

Ottawa County 2015 Employee Engagement Survey Executive Summary

Survey Purpose and Methodology

In December of 2015 employees were encouraged to participate in the biennial employee survey. First completed in 2004, the employee satisfaction survey has been an important tool for gathering the input of employees to improve the organization. Several changes were made to the survey in 2015, including:

- Change from a “satisfaction” to an “engagement” survey. The field of employee surveys has transitioned to engagement, which builds upon the feedback of historical satisfaction questions (how to make employees happy) to engagement questions (how to partner with employees to equip and best use the skills of employees).
- Utilize an online survey platform, SurveyMonkey, to easily and confidentially conduct the survey. Prior surveys cost nearly \$16,000 each, while this survey was conducted for less than \$500.
- The ability to compare Ottawa County’s results to employee engagement benchmarks by including questions generated by the Society of Human Resources Management (SHRM). While the historical tracking of overall satisfaction from 34% in 2004 to 62% in 2013 was both dramatic and helpful, it did not answer the basic question “Is 62% good when compared to other organizations?” Now results can be compared to both internal baseline and external benchmarks.

Of 935 total invitations, 587 surveys were completed for a response rate of 63%. Several data sets were generated by staff from SurveyMonkey, including:

- The aggregate results to questions, including the comparison to SurveyMonkey Global Benchmark Data. Several questions were repeated, asking the employee to respond referencing their perspective on the County organization as a whole, their individual department, and with some questions, their direct supervisor.
- The verbatim responses of all employees to the same open-ended questions used since 2004. As has been done in the past, limited editorial control is used to redact comments that contain accusations or insults against another person.
- Made available just to department heads, the aggregate results to questions by department if six or more employees completed the survey within the department. The set does not include demographic information or verbatim responses to open-ended questions. We encourage each department to share and further discuss these departmental results with their employees.

Results and Benchmark Comparisons

Analysis of recent surveys has focused on any changes in results from the prior survey, and overall trends from the baseline survey in 2004. Additionally, individual department results (when

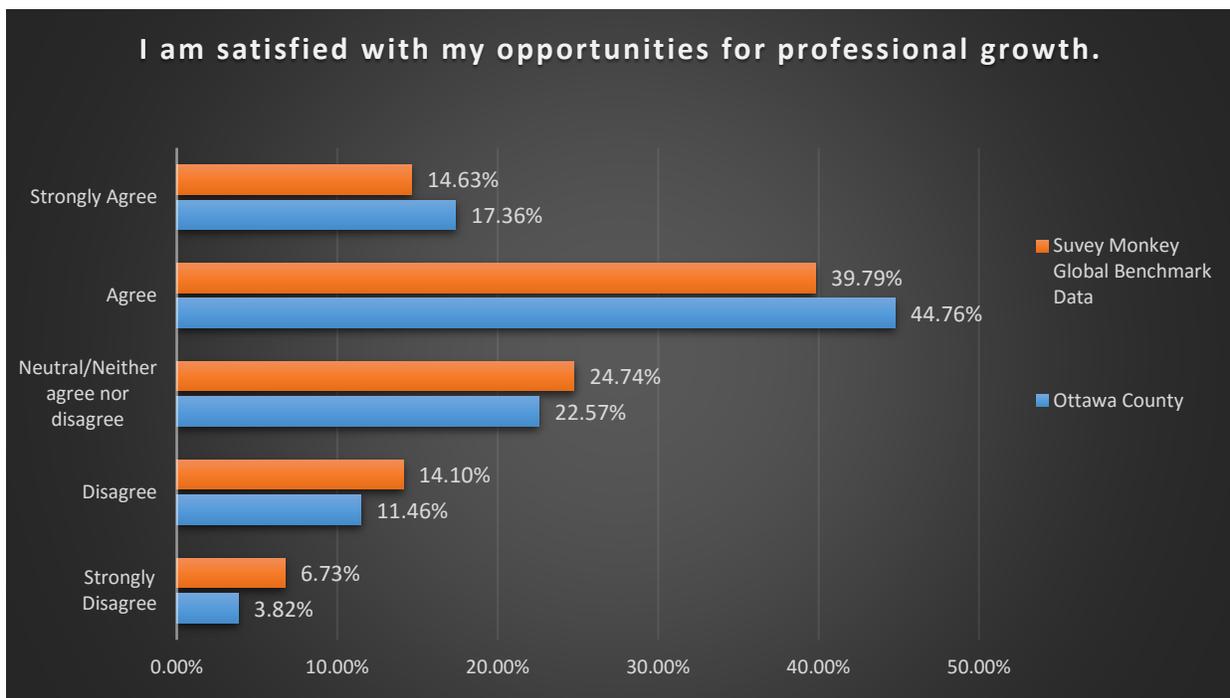
enough responses were available) could be compared to the overall County results. The key indicator was always “Overall Satisfaction”, which trended up from 34% in 2004 to 62% in 2013.

