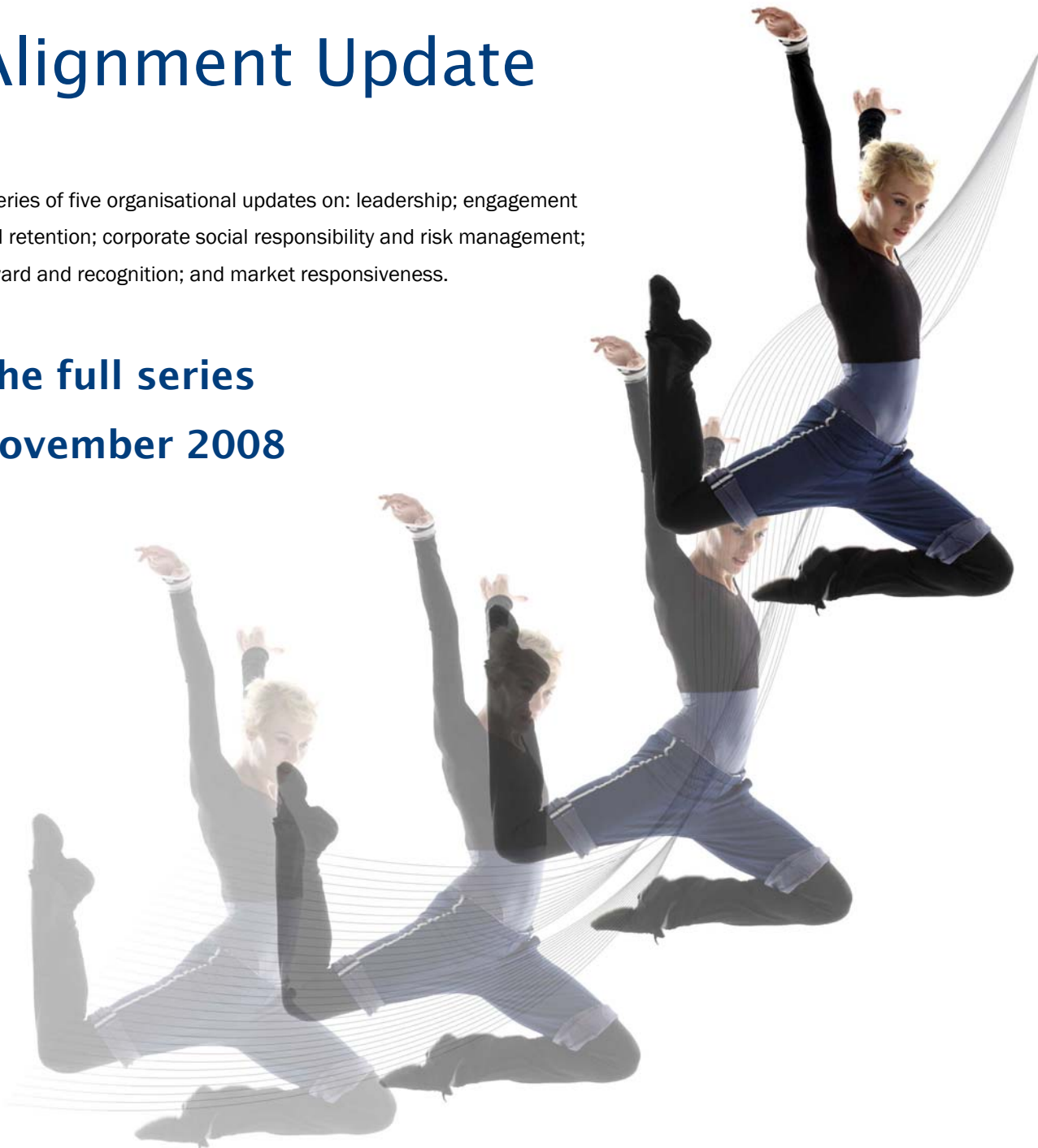


The Insync Surveys Alignment Update

A series of five organisational updates on: leadership; engagement and retention; corporate social responsibility and risk management; reward and recognition; and market responsiveness.

**The full series
November 2008**



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Table of contents

Introduction.....3

Methodology3

About the sample.....4

Chapter one: Leadership.....6

Chapter two: Engagement and retention 14

Chapter three: CSR and risk management 22

Chapter four: Reward and recognition 34

Chapter five: Market responsiveness..... 43

About Insync Surveys..... 52

Contact us 52

Introduction

The Insync Surveys Alignment Update is a series of five easy to digest reports which will confirm or challenge common perceptions held by CEOs and HR leaders.

Chapter one looks at leadership - you'll gain an insight into what employees think of their leaders depending on age, tenure or organisation size. Chapter two focuses on engagement and retention, with recommendations for maximising employee talent and building a shared sense of commitment. Chapter three examines employee perceptions of corporate social responsibility and risk management. Chapter four looks at reward and recognition initiatives that help to create a happy and productive team. Chapter five focuses on employee perceptions of market responsiveness and how to better align employees' actions and behaviours with customer strategies to achieve high organisation performance.


Methodology

Data gathered from the Insync Surveys Organisation Alignment Survey has been used as a basis for the five reports in The Insync Surveys Alignment Update. The Organisation Alignment Survey measures the connection of an organisation's vision and strategy with the actions, attitudes and outcomes of its employees. Organisations going through significant management change or adapting to new market pressures use the tool to take stock and then devise the best path for a sustainable high performance future.

The Organisation Alignment Survey is more comprehensive than other employee opinion and satisfaction surveys as it deals with areas that are important for high performance organisations. Despite being more comprehensive than other surveys, the Organisation Alignment Survey takes only 20 minutes to complete online.


The survey has 120 statements measured on a seven point scale where "one" represents strongly disagree and "seven" represents strongly agree.

This study highlights differences among demographic groups. To do this, the seven rating options are aggregated under the titles of "disagree", "neutral" and "agree" as follows:

Disagree = 

Strongly disagree (1)


Disagree (2)

Neutral = 

Slightly disagree (3)

Neither agree nor disagree (4)

Slightly agree (5)

Agree = 

Agree (6)

Strongly agree (7)

About the sample

A sample of over 14,000 employee responses from more than 70 organisations was drawn from Insync Surveys' international benchmark databases, which collectively contain the responses of more than 750,000 people. The responses used were submitted between 2004 and 2008.

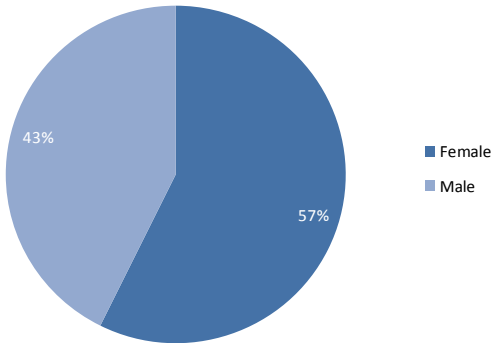
A range of organisations are covered, including not-for-profit organisations and those from the public and private sectors. Most industries are represented, including logistics, health care, education, government, resources, finance, tourism, services, manufacturing and research. Data were collected in line with the privacy policy of Insync Surveys. This policy informs survey invitees that their responses may be used for the purposes of research. It also guarantees that their identity will not be linked to their responses.

Copyright warning

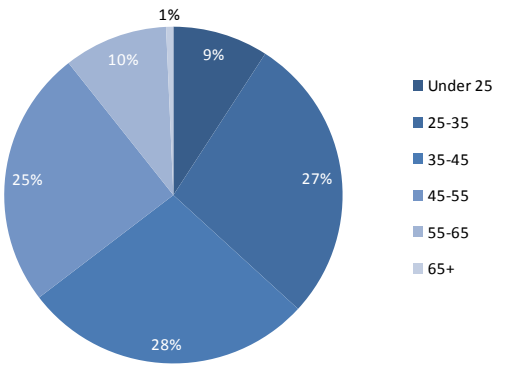
The survey statements included herein are the intellectual property of Insync Surveys and may not be copied or reused without our express prior written permission.

The below pie charts illustrate the distribution of respondents across the various demographic groups.

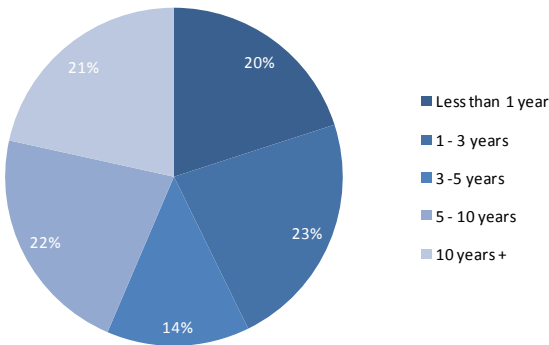
Population distribution by gender



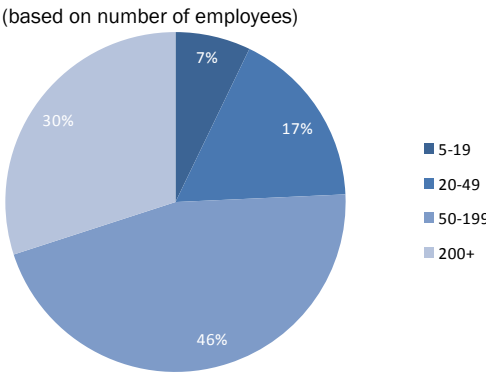
Population distribution by age



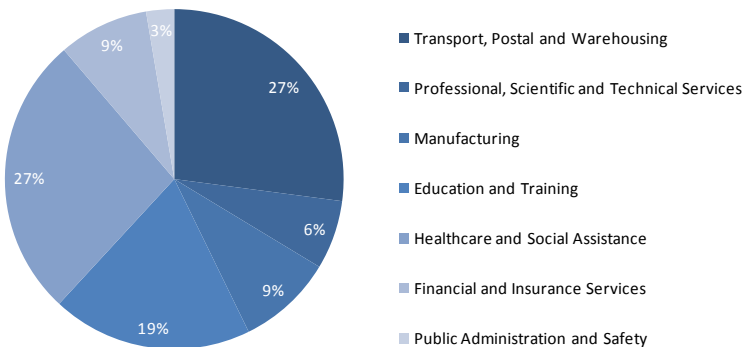
Population distribution by tenure



Population distribution by organisation size



Population distribution by industry



Note: Industry breakdown based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics' ANZSIC 2006 codes.

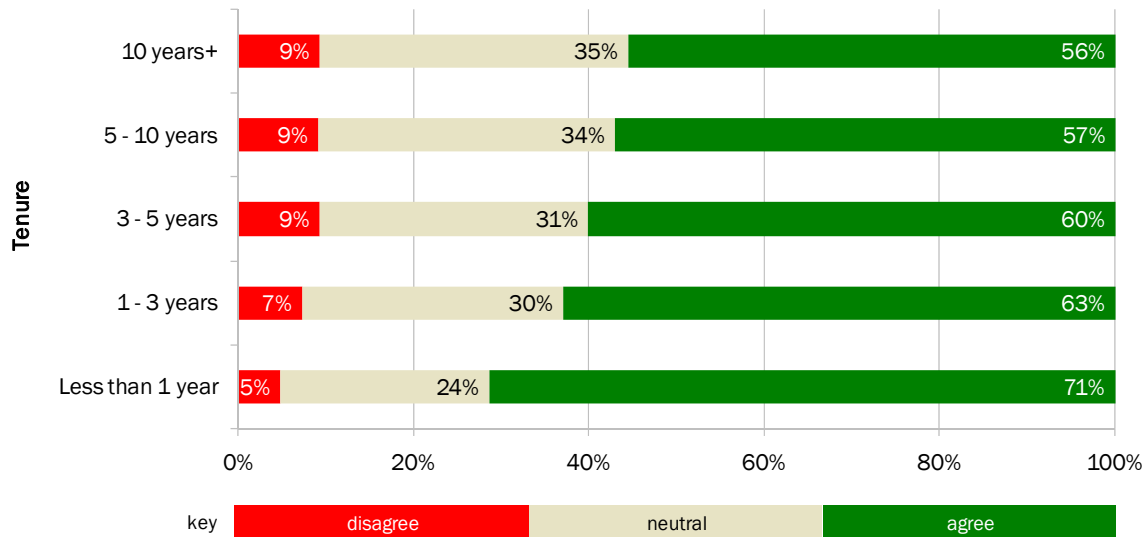
Chapter one: Leadership

Key findings

- Managers lose credibility with their staff over time (page 7)
- While 71% of new employees agree that the person they report to sets a good example, this level of agreement decreases the longer employees remain at the organisation (page 7)
- Managers are interested in the employee's job satisfaction, according to newer staff, while longer serving staff lose faith (page 10)
- Employees with less than one year of service provide the lowest levels of disagreement (5%) and highest levels of agreement (67%) for their manager being interested in their job satisfaction. This level of agreement drops almost 15% for employees who've been at the organisation for over five years, with only 53% believing their manager is interested in their job satisfaction (page 10)
- Small and large organisations connect with their people but those in the middle struggle (page 11)
- Individuals employed in medium organisations (20-49 staff) indicated the highest percentage of disagreement around being kept informed of key developments in other areas (14%) (page 11)

Bosses don't always stack up as role models

Figure 1 – “The person I report to sets a good example for me”

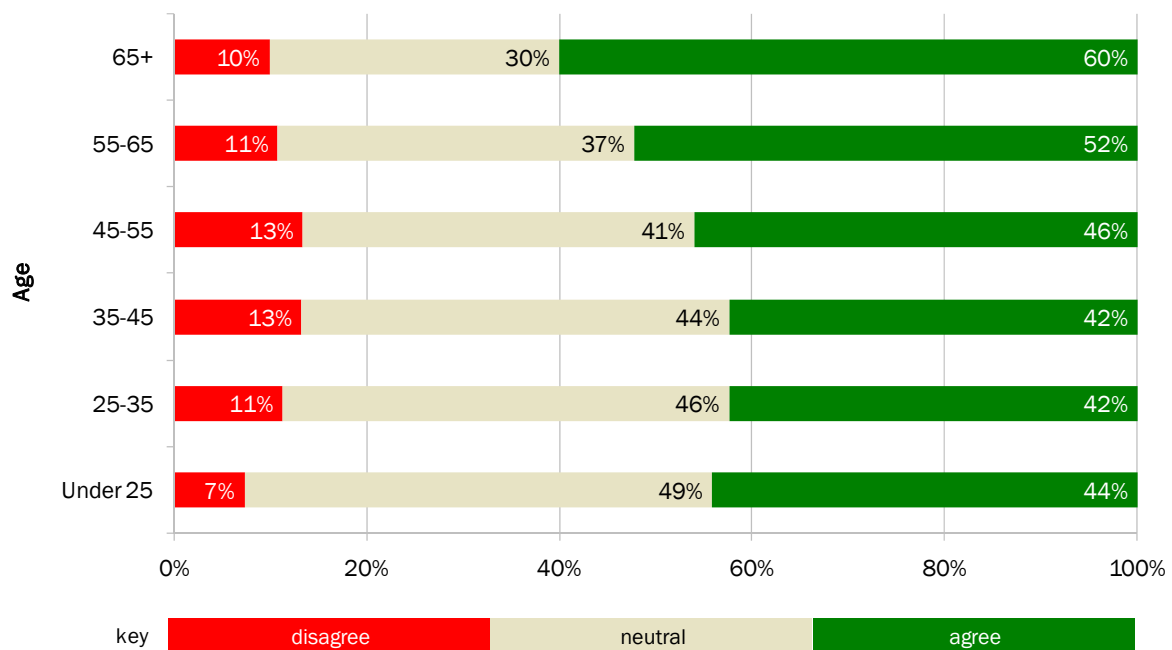


The highest percentage of employees who agree that the person they report to sets a good example have under one year of service (71%). As time goes by, fewer employees believe that their manager models positive behaviour. After 10 years or more working at an organisation, only 56% of employees believe that their manager does so. As tenure progresses and the honeymoon period ends, employees need leaders who accommodate the changing landscape of the workplace and the changing needs of employees.

