

Satisfaction with Ottawa County Administration

All aspects of satisfaction with Ottawa County's Administration show gains compared to 2007, particularly on leading Ottawa County in the right direction.

- ◆ Largest gains in 2009 are seen among non-supervisors, employees with 6–10 years' tenure, and employees in Developmentally Disabled (DD) Services and Sheriff Administration. Comments from employees include:
 - "Over the past several years, county administration has improved 100%. We are headed in the right direction." (Supervisor, >10 years)
 - "(I) have seen a marked improvement since last survey. (I am) very pleased with Administration Office's attempt to reach out to employees to improve (the) quality of employee atmosphere." (Supervisor, 6-10 years)
 - "The administration's transparency is important to me. They are doing much better in this area." (Supervisor, >10 years)
 - "The changes at the county level over the last three years have increased my trust of county administration." (Supervisor, >10 years)
- ◆ As a strong driver of employee satisfaction, being committed to providing quality service continues to be a strength for Ottawa County. Other measures of administrative support and leadership remain opportunities for improvement.

Satisfaction With Job Responsibilities

Satisfaction improves on all aspects of employees' job responsibilities compared to 2007, except ability to work a flexible schedule.

- ◆ However, employees in Environmental Health are less satisfied than in 2007 with all aspects of job responsibilities.
- ◆ Support provided by other departments and awareness of how their role contributes to Ottawa County's mission remain two areas for improvement, as less than half of employees express satisfaction with these two aspects of their job.

Satisfaction with Work Conditions and Atmosphere

Employee satisfaction improves on almost all aspects of work conditions and atmosphere, particularly on the availability of resources and a climate of trust existing within the organization.

- ◆ While the amount of job stress, contributions being valued, and climate of trust show significant overall improvement from 2007, about two-thirds of Ottawa County employees remain less than completely or very satisfied with these aspects of work conditions and atmosphere, particularly those working in Environmental Health.
 - "Unfortunately the specific department I work for (CMH) is one that is extremely trying and stressful caseload sizes and constant new deadlines have not eased and seem to be getting worse again." (Non-supervisor, >10 years)
 - "I have enjoyed my work, but the amount of work expected to be done can't possibly be done within the 40 hours we are paid. We end up working many hours of overtime with no extra pay. The stress is becoming unbearable. The staff take it out on each other, causing trust and morale issues." (Non-supervisor, 2-5 years)

Recommendations and Implications

- ◆ Focus process change on areas that most strongly influence employee satisfaction, where current performance remains relatively low, such as by:
 - ◇ Having supervisors and county leadership be more demonstrative in expressing appreciation for employee contributions and more specific when communicating how each role contributes to the overall county mission
 - ◇ Supporting merit-based promotions and making opportunities for advancement more visible (including promotions from within)
 - ◇ Offering resources to help minimize job stress, particularly within Health and Community Mental Health departments
 - ◇ Providing more detailed explanations of the reasons why policies and procedures are in place
- ◆ Prioritize attention on issues affecting the departments that have relatively low employee satisfaction – Corrections, Community Services, Environmental Health, and Mentally Ill Adult Services; apply best practices from other departments that exhibit stronger performance in identified areas.
- ◆ Implement policy and process changes that will enhance both interdepartmental communication and communication within departments, to enhance the trust built since 2004 – particularly in regard to reducing the appearance of secrecy.
- ◆ Continue to leverage the steady improvements seen in employee satisfaction – such as the strong gains in internal training, benefits, and communication of department goals – by tying research findings to process or policy changes implemented since prior measurement was conducted in 2nd Qtr. 2007.
- ◆ Continue to re-survey employees on a bi-annual basis to assess performance related to organizational initiatives and goals.

RESULTS OF THE

2nd Quarter 2009 Ottawa County Employee Satisfaction Survey

July 2009

Survey Objective and Response Rate

In 2nd Qtr. 2009, an employee satisfaction survey was mailed to all Ottawa County employees to determine current overall job satisfaction and to evaluate the attitudes of employees regarding various aspects of job satisfaction. These results were compared with previous findings to determine how satisfaction and attitudes have changed. RDA Group, a private market research and consulting firm, was responsible for collecting and analyzing all survey data.

