Action Planning Tips Guide

Knowledge, ideas and best practices for managers and employees beginning the Action Planning process, compiled and presented by:

Press Ganey Associates, Inc. | 704.522.0776 | 800.232.8032
hdesk@pressganey.com ● www.pressganey.com ● Part Number 300510 Version 4 October 2014
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Please Read These Instructions Before Using This Document

Throughout this PDF document you will see a number of hyperlinks. Many of these hyperlinks take the reader to another portion of the same PDF document. In some instances, you will see another hyperlink at the bottom of that page that allows you to return to the Table of Contents.

However, if you have clicked on one of the survey items (grouped by domain), you will be positioned on that portion of the document. To return to the list of survey items, simply follow the ‘Return’ hyperlink at the bottom of that page to be returned to the list of survey items.

Additional Help Is Always Available

For assistance, call 800.232.8032; choose option 1 for technical support. You can also email hdesk@pressganey.com

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How to Use the Action Planning Tips Guide

This Action Planning Tips Guide provides direction for work unit managers to follow up on survey results. The Tips are a useful tool when combined with a thoughtful, consistent action planning process.

Press Ganey’s Survey System

More information on the entire process of understanding your survey results, sharing them with your team, selecting issues for action planning, and creating action plans is found in Press Ganey’s Survey Leadership: The Manager’s Guide to Survey Feedback and Action Planning™. The Tips Guide can also be used in combination with Press Ganey’s Web-Based Action Planning System™.

Press Ganey’s Action Planning Tips Guide

Before you begin using any of the Tips, please review in detail the following steps for understanding and addressing the issues identified by your survey results. (The shaded box contains an abbreviated outline of the steps for quick reference when working with the Tips Guide.)

**Step 1**
Select the items you want to address.

**Step 2**
Understand the issues represented in the survey item.

**Step 3**
Read the Action Planning Practice for each survey item you want to address.

**Step 4**
Create a comprehensive action plan. Be sure to engage the appropriate people in the plan.

**Step 5**
See your manager or HR representative if you have any question about using any of the tips.

**Step 6**
Do a self-check. Have you engaged your employees in the finding solutions?

**Step 7**
Acknowledgment & celebrate success.
**Step 1** is to select the items you want to address. These may be items identified as key drivers of employee engagement, items that perform below national benchmarks, or other items of concern. You may also want to address items that have acceptable scores if they are critical to the vision and mission of your organization and you need to show improvement. The decision of which items to address should not be made in a vacuum – engage the appropriate people in conversation and reach agreement.

**Step 2** is to understand the issues represented in the items you choose to address. While many items in the survey are very clear, some are broader and can have different interpretations. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying those issues. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items. Now is a good time to take a few minutes to review both this topic so you will be familiar with the content. Afterwards, return to this page and continue with the steps below.

**Step 3** is to read the Action Planning Best Practices for the survey items you want to address. Use the List of Survey Items to help see the suggested best practices. In selecting from the multiple actions offered, remember that some action items work well at your organization; others may not fit your needs. Choose only those items that you think will work best for achieving improvement.

**Step 4** is to create a comprehensive action plan using Press Ganey’s Action Planning System™. Many of the practices can be used successfully for more than one item; some may overlap. When feasible, select tips that offer the most coverage across the issues you have chosen to focus on. A successful plan should be a concise set of action that will lead to the greatest improvement. Never compile a series of unrelated actions.

**Step 5** is to discuss your action plan with your manager and/or your HR representative if you have any doubts about using any of the recommended actions in your organization.

**Step 6** is to perform a self-check. Have you engaged the appropriate people in finding solutions? Effective leaders recognize that the best solutions most frequently come from collaboration. When possible, the solutions should be shaped through a balance of organizational leaders/managers and physician contributors. If your action plans focus on “telling” rather than “asking,” you need to revise your plans to make them more participatory.

**Step 7** is to acknowledge success. Use the action steps in your plan as guiding points and acknowledge success when each point is met. Acknowledge individual and team contributions. Making these achievements well-known will reinforce the positive advantage of the survey, establish a culture of measurement, and drive engagement.
Understanding Issues

Tips for Understanding Issues on Any Survey Item

Regardless of the survey item you target, managers need to understand the issues behind the items selected for action planning. Using the activities below or other methods, take steps to get to the root cause of the problem, and you will be in a better position to select appropriate corrective action. In addition, using these or similar methods will help physicians feel that they have been heard.

Avoid the Pitfalls of Action Without Adequate Input

In today’s rushed environment, we all want to jump into action quickly to save time and get quick results. A popular advertisement once proclaimed, “Pay me now, or pay me later.” The same logic applies to action planning. If you attempt to bypass understanding issues, you may save time and effort upfront. However, the consequences could be wasted time and resources, unnecessary expense, or even an exacerbation of the problem by taking inappropriate action.

Engage Your Employees in Action Planning

Employees need to be a part of the solution and be engaged as much as possible. One way to address this challenge is to create an action planning team and/or a group of physician “champions” that will help support the action planning initiative. The team would be responsible for interviewing others to confirm prioritization of the identified items and gather input on possible actions to be taken. Their information is brought back to the action planning team and compiled for review by the entire team. (See the “One-on-One Exploration” process below.) The team then looks for themes and patterns in the information that has been gathered and creates recommended actions. The process for approving action plans depends on the culture of the organization. Your Press Ganey Client Consultant can provide options and insights.

Remember that confidentiality is critical. Comments should never be attributed to a specific employee or respondent.

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Exercises for Understanding Issues

Several exercises work well with employee groups. You may find some modifications are needed for your organization based on your organization’s culture and structure. Your Press Ganey Client Consultant can help you determine the most effective methods for understanding the issues related to survey items.

**Stop-Start-Continue Activity** – This exercise often works well for addressing Manager Domain issues. The objective of this exercise is to find out what employees would like for managers to stop doing, start doing, and/or continue doing.

1. **Determine in advance a survey item that best illustrates the issue.**

2. **Reserve a private meeting space** with a large table for your team. If your group is large, we suggest that you subdivide them into smaller groups of approximately 8-10 people to encourage everyone to participate in the discussion of the items. We recommend a meeting duration of one hour.

3. **Present the Task.**

   a. Tell the group:
      - You want their help in making positive changes in the areas of concern indicated on the survey.
      - Your reason for focusing on a particular survey item.
      - You are committed to using the information for positive change.
      - The purpose is to get a “sense of the group’s feelings and perceptions,” not to pinpoint individual feedback.
      - You would appreciate their full participation—everyone’s input is valued.

   b. Ask them to complete three lists on the flip charts relative to the focus area:
      - What should you (the manager) **CONTINUE** doing?
      - What should you **START** doing?
      - What should you **STOP** doing?

   c. Ask each group to:
      - Select one member as recorder.
      - Select one member as presenter.

4. **Leave the room to encourage open conversation** among the group. (If the issue is not a Manager Domain issue, you may want to have a facilitator from Human Resources or you may want to stay in the room yourself.)

5. **Have a representative come get you** when lists have been completed.

6. **Listen to the sharing of items on the list.** Ask clarifying questions only—do NOT defend. The less you say, the better. Thank the group for their input.

7. **Follow up later by sharing your written action plan for addressing their comments.** Ask for their input on your plan. In addition, periodically ask “How am I doing in addressing your concerns?”
**Envisioning a Solution Activity** – Typically, items from the Organization Domain (i.e., *This organization treats employees with respect; This organization is respected in the community.*) are the focus of this activity.

1. **Determine in advance a specific survey item that best illustrates the issue.**

2. **Reserve a private one-hour meeting space** with tables for groups of 3-5 people per table.

3. **Create a worksheet (or use flip charts) with the following three questions,** providing space to answer each.

   a. When the organization doesn’t *treat you with respect* (replace as needed with the item you choose), how do you know? What does it look like? Provide specific examples.

   b. Why do you think the organization doesn’t *treat you with respect* (or other item)?

   c. List 3-5 things you would like to see the organization do to *demonstrate respect* (or other item). What behaviors would be different?

4. **Present the Task:**

   a. Tell the group:

      i. You want their help in making positive changes in the areas of concern indicated on the survey.

      ii. Why you have chosen to focus on a particular survey item.

      iii. You are committed to using the information for positive change.

   b. Have them complete the worksheet as a group at each table:

   For Questions 3a and 3c above, ask the group to explain what behaviors the organization has demonstrated to *show/not show respect* (or other item). In other words, what are leaders in the organization saying and doing when they are being/not being respectful. (Hint: *If you can’t see it or hear it, it is probably not a behavior.*)

5. **If time permits:**

   a. Have each group present their responses to all participants.

   b. Use a central flip chart to record group answers.

   c. Vote on the most popular suggestions.

6. **If you do not have time for step 5:** Collect the responses. Follow up by sharing your written action plan for addressing their comments. Ask for their input on your plan. In addition, periodically ask “How am I doing?”
**One-on-One Exploration Activity** – Items from the Employee Domain (i.e., My work unit works well together; I enjoy working with my coworkers.) are often addressed using this activity.

1. **Determine in advance a specific item you need to discuss with others confidentially to understand it better.**

2. **Set 30-minute interviews with all (or key members) of your work unit.** In each session, tell the individual:
   a. You want his/her help in using survey results to make changes for the better.
   b. Your reason for focusing on a particular survey item.
   c. You are committed to using the information for positive change and to keeping individual opinions anonymous. When reporting or acting on the issues, you will be sharing only the collective information – assure them they will not be identified.

3. **Ask, listen actively, discuss, and record responses to these questions:**
   a. When our work unit doesn’t work well together (replace as needed with item), how do you know? What does it look like? Provide specific examples.
   b. If you think that our work unit doesn’t work well together (or other item), what do you think are the primary issues contributing to the problem?
   c. If our work unit did work well together, what would it look like? How would you know that our work unit was working well together? What behaviors would be different?
   d. For Questions 3a and 3c above, ask the group to explain what behavior the work unit is demonstrating. In other words, what are employees in the work unit saying and doing when they are/are not working well together? *(Hint: If you can’t see it or hear it, it probably is not a behavior.)*

4. **Follow up by sharing the combined feedback with the group,** being careful to protect anonymity. Involve them in creating the action plan that addresses both the item and the core issues identified.

5. **When the action plan is complete, share it with the group and ask for their input.** Periodically ask “How am I doing?”

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When Your Action Planning Readiness Score is Low

Your Action Planning Readiness (APR) score gives you feedback about how your behavior as a leader affects team openness, trust, candor and creativity. This feedback can help prepare you to lead your team’s discussions of the survey results, and to make changes that improve your working relationships with the team. The items included in this score are listed on your Action Planning Readiness results the summative APR score is also displayed on your work unit Snapshot results.

If your Action Planning Readiness score is low, review the individual items scores to determine which items were your lowest-performing, and then develop a strategy for improving team readiness. Demonstrating constructive and confident leadership is important. In general, you might consider the following strategies for improving your readiness and your team's readiness for open and candid discussions.

- Acknowledge any problems openly.
- Take ownership for any role you played in creating problems.
- Share with the group your personal plans to improve the work climate and team relationships.
- Ask for feedback and ideas.
- Involve employees in planning and decision-making.
- Ask a neutral party to act as a facilitator for your team’s discussions of the survey’s results.
- Engage your team in a formal team-building program.
- Hold brainstorming meetings to stimulate the team’s creativity.
- Acknowledge employees’ contributions and thank them for their commitment.
- Clarify employees’ goals and roles.
- Delegate more responsibility, and do so more frequently.

Understanding Issues and the Tips for specific manager items, such as those listed below, may lend additional insight and ideas.

- I am involved in decisions that affect my work.
- I respect the abilities of the person to whom I report.
- The person I report to cares about my job satisfaction.
- The person I report to encourages teamwork.
- The person I report to is a good communicator.
- The person I report to treats me with respect.

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# Employee Voice Survey Items – Tips for Individual Items

## Employee Domain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy working with my coworkers. (MI 38)</td>
<td>Coworker Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My work unit provided high-quality care and service. (MI 42)</td>
<td>Quality/Customer Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a climate of trust within my work unit. (MI 45)</td>
<td>Coworker Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My work unit works well together. (MI 51)</td>
<td>Co-Worker Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like the work I do. (MI 64)</td>
<td>Job-Person Match</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My job makes good use of my skills and abilities. (MI 72)</td>
<td>Job-Person Match</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The amount of job stress I feel is reasonable. (MI 74)</td>
<td>Work-Life Balance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees’ actions support this organization’s mission and values. (MI 94)</td>
<td>Organizational Alignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have sufficient time to provide the best care/service for our customers/clients/patients. (MI 640)</td>
<td>Quality/Customer Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like I belong in this organization. (MI 677)</td>
<td>Organizational Alignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees in my work unit help others to accomplish their work. (MI 2213)</td>
<td>Coworker Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees in my work unit help make every effort to deliver error-free care. (MI 2214)</td>
<td>Quality/Customer Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees in my work unit report adverse events. (MI 2216)</td>
<td>Quality/Customer Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees in my work unit help customers/clients/patients even when it’s not part of their job. (MI 2217)</td>
<td>Coworker Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees in my work unit follow proper procedures for patient care and customer service. (MI 2240)</td>
<td>Quality/Customer Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The environment at this organization makes employees in my work unit want to go above and beyond what’s expected of them. (MI 2254)</td>
<td>Employee Involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know the process for making suggestions to improve patient safety. (MI 2368)</td>
<td>Quality/Customer Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In my work unit, we discuss ways to prevent errors from happening again. (MI 2711)</td>
<td>Quality/Customer Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel comfortable raising concerns when I see something that may negatively affect patient care. (MI 3337)</td>
<td>Quality/Customer Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication between shifts is effective in my work unit. (MI 3861)</td>
<td>Organizational Alignment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### Employee Voice Survey Items – Tips for Individual Items

**Manager Domain**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The person I report to is a good communicator. (MI 32)</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The person I report to cares about my job satisfaction. (MI 37)</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The person I report to encourages teamwork. (MI 40)</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am involved in decisions that affect my work. (MI 46)</td>
<td>Employee Involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I respect the abilities of the person to whom I report. (MI 48)</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am satisfied with the recognition I receive for doing a good job.</td>
<td>Employee Involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(MI 52)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My ideas and suggestions are seriously considered. (MI 57)</td>
<td>Employee Involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The person I report to treats me with respect. (MI 58)</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When appropriate, I can act on my own without asking for approval.</td>
<td>Employee Involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(MI 61)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My job responsibilities are clear. (MI 73)</td>
<td>Employee Involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The person I report to gives me useful feedback. (MI 229)</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The person I report to values great customer service. (MI 1089)</td>
<td>Quality/Customer Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The person I report to cares about quality improvement. (MI 1090)</td>
<td>Quality/Customer Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The actions of the person I report to support this organization's</td>
<td>Organizational Alignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mission and values. (MI 1151)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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## Employee Voice Survey Items – Tips for Individual Items

### Organization Domain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My pay is fair compared to other healthcare employers in the area. (MI 5)</td>
<td>Fair Compensation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get the tools and resources I need to provide the best care/service for my customers/clients/patients. (MI 9)</td>
<td>Employee Respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This organization contributes to the community. (MI 14)</td>
<td>Citizenship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This organization provides career development opportunities. (MI 18)</td>
<td>Growth and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am satisfied with my benefits. (MI 22)</td>
<td>Fair Compensation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different work units work well together in this organization. (MI 23)</td>
<td>Organizational Alignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This organization treats employees with respect. (MI 34)</td>
<td>Employee Respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This organization cares about employee safety. (MI 76)</td>
<td>Employee Respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The quality of patient care has improved during the last 12 months. (MI 78)</td>
<td>Quality/Customer Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This organization cares about its customers. (MI 80)</td>
<td>Quality/Customer Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different levels of this organization communicate effectively with each other. (MI 95)</td>
<td>Organizational Alignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This organization values employees from different backgrounds. (MI 112)</td>
<td>Citizenship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This organization supports me in balancing my work life and personal life. (MI 113)</td>
<td>Work-Personal Life Balance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This organization cares about quality improvement. (MI 116)</td>
<td>Quality/Customer Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am satisfied with my job security. (MI 117)</td>
<td>Work-Life Balance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My work unit is adequately staffed. (MI 119)</td>
<td>Work-Life Balance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This organization is environmentally responsible. (MI 194)</td>
<td>Citizenship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have confidence in Senior Management's leadership. (MI 213)</td>
<td>Organizational Alignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information from this survey will be used to make improvements. (MI 279)</td>
<td>Employee Respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This organization provides high-quality care and service. (MI 401)</td>
<td>Quality/Customer Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior management’s actions support this organization’s mission and values. (MI 622)</td>
<td>Organizational Alignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physicians and staff work well together. (MI 822)</td>
<td>Employee Respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The physicians at this organization respect the clinical staff’s knowledge and abilities. (MI 825)</td>
<td>Quality/Customer Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patient safety is a priority in this organization. (MI 937)</td>
<td>Quality/Customer Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This organization makes every effort to deliver safe, error-free care. (MI 1054)</td>
<td>Quality/Customer Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get the training I need to do a good job. (MI 1086)</td>
<td>Quality/Customer Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patient safety problems are addressed as they occur in my work unit. (MI 1392)</td>
<td>Quality/Customer Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can report patient safety mistakes without fear of punishment. (MI 1393)</td>
<td>Quality/Customer Focus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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## Employee Voice Survey Items – Tips for Individual Items

### Engagement Indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall, I am a satisfied employee. (MI 77)</td>
<td>Engagement Indicator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would recommend this organization to family and friends who need care. (MI 85)</td>
<td>Engagement Indicator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would recommend this organization as a good place to work. (MI 93)</td>
<td>Engagement Indicator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am proud to tell people I work for this organization. (MI 111)</td>
<td>Engagement Indicator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would like to be working at this organization three years from now. (MI 271)</td>
<td>Engagement Indicator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would stay with this organization if offered a similar job elsewhere for slightly higher pay. (MI 811)</td>
<td>Engagement Indicator</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### A special note about Engagement Indicator items:

Engagement Indicators (EI) are unique items that measure the employee’s emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization. While the score is an indication of how engaged your employees are with the organization, the item is not easy to address directly. Often, the best way to act upon an EI item is to focus on low scoring items in the three primary Domains: Organization, Manager, and Employee. The items in these domains represent the key drivers of individual employee engagement –the workforce issues that influence employee engagement. Items in these domains are more directly actionable, and improving performance on them will improve performance of EI items as well. For this reason, ideas for improvement on EI items are often tied to other survey item topics.
Survey Item:  I enjoy working with my coworkers.

Survey Domain: Employee

Survey Theme: Coworker Relations

Understanding the Issue: The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items.

Employees like to have a positive reaction to the people they work with. Other than family members, coworkers represent a majority of social interaction during any given working day. Employees may or may not maintain close social relationships to co-workers but tend to form bonds which significantly affect their satisfaction with their work and workplace. When this item is unfavorable, it may be an indicator of many issues that need to be addressed among your employees to improve their working relationships.

Improvement Ideas:

1. Encourage your employees to discuss how the group’s working relationships can be improved and tensions eased. Beginning explorations of low scores on this item are best done using the One-on-One Exploration Activity (exercise) in Understanding Issues because the sensitivity of the topic may make it too difficult for employees to open up in a group meeting. If employees are not responsive in your individual sessions with them, suggest some common issues that can lead to unfavorable working relations. Possibilities could include something uncomfortable about an individual group member, lack of opportunity to do anything but onerous work tasks with coworkers, or negative interactions between two or more workers. Strive to find the root cause of the problem, since this will heavily influence what interventions can work.

2. Improve communications in your work unit. Poor communications are often the cause of conflict and disruption. Check with your manager or HR representative to see what communication skills courses are available for your work group.

3. Use an outside facilitator to provide a “team-building” experience that emphasizes communication and group problem-solving activities. If the reaction is positive, you may incorporate pieces of this into your regular staff meetings. For example, beginning each meeting with a fun activity that allows people to get to know each other better can have a positive effect.

4. Pair people in new ways for training and projects. Use what you learned in the Understanding Issues activity to allow people who have not gotten to know each other yet a chance to work on something together.

5. Do not underestimate the influence you have over your work group as its leader. Do you enjoy working with them? Could there be resentment over perceived unfair treatment you give to a particular employee or employees? If this possibility exists, involve an outside facilitator in helping you take a look at those questions.
6. Be alert to underlying causes for tensions between team members. Issues of harassment, unethical or illegal behavior, or romantic entanglements can disrupt coworker harmony. When in doubt about how to proceed, consult with your HR department.

(MI 38)
Survey Item: My work unit provides high-quality care and service.

Survey Domain: Employee

Survey Theme: Quality/Customer Focus

Understanding the Issue: The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items.

The members of a work unit are the ‘first to know’ the quality of service being provided by that work unit. Their experience with the number and nature of problems (exceptions) and how these issues are detected and addressed may not always be reflected in overall outcomes, but are still of extreme importance. Low scores on this item may indicate a high number of minor (random) issues or regular patterns of more significant issues. In either case, you need to identify the ‘root cause’ of the low quality issue – e.g., those originating outside the work unit, those originating within the work unit.

Often, when work units provide unfavorable responses on any quality item, they have the perception that the quality of care and service provided by other work units within the organization is lacking. However, this item focuses on how employees feel about their own work unit, which is a more difficult conversation than focusing on what others do, as they are now talking about their coworkers—or themselves

Improvement Ideas:

1. Gain a better understanding from the employees as to why they would respond to this item unfavorably. What specifically does the work unit do/not do that makes them feel that the unit does not provide high-quality care and service? Is their perception based on an isolated issue, or is it based on chronic issues that they have heard about from other employees and/or patients? More than likely, the cause of the employees’ unfavorable response is a coworker. Since this is a work unit issue, a manager may have to divide the work unit into smaller groups when doing the Envisioning a Solution Activity described in Understanding Issues. You could also use the One-On-One Exploration Activity (exercise) to interview each employee within the work unit individually.

