



Ingwer Borg with Paul M. Mastrangelo

# Employee Surveys in Management

Theories, Tools, and  
Practical Applications

HOGREFE



# Employee Surveys in Management

## Theories, Tools, and Practical Applications

## About the authors

**Ingwer Borg** is Scientific Director at the GESIS-ZUMA academic survey research institute in Mannheim, Germany, Professor of Psychology at the University of Giessen, Germany, and Executive Consultant at the Kenexa Research Institute. He studied experimental psychology (MSc, Tulane), applied psychology (Dipl.-Psych., Dr. phil., University of Munich), and mathematical psychology (postdoctoral research, University of Michigan). A veteran of some 30 years in employee surveys, mostly in German-headquartered companies of all sizes, he has been involved in all conceivable aspects of employee surveys as a cofounder and former partner of HRC (now Kenexa, Germany). He has authored or edited sixteen books and hundreds of articles on survey methodology, data analysis, scaling, theory construction, and various substantive topics of psychology.

**Paul M. Mastrangelo, PhD**, specializes in the transformation of employee data into insightful pathways to change. He has over 15 years of experience in psychological assessment, organization development, and adult education. Paul works as a Senior Consultant and Director of New Service Development at Genesee Survey Services, where he has facilitated survey driven change efforts for companies such as Apple, Cisco Systems, Hewlett Packard, Johnson & Johnson, Lyondell, Raytheon, and Polaroid. Paul has over 20 original publications and is a regular presenter at the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology's annual conference. Paul received his PhD in Industrial and Organizational Psychology from Ohio University in 1993 and his BA in Psychology from the University of Rhode Island in 1989, where he was inducted into the Phi Beta Kappa Honor Society. He cheers for the Boston Red Sox from Rochester, NY, with his wife, Kim, and his two children, Ally and Marc.

# **Employee Surveys in Management**

**Theories, Tools, and  
Practical Applications**

Ingwer Borg  
with  
Paul M. Mastrangelo

HOGREFE 

## Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication

is available via the Library of Congress Marc Database under the  
LC Control Number 2008931542

## Library and Archives Canada Cataloging in Publication

Borg, Ingwer

Employee surveys in management : theories, tools, and practical  
applications / Ingwer Borg, Paul M. Mastrangelo.

Includes bibliographical references.  
ISBN 978-0-88937-295-5

1. Employee attitude surveys. 2. Organizational effectiveness--Evaluation.  
I. Mastrangelo, Paul M. II. Title.

HF5549.5.A83B66 2008

658.30072'3

C2008-903805-3

© 2008 by Hogrefe & Huber Publishers

### PUBLISHING OFFICES

USA: Hogrefe & Huber Publishers, 875 Massachusetts Avenue, 7th Floor, Cambridge, MA 02139  
Phone (866) 823-4726, Fax (617) 354-6875; E-mail [info@hogrefe.com](mailto:info@hogrefe.com)

EUROPE: Hogrefe & Huber Publishers, Rohnsweg 25, 37085 Göttingen, Germany  
Phone +49 551 49609-0, Fax +49 551 49609-88, E-mail [hh@hogrefe.com](mailto:hh@hogrefe.com)

### SALES & DISTRIBUTION

USA: Hogrefe & Huber Publishers, Customer Services Department,  
30 Amberwood Parkway, Ashland, OH 44805  
Phone (800) 228-3749, Fax (419) 281-6883, E-mail [custserv@hogrefe.com](mailto:custserv@hogrefe.com)

EUROPE: Hogrefe & Huber Publishers, Rohnsweg 25, 37085 Göttingen, Germany  
Phone +49 551 49609-0, Fax +49 551 49609-88, E-mail [hh@hogrefe.com](mailto:hh@hogrefe.com)

### OTHER OFFICES

CANADA: Hogrefe & Huber Publishers, 1543 Bayview Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M4G 3B5

SWITZERLAND: Hogrefe & Huber Publishers, Länggass-Strasse 76, CH-3000 Bern 9

Hogrefe & Huber Publishers

Incorporated and registered in the State of Washington, USA, and in Göttingen, Lower Saxony, Germany

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted, in any form or by  
any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, microfilming, recording or otherwise, without written  
permission from the publisher.



