



## 2008 Fall Briefing Series

# How to Avoid Critical Mistakes When Conducting Surveys

September 9, 2008

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# Agenda

**8:30 Welcome & Introductions**

**8:35 5 Major Mistakes When:**

- 1. Planning Your Survey**
- 2. Conducting Your Survey**

**9:30 Panel Discussion**

**9:40 Close**

## About Sirota Survey Intelligence®

- **Founded in 1972 by David Sirota, Sirota specializes in attitude survey research and utilizing that research to improve organization effectiveness**
- **For over 35 years, Sirota has focused on single and multi-constituency surveys, including employee opinion, 360°, on-boarding, exit, and customer satisfaction surveys**
- **We have 70 professionals who are 100% dedicated to survey research**
- **Our consulting staff actively conducts research and shares knowledge in the field of Industrial/Organizational Psychology**
- **Main offices in New York & London, with an additional network of affiliate offices**
- **We maintain a robust normative database which we make available to all clients for comparison purposes - benchmark data can be provided for various demographics such as country and industry**

# Select Clients

				
Booz   Allen   Hamilton				
				
		 Mercedes-Benz		
				

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## **5 Major Mistakes...Where Are You?**

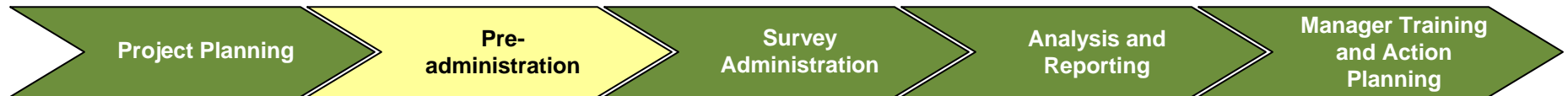
- **Goals and Roles**
- **Survey Process and Architecture**
- **Analysis and Reporting**
- **Line Manager Support**
- **Utilization**

# Surveying in “the Abstract”



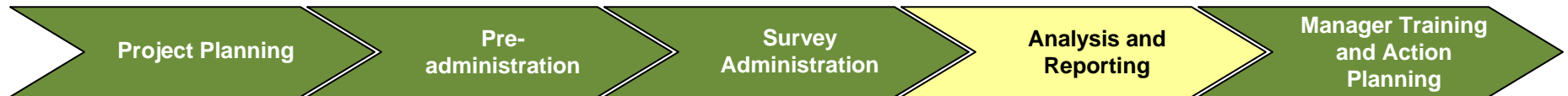
- **Underwhelming, Unsustainable Purpose**
  - Establish baselines?
  - Explore specific organizational concerns and improve performance?
  - Create metrics that will integrate with other systems and strategies?
- **Roles of the Business Leaders**
  - Passive Recipients of the Results?
  - Active Users?
  - Vocal Sponsors, Active Participants?
- **Strength of Survey Program Leader’s Mandate**
  - An extra-role (get it done)?
  - Part of formal job description (get it done, establish a process)?
  - A full-time job (create process for sustained insights and improvement)?
- **Composition of the Steering Committee**
  - HR Only?
  - Includes Line and Geographical Representatives?
  - Includes a strong Executive Sponsor?

# Having Function Follow Form



- **Incorrectly Assessing the Need for Census/Sample and Frequency of Effort**
  - Sporadic need to know? Know at what level in the company?
  - Desire periodic, predictable feedback on culture and mgmt practices?
  - Create action opportunities (at which levels in the company)?
- **Technology is Over- or Under-Utilized**
  - Primarily for administration and report delivery?
  - Plus enhancing infrastructure, quality and overall cycle-times?
  - Plus enhancing understanding and action planning to managers?
- **Inadequate (and Ill-Conceived) Communications Effort**
  - Focused on administration dates, confidentiality and anonymity?
  - Survey positioned as an important, recurring activity?
  - Survey positioned as part of the job, a continuous process?
- **Lack of Organizational Survey Governance Strategy**
  - Decentralized, unmonitored surveying?
  - Survey guidelines established and communicated?
  - Centralized systems creating control and consistency?