2. Engage other departments in identifying solutions. Ask them to provide feedback on ways your work unit can improve its quality and customer care.

3. Look for previous solutions that were never implemented. Perhaps, in the past, issues regarding quality of care have been acknowledged and solutions identified but not implemented. Often when employees give unfavorable responses to this item, they are expressing their frustration with the lack of implementing high-quality care and service improvements.

4. Follow through on solutions your work unit agrees upon. Do not let solutions fail because they were not implemented. Periodic updates will help keep the team enthusiastic about the work unit’s commitment to quality.
5. Consider forming a standing team within your work unit that focuses on quality improvement and customer care. Ask them to meet monthly or quarterly to review the status of new processes being implemented and to make recommendations for needed changes. Keep the entire work unit informed on the team’s activities.

6. Recognize and reward employees who suggest changes that result in improved quality and customer care. Create an award that is meaningful and acknowledge them publicly.

7. Be a role model. Look for ways to improve quality and customer care. Be sure to implement your ideas.

(MI 42)
Survey Item: **There is a climate of trust within my work unit.**

Survey Domain: **Employee**

Survey Theme: **Coworker Relations**

**Understanding the Issue:** The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items.

The foundation for trust is building good relationships and understanding what motivates others. Trust is gained through keeping promises, being consistent in words and action, maintaining a high ethical standard, and being as honest as possible at all times.

**Improvement Ideas:**

1. Give employees an opportunity to learn more about each other. Employees need to understand what motivates coworkers; otherwise, they may become suspicious about why they act as they do. An afternoon of bowling or other social activity can be fun and provide an opportunity for getting to know each other.

2. Avoid the perception of favoritism toward any employee. When employees feel others have an unfair advantage, trust among employees deteriorates.

3. Trust others. Trust builds trust, so be a role model and encourage others to trust and be trustworthy.

4. Make sure your actions are consistent with your words. Inconsistencies cause distrust. Encourage employees to behave similarly.

5. Consider a team-building session for your employees that includes a discussion on trust. Talk to your manager and/or HR representative about possibly using an external facilitator.

6. Tell the truth and encourage others to do the same. If you have information you cannot share, explain the reason for withholding information. Acknowledge others when they are forthright. When employees see that they can speak openly without fear of retribution, they will communicate openly and build trust among each other.

7. Always adhere to your organization’s code of ethics and insist that others do the same.

8. Protect confidentiality where appropriate. Do not engage in “off the record” conversations except for rare circumstances. You do not want to encourage employees to run to you with “secret” information about others that could create distrust.

9. Admit mistakes and encourage others to do the same. No one trusts a person who tries to hide his/her errors.
10. Make commitments only if you can keep them. If you agree to do something, do it. Meet deadlines consistently. Acknowledge and reward the same behavior in others.

(MI 45)
Employee Domain

Survey Item: My work unit works well together.

Survey Domain: Employee

Survey Theme: Co-Worker Relations

Understanding the Issue: The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items. Make sure you know what is behind your low score before you begin acting.

Departments create their own unique social cultures over time based on shared assumptions of how to operate, solve problems and resolve conflicts together or independently. These assumptions are reflected in the day-to-day rituals, values and behaviors exhibited by leadership and employees. When scores around teamwork and employee interactions indicate concerns, managers need to explore both the underlying beliefs driving employee behaviors towards each other and the leader’s own attitude and contribution to team effectiveness. Healthy values and behaviors among employees contribute to trust, good teamwork, and to the overall quality of work delivered.

Improvement Ideas:

1. Invest quality time in understanding underlying issues, attitudes, and accepted behaviors in order to reset guidelines and expectations around what is acceptable.

2. Set measurable performance goals for your group, and clearly point out the connection between the goals and your facility’s overall mission and goals. Overarching purpose and goals help to lift the focus to a collective effort, rather than concerns with day-to-day disagreements. Have employees work together on developing lists of actions to accomplish group goals. Hold employees accountable and provide individual as well as group feedback. Celebrate successes together and discuss ways to improve.

3. Evaluate the influence you have on the dynamics of the relationships among your employees. Do you treat employees equally? Are you misled by just a few instances of poor/great performance in how you regard your employees? Do you keep appropriate confidences and refrain from talking about employees when they are not present? Do you create a competitive environment in which employees are eager to impress you? If you feel you may have a negative impact on your employees’ interactions, ask an HR specialist to get feedback from employees for you. Set goals for yourself in this area; ask your employees to evaluate your progress.

4. Interview all of your employees individually. Ask them to give you examples of why they think employees do not work well together. Also, encourage them to give specific input on what can be done to improve the relationships within the department. Summarize the feedback from all employees (removing identifying information), share this information in your staff meeting, and develop actionable goals to improve collaboration.

5. Have employees confidentially vote once a quarter for a teammate who contributed to building better relationships among his/her peers. Announce the name of the winner during your staff meeting.
6. Encourage respectful dialogue and the sharing of different opinions during meetings. Do not jump to consensus or follow a natural tendency to avoid disagreements.

7. Provide team training opportunities. These include negotiating skills, dialogue and conflict management, collaborative problem solving, meeting facilitation, and creative ways of using differences in opinions.

8. Learn best teamwork practices from other departments, share them with your employees, and use them in your work group.

9. Bring in an organizational behavior specialist to conduct team-building exercises or take a half-day off to perform fun, team-building activities outside work.

(MI 51)
Employee Domain

Survey Item:  I like the work I do.

Survey Domain: Employee

Survey Theme: Job-Person Match

Understanding the Issue: The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items.

Understanding how to increase employees’ satisfaction with their job role is extremely important because it impacts their motivation and performance. There are several reasons that your employees may not like the job they are doing. Employees may not feel their job is important and appreciated by others. Or they may feel that they do not have enough autonomy and involvement in decision making. They may not find their job meaningful, or they may feel that they have skills and talents that are not matched with their current job responsibilities. Sometimes employees may simply prefer a different type of work.

Improvement Ideas:

1. Talk to your employees individually to understand what part(s) of the job they like the most/least. Ask them to provide specific examples and explain why they have certain preferences. Also, ask them to give examples of what they wish they could do at work that they currently do not get to do. Use this information to modify their responsibilities, if appropriate.

2. Compile a list of responsibilities for each of your employees or review their job description. Talk to your employees about their skills, talents, and educational/work backgrounds. Explore possible ways to use more of the employees’ skills and talents at work—including areas outside their current job. For example, a data entry clerk who enjoys planning social events could organize the monthly staff meetings.

3. Consider a possible job rotation of your employees for some period of time. Not only will it allow them to know what their coworkers are doing, but you may also discover that some of your employees are a much better fit for a different position than they currently hold.

4. Consider collaborating with other departments on job rotations to help develop employees. The ideal job match is when employees’ jobs match their strengths and personal interests. Some employees may have to move to another area permanently to achieve the best match for them and for the organization.

5. Review the decisions and responsibilities of your role. Increase your employees’ involvement in decision making and task completion. Learn to delegate more.

6. Ask yourself and your employees if they have all the necessary tools (training) to do their jobs; make changes as needed.
7. Reinforce the importance of what your employees do in your frequent feedback to them. Make sure they understand how their work affects other people and processes within the organization.

8. Help employees who seem truly to be a “mismatch” with their work to explore other possibilities in your organization or outside it. Consider that in some cases, employees may just not like the type of work they are assigned to do. Helping them get reassigned within the organization is the best and most cost-effective solution, but in some cases employees may decide that they need to move to another organization.

(MI 64)
Survey Item: **My job makes good use of my skills and abilities.**

Survey Domain: **Employee**

Survey Theme: **Job-Person Match**

**Understanding the Issue:** The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items.

For employees to feel good about their job and to be committed to the organization, they need to feel that their work gives them an opportunity to use their skills and abilities. A low score for this item could mean that you are not using the human resources in your work unit effectively.

**Improvement Ideas:**

1. Use Press Ganey’s One-on-One Exploration Activity (exercise) in Understanding Issues to learn more about the match between your employees’ skills and their job responsibilities.

2. Make sure your employees are clear about their jobs and responsibilities. Give each employee his/her job description in writing, unless your organization has an objection to doing so. Be sure to check with your manager and/or HR representative. It may need to be updated first. If one does not exist, create it.

3. Interview your employees individually to find out what they enjoy/do not enjoy about their job. Ask them whether or not they feel challenged and involved and what can be done to improve their involvement. For employees that seem unchallenged, provide additional responsibilities that match their skills. Unless your organization has objections, these responsibilities can also come from other departments.

4. Consider reorganization and redesign within your department to better use employees’ skills. Evaluate, through observation and interview with employees, whether the reorganization could provide a better match between employees’ skills and their job responsibilities.

5. Increase employees’ involvement in decision making. Evaluate all the decisions employees are currently involved in and provide more opportunities for them to contribute.

6. Involve employees in tasks outside their job description if employees possess skills that are hard to use on the job. For example, if one of your employees enjoys organizing social events, put him/her in charge of departmental parties and volunteer activities.

7. Consider job rotation among your employees. You may find out that some of them are a much better fit for a different position within your group.

8. Offer educational opportunities for employees who would like to increase and/or change their job responsibilities but do not have the necessary educational background.
9. When hiring new employees, make a careful assessment of the match between their background, interests, skills, and job responsibilities. When applicable, try to determine the reason they left their previous place of employment.

10. Help employees who truly represent a “mismatch” with their job to find other opportunities within your organization.

11. Support the initiation of a weekly lunch group, led by one or several of the work group members. The purpose would be for them to talk about their work and how to use their skills and abilities more effectively. If possible, participate so that you can learn from the experience.

(MI 72)
Survey Item: **The amount of job stress I feel is reasonable.**

Survey Domain: **Employee**

Survey Theme: **Work-Life Balance**

**Understanding the Issue:** The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items.

In today’s workplace environments, many employees feel stressed due to workloads and conflicting priorities between work and family. It is important to remember that responses to this survey item are about “feelings.” The employees responding “own” that feeling. In other words, while management may think an employee’s stress should be manageable, or the workload isn’t too heavy, no one can argue with someone else’s feeling. Management can provide information to help the employee see the workplace environment differently and to help employees support each other. However, feelings, regardless of what they are, must be respected as being very real for that employee and then addressed appropriately.

Transparent communications, management’s willingness to listen empathetically, and supportive peers can ease employee stress levels significantly.

**Improvement Ideas:**

1. Strive for timely, straightforward communications (transparency) to and among employees, especially regarding those topics that impact work-life balance and job security. Provide talking points for managers, which may include FAQs (frequently asked questions) to ensure accuracy and consistency of communications.

2. Coach Managers on strategies for recognizing stress, and on how to initiate a conversation with employees in an appropriate manner and how to identify and address the sources of stress.

3. Hold focus groups in areas where stress scores are lowest to determine the root cause of stress and how employees can support each other.

4. Offer training for managers and employees in conflict resolution, Crucial Conversations™, and/or effective communications if conflict or tension among employees are root causes of stress.

5. Coach Managers in effective change management. Employees deal with changes in different ways; some accept it easily and others become extremely stressed. When change is communicated and executed effectively, stress is reduced.

6. Enlist EAP (Employee Assistance Program) vendors in providing programs and services to support stressed employees, and make sure employees are aware of this resource/support.
7. Provide support for downsized employees in a professional, compassionate way and communicate this information to remaining employees to help ease their stress. Remaining employees may need support in handling grief, guilt and fear—train managers how to hold these conversations.

8. Limit required overtime to a reasonable number of hours a month to prevent stress, burnout, and injuries. Since the average registered nurse age has been going up, RNs may be more prone to injuries and FMLA issues related to stress than among other employee groups.

9. Look at staffing models and explore ways of redesigning jobs and processes that would distribute work more evenly and reduce stress. Engage employees in creating solutions.

10. Offer meditation, biofeedback or other stress reduction classes either internally or through a third-party vendor.

11. Show your concern for employees' work-life balance and respect their need to devote time to family and other activities outside of work. Employees appreciate flexible scheduling when possible.

(MI 74)
Employee Domain

Survey Item: Employees’ actions support this organization’s mission and values.

Survey Domain: Employee

Survey Theme: Organizational Alignment

Understanding the Issue: The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items. Make sure you know what is behind your low score before you begin acting.

Employees want to feel that their work and actions overall as an employee supports the organization’s basic mission and values. A low score on this item may be an indicator that the mission and values message has either not reached your employees or has not been related to their work effectively. Other employee actions, including volunteer work, how they represent the organization to friends and family, and career growth have strong links to their internalization of the organization’s mission and values.

Improvement Ideas:

1. Use Press Ganey’s Envisioning a Solution Activity (exercise) understand what employees think about senior management’s support for the organization’s mission and values. The exercise can be found in Understanding Issues section.

2. Find out if employees are familiar with and understand the organization’s mission and values. If employees are unclear on the organization’s mission and values, respond to their questions and concerns, or invite someone from the senior team to help you fill in the gaps.

3. Make sure that your departmental goals are in line with the organization’s mission and values. Spend time with employees to improve their understanding of how their actions contribute to fulfilling the organization’s mission and values.

4. Evaluate whether or not you hold employees accountable for performance and behaviors that support the organization’s mission and values. If necessary, improve your approach to accountability.

5. Evaluate reward/reinforcement strategies you use with your employees. By rewarding great performance, you encourage the other employees. Be creative when thinking about rewards—anything from a simple “thank you” to letting employees off an hour earlier would be an appropriate way of recognizing them.

6. Spend 10-15 minutes during each staff meeting recognizing employees whose performance contributed to the organization’s mission and values.

7. Find out from your peers (or from a mentor) what they do to ensure that employees’ actions support the organization’s mission and values. If applicable, implement their suggestions in your work group.
MI640

Employee Domain

Survey Item: I have sufficient time to provide the best care/service for our customers/clients/patients.

Survey Domain: Employee

Survey Theme: Quality/Customer Focus

Understanding the Issue: The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items. Make sure you know what is behind your low score before you begin acting.

Studies have shown that employees’ perceptions of staffing adequacy are also linked to their perceptions of quality care and service. When designing work staffing and schedules, consider the types and competency levels of care providers needed. Keep in mind that one inexperienced nurse is not equal to one competent, experienced RN, so competency levels should be a factor in workload calculations. The work plan also needs to be flexible enough to meet changing conditions. In patient care areas, this includes providing adequate time to comfort and communicate with patients and their families. In nursing units, the available nursing staff, workloads, number of beds, availability of support services and supplies, process effectiveness (e.g., admission, discharge, etc.), patient technology, physical layout, and the education and experience levels of staff influence employees’ perceptions of having sufficient time to provide good care and service.

Improvement Ideas:

1. Lead a multi-disciplinary care team in a discussion of what contributes or takes away from employees’ ability to provide best care and service across all resource streams. Initiate improvement activities to resolve.

2. Factor time for communications into workload calculations. When there is little or no time to provide comfort and build relations with patients and their families, care providers feel they are not doing their jobs.

3. Ensure that equipment and supplies are in working order and adequate to support daily needs.

4. Areas where there is high turnover, or where filling vacancies takes longer, may require consistent, qualified supplementary staff.

5. Ensure that orientation and training activities for new employees are not overly burdensome to critical core team members, especially during high-volume times.

6. Establish productivity measures with thresholds at a novice level, and then introduce higher production measures a step at a time, based on demonstrated competency.

7. Provide stress management training to help care providers cope with serious patient conditions and chaotic environments. Fluctuations in patient volume and staffing levels create unpredictability in care providers’ workloads, leading to prolonged stress.
8. Evaluate "patient day" workload measures that are based on midnight censuses. The timing might underestimate true workloads. Admission, discharge and transfer rates may have wide swings in volume across different units.

9. Ensure that RNs and other care team members are not forced to work in specialty units or areas of care without having first received sufficient training and orientation. Recognize that coercion creates ill will, and the lack of skill places additional burdens on core staff already in place.

(MI 640)
Survey Item:  **I feel like I belong in this organization.**

Survey Domain: **Employee**

Survey Theme:  **Organizational Alignment**

**Understanding the Issue:** The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items.

In today’s hectic workplace environments, employees may feel disconnected from their fellow employees and the organization in general. They may detach and “just want to be left alone,” or they may exhibit combative, disruptive behavior. Their feelings of not belonging may stem from stress, poor communications, ineffective leadership, career disappointments, or other causes. Employees may also have difficulty aligning themselves with the organization’s vision, mission, and/or values. It is important to remember that the response to this survey item is about “feelings.” Employees responding to this question “own” these feelings. In other words, while you may think employees should just “get over it,” it’s not that simple from the employee’s perspective. Management can create an inclusive environment where everyone feels engaged and where employees support each other. However, feelings, regardless of what they are, must be respected as being very real for that employee and then addressed appropriately. Dismissing employees’ feelings simply adds to their sense of not belonging. Management’s willingness to listen empathetically, along with the support of peers, helps employees feel that they belong in the organization.

**Improvement Ideas:**

1. Facilitate focus groups with employees to assess their alignment with the organization’s vision/mission/values. Invite employees to share perceptions of how things have changed. Be alert to any differences between how long-term and newer employees feel, as long-term employees may have come into the organization when the culture was more “family-oriented.” Provide information on why changes have been made.

2. Solicit input from employees on behaviors that make them feel they belong. Model these behaviors consistently.

3. Increase employees’ involvement in decision-making.

4. Communicate openly and often. Often employees lack a sense of belonging when they feel they don’t know what’s going on or when they feel information is being withheld from them.

5. Incorporate rounding as part of your management routine. Spending time with employees, even a few minutes, increases their sense of value and belonging.

6. Have fun together with a lunch or other activities shared by your work team. Create ways for employees to interact on a social level and learn more about each other. Employees who can connect with their peers on a personal level are more likely to feel they belong.
7. Evaluate your recognition program/activities to be sure all deserving employees are recognized for their contributions. Make sure the same people are not recognized consistently, causing others to feel left out.

8. Invest in employees’ professional development. When employees feel the organization cares enough to invest in its employees, they feel more a part of that organization.

9. Be alert to your own biases. Managers are people, and it’s human nature to like some employees better than others. Look inward and strive to treat all employees equally. Respect and leverage the diversity of your work unit. Be intentional about making all employees feel they belong. Check in with your employees regularly and ask how you’re doing. Don’t wait until the next employee survey.

(MI 677)
Survey Item: Employees in my work unit help others to accomplish their work.

Survey Domain: Employee

Survey Theme: Coworker Relations

Understanding the Issue: The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items.

In high performing organizations (and individual work units) team members will routinely back their coworkers up by helping them out during busy periods, absences, and in situations where they have familiarity with a process or procedure. This practice may be informal or a more formal backup (or mentoring) process.

Several factors encourage an atmosphere where coworkers cooperate this way including: cross training of job duties, a strong client service attitude, and trust.

Improvement Ideas:

1. Establish a program of cross training work unit members on all of the other jobs in the unit. This way they will be more comfortable performing tasks other than their primary focus when necessary. Realize that employees may be hesitant to 'help out' solely because they do not understand the other jobs. This is particularly true with newer employees. Help them understand what they probably can and cannot help customers with.

2. Solicit input from employees on cases where overall work unit performance will be improved by backing up team members. Focus cross training activities on these situations.

3. Establish ‘back up’ strategies and assignments for key responsibilities.

4. Establish mentoring assignments pairing experienced team members with less experienced members.

5. Encourage work unit members to recognize team mates who ‘went the extra mile’ to assist someone when it wasn’t their job to do so. This can be a regular segment of work unit meetings or it can be a ‘thank you’ posted on a bulletin board.

6. Include this topic in quality and client service discussion and training. Encourage employees to become more comfortable ‘helping out’ by breaking down fears that such actions may be seen negatively as ‘making me look bad’, or ‘meddling in my job’.

7. Include cooperative behavior in your evaluation/Recognition program to be sure all deserving employees are recognized for their contributions. Make sure the same people are not recognized consistently, causing others to feel left out.

(MI 2213)
Employee Domain

Survey Item:  Employees in my work unit help make every effort to deliver error-free care.

Survey Domain: Employee

Survey Theme: Quality/Customer Focus

Understanding the Issue: The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items. Make sure you know what is behind your low score before you begin acting.

Improvement Ideas:

1. Lead a group discussion to envision the achievement of a patient care or service goal the employees deeply desire. Establish a shared vision of what error-free care looks like to engage all employees on the team. Describe the vision in writing and talk through barriers and challenges to achieving the goal. Be sure to agree on what each employee’s role is and what might be alternatives if performance roadblocks occur.

2. Develop concrete, attainable goals that are to be achieved through cooperation and synergy. Collective aspirations and goals compel employees to learn and do together.

3. Look for long-term rewards like the pride that comes from positive patient feedback, external agency awards, and recognition that will support sustained effort. Most financial incentives for motivating higher performance are short term and must be increased or repeated frequently. Ensure that performance incentives are not manipulative or based on fear or coercion.

4. Build personal mastery through coaching and developmental opportunities to build aspiration and inspiration for continued achievement. Allow employees to tell you exactly what personal mastery efforts will contribute to the evolution of the team.

5. Ensure that employees have working equipment and other resources to do the best job possible.

6. Create a forum for employees to provide constructive feedback on barriers to achieving error-free care, and then involve them in problem solving to remove barriers. Create a professional or care practice peer committee to monitor gaps in care delivery.

7. Provide performance coaching for employees who exhibit negative attitudes or unwillingness to do anything not detailed in their job descriptions. Establish high-level performance expectations to ensure quality and safety goals are met.

(MI 2214)
Survey Item: Employees in my work unit report adverse events.