Printed and bound in the USA  
ISBN 978-0-88937-295-5

# Content

<b>Preface .....</b>	<b>XV</b>
<b>1 Characteristics and Types of Employee Surveys .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Current Usage of Employee Surveys in Industry .....	1
1.2 Some Typical Cases of Employee Surveys .....	3
1.3 General Characteristics of Employee Surveys .....	5
1.4 The Purposes of Employee Surveys .....	6
1.5 Some Basic Types of Employee Survey .....	8
Employee Polls .....	8
Benchmarking Employee Surveys.....	9
Climate Employee Surveys With Feedback.....	11
Unfreeze-and-Involve Management Programs .....	12
Systemic Employee Surveys.....	13
Employee Surveys for Measurement and Change .....	15
1.6 On the Evolution of Employee Survey Types .....	17
1.7 Potentials and Risks of an Employee Survey .....	19
1.8 Employee Surveys and Naïve Models of the Employee .....	21
Five Models about the Employee .....	21
The Five Employee Models and their Corresponding Employee Surveys .....	23
Employee Models and Employee Surveys .....	25
<b>2 Positioning an Employee Survey .....</b>	<b>27</b>
2.1 Positioning the Employee Survey .....	27
Total Package Designs.....	27
Stakeholders, Explicit Goals, and Hidden Agendas .....	30
2.2 The Context of an ES .....	31
Project Antecedents and Apparent Needs .....	31
Introducing General Information about Employee Surveys .....	33
Considering the Benefits of an ES .....	35
First Thoughts on the Costs of an Employee Survey .....	37
Readiness of an Organization for an ES .....	38
Finding the Right Time to Administer the ES .....	41
2.3 Positioning the Employee Survey through Top Management.....	43
Goals.....	44
Risks and Dealing with Risks .....	44
Defining Minimal Requirements for Managers and Non-Managers .....	45
Top Management's Own Public Commitment .....	46
2.4 Further Facets of Positioning an ES .....	47
Content Considerations.....	47
Dissemination of ES Results.....	49
Comparing Employee Survey Results across Organizational Units .....	49
2.5 Ethical and Legal Use of Individual Employee Data .....	51
Anonymity .....	52
Confidentiality .....	55
Allowing for Demographic Item Non-Response .....	55
Data Protection .....	56
Inadmissible Questions .....	57

2.6	Census and Sample Surveys .....	57
	Statistical Considerations.....	57
	Cost Considerations .....	58
	Psychological Considerations .....	59
	Usability for Organizational Decision Making.....	60
<b>3</b>	<b>Coordinating and Planning the ES Project .....</b>	<b>61</b>
3.1	Architecture .....	61
	Architecture of the Coordination Team .....	61
	Tasks of ES Coordinators .....	63
	Recruitment and Selection of ES Coordinators .....	64
	ES Coordinators and ES Consultants.....	66
	Time Consumed by Coordinators in an ES Project .....	67
3.2	ES Project Plan .....	67
	The ES Master Plan .....	68
	Differentiating Roles in the ES Project.....	69
	Phases, Activities, and Roles of an ES Project .....	71
<b>4</b>	<b>Content of Questionnaire .....</b>	<b>77</b>
4.1	Approaches for Defining the Content of an ES.....	77
	Existing Questionnaires and Instruments.....	78
	Interviewing Senior Leaders to Create Survey Content.....	79
	An ACE Hierarchy to Guide Questionnaire Construction.....	81
	Using ACE to Construct Indices.....	83
	From ACE to RACER .....	84
	The Performance-Satisfaction Motor.....	85
	Using Company Scorecards to Identify Measurement Fields.....	88
	The Various Functions of ES Items .....	89
4.2	Standard ES Questions: The Individual Employee's Perspective .....	91
4.3	Extending Standard ES Topics: Performance and Strategy .....	95
4.4	Extensions II: Further Psychological Topics.....	97
4.5	Topics Not Suited for an ES .....	100
4.6	Facets of ES Items .....	101
4.7	Importance as a Judgment Criterion.....	103
4.8	Typical Item Compilations .....	106
4.9	Demographic Items .....	107
<b>5</b>	<b>Item and Questionnaire Design .....</b>	<b>109</b>
5.1	Closed Items with Rating Scales .....	109
	Number of Categories in a Likert Response Scale .....	111
	The Middle Category of a Likert Response Scale .....	111
	Using "Don't Know" Categories and no Middle Categories .....	113
	Numerical Labels for the Categories of the Response Scale .....	114
5.2	Response Criteria in Items.....	115
5.3	On the Psychology of Answering Survey Items.....	117
5.4	Items with Qualitative Response Scales.....	120
5.5	Comments.....	123
5.6	Open-Ended Questions with a Focus .....	126
5.7	Formulating ES Items.....	128
5.8	Scales and Single Items .....	132

