

Beverly S. Shelley  
CPM Project

**S. C. STATE LIBRARY**

**SEP 11 2004**

**STATE DOCUMENTS**

**Project Ask: A Satisfaction Survey of Employees  
of the South Carolina Department  
of Parks, Recreation & Tourism**

**Beverly Shelley  
Director of Tourism Sales  
South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism  
1205 Pendleton Street, Suite 112  
Columbia, SC 29201  
Phone: 803-734-0126  
E-mail: [bshelley@scprt.com](mailto:bshelley@scprt.com)**

Project Paper  
Submitted February 7, 2003

**Project Ask: A Satisfaction Survey of Employees of  
The South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism**

**Introduction**

Two years ago, the South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism (SCPRT) adopted the Malcolm Baldrige model as a framework for accomplishing the agency's legislatively mandated mission. As part of that process, SCPRT developed a strategic plan for the agency. Goal 5 of the agency's strategic plan states that the agency will "*have a trained, motivated, diverse workforce.*" The plan further states "*the Human Resource Management Office must continuously evaluate and assess employee satisfaction, increase cultural competency of the workforce and make efforts to recruit and retain employees supportive of SCPRT's mission.*"<sup>1</sup> One of the strategies agency leadership identified to help achieve Goal 5 is to develop and implement a plan for addressing employee satisfaction.

Meanwhile, the agency also completes an annual accountability report, which is another facet of the Malcolm Baldrige system. Category 5 of the annual accountability report addresses the issue of human resources. Specifically, Question 5.4 of the South Carolina state agency reporting criteria asks, "*What formal and/or informal assessment methods and measures do you use to determine employee well-being, satisfaction, and motivation?*"<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism, SCPRT Strategic Plan, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism Annual Accountability Report, Fiscal Year 2001-2002, p. 31.

This CPM project evolved as a logical next step in support of both the agency's strategic plan and the annual accountability report.

### **Purpose of Project**

The purpose of this project is to develop and conduct a satisfaction survey of full-time SCPRT employees. The survey will serve as the agency's formal assessment method for measuring employee well-being, satisfaction and motivation, in line with the Malcolm Baldrige system, which calls for on-going assessment. The survey and the continuous improvement process that should be initiated based on the survey results will be an important component for achieving SCPRT's strategic goal to have "a trained, motivated, diverse workforce."

Survey results will provide baseline data about employee satisfaction and should be analyzed to identify opportunities for improvement. Once areas needing improvement are identified, strategies should be developed to address needed improvements. This project serves as a starting point for implementing a continuous improvement process in the area of employee satisfaction at SCPRT. The on-going cycle should include periodic surveys of employees; analysis of data to identify strengths and weaknesses; the development and implementation of strategies to improve weaknesses; and comparative analysis to evaluate strategy effectiveness.

### **What the Experts Say**

An article in the June 2002 issue of Training magazine explores the value of conducting regular employee satisfaction surveys. *"If you want to know what your employees think about the way your company is being run, then you need to undertake*

*regular climate or employee attitude surveys....Climate surveys can certainly help your company get a handle on employee morale, not solely after major events such as downsizing, merger or acquisition, but also to give you the heads-up on issues that – if acted on immediately – can be avoided, or at the very least, rectified, involving less time, money and other scarce resources.”*<sup>3</sup>

The article emphasizes that such surveys are not merely “*nice things to do to demonstrate to your employees that their voices are being heard. Indeed, such an attitude can seriously erode employees’ trust and their willingness to participate in future surveys if your organization just sees this as a way to look caring and communicative, with no intention of doing anything about the results – all of which would be a shame, since climate surveys can highlight the levers for change that align what actually does happen in your organization with what senior management expects to happen...*

*Changing things based on the results not only improves the climate but also the culture, because you’re sending out cues that lead people to think and behave in more constructive ways.”*<sup>4</sup>

The article reports that a benefit of conducting employee satisfaction surveys is that “*you give your employees a voice, they feel better and more committed to the company.”*<sup>5</sup> It suggests that organizations “*rectify a few things*”<sup>6</sup> rather than try to tackle every issue

---

<sup>3</sup> Training, June 2002, What’s going on in your company? If you don’t ask, you’ll never know, p. 30-35.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

addressed in the survey. The article points out that “*climate surveys are really only the beginning, not the end.*”<sup>7</sup>

A companion article in the same issue of Training provides succinct recommendations for conducting a successful survey. Those recommendations, condensed from the book Employee Surveys That Make a Difference written by Joe Folkman, are as follows:

- The organization should make a commitment to using the survey results to make positive changes;
- The survey instrument should not be too long; it should cover issues, that if improved, would improve the organization’s performance;
- Only query and measure on issues the organization is willing to address;
- Analyze the responses more fully through interviews and focus groups to get to the root causes;
- Build a database so that results can be compared from year to year to monitor progress; and
- Make the survey and the continuous improvement process a standard procedure within the organization.<sup>8</sup>

### **Project Development and Implementation**

This CPM project had three distinct phases: selecting the appropriate survey instrument; conducting the survey; and analyzing the results.

