

What Do Employees Think? Just Ask **by Ladan Nikravan | Talent Management**

New employees join an organization with a high level of commitment, but the honeymoon stage doesn't have to dissipate.

Problems arise in the employer-employee relationship when expectations do not become realities. In order to ensure ongoing commitment well after the employee gets situated, companies are using new-hire surveys to assess new employees' level of satisfaction.

Turnover costs are one of the largest controllable expenses incurred by organizations, and communication in early employment is crucial to develop a healthy relationship and maintain commitment from newly acquired talent. Establishing a strong bond between an employee and employer boosts engagement and can drive results faster.

"There's so much going on with the new hires that you just don't know if you don't ask," said Beth N. Carvin, CEO of Nobscot Corp. "It's all about retention and helping employees get off to a good start with an increased speed to productivity. New-hire surveys help organizations audit their processes; it's a wonderful way to really improve procedures and reduce early turnover."

Carvin said employee turnover is a bigger problem now than ever before. In the past, employees were willing to work through obstacles and often opted to stay to avoid being perceived as job hoppers. Although the recession has put a tighter leash on those wishing to jump, employees are still more likely than before to leave.

"Today, people are less likely than ever to stay if there's an issue, if it doesn't feel right or if the expectations are different from what they thought," Carvin said.

To effectively use new-hire surveys as an engagement tool, companies need to have a scheduler who plans the distribution of surveys to new hires on a staggered basis and a determined process on how to conduct surveys. The compiling process and questions asked depend on company preference; what's more important is what is done with the numbers obtained.

"Collecting data is as good as what you do with it," Carvin said. "You can collect all the data in the world, but if you don't use it, there's no point in even having it. It's really important that as you're collecting this data, you begin to create action plans and create a bit of a road map of things that you can work on or solve that can improve the process."

Survey results need to be aggregated in a way that highlights trends rather than individual or anecdotal performances. The purpose of these surveys is to improve the process and organization — not to provide performance data on the individual employee. According to Carvin, a company can best guarantee honest feedback if employees understand the purpose of the survey and receive clear communication on when it is coming. Tangible proof of improvements from previous survey results help, too.

"New-hire surveys can create a company standard that acts upon the criticism of new employees and the inclusive opinions of everyone in the organization," Carvin said.

Through the use of new-hire surveys, organizations can identify critical job features that ensure the

success and satisfaction of newly hired employees and forge a strong employer-employee partnership that minimizes turnover.

“Taking action is really important for improving your organization and improving the corporate culture around employee feedback,” Carvin said.