
Eliminating the Most Common Barriers to Organizational Performance

Executive Summary

What an executive doesn't know about the organization's cultural environment puts the success of the business at risk. For example, how do the leaders, managers and employees perceive the organization? Are they engaged and ready to get behind the new strategic initiatives that will be needed to sustain the success of the business?

The organizational surveys performed by Batrus Hollweg International (BHI) over the years have provided significant qualitative and quantitative answers to these questions and many more. A *review* of these organizational surveys reveals some of the *most frequent pitfalls* that hinder *organizational performance*. This paper discusses the typical barriers to success that many organizations encounter, it suggests remedial actions and it describes some of the benefits of regularly scheduled organizational surveys.

Broad Scope, Narrow Focus

Over the past 37 years BHI has conducted organizational surveys for a broad range of companies, large and small, with diverse products and services in a variety of industries. A high-level and confidential review of these surveys reveals that while specific business situations differ from company to company, there are common and repetitive organizational issues that, when present, hinder performance.

These organizational issues or pitfalls focus on three critical areas: development, supervision and work environment.

1. Development

The age old question, "what's in it for me," certainly holds true for employees. They care about growing and advancing in the workforce. A developmental plan for employees provides them with a map and proof that their companies support their growth.

BHI Organizational Surveys frequently identify developmental issues that interfere with individual, team and organizational performance. In some cases, the new skills needed for promotion may not be clearly understood by employees. In other cases, feedback on employee performance may be very limited or perceived as not very useful; performance reviews may not be timely. Whatever the case, organizational surveys help companies uncover and address developmental barriers.

One of the most common complaints involves performance reviews. Employees state loud and clear that they want performance reviews and that they want them completed on time. Yet, in a large number of organizations this critical component of the employee value proposition is absent.

2. *Supervision:*

Employees don't work for companies; they work for their supervisors. The relationship between employees and supervisors is critical.

Some of the most frequent supervision issues revealed through BHI Organizational Surveys include: limited one-on-one interaction time with supervisors, lack of recognition for an employee's work, and the perception that a supervisor doesn't listen to employee ideas. These perceptions can be based on reality or an individual's personal fiction, but in either case these issues must be identified and addressed before they become barriers to performance. A BHI organizational survey can function as a diagnostic tool and leads to a strengthening of the bond between supervisors and employees.

The critical importance of the supervisor/employee relationship was illustrated powerfully in the *Industry of Choice Study* that BHI conducted for the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation. For employees of differing job responsibilities and restaurant types, the study examined and prioritized issues that would have the greatest effect on employees' job satisfaction and their likelihood to stay or leave an employer and/or the industry. Of the Top 10 Employee Needs or "Deal Breakers", six involved the relationship between the employee and supervisor. To underscore this point, the study asserted that, "Unit managers emerged from this study as the linchpin to the overall successful development of a successful employee base." BHI has conducted numerous company surveys since the *Industry of Choice Study*, and time and again the results have reinforced the critical importance of the relationship between supervisors and employees.

3. **Work Environment:**

The work environment plays a big role in performance issues because it influences how engaged employee are with their jobs. Research studies have demonstrated that a low level of employee engagement lowers performance results in critical areas such as customer satisfaction, productivity and turnover. Consider the following statistics and the findings from a Gallup poll of the U.S. working population over 18 years of age:

- More than 70% of the working population is not engaged at work.
- 28% of those who are **engaged** are loyal and psychologically committed to their organization; they are more productive and more likely to remain with their current employer for an extended period of time.
- 55% of those who are **not engaged** may be productive, but they are not psychologically connected to their company; they are more likely to miss workdays and more likely to leave their employer after a short period of time.
- 17% of those who are **actively disengaged** are psychologically absent; they are typically unhappy with their work situation and insist on sharing this unhappiness with their colleagues.
- Typically, employees are not disengaged when they join a company, but within six months, they either become engaged or disengaged.

To foster a culture of engagement, organizations need an objective and systematic way to assess and address workplace issues. Consistent work environment issues unveiled in BHI Organizational Surveys center on teamwork and the tone set by supervisors. Employees care about being part of a team working toward a common goal. The accountability of each team member to organizational goals also matters to them. Employees appreciate working at a company where ethics are valued and fun is encouraged.

Improving communications and relationships among home office departments and between the home office and field operations would have a significant impact on the work environment in a geographically dispersed organization. BHI research indicates that each segment of the organization tends to perceive its work as the most important to the success of the organization. As a result, employees often fail to invest time and effort in building collaborative cross-functional relationships.

Eliminating Barriers, Leveraging Strengths

Knowledge is power. Every company has its unique circumstances and challenges when it comes to organizational issues – be they real or perceived. Where does a particular company stand? What are the dynamic talent issues that produce the best performance? Are there pitfalls the company could avoid; strengths it could leverage?

BHI Organizational Surveys can reveal where an organization stands and help it focus on the key issues that affect performance. These surveys can also help develop action plans to address organizational issues, leverage organizational strengths, and evaluate progress over time.

Bonus Benefit: Predicting Intent to Stay, Retaining Best Talent

Retaining the best talent ranks as one of the top challenges for competitive companies today and will become even more critical in the future. BHI Organizational Surveys have the power to identify those key leverage points that can have the greatest impact on employees' intent to stay. While every company wants to improve the employee value proposition, knowing which actions will produce the greatest results for the available resources is a powerful contributor to the success of the organization.

To learn more about how BHI Organizational Surveys can improve your company performance, contact a BHI consultant at 469-241-9701.