Columinate

Catalysts for Common Good

To Melinda Schab
From Carolee Colter
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Policy Accountability Report for Moscow Food Co-op's 2021 Employee Survey

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The database for this survey is 74 employees, 98% of the eligible staff, i.e. who had completed 30 days of employment as of September 20, 2021.

Surveys were taken online using a survey program designed for Columinate. The survey program generated key codes to give the participants access, and Heather Nelson, HR manager, assigned them. I never knew which employee had which key code but I was able to tell which key codes had not been used so that Heather could follow up with those employees and ensure that they completed the survey on line. In this way anonymity was preserved while achieving a high level of participation.

When people filled out the survey questionnaire, they had a choice of responses:

5 Strongly agree
4 Agree
3 Partly agree/partly disagree
2 Disagree
1 Strongly disagree
No value No opinion

The survey software calculated average (mean) scores from these responses. Responses of "No Opinion" were not used in the averaging. Employees also had the option to write free-form comments at the end of each topic.

After analyzing the survey scores and reading the written comments, I randomly selected 12 employees for interviews by Zoom. The purpose of the interviews was to help me understand the reasons behind the average scores and standard deviation on certain questions.

Keep in mind that surveys measure perception, not facts.

WHAT DO THE SCORES MEAN?

Based on my experience with other employee surveys, I consider an average score over 3.50 to indicate relative satisfaction, and an average score of 4.00 or higher to indicate very high satisfaction, an area of strength in the perception of co-op staff. A score of 4.00 requires that most respondents agree or strongly agree with a statement. As scores decline from 3.50 to 3.00, they indicate declining levels of satisfaction, and scores below 3.00 indicate outright dissatisfaction.

Standard deviation is a statistical tool that helps to interpret survey results. High standard deviation (1.10 or more) indicates that there is a wide diversity of opinion among survey participants on a particular question, while low standard deviation (.80 or less) shows that there is general agreement on a response. High and low standard deviation are neither good nor bad in themselves, but they can shed light on a survey score.

HOW DID THE CO-OP DO?

Out of the 69 questions on the survey that asked for agreement or disagreement, 36 (52%) scored 4.00 or more, and 28 questions (41%) scored between 3.50 and 3.99, and 5 questions (7%) scored below 3.50. Right on the face of it, this is basically a "good news" survey.

While 9 questions showed high standard deviation, 12 showed low standard deviation. This indicates some areas of strong agreement and strong disagreement—but not a lot of either.

I compared the results for 48 questions in this survey that were also used in 285 surveys of other retail food co-ops. Moscow Food Co-op employees rated 11 of these questions in the top quartile, and only one in the bottom quartile, while the rest fell relatively close to the median. Moscow Food Co-op employees appear to be more satisfied than employees of other co-ops.

Engagement Index

Engagement is a subset of satisfaction. An engaged employee is fully involved in, and enthusiastic about, and committed to his or her work. Research by Gallup on engaged employees shows that they care about the future of their company and are willing to go above and beyond the daily expectations of the job. My colleagues and I in Columinate have selected 15 survey questions that correlate to the factors that Gallup's research identified as important for engagement. We're calling this the Engagement Index. Moscow Food Co-op's survey contains 13 of these 15 questions. The median score for the Engagement Index for the 285 co-op surveys is **3.90**. Moscow Food Co-op scores very close this at **4.03**. This is really significant because there are thousands of employee responses contained within the 285 other surveys. So just as Moscow employees seem more satisfied than their peers at other co-ops, they also seem to be more engaged.

Comparison to Previous Survey

The trend from the last survey to this one is incrementally upward. Of the 63 questions used on both surveys, 10 questions increased by 20 points or more, while two decreased by that much. The cumulative impact was to push the scores up in seven topics, down in three topics.

GM as Direct Supervisor

From time to time co-op boards tell us that they'd like to conduct a "360 degree evaluation" of the GM in addition to the evaluation process of a monitoring calendar with regularly scheduled monitoring reports on different policies. When we've engaged in dialog with these boards, what we've found is that they want to know how the GM's direct reports would evaluate the GM. Rather than conduct a separate process to collect upper manager feedback, we recommend using the data already collected through the most recent employee survey. If your board requests this data, I am providing here the graph showing the scores on questions of supervision. If your board does not request this information, it is your choice whether to provide it as part of your Staff Treatment monitoring report.