5.9	Items in Different Languages .....	133
	Back-Translations .....	133
	Further Criteria for Questionnaire Translations .....	134
	The TRAPD Approach .....	134
5.10	Collecting Demographic Information.....	135
5.11	The Structure of the Questionnaire.....	136
	Reasons for a Questionnaire Structured by Content .....	137
	Criteria for Sorting Items.....	138
5.12	Layout of Questionnaire .....	139
	Cover Page and Introduction .....	139
	Design and Layout of Demographic Items .....	140
	Layout of the Blocks of Content Items .....	141
	Alternative Layouts of ES Questionnaires.....	141
	Total Design Method .....	146
5.13	Prognosis Questionnaires .....	146
5.14	Electronic Questionnaires.....	148
<b>6</b>	<b>Processes of Questionnaire Development .....</b>	<b>153</b>
6.1	Developing an Early Version of the Questionnaire.....	153
6.2	The ES Project Team's Role in Questionnaire Development .....	155
	Coordinating Language Adaptation and Translations .....	155
	Coordinating the Development of Group-Specific Items .....	156
	Coordinating the Development of Demographic Items .....	158
6.3	Involving Stakeholders into Questionnaire Development.....	160
	Involving Rank-And-File Employees .....	161
	Involving the Organization's Executive Board.....	161
	Involving the Works Council.....	162
	Involving Middle Management and ES Advisory Boards .....	163
6.4	Pre-Testing and Pilot-Testing the Questionnaire .....	163
	A Simple Pre-Testing Approach for Employee Surveys .....	164
	Cognitive Pre-Testing.....	165
	How Many Pre-Tests? .....	166
	Pilot-Testing the Questionnaire .....	167
<b>7</b>	<b>Sampling .....</b>	<b>169</b>
7.1	The Population.....	169
7.2	Non-Random Samples.....	170
	Convenience Samples .....	170
	Typical Cases, Extreme Cases, Experts .....	171
	Cut-Off Samples .....	171
	Snow-Balling .....	171
	Quota Sampling .....	172
7.3	Random Samples .....	173
	Simple Random Samples .....	174
	Systematic Random Sampling .....	174
	Stratified Random Samples .....	174
	Cluster Samples .....	176
	Multi-Stage Sampling.....	176
7.4	Sampling Errors.....	177
	Sampling Errors in Samples of Different Size.....	177
	Sampling in Small Populations.....	179