# Shoot, Ready, Aim



- **Weak (or Missing) Company-wide Analysis and Recommendations**
  - Descriptive analysis (hi's, low's)
  - Comparative analysis (trends, internal and/or external benchmarks)
  - Prescriptive and predictive analysis (with recommendations and goals)
  
- **Level of Reporting Unmatched to Pace of Desired Changes**
  - Major Lines of Business Only – Slowest Change
  - “Director-levels” – Moderate Change
  - “Lowest-levels” – Opportunity for Rapid Change
  
- **Reports for Managers**
  - Very basic (descriptive only)
  - Plus comparative analysis. Offers direction for action. Includes some training material
  - Integrated with action planning tools and resources with built-in follow-up

# “Dancing in the Dark”



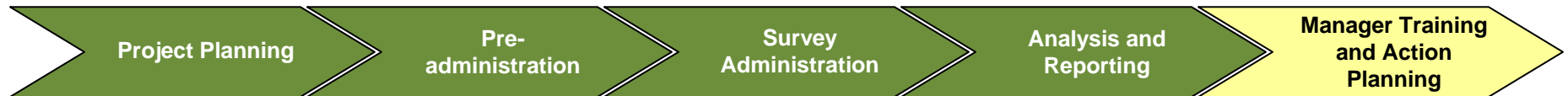
- **Inadequate Manager Training**

- Training doesn't exist or is not required
- Training has been formalized and materials universally distributed
- Occurs through interactive means with a “live” trainer – often including role-playing exercises

- **Poor Support for Poor Performers**

- Ad Hoc / Must be requested
- Self-directed tools exist / Readily available to all
- Live coaching mandatory for repeat offenders

# Failing to Cross the Finish Line



- **Little Attention to the Feedback and Action Planning Process Itself**
  - Survey feedback and action planning meetings may occur
  - Mandatory feedback and action planning meetings. Little uniformity.
  - Centralized process, best-practices available
- **Managers Not Held Accountable**
  - Little or no accountability for post-survey activity
  - Managers are required to hold feedback and action planning meetings
  - Managers are held accountable for improvements year-over-year
- **Little to No Connection With Business Results**
  - A “happiness” study focused on morale or engagement
  - An effectiveness study with links only to HR outcomes (like turnover)
  - Quantifying influence of management practices on business outcomes
- **Failure to Integrate with Other HR Processes**
  - HRIS systems
  - 360° surveys
  - On-boarding and exiting surveys

# In Sum

## *Normative Findings*

	<b>Score</b>
<b>■ Average Total Score</b>	<b>31</b>
– Based on 57 possible points; 19 dimensions	
– Range: 20-47	
<b>■ Total Dimension Average (1-Below; 2-Avg.; 3-Above)</b>	<b>1.84</b>
– Analysis and Reporting	<b>2.05</b>
– Goals and Roles	<b>2.00</b>
– Process Itself	<b>1.76</b>
– Data Utilization	<b>1.74</b>
– Manager Support	<b>1.71</b>

## ...and Let's Not Forget Vendor-Management

- **Unclear About the Need**
  - Want a consultant, technologist, tab-house or all of the above?
- **Failure to Investigate Overall Management Philosophy**
  - Only Full-time Employees?
    - Beware Out-sourcing, Part-time & Informal Business Relationships
  - Project Management Philosophy
    - Strength and experience of the Survey Process Leads and Overall Team Leader (tenure matters)
    - Formal teams vs. Ad Hoc teams
  - Corporate Values (like Partnership, etc.)
- **Not Meeting the Full Team**
  - This is an intimate process, one must “like” or “connect” w/team
- **Lack of Real Due Diligence**
  - Seek case studies that match your complexity / Call references
  - Investigate Data Control Process (should be clear and documented)
    - Min N, Suppression Rules, Remainder Rules, Cross report confidentiality protection procedures, Trend management
  - Clarify deliverables / Little room for subjective interpretation

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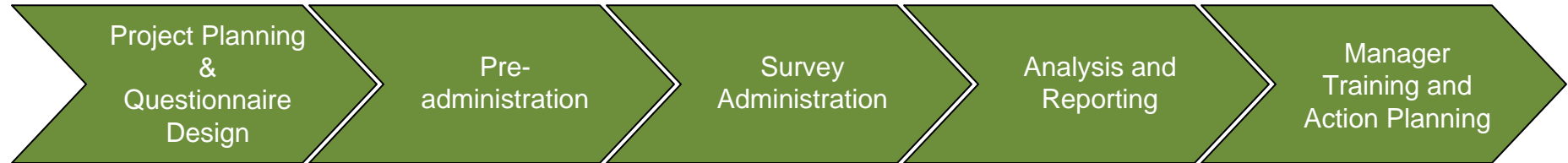
**1. Planning Your Survey**

