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New-Hire Surveys Help Audit Recruiting, Onboarding Processes

Many employers are using new-hire surveys to help identify the strengths and weaknesses of their recruiting and onboarding processes and thus improve retention of new hires and increase time to productivity, says human resources expert Beth N. Carvin.

Customize Questions

New-hire surveys are being used most often by companies with at least 1,000 employees, says Carvin, CEO of Nobscot Corporation (www.nobscot.com). The companies create customized online surveys for new hires to complete 30 to 90 days after hire, depending on what the company is trying to measure.

When auditing their recruiting process, employers often conduct a survey at 30 or 45 days after hire, when the process is still fresh in new hires' minds, Carvin says. Surveys about new-hires' overall experience, training, and socialization are ideally conducted at 60 or 75 days; however, some companies prefer to wait until 90 days.

The questions asked vary by organization and depend on what processes the employer wants to measure, she says.

For example, new hires might be asked about the accuracy of information they received during the recruiting process, frustrations they experienced, how welcomed they felt, how quickly their direct supervisor met with them to discuss goals, whether the onboarding process was overwhelming, and whether

they had access to e-mail, phone, and a computer and received training in a timely manner.

New hires can also be asked for suggestions to improve the onboarding experience. Carvin's personal favorite question on these surveys is: "What do you know now that you wish you knew when you started?"

Promote Participation

Communication about the new-hire survey should begin during the hiring process and continue after hire, Carvin says.

Applicants and new hires should understand that the company values feedback, aggregates the results, and makes changes based on new-hires' feedback. "The more they hear how important it is and that it's just part of the process, [the more] your participation will increase."

Employees are more likely to provide honest feedback if they feel they will not be punished for doing so and if the surveys are conducted by HR or a third-party provider—not the individual's manager, she says.

Employers need to be cautious about using multiple surveys, because "you could produce survey fatigue," which could affect the quality of feedback, Carvin says.

Other Advice to Consider

Carvin also recommends that employers do the following:

- **Use a combination of rated and open-ended questions.** Rated answers allow you to aggregate data and pinpoint problems, she says. Open-ended questions help "flesh out the data" with more details.

- **Track employee demographics.** Asking new hires to identify their department, division, gender, and race on the survey, for example, will help you uncover problems within a particular department and identify potential discriminatory treatment during onboarding.

- **Consider the benefits of technology.** If you conduct new-hire surveys on paper, Carvin recommends entering the data into a spreadsheet so it can be aggregated.

  For large companies, she recommends using online surveys created by a third party, which automatically aggregates the data, compiles demographic information, and sends out new-hire surveys at the appropriate time.

- **Couple new-hire surveys with supervisor surveys.** When auditing the recruiting process, have direct supervisors complete a separate survey. Supervisors' perspective on the quality of the new hires will give you more insight into the recruiting process.