

An employeesurveys.com Tip

Evaluating Employee Comments

Many employee satisfaction surveys give employees the opportunity to provide comments. Evaluating each comment as it is returned will be helpful in understanding the needs of individual employees. However, you'll gain even more information if you review the comments in batches and attempt to uncover patterns in the responses through "coding" them.

This doesn't have to be rocket science. If you are dealing with a relatively small number of comments (less than two hundred or so), all that is necessary is to read through the comments once or twice and write down "categories" into which most of the comments would fit. Typical categories would include items such as speed, accuracy, courtesy, pricing, product, product availability, business hours, business location, etc. You should create one list for positive comments and a second list for negative ones, including the same categories in each. After you have developed the categories, you would review the comments again, this time recording a "tick mark" in the appropriate category for each comment. People often comment about more than one thing, so it is a good practice to break each comment into parts and enter a tick mark for each portion of a comment. So, if a comment says something like "It took too long for my food to be served and the waiter was very rude," you would code it in both the speed and courtesy categories of your negative comments list.

Once you have completed "coding" the comments, you can look for patterns. You would commonly see many of the same things identified as issues in the quantitative portion of the survey report (if you have a quantitative section). Often, the comments will provide you with more specific information about how to fix problems identified in the quantitative portion of a survey. However, it is not uncommon to uncover completely new issues by coding and reviewing comments. If this occurs, consideration should be given to modifying future questionnaires to specifically ask about such issues. If you see a lot of references to particular employees, you should consider including employee names in both the positive and the negative comment coding sheets. You could then put a tick mark in the appropriate column for each positive or negative mention of an employee. If you do this, be sure to also place a tick mark in the appropriate "issues" category as well.

If you have many comments to code, it is helpful to use a data base program or a spreadsheet. Rows should represent each respondent and columns can represent categories. This approach also makes it easy to calculate what percentage of respondents mentioned items in a particular category.

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