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# Survey Process and Pitfalls



## Major Activities

- |  |  |  |  |   |
|--|--|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Questionnaire Design</li> <li>• Validation of business requirements/needs</li> <li>• Preliminary report discussion</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capture Organizational Structure</li> <li>• Item translations</li> <li>• Development and testing</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survey launch</li> <li>• Response count monitoring</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Executive Presentations</li> <li>• Manager Reports</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Action Planning</li> <li>• Manager Training</li> </ul> |
|--|--|--|--|---|

## Major Pitfalls

- |  |  |   |   |   |
|--|--|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weak Project Management</li> <li>• Ineffective Communication</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incomplete/incorrect org structure</li> <li>• Missing or not fully vetted translations</li> <li>• Inadequate application of technology</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low response rates</li> <li>• Too High Response Rates</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data Issues</li> <li>• Technical Issues</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor manager support</li> <li>• Lack of documentation/tools</li> </ul> |
|--|--|---|---|---|

# Project Planning Pitfalls

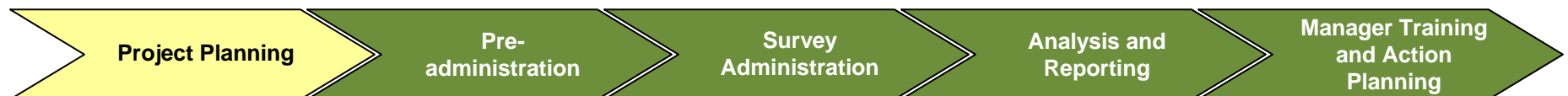
## Where does it go wrong?

### ■ Weak Project Management

- Management by committee (lack of central decision-maker)
- Failure to meet milestones – client and vendor
- Underestimation of cycle-time
- Managing requests for changes to the survey process/materials/timing
- Incomplete administration methodologies

### ■ Ineffective communication

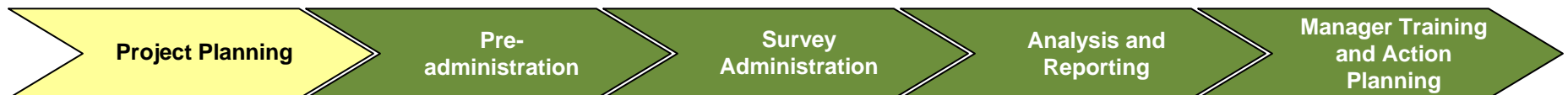
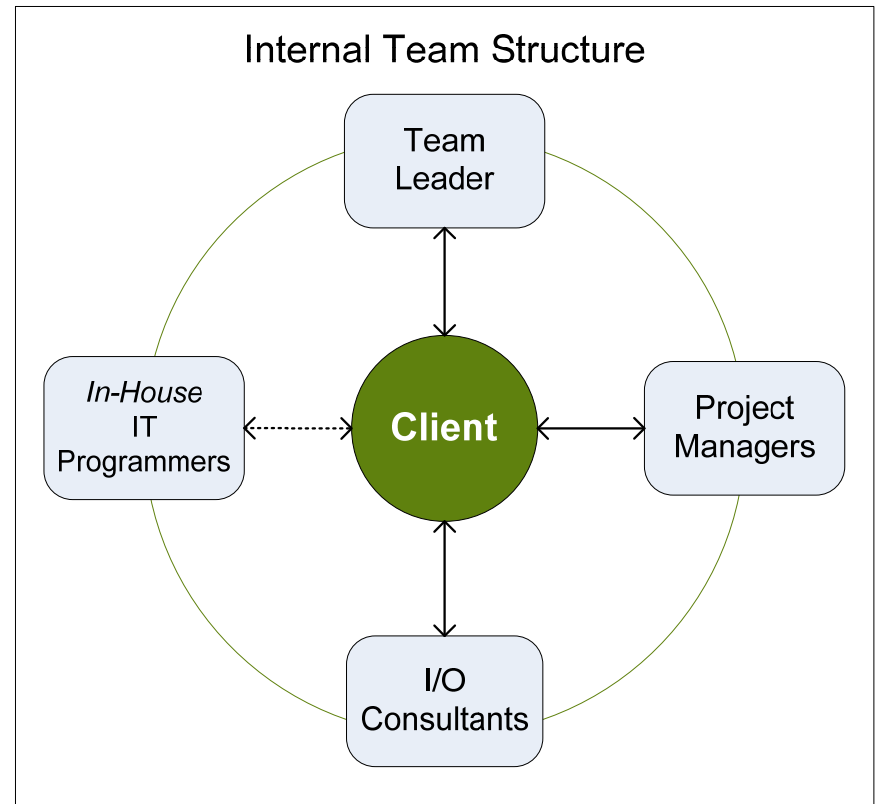
- Lack of follow-up
- Mismatched expectations