	Sampling Errors for Means and Other Statistics.....	179
	Sampling Errors under Different Sampling Methods .....	180
7.5	Sample Size .....	180
7.6	Response Rates and Nonresponse .....	183
	Nonresponse Bias .....	183
	Dealing with Nonresponse.....	184
	Item Nonresponse .....	186
7.7	Sample Construction in Practice .....	187
<b>8</b>	<b>Information Campaign Before the Survey .....</b>	<b>191</b>
8.1	Phases and Steps of an ES Information Campaign .....	191
8.2	Activities in Phase I of the Information Campaign .....	192
	Informing Employees About the Survey .....	192
	Motivating to Participate .....	193
	Informing About Survey Administration.....	198
	Bridging the Time of “No Action” After the Survey.....	198
8.3	Planning the Information Campaign .....	200
8.3	Style of the Information Campaign .....	200
8.4	Typical Questions and Answers .....	201
<b>9</b>	<b>Data Collection .....</b>	<b>207</b>
9.1	Survey Administration and Survey Logistics.....	207
9.2	Data Collection in Group Sessions.....	208
	The Polling Station Method.....	208
	Organizing a Polling Station Setting .....	212
	Polling Station Data Collection and Other Group Sessions.....	213
	Special Participation Requests for Unavailable Employees .....	214
	Monitoring Response Rates and Using Reminders.....	215
9.3	Data Collection by Postal Mail.....	216
	Monitoring Response Rates and Using Reminders.....	218
9.4	Online Data Collection .....	220
	General Advantages of Online Surveys .....	220
	Challenges of Online Employee Surveys .....	221
	Online Data Collection and Anonymity .....	221
	Monitoring Response Rates and Using Reminders.....	224
	Combining Online and Traditional Methods of Data Collection.....	225
9.5	Alternative Methods of Data Collection.....	226
9.6	Summary Comparison of Data Collection Methods .....	227
9.7	Measures to Increase Response Rates .....	228
	What Response Rates can be Considered High Response Rates? .....	229
	Persuasive Positioning .....	229
	Reducing Anonymity and Confidentiality Concerns .....	231
	Transparency and Visibility.....	231
	Incentives.....	232
	Monitoring Response Rates and Reminders .....	234
	Questionnaire Design and Personal Invitation Letter .....	236
9.8	Data Entry and Data Coding.....	237
9.9	Data Cleaning .....	238

<b>10</b>	<b>Standard Data Analysis.....</b>	<b>241</b>
10.1	Elementary Analysis of ES Data .....	241
	Survey Results for Single Items.....	241
	Comparisons of the Focal Group with Other Organizational Units.....	245
	Placing Absolute Scores in the Context of Several Standards .....	246
	Items, Indices, and Indicators .....	248
	Using Interrelationships among Items to Determine Importance .....	251
10.2	Standard ES Reports .....	252
10.3	Focal Reports .....	253
	The General Introduction of a Focal Report .....	253
	Turning to the Focal Group .....	255
	Tables of the Focal Report.....	256
	Alternative Ways to Organize the Items in a Focal Report .....	257
	Reporting Demographics in a Focal Report.....	258
	Appendices of a Focal Report.....	259
10.4	Cross-Comparison Reports.....	259
	Cross-Comparison Tables.....	260
	Who Should Get Cross-Comparisons? .....	261
10.5	Prognoses Reports .....	262
10.6	Standard Reporting of Answers to Open Questions.....	263
10.7	First-Results Reports for Employees .....	265
10.9	How to Organize Report Ordering .....	266
	Specifying Selection Rules .....	266
	Automated Report Ordering .....	268
<b>11</b>	<b>Designing Follow-Up Processes.....</b>	<b>271</b>
11.1	Basic Components of the Follow-Up Processes.....	271
	Actions and Busy Work.....	271
	Monday Morning Actions: Starting Small.....	272
	Avoiding Unnecessary New Initiatives or New Goals .....	273
	Types of Responses to ES Results .....	274
11.2	Approaches to Designing Follow-Up Processes .....	275
	The Top-Down Approach.....	275
	The Bottom-Up Approach .....	277
	The Task-Force Approach .....	279
	The Big-Bang Approach.....	280
	Soft Varieties of the Top-Down Approach.....	280
11.3	Communicating the Organization’s Official Response to ES Results .....	282
11.4	Creating Dialogue as a Response to Survey Results .....	284
11.5	Cultivating Individual Responses to Survey Results.....	286
11.6	The 7+7 Approach for Rolling-Out the Follow-Up Processes.....	289
11.7	Response Sequences for Individual Managers .....	291
11.8	Criteria for Planning and Evaluating Follow-Up Processes.....	292
<b>12</b>	<b>Nonstandard Data Analysis .....</b>	<b>295</b>
12.1	Interpreting ES Results.....	295
12.2	Experience-Based Hypotheses and ES Results .....	297
12.3	Benchmarking.....	298
	Types of Benchmarks .....	298
	Benchmarking Single Items and Indices.....	300

