not reach all employees, especially those who do not have regular access to a computer as part of their job. To secure higher participation rates, an employee survey requires staff to support it through a planned strategy to ensure all employee groups at all locations have an opportunity to take the survey. This cannot be achieved by a volunteer committee who participates on TeamSTC in addition to their regular job responsibilities.

A professional employee engagement survey supported by Human Resources staff would address these challenges. By ensuring accurate results through employee participation and skilled analysis, the employee engagement survey can be used to develop a program to address corporate culture and engagement at the City of St. Catharines.

### **Cost of employee engagement survey**

In response to the request from the Budget Standing Committee, Human Resources has requested pricing for an employee engagement survey for City of St. Catharines staff from an organization with a depth of experience in conducting and analyzing employee engagement survey. The cost is approximately \$13,000 to \$15,000 plus taxes. This cost includes the following:

- Survey development and research methodology
- Survey delivery (online and paper formats)
- Data analysis and creation of reports (one covering the entire corporation, an separate reports for each City department)
- Benchmarking with others in the municipal/public sector.

The City will also incur costs to support the successful execution of the survey. These include production of educational and promotional materials about the survey, staff presentations and training for managers.

Additionally, once the survey is completed it will be imperative that the City has a way to share the results with all employees and can be informed about how the results will be used to make change in the organization.

While initiatives as a result of the survey which have a larger budgetary impact would be included in the 2019 budget for consideration, there will be some smaller, low-cost items which could be implemented in 2018 to demonstrate immediate action.

Both reporting back to participants and taking some immediate action are important factors in demonstrating to staff that their opinions are valued by the organization.

It is estimated that costs for execution and implementation in 2018 will be approximately \$5,000.

As a result, the total amount required for an employee engagement survey in 2018 is between \$18,000 and \$20,000.