These results are an important reminder that effective leadership is always a challenge, and that leaders need to be modelling desired behaviours even after the first year of employment.

Performance appraisals are always important and delicate

Figure 2 – “The appraisal of my performance is handled effectively”



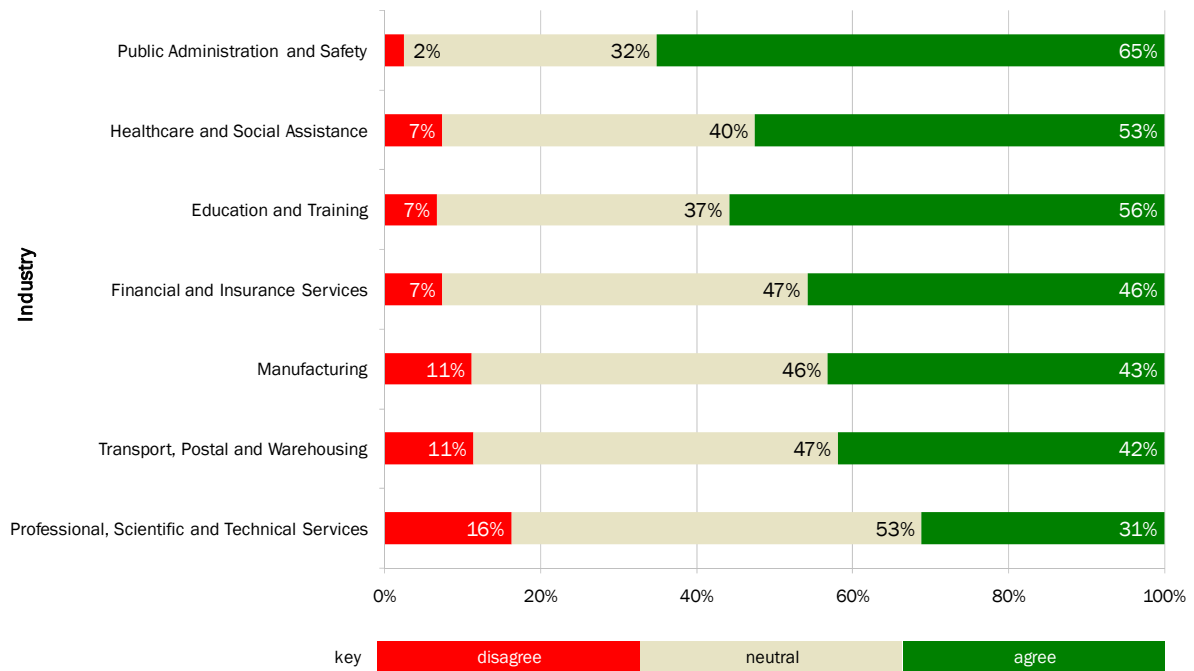
Employees aged between 35 and 55 are most likely to be dissatisfied with the way their performance appraisal is handled. But after 55 the level of satisfaction begins to improve. The findings are also interesting because although satisfaction increases over time, dissatisfaction rises with age and then falls. The likely explanation is career stage.

Employees under 25 are starting out in their career and may have little to compare their performance appraisal to. Even when they have a performance appraisal they're likely to be improving in their job as they begin to fulfil their potential. Managers are less likely to be threatened by younger staff and more likely to be encouraging. In short, the appraisal is more likely to meet the expectations of the younger worker.

At the other end of the scale, older workers may have lower expectations of appraisals. Many of them may have begun their careers 40 years ago in organisations where management set stricter rules. New style managers may be exceeding older workers' expectations while at the same time, as their hunger for career progression subsides, their expectations may be declining. Another aspect of career progression that workers aged between 35 and 55 may be experiencing is failure, disappointment and frustration for the first time in their careers. The dissatisfaction reported may therefore be with their own performance rather than the way it is appraised.

Spreading the word, sharing the dream

Figure 3 – “I have access to documents/statements setting out the sort of organisation we hope to become”



Employees from the Public Administration and Safety industry were the most likely to have vision documents or statements with agreement levels of 65% for this statement; this may be unexpected by some readers. Conversely, employees in the Professional, Scientific and Technical Services industry recorded the highest levels of disagreement at 16%. Furthermore, only about a third of Professional, Scientific and Technical Services workers agreed with the statement. Performance without clarity can be compared to a chicken without its head. It can run quickly, but often ends up going around in circles, and its speed isn't sustainable. Documents and statements about where an organisation is heading are fundamental to a shared sense of direction and are necessary for sustainable high performance. It's surprising that Professional, Scientific and Technical Services firms are so far behind other industries in achieving clarity around vision statements.

One explanation is that the Professional, Scientific and Technical Services industry is more agile than other industries in the sample. Public Administration and Safety, Healthcare and Social Assistance and Education and Training are all bound to a specific vision and purpose because of their area of operation. Many of these organisations are not required to return a profit and may be immune to economic cycles.

Financial and Insurance Services, Transport, Postal and Warehousing and Manufacturing companies are profit driven but are tied to a less flexible vision of the future due to their investments in equipment and

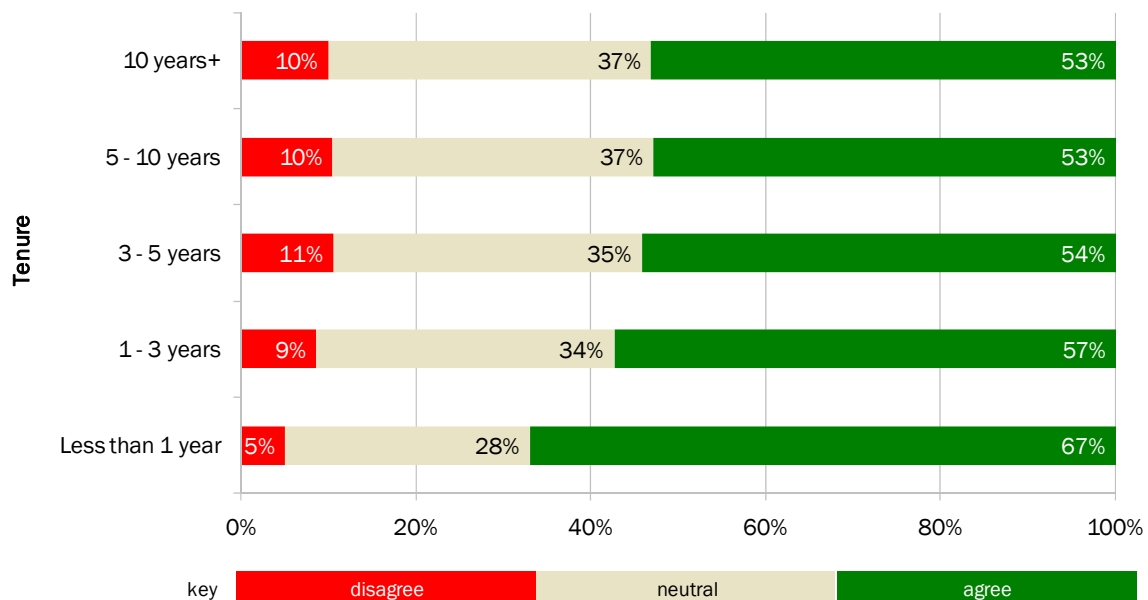
brand. An airline, for example, cannot change its vision overnight and can therefore rally its entire staff around a set of meaningful statements about the future.

Professional, Scientific and Technical Services firms, on the other hand, tend to sell a short-lived commodity: knowledge. As market conditions change they can respond immediately by tweaking their product offering and directing talent to different ventures. Furthermore, as different business lines adapt to client demands, a universally relevant vision may be difficult to articulate.

As such, Professional, Scientific and Technical Services firms may have a bigger challenge than other industries in defining a unifying vision.

Lending an ear

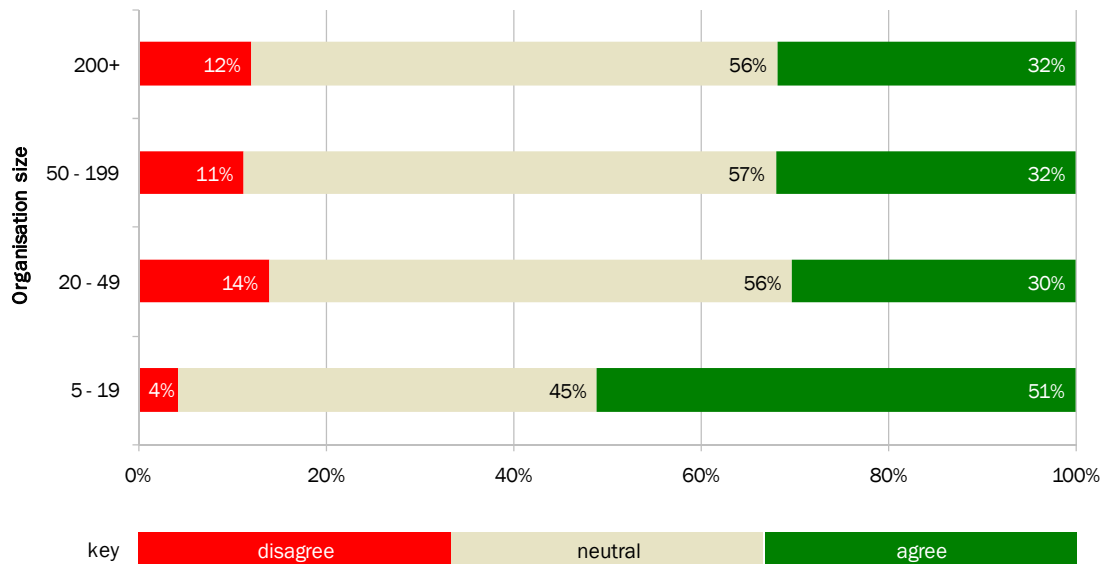
Figure 4 – “The person I report to is interested in my job satisfaction”



Employees who've been with the organisation for less than a year believe their boss is more interested in their job satisfaction compared to employees who've been around for longer. Employees with less than one year of service provide the lowest levels of disagreement (5%) and highest levels of agreement (67%). Levels of agreement appear to decrease until after three years of service when it levels out at 53-54%. This reminds us that taking the time to listen, show an interest and really care is always important no matter how long the employee has been with the organisation.

Avoiding silos

Figure 5 – “I am kept informed of key developments in other areas of our organisation”

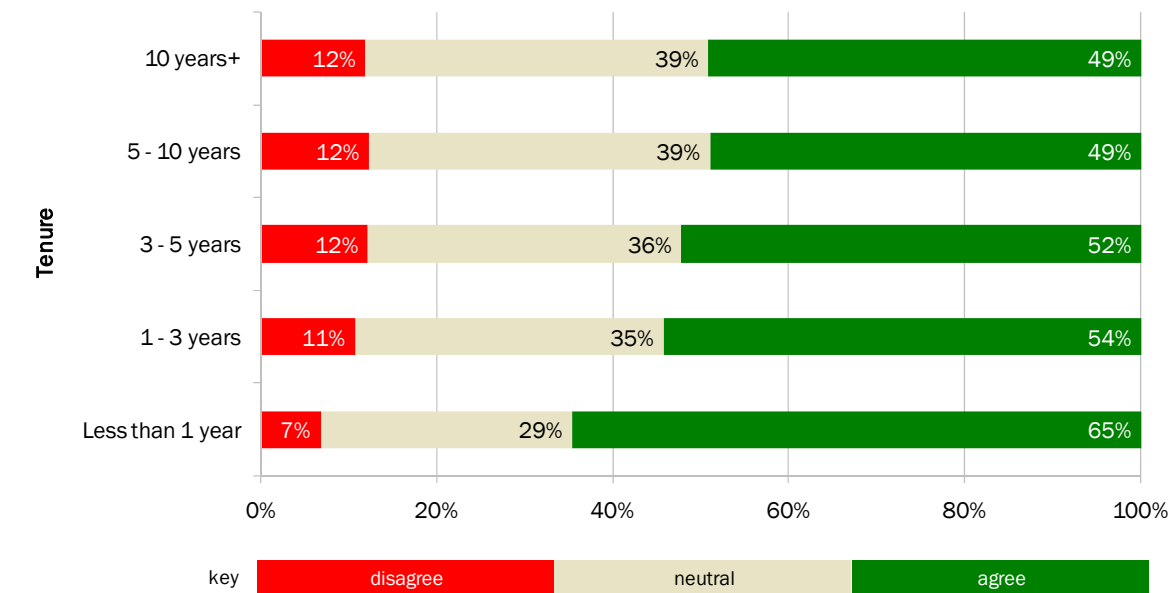


Employees in medium sized organisations (20-49 staff) displayed the highest levels of disagreement with being kept informed of key developments in other areas of the organisation (14%). Alternatively, employees in organisations with 5-19 staff are the most content with this area, with 51% in agreement and only 4% in disagreement.