On the Validity of Benchmarks .....	300
Benchmarks from Different Countries.....	301
Benchmarking Against Industry and Job Norms .....	303
Benchmarking by Cross-Comparisons within the Organization.....	304
Upward and Backward Benchmarking .....	305
Benchmarking Against Prognoses .....	306
Benchmarking Correlations and Patterns.....	306
12.4 Using Theory to Interpret ES Data.....	307
12.5 Deep Statistical Analyses .....	310
The Psychological Map of the Respondents .....	310
Dependent Variables within MDS .....	312
External Dependent Variables and Linkage Research .....	313
Relating Internal Dependent Variables to Demographic Information .....	316
Interpretations and the “More is better” Fallacy .....	317
12.6 Business-Oriented Frameworks for ES Data Interpretation .....	318
ES Data and the Balanced Scorecard.....	318
SWOT Analysis.....	319
12.7 Triangulation and Other Views onto the Data.....	321
<b>13 Presenting Survey Results to Management .....</b>	<b>323</b>
13.1 Structuring an ES Presentation .....	323
Introduction of an ES Presentation .....	323
Facets/Dimensions of the Organization Climate .....	325
The Performance-Satisfaction Network: Core and Extension .....	327
A Simpler Alternative: ACE or RACER Structuring .....	327
Further Break-Downs of the Statistics .....	328
Empirical Structure of Items.....	329
Special Topics.....	329
Business Perspectives .....	329
Monday Morning Action Platforms.....	330
Summary and Recommendations .....	330
Still Other Forms of Structuring an ES Presentation .....	331
13.2 The ES Presentation Process .....	332
Aligning the Final Presentation with Key Managers .....	332
Global Management Decisions as Input to the Follow-Up Processes .....	334
Overcoming Typical Psychological Barriers .....	334
13.3 Adding Punch to the Presentation .....	336
Positioning the Presentation in the Context of the Follow-Up Processes .....	336
Avoid Wasting Time on Side Issues.....	336
Avoid Over-Interpretation .....	338
13.4 Motivating Managers to Act.....	339
Motivating Managers to Get Involved.....	339
Building Platforms for Immediate Actions.....	340
<b>14 Employee Survey Workshops .....</b>	<b>343</b>
14.1 Foundations of ES Workshops .....	343
The Basic Goals of an ES Workshop.....	343
Feedback, Discussion, and Explanations .....	344
Proposals for Solutions .....	345
Alignment .....	346
14.2 Typical Design of an ES Workshop .....	347
Phase I: Introduction.....	347