Survey Domain: Employee

Survey Theme: Quality/Customer Focus

Understanding the Issue: The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items. Make sure you know what is behind your low score before you begin acting.

Trust is a key factor in employees' willingness to report adverse events. Environments in which there is strong collaboration and transparency among team members will foster the most supportive conditions for reporting negative or problematic observations. Team members must have trust that everyone will behave appropriately when problems arise or they will not subject themselves to employees' adverse reactions. To build comfort around the outcomes of any reporting, department leaders must also display consistent, mature behaviors.

Improvement Ideas:

1. Be sure that your work unit is grounded in organizational values, especially around integrity and team support. When employees feel they are part of something bigger than themselves, they believe that reporting adverse events is their responsibility. They are more likely to trust their leadership when they can identify with the organization's mission, values, behavioral norms and beliefs.

2. Manage gossip, conflict, or deviant behavior that would could threaten or weaken employees' motivation to point out co-workers' inappropriate actions or behaviors.

3. Educate staff on ways to raise concerns respectfully and appropriately, with the least amount of critical judgment, to create receptive listening.

4. Examine your own and others' reactions to the reporting of adverse events or concerns. Make sure you are not implicitly or explicitly discouraging open communication. Sometimes personal biases (filtering on who is doing the reporting) and defensiveness can send signals that you would rather not hear about what's going on.

5. Provide opportunities for employees to approach you one-on-one through rounding and private appointments to discuss observations. Make time during staff meetings for employees to ask questions to clarify policy or protocol.

6. Be sure there is a known policy regarding how and when to report adverse events. Demonstrate consistency in responding to all reports to avoid the appearance of inconsistencies in policy compliance or follow-through. Use the role of Peer Educator to ensure that policy knowledge is thoroughly disseminated and understood.

7. Be proactive in pointing out behaviors or conditions that could lead to an adverse event so that all care team members are alert to this potential. Identify high-risk, low-frequency
processes that may not always be on the radar and be prepared to discuss them during staff meetings at least quarterly.

8. Be visible and accessible to the unit; participate regularly on interdisciplinary rounds to build trusting relationships with staff.

(MI 2216)
Survey Item: Employees in my work unit help customers/clients/patients even when it’s not part of their job.

Survey Domain: Employee

Survey Theme: Coworker Relations

Understanding the Issue: The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items. Make sure you know what is behind your low score before you begin acting.

Improvement Ideas:

1. Instill the vision of working for a successful organization. Help employees see what is possible for them and their department when everyone works at a higher level of achievement and believes it will have a positive impact. The motivation to achieve more than what is required comes from connecting to an overarching purpose or value around teamwork, mastering competencies for themselves, and receiving recognition for themselves and/or the department.

2. Ensure that work unit-based goals and objectives align with the organization's mission and values. Help employees see how their voluntary extra efforts contribute to higher quality and improve the organization's reputation.

3. Lead a discussion about what happens when employees limit what they are willing to do. How does this affect care or service? What impact does this have on teamwork and trust? Brainstorm for ideas about what the highest care or level of service would look like. What would all employees need to do to achieve this vision? Raise accountability and ownership for achieving it.

4. Coach employees promptly when efforts flag or do not meet expectations, reminding them of the expectation to do their very best every day. Even though it takes a few minutes to coach an employee in the moment, this intervention will pay off in the long-term.

5. Ensure that rewards and recognition align with expectations for high levels of accountability and effort.

(MI 2217)
Survey Item: Employees in my work unit follow proper procedures for patient care and customer service.

Survey Domain: Employee

Survey Theme: Quality/Customer Focus

Understanding the Issue: The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items. Make sure you know what is behind your low score before you begin acting.

Improvement Ideas:

1. Lead a discussion on the intent, value and outcomes of providing consistent care and service. What does following proper procedures do for the patient? For the team as a whole? Explain how procedures were determined and what is/is not negotiable, and why.

2. Ensure that procedural changes are communicated in a timely and readily accessible manner to all employees. In multi-shift settings, assign the role of policy “communicator” to at least one employee on each shift.

3. Define the role of a team member in following proper procedures and how adherence to standards and practices is considered part of expected performance. Be sure to prioritize what is most important.

4. Seek out areas of confusion and work to clarify expectations and outcomes. Be clear about if/when it is appropriate to question or deviate from a standard or procedure.

5. Coach and counsel employees promptly when an unauthorized deviation from standards is observed. Catching an error soon after it has been made will support better understanding and behavioral change.

6. Create and communicate metrics for specific procedures. Share with all employees the results of surveys and reports that identify performance levels.

7. Discuss the problems that arise when employees act independently, outside the organization’s policies and procedures. Explain why certain policies and procedures were put in place and how they reduce errors and risk of harm to patients.

8. Provide support and encouragement following an employee learning event to ensure employees are motivated to apply their new skills and knowledge.
Survey Item: The environment at this organization makes employees in my work unit want to go above and beyond what’s expected of them.

Survey Domain: Employee

Survey Theme: Employee Involvement

Understanding the Issue: The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items. Make sure you know what is behind your low score before you begin acting.

Improvement Ideas:

1. Instill the vision of working for a successful organization. Help employees see what is possible for them and their department when everyone works at a higher level of achievement and believes it will have a positive impact. The motivation to achieve more than what is required comes from connecting to a higher-level purpose, mastering a competency, and having the freedom to perform without undue oversight.

2. Ensure that work unit-based goals and objectives align with the organization’s mission and values. Help employees see how their voluntary extra efforts contribute to higher quality and improve the organization’s reputation.

3. Communicate clearly and consistently about performance outcomes and share results of surveys and other measurements widely. Discuss what is merely expected as compared to what is exceptional effort.

4. Recognize and appreciate exceptional performance outcomes and point out the discretionary effort it took to go above and beyond. Be sure that rewards align with efforts.

5. Lead a group discussion about why employees came to work at your organization, what inspires them most, and how they derive satisfaction from doing their work well. Ask: How can connecting to your own purpose for working in healthcare support you in challenging times? How can colleagues support and inspire each other in pursuit of a common mission?

6. Share stories of employee's actions that modeled remarkable caring, compassion, and competency which touched the lives of others.

(MI 2254)
Employee Domain

Survey Item: I know the process for making suggestions to improve patient safety.

Survey Domain: Employee

Survey Theme: Quality/Customer Focus

Understanding the Issue: The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items. Make sure you know what is behind your low score before you begin acting.

Improvement Ideas:

1. Check for employees' understanding, and their ability to apply that understanding, when using sign-off sheets to communicate process or protocol changes. Studies have shown that using sign-off sheets for communicating new or changed standards or processes is not effective. Typically 50% or fewer employees actually read and understand the changes. Transferring knowledge to others in busy environments is a common problem, requiring more than a memo or bulletin board posting.

2. Create, or use an existing, unit-based "learning collaborative" made up of care team members across disciplines to identify the most effective ways of disseminating policy and standards to ensure distribution and understanding.

3. Incorporate opportunities for making open-ended suggestions on quality and safety improvements into required annual education models.

4. Use rounding, huddles, and staff meeting discussions as a forum for employees to describe ways of submitting ideas to improve patient safety.

5. Foster an environment of inquiry, in which ideas are welcome and it is safe to question what goes on. Employees should feel free to question the effectiveness of practices affecting patient care and engage in problem-solving together to continuously improve outcomes.

6. Consider developing a "peer educator" role, a person with the responsibility to channel policies, standards, and other information to colleagues in the work unit and across shifts.

7. Centralize documentation describing safety and quality-related policies and processes so there can be no question about where to look for information. Creating electronic files in place of, or as back-up to, unit-based policy books may be useful for Intranet searching. Be sure these sources are kept current as changes occur.

Return
Employee Domain

Survey Item: In my work unit, we discuss ways to prevent errors from happening again.

Survey Domain: Employee

Survey Theme: Quality/Customer Focus

Understanding the Issue: The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items. Make sure you know what is behind your low score before you begin acting.

Open, transparent, and respectful environments establish the groundwork for effective dialogue about actions or behaviors that may cause, or prevent, errors. The willingness on the part of employees and managers to discuss process weaknesses, ask for help, and accept questions and input non-defensively is critical to having open conversations about what could, or did, happen.

Improvement Ideas:

1. Analyze the root cause of an undesirable outcome by focusing on the behavior or actions of the employee, or employees, involved, not their personality or attributes. Placing blame destroys open dialogue.

2. Educate employees on the appropriate and respectful ways of raising concerns or presenting observations.

3. Create a unit-based quality improvement "learning collaborative" that focuses on the most common errors. Empower collaborative members to identify and implement strategies for prevention.

4. Document successful outcomes and/or cases of error prevention and recognize those involved. Share best practice across disciplines.

5. Initiate a unit-based journal club, a group of individuals who meet regularly to critically evaluate recent, relevant scientific journal articles. Post ideas from articles and service presentations to bulletin boards. Reach out to peers in other organizations to look for innovative strategies for preventing errors.

6. Start a department quality blog to solicit team thoughts and ideas.

7. Model effective communication strategies to be used when discussing problem outcomes with the care team. Your approach should align with what you expect of the team.

8. Provide time and a safe environment in which care team members can practice role-playing how they would identify, discuss, and resolve errors with other team members, patient care advocates, or patient relations specialists.

(MI 2711)
Survey Item: I feel comfortable raising concerns when I see something that may negatively affect patient care.

Survey Domain: Employee

Survey Theme: Quality/Customer Focus

Understanding the Issue: The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items. Make sure you know what is behind your low score before you begin acting.

Trust is a key factor in employees' willingness to report adverse events. Environments in which there is strong collaboration and transparency among team members will foster the most supportive conditions for reporting negative or problematic observations. Team members must have trust that everyone will behave appropriately when problems arise or they will not subject themselves to employees' adverse reactions. To build comfort around the outcomes of any reporting, department leaders must also display consistent, mature behaviors.

Improvement Ideas:

1. Orient new staff to the expectation that everyone is responsible for patient care. Reinforce this message repeatedly with all employees. Use the organization's overall mission and value statements as the basis for establishing a unit-based mission/purpose statement about safe, high-quality care and service.

2. Investigate and resolve conflicts between employees promptly. Keep performance expectations focused on the unit's shared purpose rather than on individual needs.

3. Research all patient concerns brought to your attention and then follow-up with the employees who bring concerns to your attention and explain the resolutions. Be a role model for the accountability you wish to see among your employees.

4. Be visible and available for employees to speak privately with you if they are concerned about open discussion of a patient care situation.

5. Seek to understand others' perspectives on what represents patient care concerns. Be open to listening and responding with encouragement. Be aware of your own bias and reactions, especially when repeated complaints or concerns are made. Employees will stop bringing concerns to your attention if they believe you are too busy to listen or will pass judgment before investigating.

6. Educate staff on ways to raise concerns respectfully and appropriately, with the least amount of critical judgment, to create receptive listening.
7. Foster an environment of inquiry, in which ideas are welcome and it is safe to question what goes on. Employees should feel free to question the effectiveness of practices affecting patient care and engage in problem-solving together to continuously improve outcomes.

(MI 3337)
Employee Domain

Survey Item: Communication between shifts is effective in my work unit.

Survey Domain: Employee

Survey Theme: Organizational Alignment

Understanding the Issue: The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items. Make sure you know what is behind your low score before you begin acting.

‘Hand-over communication’ most often relates to the process of passing patient-specific information from one care provider to another. During a period of care, a patient can potentially be treated by any number of health care practitioners and specialists in multiple settings, across three shifts, introducing a safety risk at each interval. These gaps in communication can cause serious breakdowns in the continuity of care.

Improvement Ideas:

1. Involve everyone providing care across shifts and receiving care in the communication of treatment, therapies, and medications. Ensure thorough and consistent education for family caregivers on common language and terms, processes, and documentation.

2. Streamline and standardize change-of-shift communications so all involved will know what to expect, regardless of area or shift. Consider the use of SBAR (Situation, Background, Assessment, Recommendation or Request) or a similar communication technique.

3. Incorporate training on effective hand-over communications into the education curricula for all care providers.

4. Allow enough time for end of shift reporting (20-30 minutes) and overlapping coverage between shifts. Ensure face-to-face communication whenever possible. Consider moving the shift report to the bedside, following a recorded or electronic review, to increase accountability and involve the patient in this important exchange.

5. Consider implementing a read-back process, where the receiver of patient information on the next shift writes down the report and reads it back to the sending care provider to confirm accuracy.

6. Explore new technologies like electronic patient sign-out, which has been shown to reduce preventable, adverse event rates.

7. Limit the exchange of information to that which is necessary to provide safe care.

8. Make patients aware of their prescribed medications, doses, the required time between medications; advise appropriate family members of the information whenever possible.
9. Inform patients and family members of the next steps in the care plan, so they can communicate this information to the care provider on the next shift.

10. Provide information to the patient and appropriate family members about the patient’s medical conditions and treatment/care plan in a way that is understandable, avoiding jargon or language specific to clinicians.

11. Provide role-playing opportunities for nurses to practice speaking in patient-centered language when having hand-over conversations about patients in their presence.

12. Bring various care providers together periodically from across shifts to discuss what is/is not working with communications and documentation.

13. Conduct collaborative, multi-disciplinary rounds with an emphasis on hand-over communications.

14. Conduct “safety huddles” at the beginning of each shift, at a central location, involving both off-going and in-coming staff.

(MI 3861)
Manager Domain

Survey Item: The person I report to is a good communicator.

Survey Domain: Manager

Survey Theme: Leadership

Understanding the Issue: The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items.

All leaders should aspire to cultivate effective communication skills. Communication is a critical component of almost everything that happens in an organization. Managers sometimes take for granted that the information they convey to their teams will be received the way they intended. The reality is that several factors affect the message including: method, style, timing, and choice of words. Efforts to improve your communication skills will pay big dividends over time.

Improvement Ideas:

1. Ask your employees specific questions about your communication style, like: “When we talk, do I communicate clearly?” or “What specific ideas do you have about how I could communicate more effectively?”

2. Work with your employees to develop communication standards for the team.
   a. Determine the information they need from you, including how it is provided.
   b. Determine the information you need from them, including how it is provided.
   c. Ask the team to establish an agreement for handling misunderstandings that result from poor communications. If not addressed promptly, poor communications can lead to team conflict. An example of an agreement might be: When in doubt about a communication, do not make assumptions. Ask the other person to clarify their message.

3. Use electronic communication appropriately. Make sure that you are not over-relying on electronic communication. Face-to-face communication is still the most effective method for connecting with your staff. Avoid communicating emotions or expressing different opinions electronically. For these discussions, talking face-to-face is the best option, followed by a phone conversation.

4. Determine how individuals on your team like to communicate. Some people prefer voice mail, others emails, others memos. Within practical reason, customize your style to your employees.

5. Use active listening techniques to demonstrate to your team that you are listening and considering their input and suggestions. Behaviors that demonstrate active listening include making eye contact, head-nodding, and saying “Let me see if I understand you,” and paraphrase their comments.

6. Look for opportunities to recognize and reinforce the desired behaviors that support the communication agreements the team establishes.
7. Ask for coaching from your manager or a mentor. Consider working with an internal or external coach who can give you personalized suggestions for improvement. Ask your manager or HR representative if this option is available to you.

8. Consider taking a course in communications. Ask your manager or HR representative if any courses are available internally. If not, consider attending an external public workshop.

9. Adopt the attitude that improving communication skills is an ongoing initiative. Check the library for books and articles that address these skills.

(MI 32)
Manager Domain

Survey Item:  The person I report to cares about my job satisfaction.

Survey Domain: Manager

Survey Theme: Leadership

Understanding the Issue: The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items.

A low score on this item indicates that your employees perceive (it is their perception) that their managers do not consider their job satisfaction sufficiently or do not consider it a priority. They may feel that they are being ‘taken for granted’, or considered like a piece of equipment. Employees rarely express this perception during their performance evaluations so it may come as a surprise to their managers.

Improvement Ideas:

1. Remember that employees score this item based on their perception of you. Their perceptions are formed on what they observe you doing and saying. If your score needs improvement, do not defend your actions or try to explain how much you really do care. Instead, listen to understand where their perception is coming from. Ask what they have observed, as behaviors can be seen and heard. You do not have to agree with what your employees say; you do need to listen and learn from it.

2. Using Understanding Issues set up a meeting with your employees to understand how you can improve on this item. Ask for specific behaviors your employees would like to see you demonstrate that would show you care about their job satisfaction. What does caring look like from their perspective? Ask for specific examples of your not demonstrating you care so you can consider changing these behaviors.

3. Remember that sometimes employees do not agree with the message, regardless of how well you deliver it. At other times, how you deliver a message may cause concern. Make sure you understand whether you need to work on the message or the way it is delivered—or both.

4. In your meeting, be prepared to hear some things that are difficult to handle. It will help to remind yourself in advance—and to remind them when introducing your topic—that “I promise to try my best to be non-defensive and just listen. Please bring it to my attention if I start to explain myself.” Remember that even though you DO care about your employees, and you INTEND to show that, the IMPACT on them may be very different.

5. When you have gathered enough information from your employees, start by thanking them for sharing the information. Acknowledge that you know it is uncomfortable for them to say what they would like you to change.

6. If you are ready at the close of the meeting, commit to changing the behaviors that will demonstrate to your employees that you care about their job satisfaction. You may not be
able to agree to everything they suggest. If you cannot agree to a specific request, thank them for their input and state your reason for being unable to do what they ask.

7. As an alternative to #6, many managers find it works better to take some time to process what you've heard after the meeting, before you respond to it. This allows you a chance to organize your thoughts and to get beyond the strong emotional reaction that can occur with this sort of feedback.

8. In the days and weeks following your action plan around this item, periodically ask employees, “How am I doing?”

(MI 37)
**MI40**

**Manager Domain**

Survey Item: **The person I report to encourages teamwork.**

Survey Domain: **Manager**

Survey Theme: **Leadership**

**Understanding the Issue:** The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items.

Teamwork occurs when the leader and the members of the team work in concert to create positive, productive working relationships. As the leader, your role is to create the environment for teamwork, model it, and coach team members to work together for the benefit of the team and the organization. Remember that teamwork is much bigger than just having everyone like each other. Teamwork is a combination of respect, synergy, interdependence, and mutual support.

Managers may tend to value ‘individual contributors’ in order to get things accomplished, but the heroics of single individuals may actually hold the team back from developing a teamwork atmosphere which encourages best practices to be shares and replicated.

**Improvement Ideas:**

1. **Identify effective teamwork behaviors for your area:**
   a. Develop with your team the Target Behaviors that will lead to better teamwork.
   b. Assess the current environment and determine which Target Behaviors are currently being used and those that are not. With the team’s involvement, create an action plan for improvement.
   c. Determine how to introduce and reinforce the Target Behaviors that are not part of the current environment.
   d. Self-assess your own behavior as the leader. How are you modeling teamwork and creating the environment for teamwork to thrive? What could you do differently?

2. **Look for opportunities to rotate and share various job responsibilities between different team members.** Doing so will create an appreciation and respect for others’ contributions, develop your team’s skills, and build flexibility within the team.

3. **Review the organizational structure and how it might impact teamwork.** Make suggestions for repositioning or title changes, as appropriate, to senior management.

4. **When conducting meetings, create an environment that is positive, informative, and fun.**

5. **Consider scheduling team-building sessions with a trained facilitator away from the typical work setting.**

6. **Once agreements are reached on how to improve teamwork, look for opportunities to recognize and reinforce the desired behaviors.** Since employees do what they are rewarded for doing, be sure to reward teamwork individually and as a team.
7. Consider team goals, rather than having only individual goals. Team goals encourage employees to work together toward common objectives.

8. Make sure your team is trained in team skills: conflict management, problem solving, and group decision making. This training may be available in your organization; check with your manager or HR representative.

9. Make sure the team has time to get to know each other. A group luncheon, bowling party, or other social activities help build teamwork.

10. At least quarterly, ask at the end of your staff meetings, “How are we doing as a team? What can we do to build teamwork?”

(MI 40)
Survey Item:  I am involved in decisions that affect my work.

Survey Domain:  Manager

Survey Theme:  Employee Involvement

Understanding the Issue:  The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items.

Employee involvement can be a challenging undertaking. You may want to discuss your strategy first with your manager or an HR representative who is a specialist in organizational behavior. Also, be aware that greater employee involvement typically takes more time and you have to be willing to invest it. However, when done effectively, engaging employees in decisions leads to greater engagement.

Improvement Ideas:

1. Create a list of the kind of decisions you would like to make in managing your department or work unit. Label each one either: 1) No input from team members is appropriate, 2) Some input or recommendations are desired, or 3) Appropriate for the team to make the decision. Follow through accordingly.

2. Increase the number of decisions that fall into categories two and three shown above to improve employee involvement in decision making. Engage the team in labeling which approach is best for each kind of decision.

3. Establish a block of time at regular meetings that allows for employee input and discussion of decisions that will affect them.

4. Pay more attention in staff meetings by asking less-talkative members to give their ideas or opinions on important matters before a final decision is made.

5. Use a flip chart routinely for recording ideas offered. Review the list periodically so that all ideas are considered and discussed at some point.

6. Attend a training workshop on employee involvement—one that addresses how to achieve a management style that emphasizes team engagement and decision making.

7. Take the team through a “Creative Problem Solving” workshop together, one that teaches members techniques for creative thinking and group problem solving.

8. Make it clear to all that you expect their full participation, especially those employees who have a tendency to be “non-participants” in offering ideas to solve team problems. Make participation in team problem solving a performance requirement. Give employees feedback periodically.
9. If progress comes slowly in getting team members to become more involved in group
decision making, perhaps a fresh perspective and more objectivity will help kick-start the
group. Consider asking an outside expert to facilitate staff meetings for a period of time.

