

Overcoming the Impact of Recent Events on PERCEPTION SURVEYS

By Shawn M. Galloway

Perception surveys are widely used and highly valuable tools for enabling organizations to gather feedback, evaluate employee satisfaction, identify areas for improvement and make informed decisions.

However, it is essential to recognize that the timing of these surveys in relation to recent events can significantly influence the outcomes and insights derived from them. Recent events both internal and external to the organization have the power to shape employees' perceptions, attitudes and responses, thus affecting the overall effectiveness and accuracy of perception surveys. This article discusses potential positive, negative and neutral effects; specific impacts that recent events may have on perception surveys; and tactics to overcome these impacts.

Positive Effects

Unity and solidarity. Events that promote unity and solidarity among the population such as successful national unity campaigns or communities coming together to support a common cause can lead to more positive responses in perception surveys. Such events can cultivate optimism and cooperation, which may be reflected in survey responses.

Policy changes. Positive policy changes or well-received government initiatives can enhance public perceptions and result in more favorable survey outcomes. For example, implementing a popular social welfare program or infrastructure development project can boost confidence and trust in the government.

Negative Effects

Natural disasters. Natural disasters or humanitarian crises can negatively affect public perceptions and attitudes, leading to a more pessimistic outlook reflected in survey responses. The devastation caused by a natural disaster can overshadow other aspects of life, influencing how respondents view their current situation.

Scandals or controversies. High-profile scandals or controversies involving public figures or institutions can erode public trust and confidence, resulting in a more critical and negative response in perception surveys. Such events can shape public perceptions and attitudes, impacting the credibility of survey results.

Neutral Effects

Global events. Events on a global scale such as economic decline, pandemics or geopolitical tensions can have a mixed effect on perception surveys. While these events may create uncertainty and anxiety among the population, they can also lead to a heightened awareness of pressing issues and a desire for change, potentially influencing survey responses differently.

Social movements. Social movements advocating for social justice, equality or environmental sustainability can also have a mixed effect on perception surveys. While these movements may inspire positive change and mobilize public support, they can also polarize opinions and lead to divergent responses.

Specific Impacts of Recent Events on Perception Surveys

Contextual relevance. Recent events such as organizational changes, crises or industry developments can influence the context in which employees interpret survey questions. For instance, a recent company merger may lead employees to question job security or perceive work culture differently than in a stable environment.

Emotional influence. Significant events, such as layoffs, leadership changes or global crises, can evoke strong emotions among employees. These emotions can influence survey responses, leading to variations in feedback that may not reflect employees' usual attitudes or experiences.

Perception bias. Recent events can create biases in how employees perceive and respond to survey items. Positive events may lead to inflated ratings, while negative events could result in more critical feedback. It is essential to understand and account for these biases to obtain accurate and actionable survey data.

Employee engagement. Events that impact employee morale, motivation, or engagement levels can influence employees' willingness to participate in surveys and provide honest feedback. Low morale following a negative event may lead to decreased survey response rates or skewed responses.

Organizational priorities. Recent events can shift organizational priorities, focus areas or initiatives. Consequently, survey results obtained before or after such events may reflect outdated perceptions or fail to capture emerging organizational concerns or priorities.

Trust and transparency. How organizations address recent events, communicate changes and involve employees in decision-making can impact trust levels. Trustworthy and transparent responses to events can foster open communication and willingness to engage in surveys, leading to more authentic feedback.

Action planning. The insights gathered from perception surveys are instrumental in driving organizational improvements and action planning. However, recent events may necessitate immediate

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interventions or adjustments based on real-time feedback to address pressing issues highlighted by employees.

Long-term impact. Recent events' effects on perception survey outcomes may have lasting implications for employee morale, trust in leadership, organizational culture and overall performance. Monitoring these trends over time and adapting survey strategies accordingly is essential for maintaining employee engagement and satisfaction.