These findings make intuitive sense. Generally speaking, the bigger an organisation, the less each person knows about what's going on. However, the disagreement spike at the 20–49 person level is interesting. This bracket is typically at the stage in an organisation's growth where a third layer of management is introduced. Instead of being in a single team led by the founder/entrepreneur, the organisation is typically divided into functional teams with middle managers. The expectations of front line employees, who've until now known about everything that's gone on, aren't met as the organisation grows. To avoid these frustrations, leaders of medium sized organisations should acknowledge the feelings of their staff and articulate the benefits of growth as well as its drawbacks. While formalised knowledge management structures may be too much for fast growing organisations; intranets, knowledge sharing sessions and opportunities for casual interaction can be provided.

Familiarity breeds contempt

Figure 6 – “The person I report to is a good business coach for me”



In relation to the statement above, new employees are most likely to agree that the person they report to is a good business coach (65%). The belief that their boss is a good business coach decreases as time goes by and after five years, less than half of all employees believe their direct manager is a good business coach (49%). The findings suggest that people can be taken for granted once they are competent in their roles. The challenge of leadership and duty of care however, do not diminish with time.

Tips to tackle leadership issues

- It's easy to forget what it's like on the receiving end of a performance appraisal so handle them delicately
- A clear, unifying and energising vision is necessary for sustainable high performance
- People learn in different ways and messages should be packaged to help staff retain them and make meaningful connections to the organisation's strategy
- Be a situational leader to give people what they need rather than what you've got
- Don't rely on the "need to know" principle; consider what staff want to know and tell them before anyone else has a chance
- Provide coaching as tenure progresses, not only during initial years of employees' service

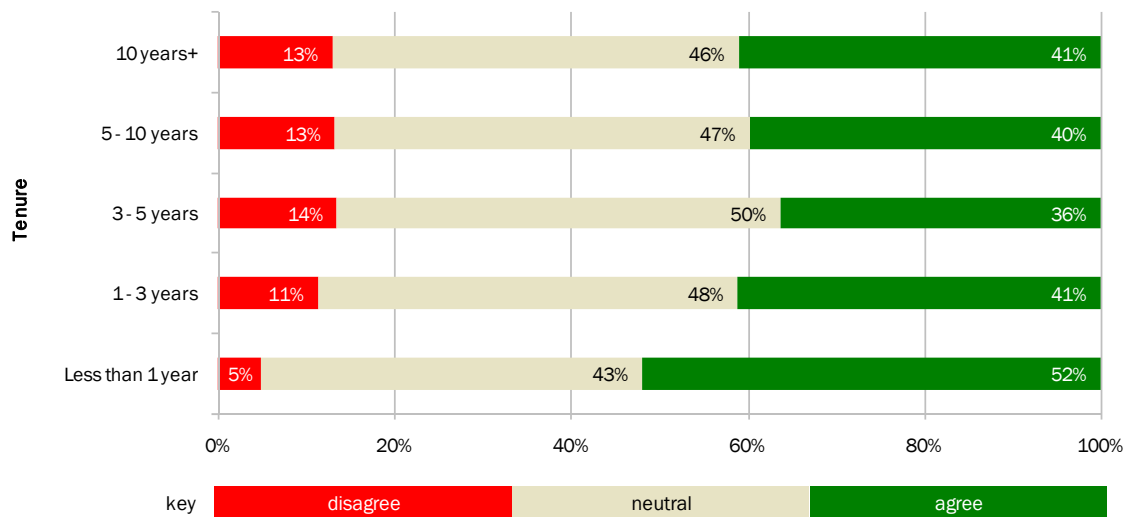
Chapter two: Engagement and retention

Key findings

- Up to half of all employees in the workforce for more than a year don't know if their organisation is committed to them, indicating that bosses fail to show they appreciate employees and aren't effective in communicating interests in wellbeing (page 15)
- Despite fewer women making senior positions, they're more content with the effectiveness of development plans than men (page 16)
- Blue collar employees in the Manufacturing industry enjoy the most effective plans for developing and retaining staff, while people in the Professional, Scientific and Technical services industry say they have the poorest plans (page 18)
- Employees between 25 and 45 years of age are frustrated as they don't believe their skills and talents are utilised to their full potential (page 19)

Bosses need to show they care

Figure 1 – “Our organisation cares about and is committed to me”



The above results illustrate a troubling state of affairs – over half of all employees with over a year of service either don’t believe or aren’t sure if their organisation cares or is committed to them.

In our experience, it’s hard to find anyone in business who genuinely doesn’t care about their staff. Bosses do think about their employees’ wellbeing, families and livelihood. However, these results indicate that organisations fail to show this concern to employees.

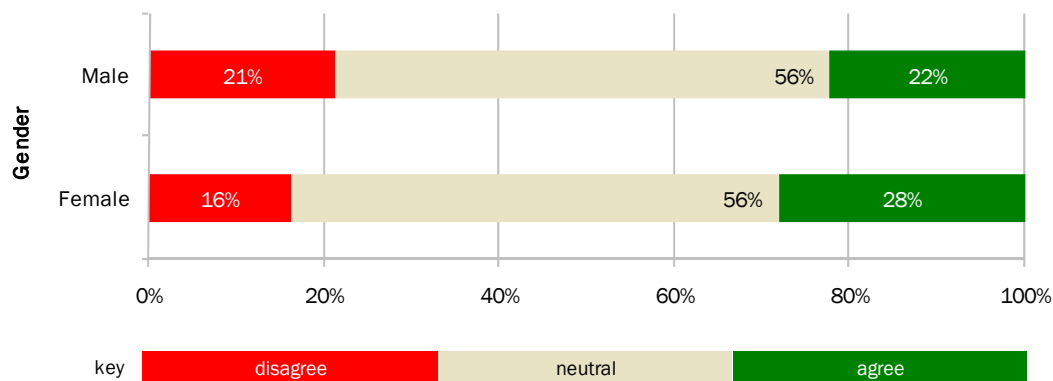
Support and commitment is necessary for the retention of skilled employees, however the above graph suggests that longer serving employees don’t feel as supported or cared for as they’d like. Specifically, employees with 3-5 years of service display the lowest levels of agreement and highest level of disagreement in relation to commitment from the organisation. In the graph above, this trend remains constant. This suggests that employees who are unsatisfied with the care and commitment provided by the organisation either leave after a couple of years or stay but with views unchanged as tenure goes on.

Employees in their honeymoon period, with less than one year of service, hold an optimistic view. The majority of new employees (52%) believe their organisation is committed to them to a greater extent than all other employees. Furthermore, disagreement levels in this group are also low (5%) and suggest that new employees feel adequately supported.

Organisations can benefit from higher employee commitment by being understanding and flexible about employees’ family or life pressures. Insync Surveys’ clients use work life balance options for employees to actively demonstrate their support; in return they hope to retain engaged employees for longer. The challenge for organisations lies in communicating that they care about the wellbeing of their workforce.

Women can raise expectations

Figure 2 – “Our organisation has effective plans for developing and retaining its people”



Analysis reveals that the survey statement, “our organisation has effective plans for developing and retaining its people”, has a big impact on employee commitment.

Men are more likely to believe that their employer doesn’t have effective plans for developing and retaining its people (21%) compared to women (16%). On the positive side, women were more likely to agree with the statement (28%) than men (22%). Women’s contentment suggests that they may be more open to development plans which they put into action, or that men have higher expectations.

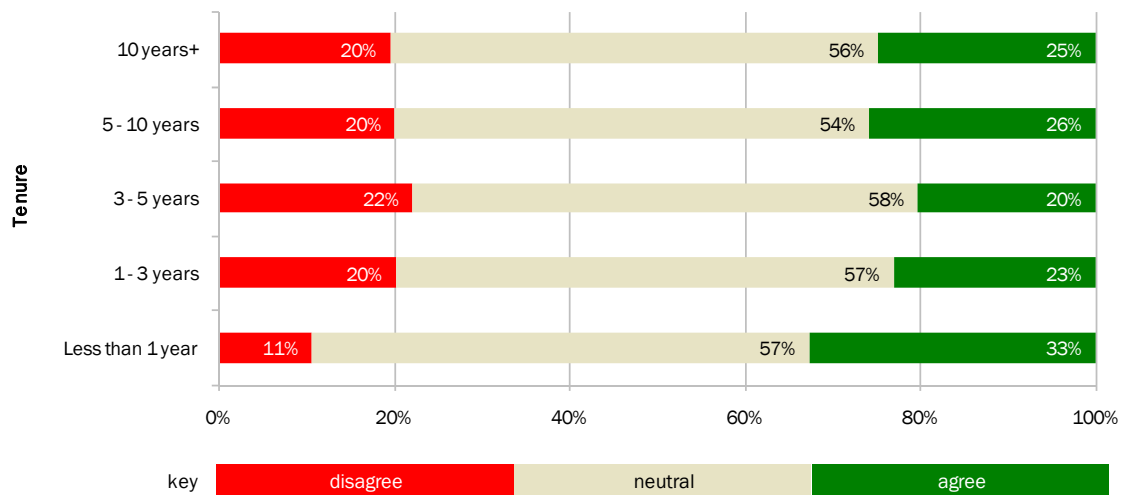
Given the scarcity of women at senior executive and director levels, it’s a revealing statistic to see that they report a higher level of satisfaction with their employers’ efforts to prepare them for greater responsibility or effectiveness. Development opportunities may be less of a priority for women who are trying to juggle family needs with work.

The finding to this survey statement is ironic because paid maternity leave, additional family leave and flexible conditions are still a struggle for many organisations. As a result, retention and development of women is more challenging.

To address this finding, organisations need to understand if it is their most or least talented and valued employees who are claiming not to be well looked after.

Long-term staff want attention

Figure 3 – “Our organisation has effective plans for developing and retaining its people”



The findings displayed in figure 3 suggest that some longer serving staff believe they're taken for granted. One in five employees who've been with their employer for more than one year don't think there are effective plans for developing and retaining key talent. This is important for organisations to address given the shortage of talent and the costs of employee turnover.

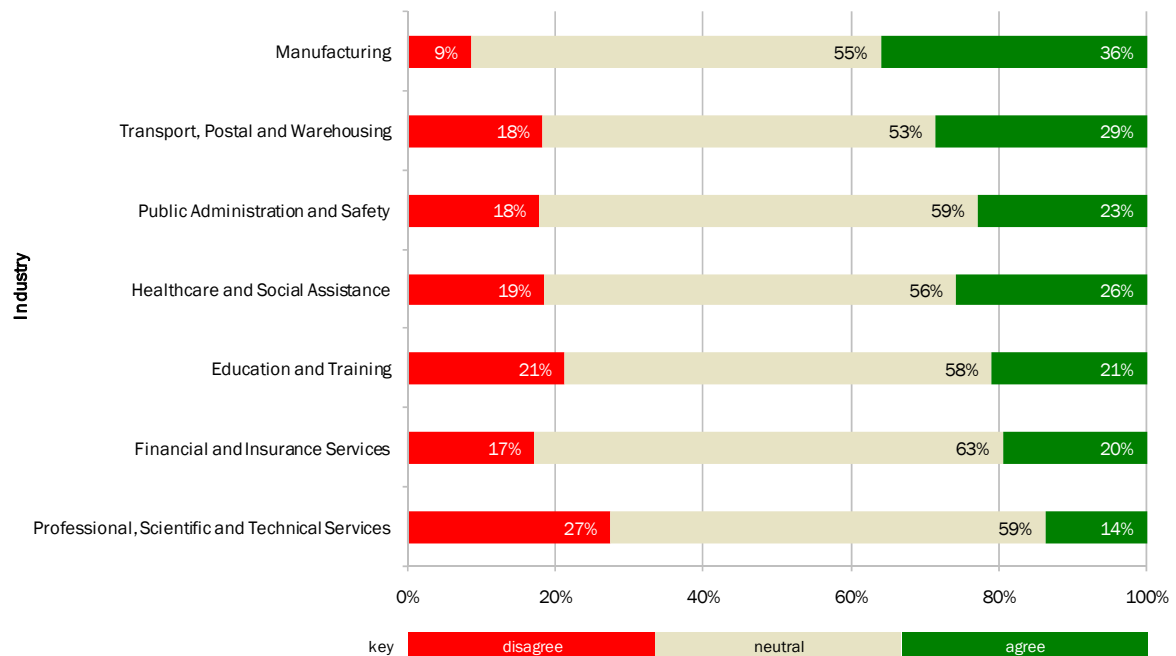
One obvious explanation for these results is that employers are developing staff to the point where they are proficient in their roles, but no further.

Organisations need to be aware that as employees become more capable, they want to be further developed. In return, they become more engaged and likely to stay. Having effective plans for developing and retaining people presents an opportunity to improve retention and increase levels of commitment.

Employees in their honeymoon period, with less than one year of service, are most likely to believe the organisation has effective plans for developing and retaining people. New employees provided the lowest level of disagreement (11%) and the highest level of agreement (33%). New staff often bring a fresh perspective and a positive attitude. They're often appreciative of the organisation's recruitment and induction effort and the extra attention provided by bosses. This theme is consistent with The Insync Surveys Alignment Update's first report into leadership which found that new employees were most satisfied with their managers.