---

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

Selecting the appropriate survey was a time-consuming step. In order to foster buy-in to the SCPRT Employee Satisfaction Survey, the survey instrument selection process was an open process that encouraged input from across the agency leadership. Specifically, two deputy directors, four division directors and nine office directors were invited to comment on the survey instrument options. Two potential survey instruments were considered: the Gallup Organization's Workplace Survey and the Government Agency Employee Survey, which is included as a template in Perseus Survey Solutions software. Ultimately, a modified version of the Government Agency Employee Survey was developed and used. **(See Appendix A)**

The survey instrument was modified to eliminate questions which the agency was either unprepared or unable to address. For example, a question about employee satisfaction regarding benefits was eliminated because SCPRT does not directly control employee benefits. Additionally, a question regarding compensation was removed because in these fiscally challenging times, SCPRT is not in a position to positively impact employee attitude about pay. Demographic questions about gender, race, income, etc., were included at the beginning of the survey rather than at the end to increase the likelihood that respondents would answer these questions. The leadership group elected not to include a question that would have identified employee responses based on the division in which they work, expressing concern that this level of identification might negatively impact participation. However, several questions that identified State Park Service personnel were included at the request of that program's Division Director and

Office Director. The State Park Service program has the single largest number of employees of any program in the agency.

Because of the number of employees SCPRT has and because the employees are scattered among more than 50 locations, the logistics of conducting the survey could have posed some challenges. However, technology facilitated the process significantly.

Through the use of the agency's internal e-mail system, employees were notified about the survey several days prior to when the survey was distributed. The initial communication from the agency's deputy directors announced the survey, encouraged participation and advised staff that responses would be anonymous. **(See Appendix B)**

The second e-mail communication about the survey again communicated its purpose, provided a deadline for completion, encouraged participation and provided a web link to the survey. **(See Appendix C)** The survey period spanned two work weeks to allow ample time for employees to respond. A reminder e-mail communication was distributed at the mid-way point of the survey period to encourage participation. **(See Appendix D)**

Employees with computer access were asked to complete the survey on-line. Employees in the state parks who either lacked access to a computer and/or lacked the computer skills necessary to complete the on-line survey were provided a printed copy of the survey along with a pre-addressed, postage paid envelope in which to return it. Approximately 70 percent of all of the completed surveys were filled out on-line, minimizing the amount of data entry that was necessary.

Analysis of the data also was assisted through the use of technology. The Perseus Survey Solutions software tabulates aggregate results and presents the data in a variety of

optional chart formats. Additionally, the software's database can be manipulated to filter data based on specific criteria. For example, for the purpose of this CPM project, the data was sorted to show and chart the responses of SCPRT's central office employees. It was also sorted to show and chart only the responses of SCPRT employees who work in park and welcome center field locations. Sorting the data by these two subgroups and comparing the results helped identify differences in the level of satisfaction among these two groups on certain topics in the survey.

The software allows the user to filter and sort the data. Although not as a part of this CPM project, the responses could be sorted and compared many different ways. The agency could look at differences in the responses of male employees compared to those of female employees or the responses of white employees compared to African-American employees. With even more extensive filtering of the data, the software would allow SCPRT to compare the responses of field staff in the state park program with those of field staff who work in the welcome center program to identify any variances in opinions of these two groups – which are units of two separate divisions within the agency. (This more detailed level of analysis will occur after the completion of this CPM project.)

### **Survey Findings**

Survey participation was high. Of 519 permanent, full-time employees, 392, or 75 percent, completed the survey. Among the 139 employees who work in the central office, 109, or 78 percent completed the survey. And, of the 380 employees who work in park and welcome center field locations, 276, or 72 percent, completed the survey.

The survey identified both strengths and opportunities for improvement within SCPRT. **Appendix E** provides an at-a-glance look at the results of the survey's core questions. The graphic charts the percentage of positive responses of all respondents and of two primary subgroups: the central office staff and the field staff.

Overall, SCPRT employees like working for the agency and are motivated to see the agency succeed. Employees said the agency does a reasonably good job communicating its goals and objectives. The majority of employees feel empowered to take independent action when necessary, and they feel they have enough freedom in their jobs to do what is right for the public. The majority say they have the equipment they need to do their jobs. The majority also say they have adequate training to perform their job duties.