# Project Planning the Right Way

## So, what does success look like?

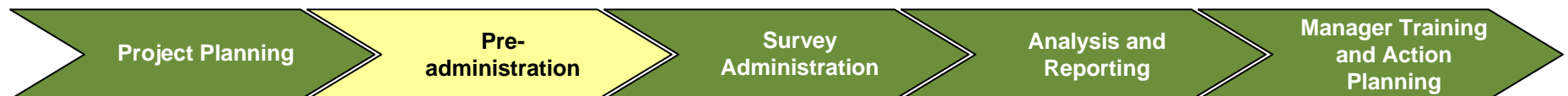
- Detailed planning by both client and vendor
- Frequent, consistent feedback
- Evolving, partnership approach
- Commitment to milestones
- Effective communication among all team members



# Pre-Administration Issues

There are many potential pitfalls in this phase:

- **Incomplete/Incorrect Organizational Structure**
  - Missing parts of the organizational hierarchy
  - Matrix relationships
  - Organizational code circularity
- **Missing or Not Fully-Vetted Translations**
  - Left-to-Right (LTR) languages
  - Double-byte languages
  - Japanese and Arabic
- **Inadequate Application of Technology**
  - Browsers (skip pattern protocol, branching, languages, on-hover definition)
  - Generated links (wrapping, white-listing)
  - Versioning (avoiding overlapping logic)
  - Reverse scales / MTM scales



# Pre-Administration Done Well

## What should be done to prepare?

- **Testing, testing, testing**
  - Make a test plan
  - Involve many members of client and vendor
  - Build in sufficient cycle-time for testing
    - Too often, testing gets shortchanged due to missed milestones
- **Partnership with Your Company's Technical Help Desk**
  - Have a FAQ ready for the Help Desks before launch
  - Have a Problem Resolution Plan
  - Immediate reaction/support when issues arise
  - Effective reminder process



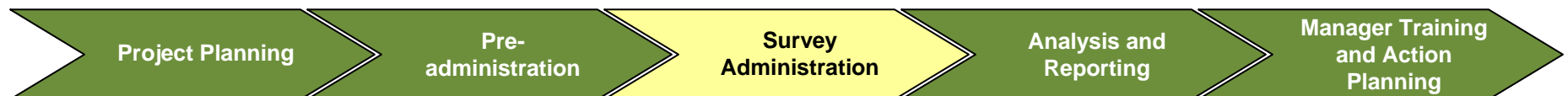
# Survey Administration Pitfalls

Issues once the survey has launched...

## ■ Low Response Rates

- Technical
  - White lists
  - Location access
  - User Access (Missing invitations, etc.)
- Planning
  - Include all employees
  - Consider all employee schedules
- Communications
  - Lack of Marketing (over-estimating naturally occurring response rate)
  - Lack of Executive Endorsement

## ■ Too High Response Rates (Voluntary “wink-wink”)



# Survey Administration Done Well

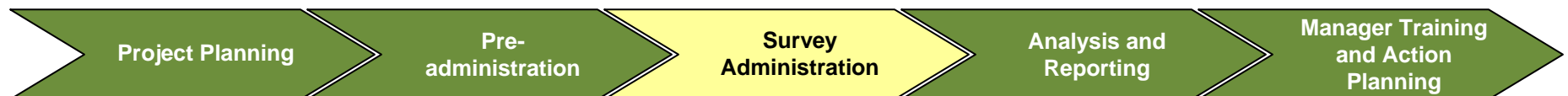
During a successful survey administration:

## ■ Monitor Response Rates

- Technical
  - Real-time response rate reporting
- Planning
  - To include all employees
  - To consider all employee schedules (and accommodate them, not you)
- Communications
  - Explain Purpose (Insight, Action)
  - Confidentiality/Anonymity (if so)
  - Frequent Reminders
  - Executive voice

## ■ Too High Response Rates

- Avoid competitions and rewards



# Analysis and Reporting Pitfalls

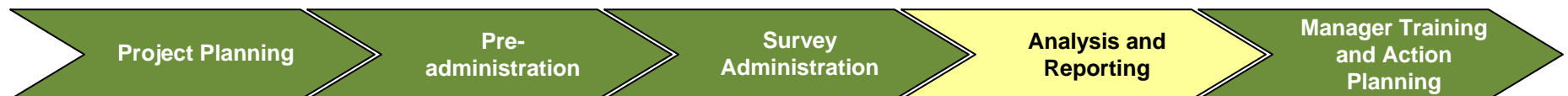
**Beware the following:**

## ■ Data Issues

- Quality – Is it the data correct?
  - The calculated scores
  - The comparison groups
- Quantity – Is everyone who should get a report getting one?
  - Reports not created/available for lower levels of managers
  - Reports not available due to minimum N

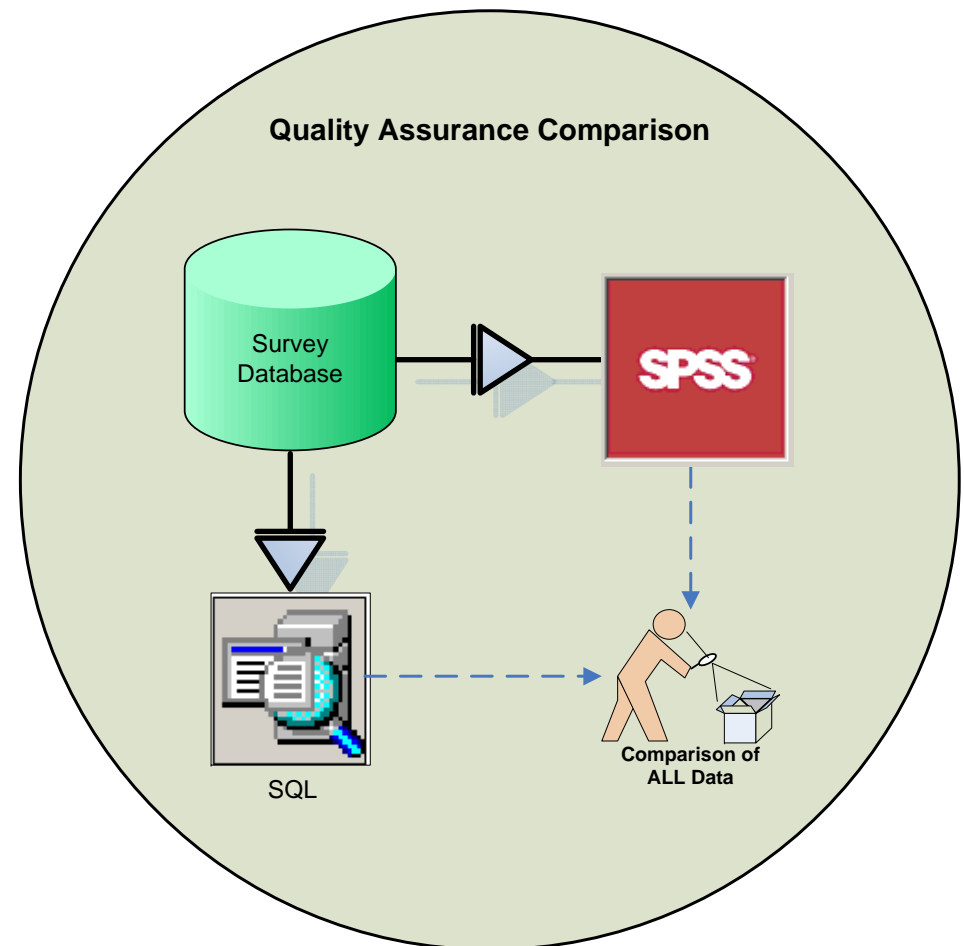
## ■ Technical issues

- Reports (incorrect, incomplete, or missing data)
- Users can't access reports
  - No internet access
  - Site not white-listed
  - Inability to download files
  - Lack of required software