White collar bond to profession

Figure 4 – “Our organisation has effective plans for developing and retaining its people”

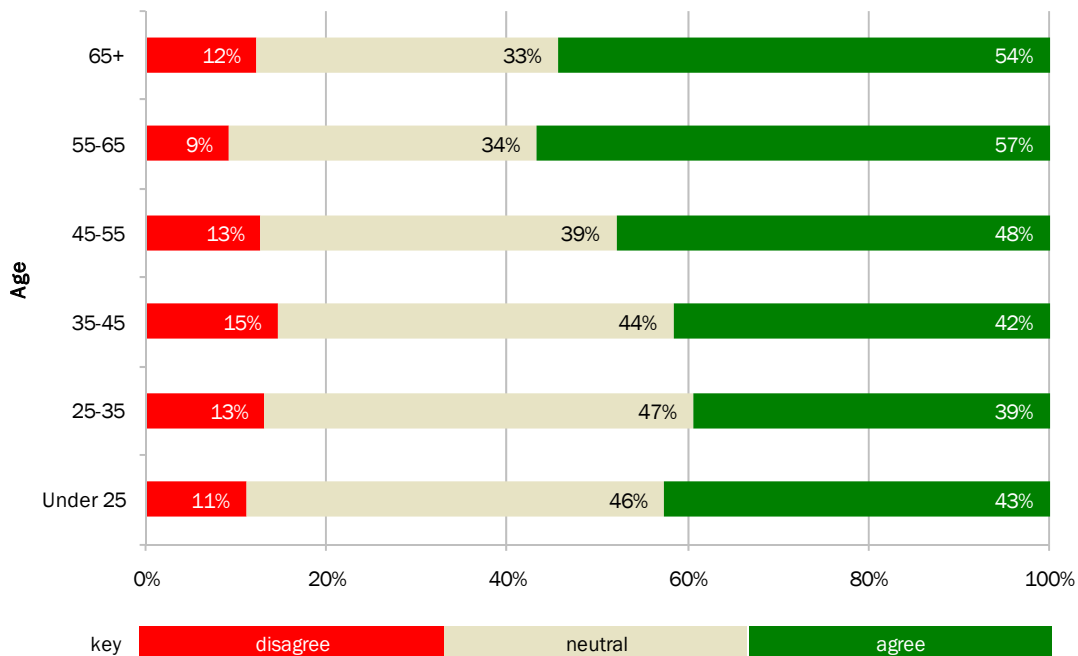


The blue collar Manufacturing industry displayed the lowest percentage of disagreement (9%) and highest percentage of agreement (36%) for their organisation having effective plans for developing and retaining staff.

However, the white collar Professional, Scientific and Technical Services industry recorded the highest level of disagreement (27%) and the lowest level of agreement (14%) for their employers' development and retention plans. Retention may be more important in the Professional, Scientific and Technical Services industry given that its workers sell knowledge. In this sector, if an employee walks out, so does their knowledge and clients. With low unemployment levels, training and development could be used as a retention tactic, however this can be challenging as training must be varied to meet individual needs and as many white collar workers are university educated, their expectations can be even more difficult to meet. These results highlight the need for organisations to create and promote effective development and retention plans tailored to the needs of individual employees rather than adopt a “one size fits all” approach.

Age dictates attitude

Figure 5 – “My skills and talents are used to their full potential”



When looking at the statement “my skills and talents are used to their full potential”, agreement varies depending on age. For those employees who are approaching retirement (55 and 65 years), there’s more agreement that their skills and abilities are being used to their full potential (57%).

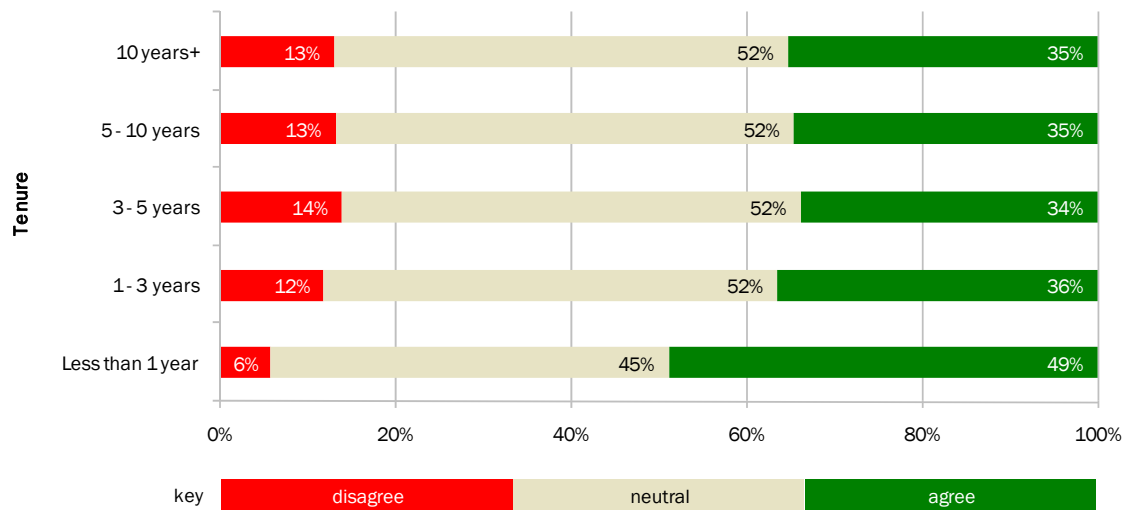
Employees aged between 25 and 45 are the least convinced that their skills and talents are being utilised to the extent they should, displaying the highest disagreement percentages (13%-15%) and the lowest agreement percentages (39%-42%). These employees expect their career to fast track. The findings illustrate a gap in perceptions between job market reality and illusion.

While younger people under 25 have a lot to learn, they’re also frustrated by the limited opportunities to show what they can do with just 43% agreeing with the statement.

These results provide startling evidence for real conversations to take place between leaders and their staff. Leaders must be proactive and have honest conversations with their staff about their potential. In this way, realistic and attainable career paths can be forged and existing roles can be enriched to assist employees, particularly those between 25 and 45, achieve their career goals and become more satisfied.

Honest conversations needed

Figure 6 – “Our organisation is committed to maximising the potential of each person”



Employees with less than one year of service displayed the highest level of agreement for the organisation maximising the potential of each person (49%). New employees hold their managers in high esteem. However, after one year of service, employees become disenchanted. Of concern is the finding that agreement decreases 13% after the first 12 months and over half of all employees no longer believe the organisation is committed to maximising the potential of each person.

Organisations can address this by improving their performance review system, by giving talented employees the opportunity to take on greater responsibility, increasing their involvement in strategic planning and by giving coaching so career goals are met, especially after the first year. Organisations should also avoid mixed messages and creating expectations which will never be met. If you can't do much to maximise the potential of a person, don't suggest you can; instead, be honest about career options and set realistic expectations.

Tips for building a shared sense of commitment

- Work life balance options show the organisation cares; in return, retention and engagement can be earned from longer standing employees
- Understand talented employees' expectations to make development and retention plans that fit their needs
- Provide individual and targeted development for seasoned employees, not just new starters, so talent loss and recruitment costs are reduced
- Employees in the Professional, Scientific and Technical Services industry have a stronger allegiance to their profession than their organisation; enhancing their professional skills could represent more valuable development and retention plans
- Provide employees aged 25 to 45 with concrete career advice and opportunities, such as role enrichment, to increase commitment and satisfaction levels
- Improve the performance review process by boosting responsibilities given to talent, involving employees in strategic planning and by offering coaching so career goals are met

Chapter three: CSR and risk management

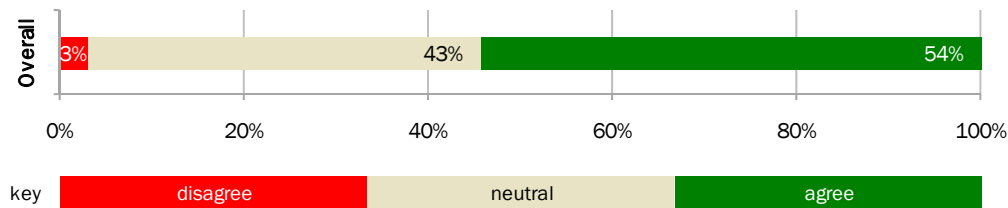
(supported by Business Shaper, previously Sustainable Business Practices)

Key findings

- Only a little more than half of all employees believe their organisation is giving back to the community (page 23)
- While 59% of employees agree that their organisation is committed to identifying and reducing business risks, only 39% of employees agree that their organisation has effective processes for identifying and preventing non-sanctioned actions (page 24 and 25)
- Most employees agree that their organisation is committed to respecting confidential information; however the level of agreement decreases as organisation size grows (page 28)
- Approximately two thirds of employees with over one year of service are unsure or don't believe there are effective mechanisms for dealing with workplace concerns (page 29)
- The majority of employees agree that their organisation requires them to behave ethically; the level of agreement in the 25 – 35 year age group is slightly lower, suggesting this age group holds their organisations to a marginally higher ethical standard (page 31)

Organisations need to ramp up CSR efforts

Figure 1 – “Our organisation contributes positively to the wider community”



Strong community relations have long been considered to be an important component of good business management. It secures a local customer and employee base and also assists in maintaining community support.

A little over half of employees agree with the statement “our organisation contributes positively to the wider community.” Approximately 3% disagree with the statement and 43% of employees aren’t sure. This indicates that many organisations are either failing to implement effective CSR programs, or are experiencing difficulties in engaging and communicating CSR initiatives and achievements to employees.

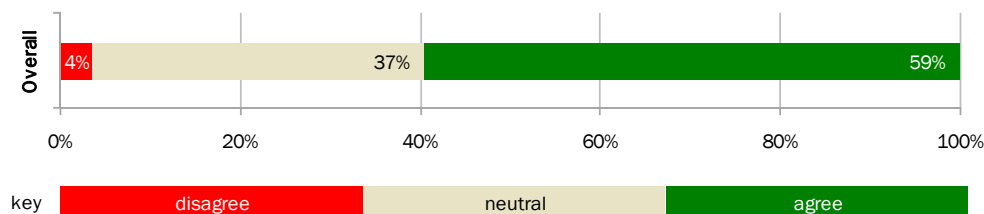
Organisations wanting to implement a best practice CSR program need processes to:

- manage the health, safety and wellbeing of employees
- reduce the environmental impacts of operations, products and services
- ensure transparency in decision making and governance
- support communities in which they operate
- enhance financial viability
- engage with employees
- align their CSR program with their business strategy
- embed the above practices into their business systems and culture

Organisations that implement CSR programs can use the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) to develop CSR reports. To monitor progress, indices such as the Dow Jones Sustainability Index (DJSI), the Corporate Reporting Index (CRI) and Reputex can be used. These reporting tools assist organisations in better understanding and communicating their performance with employees and stakeholders.

Not all organisations are committed to identifying and reducing risk

Figure 2 – “Our organisation is committed to identifying and reducing all types of risks to our business”



A key component of CSR is the management of risks. The implementation of a CSR program can improve risk management as employees are engaged and have a proactive attitude towards improving their workplace, including the identification and management of risks. An effective CSR program improves the ability of an organisation to manage the spectrum of risks, including: safety, operational, market, reputational, legislative and environmental.

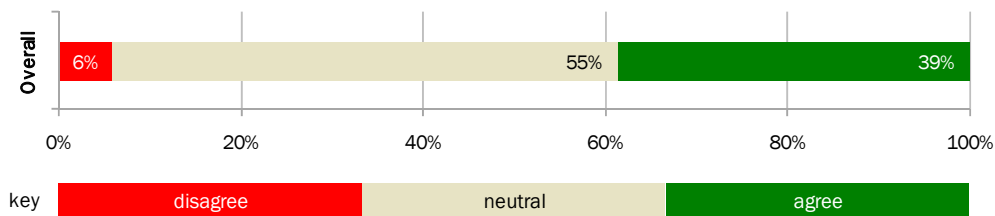
Many organisations implement some form of risk management as this is core to business survival. However, figure 2 indicates that only 59% of employees believe their organisation is committed to identifying and reducing risks. Thirty seven per cent of employees are neutral when considering their organisation's commitment to identifying and reducing risk. A further 4% of employees disagree with this statement. A low commitment to risk management among employees is a cause of concern for organisations as it has the potential to undermine shareholder, investor and regulator confidence.

Organisations wanting to improve their risk management systems, processes and culture should ask themselves the following questions:

- Does the board and CEO set the right “tone at the top” which embodies a commitment to excellence in risk management?
- Is the organisation's culture sufficiently robust to ensure that all material risks are identified and managed?
- Are specific individuals held accountable to manage risks?
- How are risk management processes communicated to employees and other stakeholders?
- Is the management of risk embedded in business processes?
- What external support is available to improve risk management?

Little prevention of unsanctioned actions

Figure 3 – “Our organisation has effective processes for identifying and preventing unauthorised actions”



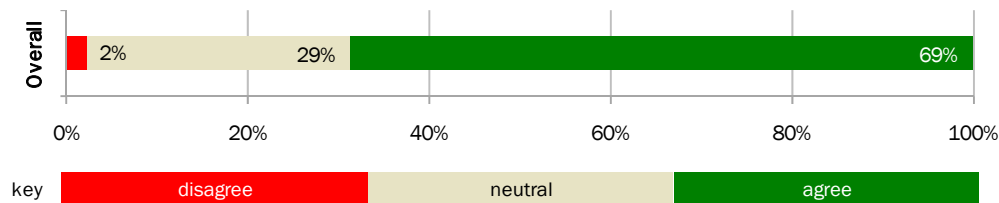
Unauthorised actions include actions that may compromise employee safety, product quality or the integrity of an organisation. When analysing the statement: “our organisation has effective processes for identifying and preventing unauthorised actions,” only 39% of employees agree that their organisation has effective processes for this. Organisations that do not effectively mitigate against unauthorised actions by any employee, regardless of status, face risks including legislative action, reduced employee morale and customer complaints. These risks may in turn result in reduced shareholder value and customer confidence.

A process to effectively identify and prevent unauthorised actions needs to:

- define what constitutes an unauthorised action
- assign and communicate individual responsibilities in relation to undertaking work
- ensure appropriate personnel have the permission to authorise and disallow any unauthorised actions
- have clearly stated consequences for employees who carry out an unauthorised action and ensure these consequences are acted upon
- have appropriate frameworks for unauthorised actions to be reported
- promote leadership
- This process should be clearly articulated and communicated through a company-wide code of conduct and associated training.
- As with many risks it's of little benefit to an organisation if it is, on average, very good at managing risk and preventing unauthorised actions but not aware of the small pockets of significant risk. Surveys are a good way to determine the pockets of risk and where remedial action may need to be taken.