Comparisons to prior years will not be helpful until or unless we use the same methodology and questions in the future. The benchmark comparisons, however, are extremely helpful to measure against other organizations. Individual department results (if available) continue to be helpful to measure against the county average.

Questions are grouped into categories as follows:

Career Development

- Overall, employees rate the County better in career development than the benchmark.



- Employees are particularly positive about opportunities for training and education, although responses are stronger for the County organization when compared to the department level.
- Employees are slightly above the benchmark when evaluating professional growth and career advancement. Employees report above benchmark and an overall high percentage of having opportunities to apply their talents and expertise.
- Verbatim comments sample:
 - “Thank you for professional development training and the opportunity to meet and engage with leadership throughout the county”.
 - “Continue to offer employee classes and diversify the classes offered”.
 - “Departments should have more all staff meetings in order to meet new staff or to know the name by face.”

Work Engagement

- In most categories of work engagement employees rate the County slightly above or at the benchmark when combining “Strongly Agree” and “Agree”. The intensity of that agreement, however, is less than the benchmark where a higher percentage “Strongly Agree” compared to County employees that “Agree”.
- Additionally, in questions about adapting to difficult situations, taking initiative and accepting change employees rate their departments at levels significantly higher than the County as a whole.
- Verbatim comments sample:
 - *“I am a firm believer in giving employees a voice. Employees feel engaged when they have a voice that is more than just a suggestion box. In my experience, employees do have a voice, which helps alleviate a lot of engagement issues.”*
 - *“At some point, it ceases to be about oneself but about how we can better serve our customers and the people of Ottawa County better with the skills we have and the knowledge we possess. This becomes the driving force that brings me to work every day knowing that there are customers that need important services that my department offers.”*