10. Ask team members to identify any barriers to increasing employee involvement in decision
making. If you suspect that your management style is part of the reason, ask a third party
expert to facilitate the discussion and have that person review the reasons with you. This
approach might identify the need for a separate action plan to help you change your
leadership style by creating the right team climate for increased involvement.

11. Meet periodically with employees individually and ask them to evaluate their own
involvement in decisions made that affect their work.

(MI 46)

Return
Manager Domain

Survey Item:  

I respect the abilities of the person to whom I report.

Survey Domain: Manager

Survey Theme: Leadership

Understanding the Issue: The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items.

Two ways to positively impact this item are to 1) improve your actual job-related skills and 2) to increase employee awareness of your efforts to become more competent in areas that matter to them. Practicing continuous improvement, especially on 'emerging' technology and practices (staying ahead of the curve), sends a very positive message that you care about your contribution to your profession, to the organization, and to your employees. In the book The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, author Dr. Stephen Covey describes the habit ‘Sharpen the Saw’ referring to the practice of continuous improvement of your skills rather than relying on ‘brute force’ using dull tools. Employees respect job-related skills in their managers, but are inspired by managers who practice continuous improvement.

Improvement Ideas:

1. Help employees solve problems or answer questions they bring to you rather than doing it yourself. Support them in using what they know already to build an answer. This approach builds their respect for your knowledge and helps them to feel competent as well.

2. Advertise your willingness to be a sounding board for employees who run into difficulties they cannot resolve themselves; and request that they do the same for you.

3. Keep your skills and knowledge current for your job and your employees’ specific job areas by reading articles, books, research publications, and blogs. Share what you are learning with your employees, get their reactions, and show your willingness to continue learning from the interaction with them.

4. Continue to expand your understanding of and skills in new (emerging) technology and practices which will be important to your job area in the near future. Your younger employees and other recent entrants to the industry will often have familiarity with ‘cutting edge’ technology. Be prepared for their suggestions and expectations.

5. Schedule time for yourself to observe, work with, and get feedback from others (e.g., your supervisor, a colleague, a mentor), who are highly skilled in a specific job area.

6. Request or accept assignments that will broaden or increase your knowledge, either within your work unit or outside. Depending on your field of work, these assignments may involve more difficult tasks, a greater variety of tasks, new categories of tasks, or areas of greater specialization. Arrange to receive coaching and feedback on your performance on the assignments from both “outside” and “inside” experts.
7. Use committees, task forces, and department meetings as opportunities to enhance your understanding of how departments function in your organization. Your understanding on 'how to get things done' properly within your organization will be greatly appreciated by your employees.

8. Attend courses and seminars that will expand your knowledge. Courses may be available within your organization and at local universities or adult education seminars.

9. Join professional organizations related to your work, and take advantage of their social, networking, and learning opportunities to expand your knowledge. Most national professional organizations (e.g. Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI)) provide continuous learning programs along with contributions from thought leaders in their industry. Share the key points of what you learn and materials with relevant employees.

10. Increase your knowledge about your organization through marketing literature, articles, your annual report, and your strategic plan.

11. Become familiar with the history of your organization by reading and talking to others. Learn when it was founded, what changes have been made in the organizational structure, and what lessons have been learned. This information will help you understand the organization’s culture and how it was created. It may also help you in leading others as you make decisions and create strategies.

12. Offer to make a presentation on a project you have successfully completed. The project might be one you worked on inside your organization or one that you worked on for a professional organization or others external to your work group.

13. Network with peers in similar organizations or field of work; exchange ideas, discuss issues, and learn about the latest advancements.

(MI 48)
MI52

Manager Domain

Survey Item:  

*I am satisfied with the recognition I receive for doing a good job.*

Survey Domain:  

Manager

Survey Theme:  

**Employee Involvement**

**Understanding the Issue:** The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items.

Employees who are recognized often are more likely to be committed to the organization. Your role as a manager is to ensure that all your employees are appropriately recognized in a way that is meaningful for them. Recent studies on generational differences point out that recognition of accomplishments may be even more of a performance driver for younger members of the workforce, e.g., generation Y workers.

Recognition must be sincere and be related to significant aspects of work assignments. Insincere recognition (just going through the steps) or recognition for trivial aspects (it was just their turn) will be seen through and will evoke negative reactions from your workers.

**Improvement Ideas:**

1. Meet with each employee quarterly to give them quality feedback regarding their contributions to the team and the organization. Thirty minutes can go a long way toward making them feel recognized and heard.

2. Take each of your direct reports to lunch at least once each year to thank them for their contributions to the team and the organization.

3. Ask team members, at the beginning of a monthly staff meeting, to recognize others on the team who did something especially helpful for them during the past month. In the beginning, employees may be reluctant to acknowledge others publicly if they are not accustomed to doing so. Be persistent and they will become comfortable with it.

4. Write thank-you notes or emails to individuals when they do something particularly well or something that is important to the work group’s success. If you send an email, copy other team members on the email as a way to recognize them with their peers. For your direct reports (or others you prepare performance reviews on) keep a copy of this recognition communication and refer to it during the employee’s next performance review. This communicates to the individual that their accomplishments are definitely factored into performance evaluations.

5. Select an employee each quarter or each year to recognize for their specific contributions to giving outstanding customer service. Include background information (details) on at least one of situations involved to help reinforce why outstanding service matters and to provide best practice examples to all members of the team.
6. Recognize an employee each month or quarter for an outstanding idea they had to improve the quality of the organization’s care/services/products. Include details (quantify) on the positive impact to the organization to help reinforce why creative thinking matters and to provide best practice examples to all members of the team.

7. Send an email to your work group’s major “internal customers” asking them to reply with any deserved recognition earned by one of your team members. Encourage these internal customers to include two or three ‘bullet points’ outlining how the individual’s actions positively impacted their operation. Use this ‘success story’ information in your recognition of the individual as described above.

8. Arrange for each of your direct reports to have lunch once each year with your senior manager as a way of structuring recognition from “the top” of the organization.

9. Create a “recognition bulletin board” on which anyone can post a message of praise or thanks to another team member for their contribution or help.

10. Conduct an annual, half day “recognition/team-building workshop” in which team members compile a list of contributions made by each team member.

11. Ask the editor of your company’s newsletter to create a section that appears in each issue to recognize deserving employees for specific ideas or accomplishments to improve quality, customer service, or extraordinary teamwork. Make good use of it, once created.

12. Throw a surprise pizza or ice cream party for the team after a major push to accomplish a group goal; use the occasion to recognize people for their individual roles in accomplishing a goal.

13. Keep your ‘recognition thinking’ fresh. Utilize resources available from your HR organization. Learn and try new ideas gleaned from published posts and articles. Make it part of your routine to invest a few hours each week searching the internet for relevant materials and reviewing blogs focused on employee recognition.

(MI 52)
Survey Item:  My ideas and suggestions are seriously considered.

Survey Domain: Manager

Survey Theme: Employee Involvement

Understanding the Issue: The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items.

For employees to be committed to their organization and their work, they need to feel that their ideas are seriously considered. Otherwise, employees will eventually stop offering suggestions and their performance will suffer. A low score on this item signals an opportunity for managers to engage employees by soliciting their input into decisions that impact their work.

Improvement Ideas:

1. Ask yourself what you might be doing to score low on this item. All managers have limits on the extent to which they are able to use the suggestions of employees, but outstanding managers insure that their employees feel their suggestions are seriously considered. Could you be doing more to get and use employee ideas?

2. Examine the range of decisions that must be made within your work unit. On some of them, what is decided is not as important as how people feel. For example, if you need to decide what day(s) are taken off for the spring holiday, you will gain respect with your employee group if you put that decision into their hands.

3. Solicit feedback from your employees often. Before doing so, be clear with them on how their input will be used. Are you going to act on their recommendations or are you just looking for input and then make the decision yourself? Employees often feel their input is discarded when a different action is taken than one they recommend. Explain the reason for your decision.

4. When involving your group, it helps to distinguish between a goal of getting “input” and a goal of getting a “decision.” Explain your reason; (for example, “We want to get the opinions of the nursing staff about moving this unit to a different floor, as part of the larger decision which involves other employees and patient feedback.”)

5. Hold work unit meetings to consider upcoming decisions that must be made. For issues where you can appropriately ask for employee input, encourage employees to discuss how these issues impact their work and the functioning of the work unit. Try to reach preliminary decisions based upon these discussions. Be sure to thank your employees for their valuable input.

6. Recognize and reward employees’ contributions. Make a note of successful changes you have made as result of employee input and be sure that these positive changes are attributed to employee suggestions. Recognition can be done formally or informally. Be alert for opportunities to recognize someone’s part in a success.
7. Make a suggestion box available for employees and collect their input continuously. Explain that you are willing to accept anonymous suggestions if employees are not comfortable identifying themselves. Anonymous suggestions regarding difficult issues are often more honest and constructive. Post suggestions and responses on the bulletin board or use other methods of communication. Explain the reason each suggestion was accepted or rejected. Attempt to adopt as many suggestions as possible.

8. Consider an annual work unit award for “idea of the year.” This process often commences with the distribution of a ballot that contains five or six successful ideas that have led to substantial improvements in work unit performance. After the votes are tabulated, hold an awards ceremony to recognize the employee who contributed the “idea of the year.” Treat the entire work unit to refreshments and award the recipient a prize (e.g., gift certificate to a popular local establishment).

(MI 57)
Manager Domain

Survey Item: The person I report to treats me with respect.

Survey Domain: Manager

Survey Theme: Leadership

Understanding the Issue: The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items.

A low score on this item could mean you need to develop respect for all employees. Or it could mean that your intentions are good but your behaviors do not reflect what you are feeling. For this item, the changes and solutions must come directly from your employees—it is their perception that is important. Discussion on this item can easily generate a defensive reaction—do not let yourself fall into this trap.

Improvement Ideas:

1. Use the Stop-Start-Continue Activity (exercise) in Understanding Issues to solicit specific examples from your employees regarding why they feel you do not treat them with respect. Their examples should be observable behaviors — something they can see you do, or something you fail to do. If you have questions about employees’ examples, ask “What does the behavior you describe look like?” Consider asking your HR representative or an external facilitator to conduct this session so employees will feel free to speak.

2. Ask for feedback and coaching from your manager or peers. Create a plan of action that will improve your employees’ perception of your “showing respect.” Become a role model for showing respect to your employees.

3. Avoid the appearance of disrespect. Respond politely, maintain professionalism at all times, avoid telling jokes or making offhanded remarks that could offend others, and apologize promptly if you make careless comments.

4. Spend quality time with each individual employee. Do not pry into their personal lives, but show interest in their well-being beyond the work they produce. Employees are more likely to feel you respect them if you take the time to get to know them.

5. Ask your employees regularly what you can do to show more respect. Take appropriate actions to change your behavior. Recognize employees who give you straightforward feedback—it takes courage for them to speak up.

6. Ask trusted people in your personal life whether they feel you treat them with respect. If there are times when you do not, ask for specific behaviors you do or do not show. Their feedback may help you identify habits you are not aware of that make others not feel respected.

7. Compare your score on this item with the score for the item, “This organization treats employees with respect.” If your group’s score is below the organizational average on both,
look at how your communication and behaviors differ from what others and the organization as a whole are doing. Set goals for change as indicated.

8. Be honest with yourself. If you have problems showing respect to particular individuals or to certain groups of people, talk to a qualified person outside the organization (e.g., professional coach, external consultant, minister, counselor) for ideas on changing your perspective and then change your behavior so that you show respect to all employees.

(MI 58)

Return
Manager Domain

Survey Item:  
When appropriate, I can act on my own without asking for approval.

Survey Domain: Manager

Survey Theme: Employee Involvement

Understanding the Issue: The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items.

When this item scores unfavorably, it may indicate that employees do not feel empowered to perform their job responsibilities, and/or that there is a lack of trust between work unit management and employees. Employees may also be confused about what is expected of them.

Once employees become proficient with their responsibilities and take ownership for seeing them completed in a quality-focused/customer-focused manner (accountability), they are ready to ‘grow’ in responsibility. They value their manager’s guidance as how to respond to non-standard situations, especially guidance on situations when it is appropriate for them to ‘make the call’. Not all employees are comfortable handling ‘gray areas’ so it is best to tailor this guidance for each employee’s personality and career goals.

Improvement Ideas:

1. Clearly communicate job accountabilities to all employees. Sometimes when employees are not sure of what they are supposed to do, they do not feel confident to work unsupervised.

2. Provide constructive feedback to employees by reviewing their work frequently. Employees who properly complete their tasks should be given the opportunity to work with little supervision.

3. For employees who need additional supervision, provide constructive feedback to help them improve their performance. Set clear expectations of how they can meet and exceed the needs and expectations of the work unit. What will their performance look like when it is good enough for them to work independently?

4. Recognize and reward individuals who can work autonomously with minimum supervision.

5. Encourage employees to “ask questions” rather than seek approval. Even when employees require assistance or confirmation that their approach is correct, be sure to respond in a supportive manner. Avoid being directive unless you have no alternative and if you do, be sure to follow up with the employee and help them understand why you needed to direct rather than empower in that case.

6. Ask yourself if you have a need to be in control. Subconsciously, you may be afraid to “let go” and empower your employees. If so, remind yourself that your role is to develop employees and make them less dependent on you. If necessary, ask your manager or HR representative to coach you for improvement in this area.
7. Delegate more responsibilities to others. Appropriate delegation can be extremely beneficial in reducing your responsibilities while developing your employees’ skills.

8. Encourage appropriate risk taking. When mistakes are made, ask employees what they learned from the experience and ask how that learning can be applied to future situations. Avoid overreacting; confirm your confidence in the employee.

9. Share insights on how to evaluate the ‘gray areas’ which employees will need to deal with as they become more empowered. You should not assume that they automatically develop this skill – it has to be learned and you can make the transition to an empowered employee easier with your coaching.

(MI 61)
Manager Domain

Survey Item: **My job responsibilities are clear.**

Survey Domain: **Manager**

Survey Theme: **Employee Involvement**

**Understanding the Issue:** The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items.

Employees need to understand the responsibilities of their department and specifically, their job responsibilities. Vague or out-of-date job responsibilities may lead to incorrect assumptions about the employee’s priorities, performance standards, or department workflow. In addition to negatively impacting department performance, vague or out-of-date job responsibilities may lead to employee’s feeling that evaluations of their performance are arbitrary.

Organization change, technology change, and process changes may all contribute to changes in job responsibilities and periods of rapid change often present little time to rethink and formally revise job responsibilities. It is often not until an employee brings the subject up, or a negative event occurs that time is allocated to improving job responsibilities. This reflects negatively on the manager involved.

**Improvement Ideas:**

1. Make sure each job position has clear, documented job responsibilities. Review them annually and when technology and/or process changes are introduced, to be sure they stay current. Leave room for flexibility as some responsibilities cannot be anticipated. Ask your manager and/or HR representative to give you some guidance or share examples from other areas.

2. Schedule one-on-one meetings with employees to review their job responsibilities and job performance. You should meet with each employee at least annually to formally review their performance. If possible, schedule a more informal meeting at the mid-point of the annual review. If you are unsure whether your organization has a performance review policy, talk to your manager and/or HR representative to be sure you are in compliance.

3. Give feedback regularly, formally and informally. If you provide ongoing feedback, your employees should have no surprises during the annual performance review.

4. Arrange a work unit meeting to discuss the impact of organizational changes on job roles. When work environments are in a state of change, employees are often asked to perform tasks that have not been part of their daily routine. The change may create confusion, or even resentment, for some employees. Reviewing expectations as they evolve can help clarify responsibilities and reduce anxiety.

5. Communicate newly adopted organizational strategies, directions, and policies that may alter the work your work unit performs. Employees need to understand how these changes affect their work.
6. Ask employees how you can make the job responsibilities clearer. Sometimes employees can get confused because of an uninformative new hire orientation, promotions to new positions with new tasks without the proper training, or poorly written job descriptions. Ask for help in determining the source of the confusion.

7. Make yourself available to meet with employees and to answer their questions. If employees feel you are easy to talk to, they are more likely to ask questions about their job responsibilities.

(MI 73)

Return
Survey Item: The person I report to gives me useful feedback.

Survey Domain: Manager

Survey Theme: Leadership

Understanding the Issue: The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items.

Effective and regular feedback is crucial to an employee’s development. Giving effective feedback to employees is one of the most critical responsibilities a manager performs. Feedback should be timely, accurate, and constructive. The manner in which you give feedback can mean the difference between a defensive, argumentative employee and one who appreciates and learns from it.

Improvement Ideas:

1. Set clear expectations for each employee’s performance by following these steps.
   a. Ensure that employees understand the specific functions and responsibilities of their job. If written job descriptions are available, you may be able to obtain this information from them. Review each employee’s job description with them and answer any questions they may have. If written job descriptions are not available, do your part to get them created. Be sure they are created or approved by your HR or legal department to make sure they are defensible.
   b. Develop specific standards of performance for each job. Review it with your employees and get their agreement.
   c. Establish performance measurements for each employee or position and get agreement with each employee.
   d. Observe employees’ performance on a regular basis and compare it to the established performance measurements.
   e. Provide specific feedback where the standards of performance are and are not being met. Provide feedback immediately in a constructive, positive way.

2. Meet regularly with employees to discuss performance feedback. Some employees may need frequent discussions; good/excellent performers may need less frequent follow-up meetings. When meeting with employees organize your thoughts and make yourself reminder notes so that you cover the key points.

3. Supplement your observations with performance feedback from customers. Written feedback is best, but if you receive verbal feedback, documents the customers’ comments in writing so that you can share the information with your employees as accurately as possible.

4. Be discreet when providing performance feedback to avoid embarrassment to the employees. Do not give feedback in front of others or where others can hear the conversation. Acknowledging accomplishments in front of others is fine, but keep performance feedback private.
5. Give feedback routinely and informally. Feedback should come from both the regular formal performance management process as well as informal day-to-day feedback. Do not overly rely on one method of feedback.

6. Keep an electronic and/or paper file on each employee. Place notes of informal and formal feedback there, and use it to prepare your annual performance appraisal.

7. Ask employees to assess your feedback style on a regular basis. Make sure that you are providing feedback effectively and in a non-threatening manner. Ask your employees how you can improve the process to make it more meaningful for them. Feedback should be accurate, timely, and communicated in the most effective way possible.

8. A good test of your ongoing feedback approach is to ask employees if there are any surprises on their annual performance appraisal. If you’ve done a good job along the way, there will be no surprises.

9. Coach your employees on how to receive feedback. Employees often become defensive or argumentative, which can result in their receiving less feedback over time. Help your employees appreciate the value of feedback in their development. Encourage them to seek feedback voluntarily from you and others.

(MI 229)
Survey Item: The person I report to values great customer service.

Survey Domain: Manager

Survey Theme: Quality/Customer Focus

**Understanding the Issue:** The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items. Make sure you know what is behind your low score before you begin acting.

Most employees are motivated by achievement and will pay attention to what is stated as important by management. Employees also compare how performance is reinforced and rewarded according to standards and goals, and whether or not management actions are in line with their words.

**Improvement Ideas:**

1. Convey that quality is a priority by routinely including quality, safety, and customer service in communications with your staff. As a leader, the tasks and responsibilities that you pay attention to the most will be construed by employees as your priorities, and potentially the organization’s priorities as well.

2. Explore what employees may see in your behavior that might lead them to believe your work focus, coaching, and ways of recognizing staff may not be congruent with what they hear or see from leaders above you or colleagues in other departments regarding quality and service.

3. Examine your personal commitment to customer service. It is easy to lose focus if you are extremely busy and have competing priorities. Commit to continuous improvement and ask employees regularly how you are doing.

4. Invite someone from Human Resources to facilitate a meeting with your work unit. Have the facilitator solicit feedback on how you can improve on valuing customer service. Sometimes it is easier for employees to talk with an objective facilitator than directly to their manager.

5. Catch employees in the act of providing good service and acknowledge them on the spot.

6. Examine the impact on customer service anytime a work process is changed. By routinely keeping the customer at the forefront, employees will understand that you value customer service.

(MI 1089)
Survey Item: The person I report to cares about quality improvement.

Survey Domain: Manager

Survey Theme: Quality/Customer Focus

Understanding the Issue: The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items.

When employees rate this item unfavorably, they feel the manager is not focusing on improving quality and/or providing customer care. Their perceptions may be based on department performance data or on the manager’s actions related to specific ‘decision points’, e.g., handling of a problem, participation in quality programs, encouragement of employees’ quality improvement ideas.

Improvement Ideas:

1. Do not allow yourself to become defensive. If you over-explain or make excuses, your employees will not give you the information you need to improve. By listening to learn, you will get valuable information to help you become a better manager.

2. Gain a better understanding from the employees as to why employees would respond to this item in the Manager Domain unfavorably. You may want to get another person to facilitate this session so employees will feel more comfortable speaking out. They are likely to be a little uncomfortable giving you direct feedback.

3. One of the best methods to use to help gain a better understanding of how to address issues regarding the manager and the quality of care is an exercise called the Stop/Start/Continue Activity. This activity is explained in detail in Understanding Issues. It will help you gain a better understanding of what employees think the manager needs to stop doing, start doing, and continue doing in order to see an increase in favorable responses to this item. It will also assist you in identifying improvement initiatives that should be implemented.

4. Look for previous solutions that were never implemented. Perhaps in the past, issues regarding quality of care have been acknowledged and solutions identified, but you did not follow through on implementation. Often when employees give unfavorable responses to this item, they are expressing their frustration with the manager’s lack of attention to implementing high-quality care and service improvements.

5. Follow through on solutions you and your group agree upon. Do not let solutions fail because they were not implemented or because you did not follow up. Periodic updates will help keep the team enthusiastic about your commitment to quality.