Employers meet legal obligations

Figure 4 – “Our organisation is committed to meeting its legal and compliance obligations”



Legal obligations are an important component of any CSR program – they form the minimum performance baseline. An organisation must meet its legal obligations. The implementation of an effective CSR program should not only ensure legal obligations are met but also that the organisation is a good corporate citizen.

When analysing the statement “our organisation is committed to meeting its legal and compliance obligations,” most employees believe their organisations hit the mark in this area, with 69% agreeing with the statement. This is a solid result for organisations.

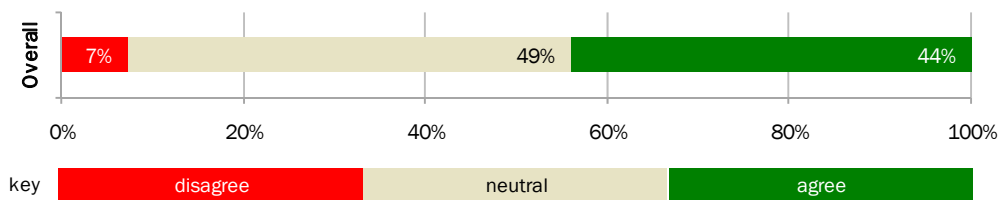
When considering an organisation’s performance against legal obligations it should be noted that there’s a significant difference between meeting legal obligations and not getting caught – if no legal action was taken against an organisation, it doesn’t mean all legal obligations have been met.

An effective CSR program will identify all legal and compliance obligations which apply to an organisation. These obligations will cover the full range of the organisation’s operations – employee safety, product safety, advertising, environmental performance, financial management and privacy. By meeting legal and compliance requirements an organisation will be reducing the risk of financial and other penalties.

Many organisations have commenced the journey to become a good corporate citizen and to introduce and even embed CSR programs into their organisations. Much of that good work can very quickly be undone if that same organisation fails to meet one or more of its key legal and compliance obligations.

Keep employees in the loop

Figure 5 – “I am kept updated on changes to regulatory and contractual issues that affect my job”



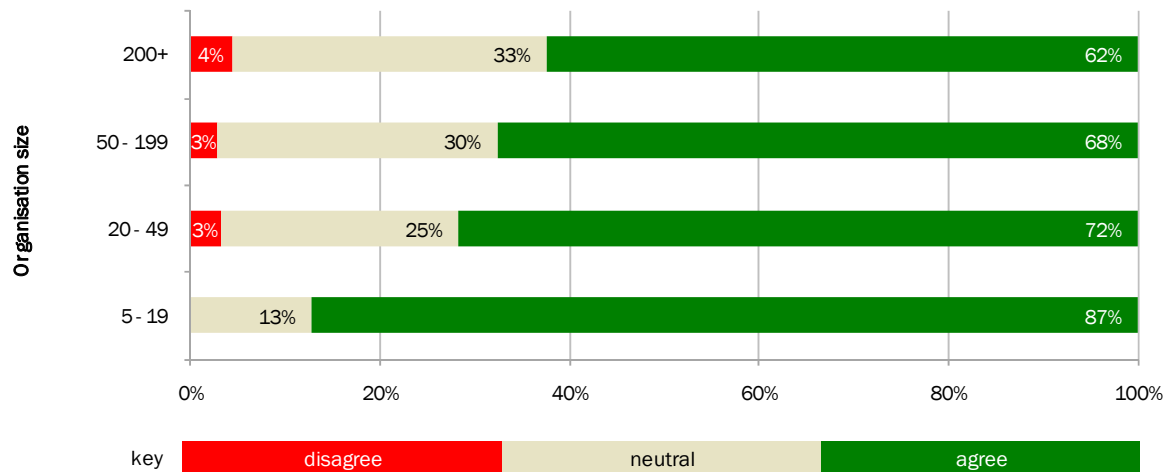
Despite most employees believing their organisation meets legal obligations (figure 4), only 44% of employees believe they’re well informed on changes to regulatory and contractual issues that affect their job. This is a disappointing result. It is unreasonable to hold employees to account in relation to matters that have not been properly communicated to them.

It is important that employees are aware of legal issues that may affect their work. The ability of an organisation to meet its legal obligations may be dependent on its employees being aware of them and taking appropriate actions at the right time. A lack of employee understanding around legal issues may also lead to an overly conservative approach due to their fear of legal action.

To generate the necessary understanding of legal issues among employees, organisations must communicate and document any legal requirements and changes relevant to employees in simple language. Depending on the workplace, this could be incorporated into existing education and training programs. Communication with employees around legal issues will generate trust between employees and their employer.

Confidentiality message fades with size

Figure 6 – “Our organisation is committed to respecting confidential and sensitive information”



The results from the statement “our organisation is committed to respecting confidential and sensitive information” are positive. Overall, most employees agree that their organisation is committed to respecting confidential and sensitive information. However, in large organisations up to 4% of employees don’t believe this is the case. When broken down by organisational size the level of disagreement decreases with the number of employees.

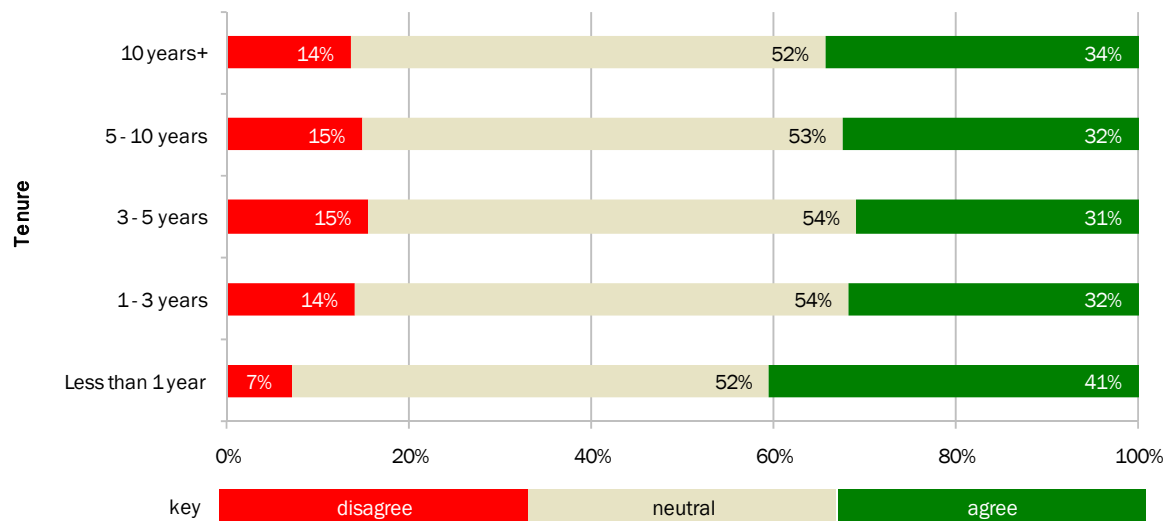
The increase of confidentiality with reduced organisational size may be related to the broader roles and responsibilities within smaller organisations. In large organisations many employees may consider confidentiality someone else’s responsibility.

Incorrect handling of confidential and sensitive information is an enormous risk to organisations. A lack of respect for confidential and sensitive information leads to poor levels of employee trust and reduced engagement and retention. It can breach privacy legislation and impact the perception of the organisation as an ethical entity that operates with integrity.

To avoid governance issues, especially in larger organisations, upper level management must ensure they promote and enforce both systems and a culture that respects confidentiality and the security of sensitive information.

Employers are ill equipped to deal effectively with workplace concerns

Figure 7 – “Our organisation has effective processes for dealing with workplace concerns”



Workplace grievances and concerns should be dealt with in a sensitive and proactive manner to avoid disruption. If this isn't done effectively the risk to business can be a culture of distrust and even bullying. Figure 7 suggests that less than half of all employees believe there are effective processes in place for dealing with workplace concerns. Specifically, around two thirds of employees with over one year of service are unsure or don't believe there are effective processes. The large number of employees who have a neutral opinion of the topic, again indicates a lack of engagement.

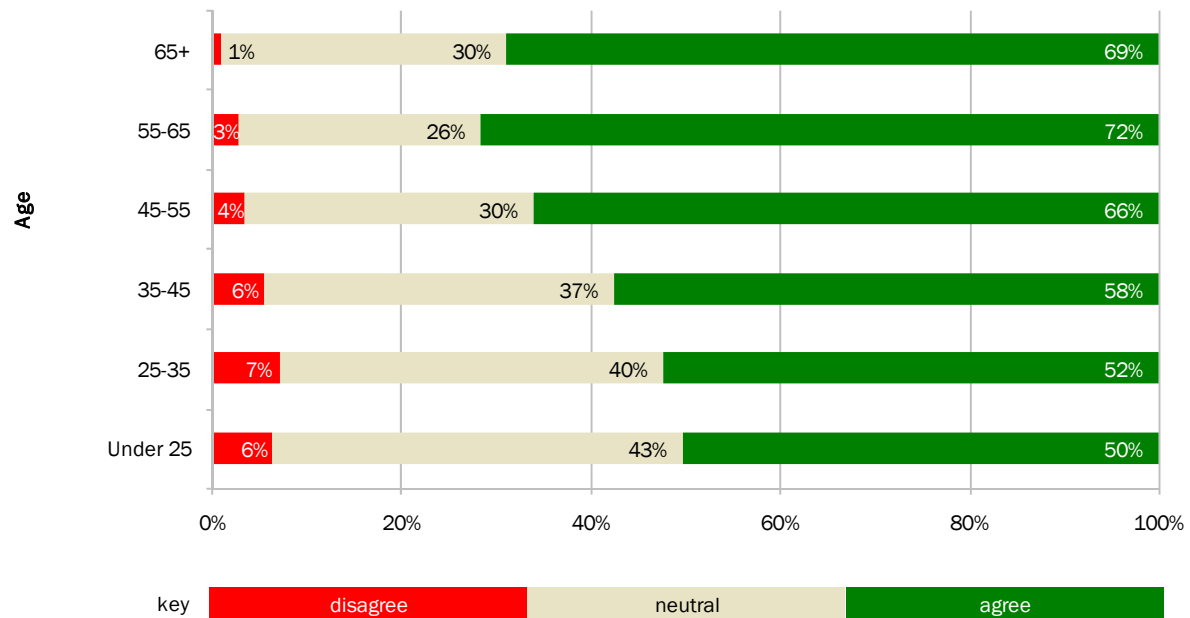
It's important for organisations to deal with workplace concerns in both informal and formal ways. Ideally organisations build into their culture a strong values framework that includes low tolerance of unacceptable behaviours such as bullying. A culture of using appropriate diplomacy and sensitivity in dealing with difficult workplace issues such as personality differences, team dysfunction and lying is also important.

Also important are formal measures such as “whistle blowing” and grievance processes, to ensure that significant employee, ethical and business conduct concerns can be received directly by the board in an unfiltered, anonymous and confidential way. It's important that employees be appropriately encouraged and not victimised for using such processes.

Grievance processes must be effectively communicated to employees. Employees must know that this support is available to them and when it should be used.

Younger workers naive about workplace accidents

Figure 8 – “I would know what to do if there was a major workplace accident”



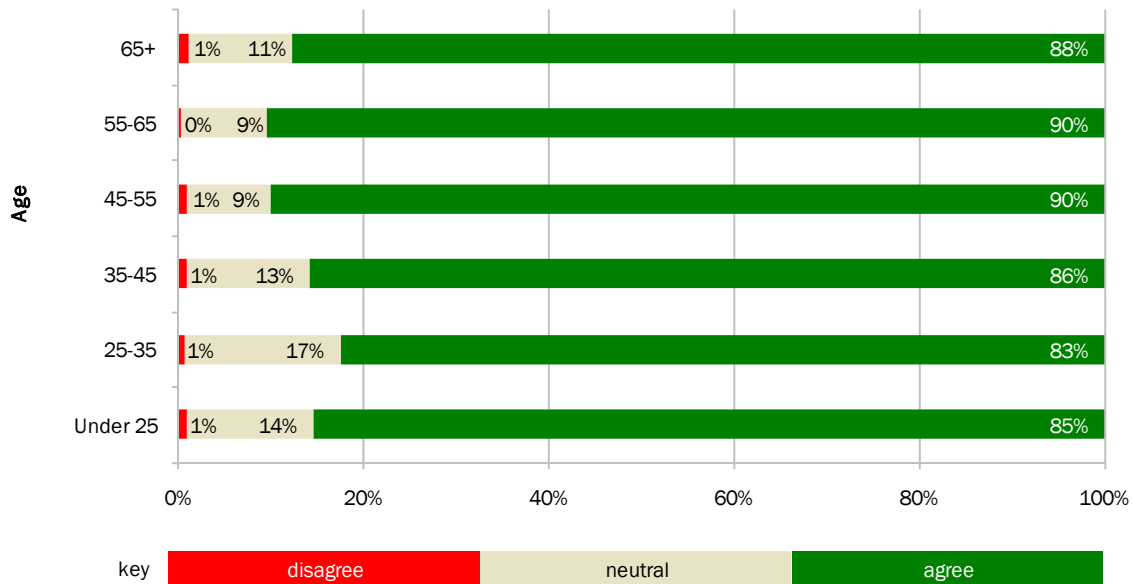
If employees don't know how to deal with a workplace accident, the risk to the business can be devastating, with the possibility of serious injury or a workplace death resulting.

Figure 8 shows that experience counts. The percentage of employees agreeing that they would know what to do in a workplace emergency increases with age. For staff aged under 25, just 50% agreed they would know what to do. For staff aged between 55 and 65, this improved to 72%. Awareness of what to do in the event of a workplace accident slightly decreases once employees are aged over 65, with the percentage of employees agreeing dropping to 69%.

This trend suggests safety procedure education needs to be improved for younger workers. While understanding what to do in the event of a major workplace accident comes with experience, given the importance of safety in the workplace and the legislative risks, organisations need to improve communication and training of processes to all employees. Induction programs can incorporate safety procedures. Regular refresher courses and safety drills will also assist in addressing workplace accident awareness.

Ethical employer behaviour a must for 25 -35 year olds

Figure 10 – “Our organisation requires me to behave ethically”



In figure 10, the majority of employees agree that their organisation requires them to behave ethically. Across all age groups there is a high level of agreement with the statement: “our organisation requires me to behave ethically.” The level of agreement in the 25–35 year age group is slightly lower; suggesting this age group holds their organisations to a marginally higher ethical standard.

