Creating, Administering, and Responding to a Library Workplace Climate Assessment

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Abstract. In 2020-21, we developed, administered, and began responding to a workplace climate survey. Here, we describe the project & lessons learned.

Survey Goals. To assess how employees experience the workplace with regard to:
- Satisfaction of basic psychological needs
- Job satisfaction & professional growth
- Workload & work/life balance
- Supervision & mentoring
- Climate (e.g., discrimination)
- Accessibility & workspace needs
- Organizational trust

Launch & Close
December 16th, 2020 -- 2 reminders -- February 1st, 2021

Survey Team Work
Diverse team planned analyses & comm., framed findings, wrote reports, created recommendations, met with leaders.

Team created agreements about decision making, respect, capacity, accessibility, inclusion, etc.
Lots of sub-team work.

Survey Development

1. Mapping Content
Open sessions: what do we want to know? Consulting with work teams and DEI & accessibility leads.

2. Drafting
Initial drafting using new & existing measures; designed to capture quantitative & qualitative data.

3. Iterative Tuning
More sessions with leaders and others; feedback used for more revising.

4. Piloting

5. Final Draft
Final draft shared with leaders before launch. Small issues resolved. Instrument ready for launch.

Link to Instrument

Survey Team Work

Survey Development

Responding
Leaders slow to respond. Led to frustration. Finally, framework for acting and communicating created. Employee groups still pushing for openness and tangible change.

Systems-analysis approach used for next steps. Leadership accepting accountability, learning, taking action on DEI issues and rethinking harmful structures.

Sharing & Talking
Results and recommendations shared. Meetings with divisions and library teams. Follow-up analyses conducted as requested.

Results shared with leaders and employees simultaneously in whole-staff meeting. Then, many chances for people to share reactions.

77% Response Rate; sample representative.

What We Learned from the Process.
- Better team-to-leadership contact can prevent confusion and help leaders prepare for action.
- Plans for next steps should be developed earlier.
- Leaders’ communication about their work to make improvements should be very, very clear.
- Changes to systems should be clearly connected back to survey findings to avoid confusion and cynicism.
- Don’t collect an overwhelming amount of data!
- Asking questions about already-known problems does not help with trust in the organization.

Important pattern throughout the findings: Specific groups -- such as people of color, people with disabilities, staff compared to librarians, people in certain units -- experienced poorer treatment and climate.

All documents were shared with the whole library; many avenues for people to dive in.