6. Consider forming a standing team within your work group that focuses on quality improvement and customer care. Ask them to meet monthly or quarterly to review the status of new processes being implemented and to make recommendations for needed changes. Keep the entire work group informed on the team’s activities.
7. Recognize and reward employees who suggest changes that result in improved quality and customer care. Create an award that is meaningful and acknowledge them publicly.

8. Commit to improvement. Continuously look for ways to improve quality and customer care. Be sure to implement your ideas. Focus on looking ahead rather than on any unfavorable comments you may have heard during the feedback sessions.

(MI 1090)
Manager Domain

Survey Item: The actions of the person I report to support this organization’s mission and values.

Survey Domain: Manager

Survey Theme: Organizational Alignment

Understanding the Issue: The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items.

Employees may give this item a low rating for two possible reasons. One reason may be that they do not have enough clarity about your actions and/or the organization’s mission and values. Another reason may be that employees see a discrepancy between your actions and the organization’s mission and values.

Improvement Ideas:

1. Use the Stop-Start-Continue Activity in Understanding Issues to get clarity on what employees meant when they gave a low score on this item.

2. Make sure that you and your employees have a clear understanding of the organization’s mission and values.

3. Evaluate the contact you have with your employees. Do they understand the ways in which you support the organization’s mission and values? Do you give them an opportunity to ask questions? Based on the answers to these questions, make adjustments to your interactions and time spent with employees.

4. Ask your employees to explain the link between your departmental goals/actions and your organization’s mission and values. If they are unable to explain a clear linkage, explain it to your employees and encourage questions. You may also consider inviting someone from senior management to emphasize the importance of what your department does, and how it fulfills the organization’s mission and values.

5. During staff meetings, update employees on where your group stands in accomplishing its goals. Help employees understand how your department’s goals and actions contribute to the organization’s mission and values.

6. Ask yourself whether you “walk the talk.” Employees should see a direct correlation between what you say about the organization’s mission/values and your actions. Take steps to eliminate any gaps.

7. Collaborate with your peers by sharing ideas for ensuring that employees see the connection between departmental actions and the organization’s mission and values. Consider implementing some of the best ideas as strategies for your department.
8. Develop the habit of stating the purpose of meetings, assignments, and new responsibilities in ways that connect them to the organization's mission and values. State connections in a way that is easy to understand; be focused and concise.

(MI 1151)

Return
**Survey Item:** My pay is fair compared to other healthcare employers in the area.

**Survey Domain:** Organization

**Survey Theme:** Fair Compensation

**Understanding the Issue:** The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items.

Often, the manager or work unit can do little about the actual pay employees receive. At times, attempting to improve perceptions of pay at the work unit level is a matter of communication: why the pay is what it is, how it compares to other comparable organizations, and financial barriers the organization is facing. While this may be true, sometimes there are actual pay issues that can and should be addressed by the organization.

**Improvement Ideas:**

1. Invite your HR representative to meet with your work unit to share appropriate information on pay. Often the perception of others’ pay is based on an assumption that “the grass is greener” somewhere else. Human Resources can focus on your group’s pay as compared to national, regional, and local standards. They can also discuss current financial circumstances the organization faces that may dictate why the pay is what it is at the present time.

2. Ask your HR representative to share total compensation information with your employees. Employees may be focusing only on pay, but the total compensation they receive includes other benefits as well. Employees may feel more fairly compensated if they understand the whole package.

3. If appropriate, you and your HR representative can help employees understand the part that salary costs play in the total financial picture of your organization. This discussion has to happen in combination with listening to employee issues, but it can be very helpful for employees to better understand the monetary demands on the organization. For example, healthcare organization expenses often include stewardship and care-for-the-poor missions in addition to the obvious expenses, including patient care.

4. Be sensitive to work-life balance issues and encourage employees to discuss ways to improve how they feel about this issue. Sometimes perceptions of fair pay are directly related to employees’ feelings about work-life balance issues like scheduling, flex-time options, family leave time, etc.

5. Maintain adequate staffing. Employees may have greater appreciation for their pay when the organization maintains appropriate levels of staffing and keeps workloads manageable. If salaried employees consistently have to work longer hours, they may feel they are underpaid. Hourly employees may appreciate overtime occasionally but will burn out if they work long hours consistently.
6. Minimize job stress. Employees may have greater appreciation for their pay when they feel their job stress is manageable. The higher the perceived stress, the more they believe they should be paid.

7. Express appreciation and provide meaningful work. Employees are likely to feel more positive about their pay when their work is valued and they feel they are contributing to the organization’s success.

8. Hold employees accountable consistently for job performance. If employees feel that everyone is not held to the same standards, they may feel they are doing more and being paid inadequately in comparison to poor performers.

9. Provide adequate training and professional development opportunities. Employees value marketable skills and are likely to feel better about their pay when they feel they have opportunities to improve their skills.

10. Never discuss an employee’s salary with another employee. Pay information should be held in confidence.

11. Adhere to your organization’s guidelines for pay/salary review. If you are not sure about the frequency or process for pay/salary reviews, ask your manager or HR representative for guidance. Use good judgment when making pay exceptions and consider the impact on others.

(MI 5)
MI9

Organization Domain

Survey Item: I get the tools and resources I need to provide the best care/service for my customers/clients/patients.

Survey Domain: Organization

Survey Theme: Employee Respect

Understanding the Issue: The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items. Make sure you know what is behind your low score before you begin acting.

Having the right tools in good working order and resources to do the best work is a significant contributor to effective operations and employee/staff engagement. Making sure employees/staff have tools and resources demonstrates the organization’s concern for high achievement, both in patient outcomes and employee/staff engagement. This item may cover a broad range of needs and concerns: work space, availability of state-of-the-art equipment, break rooms, or having private areas where documentation and discussions regarding patients may be held conducted confidentially.

Improvement Ideas:

1. Ask employees to help you develop a list of all the tools, resources and/or process improvements they believe would help them do a better job. Take enough time to understand why they believe it is a need. If the discussion is in a group, encourage interaction and an exchange of ideas. Often, such a discussion will lead to other employees sharing ideas that may change the perceived needs. Or the discussion may only confirm the need. Either way, you will have a better understanding of employees’ needs.

2. Identify what you can do that does not involve cost, and act on it. While the cost of some tools and resources may prevent your being able to provide employees with everything they need, satisfying some needs will not require additional expense. Often, what is perceived by the employees to be a lack of tools and resources is actually due to the organization’s poor planning, coordination, or communication.

3. Use facilitation tools like the fishbone or force field analysis techniques to dig into details and uncover why these needs exist. Build a good business case to present to upper management on how better tools and resources identified would improve care, service, safety, and employee working conditions.

4. Keep employees informed about items that are expensive or that may not be available in the near future. Let them know what you are doing to request tools and resources and when they can be expected. If you cannot provide them, be sincere and forthright. Most employees are reasonable. They also know the organization does not have unlimited funds, but they want to know that their needs are legitimately understood and considered in light of all other needs.

5. Be an advocate for your team’s needs by inviting others who control resources to attend a staff meeting to learn firsthand about why certain tools and resources are needed.
6. Ask your team to help you develop alternative ways to meet their needs when you cannot acquire what they want.

7. Ask the organization for alternative ways to meet the resource needs of your team.

(MI 9)
Organization Domain

Survey Item: This organization contributes to the community.

Survey Domain: Organization

Survey Theme: Citizenship

Understanding the Issue: The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items.

Employees’ perception of the organization’s contributions to the community can be affected by many issues, including the mission and values of the organization and the extent of involvement in community-based activities like volunteering and charitable giving. A low score on this item may indicate limited community involvement or limited communication of activities to employees (lack of awareness).

Improvement Ideas:

1. Ask the appropriate resource for accurate information on your organization’s community contributions, and share it with employees. Often, organizations fail to communicate the extent of their assistance to the community to employees. If a summative report is not available, ask that it be created and offer to assist.

2. Hold a session with employees to determine how they interpreted the item. Use Understanding Issues as a guide for your meeting. Review the organization’s mission and values to see if employees feel they are community-focused. Determine if employees feel participation in community-based activities should be increased.

3. Brainstorm ways your work unit or the organization can add value to the community. Invite a senior leader to participate in your discussion who may be able to contribute information from a strategic perspective. Consider the core business of your organization and how you could provide benefit to the community from it. For example, in a hospital, the behavioral health unit might have a table at the health fair on “Stress and What to Do About It.”

4. Have your work group assess its community involvement. If employees feel they are not actively involved in community-based activities, develop a list of activities for which the group would like to volunteer. Provide various opportunities to appeal to the diverse interests of the group. Employees should be given an opportunity to participate in activities that benefit different populations: children, elderly, underprivileged, homeless. Provide different ways for employees to support the community: donating money, direct interaction with the community, and environmentally-focused activities. They may also want to collect, sort, and deliver donated items or volunteer to help at athletic events supporting particular causes. By developing teams for each activity, people can select which team best suits their interests.

5. Make and display a calendar to show all the community activities in which the work group participates throughout the year. The calendar will encourage everyone to participate by showing them the options available, and it shows the group’s ongoing community support.
6. Contact your HR representative for the organization’s guidelines on volunteerism. Many organizations allow employees to volunteer a certain number of hours a month during work hours.

7. Ask for a “Volunteer Coordinator” in your work group. Encourage and promote their efforts. Allow leave time and/or resources to support initiatives, if it makes sense to do so.

8. Model community involvement by participating in community-based activities.

(MI 14)
Organization Domain

Survey Item:  This organization provides career development opportunities.

Survey Domain: Organization

Survey Theme: Growth and Development

Understanding the Issue: The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items. Make sure you know what is behind your low score before you begin acting.

One of the secrets to high performance and satisfaction at work is the human need to direct our own lives, learn and create new things, and move forward in the world. Many employees see career development as a way to make a higher income, get promotions, and become a more valuable employee to the organization. However, career development also fulfills employees’ needs for professional growth and personal fulfillment. These needs may be reflected differently according to the worker’s age and experience. A low score on this item could mean that employees do not have enough information about the organization’s efforts, or it could mean the organization’s career development program needs improvement.

Improvement Ideas:

1. Help create a learning culture at your organization and within your work unit. Leadership behavior can serve to support or hinder employees’ perceptions of growth opportunities. Studies have shown that supportive management behaviors include good listening skills; timely, genuine performance feedback; developing employees’ self-confidence through their participation in decision making; constructive conflict resolution; and promotion of group cohesion and teamwork.

2. Include career planning in performance discussions with employees at least once a year. This discussion should include a review of strengths, limitations, learning needs, and a realistic plan for the future. Encourage employees looking for advancement to document their accomplishments and create specific steps for career progression that include learning in place and a commitment to stretch goals like project team participation and advanced education.

3. Dedicate a specific period of time for employee teams to research a particular work process or problem and make recommendations for change. The autonomy and learning involved with this approach build personal mastery and provide a sense of career accomplishment.

4. Support the transfer of knowledge from experienced employees to new hires and junior staff by providing opportunities for collegial interaction. This can be through personal mentoring by matching older, respected employees with newer ones, or through casual discussions over lunch or by allocating extra time at staff meetings.

5. Invite Human Resources to provide a learning session focusing on career development opportunities throughout the organization, training opportunities, job posting processes, and other topics relevant to career growth within the organization.
6. Provide cross-training opportunities for employees within your own work area. Career development does not always mean a promotion. When a promotion is not possible, learning additional skills helps employees feel they are more valuable to the organization and more likely to be considered for pay increases and/or future promotions.

7. Reach agreements with other departments to provide reciprocal cross-training opportunities. Rotating valuable employees through other departments will make them more valuable to the organization, and it will provide career development opportunities.

8. Explore your organization’s possibilities for supporting external training and development opportunities for your employees. Use what you learned from talking to employees about low scores on this item. Many times, continuing education opportunities are made available when a manager and employee(s) together “make the case” to senior management by providing specific information about development needs.

9. Create flexible work options to allow employees to take classes or outside training, even if your organization cannot fund them. Again, this is most effective when the employee identifies a specific educational opportunity in which they would like to participate.

(MI 18)
MI22

Organization Domain

Survey Item: I am satisfied with my benefits.

Survey Domain: Organization

Survey Theme: Fair Compensation

Understanding the Issue: The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items.

This item is a broad topic, so the better you can understand what employees had in mind when responding to this item, the more effective your improvement efforts will be. Two potential directions for exploration are 1) identifying which existing benefits are perceived as inadequate and 2) determining other benefits employees desire that are not presently offered. Specific managers and work units likely cannot do much to change the actual benefits package, but improvements may be achieved through employee feedback and ongoing communication regarding benefit options.

Improvement Ideas:

1. Hold a session with employees to understand the nature of dissatisfaction with the benefits. Do employees perceive that any particular benefits are inadequate? Or do they lack understanding about the benefits offered? What additional benefits would they like to have?

2. Invite Human Resources to meet with employees to fully explain their benefit packages and share information regarding each type of benefit. Additionally, HR may be able to compare benefits with other organizations in the area. They may also be able to share the organization’s plan for rolling out additional benefits in the future.

3. Ask your HR representative to share total compensation information with your employees. For this survey item, employees may be focusing only on benefits, but the total compensation they receive includes pay as well. Employees may feel more fairly compensated if they understand the whole package.

4. Consider developing a suggestion to be passed along to Human Resources or Senior Management suggesting a specific benefit that might have a major impact on enhancing employee perceptions (e.g., additional dental coverage, eye glass coverage).

5. Create a “Benefits List” that includes benefits currently offered by your organization and any other benefits that may be under consideration. Ask your employees to add any of their own, and then rank them in terms of desirability. Tell them you will share these with senior leaders, and do so.

(MI 22)
Survey Item: Different work units work well together in this organization.

Survey Domain: Organization

Survey Theme: Organizational Alignment

Understanding the Issue: The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items. Make sure you know what is behind your low score before you begin acting.

As healthcare organizations move towards flattened, or matrix structures, the need to work effectively across functional lines increases. This survey item addresses a broad topic, and many of the issues may be beyond your ability to resolve without engaging other departments. Since employees often look to their leaders to role model the behaviors that should be used when working across functional lines, it is useful to evaluate how well you have resolved problems or conflicts across boundaries and have worked with peers to make improvements in a collegial manner. The better you can understand what employees had in mind when responding to this item, the more effective your improvement efforts will be. In responding to this survey item, were employees thinking about specific departments? Or do employees think that alignment throughout the organization needs improvement?

Improvement Ideas:

1. Look for ways to level the playing field across disciplines by holding open-floor meetings that permit and encourage respectful, unfiltered communication and feedback between functions.

2. Set up lunches or brief, casual get-togethers with peers on a regular basis to build effective personal relationships that support open dialogue.

3. Partner with peer managers to do joint rounding of each other’s departments to demonstrate interest in team challenges and outcomes that impact all employees.

4. Make a list of common responsibilities, tasks, and goals shared between departments. Present the list to your employees and encourage them to discuss what is working well and also areas that need improvement. Encourage your employees to suggest possible solutions to improve interactions. Involve HR or other parts of your organization to help mediate the relationships between departments and to suggest implementing the new solutions.

5. Clarify for your employees the roles and responsibilities related to the interactions between departments.

6. Suggest establishing interdepartmental, measurable goals that promote relationships. If they are agreeable, invite representatives from the departments that work together to develop the goals and a list of actions for achieving these goals.

7. Schedule periodic meetings with your employees to evaluate the relationships between departments. Invite each department to send a representative(s) from their group to
participate in the decisions. Encourage employees to develop specific solutions to existing issues.

8. Arrange for employees to spend time in departments that they typically work with. The exposure will improve their understanding of challenges faced by those in other work groups. Ask employees to describe their experiences in another department to their coworkers. Encourage employees to provide ideas on how to improve collaboration between departments.

(MI 23)
### MI29

**Organization Domain**

Survey Item:  **This organization conducts business in an ethical manner.**

Survey Domain: **Organization**

Survey Theme: **Citizenship**

**Understanding the Issue:** The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items.

Low scores on this item call for an examination of how well you and your organization are adhering to legal requirements (compliance), social conscience (fair treatment of customers and employees), and the organization’s business operating policies (business strategy). Unethical practices cover a broad spectrum, including: how charges are passed/reported to internal organization units, how charges are passed/reported to external organizations, and how client and employee transactions are conducted. National attitudes towards business ethics have received much attention over the past 20 years. Improper or irregular operations can result in serious business penalties as well as penalties for the managers and employees who perform or condone them. Employee sentiment that indicates the presence of unethical conduct must be understood and dealt with.

**Improvement Ideas:**

1. **Review your manager readiness results.** If your results are quite low, or if there is a low degree of perceived trust, you may consider inviting a neutral “moderator” to hold a discussion session with your employees (see below). Even if your scores are relatively high, you may ask your employees if they would feel more comfortable holding the session without you. Employees may feel some reluctance to discuss their views about this item with you. If you leave the room, you can request volunteers to lead and record the views that are expressed during the session.

2. **Conduct a discussion session with your employees.** If your group is large, create smaller groups with up to five people. Within the smaller groups, ask employees to write down the answers to three questions:
   
   a. What, if any, actions does this organization take in conducting its business that you consider to be unethical?
   
   b. What would it look like if this organization did conduct business ethically?
   
   c. What can be changed to address your concerns about the manner in which business is conducted? What specific actions can be taken?

   Encourage employees to provide specific behavioral examples when answering questions. Allow time for employees from each group to present their answers. Summarize the information you get from the group.

3. **Consider contacting Human Resources or senior management, suggesting specific changes that might have a major impact on enhancing employee perceptions.**
4. Invite a member of senior management to meet with your work group and address some of the specific concerns that were identified in #2 above.

5. Repeat the exercise in #2. However, rather than focusing on the organization, focus on your specific work group. Allow employees the opportunity to explore how ethically they feel work is being conducted in their own work group. What are specific actions that represent ethical and unethical behavior in their everyday work life? Draft an action plan that identifies three specific activities employees feel could be improved upon within their own work group. This exercise will allow them to feel a sense of ownership and control over the manner in which they conduct business.

(MI 29)

Return
Organization Domain

Survey Item:  This organization treats employees with respect.

Survey Domain: Organization

Survey Theme: Employee Respect

Understanding the Issue: The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items.

While this item is greatly affected by the senior leadership, personnel policies, and culture of the organization, each manager also plays an important role in shaping the degree to which employees feel respected by the organization. Each manager is an ambassador for the organization and is also an advocate for employees. This dual advocacy role requires a certain balancing act.

Improvement Ideas:

1. Embrace your role as the communications link between senior management and your direct reports, and take the responsibility seriously. Make sharing “information from above” part of your regular staff meetings. Allow time for questions and discussion. Well-informed employees feel respected.

2. Periodically ask your employees what they would like more information about. Go to your senior manager, or the appropriate department or person, with these questions and promptly get back to your employees with answers.

3. Invite senior management or others with important information to share, to visit your staff meetings. Ask them to speak to employees on matters that impact how employees feel about the organization.

4. Avoid blaming or belittling senior management regarding information that may not be well received by employees. Often the difference between how employees perceive a decision or new policy is determined by the explanation, or the “face” put on it by each manager. Of course, some decisions or changes in policy are easier to explain or defend than others. Some managers make the mistake of forming a “coalition” with employees in order to preserve their relationships within their work unit. A much better alternative is to serve as a constructive bridge between employees and the organization, being an initiator of events that create dialogue and understanding.

5. Arrange for one or more employee focus groups to be conducted, either by yourself or a neutral third party, to learn what specific concerns employees have regarding how the organization shows, or fails to show, respect for employees. Ask them to describe what “respect” looks like. What would people be saying and doing if they were showing respect? What is working well now? What needs improvement now in order for the employees to feel respected? Ask employees for their ideas regarding changes the organization could make that would increase their sense of being respected by the organization. Then ask employees to identify the top 3-5 ideas and make these suggestions to senior management. Make sure your recommendations are specific.
6. Review the organization’s diversity policy and guidelines with your employees, or ask your HR representative to do so. Ask employees how the organization is doing in showing respect to all employees, regardless of their age, race, or sexual orientation. Reinforce the organization’s zero tolerance for disrespect of any employee.

7. Avoid the appearance of disrespect. Respond politely, maintain professionalism at all times, avoid telling jokes or making offhanded remarks that could offend others, and apologize promptly if you make careless comments.

8. Spend quality time with each individual employee. Do not pry into their personal lives, but show interest in their well-being beyond the work they produce. Caring and showing respect are often closely linked in employees’ minds.

9. Be alert for anyone who shows disrespect for others. If the offending person works for you, coach them on the expected proper behavior. Be intolerant of anyone in your work unit showing disrespect. Model the behavior you expect from others.

(MI 34)

Return
Survey Item: This organization cares about employee safety.

Survey Domain: Organization

Survey Theme: Employee Respect

**Understanding the Issue:** The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items. Make sure you know what is behind your low score before you begin acting.

Employees perceive programs and policies designed for their protection as a demonstration of respect for their well-being. Since most employees have the expectation that their workplace will offer a safe environment, everyone should be familiar with incident reporting policies, procedures, and emergency actions. Employees should be protected from hazardous elements as well as emotional, physical or verbal abuse or harassment from patients, colleagues and others in the healthcare setting.

**Improvemen Ideas:**

1. Work with Human Resources to ensure that background checks and references are completed for new hires before they begin work. This reduces the risk of hiring objectionable or even dangerous employees.

2. Thoroughly review any manual or procedures that pertain to safety policy and hazard reporting at least annually with all staff and with new employees during the first week of hire.

3. Create an open door safety policy that encourages employees to report hazards or policy violations that could endanger staff, patients or families. If employees believe management does not care, they fear reprisal of some type, or fear being seen as weak or incompetent, they may choose to keep some incidents to themselves.

4. Incorporate safety discussions into regular meetings to surface any concerns for employees, patients, or families. Remind employees of their responsibility to report anything observed that could represent a safety risk.