While there may only be a small group who feels they’re not required to act in an ethical manner, it’s the actions of these employees that represent risk to organisations, such as through rogue trading, fraud and misconduct. If an organisation is perceived to be acting in an unethical manner the perceptions of it by all stakeholders, including employees, customers, investors and the government, may be tarnished.

It’s important to identify and address the small percentage of employees who don’t believe their organisation requires them to behave ethically. Surveys can be used to reveal pockets of danger. In the financial sector, organisations can create compliance requirements or departments can withhold employee bonuses for failure to meet standards. Sign-off points or “toll gates” can also be implemented to control unethical behaviour. Similarly, in the health sector, ethics committees that deal with complex moral issues and legal requirements are common.

Tips to tackle CSR and risk management issues with employees

- Implement a best practice CSR program with processes and systems that manage the organisation's impact on the wellbeing of all its stakeholders
- Identify, document and manage the spectrum of risks, including: safety, operational, market, reputational, legislative and environmental
- Unauthorised actions need to be clearly articulated and communicated through a company-wide code of conduct, backed by associated training
- Ensure legal and compliance obligations are met and where possible, exceeded
- The ability of an organisation to meet legal obligations may be dependent on employees, so make sure they're aware of legal issues that affect their work
- Promote and enforce both systems and a culture that respects confidentiality and security of sensitive information
- Deal with workplace concerns in both informal and formal ways with a culture backed by a strong values framework that includes low tolerance of unacceptable behaviours such as bullying
- Grievance processes and whistle blower protection measures should be in place within an organisation and promoted among employees
- Improve safety procedure education for younger workers
- Identify and address the small percentage of employees who don't believe their organisation requires them to behave ethically

About Business Shaper (previously Sustainable Business Practices)

Business Shaper works collaboratively with business, government and non-government organisations to build competitive advantage through improved environmental, social and business performance.

Transforming businesses to adapt to and capitalise on changing market conditions and government regulation is our expertise. We understand that addressing potential risks and realising the opportunities in relation to sustainability, social responsibility and climate change is a critical concern for every business today.

As a multi-disciplinary team of highly experienced professionals providing integrated, whole of business sustainability solutions, we lead by example.

If you are interested in further understanding CSR or developing a program for implementation within your organisations please contact:

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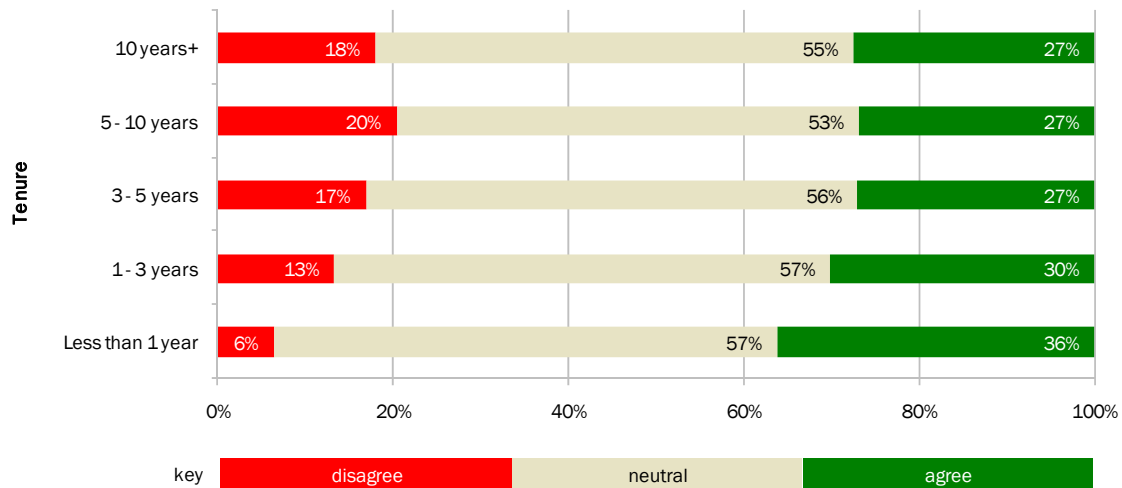
Chapter four: Reward and recognition

Key findings

- Employees are disappointed by the lack of opportunities for high performing employees to progress in their organisation, with over 60% of respondents unsure or disagreeing that their organisation is committed to promoting the right people (page 35)
- Only 33% of employees aged 25-45 agree they're paid fairly in their role (page 36)
- Only around 40% of 25–45 year olds agree that they receive the training and development needed to be successful but older workers are more content (page 37)
- Organisations are missing an opportunity to sustain engagement - the extent to which employees agree that challenging goals are used to increase performance decreases over time; from 51% of employees with less than one year of service to 43% for employees with over 10 years' experience (page 38)
- Many organisations aren't taking basic steps to create a more productive and happier workforce, with 64-78% of employees disagreeing or indifferent about there being effective programs for recognising and rewarding achievements of their people (page 39)
- More employees agree, than disagree, that their organisation has effective recognition and reward programs but it's individuals in organisations with 200+ staff who have the highest degree of dissatisfaction (20%) indicating their achievements get lost (page 40)

Frustration climbing the corporate ladder

Figure 1 – “Our organisation is committed to ensuring that the right people get promoted”



When analysing the statement: “our organisation is committed to ensuring that the right people get promoted,” it shows that over time employees become more disappointed by a lack of career opportunities for high performers. Over 60% of respondents were unsure or disagreed with the statement. Staff employed for 5-10 years expressed the highest level of disagreement, with 20% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that their organisation promotes the right people.

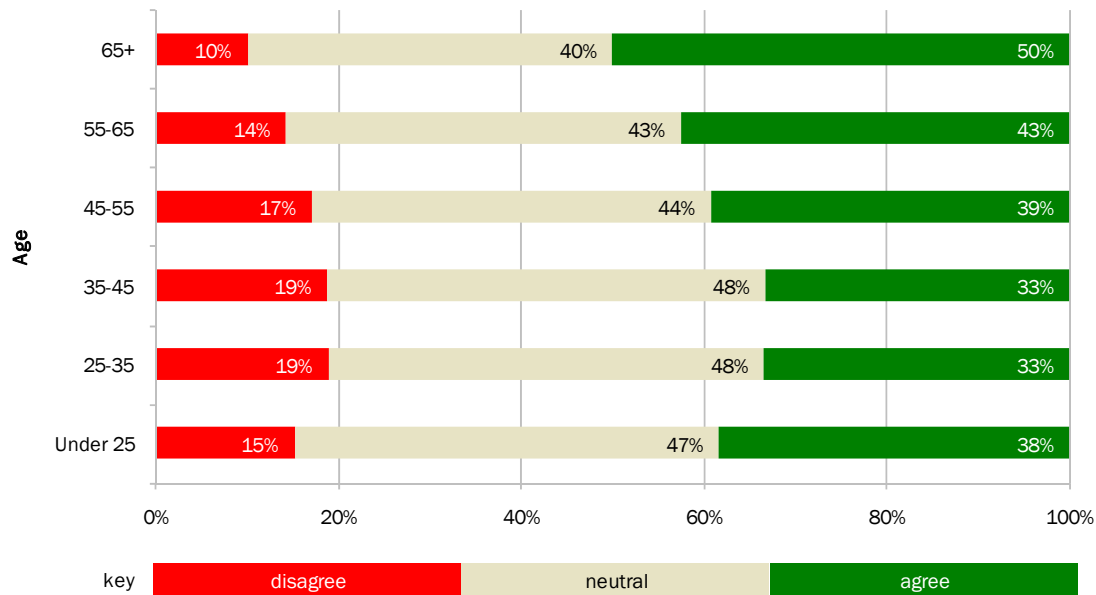
If employees are perceived to receive promotions for reasons other than merit, organisations will face staff disengagement. When employees believe promotions aren't based on training, experience and interpersonal style, a sense of injustice and mistrust can flood the workforce, leading to internal divisions and a lack of respect for management and HR.

Organisations must ensure their promotional processes are equitable and transparent so that employees believe they're given a fair go. By providing and advertising internal vacancies, organisations give employees assurance that fair processes are in place. However, it is critical to ensure that the right person for the job is employed, regardless of whether they're internal or external.

Setting up legally defensible and valid selection systems also assists in ensuring the person with the right fit is selected for any given role. Employers may also help longer standing employees by facilitating career development plans and providing the skills and education needed to reach their desired goals. An investment in people is an investment in building organisational capability and future sustainability.

Show me the money

Figure 2 – “I am paid fairly for my current role”



If you employ people aged 25-45, chances are they want you to pay them more. Only 33% of employees aged between 25-45 agree they're paid fairly in their role. Employees over 65 years of age display the highest level of satisfaction with their income, with 50% agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement.

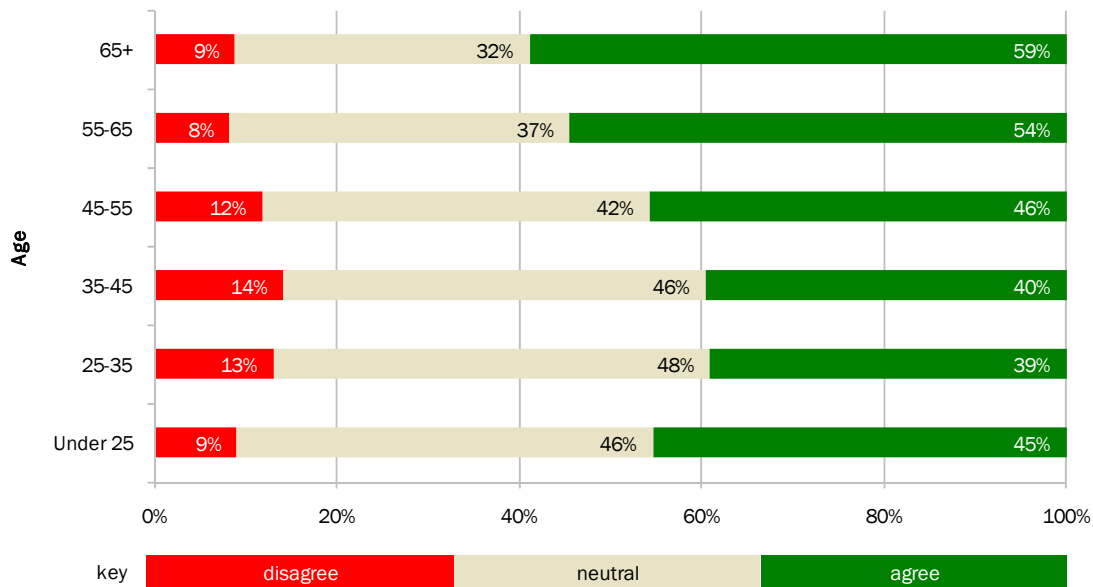
The above figure suggests that a majority of staff don't believe or are unsure if they are paid fairly. It is important that leaders are aware of what remuneration levels are appropriate and that employees have a sense of clarity around how they compare with others in their industry. While staff may not always agree, attempts can be made by managers to communicate going industry rates to explain their difficult position. This helps to more effectively manage the challenges associated with internal and external pay concerns.

In a tight market for talented employees, organisations with deep pockets, such as those in the mining sector, have enticed workers away from less lucrative industries such as local government and manufacturing. In response, organisations offering lower salaries are often more creative by expanding and marketing roles with other employment conditions, such as leveraging the intrinsic satisfaction of the work, greater opportunities for training and development, tax breaks (in the not-for-profit sector), opportunities for career progression, paid parental leave, a great culture and more flexible working conditions.

With a tightening economic climate, the results to this statement may change as employees become more thankful about just having a job.

25-45 year olds are hungry for progression while older workers are more content

Figure 3 – “I get the training and development I need”

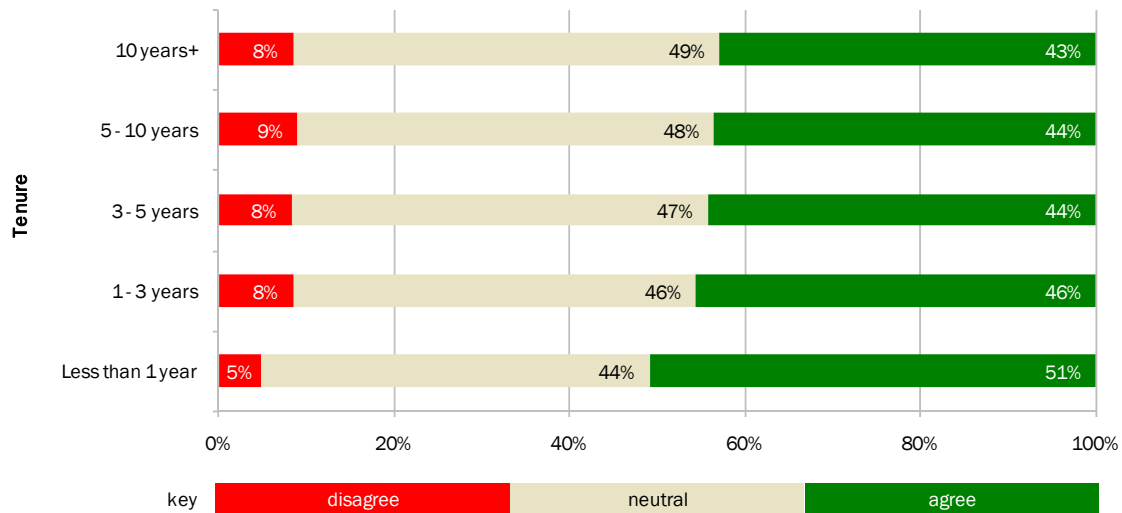


Similar to figure 2, employees aged between 25-45 again expressed the lowest levels of agreement, this time with the statement: “I get the training and development I need.” Only around 40% of this group agree or strongly agree that they receive the training and development needed. Training and development can be focused on new starters, which is reflected in their more positive responses in the figure above. It may be the 25-45 year old workforce that is in need of more targeted and frequent opportunities for professional growth and learning.

