

Infinite Possibilities Work Climate Survey Explanation

Organisations strive to achieve best performance, yet many do not achieve this. Using research and practical application, we have found that the key reason for some organisations and teams achieving greater success over others is down to the 'Work Climate' that it operates within; it is a key differentiator to performance, accepting that other external factors can of course have an influence.

'Work Climate' is simply described as "what does it feel like to work here?" and directly impacts people's drive and enthusiasm to do a good job and thus perform. In this sense the 'Work Climate' has a direct correlation to the overall performance of the organisation/team.

This is set in the context of an overall framework of performance that has 'Work Climate' at its heart, where all the aspects of this framework have a contribution to the 'Work Climate' and therefore performance outcomes.

Impact of 'Work Climate'

A number of factors can impact 'Work Climate', these include:

- Management processes – how planning, team communications and performance management or appraisals work
- Structure and role – how clear the structure is (often shown by an organagram) and the clarity of people's job descriptions and objectives
- Behaviours – of people within and across the team (in terms of how people operate with each other), but also that of the leader and how they influence how people feel (more about these below)

Ultimately, effective leadership is about the creation of a high performing 'climate' that leads to excellence in performance.

Dimensions of 'Work Climate'

The 'Work Climate' has six dimensions to it – each of which is key to underpinning excellence in performance. The graphs that play back the scores are an amalgam of those who contributed to them. In each case:

The six dimensions and their meaning are as follows:

- Clarity direction and vision for the business is clearly communicated and understood
- Challenge people find their work sufficiently challenging
- Change the business is able to deal successfully with change
- Autonomy people feel they are able to get on with their job
- Recognition people feel they are recognised sufficiently for a job well done
- Involvement people feel they have a say in the business

The scores for each dimension identify the extent to which the organization demonstrates the above description in the perception of the employees of the organization.

The way the scoring can be interpreted is as follows:

75th percentile and above represents upper quartile performance and is the target zone to aim for and is more likely to facilitate high performance.

50 – 75th percentile means 2nd quartile so work to be done to improve aspects of the Climate which should have a direct impact on performance. At the lower end of this zone, bear in mind that it means only half of the people believe we have got a certain dimension right, or we have it right only half the time – hence lack of consistency. Addressing issues here is likely to see a positive contribution to performance.

25 – 50th percentile means there are significant issues that exist and a call to immediate action to address, in order to make a clear contribution to performance, which is likely to be failing in some areas.

25th percentile and below means there are very significant issues and very urgent action is need as this is having a major impact on performance.

Dimensions of 'Work Climate' - Leadership & 'Climate'

There are many facets to leadership and what is seen as a good role model. Often this is confused with personality.

Nevertheless, how a leader operates does have an influence on the 'climate' – and indeed the structure and management processes, so it is key to understand the view of leadership.

This model looks at seven core facets (dimensions) that are key to creating an excellent climate and thus contribute to good performance.

The seven dimensions of leadership & Climate are:

1. Direction
2. Relationship Management
3. Engaging
4. Team Development
5. Results Focus
6. Delegation
7. Issue Resolution

1. Direction

Definition: The extent to which the leader creates and articulates a clear vision for the future and drives an effective planning process to put actions into place to achieve that vision. It is at the heart of performance in terms of setting clear objectives and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

A lower score here would suggest that such clarity is not forthcoming and there is not a joined up way in which people can contribute to those goals and actions necessary to achieve them.

This can lead to poorer Clarity and Challenge scores and in turn has a negative performance impact as people are not clear about their priorities and what they should focus on.

2. Relationship Management

Definition: The extent to which the leader demonstrates a focus on customers and the key stakeholders necessary to facilitate success in the business. It also looks at how the leader manages the often conflicting demands by differing stakeholder groups and manages them effectively.

A lower score here would suggest that this focus and management of conflicting demands, is not as well managed as it could be.

This can lead to poorer Clarity and Change scores, as the ability to flex and be adaptable to change impacts new ideas and different / better ways of doing things.

3. Engaging

Definition: The extent to which the leader engages effectively with the team, sharing information and encourages 2-way communication and feedback.

A lower score here would suggest that communications are not seen as effective and that feedback upwards is not encouraged or often overlooked.

This can lead to poorer Clarity and Challenge scores as direction and hence the challenge is not clearly articulated and also poorer Recognition and Involvement scores as people don't feel listened to or that they are involved in the direction-setting process.

4. Team Development

Definition: The extent to which the leader encourages development and operates as an effective Development Coach.

A lower score here would suggest that development through coaching is not as effective as it could be and that people's development is not seen as a priority.

This can lead to poorer Autonomy and Recognition scores as people do not know fully the remit of their role and are not developed in the right way. It can also impact Challenges as people may not have the opportunity of developing the right skills to use effectively in their role.

5. Results Focus

Definition: The extent to which the leader has their 'finger on the pulse' of performance and operates as an effective Performance Manager, holding people to account for their performance.

A lower score here would suggest that there is a lack of clarity on how the organisation is performing and how individuals 'feel' they are doing against that overall performance. The lack of accountability also means that people are seen as more likely to 'get away' with poorer performance.

This can lead to poorer Involvement scores as any perceived lack of meritocracy can build mistrust in the team ("why does that person get away with it?"). It also leads to poorer Clarity scores as achievement is not clear and poorer Recognition as people do not feel they are receiving clarity on how they are performing.

6. Delegation

Definition: The extent to which the leader delegates effectively and does not attempt to do the job of others. In essence this is about the leader operating at the right level, rather than at the level below where they should be at.

A lower score here suggests that there is a lot of leadership 'interference' and potentially unnecessary control, as the leader constantly either checks up on, or chips in to, the job of the team.

This can lead to poorer Autonomy scores as the authority of individuals is removed and also poorer Involvement scores as it undermines the synergy and trust within the team.

7. Issue Resolution

Definition: The extent to which a leader is prepared to tackle the difficult issues quickly whilst ensuring flexibility in developing the right solutions to overcome such issues.

A lower score here can suggest that issues are not tackled head on, but rather swept away and significantly delayed. In addition there is a risk of 'not being prepared to listen' to ideas that might facilitate effective resolution.

This can impact the Change score as the lack of flexibility means a constraint in finding effective solutions and also the Involvement score as the issues resolution is perhaps not being role-modeled in a way that supports a synergistic team.

Conclusion

The key benefit for all this data is it provides a starting point for dialogue. Through such dialogue, a good understanding of those areas that are contributing well to performance can be identified. Equally, those areas where improvements would make a significant difference to performance can be identified and a 'road-map' for change can be developed.

Involving the team in the analysis of the data, the development of actions to address and then the ownership of activity to fulfill those actions, in itself has the potential for huge benefit for the 'climate' and thus the 'performance' of the team to make a quantum leap forwards.