5. Educate employees on how to perform basic self-defense actions when faced with a threatening situation from a patient, family member, or colleague. This awareness is especially important in Emergency Departments and trauma centers.

6. Brainstorm during a staff meeting to identify employees’ perceptions of what constitutes a safe work environment. Lack of tools and equipment, inadequate staffing, even lighting in the parking lot at night may cause employees to feel unsafe.
7. Show personal concern. When you personally encounter an unsafe situation for employees, get involved. Ask questions, get the specifics, find out if it is a recurring situation, ask for their ideas, and promise to do what you can. Most importantly, follow up.

(MI 76)
Organization Domain

Survey Item: The quality of patient care has improved during the last 12 months.

Survey Domain: Organization

Survey Theme: Quality/Customer Focus

**Understanding the Issue:** The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items. Make sure you know what is behind your low score before you begin acting.

**Improvement Ideas:**

Perceptions of what has, or has not, improved will often be unit-based. When assessing results, employees’ perceptions will be based on their understanding of what improvement goals were set and what the expectations are for specific outcomes. Therefore, goals and expectations must be clearly communicated.

1. Communicate specific quality goals in conversations with employees during huddles, rounding, staff meetings, and at the beginning of each new performance cycle or project. The improvement goal(s) should be seen as the highest priority and always on the radar.

2. Identify measurements that will provide evidence of progress. Conduct periodic analyses and ensure all employees are aware of the status and what needs to be done to move goals forward. Share with all employees the results of HCAHPS and other reporting metrics; make sure these results are understood.

3. Look for stories, outcomes, achievements that exemplify desired results and communicate them widely.

4. Recognize that, in clinical settings, autonomy and professionalism are critical elements for optimal patient outcomes, as well as collaborative practice and Magnet designation. To ensure broad awareness and understanding, care providers—nurses, aides, technicians and therapists—should be involved in setting goals, making improvements, assessing progress, and reporting periodically on goal progress.

5. Provide opportunities for employees to discuss barriers to quality improvement efforts and to solve problems around removing them. Use the force field analysis tool to examine all the forces for and against a decision.

(MI 78)
Survey Item:  This organization cares about its customers.

Survey Domain: Organization

Survey Theme: Quality/Customer Focus

Understanding the Issue: The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items. Make sure you know what is behind your low score before you begin acting.

Improvement Ideas:

1. Work through resistance or anxiety about changes by identifying specific concerns and how to handle them. With the current emphasis on budgets and greater efficiency, employees may translate staffing, resource, and other changes as detracting from good care and service. It is important to explain changes in the context of “why this is happening” and have dialogue about the intent behind the changes.

2. Share positive stories about patient feedback and/or employee actions that went above and beyond. In addition to those actions recognized by the organization, you may hear more about special programs or actions taken with patients, families, and other employees that demonstrate the organization’s overall concern for their welfare. Pass this information along to your employees regularly.

3. Identify, as specifically as possible, what employees mean by “caring” and what caring looks like in action. Have this discussion within your department, across the organization, and among leaders. During the discussion, have them envision what a caring organization would be doing.

4. Recognize that, in clinical settings, autonomy and professionalism are critical elements for optimal patient outcomes, as well as collaborative practice and Magnet designation. To ensure broad awareness and understanding, care providers—nurses, aides, technicians and therapists—should be involved in setting goals, making improvements, assessing progress, and reporting periodically on goal progress. Involving care team members will help demonstrate that the organization cares enough to listen and involve staff in doing what’s best to improve quality.

5. Look for previous solutions that were never implemented. Perhaps, in the past, issues regarding care for some customers or customer groups have been acknowledged and solutions identified but not implemented. Often when employees give unfavorable responses to quality items, they are expressing their frustration with the lack of implementing high-quality care and service improvements.

6. Recognize and reward employees who suggest changes that result in improved quality and customer care. Acknowledge them publicly or in other ways they may prefer.

7. Be a role model. Look for ways to improve quality and customer care. Be sure to implement your ideas.
8. Implement in your work unit a “zero tolerance” policy for disrespecting or not valuing any customer or customer group.

9. Avoid the appearance of disrespect for anyone or any group of customers. Respond politely, maintain professionalism at all times, avoid telling jokes or making offhanded remarks that could offend others, and apologize promptly if you make careless comments.

10. Be alert for anyone who shows lack of care or disrespect for any customers or customer groups. If the offending person works for you, coach them on the expected proper behavior. Model the behavior you expect from others.

(MI 80)

Return
MI95

Organization Domain

Survey Item: Different levels of this organization communicate effectively with each other.

Survey Domain: Organization

Survey Theme: Organizational Alignment

**Understanding the Issue:** The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items.

Explore with your employees what they had in mind when they were reacting to this item. It is important to understand not only why employees in your group gave this item a low rating, but also what work areas within your organization they had in mind. Were employees considering communication between managers and employees, communication between senior managers and managers, communication between senior managers and employees, and/or communication between specific work groups within the organization? Once you find out the context for this item, it will be easier for you to proceed with solutions.

**Improvement Ideas:**

1. Use the *Envisioning a Solution Activity* (exercise) in Understanding Issues to explore employees’ thoughts on this item. If you discover that employees think different departments do not communicate well, organize a focus group and use the *Envisioning a Solution Activity* with representatives from different departments.

2. Discuss with your employees how communication is done throughout the organization. What are the primary means of communication (e.g., email, meetings, memos)? How frequent is the communication? What is typically communicated to employees? Based on the discussion with employees, compile a list of specific suggestions on how to improve communications. Present this list to the senior management team. Follow up with employees on what will be changed, as well as the timeline for changes.

3. Invite someone from the senior management team to meet with employees and give them a chance to ask questions and give suggestions on how communication could be improved.

4. Establish common, interdepartmental, measurable goals that promote communication. Have employees work together on developing a list of actions to accomplish these goals. Provide a progress report to your employees frequently.

5. If applicable, examine the trust items on your survey. If the scores are low, discuss with your employees whether trust is an issue in communication. Ask them to give specific examples to support their answers. Finally, seek agreement with your employees on specific behavioral solutions to improving trust.

6. Evaluate the effectiveness of your meetings, if that is a primary communication mode. Are employees engaged in discussing important issues at the meetings, and do they feel comfortable disagreeing with each other? Are solutions reached in the meetings? Is time used effectively? Review ideas in one of the numerous reference books on this subject.
available in the library or bookstore. Seek agreement with your employees on specific solutions to improve meeting communications.

7. Establish an ongoing dialogue with your employees about the quality and effectiveness of communications in the organization. Take steps as needed to implement solutions in collaboration with other areas of the organization.

(MI 95)
MI112

Organization Domain

Survey Item: **This organization values employees from different backgrounds.**

Survey Domain: **Organization**

Survey Theme: **Citizenship**

**Understanding the Issue:** The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items.

Employees may be reluctant to discuss this item openly. You may consider inviting someone from Human Resources trained in dealing with diversity issues to facilitate your session. The *One-on-One Exploration Activity* (exercise) in Understanding Issues is also helpful.

**Improvement Ideas:**

1. Meet with your employees to discuss what they were thinking when responding to this item. Ask employees to discuss within smaller groups of no more than five employees and write down the answers to four questions:
   a) What are specific positive examples of the organization valuing employees from different backgrounds?
   b) What are specific examples of the organization not valuing employees from different backgrounds?
   c) What would it look like if this organization demonstrated valuing employees from different backgrounds?
   d) What specific actions can be taken from this work unit to make employees from different backgrounds feel valued?

   Encourage employees to provide specific examples of observable behaviors when answering questions. Allow time for employees from each group to present their answers. Summarize the information you get from the group and implement the actions within your area. Communicate other ideas relating to areas outside your work area to your manager or HR representative.

2. Invite an expert in diversity training to hold a diversity workshop with your employees. A well-run diversity workshop can create awareness and educate people about various perspectives held by employees from different backgrounds. Often this heightened awareness helps sensitize people to other views and produces a greater willingness to listen to different perspectives.

3. Invite someone from senior management or Human Resources to discuss diversity initiatives within the organization. Improved communication about the organization’s diversity strategies may improve employees’ attitudes about this item.

4. Implement in your work unit a “zero tolerance” policy for disrespecting or not valuing any employee. Be alert for anyone who shows disrespect for others. If the offending person works for you, coach them on the expected proper behavior. Be intolerant of anyone in your work unit showing disrespect. Model the behavior you expect from others.
5. Avoid the appearance of disrespect. Respond politely, maintain professionalism at all times, avoid telling jokes or making offhanded remarks that could offend others, and apologize promptly if you make careless comments.

6. Spend quality time with each individual employee. Do not pry into their personal lives, but show interest in their well-being beyond the work they produce. Caring and valuing are often closely linked in employees’ minds.

(MI 112)

Return
Survey Item: This organization supports me in balancing my work life and personal life.

Survey Domain: Organization

Survey Theme: Work-Life Balance

Understanding the Issue: The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items.

The organization can learn much from the survey in shaping overall organizational values and policies that affect how employees perceive this issue. An abundance of research confirms the importance of work-personal life balance as it affects employee engagement and retention. As is the case with numerous survey items, the organization plays a unique role in creating positive change, just as individual managers also play a unique role. The following tips are meant for the individual manager.

Improvement Ideas:

1. Begin by asking your employees for specifics. In some cases, their dissatisfaction will be due to organizational policies/issues; in other cases it will be due to unique personal circumstances; and in still others it could be due to the amount of work and pressure being put on them by you or others.

2. Involve your senior manager in discussions on organizational issues. Request to have your recommendations understood and considered, even if the decision is made not to change anything.

3. Invite your senior manager and/or HR representative to attend a staff meeting to hear from employees. Better communication, trust, and mutual respect begin with dialogue.

4. Remember that an individual employee’s concerns with work-personal life balance may have to do with health issues or with problems at home. Explore the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or other possibilities for getting them any help they might need.

5. Do not hesitate to recommend policy or strategy changes to senior management. You and your team may come up with valuable ideas to increase employee work-personal life balance throughout the organization.

6. Be sincere and forthright with employees in telling them what is possible or not possible.

7. Read some of the many excellent books, articles, and Internet resources that are available on work-personal life balance. Look for local workshops to attend on the subject and/or ask your HR Department if the organization offers a workshop or other training on the topic. You will find that the most respected and successful organizations, whether they are corporations or hospitals, are those that are progressive in this arena.
8. Learn how to manage employees according to their individual needs. While your goal should be to apply policies regarding work-personal life balance evenly among all employees, you also have to consider the unique circumstances of each individual. If you think it is appropriate to be flexible in applying a rule for an individual situation, use your senior manager or HR representative as a sounding board and then get the appropriate approval.

(MI 113)

Return
Survey Item:  This organization cares about quality improvement.

Survey Domain: Organization

Survey Theme: Quality/Customer Focus

Understanding the Issue: The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items. Make sure you know what is behind your low score before you begin acting.

Perceptions of what represents high-quality care and service may be influenced by factors other than the actual care or service level delivered within your own department, and the belief that the organization does not care enough about these concerns to do something about them. Staffing levels, inefficient processes, lack of equipment, resources or needed information may cause employees to believe they do not have the time or support to provide the best care or service according to their own professional standards.

Improvement Ideas:

1. Try to identify what employees mean by "caring" and what caring looks like in action, within your department, across the organization, and among leaders. Lead a discussion with your employees, asking them to envision and share what a caring organization would be doing.

2. Recognize that, in clinical settings, autonomy and professionalism are critical elements for optimal patient outcomes, as well as collaborative practice and Magnet designation. To ensure broad awareness and understanding, care providers—nurses, aides, technicians and therapists—should be involved in setting goals, making improvements, assessing progress, and reporting periodically on goal progress. More opportunities for direct involvement by care team members may help to demonstrate that the organization cares enough to listen and involve staff in doing what's best to improve quality.

3. Engage other work units in identifying solutions, if appropriate.

4. Look for previous solutions that were never implemented. In the past, issues regarding quality may have been acknowledged and solutions identified but not implemented. Often when employees give unfavorable responses to quality items, they are expressing their frustration with the lack of implementing high-quality care and service improvements.

5. Invite the appropriate people to your staff meetings periodically to discuss what is being done to improve quality on an organizational level. Employees may not realize what is actually being done to make improvements.
6. Ensure two-way communication between your work unit and senior leaders responsible for quality. Communicate upward any concerns or issues that arise from your work unit to ensure that their voices are heard at the appropriate level.

(MI 116)
Survey Item:  **I am satisfied with my job security.**

Survey Domain: **Organization**

Survey Theme: **Work-Life Balance**

**Understanding the Issue:** The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items.

When employees lose their sense of job security, they often do so for good reasons. If layoffs are occurring or major organizational change is happening, worry and rumors abound. Often, a communication vacuum develops, which is filled by non-productive gossip.

In difficult times, the organization’s leadership must communicate well, avoid sugar-coating issues, remain truthful in the face of tough questions from employees, and maintain a sense of purpose and confidence. Managers play a challenging role in this “moment of truth.” How is one simultaneously to be truthful with employees while, perhaps, withholding confidential information about changes yet to happen? Most of the ideas that follow assume there are some real causes for employees expressing a sense of low job security.

**Improvement Ideas:**

1. You can be truthful without disclosing confidential information. You are not obligated to answer all questions employees ask. Most people understand that your responsibilities include being a confidential member of management. For example, when asked if there will be more layoffs, you can appropriately say that you are reluctant to answer that question because you don’t want to be wrong on such a sensitive topic. You can also say that a lot of study is going on to determine what is right for the organization. Letting people live in some uncertainty is far better than saying something that appeases their fears but later haunts your reputation as a person of truth. Often, you truly don’t know the answer to the question, and you can say so. When in doubt about what you should or should not say, talk it over with your manager.

2. Forthrightness is a far better strategy than sugar-coating sensitive issues pertaining to job security. Acknowledging that “times are tough and challenging right now” is fine. Some people try to put a “happy face” on anything. This approach is unconvincing to people, and they may feel manipulated. On the other hand, most people feel respected and taken seriously when you acknowledge a situation for what it is—“this is not a fun time.” However, in most situations reminding people of better days ahead can be helpful and comforting.

3. During turbulent times, carry on with business in a manner that is mature, responsible, and productive. Engage people in problem-solving and forward-looking research to find new solutions to old problems.

4. If employees’ fear for their job security is more about rumors than fact, then emphasize the facts and provide good communication. Invite relevant people to speak to your group about the issues that may be the cause of such fears.
5. If layoffs are part of what is happening, meet one-on-one with employees you know you want to retain and assure them of their value and ongoing role in the organization.

6. Share the vision for the future as it develops. Hope is important in difficult times. People need information and they want to know if leadership has a plan for a better future.

7. Keep people informed of changes as they happen. Explain the reasons for the changes.

8. Do not expect a lot of praise, thanks, or even confidence in your leadership from your employees in difficult times. Employees tend to believe only what they can see in such times, which is not all bad. They may remain skeptical of a better future until it is nearly here.

9. Maintain your sense of humor in difficult times.

10. Look for small, authentic ways to encourage employee morale. Take people to lunch to talk one-on-one or in small groups.

(MI 117)
Survey Item: My work unit is adequately staffed.

Survey Domain: Organization

Survey Theme: Work-Life Balance

Understanding the Issue: The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items. Make sure you know what is behind your low score before you begin acting.

Improvement Ideas:

1. Analyze the level and timeliness of support services like blood draws, medications, and availability of computers, equipment, and supplies. Resolve underlying process issues that might reduce accessibility and cause loss of time or effectiveness.

2. Evaluate "patient day" workload measures that are based on midnight censuses. The timing might underestimate true workloads. Admission, discharge and transfer rates may have wide swings in volume across different units, causing periods of undue stress or concern for patient and employee safety.

3. Assess the level of experience and competency among work units with high turnover or unexpected volume. The full complement of Full Time Employees (FTE) may be present, but if these employees are inexperienced or registry staff who are unfamiliar with unit care process or policy, it could create stress and safety issues.

4. Work with Human Resources to track and follow up on FMLA and other intermittent and long-term leave situations. Appropriate oversight will help minimize inappropriate absences.

5. If you are convinced of the inadequacy of staffing, make recommendations to senior management. Your case will be stronger if you can document the need with sound measurements.

6. Ask your employees for their ideas on improving work processes. Engage them in problem-solving, which will refocus them on creating solutions instead of feeling stressed.

7. Reorganize or redeploy. Sometimes people need a new organization or structure, or resources need to be moved. “Shaking things up” can sometimes be effective in helping a group maximize its human resources. Engage your work unit in exploring possibilities.

(MI 119)
Survey Item: This organization is environmentally responsible.

Survey Domain: Organization

Survey Theme: Citizenship

**Understanding the Issue:** The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items.

Multiple interpretations are possible for this item, so you will need to learn what employees had in mind when responding. Were they thinking about the environmental impact of the operational practices of the organization? Or did they think about the grassroots behaviors and practices of the employees in their daily activities, such as waste handling, recycling and paper usage?

**Improvement Ideas:**

1. Hold a meeting with employees to discuss the nature of their dissatisfaction with the organization’s environmental practices. Try to understand the specific aspects of the practices that concern employees. Discuss potential options for improving these environmental practices. If more research is needed, solicit volunteers or assign research responsibilities to willing employees to bring further information back to the group regarding these practices.

2. Consider developing and documenting a formal recommendation to be delivered to senior management with information learned and potential remedies or solutions.

3. Invite senior management to hold a session with your employees explaining the nature of these practices and plans regarding improving these practices. Open communication about these practices may lead to greater understanding of why the organization engages in the actions/practices. It may also reveal organizational plans for improvement.

4. Hold a meeting to identify and discuss the various daily environmental practices that might be implemented to create a more environmentally-friendly organization. Some ideas include: recycling program for food and beverage containers, recycling program for office paper, reuse program for office products, purchase of “environmentally-friendly” equipment and supplies. Engaging the group in discussions about daily environmentally-friendly activities may help their perceptions about the organization when no direct action is possible to remedy the operational practices.

5. Organize employee participation in environmentally-focused volunteer activities within the local community. These activities may help improve the employees’ overall perception of the organization’s focus on environmental practices even though these activities are done by the employees themselves.

(MI 194)
Survey Item:  I have confidence in Senior Management’s leadership.

Survey Domain:  Organization

Survey Theme:  Organizational Alignment

Understanding the Issue:  The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items. Make sure you know what is behind your low score before you begin acting.

Employees have confidence in and trust leaders when employees feel they can rely on consistent, direct, transparent, communications on issues affecting organization challenges and success, job security, and working conditions. As a manager, recognize that your behavior and attitude may be construed as representative of those at higher levels. Having accepted a leadership role, you have an obligation to be an effective ambassador for those above you. You are expected to translate policies, goals and outcomes for your employees and ensure that accurate messages are passed down to the frontline in a timely manner.

Improvement Ideas:

1. Conduct a brainstorming session with employees to identify the actions and behaviors that would instill more confidence in the leaders above you. Identify those actions with the greatest potential for changing employees’ perceptions and respectfully share this information “up the pipeline.”

2. Partner with your boss and members of the senior team to conduct effective rounding across the units you manage. During these rounding sessions, build relationships and invite interaction.

3. Advise leaders at higher levels when special recognition is due to individuals or teams so the leaders are able to convey their thanks for a job well done.

4. When organization-wide policy changes or fiscal challenges must be communicated to your employees, clearly understand the intent of the change and the potential unfavorable outcomes if the changes were not to occur. Communicate the information to employees in a way that does not point fingers or place blame.

5. Be responsible to both senior management and your employees. Avoid placing blame on or passing the buck to senior leaders. At the same time, do not give the impression to employees that you are so loyal to senior management that you are not open to hearing their concerns.

6. Consider having your HR representative or someone else facilitate discussions with your employees. They may give more honest feedback to someone outside of management.
7. Make sure you communicate senior management’s activities to your employees frequently. Managers often assume that employees know more than they actually know about what is going on in the organization. It's better to over-communicating than to assume the employees know what senior management is doing to ensure the organization’s success.

(MI 213)
Survey Item:  Information from this survey will be used to make improvements.

Survey Domain:  Organization

Survey Theme:  Employee Respect

Understanding the Issue:  The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items.

A survey is a real opportunity to create value for the organization: employee involvement and excitement, improved communications and trust, heightened expectations for the future of your group, greater teamwork, increased accountability, and, ultimately, a healthier culture. Wise organizations do not squander this opportunity. A well-used survey will return your investment many times over. An abundance of research proves the direct link between employee engagement and the most valuable outcomes you want, like external and/or internal customer satisfaction. The only effective employee survey is one that yields useful findings that are acted upon to bring about positive change. Changes must happen at the senior management level and at the work unit level. In this guide, we address what the individual manager can do to ensure that a survey is used to make improvements.

Improvement Ideas:

1. Be prompt in holding your first employee meeting to share and discuss results. In most cases, no more than two weeks should pass from when you first see the results until your first meeting. If you have managers reporting to you, be sure to meet with them before they meet with their direct reports.

2. In most cases, before sharing the results with your work unit, you should meet with your manager to discuss your results and your plans for communicating with your direct reports. Get a clear understanding with your manager on his/her expectations and priorities regarding changes and improvements in your work unit.


4. If your work unit’s survey results are unusually low, you may consider asking a third party to help your work unit discuss their concerns and develop ideas for improvement. Your senior manager or HR representative may have some ideas regarding what assistance would be appropriate.

5. Do not bite off more than you can chew. Typically, most work units focus on one to three key issues to address in action planning. If your work unit is large, you may want to establish an “action planning team,” comprised of team members who want to serve as a task force to study a problem, gather ideas, develop a plan, execute the plan, and at a later time evaluate progress.
6. Establish a formal process that includes a timeline and assigned accountability for action planning. The primary reason for employees developing a skeptical attitude to an opinion survey is their suspicion that nothing will be done about their concerns. Skepticism can be minimized when a manager takes the process seriously and follows up on it. Often, arranging for a third party facilitator can help ensure that the process thrives.