67 My supervisor lets me know what is expected of me.
68 My supervisor's decisions are fair and consistent, even if I don't always agree with them.
69 My supervisor lets me know when I do a good job.
70 I get helpful, timely feedback from my supervisor so that I can improve my performance.
71 My supervisor encourages us to share our ideas, suggestions and concerns.
72 My supervisor maintains a positive attitude in the face of challenges.
73 My supervisor encourages cooperation between my department and other departments.
74 My supervisor acts as part of the management team to continually improve the co-op.
75 I feel I can go to my supervisor regarding concerns of discrimination and harassment without fear of retaliation.
76 My supervisor supports an environment where people feel included and diversity is accepted and honored in our department

The line shows the average score co-op-wide, while the bar shows the scores given by those reporting to the GM including admin staff. Given the extraordinarily high scores

co-opwide on the Supervision questions, these scores can be interpreted as strong satisfaction with the GM's supervision on the board of her direct reports.

POLICY COMPLIANCE ANALYSIS

On questions related to a particular policy, I consider a score of **3.25** to be the minimum to demonstrate compliance. That score would indicate that more employees agree with the question than disagree.

However, for questions involving discrimination and harassment on the basis of status in a protected group, I consider **3.75** to be a minimum score to demonstrate compliance. This is because it is possible for a minority to feel discrimination of which the majority is unaware. Also, I consider standard deviation of no more than **1.00** as one of the recommended standards for questions about discrimination or harassment, because otherwise a high average score could mask the existence of such a minority opinion.

The standards for scores demonstrating compliance have been developed in collaboration with the Cooperative Board Leadership Development program.

For each policy, I will list:

- the survey questions that directly relate to the policy
- the recommended standard for compliance
- the score on the question,
- whether the score indicates compliance with the policy (following the recommended standard)
- the score on that question from the previous survey

PEOPLE POLICY B6: STAFF TREATMENT AND COMPENSATION, updated 10/9/2018

The General Manager must not treat staff in any way that is unfair, unsafe, or unclear.

Global policy—unfair

Survey Results:

	Compliance benchmark	**2021 Scores**	Does data indicate compliance? Y/N	2019 Scores
52. The hiring process is fair and based on work-related qualifications, resulting in good hiring decisions.	Score of 3.25 or above	**4.13**	Y	3.92
47. Department expectations are upheld in a fair and consistent way for all department staff.	Score of 3.25 or above	**3.83**	Y	3.51
48. Corrective action in my department is handled fairly and consistently to the best of my knowledge.	Score of 3.25 or above	**4.00**	Y	3.71
68. My supervisor's decisions are fair and consistent even if I don't always agree with them.	Score of 3.25 or above	**4.27**	Y	4.12
63. Internal candidates are given fair consideration for job openings.	Score: 3.25 or above	**4.20**	Y	3.92

Global policy—unsafe

Survey Results:

	Compliance benchmark	**2021 Scores**	Does data indicate compliance? Y/N	2019 Scores
33. The physical working environment of the store is safe.	Score of 3.25 or above	**3.93**	Y	4.00
34. Safety concerns are addressed promptly and effectively.	Score of 3.25 or above	**3.84**	Y	3.88
35. In the event of an emergency, I know whom to contact.	Score of 3.25 or above	**4.16**	Y	4.01
36. To the best of my knowledge store operations support safe food handling and hygiene.	Score of 3.25 or above	**4.08**	Y	3.97

Global policy—unclear

Survey Results:

	Compliance benchmark	**2021 Scores**	Does data indicate compliance? Y/N	2019 scores
59. I received well-planned and useful on-the-job training.	Score of 3.25 or above	**3.62**	Y	**3.71**
60. On-the-job training provided for new employees is adequate for staff to successfully perform their job duties within an appropriate time frame.	Score: 3.25 or above	**3.67**	Y	**3.75**
64. I am clear on the criteria used to evaluate my performance.	Score of 3.25 or above	**3.82**	Y	**3.94**
65. As a result of my evaluation, I am clear on the goals I have to work toward.	Score of 3.25 or above	**3.72**	Y	**3.92**
67. My supervisor lets me know what is expected of me.	Score of 3.25 or above	**4.27**	Y	**4.23**

The GM must not:

1. **Operate without written personnel policies that:**
   a. **Clarify rules for staff.**
   b. **Provide for fair and thorough handling of grievances.**
   c. **Are accessible to all staff.**
   d. **Inform staff that employment is neither permanent nor guaranteed.**

Survey Results:

	Compliance benchmark	**2021 Scores**	Does data indicate compliance? Y/N	2019 Scores
17.I know what to do if I have a disagreement or grievance about a management decision.	Score: 3.25 or above	**3.68**	Y	3.68
18. I feel I could use the grievance procedure without fear of retaliation.	Score: 3.25 or above	**3.76**	Y	3.72
16. I feel safe bringing my criticisms and concerns to management.	Score: 3.25 or above	**3.63**	Y	3.53

2. Cause or allow personnel policies to be inconsistently applied.

Survey Results

	Compliance benchmark	**2021 Scores**	Does data indicate compliance? Y/N	2019 Scores
14. The policies in the Personnel Handbook are applied fairly and consistently.	Score: 3.25 or above	**3.60**	Y	3.72

3. Allow arbitrary discrimination on the basis of race, nationality, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, political affiliation, or otherwise.
[Survey did not ask about political affiliation]

Survey Results:

	Compliance benchmark	**2021 Scores**	Does data indicate compliance? Y/N	2019 Scores
51. In my own personal experience, I have been treated equitably in regard to race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, age, religion, national origin, or mental or physical disability.	Score of 3.75 or above	**4.49**	Y	4.36
	Standard deviation not higher than 1.00	**.73**	Y	.95
53. The co-op's work environment is free from discrimination and harassment.	Score of 3.75 or above	**4.19**	Y	4.12
	Standard deviation not higher than 1.00	**.95**	Y	.93
54. I know what to do if I have a claim of illegal discrimination or harassment.	Score of 3.75 or above	**3.99**	Y	4.08
55. I feel I could use the channels for reporting claims of harassment or discrimination without fear of retaliation.	Score of 3.75 or above	**4.11**	Y	3.99
8. The co-op values diversity of race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, national origin and mental and physical ability.	Score of 3.75 or above	**4.28**	Y	4.47

4. Provide for inadequate documentation, security and retention of personnel records and all personnel related decisions.

Not covered by this survey

Documentation provided by the GM
GM Interpretation & Operational Definition:

The GM must ensure that all employee information and employment files, including job applications & interview materials, are securely stored & retained.

Paper records will be stored in locked filing cabinets inside an office that also locks.

Access to electronic records will be password protected. Only authorized personnel will have access to any employment records.

The Co-op will follow all state and federal requirements for record retention.

Data:

- The HR manager keeps all paper records in multiple locked filing cabinets in the GM/HR office. This office is locked when not in use. The filing cabinets are all individually locked, as well.
- Electronic records are accessible only by authorized personnel. The HR Manager and THE GM maintain all passwords and establish appropriate authorization.
- There have been no instances of unauthorized use of personnel or employment records.
- Paper records are retained for 7 years.
- There are no known instances of non-compliance with state and federal record retention requirements.

5. Establish compensation and benefits that are internally or externally inequitable.

Survey Results for "externally inequitable"

	Compliance benchmark	**2021 Scores**	Does data indicate compliance? Y/N	2019 Scores
29. I am fairly paid for the work I do relative to similar opportunities in the area.	Score: 3.25 or above	**3.37**	Y	3.36

Survey Results for "internally inequitable"

	Compliance benchmark	**2021 Scores**	Does data indicate compliance? Y/N	2019 Scores
30. The pay rate for my position is fair in relation to the pay rate for other positions at the co-op.	Score: 3.25 or above	**3.61**	Y	3.70
28. I am satisfied with the system for determining pay raise.	Score: 3.25 or above	**3.33**	Y	3.42

Note: Unlike 2019, in this report I did not include the results for *Q27. I understand the system for deciding pay raises.* We know from survey comments that many staff members were confused about the role of individual performance-based pay raises in the context of the recent across-the-board pay raises. This would not necessarily lead them to conclude that their raises are "internally inequitable."

6. Change the GM's own compensation and benefits, except as his or her benefits are consistent with a package for all other employees.

Not covered by this survey.

Documentation provided by the GM
Please see the attached memo provided by the Moscow Food Co-op's Human Resources Manager.

7. Utilize bonuses as part of staff compensation packages.

Not covered by this survey.

Documentation provided by the GM
GM Interpretation & Operational Definition:
The GM must ensure that compensation packages do not include discretionary, year-end bonuses and that these are not awarded to employees. A bonus is interpreted as being an additional cash payment added to regular payroll at the end of the year.

A bonus is different from profit-sharing (also called gain sharing) as a part of the Co-op's Open Book management practices, from gifts (like logo items) given to all employees, and from the use of Co-op Bucks to reward going above and beyond.

Data:
No year-end or discretionary bonuses have been paid out to any Co-op employee in FY2021.