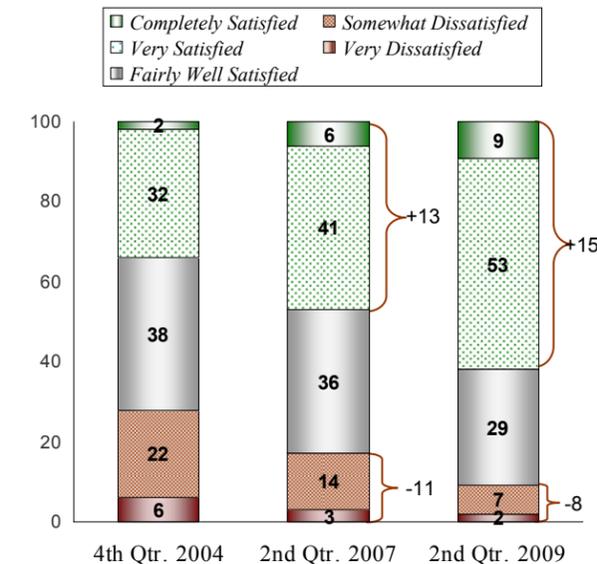
Of the 939 surveys that were mailed in 2009, 405 employees returned a survey, for a response rate of 43% (vs. 50% in 2007).

Overall Satisfaction

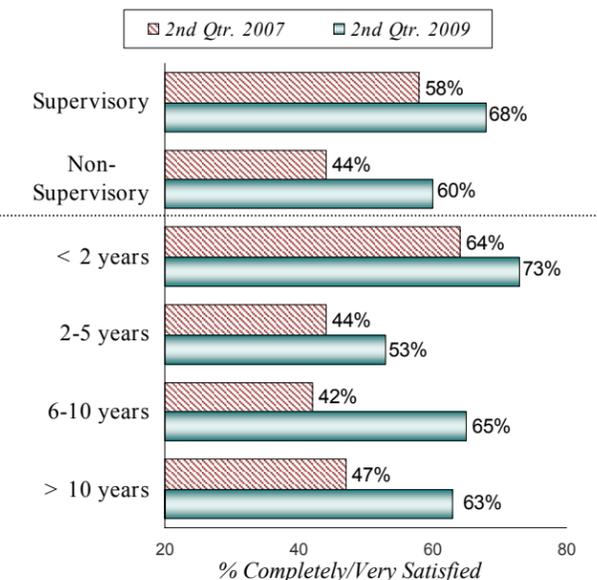
Substantially more employees are completely or very satisfied overall in 2009 than in 2007, continuing the trend seen in 2007. Since the 2004 baseline study, overall satisfaction among Ottawa County employees has almost doubled.

- ◆ 62% of Ottawa County employees are now completely or very satisfied, a significant increase from 2007 (47%) and 2004 (34%); only 9% report being dissatisfied.
 - ◇ Employees with less than 2 years' tenure remain the most satisfied, while those with 2 – 5 years' tenure have the lowest satisfaction
 - ◇ At 90%, MI Works! and Circuit Court Trial Division employees have the highest satisfaction, followed by Sheriff's Department Administration, Holland District Court, and Friend of the Court (82% - 83% completely/ very satisfied); satisfaction is lowest in Corrections, Community Services, Environmental Health, and Mentally Ill Adult Services departments (33 - 46% satisfied)
- ◆ The largest satisfaction gains from 2007 are seen among employees with over 6 years of tenure, those in non-supervisory positions, and those working in Law Enforcement, Disabled Services, and the Holland District Court.
- ◆ Along with changes in the Ottawa County work environment or employee experiences at work, satisfaction gains may also reflect the lack of stability in the general economy, which can sometimes manifest in employees feeling more appreciative of their job.
 - "(I like)...being fairly confident that I won't lose my job because of the economy." (Non-supervisor, 2-5 years)
 - "I enjoy the stability afforded me in an unstable environment." (Supervisor, >10 years)

Overall Satisfaction Among Total Sample



Overall Satisfaction by Position and Tenure



Most Liked Aspects of Job

Employees are more likely than in 2007 to say they appreciate the job security, advancement and training opportunities, and autonomy afforded in their job.