7. Be sure to document your action plans and share them with everyone. Documentation will increase everyone’s sense of accountability and their awareness that you are taking the feedback seriously. Continuously ask employees for their ideas.

8. If your organization is using Press Ganey’s Web-based Action Planning System, post your action plans promptly and keep them updated as progress is made.

9. Some high priority concerns may pertain specifically to your management style or abilities. Invite your direct reports to give you more feedback or explanation on these, but only if you can accept the feedback without getting defensive. If you believe your employees may be too uncomfortable giving you direct feedback, you may want to develop a greater understanding of these issues by talking with your senior manager or a specialist in your Human Resources/Training Department.

10. If you need to improve how others view your performance and management style, consider conducting a 360 degree feedback evaluation of yourself.

11. Be sure to schedule a specific meeting to review progress made on all action plans. While some issues may take a year to address adequately, many others can be acted upon relatively quickly. Typically, scheduling a review in 60 or 90 days is appropriate.

12. If the issues identified by your survey results can best be addressed through an existing organizational process, such as a quality improvement process, use the process to address the matter. You do not need to develop a duplicate approach. Be sure to communicate with your work unit members so they will understand that you are using this approach.

13. In advance of your next survey, or at the end of your fiscal/calendar year, discuss the accomplishments in addressing concerns since the last survey. Employees often forget how much has been done.

14. After significant progress has been made in addressing employee concerns, consider holding a “town meeting” to recognize those work units and individuals who were responsible for the success. Ask senior management to attend and speak to the group. Some Press Ganey clients make the occasion festive with food, balloons, banners, and humorous awards.

(MI 279)
MI401

Organization Domain

Survey Item:  This organization provides high-quality care and service.

Survey Domain: Organization

Survey Theme: Quality/Customer Focus

Understanding the Issue: The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items. Make sure you know what is behind your low score before you begin acting.

Often, when work units provide unfavorable responses on this item, it is caused by the perception of the quality of care and service provided by other work units within the organization. If someone asks an employee, “Do you provide high-quality care?” they will say, “Of course I do.” If someone asks them if others within the organization provide the same high-quality care and service, they are more likely to share stories and incidents about the lack of high-quality care or service they have heard from other employees or patients. When assessing their own unit, employees often point to staffing levels, inefficient processes, lack of equipment, resources, or lack of information as barriers to providing quality care. Employees may also observe and pass judgment on what they see upstream coming into their work unit, and downstream, the way things are handled in other parts of the organization and believe that not enough is being done to improve quality care or service delivery in these areas.

Improvement Ideas:

1. Define for your employees, through discussion and education, what high-quality care and service are intended to look like.

2. Ensure that specific quality goals are the focus of regular conversations with employees during huddles, rounding, staff meetings, and at the beginning of each new performance cycle or project. Quality goal(s) and outcomes should be seen as the highest priority and always on the radar.

3. Encourage employees to identify and report on breaches of policy or behaviors that would detract from quality and service goals and outcomes. Follow up promptly on any concerns, resolve them, and close the communication loop by reporting to those raised the concern.

4. Work with the appropriate managers to investigate and resolve reported issues that occur outside of your own work unit. Be sure to approach your peers with a spirit of inquiry, rather than criticism, so that the opportunities to both strengthen cross-organization relations and resolve problems in a collegial way are accomplished.

5. Follow through on any quality solutions your work unit agrees upon. If the solution lies in another area, report on progress to the unit. Do not let solutions fail because they were not implemented. Periodic updates will help keep the team enthusiastic about the organization’s commitment to quality.
6. Look for previous solutions that were never implemented. In the past, issues regarding quality of care may have been acknowledged and solutions identified but not implemented. Often when employees give unfavorable responses to quality items, they are expressing their frustration with implementing high-quality care and service improvements.

(MI 401)
Survey Item: Senior management’s actions support this organization’s mission and values.

Survey Domain: Organization

Survey Theme: Organizational Alignment

Understanding the Issue: The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items.

One of your roles as a manager is to serve as a link between senior leaders and your employees. Your work group will often reflect your own attitudes about senior management, so make sure your communications about senior management are informed and balanced.

Improvement Ideas:

1. Use the Envisioning a Solution Activity in Understanding Issues to explore what employees think about senior management’s support for the organization’s mission and values.

2. Find out how much employees know about the organization’s mission and values. If employees are unclear on the organization’s mission and values, invite someone from the senior team to fill in the gaps.

3. Evaluate how visible senior management is to your department. Have your employees met senior leaders and/or know who they are? Does anyone from the senior team periodically come to your departmental meetings? Your employees should have regular contact with your immediate manager, as well as other senior management. How does senior management communicate with employees in the organization? Are employees informed about important senior management decisions and their impact on the organization? Use information gained from the Envisioning a Solution Activity (exercise) (in tip #1 above) and your analysis of senior management’s visibility to present this information to the appropriate person in senior management.

4. Find out from your peers if their employees also gave this item a low rating. If they did, combine information you gathered from employees across departments and present it to the senior team.

5. Invite your supervisor or someone else from the senior team to discuss the connection between your departmental and organizational goals. Give employees a chance to ask him/her any questions they would like to have answered.

6. Resolve your own questions about senior management’s actions. If you have questions, it is likely your employees may have the same questions. Talk to your manager or others who can get you answers.
7. Evaluate the information you provide to employees about senior management and how you share that information. Do you share your negative feelings/frustrations in regards to senior team decisions with your employees? Make sure you do not create a “wall” between your employees and the organization. Periodically share with employees important information on actions/decisions made by senior management.

8. Evaluate your departmental goals. Do they support overall organizational goals? During staff meetings, spend 10-15 minutes updating employees on organizational changes.

(MI 622)

Return
MI822

Organization Domain

Survey Item: Physicians and staff work well together.

Survey Domain: Organization

Survey Theme: Organizational Alignment

Understanding the Issue: The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items.

Breakdowns in communication and work processes often contribute to a low score on this item. The quality of the healthcare service provided also impacts how well physicians and staff work together.

Improvement Ideas:

1. When planning interventions on this item that involve physicians, get a “physician advocate” to partner with you in your communications. Physician response tends to be much more positive when a colleague is a part of communication with them.

2. Improve communication with physicians. When communications are inaccurate or incomplete, relationships between physicians and staff are greatly impacted and may suffer as a result.
   a. Encourage staff to be sure that they have fully understood a physician’s directions and instructions. Advise your staff to ask the physician to confirm any part of the instruction they may have misunderstood.
   b. Be sure that communications to physicians are timely and accurate. This action will instill confidence among the physician group in general while improving their relationships with staff.
   c. Provide physicians (staff physicians) with a pocket card that lists key phone numbers (laboratory, radiology, etc.) that they may need to access while treating patients at your facility. This contact list will reduce the assistance that staff must provide to physicians and create a more efficient means of communication for the physician.
   d. Provide phone lists to referring physicians periodically so that they may easily reach key departments in your organization. This action will ease communication barriers and create a good sense of working relationships between physicians and staff.

3. Consider having an outside facilitator meet with your employees to help you learn more about your low score. Since this topic can be sensitive, begin with separate focus groups—one for physicians and one for your unit’s staff—with the following agenda:
   a. Create a list of accidents, mistakes, and performance problems related to patient treatment.
   b. Talk about how communication breakdowns may contribute to the problem.
   c. Create a goal for the top one or two communication issues identified.
   d. Ask for help from physician and patient care leaders in bringing the two groups together to make specific plans for creating improvement on the goal.

4. Consider using an outside facilitator and a “physician advocate” to help you design and implement team-building activities.
5. Be sure that physicians and staff understand the quality improvement efforts your organization is pursuing.

6. Research shows that physicians and staff work much more harmoniously in environments that encourage error-free and compassionate care. Be sure that physicians understand the ways through which your organization attempts to eliminate errors and provide compassionate care to all customer groups. Be sure that staff understand and practice the same initiatives.

(MI 822)

Return
Survey Item: The physicians at this organization respect the clinical staff's knowledge and abilities.

Survey Domain: Organization

Survey Theme: Employee Respect

Understanding the Issue: The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items. Make sure you know what is behind your low score before you begin acting.

For work relationships among clinicians and physicians to be perceived as collegial and collaborative, the relationships must foster professional practice, job satisfaction, and organizational trust. Busy environments may create barriers to collaboration and mutual respect by limiting the interaction of nurses and physicians in care delivery through scheduling, physical layout or unclear policy. Physicians may not have the conduit for reporting perceived skill deficiencies on the part of care team members or sufficient opportunity to observe skill application and provide feedback. Clinicians may be unaware of policies designed to protect and remedy inappropriate physician behavior.

Improvement Ideas:

1. Conduct periodic physician surveys to determine their perceptions of staff learning needs to support quality patient care.

2. Keep physicians informed of role changes and new learning paths affecting care team members through ground rounds and/or online bulletins.

3. Work with physician relations representatives to orient physicians toward understanding organization values and performance expectations.

4. Ensure that a management policy of zero tolerance towards physician abuse is being used to address disruptive behaviors. Communicate to all clinicians how to confidentially report inappropriate physician behaviors.

5. Establish performance expectations for all team members that include demonstrated behaviors of mutual respect, collegial interaction, constructive conflict resolution, and interdisciplinary-care planning.

6. Assess physicians rounds, especially in the morning, and, if possible, schedule them during times when nurses and other care providers may be present.

7. Develop the role of Peer Educator to increase staff knowledge, enhance practice and improve care/service outcomes.

(MI 825)

Return
Survey Item: Patient safety is a priority in this organization.

Survey Domain: Organization

Survey Theme: Quality/Customer Focus

**Understanding the Issue:** The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items. Make sure you know what is behind your low score before you begin acting.

An organization that is aligned around quality and safety, from the board of directors to frontline employees, embraces a common language, values, processes, and standards that put safety first. The focus may be through an industry-recognized patient-centered care model or a framework developed by a cross-disciplinary committee. This model or framework becomes the lens for measuring performance, guiding analyses, reporting and innovation in support of high-quality, safe care.

**Improvement Ideas:**

1. Make patient and employee safety the primary focus of all communications: morning huddles, rounding and staff meeting discussions, and process team inquiries.

2. Train managers and frontline supervisors on how to listen effectively and how to invite employee feedback and solicit ideas for improving safety concerns.

3. Listen to all concerns raised about both employee and patient safety and promptly follow complaints or problems through to a constructive end. Be sure all employees know about the resolution of any concerns raised.

4. Create a unit-based scorecard that identifies, tracks, and reports potential safety risks. Share progress and results with all department employees.

5. Encourage dialogue among leaders at all levels of the organization that will identify and explore strategies and practices for supporting patient safety.

6. Be visible and accessible to employees and build comfortable relationships that engender trust and confidence in raising concerns. Recognize whether your body language and response convey interest in employee ideas and concerns, or judgment and rejection.

(MI 937)
Survey Item:  This organization makes every effort to deliver safe, error-free care.

Survey Domain: Organization

Survey Theme: Quality/Customer Focus

Understanding the Issue: The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items. Make sure you know what is behind your low score before you begin acting.

Improvement Ideas:

1. Lead a group discussion to envision the achievement of a patient care or service goal the employees deeply desire. Establish a shared vision of what error-free care looks like to engage all employees on the team. Describe the vision in writing and talk through barriers and challenges to achieving the goal. Be sure to agree on what each employee’s role is and what might be alternatives if performance roadblocks occur.

2. Develop concrete, attainable goals that are to be achieved through cooperation and synergy. Collective aspirations and goals compel employees to learn and do together.

3. Look for long-term rewards like the pride that comes from positive patient feedback, external agency awards, and recognition that will support sustained effort. Most financial incentives for motivating higher performance are short term and must be increased or repeated frequently. Ensure that performance incentives are not manipulative or based on fear or coercion.

4. Help employees, through coaching and developmental opportunities, develop personal mastery in areas in which they want to excel. Employees are more likely to achieve and sustain higher levels of achievement when they are masters in those areas. Ask employees which personal mastery efforts will contribute to the evolution of the team.

5. Ensure employees have working equipment and other resources to do the best job possible.

6. Create a forum for employees to provide constructive feedback on barriers to achieving error-free care, and then involve them in problem solving to remove barriers. Create a professional or care practice peer committee to monitor gaps in care delivery.

7. Provide performance coaching for employees who exhibit negative attitudes or unwillingness to do anything not detailed in their job descriptions. Establish high-level performance expectations to ensure quality and safety goals are met.

(MI 1054)
Survey Item: I get the training I need to do a good job.

Survey Domain: Organization

Survey Theme: Growth and Development

Understanding the Issue: The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items.

For employees to be committed to their organization, they must also feel that the organization is committed to their training and development. Employees may not always recognize the training they receive as actual training. For example, they may not perceive one-on-one training to be just as “real” as formal classroom training even though it can be more effective. Another challenge to overcome is the reluctance some employees will have stepping out of their normal work routines to participate in their training and development. Some adults just seem to have an aversion to anything remotely related to classrooms, exercises and evaluations! The paradox is that even if the employee has consciously not taken full advantage of available training and development (their choice) or workload/schedule (their choice) has limited their participation, they may still sense that the organization is not committed to their training and development. Your employees may not be aware of available training and development resources or of alternatives which may overcome perceived barriers (e.g., temporary shift assignments, online self-study training, and on-site seminars).

Improvement Ideas:

1. Have a group discussion with your employees to understand what prompted their responses to this item. Ask employees to discuss the following questions:
   a. What is their understanding of existing training opportunities?
   b. What types of training activities do they believe are missing?
   c. What specific training opportunities would they like to have?

   Their answers to these questions will give you an indication of their understanding of what is currently available and what issues are important to them.

2. Consider developing a training mentorship program within your work group. Identify employees with proficiency in specific skills and ask them to provide training to employees with corresponding training needs. (Note: This technique is often as satisfying to the mentor as to the trainee.)

3. Implement regularly scheduled “brown-bag lunch” training sessions by inviting people with specific skills to present information on topics your employees identify as areas where further training would be beneficial.

4. Review your scores on the Manager Domain items, especially focusing on those pertaining to the feedback you provide and your supportiveness in training (if applicable on your survey). If your scores are relatively low or if you have a relatively large number of employees responding unfavorably to these items, consider developing a personal
development plan to improve the type, amount, and frequency of feedback you provide your employees and/or your role in their training.

5. Review your work group’s scores on items related to career development. If your scores are relatively low or if you have a relatively large number of employees responding unfavorably to career development items, you may want to consider combining your discussion regarding training with career development opportunities.

6. Invite Human Resources to come in and provide a learning session focusing on training opportunities, courses, and other topics relevant to training within the organization.

7. Explore your organization’s support for external training and development opportunities for your employees. Many times, continuing education opportunities are made available when a manager and employee(s) together “make the case” to senior management by providing information to describe a specific training opportunity.

8. Create flexible-work options to allow employees to take classes or outside training, even if your organization cannot fund them. This approach is most effective when employees identify a specific educational opportunity in which they would like to participate.

9. Keep a training log for each employee that includes all the training they receive: formal, one-on-one, self-study, etc. This can help employees recognize the atypical forms of training.

10. Recognize and be sensitive to barriers which may prohibit your employees from taking advantage of training including, language skills, family responsibilities, and anxiety with traditional classroom situations.

(MI 1086)
Survey Item:  Patient safety problems are addressed as they occur in my work unit.

Survey Domain: Organization

Survey Theme: Quality/Customer Focus

Understanding the Issue: The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items. Make sure you know what is behind your low score before you begin acting.

Improvement Ideas:

1. Commit to listening to concerns raised and following through on complaints or problems through to a constructive end. Convey the sense that patient safety is an important priority. Safety and related ethical concerns perceived, or experienced, by staff will often be unique to a practice setting and may vary.

2. Create a clinical practice research council and empower it to establish direction and policy for reporting and addressing perceived safety issues. Be sure there is an established process in place for reporting.

3. Through a practice council or group review process, institute and communicate a "Safety Ethics Consult" policy. Include the expectation that anyone involved in patient care may initiate this consult.

4. Ensure that nursing staff and other clinicians delivering care are active participants in resolving quality and safety problems.

5. Clarify and communicate what the most common problems might look like; establish parameters for reporting "gray" areas of concern.

6. Listen carefully to patients and then screen feedback to identify themes and patterns of complaints that may indicate some underlying systemic issue.

7. Assess the types of problems being reported within the unit. Meet informally one-on-one with care team members to identify the types of issues they are experiencing; elevate thematic concerns to staff meeting discussions.

8. Address conflicts within the care team promptly. These may be relationship-based or professional conflicts of interest that contribute to perceptions of safety or ethics issues.

9. Examine your own behavior as a manager. Make sure you listen and follow through, and that you are not projecting a lack of concern because of time pressures or filtering the worthiness of a concern based on the person raising it.

(MI 1392)
Survey Item:  I can report patient safety mistakes without fear of punishment.

Survey Domain: Organization

Survey Theme: Quality/Customer Focus

Understanding the Issue: The first step is to understand the issues behind the survey performance scores. Unless you are absolutely sure that you understand the issues related to a particular survey item, the best place to start is identifying them, and the section Understanding Issues can help you do so. The activities described in Understanding Issues can be used for any of the survey items. Make sure you know what is behind your low score before you begin acting.

Recognize that there is always risk involved in reporting the events of the day with a co-worker or manager, especially if a physician or strong team member is a concern. In order to build trust and transparency in the process, it is important for management to create an environment that allows employees to respectfully question activities and practices they perceive to be inappropriate. Patient and employee safety concerns are often perceived as ethical issues as well.

Improvement Ideas:

1. Incorporate a safety “hotline” into compliance training and educate employees and physicians on how and when to use this resource.

2. Educate staff on ways to raise concerns respectfully and appropriately, with the least amount of critical judgment, to create an effective environment for dialogue.

3. Examine your own and others’ reactions to patient safety reporting concerns. Be sure you are not explicitly, or implicitly, discouraging open communication. Sometimes personal biases (filtering based on who is reporting) and defensiveness can send signals that you would rather not know.

4. Convene representatives of the care team (or empower an existing practice council) to develop and implement an “Ethics Consultation Policy.” It should include the expectation that nurses, physicians, and anyone else involved in patient care or service may initiate a consult when a concern arises around treatment, use of equipment, or hazardous materials.

5. Build collaborative relationships between care team members to support open, honest dialogue on issues of concern.

6. Make safety discussions a topic on every staff meeting agenda. Work through solutions and recommendations as soon as possible after a concern is raised.

7. Facilitate discussion on ways of handling a problem when staffing issues are raised as safety concerns. To assist staff in viewing the problem on broader basis, look at all possible solutions like role changes, equipment or technology usage, staff education, etc. Follow through on changes identified.

(MI 1393)
Engagement Indicator

Survey Item: Overall, I am a satisfied employee.

Survey Domain and Theme: Engagement Indicator

Understanding the Issue: Engagement Indicators (EI) are unique items that measure the employee’s emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization. While the score is an indication of how committed your employees are to the organization, the item is not easy to address directly. Often, the best way to act upon an EI item is to focus on low scoring items in the three primary Domains: Organization, Manager, and Employee. The items in these domains represent the key drivers of individual employee engagement—the workforce issues that influence employee engagement. Items in these domains are more directly actionable, and improving performance on them will improve performance of EI items as well. For this reason, ideas for improvement on EI items are often tied to other survey item topics.

Employee satisfaction is influenced by many things. The survey measures many of the variables that impact employee satisfaction. Overall, Press Ganey’s research shows that employees feel satisfied when they are appreciated, respected, and when they enjoy their work, their coworkers, and their relationships with managers. In addition, organizational and managerial support of employees’ work-personal life balance influences employee satisfaction. Finally, employees want to take pride in the organization’s services and products.

Improvement Ideas:

1. Compare the score of this specific Engagement Indicator to the overall work unit Engagement Score as well as to the scores of the other EI items) provided with your survey results (there are about six such items included in your survey). If this performance score is significantly lower than the overall engagement score or the other Engagement Indicators, then you may have a specific challenge related to this aspect of engagement. Most likely, this will not be the case though. The overall and individual Engagement Indicator item scores more frequently track together.

2. Review the Key Drivers of employee engagement included in your survey results. These items are the ones most significantly influencing your overall Employee Engagement score. Those items with the lowest scores should be your top priority to address. By improving in these areas, your Engagement Indicators scores should see positive results in future surveys.

3. In addition to identifying and addressing influencers of employee engagement (the Key Drivers) you may want to gain a better understanding of the issues behind the scores though open discussions with your employees…. If you do not feel comfortable leading this discussion consider utilizing an outside facilitator provided by your Human Resources department. The objective is to identify the set of issues influencing employee engagement – not to deal with the Engagement score itself since it is a result, not the cause.

4. Get action ideas from the specific tips for improving on other low-scoring survey items. Improvement on any items will help you improve the overall satisfaction of your employees.
5. Use the items highlighted on your survey report as “concerns” as your starting point. Meet with employees to discuss the list, and ask them to suggest specific solutions for areas of dissatisfaction. Implement feasible solutions. If necessary, ask your senior manager for his/her assistance.

6. Demonstrate your support for organizational goals, missions, and values. Do not underestimate how much impact your thoughts and beliefs about the organization have on what your employees think.

7. Ask senior management to meet periodically with your employees to reinforce the connection between their job and the organization’s success.

8. Show appreciation to your employees by acknowledging them during staff meetings, sending “thank you” emails, and by posting appreciation notes on a bulletin board.

9. Start an “employee of the month” program. Each month acknowledge a high-performing employee by letting him/her take a half day off.