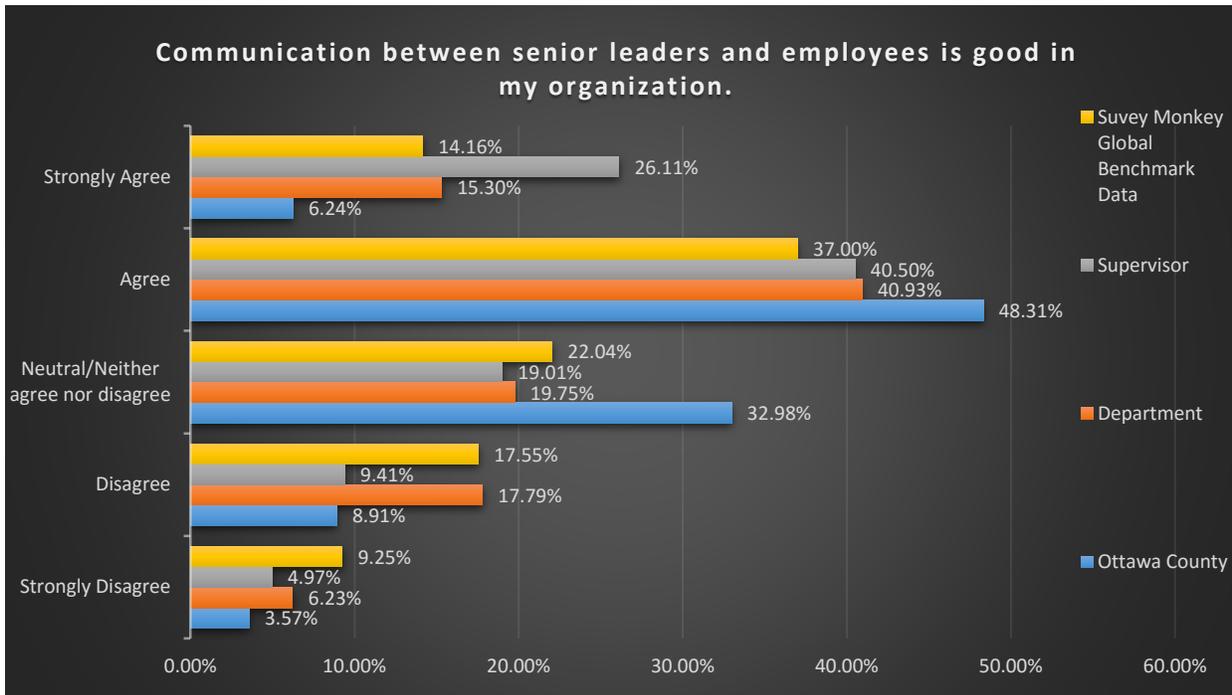
Compensation

- Employees rate the County better than the benchmark for being satisfied and fairly compensated, although with the strongest percentages in “Agree” and “Neutral”.
- Verbatim comments sample:
 - *“It was very difficult for CMH staff to be omitted from the 2% raises this year. While we understand that CMH is in a poor fiscal situation, the county is not.”*
 - *“Allow performance based pay increases. Employees who perform better get no recognition for working hard and getting assignments done correctly and on time.”*
 - *“Great place to work, great pay and benefits, appreciate being able to work in matters that positively impact the lives of our residents.”*
 - *“Appeal of wages is absolutely unfair.”*

Relationship Management

- This category asks questions regarding communication, recognition for work performance, and trust between management and employees. Several questions request a response for the county as a whole, individual departments, and supervisors.

- Employees report stronger positive support for management that is closest to them. In three separate questions employees rate their supervisor higher than their department, and their department higher than the County as a whole.



- One deviation from the previous trend is that a higher number of employees “Disagree” at a higher percentage when rating their department when compared to the County as a whole. This would seem to indicate a difference amongst departments relating to Relationship Management.
- When “grouping” the responses for county/department/supervisor, it appears that employees rank the County at or above the benchmark. On other questions in this category the County is rated above the benchmark.
- Verbatim comments sample:
 - *“Top down management has not always been the most effective approach at getting positive outcomes, sometimes the bottom up approach is just as important in steering the organization as a whole to doing great work.”*
 - *“I think that Ottawa County goes to incredible lengths to provide employee input/participation/engagement. The employees who are not engaged probably never will be because their outlook is generally self-centered and pessimistic in nature.”*

Benefits

- Employees rate the County significantly higher for the quality of benefits when compared with the benchmarks.
- The only departure from this trend is in the area of workplace flexibility, although employees report higher ratings for departments than the County as a whole.
- Verbatim comments sample:

- *“Providing better flexibility for employees outside of the office would allow them to be better focused when they are in the office.”*
- *“Focus on incentives for positive health and wellness along with or instead of disincentives or the avoiding of disincentives through tasks.”*
- *“After working in several government sector and private sector positions outside of Ottawa County, there is no doubt this is a great place to live and work.”*