- ◆ Many employees cite appreciation for the ability to take ownership of their position.
 - "I love what I do and I enjoy the fact that our department head lets me take ownership of my job and responsibilities." (Supervisor, >10 years)
 - "(I like the) freedom to perform my job without micro management." (Non-supervisor, >10 years)
 - "(I like my) ability to be self-directed – minimal supervision, freedom to work a variety of investigations at our own discretion." (Non-Supervisor, 6-10 years)
- ◆ Similar to 2007, co-workers (42%) and benefits (33%) are the top rated job aspects appreciated by employees; also highly appreciated is job responsibilities (22%), replacing flexible work schedule as the third most frequently mentioned aspect of job satisfaction in 2009.
- ◆ Newer employees (<2 years) are almost twice as likely as other employees to say they enjoy the cooperative workplace.
 - "I've had the privilege of working with the Health Department and Circuit Court. In both locations, the employees treat each other and the clients they work with (with) respect, dignity, and professionally." (Non-Supervisor, < 2 years)
 - "(I like)...the camaraderie amongst county employees – not just those in your department. The willingness of other departments to help and mentor with things." (Supervisor, >10 years)

Ways to Improve Satisfaction

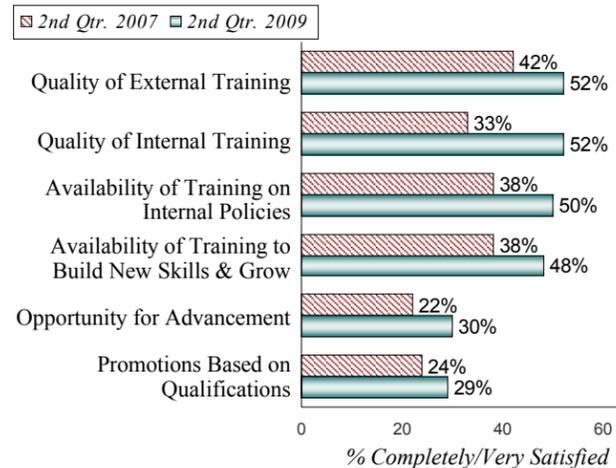
More employees in 2009 cite the need to improve communication, HR support, and general responsiveness... notably fewer cite concerns with direction and leadership

- ◆ Improving compensation (14%), communication (14%), and leadership support and direction (13%) remain the three most often mentioned ways to increase satisfaction.
- ◆ In particular, employees with more than 10 years' tenure are more likely than in 2007 to indicate the need for improved communication and responsiveness, often citing secretive management and lack of input in decision making as key dissatisfiers.
 - "Listen to the employees. Be open to suggestions. Keep us informed of what's going on. Everything is a big secret!" (Non-supervisor, >10 years)
 - "Communication is still a big issue. (We) hear lots of rumors. When we ask (our) supervisor for some sort of explanation, we are told nothing. We hear things from other departments first." (Non-Supervisor, > 10 years)
 - "(Need) better communication from leadership – I feel like there are a lot of secrets in our department, which prevent members from knowing what is going on or coming up." (Non-Supervisor, 6-10 years)
 - "(I) continue to feel a lack of support from department director, acting on her own or with input only from those who are closest to her." (Non-Supervisor, >10 years)
 - "When issues are brought to management, they choose to ignore the problem and let it continue." (Non-Supervisor)

Satisfaction with Training and Career Development

Satisfaction with all aspects of training and career development have increased notably in 2009, continuing the upward trend seen in 2007.