Phase II: Discussing and Structuring the Results.....	350
Phase III: Action Fields and Ideal Scenarios .....	354
Phase IV: Outlook on Next Steps .....	356
Phase V: Wrapping Things up After the Workshop .....	356
14.3 The Participants of an ES Workshop.....	357
14.4 The Facilitator of an ES Workshop.....	357
14.5 Organizing and Preparing an ES Workshop.....	359
Participants, Time, Location, and Invitation.....	360
Room .....	360
Materials .....	360
Preparing an ES Workshop: the ES Coordinator's Role.....	361
A Facilitator's Personal Preparation for the ES Workshop .....	362
14.6 Discussing ES Results .....	363
Workshop Activities for a Particular Item Block.....	364
An Illustrative Item Block .....	364
Another Illustration with Items on the Supervisor.....	366
14.7 Tips and Hints for Facilitating an ES Workshops .....	368
Timing .....	368
Role and Behavior of the Facilitator.....	369
Presenting the Survey Results.....	370
Discussing the ES Results .....	370
Behavior of the Participants in the Discussions.....	372
Discussing the Items on the Direct Supervisor .....	373
Brainstorming on the Fields of Action.....	374
Behavior of Managers in ES Workshops.....	375
Giving Feedback to the Supervisor after the ES Workshop .....	375
14.8 Variants of the Traditional ES Workshop .....	376
ES Workshops with Managers Only.....	376
ES Workshops under Tight Time Constraints .....	377
14.9 Alternatives of the Traditional ES Workshop .....	378
14.10 Planning Batteries of ES Workshops .....	382
14.9 Additional Follow-Up Work on ES Workshop Results .....	383
Additional Statistical Analysis of the Survey Data.....	383
Consulting Additional Theory in the Literature.....	384
Understanding Opportunities.....	384
Cause-And-Effect Analyses for Problem Areas .....	384
Testing the Strategic Value of Possible Areas of Action.....	385
Summarizing how Workshop Participants Interrelate the Topics.....	386
<b>15 Action Management.....</b>	<b>389</b>
15.1 Developing Ideas for Actions.....	389
15.2 Organizing Actions.....	392
Level of Action.....	392
Roles in Action Management .....	393
Selecting Action Directors and Action Team Members .....	393
Action Management vs. Line Management .....	394
The Action Mission Contract.....	395
Defining the Action Director's Action Space .....	396
When to Begin Action Planning .....	397
15.3 Foundations of Action Planning.....	398
Planning Actions Hierarchically.....	398
The Timeline of an Action.....	399

15.4	Simple Action Planning Tools.....	399
	“W” Action Forms .....	400
	“W” Action Forms with Status Indicators .....	400
15.5	Planning Complex Actions.....	401
	Planning Milestones.....	401
	Planning Activities.....	403
15.6	Controlling Action Implementation .....	404
	Principles of Action Controlling.....	405
	Reporting .....	406
	Simple Reporting Forms.....	406
	Reporting in Complex Actions .....	406
	Adjusting an Action Plan.....	407
	Online Action Planning Tools .....	409
15.7	Soft Factors in Action Management.....	409
	Selecting the Right People.....	410
	Delegating Actions Away.....	411
	Remaining Open to Clarify the Action’s Goals and Conditions .....	411
	Accepting and Endorsing the Action Plan .....	411
	Insisting on Discipline .....	411
	Leading Action Team Members .....	412
	Planning Realistically .....	412
	Controlling Action Progress Constructively .....	412
	Thinking About the Politics of the Action.....	413
	Turning the Action Team into a Team.....	413
	Keeping Technical Gimmickry Minimal.....	414
	Showing Commitment to the Action and its Tasks.....	414
<b>16</b>	<b>Information Campaign after the Survey .....</b>	<b>415</b>
16.1	Information on Results and Management’s Responses.....	415
16.2	Information on Actions.....	416
16.3	Planning and Organizing the Information Campaign.....	419
	Architecture and Roles .....	419
	Publications and Time Line .....	421
	Communication Politics.....	423
16.4	Communication as Part of Planned Change Management .....	425
	Creating Perceptions of what most People are Doing.....	425
	Communicating what Employees are Ready to Hear .....	426
<b>17</b>	<b>Evaluating Employee Survey Projects .....</b>	<b>427</b>
17.1	Project Evaluation and Learning .....	427
17.2	Evaluating ES Projects .....	428
	Positioning the Evaluation of an ES Project .....	428
	Evaluation Criteria.....	429
	Objective Business Criteria .....	431
	Finding the Right Time for Evaluations .....	432
17.3	Evaluation Methods.....	433
	Analyzing the Quality of the Survey Data.....	433
	Studying Documentation Materials .....	434
	Collecting Observations on the ES Project.....	435
	Interviews to Evaluate the ES Project’s Results and Processes.....	436
	Surveys to Evaluate the ES Project’s Results and Processes .....	439