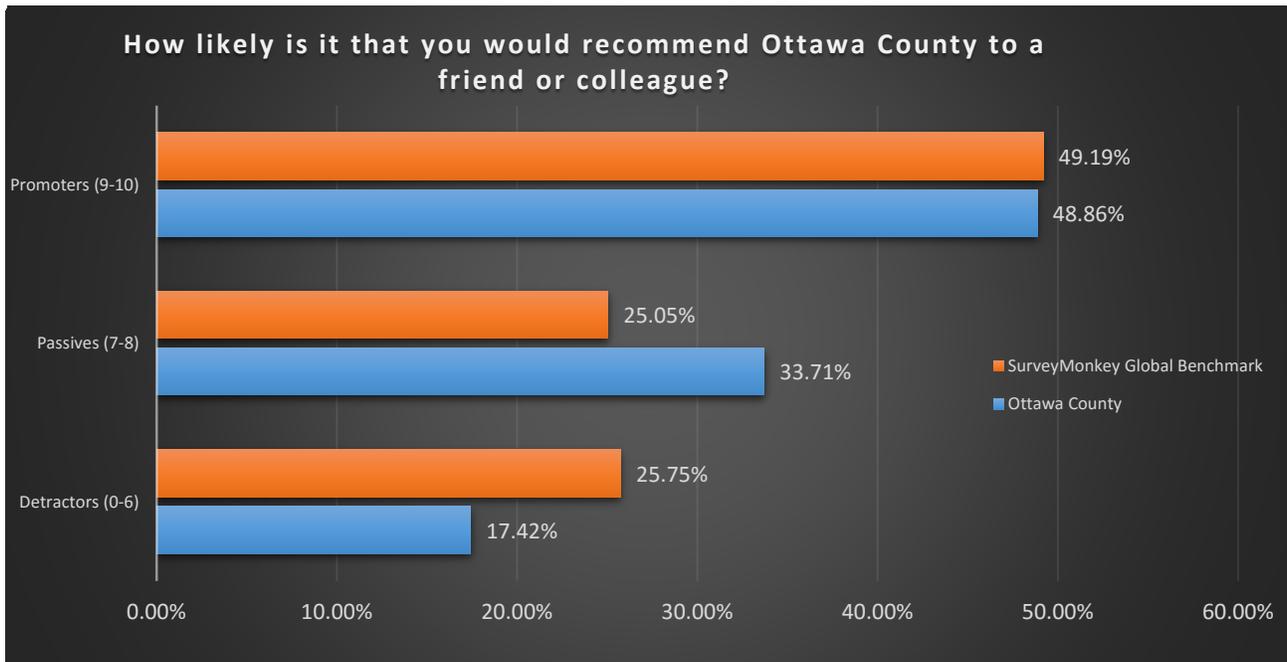
Work Environment

- This category asks a wide variety of questions about safety, job security, social responsibility, and fiscal well-being among others.
- On almost all questions, the County is rated higher by employees than the benchmark.
- In certain measures employees “Agree” at a rate higher than the benchmark, but have less ratings of “Strongly Agree”. Examples include having a safe work environment and understanding how work impacts the organization’s business goals.
- Employees rate their department higher than the County as a whole when questioned about work positively impacting people’s lives and operating in a socially responsible manner.
- Overall ratings for the fiscal well-being of the County were significantly above benchmark, but lower ratings by department may indicate stated concerns about the status of the Community Mental Health Department.
- Verbatim Comments sample:
 - *“Being that I work for CMH in a turbulent financial year, input was very difficult.”*
 - *“I am proud to be a citizen of Ottawa County and an employee of Ottawa County. We are innovative, financially sound BUT we still lack cultural diversity/sensitivity.”*

Other Areas of Feedback

- This category included a Net Promoter Score (described below) and a select few questions used in prior surveys.
- The Net Promoter Score is a widely used survey question that utilizes the terms “Detractors”, “Passives”, and “Promoters” to help gauge overall support for an organization or product. The County is rated as having a higher number of “Passives” than benchmark, or number of employees that would recommend Ottawa County to a friend or colleague as a 7-8 on a 10-point scale. While we have fewer “Detractors” than benchmark rating the County 0-6 on that scale, we also have fewer “Promoters” that rate the County 9-10 on the same scale.
- Ultimately the Net Promoter Score generates a score of 31, when compared to the benchmark of 23. The score is derived by subtracting the “Detractors” percentage total from the “Promoters” percentage total, ignoring the “Passives”

percentage. This Net Promotor Score is both below the median score of 40, and in the bottom 25-50% of Survey Monkey organizations.



- Other questions in this category were asked to monitor trends from prior employee surveys. Questions included issues like providing support and resources, involved employees for problem solving and change, and leading the county in the right direction. There were no significant changes in the responses from prior years.
- Verbatim Comments sample:
 - *“There are always going to be pro’s and con’s to every work place and I believe that we are fortunate to work in Ottawa County. It doesn’t get much better than this!”*
 - *“Love my co-workers & my department!”*
 - *“It is great to be part of an organization that has an administration that not only values county employees, but also emphasizes providing great customer service to the public.”*

Recommendations & Implications

- Continue initiatives that break down silos and increase communication between departments, like the many employee work teams (Leadership Cohorts, Ambassador Program, Training Council, etc.).
 - *“Something so that employees can better understand what other departments do.”*
- Further our commitment and work recognizing the importance of department and supervisor leadership on employee engagement. Encourage department results, where available, be analyzed and discussed with work teams to find opportunities for improvements.

- *“Make employees feel their opinions and input are valued and that they can trust management.”*
- Further communicate with CMH staff regarding financial issues and relationship with the County.
 - *“Regarding CMH I believe the administration is trying to be as transparent as they can be.”*
- Consider the business needs of various departments and evaluate if additional work flexibility can be added without compromising customer service.
 - *“I think that the County would greatly benefit from having a more flexible environment.”*
- Continue to re-survey employees, possibly on an annual basis through SurveyMonkey, to assess performance.
- *“Keep up the good work. Continue to solicit feedback and compare to other successful organizations.”*