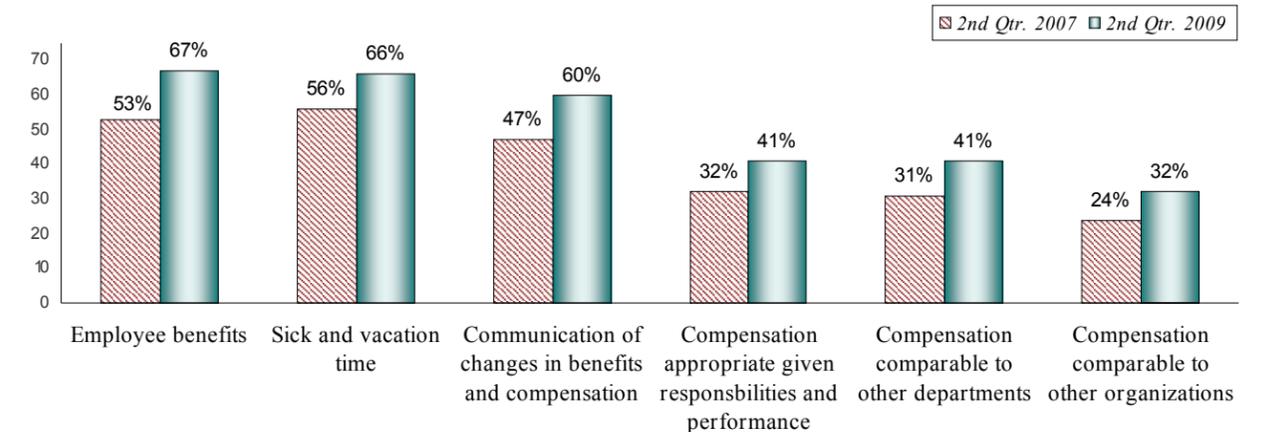
- ◆ Strongest gains are among employees with more than 10 years' tenure and those in non-supervisory positions.
- ◆ Satisfaction with the quality of internal training sees the largest improvement (+19 pct. pts.).
 - "(I like) the training center. What was put together is a treasure trove for employees." (Supervisor, >10 years)
 - "The gold standard training program is the best indication of the support this administration has for its employees. The training coordinator is awesome." (Supervisor, 2-5 years)
- ◆ The satisfaction degradation seen in 2007 among Developmentally Disabled (DD) Services employees has stabilized in 2009 for most aspects of training and development, with increases seen in the quality of both internal and external training.
- ◆ Although satisfaction continues to increase in the high-impact areas of promotions being awarded based on qualifications and opportunity for advancement, room for improvement still exists in these areas in order to become strengths. In particular, many employees express a desire for more promotions to be awarded from within rather than hiring external applicants.
 - "(I) would like to see more opportunity for promotion. People work hard to earn a degree but when a position becomes available, human resources or department head select external applicant." (Non-supervisor, >10 years)
 - "I have tried to apply for other positions, but they hire them from the outside instead of hiring within the county." (Non-supervisor, 2-5 years)
 - "Ottawa County needs to be progressive and start thinking about promoting from within when qualified internal candidates exist, or grooming them for future jobs, as it is more fiscally responsible and engenders better employee morale." (Non-supervisor, 2-5 years)



Satisfaction with Compensation and Benefits

Compared to 2007, satisfaction improves on all aspects of compensation and benefits, especially employee benefits and communication of changes in benefits and compensation.

- ◆ The largest gains in benefits and communication of changes are seen among employees with 6 - 10 years' tenure, non-supervisors, and those in Law Enforcement.
- ◆ While satisfaction with benefits is relatively high, satisfaction with compensation remains below that of other most aspects of job satisfaction -- less than half of employees report being satisfied with compensation being appropriate to performance or being comparable to others in similar positions.
- ◆ Many employees cite the need to tie pay and recognition more closely to performance, with verbatim comments on compensation including:
 - "I still believe bad employees are paid the same as good employees. I believe merit pay for work performance would eliminate this." (Supervisor, >10 years)
 - "High-performing staff should be recognized for their work and poor performing staff should be held accountable." (Non-Supervisor, 6-10 years)
 - "Apparently, years of service and experience mean nothing when determining pay level. Someone with no experience in the job cannot only start at the same classification but at the "top step," along with someone who has many years of service." (Supervisor, >10 years)
 - "All the surrounding counties pay more for the same job, but job studies never change anything." (Non-supervisor, 2-5 years)



Satisfaction with Direct Supervisor and Department Director Support

Direct supervisory support continues to represent a clear strength for Ottawa County, particularly on supervisors being approachable, receptive to ideas, encouraging innovation, and setting reasonable standards.

- ◆ Gains are seen across almost all aspects of direct supervisory support in 2009. Comments from employees include:
 - "(I like) the freedom we were given to explore new and innovative methods." (Non-supervisor, <2 years)
 - "Supervisors are always willing to listen and do their best to help with any situation." (Non-supervisor, > 10 years)
- ◆ In a reversal of trends seen in 2007 among employees in Developmentally Disabled (DD) Services, satisfaction improves noticeably on over half of direct supervisor measures; Juvenile Services also sees gains on many measures, while Clinic Services posts several declines.
- ◆ On many measures of direct supervisory support, supervisors and newer employees (< 2 years' tenure) have the highest satisfaction.

Satisfaction also improves for almost all measures of Department Director support, primarily due to gains among non-supervisors and those with 6 – 10 years' tenure.

- ◆ Satisfaction is highest on respecting employees' need for balance, communicating department performance on achieving goals, and providing autonomy.
- ◆ Although gains from 2007 are evident, less than half of Ottawa County employees are completely or very satisfied with several aspects of support from department directors, most notably availability and being treated fairly.