



Getting Management “Buy-In”

No aspect of the survey-intervention process is so critical to success than obtaining the firm support of senior management. Don't proceed until this first step is assured!

- 1. They are the real change agents.** Senior management is accountable for the organizational climate and managing change in the organization. Change is not the responsibility of Human Resources. While Human Resources can be a valuable facilitator in the process, without senior management support, even their best efforts are likely to fail.
- 2. Interventions are driven from the top.** This is true of organizational development activities, but it is particularly true of survey-feedback interventions, since they are system-wide in scope. All too often we find senior management feeling they have delegated this responsibility to lower level managers and directors. They sometimes have said, “I here to set the vision and business direction, I hired them to handle this type of issue.”
- 3. Senior management participation must be meaningful.** Instead of “token” involvement, senior management provides active guidance and support in the intervention. Interventions that work, find senior management being involved in reviewing rolled up action plans and determining what they can do to remove road blocks and support change. Additionally, they are responsible for organization-wide interventions that respond to the action plans that are solely theirs to accomplish.
- 4. Never surprise the boss.** Survey feedback can be very threatening to senior management. Provide them with an early look at the data. It also wise to ask senior management if they are ready to receive candid feedback. So often we find senior management disconnected from reality and they find the candid feedback unreal and have a hard time accepting the information. What is generally evident is that predominance of negative feedback comes from only part of the organization. Be ready to drill down and find out where these negative reactions are coming from.
- 5. They decide what is measured, who is surveyed and what is published.** Although they may delegate these responsibilities, they establish the accountability for the entire intervention as well as its broad emphases, scope, and feedback strategy.
- 6. Sense their readiness.** When contemplating carrying out the survey feedback intervention, it is important to determine the extent to which members of senior management are open to managing change in an open-systems way. If there is resistance and rigidity at the top, it may be wise to abandon the idea of using survey-feedback until such time senior management shows a willingness to use it properly.
- 7. Openness to sharing the feedback data.** If senior management is unwilling to share the data with the organization, stop thinking about this process right now! **There is nothing worse than asking people for their feedback and then setting the reports on the shelf or reviewing it and not telling them what is said.** Organizational climate will be more negative than it was before the survey!
- 8. Have senior management help establish the taskforce.** By having senior management assist in this effort they are buying into the process and making a commitment to act on the feedback. Let them choose the leader and hopefully the leader of the group will not be someone in Human Resources. All too often it falls on Human Resources and they do a great job, but more progressive, effective and committed organizations will take the lead and utilize Human Resources to do much of the leg work.
- 9. Utilize outside consultants to reach senior management.** Often internal consultants (OD/HRD professionals) are wrongly, but seriously “discounted” by members of senior management. These people are usually highly qualified and on target with strategies and recommendations but are viewed as pushing too hard on organization culture rather than organization effectiveness. Some senior managers fail to see the interconnection.
- 10. Work hard to connect senior management with the successes.** Everyone should feel it is important to help senior management be successful, not fail. When you see real change and improvement and they are in some way connected to a senior manager, make sure they recognized for their involvement and support.
- 11. Involve management in recognizing successes lower in the organization.** Almost everywhere we work we find people too busy to recognize people and teams for their successes. Help senior management find opportunities to provide warranted and visible recognition to support to team and individuals.