# Analysis and Reporting Success

- **The cornerstone of Sirota's data quality assurance is a parallel process whereby ALL report data is produced and compared between two independent systems.**
  - One set of results is produced using our SQL database (which directly feeds the reports that are ultimately produced).
  - The other set of results is produced using SPSS (statistical software used in social sciences).
  - Both sets of results are independently produced according to all business reporting rules (e.g., provided hierarchy, minimum N).
  - The results are then compared for **each and every** data point produced. Any discrepancy triggers an investigation until all discrepancies are resolved



# Manager Training and Action Planning Issues

When managers fail to act, its because of:

- **Poor manager support**

- Managers don't know what's expected of them
- Managers lack experience in feedback sessions
- Managers lack communication skills
- Managers don't know what to do to address the data concerns

- **Lack of documentation/tools**

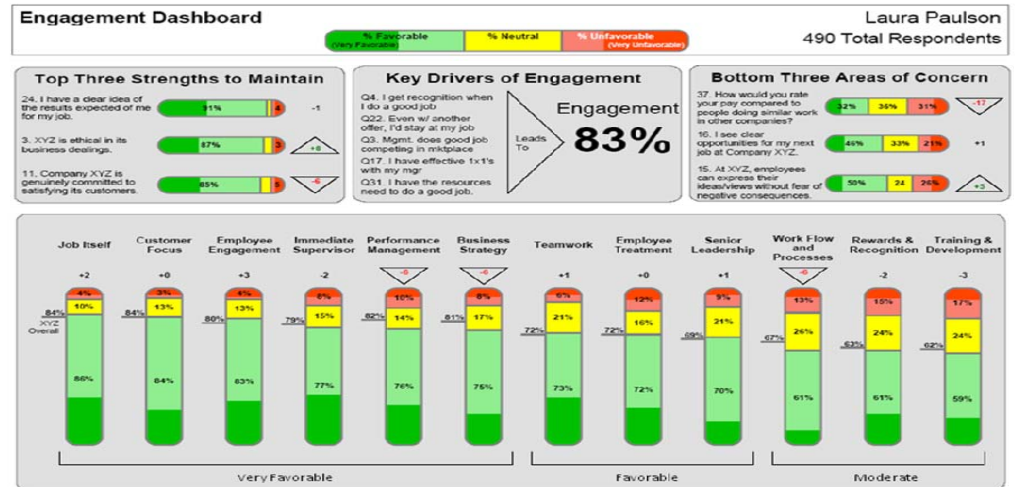
- How do they create an effective Action Plan?



# Manager Training and Action Planning Done Well

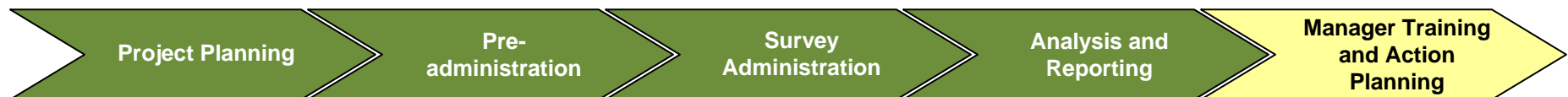
## Help all managers to take action

- How am I doing?
- What should I do?
- How should I do it?



	N	% Favorable	% Neutral	% Unfavorable	Trend	Mean	Norm	Percentile
<b>Q1. I would recommend XYZ as a great place to work.</b>								
Company XYZ Overall	5648	83%	7%	10%	+6	-11		55
BU Overall	1075	82%	7%	11%	+3	+5		75
Fred Smith	750	79%	5%	16%	-6	+2		34
Fred Smith Direct Reports Only	5	78%	5%	17%		-3		75
<b>Q12. Within my group, there is equal opportunity for each to achieve his/her potential.</b>								
Company XYZ Overall	5648	83%	7%	10%	+6	-11	+5	55
BU Overall	1075	82%	7%	11%	+3	+5	+2	75
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- Action Tracker**
- More information**
- Research**
- Training Video**



## In Sum: How Do You Avoid Critical Mistakes?



**Taking action as a result of the survey moves the dial on employee engagement**

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