As shown in the above figure, people aged 55 and above display the highest levels of agreement with the statement, with 54-59% agreeing or strongly agreeing. These employees may already be seen as specialists or leaders in their field. Alternatively, older workers may not be looking for career progression as retirement is the only option ahead. This can be challenging for organisations if they’re faced with workers who are no longer driving the organisation forward, preferring instead to coast for their remaining years until retirement kicks in. It could also be that longer serving employees feel satisfied with the amount of training and development they’ve had over their career.

Organisations wise to challenge employees

Figure 4 – “My work group/team uses challenging goals to increase performance”



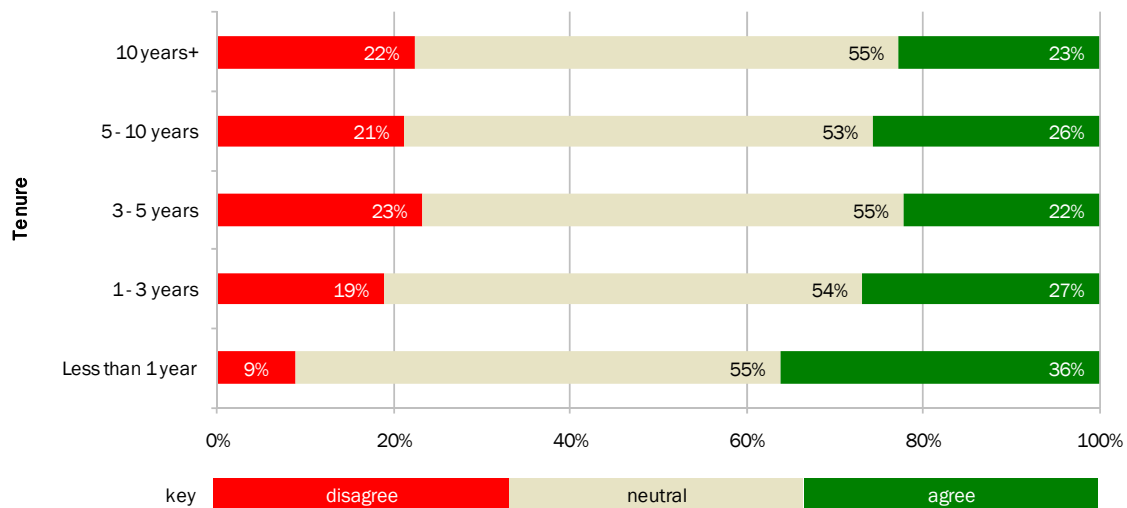
When analysing the statement: “my work group/team uses challenging goals to increase performance,” the extent to which employees agree decreases over time; from 51% of employees with less than one year of service to 43% of employees with over 10 years’ experience. The induction effect, where new employees are given a lot of attention, may be at play here.

Rather than letting longer serving employees fade into the woodwork, challenging goals can increase performance and act as a reward. Increasing responsibility and challenge in the workplace can sustain engagement, and productivity, particularly after a position has been mastered over time. Increasing responsibility demonstrates a level of trust in an employee’s ability, and this faith can inspire confidence and enhance performance.

As economic times become more difficult organisations will benefit from improving their performance culture to get more out of existing employees. Employees like to be set challenging goals, providing they’re realistic. Employees also enjoy achieving challenging goals. Accordingly, there are significant organisational benefits from developing and maintaining an effective performance management system.

Saying a simple “thank you” pays off

Figure 5 – “Our organisation has effective programs for recognising and rewarding achievements of its people”



When analysing the statement: “our organisation has effective programs for recognising and rewarding achievements of its people,” 64-78% of employees disagree or are indifferent. Those with three to five years of service indicated the highest level of disagreement. This is closely followed by those employees serving over five years. Like figure 4, newer employees appear to be more enchanted by positive reinforcement.

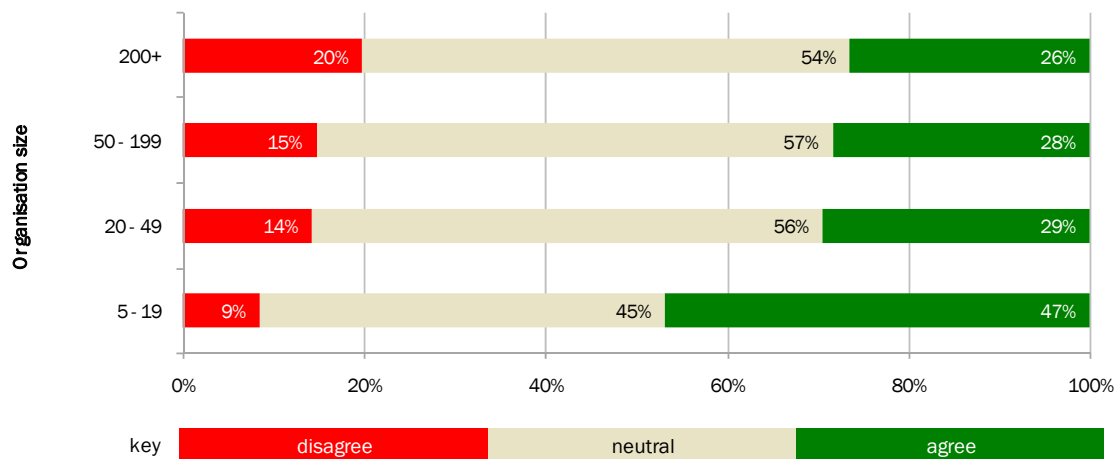
These results are disappointing as effective programs for recognising and rewarding staff achievements can be developed and implemented at a small cost but with very significant organisational benefits. For example, appropriately thought out presentations and vouchers may be used to invigorate staff to achieve greater outputs.

It is important for organisations to recognise that it’s not only new employees who need to be praised and rewarded for their efforts at work. All employees need to feel valued and in return they’re more productive and better to work with. Insync Surveys identifies this as an area of substantial employee frustration in a number of organisations.

Initiatives to recognise and reward staff can increase employees’ feeling of achievement. A simple “thank you” to an employee and praise for a job well done can dramatically improve satisfaction. Recognition from senior management can also increase the feeling of value, for example: truly people-oriented CEOs may go out of their way to get to know employees’ names and recognise their contribution. Celebrations around key milestone achievements are also important.

Small organisations share the love

Figure 6 – “Our organisation has effective programs for recognising and rewarding achievements of its people”

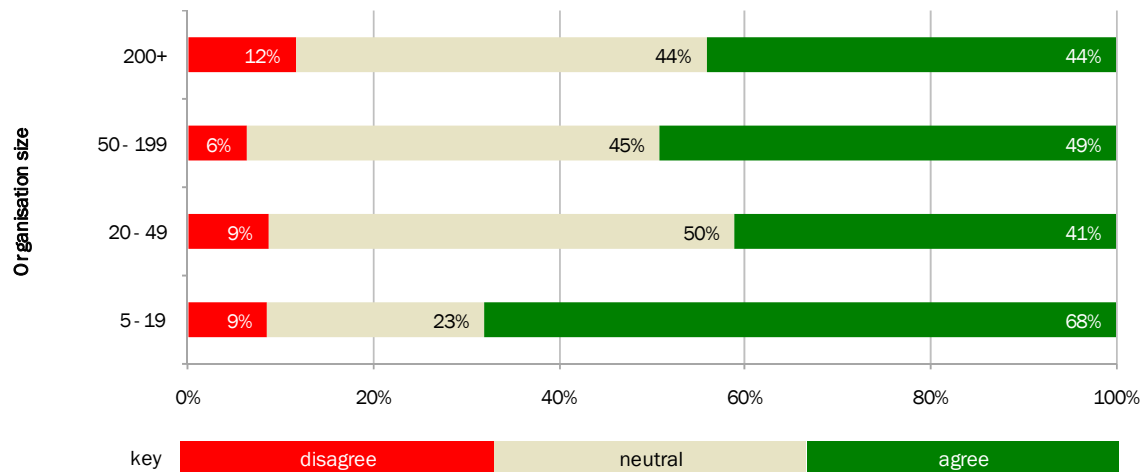


Positively, more employees agree with the statement: “our organisation has effective programs for recognising and rewarding achievements of its people,” than people who disagree. But it’s individuals employed in organisations with 200+ employees who indicated the highest degree of dissatisfaction with the effectiveness of recognition and reward programs (20%). This is followed by those organisations with 50-199 employees, and 20-49 employees, at 15% and 14% respectively. As the number of employees increase, so does the dissatisfaction with the effectiveness of recognition and reward programs available.

Larger organisations must ensure the efforts of each and every employee are recognised and rewarded adequately. Obtaining an understanding of unique employee needs and motivations and acknowledging them may also assist in enhancing current perceptions. Organisations that instil policies and traditions as part of their culture reinforce achievement and an award winning mentality.

Bigger isn't better

Figure 7 – “My work group recognises, encourages and rewards good performance”



It's necessary for recognition to be given within an employee's immediate team. Results for the statement: “my work group recognises, encourages and rewards good performance,” shows that employees in organisations with over 200 staff display the highest degree of dissatisfaction about their performance being rewarded, recognised and encouraged by their work group (12%). These findings suggest that positive achievements can get lost in bigger organisations. They also point to a lack of empowerment and inspirational team leadership in larger organisations.

Employees in smaller organisations believe their work group recognises, encourages and rewards performance to a greater extent than those in their larger counterparts.

To enhance existing perceptions, larger organisations can ensure that reward and recognition within teams is promoted. Most great accomplishments in organisations are a result of strong teams. Strong teams require effective team leadership. Leaders who can leverage the potential of each individual contributor and harness the collective can be part of teams that become greater than the sum of its parts.

Tips for creating a valued workforce

- Organisations must ensure their promotional processes are equitable and transparent so that employees believe they're given a fair go
- Organisations offering lower salaries can compensate by enriching the employee experience through better employment conditions, enhancing the intrinsic satisfaction of the work, increasing opportunities for training and development, providing opportunities for career progression, establishing a great culture and by offering flexible working conditions
- 25-45 year olds need to be provided with targeted and rewarding training and development opportunities linked to career goals
- Challenging goals not only increase performance but can also act as a reward; by increasing responsibility and by stretching goals in the workplace, organisations can sustain employee engagement particularly after a position has been mastered over time
- Initiatives to recognise and reward staff can improve employees' feeling of being valued, but even a simple "thank you" from management can dramatically improve the extent to which staff feel like key contributors to the organisations' success
- Larger organisations need to work harder than their smaller counterparts to ensure they recognise and reward their employees' contributions
- Hire and promote leaders capable of inspiring, empowering and harnessing the potential of individuals in teams to drive greater results

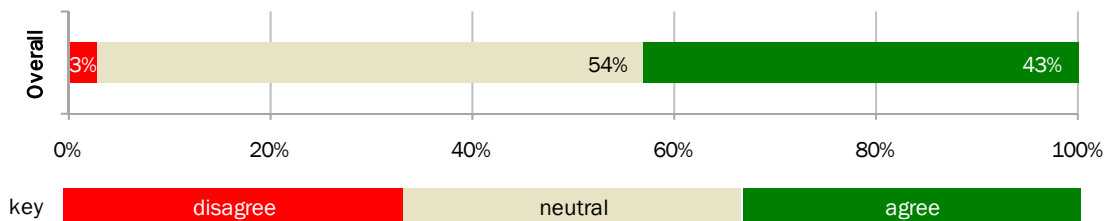
Chapter five: Market responsiveness

Key findings

- Many organisations do not adequately link their customer strategies to their overall vision, with only 43% of employees agreeing that their organisation's customer strategies help achieve long term goals (page 44)
- Organisations with 20-49 staff are slightly more innovative than larger ones, with 61% of their employees believing the organisation is committed to bringing innovative products and services to the market place (page 45)
- Smaller organisations are more committed to retaining customers than their larger counterparts; 79% of employees from organisations with 20-49 staff believe their employer is committed to achieving long term customer loyalty (page 46)
- Less than half of all employees agree that their organisation's products and services differentiate them from competitors/peers, indicating a lack of clarity and buy-in about what their organisation has to offer and how it's different (page 47)
- Asking for and responding to customer feedback is an area for improvement for many organisations, with only 38% of employees agreeing their organisation asks for feedback (page 48)
- Implementing marketing and customer change programs won't be easy as only half of all employees agree that their work group copes well with change (page 50)

Employees unaware of link between customer strategies and long term goals

Figure 1 – “Our customer strategies will help us achieve our long term goals”



Not enough employees understand the drivers for success with only 43% of employees surveyed agreeing that their organisation's customer strategies will help them achieve their employer's long term goals. Given that the success of an organisation is heavily dependent on patronage, customer strategies must be linked to long term goals and these strategies need to be communicated to all employees so they can relate them to their own roles.

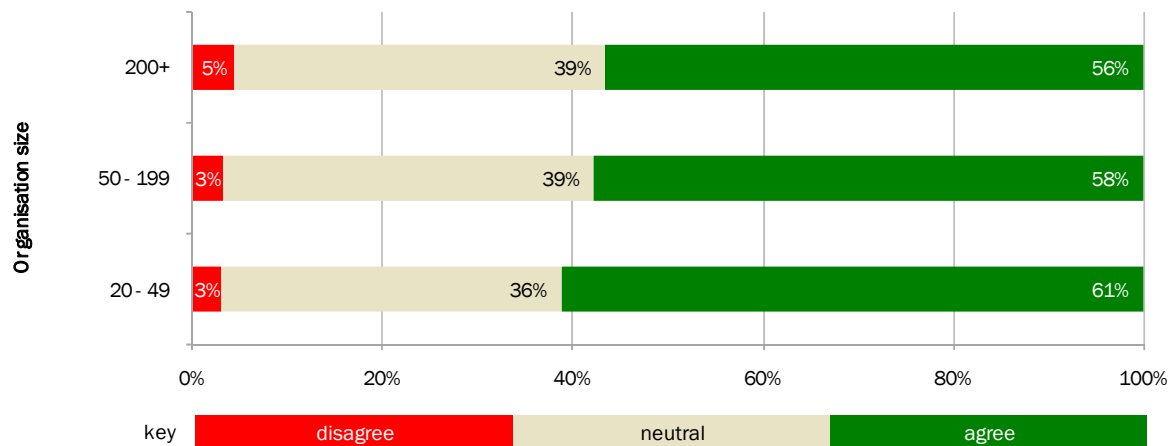
This finding suggests that organisations do not appreciate the importance of integrating their long term vision and goals into a clear and consistent customer strategy, or if they do appreciate it they don't properly communicate it to their employees.