10. Increase employees’ involvement in decision making.

11. Consider possibilities for improving teamwork by writing down actions that you could take to improve teamwork among your employees (it could be work-related or extracurricular activities). Take action on your best ideas.

12. Support employees’ work-personal life balance. Do you offer flexibility to meet employees’ family needs when necessary? Do you assign realistic workloads so that employees do not have to work long hours on a regular basis? Are you supportive of organization-wide work-personal life balance programs? Evaluate your answers to these questions and set goals for improvement.

13. Incorporate the importance of employees into your vision, mission, and value statements. An example would be: “Our product is titanium; our strength is people.”

14. Provide financial assistance, resources, and encouragement for employees to pursue professional development.

(MI 77)
Survey Item: I would recommend this organization to family and friends who need care.

Survey Domain and Theme: Engagement Indicator

Understanding the Issue: Engagement Indicators (EI) are unique items that measure the employee’s emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization. While the score is an indication of how committed your employees are to the organization, the item is not easy to address directly. Often, the best way to act upon an EI item is to focus on low scoring items in the three primary Domains: Organization, Manager, and Employee. The items in these domains represent the key drivers of individual employee engagement—the workforce issues that influence employee engagement. Items in these domains are more directly actionable, and improving performance on them will improve performance of EI items as well. For this reason, ideas for improvement on EI items are often tied to other survey item topics.

Employees’ confidence in the quality of care at their organization is a key indicator of their engagement. Their willingness to recommend the organization to their family and friends reveals that confidence.

Improvement Ideas:

1. Compare the score of this specific Engagement Indicator to the overall work unit Engagement Score as well as to the scores of the other EI items) provided with your survey results (there are about six such items included in your survey). If this performance score is significantly lower than the overall engagement score or the other Engagement Indicators, then you may have a specific challenge related to this aspect of engagement. Most likely, this will not be the case though. The overall and individual EI item scores more frequently track together.

2. Review the Key Drivers of employee engagement included in your survey results. These items are the ones most significantly influencing your overall Employee Engagement score. Those items with the lowest scores should be your top priority to address. By improving in these areas, your Engagement Indicators scores should see positive results in future surveys.

3. In addition to identifying and addressing influencers of employee engagement (the Key Drivers) you may want to gain a better understanding of the issues behind the scores though open discussions with your employees…. If you do not feel comfortable leading this discussion consider utilizing an outside facilitator provided by your Human Resources department. The objective is to identify the set of issues influencing engagement – not to deal with the Engagement score itself since it is a result, not the cause.

4. Involve your organization’s quality improvement division. If your group’s score is lower than that for the organization as a whole, ask a quality improvement facilitator to meet with your group, share the status of your organization on key indicators of quality, and listen to and discuss the concerns and suggestions of the group.

5. Document the outcomes and ideas generated in your Understanding Issues activity to summarize the issues and potential solutions. Invite appropriate senior leaders to a
session to share the information, explain the motivation of the group to improve perceptions of themselves and others, and discuss current status and potential next steps. Keep the session positive by focusing on the goal of being a healing force in your community and the awareness that it takes everyone to make that happen. Have refreshments and an informal atmosphere to communicate that “we’re all in this together.”

6. Conduct a “What can we do?” session with your staff. Acknowledge that much is out of your control. Share the information in #4 and #5, and discuss the value of every employee’s contribution to the organization’s success. What specific steps, even if small, could your group take to contribute to quality of care and to model that for others? Share your outcomes and commitments with quality improvement representatives and other leaders.

7. Tap into the resources of The Institute for Healthcare Improvement (www.ihi.org) if your work unit’s role is central to quality. They are committed to accelerating improvement nationwide and have information to share.

(MI 85)
Engagement Indicator

Survey Item: I would recommend this organization as a good place to work.

Survey Domain and Theme: Engagement Indicator

Understanding the Issue: Engagement Indicators (EI) are unique items that measure the employee’s emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization. While the score is an indication of how committed your employees are to the organization, the item is not easy to address directly. Often, the best way to act upon an EI item is to focus on low scoring items in the three primary Domains: Organization, Manager, and Employee. The items in these domains represent the key drivers of individual employee engagement—the workforce issues that influence employee engagement. Items in these domains are more directly actionable, and improving performance on them will improve performance of EI items as well. For this reason, ideas for improvement on EI items are often tied to other survey item topics.

Since this survey item reflects a composite of employees’ feelings about a variety of issues, taking action to improve other low-scoring survey items will help you improve the overall opinions that employees share of your workplace.

Improvement Ideas:

1. Compare the score of this specific Engagement Indicator to the overall work unit Engagement Score as well as to the scores of the other EI items provided with your survey results (there are about six such items included in your survey). If this performance score is significantly lower than the overall engagement score or the other Engagement Indicators, then you may have a specific challenge related to this aspect of engagement. Most likely, this will not be the case though. The overall and individual Engagement Indicator item scores more frequently track together.

2. Review the Key Drivers of employee engagement included in your survey results. These items are the ones most significantly influencing your overall Employee Engagement score. Those items with the lowest scores should be your top priority to address. By improving in these areas, your Engagement Indicators scores should see positive results in future surveys.

3. In addition to identifying and addressing influencers of employee engagement (the Key Drivers) you may want to gain a better understanding of the issues behind the scores though open discussions with your employees…. If you do not feel comfortable leading this discussion consider utilizing an outside facilitator provided by your Human Resources department. The objective is to identify the set of issues influencing engagement—not to deal with the Engagement score itself since it is a result, not the cause.

4. Partner with other managers who have targeted this item—low scores here typically involve a number of managers. Brainstorm causes and solutions together and work as a team to resolve them.

5. Get employees involved in developing a recruitment program for new employees. Ask them as a group what would help “sell” your organization to potential employees. Listen for ideas that come out about what’s lacking. Also listen for the positive points that are presented.
6. Conduct entrance interviews with new hires after one month to learn what brought them to your organization and to find out if their experience to date is consistent with their expectations. Communicate your findings to the areas of your organization, including your own that can make needed changes.

7. Conduct exit interviews with employees leaving your work unit. (Even if the organization has its own Exit Interview Process, do your own individual session with each departing employee.) Begin by committing to use all the information you receive from the employee to help make the organization, and your work unit, a better place to work. Follow up on that commitment. Ask them questions such as:

   a. Why are you leaving? (If it’s for a job) Did you find your new job or did it find you?
   b. What did you like best about the job?
   c. What will you miss the least about the job?
   d. How could I have done a better job as your manager?
   e. How could others in the organization do a better job?
   f. How did you feel about the relationships you had with members of your team?
   g. Did your work give you a sense of accomplishment?
   h. Are there things we could have done to make your job more fulfilling?
   i. Did you feel you had opportunities to grow and learn?
   j. If you were me, what would you address that is a problem in our work unit?
   k. What skills and talents do you think were required by your job, and did you have them?
   l. If there were an opportunity to come back here, would you do that?

(MI 93)
Survey Item:  **I am proud to tell people I work for this organization.**

Survey Domain and Theme: **Engagement Indicator**

**Understanding the Issue:** Engagement Indicators (EI) are unique items that measure the employee’s emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization. While the score is an indication of how committed your employees are to the organization, the item is not easy to address directly. Often, the best way to act upon an EI item is to focus on low scoring items in the three primary Domains: Organization, Manager, and Employee. The items in these domains represent the key drivers of individual employee engagement—the workforce issues that influence employee engagement. Items in these domains are more directly actionable, and improving performance on them will improve performance of EI items as well. For this reason, ideas for improvement on EI items are often tied to other survey item topics.

**Improvement Ideas:**

1. Compare the score of this specific Engagement Indicator to the overall work unit Engagement Score as well as to the scores of the other Engagement Indicator items) provided with your survey results (there are about six such items included in your survey). If this performance score is significantly lower than the overall engagement score or the other Engagement Indicators, then you may have a specific challenge related to this aspect of engagement. Most likely, this will not be the case though. The overall and individual Engagement Indicator item scores more frequently track together.

2. Review the Key Drivers of employee engagement included in your survey results. These items are the ones most significantly influencing your overall Employee Engagement score. Those items with the lowest scores should be your top priority to address. By improving in these areas, your Engagement Indicators scores should see positive results in future surveys.

3. In addition to identifying and addressing influencers of employee engagement (the Key Drivers) you may want to gain a better understanding of the issues behind the scores through open discussions with your employees…. If you do not feel comfortable leading this discussion consider utilizing an outside facilitator provided by your Human Resources department. The objective is to identify the set of issues influencing engagement— not to deal with the Engagement score itself since it is a result, not the cause.

4. Communicate to senior management any information you learn from the Understanding Issues activities that applies to the organization as a whole. Help initiate cross-functional focus groups to examine the issue on a larger scale. Consider using an external consultant to help the group get past defenses and to identify the root causes of a lack of pride.

5. Involve your employees in determining what changes are needed if what you learn from the Understanding Issues activities applies more uniquely to your work unit. Once you understand what would make people proud to say they work at your organization, you can begin planning where changes need to be made.
6. Discuss the two meanings of this sentence with your employees: We do good work. It means that 1) work is well done and 2) the work is meaningful. After the discussion, create with your employees a statement for your work unit that expresses what you are all committed to achieving. Examples include, “We do excellent work. We provide excellent service.”

7. Be obsessed with quality. Show that you, as a manager, are focused on quality, that you expect everyone on your team to be focused on quality, and that you will provide the resources and the support for the team to provide that quality.

8. Establish metrics for quality that show how well you are providing products and services that delight the customer by using efficient and effective methods of execution. Get buy-in from your team for these metrics, and check your progress on them regularly. Posting a chart in an open area, showing ratings on customer satisfaction surveys or percent of deliverables on-time and error-free, is helpful.

9. Develop an “Occurrence System” to track, monitor, and plan future prevention for errors in your work systems or processes. Classify errors into three types: Type 1 is an error that you send outside your organization for process improvement, Type 2 is an error that you send to another department, and Type 3 is an error requiring rework within your department. In planning future prevention, remember that 80% of errors come from faulty systems/processes, not faulty people.

10. Consider a promotional activity if your work unit believes the wider community misunderstands the value of your organization and this is the reason they are not proud. The activity could be giving talks to high school students on career day, sponsoring a booth at a local health fair, putting up a display in the library, or holding a “bring-your-child-to-work” day. Involving your work unit in preparing for this activity will create a focus on what people are proud about.

11. Ask your employees how they feel about the organization’s ethics. If your employees have any concerns, ask for specifics about what the organization is doing or not doing that they perceive as unethical. The problem may be substantive or it may be that your employees need additional information to support the organization’s actions. Consider having someone from senior management or HR have a discussion with your employees regarding these issues and address their concerns.

(MI 111)
Survey Item:  I would like to be working at this organization three years from now.

Survey Domain and Theme: Engagement Indicator

Understanding the Issue: Engagement Indicators (EI) are unique items that measure the employee’s emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization. While the score is an indication of how committed your employees are to the organization, the item is not easy to address directly. Often, the best way to act upon an EI item is to focus on low scoring items in the three primary Domains: Organization, Manager, and Employee. The items in these domains represent the key drivers of individual employee engagement—the workforce issues that influence employee engagement. Items in these domains are more directly actionable, and improving performance on them will improve performance of EI items as well. For this reason, ideas for improvement on EI items are often tied to other survey item topics.

Employees who say they would like to stick around are more likely to actually stick around. Retention benefits you as a manager in three ways: 1) the “intellectual value” of your work unit will be greater, so more and better work can be done; 2) your customer group will be more satisfied; and 3) you will avoid the high cost of employee turnover.

Improvement Ideas:

1. Compare the score of this specific Engagement Indicator to the overall work unit Engagement Score as well as to the scores of the other EI items) provided with your survey results (there are about six such items included in your survey). If this performance score is significantly lower than the overall engagement score or the other Engagement Indicators, then you may have a specific challenge related to this aspect of engagement. Most likely, this will not be the case though. The overall and individual Engagement Indicator item scores more frequently track together.

2. Review the Key Drivers of employee engagement included in your survey results. These items are the ones most significantly influencing your overall Employee Engagement score. Those items with the lowest scores should be your top priority to address. By improving in these areas, your Engagement Indicators scores should see positive results in future surveys.

3. In addition to identifying and addressing influencers of employee engagement (the Key Drivers) you may want to gain a better understanding of the issues behind the scores though open discussions with your employees…. If you do not feel comfortable leading this discussion consider utilizing an outside facilitator provided by your Human Resources department. The objective is to identify the set of issues influencing engagement– not to deal with the Engagement score itself since it is a result, not the cause.

4. Hire people who are a good fit for the work and who know what it will entail. Getting the right people in the door is the first step.

5. Create a work unit environment that makes people want to stay. Some policies and decisions may exist at the organizational level over which you, as a manager, have minimal control. However, the application and explanation of those policies are in your
hands. Think of yourself as a filter through which your employees get much of their perception of your organization. Be a filter that contributes positively to your work unit culture.

6. Communicate, communicate, communicate. Be as open as you can about the organization's financial situation, strategies, and the business itself. Open communication helps employees feel they are trusted and respected.

7. Let people know their contributions are valued. Use any opportunity to make the connection between what employees do and the positive outcomes for the organization. Make sure to include both financial results (for example, "your suggestion led to a larger profit this quarter") and more abstract results (for example, "your work exemplifies our mission of building healthier communities").

8. Emphasize employee autonomy. People tend to be happier and more interested in staying when they have more control. Keep supervision to the minimum possible.

9. Show your concern for work-personal life balance. Today's employees care about their employer's respect for the areas of life outside the job. Create the circumstances where people can feel fulfilled beyond their work. Employees appreciate flexible scheduling, purchase of personal productivity devices, allowances for activities during the typical work day in exchange for some evening work, etc.

10. Pay attention to career development and growth opportunities for your employees. Press Ganey's research shows that employees who score this item low, but are otherwise satisfied and are high performers, are often those who place a high premium on learning and advancing.

11. Challenge your employees to grow professionally and personally. People are more likely to stay in an environment that allows them to develop new and existing skills. Show your trust by assigning larger responsibilities to the employees you want to retain.

12. Make retaining quality employees a primary goal of your job as a manager. As you are scheduling work flow and going through your daily activities, ask yourself, "Am I acting in ways that will help to retain my good and excellent performers?"

(MI 271)
Survey Item:  I would stay with this organization if offered a similar job elsewhere for slightly higher pay.

Survey Domain and Theme:  Engagement Indicator

Understanding the Issue:  Engagement Indicators (EI) are unique items that measure the employee’s emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization. While the score is an indication of how committed your employees are to the organization, the item is not easy to address directly. Often, the best way to act upon an EI item is to focus on low scoring items in the three primary Domains: Organization, Manager, and Employee. The items in these domains represent the key drivers of individual employee engagement—the workforce issues that influence employee engagement. Items in these domains are more directly actionable, and improving performance on them will improve performance of EI items as well. For this reason, ideas for improvement on EI items are often tied to other survey item topics.

Retaining employees helps you, the manager, in three ways: 1) the “intellectual value” of your work unit will be greater, so more and better work can be done, 2) your customer group will be more satisfied, and 3) you will avoid the high cost of employee turnover.

Improvement Ideas:

1. Compare the score of this specific Engagement Indicator to the overall work unit Engagement Score as well as to the scores of the other EI items) provided with your survey results (there are about six such items included in your survey). If this performance score is significantly lower than the overall engagement score or the other Engagement Indicators, then you may have a specific challenge related to this aspect of engagement. Most likely, this will not be the case though. The overall and individual Engagement Indicator item scores more frequently track together.

2. Review the Key Drivers of employee engagement included in your survey results. These items are the ones most significantly influencing your overall Employee Engagement score. Those items with the lowest scores should be your top priority to address. By improving in these areas, your Engagement Indicators scores should see positive results in future surveys.

3. In addition to identifying and addressing influencers of employee engagement (the Key Drivers) you may want to gain a better understanding of the issues behind the scores through open discussions with your employees…. If you do not feel comfortable leading this discussion consider utilizing an outside facilitator provided by your Human Resources department. The objective is to identify the set of issues influencing engagement—not to deal with the Engagement score itself since it is a result, not the cause.

4. Focus beyond salaries. Often, employees who express a willingness to leave for “slightly higher pay” are looking at other aspects of their job. When completing an Understanding Issues activity, explore the role of benefits in employees’ willingness to leave. If there are insurance, retirement, vacation, or other benefits which your group sees as lacking, communicate this information to your manager and/or HR department and see what changes could be made.
5. Create a work unit environment that makes people want to stay. Some policies and decisions may exist at the organizational level over which you, as a manager, have minimal control. However, the application and explanation of those policies are in your hands. Think of yourself as a filter through which your employees get much of their perception of your organization. Be a filter that contributes positively to your work unit culture.

6. Communicate, communicate, and communicate. Be as open as you can about the organization's financial situation, strategies, and the business itself. Open communication helps employees feel they are trusted and respected.

7. Let people know their contributions are valued. Use any opportunity to make the connection between what employees do and the positive outcomes for the organization. Make sure to include both financial results (for example, item topics. “Your suggestion led to a larger profit this quarter”) and more abstract results (for example, “your work exemplifies our mission of building healthier communities”).

8. Emphasize employee autonomy. People tend to be happier, and more interested in staying, when they have more control. Keep supervision to the minimum possible.

9. Show your concern for work-personal life balance. Today’s employees care about their employer’s respect for the areas of life outside the job. Create the circumstances where people can feel fulfilled beyond their work. Employees appreciate flexible scheduling, purchase of personal productivity devices, allowances for activities during the typical work day in exchange for some evening work, etc.

10. Challenge your employees to grow professionally and personally. People are more likely to stay in an environment that allows them to develop new and existing skills. Show your trust by assigning larger responsibilities to the employees you want to retain.

11. Make retaining quality employees a primary goal of your job as manager. As you are scheduling work flow and going through your daily activities, ask yourself, “Am I acting in ways that will help to retain my good and excellent performers?”

(MI 811)
Creating Action Plans for Employee Surveys

Great ideas work only when they are put into action. However, before taking action, careful thought should be given to creating a strategy that ensures success. Following the action planning steps below will improve the chances your ideas for improvement become reality.

The Action Planning Process

Building an effective action plan involves the following steps.

1. Select a survey item. Confirm that the survey item or group of items, selected is closely related to the issue you want to address. Typically these items will be those with lower performance scores and items, but you may identify other items.

2. Define the issue. What is the situation or problem you’re attempting to address through action planning? Refer to Understanding Issues in the Employee Action Planning Guide for ideas on how to define the issue.

3. Identify the domain associated with your action. Action Plans are based on specific survey items and are typically related to one of the three domains: Employee, Manager, or Organization. The type of plan may indicate who will be responsible for creating, implementing, and monitoring progress of the action plan.

4. Set a goal. In measurable terms, specify what you hope to accomplish with your plan. The more precise you are in setting a goal, the better your chance of success.

5. Show how you will measure success. Be as specific as possible. Goals should focus on what can be counted or observed (behaviors). You may want to state a goal of improving the scores of specific survey items on the next survey, which is an excellent method of tracking improvement. You may also consider using other measures that enable you to track progress more frequently. The more precise you are in setting goals, the better your chances of tracking progress and creating change.

6. Project a completion date. Set a date by which you expect to complete the entire plan as outlined.

7. List action steps. An action plan consists of a series of steps to be taken to achieve the stated goal. Avoid vague statements such as “Improve the performance appraisal system by rewriting it” or “Develop a new performance appraisal system.” Global missions like these are more difficult to achieve and evaluate. You can break steps down into smaller tasks, especially if they are to be assigned to different group members. For all actions, be sure to get the group’s consensus that improvement is needed and resources committed to addressing the issue. Figure 1 shows an example of a physician action plan created on Press Ganey’s online action planning system.

8. Identify who is responsible. For each action step, identify an individual who will be held accountable for ensuring its completion. Enthusiastic employees and physicians often throw out ideas or volunteer to take immediate actions. Just be sure to evaluate all ideas carefully and make sure they fit the overall improvement strategy. Make sure everyone involved in the action planning has a clear understanding of what will be done and by whom.

9. Show how you’ll measure step completion. Make sure you and other stakeholders in the process agree on what constitutes successful completion of a given task.

10. Establish projected step completion dates. Once assignments have been made, individuals should commit to realistic deadlines to specific actions. Make sure the individual dates do not exceed your overall timeline for completion.
11. **Track actual completion dates.** Finish dates should be documented as soon as an action is completed so that you can adjust the schedule when steps are completed earlier or later than expected. Some actions are interrelated or dependent on others, and finishing later than planned could have a domino effect on the overall completion date.

Figure 1. An action plan created in Press Ganey’s online action planning system.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Persons Responsible</th>
<th>Success Measure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Reduce the turnaround time for lab studies by involving all lab staff in a quality improvement initiative.</td>
<td>Director of Laboratory Services</td>
<td>Real reduction in time required for studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Improve the coordination of blood drawing with patient visits. This will limit the number of patient visit and prevent delays in results to physicians.</td>
<td>Director of Laboratory Services</td>
<td>Physicians receive lab studies/results more rapidly from the point of the initial patient visit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Simplify the reporting of lab results to promote enable more efficient interpretation by physicians—our current forms/reports seem cumbersome in comparison to other lab reports.</td>
<td>Director of Laboratory Services and Lab Quality Assurance Coordinator</td>
<td>Reduction in post-study questions and/or consults with physicians following the delivery of results.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Use a laboratory log to record when studies are finalized and incorporate these results from computerized lab systems into the medical record.</td>
<td>Lab Quality Assurance Coordinator</td>
<td>Reduction in status requests from providers/office.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please be sure to save this action plan by clicking 'Save' or 'Save as Complete' at the bottom of this page.