

Date: July 8, 2008



TO: Board Members – Vancouver Park Board
FROM: General Manager – Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: Employee Engagement Survey

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Board approve the employee engagement survey action plan outlined in the report below, with funding for the process referred to the 2009 Operating Budget process.

POLICY

There is no applicable policy.

BACKGROUND

At the Board meeting of January 28, 2008, a Motion was approved requesting staff to report back with a proposal for an Employee Engagement Survey, including a survey timeline and follow-up actions.

DISCUSSION

Employee Engagement Survey is a tool, through completion of a questionnaire, to measure the current level of employee engagement and identify factors that may be hindering it. An Employee Engagement Survey will give a baseline data that an employer can work from in order to improve overall satisfaction, productivity and retention. According to the Conference Board of Canada "employee engagement is a heightened emotional and intellectual connection that an employee has for his/her job, organization, manager, or co-workers that, in turn, influences him/her to apply additional discretionary effort to his/her work". Their research notes that "employee engagement is strongly correlated to a number of individual, group and corporate performance outcomes including recruiting, retention, turnover, individual productivity, customer service, customer loyalty, growth in operating margins, increased profit margins and even revenue growth rates". It also notes that "the process of regularly polling employees..., creating actions plans based on that feedback, and demonstrating the steps taken to achieve the plans' goals will impact employees' perceptions of trust..., the content of their own jobs and the ...impact of their contributions". While most of these areas of

employee engagement may be surveyed, not all will be addressed immediately. The survey however, will assist in prioritizing which performance indicators need further analysis/consideration and ultimately, action.

Vancouver Public Library Experience

The Vancouver Public Library (VPL) conducted an Employee Engagement Survey in May 2007 with 800 full-time and part-time employees. This was partly in response to workload and morale surveys conducted by CUPE Local 391, the union representing the Library employees, which indicated some concerns with workload stress and poor morale. While the union survey had relatively low response rates (less than 25% for each survey), VPL felt it was important to further explore this potential issue and any possible impact on absenteeism, burnout, and diminished capacity for creativity and innovation.

The VPL Board supported using a professional consulting firm to address staffing and experience issues, as well as to ensure employee anonymity, encourage participation, and provide comparative data against which to evaluate the survey results. A consultant was hired to conduct a basic, standard survey in May 2007 and the VPL is working to develop action plans as result of the findings, one of which was a staff request for a strategic plan.

Key Lessons

After examining the recent VPL experience and reviewing research on engagement surveys, the following key lessons should be incorporated into the proposed Park Board survey process:

- Clearly identify the goal and objective(s) of the survey.
- Create a working group to facilitate the survey and follow-up.
- Engage an outside party to assist in developing the questionnaire, to conduct the survey and collate the data to address employee concerns about confidentiality.
- Commit to a follow up process before the survey, including sharing the results and creating an action plan to address survey results.
- Conduct surveys regularly analyze trends and monitor progress against action plans resulting from the surveys (multi year process).

Survey Action Plan

- **Develop Task Group**
To ensure a valid result is obtained, we need a high participation rate from staff on the survey. By involving staff from across the organization to participate on the task group to advocate and to follow-up, participation will increase. The team should be comprised of a representative group of Park Board staff from all levels of the organization (including both union and management staff), representatives from CUPE Local 15 and CUPE 1004 and the City's Human Resources Department (as the City is the employer of Park Board employees).

- **Engage a Consultant to Assist the Task Group**
To help develop appropriate questions, ensure confidentiality of all employees' responses and provide comparative data against which to judge our survey outcomes, a consultant should be engaged to assist with the survey.

- **Implementation Plan**
 - What to Measure
 - Design Survey
 - Design Survey Process
 - Survey
 - Design Follow-up Process

- **Cost**
Consultant cost for the Library survey, which was conducted in May 2007 was approximately \$30,000. The estimated cost for a similar survey for all Park Board staff is estimated between \$50,000-\$70,000 due to the greater complexity of our workforce (both inside and outside workers in many different disciplines, many of whom are seasonal) and comparative size of our workforce (780 regular staff and up to 1500 temporary and auxiliary staff).

The process for engagement surveys is to repeat the survey process every two (2) or three (3) years to measure success on issues identified during the initial survey. In order to repeat the survey process, a timeline for future surveys should be determined and a source of funding would need to be identified.

- **Timing**
 - **Length of Process**
This initial survey process is expected to take approximately six (6) months: two (2) months to engage the consultant, form the task force, design and organize the survey; one (1) month to allow employees to complete the survey; one (1) month for the consultant to gather and evaluate the findings, and one to two (1-2) months to share the results and determine next steps.

As well, extensive time will be required to develop and implement an action plan to address the survey findings.

- **When to Start**
Given the seasonal nature of our workforce and the importance of engaging all components of our workforce, it is recommended that an Employee Engagement Survey be undertaken in May-October of 2009.

SUMMARY

As requested by Commissioners, staff have developed an action plan for an Employee Engagement Survey. As noted in the research, there should also be an ongoing commitment to survey staff in order to follow-up on issues identified as part of the initial survey. Given the repetitive nature of these surveys, staff recommend identifying funds to support this ongoing commitment as part of the development of the 2009 operating budget.

Prepared by:

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