Reducing customer churn or turnover rates by improving customer service may be an appropriate customer strategy. In this example, organisations may help employees realise that by building strong customer relationships, they will contribute to the organisation achieving greater customer satisfaction and loyalty, and a healthier bottom line.

It's important to remember that employees are brand advocates. They will translate what the organisation stands for – in terms of its brand, values and goals – into reality, and customers will be at the receiving end of this. Organisations can engage employees to deliver value to customers and achieve long term goals with regular communication and by sharing “the bigger picture”. Employees will then realise that individually, they can contribute to the organisation's success.

Innovative organisations respond quickly to market demands

Figure 2 – “Our organisation is committed to bringing innovative products and services to the market place”



With reference to the statement: “our organisation is committed to bringing innovative products and services to the market place”, employees in organisations with 20-49 staff recorded the highest level of agreement with the statement (61%). The extent to which employees agree with this statement decreases slightly as organisation size increases to over 50 employees.

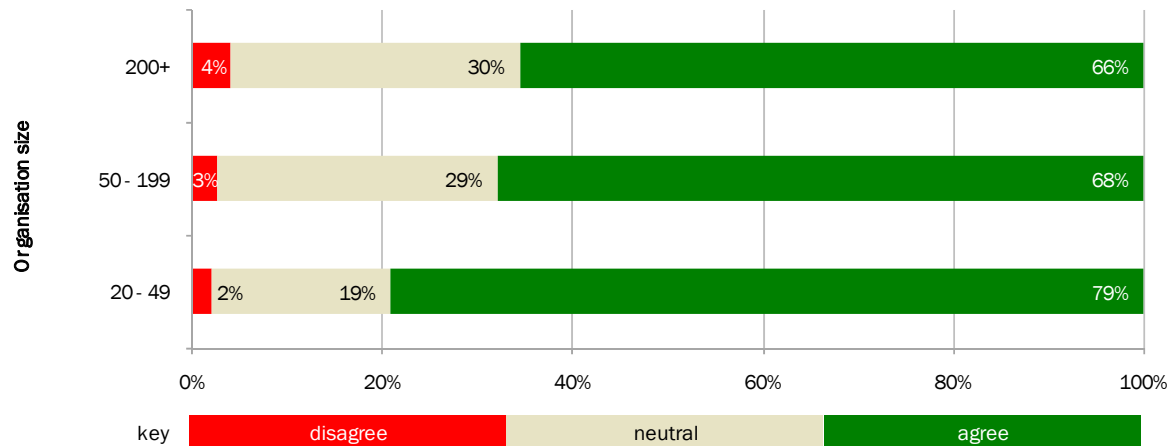
These results support the common perception that smaller organisations are able to respond more quickly to customer demands or market changes, with relatively informal approval processes and flatter hierarchies. Decisions can be made quickly and teams can pull together to get a project over the line.

Larger organisations with over 50 employees can lack the flexibility to respond quickly to market changes. More employees and resources don’t necessarily translate to faster results; some larger organisations get caught up in “red tape”, so they need to strike a balance between following strict processes and being adaptable.

Being innovative is important for organisations of all sizes so they can be more responsive to changes or trends within their market. For example, customers wanting “green” alternatives is an emerging trend that well-positioned organisations can take advantage of and be seen as innovative and listening to their customers. Having the capacity to be innovative will allow organisations to respond quickly to market changes and stay ahead of the pack.

Customers reward smaller organisations with loyalty

Figure 3 – “Our organisation is committed to achieving long term customer loyalty”



Customer loyalty is where smaller organisations excel; 79% of employees from organisations with 20-49 staff agree that their organisation is committed to achieving long term customer loyalty. The level of agreement decreases to 68% in organisations with over 50 employees and 66% in those with over 200.

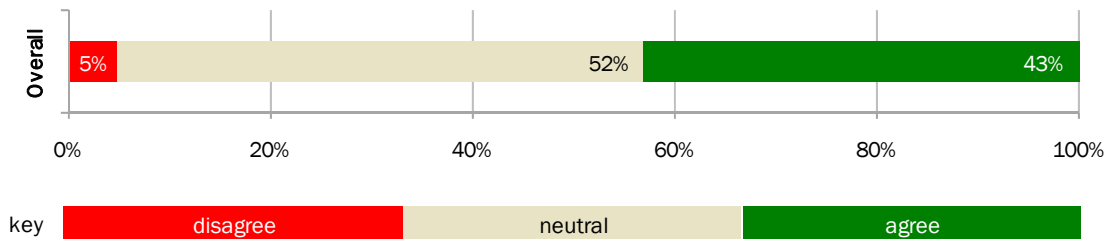
This finding supports the common perception that smaller organisations “go the extra mile” for their customer. Many smaller organisations are advantaged by having a smaller client base and are therefore able to connect and respond directly to customer needs. Also employees in smaller organisations are closer to the customer and are not shielded from them by layers of structure. A happy customer will not only come back but will recommend the organisation to others. Profitability is stimulated by customer loyalty and employees are the ones who hold the greatest power of influence.

For larger organisations to ensure long-term profitability, customer satisfaction and loyalty is vital. Organisations can make their customers feel like they are a top priority by reviewing their customer service practices and ensuring all customer-facing staff are on the same page. Orienting all employees in terms of their contribution to customer outcomes is also important. Recognising and rewarding employee behaviour is a simple and effective way to engage people and align them with the organisation’s approach to customers. A happy employee will deliver value to your customers and spread positive word-of-mouth.

- There is an opportunity for HR and marketing teams to work more closely together to ensure employees’ actions are aligned with customer strategies. Marketing and sales can have an appropriate input to induction and training to ensure there’s an emphasis on the organisation’s commitment to long term customer loyalty.

Employees unaware of their organisation's competitive differences

Figure 4 – “Our products and services successfully differentiate us from our competitors/peers”



Approximately 57% of all employees surveyed were either unsure or did not agree that their products and services successfully differentiated their organisation from competitors/peers. This result indicates a lack of employee awareness in what organisations have to offer compared to their competitors or peers, and possibly a lack of knowledge of the wider market place. Conversely, it can indicate that the products and services of some organisations may not be distinctly different.

Employees are key promoters of their own organisation whether they know it or not. Every employee will discuss their organisation and what it offers, even with friends and family at a BBQ. The impact of not understanding what their organisation does better than or differently to competitors or peers means employees are not promoting their organisation to the extent they could be.

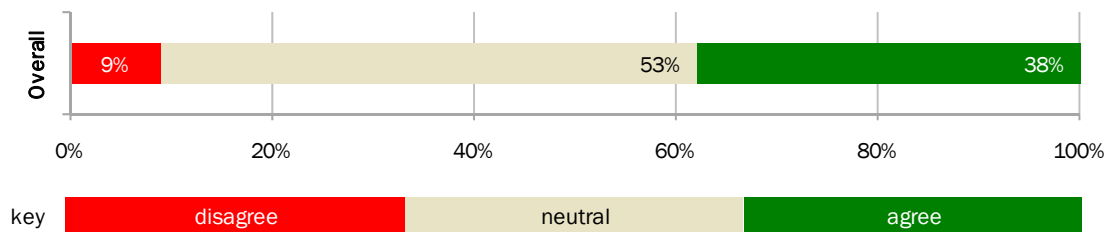
It's important for employees to take ownership and understand exactly what their brand offers to customers. If employees buy-in to how their organisation differentiates its products or services, it shows they have a deeper sense of commitment and will be more willing to talk positively about their employer with customers, friends or family. This word-of-mouth will enhance and promote an organisation's reputation, increasing profitability and growth.

Leaders wanting to measure and improve word-of-mouth and loyalty can use Net Promoter¹, which results in a Net Promoter Score (NPS). Customers or employees respond to the question: “How likely is it that you would recommend this organisation to a friend or colleague?”, by rating their answer on a scale from 0 to 10; those rating 9-10 are promoters, those rating 7-8 are passives and 0-6 are detractors. The difference between the percentage of promoters and detractors is an organisation's NPS, so the higher the score, the more promoters it has. Promoters are likely to be satisfied customers who'll come back and also refer others to it, translating into growth and greater long term revenue.

¹ Net Promoter is a registered trademark of Satmetrix Systems, inc., Bain & Company and Fred Reichheld

Listen to the voice of the customer

Figure 5 – “We often ask our customers how we can serve them better”



Only 38% of employees surveyed agree that their organisation often asks customers how they could be served better. This either reflects a lack of feedback from customers or a lack of awareness on the part of employees. Given that the success of an organisation is heavily dependent on customer satisfaction and the resulting loyalty, it is of concern that many organisations aren't asking customers how they can better meet their needs. This means organisations are also missing opportunities to develop and improve their customer service.

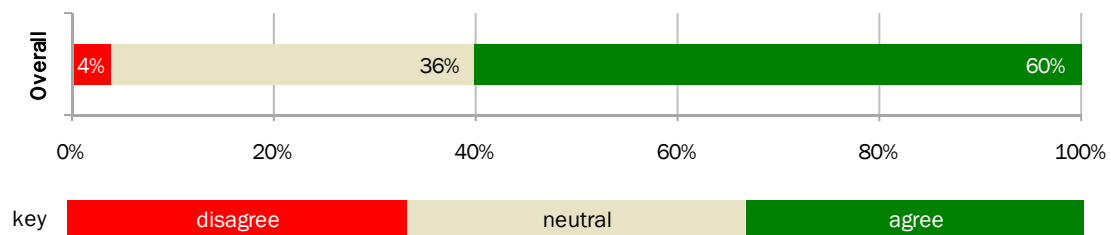
Insync Surveys' clients have found immense value in conducting well designed customer satisfaction surveys. These surveys not only uncover invaluable information for the organisation but also ensure that customers feel valued. Whether customers are happy or not, the fact that an organisation has taken the time to ask means a great deal, and without this feedback, an organisation lacks knowledge on where they can improve.

There's plenty of research that shows it's much cheaper to retain and grow existing customer revenue than develop revenue from new customers. Taking the time to ask your customers how you can serve them better can also lead to the sale of additional products and services.

Organisations that don't have both formal and informal programs to ask their customers how they can serve them better are missing a very low cost and effective way to improve customer loyalty and achieve sales growth.

Organisations can turn complaints into compliments

Figure 6 – “We act appropriately on customer feedback”



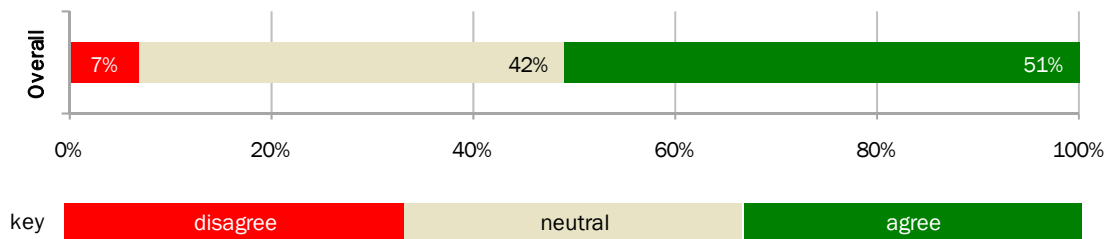
While 60% of employees believe their organisation acts appropriately on customer feedback, 4% disagree and 36% are neutral. If a customer believes an organisation doesn't act appropriately on their feedback, they're likely to find another supplier. It's not only important for organisations to improve this percentage over time but also to pinpoint where urgent remedial action or new initiatives are required.

Customer feedback comes from proactive action taken by the organisation (see figure 5) and from customer complaints. Customer complaints can be treated either as being welcome and an opportunity, or conversely as unwelcome and a nuisance. Organisations with a good customer service culture will thank their customers for their feedback/complaints as that will provide them with an opportunity to improve their product, service or system. Appropriate follow-up action is of course required.

If customer complaints are treated as unwelcome and if appropriate follow-up action does not take place, the customer is likely to leave the organisation as soon as possible. While remaining a customer, this person or organisation is likely to be an active “detractor”.

Be ready for change

Figure 7 – “Our work group copes well with change”



Many employees are unsure if their team is capable of adjusting, with only 51% agreeing with the statement: “our work group copes well with change”.

This finding suggests that employees may not deal well with organisational changes, such as a new strategic direction, or changes in management and/or organisation structure. In terms of organisations being market responsive, this result is not ideal. Employees must be receptive to workplace changes to allow organisations to move quickly and respond to customers and to changing economic conditions.

Organisations that cope well with change have built change capability into their culture and the way they operate. They plan change programs well in advance and have extensive and ongoing communications to explain the strategic reason for the change.

Organisations that cope well with change will benefit in times of deteriorating economic conditions and changing industry dynamics. Organisations that don't cope well will need to significantly improve their planning and communications around their change programs.

Tips for aligning employees and customers

- Ensure all employees understand how their role fits with your customer strategies and the organisation's long term goals; an example is to encourage them to build strong customer relationships for greater customer loyalty
- Listen to customers so you can respond quickly to changes or trends within your market and get ahead of the pack
- Keep customers satisfied and coming back by ensuring employees are recognised and rewarded; also try aligning HR and marketing to communicate a consistent customer message to staff
- Allow staff to take ownership and understand exactly what your organisation does better than competitors or peers; they'll display a stronger sense of commitment and spread positive word-of-mouth
- Customer feedback is gold; organisations should ask for it and respond to it appropriately to retain and enhance customer loyalty
- Build change capability into your organisation's culture to be more responsive to the market

About Insync Surveys

With offices in Melbourne and Sydney, we specialise in employee, customer, board and other stakeholder surveys backed by consulting. Our surveys supported by our registered psychologists and research experts help organisations become more effective.

We co-founded the Dream Employers Survey and have worked with some of the largest organisations in Asia Pacific, including: Cathay Pacific, Toll, Medibank Private, WorleyParsons, NAB, Fairfax, Nufarm, Visy, GlaxoSmithKline, Orica, Mission Australia, federal and state government departments, many local councils and most university libraries.

Contact us

To discuss your organisation's alignment needs or to access the individual reports in The Insync Surveys Alignment Update for free, contact:

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