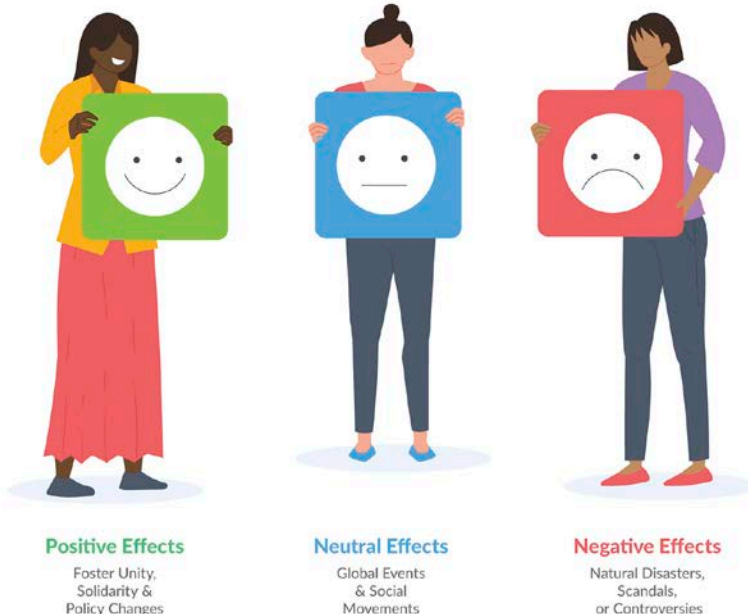
Tactics to Overcome Negative Impacts of Recent Events

Organizations can employ several tactics to overcome the negative impacts of recent events and ensure the accuracy and effectiveness of the survey results:

Timing and frequency. Consider the timing and frequency of perception surveys in relation to recent events. Conducting surveys during or immediately after a significant event may yield biased results. Instead, organizations can choose to delay or re-schedule surveys to allow for the impact of an event to settle and give employees time to process their thoughts and emotions.

Communication and transparency. Open and transparent communication is crucial during times of change or crisis. Organizations should provide clear and timely information about recent events, their implications and any steps being taken to address them. This helps build trust and ensures that employees understand the context in which the survey is being conducted.

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Employee support and wellness. Recent events can take a toll on employees' well-being and mental health. Organizations should prioritize employee support and wellness initiatives to mitigate the negative impact of these events. This can include offering counseling services, flexible work arrangements or additional resources to help employees cope with the challenges they may be facing.

Survey design and questions. Customize survey questions to address the specific impact of recent events. This ensures that the survey is relevant and captures the nuances of employees' experiences during that time. Consider including questions that directly address the event's impact on the organization, employee morale or job satisfaction.

Anonymous and confidential surveys. To encourage honest and unbiased feedback, organizations should ensure that perception surveys are conducted anonymously and that employee responses are kept confidential. This allows employees to freely express their opinions without fear of repercussions, resulting in more accurate and authentic feedback.

Action planning and follow-up. It is crucial to act on the feedback received from perception surveys, especially during times of change or crisis. Promptly address any concerns, issues or suggestions raised by employees in the survey. Communicate the actions taken as a result of the survey to show employees that their feedback is valued and taken seriously.

Continuous monitoring. Continuously monitor employee engagement, satisfaction, and morale to identify any ongoing effects or changes. Adjust survey strategies and action plans accordingly to address evolving needs and concerns.

Conclusion

Recognizing the profound impact that recent events can have on the outcomes of perception surveys is crucial for organizations seeking to gather accurate feedback, drive positive change and enhance employee satisfaction. By considering the positive, negative, neutral and specific impacts and implementing tactics to overcome the negative impacts, organizations can tailor their survey approaches, communication strategies and action plans to effectively address evolving employee perceptions and needs.

By acknowledging the dynamic nature of employee perceptions in the context of recent events, organizations can leverage perception surveys as a powerful tool for fostering a culture of transparency, trust and continuous improvement. This, in turn, enables organizations to make informed decisions, drive positive change, and foster a supportive and engaging work environment. **PSJ**

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