



Employee Surveys. Integrated Analysis Tools.

Transition to Sirota

Shell had initiated a global survey process in 1999. The process involved biennial global Shell People Surveys, each involving 100,000+ staff in 130 countries, using 35 languages, administered via web and paper - with 170 versions of the questionnaire. The project was centrally led by HR, with results delivered to Managers in multiple Business Units throughout Shell. Over the years, follow up was wide ranging in nature, scale and impact.

In 2004 Shell ran its first global employee survey in partnership with Sirota. In the midst of turbulent times, driven by investor concerns about how oil & gas reserves had been 'booked', Shell needed to focus on increasing the efficiency and the effectiveness of the business, to restore investor trust and strengthen employee engagement. The latter need connected well with the objective expressed then by Ewout Durieux, Head of Shell's Survey Office: "I want to develop the survey to become an instrument that has the greatest possible impact, while running it as efficiently as possible. The survey has immense potential and we need to release that."

A Growing Partnership

The partnership between Shell and Sirota grew stronger during the preparations for the 2006 survey. The survey process, questionnaire and data utilisation were all put under the microscope. The questionnaire was reviewed and streamlined: one third of items were removed and the number of versions was reduced significantly. A highly confidential connection was established to utilise personnel data from Shell's new global HR system to enhance the quality of the demographic data and to reduce the time needed to complete the survey. It also incorporated a complete global organisation structure for reporting survey data. These and other innovative changes combined the benefits of pre-coded, attributed surveys with the highest possible degree of confidentiality - and reduced the administrative effort for all involved worldwide.

Recognising the importance of a consistent measure of Employee Engagement, Shell introduced an Index, which became the main focus of Manager Reports and Executive presentations. Employee Engagement was introduced as a Key Activity Area in the HR Functional Plan for 2007 and beyond. Supervisor and manager reports were revised to become available as ready-to-use presentations with Employee Engagement at the centre of attention.

In 2008, further streamlining was achieved by eliminating the remaining paper surveys - moving to fully electronic administration. Supervisors now access their survey reports through an intranet portal, which takes them straight into Sirota's on-line report library (SORT). This has further reduced the work of the HR Business Partners, freeing up time to focus on the results, rather than on producing the reports.

The effect of all these improvements on the overall global process has been significant. Compared to four years ago, managers and HR view the survey as extremely "light touch", focused - and much more useful.

Ewout comments: "The survey has evolved to a cultural assessment instrument that is widely appreciated and used at all levels and organisations. We have not reached the end state of the journey yet. The future state will be even more exciting".

Shell and Sirota are now building on the possibilities offered by attributed surveys. Throughout this global company, Shell units run a limited number of approved surveys (e.g. Onboarding – for new joiners when they

are 3 months into Shell, repeated at 10 months of service; Inside Track – an Internal Communications survey; Reputation Tracker – measuring stakeholder perceptions of Shell's reputation, etc.) that together form the Shell Survey Calendar. Sirota has recently developed a more sophisticated advanced reporting tool (A-SORT) to enable HR Business Partners to conduct higher-end analysis, combining the responses from these various surveys. The tool enables users to conduct longitudinal analysis of how attitudes move over time or in relation to various events - for example, examining the views of cohorts like high potential employees from entry to managerial positions within Shell.

In Summary

Lewis Garrad, Sirota's project lead commented: "Shell has made tremendous progress in its entire survey program – and now offers the business an impressively efficient delivery process. Data utilisation (respecting local laws regarding data privacy) and survey effectiveness has improved enormously thanks to clearer report design, smoother delivery of survey data and continued focus on Employee Engagement. This is an excellent example of the great partnership between Shell and Sirota".

The partnership also involves Shell's Internal Communications department. Shell is always on the look-out for stories about how survey results have improved the working climate and people's behaviour - knowing that this impacts Employee Engagement and ultimately, business outcomes.

Nick Starritt, Managing Director, Sirota Europe notes: "The evolution of the Shell People Survey, in terms of efficiency and effectiveness, is testament to what companies can achieve with the right vision. Today, the Shell People Survey benchmarks extremely well with our other 'best in class' clients. More importantly though, it has helped Shell create a stronger connection between employee engagement and business outcomes."