The responses to three survey questions stand out significantly and may identify real or perceived weaknesses within the organization. Those questions focused on:

- **Job stress:** 21.6 percent selected 4 or 5 (with 5 representing not at all stressful) when reporting the stress level of their jobs; 38.1 percent selected the neutral response; and 40.2 percent rated their job stress at 1 or 2 (with 1 representing extremely stressful.)
- **Opportunities for advancement:** 23.8 percent of respondents rated the opportunity for advancement as excellent or near excellent; 35.8 percent selected the neutral response; and 40.4 percent selected 1 or 2 (with 1 representing poor.)
- **Individual recognition:** 42.7 percent of respondents said they are always or usually recognized as individuals.

Meanwhile, responses to several other questions point to areas that may also be perceived as needing improvement. Those questions focused on:

- **Quality of training:** 60.9 percent of respondents rated the training opportunities at SCPRT as excellent or nearly excellent.
- **Job performance feedback:** About 63.8 percent feel their manager “always or usually” gives them feedback on their job performance; and,
- **Credit for accomplishments:** 66 percent say their managers “always or usually” give them credit for their accomplishments. (The opinion of the central office respondents drives up the overall average response to this question; field staff are less positive in their response to this question.) (See **Appendix E**)

Comparing the responses of central office employees to those of employees in field locations points out several noteworthy differences in how these two groups view specific topics. (See **Appendix E**) A smaller percentage of field staff employees selected positive responses to most of the core survey questions. Field staff were less positive in their responses to the questions about:

- individual employee recognition;
- managers communicating about department activity and performance;
- managers giving credit for accomplishments;
- about having adequate equipment to perform one’s job function;
- having adequate training to perform one’s job; and
- the quality of agency-provided training.

Three questions in particular drew a higher percentage of positive responses among field staff than among central office staff:

- A slightly higher percentage of field staff expressed confidence that they have the freedom to take independent action when necessary;
- A slightly higher percentage rated their job stress as very low or not at all stressful;
- A slightly higher percentage rated professional advancement opportunities at SCPRT as excellent or nearly excellent.

The survey included the following open-ended question, “*What could be done to make SCPRT a better place for our employees?*” (See **Appendix A**) Many respondents (258 respondents or 40 percent of all survey participants) took the opportunity to share their thoughts. Several themes emerged amid the overall input. The most frequent suggestion focused on better compensation. In addition to better overall compensation, many employees suggested that pay increases should be merit-based – including pay for above average performance and pay for additional training – rather than an across the board increase for all employees. Other recurring themes included a desire for more employee recognition; improved communication vertically and horizontally through the agency; additional staff to operate field locations; and opportunities for advancement. Several themes specific to the State Park Service program also emerged, including: a need for improved housing for resident park employees; benefits for long-term, full-time temporary employees; quicker turn-around time for delivery of uniforms; more career

path opportunities within the park system; and well-communicated and fairer process for internal promotions.

### **Recommendations**

Best practices and common sense point to several next steps and recommendations:

- Survey results should be shared with all agency staff.
- Responses of other relevant subgroups such as the State Park Service field staff and the Welcome Center field staff should be further analyzed.
- The agency's real and perceived weaknesses as identified through the Employee Satisfaction Survey should be further analyzed through the use of focus groups and interviews.
- Strategies should be developed to foster improvement.
- An Employee Satisfaction Survey should be conducted on an annual or semi-annual basis.
- A continuous improvement process focused on employee satisfaction and motivation should be implemented; and
- The SCPRT leadership team should explore the benefits of using the Gallup Organization's Workplace Survey. Use of this standardized survey would allow SCPRT to benchmark the agency's overall health against that of other organizations that use the Gallup survey.

## Appendix A: Survey Instrument

### SCPRT Employee Satisfaction Survey

SCPRT is conducting an agency wide Employee Satisfaction Survey in order to establish baseline data regarding employee satisfaction and to identify areas for improvement throughout the agency.

**Please complete the following survey and return the survey to SCPRT using the postage-paid envelope provided to you by your Park Manager. Please complete and return the survey by Sunday, November 17, 2002.** Please do not put your name on your survey response.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Beverly Shelley  
Director of Tourism Sales, SCPRT

#### **Please answer the following questions:**

##### **How long have you worked for SCPRT?**

- Less than 1 year
- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years
- 21-25 years
- 26 or more years

##### **How long have you been working in your present position?**

- Less than 1 year
- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years
- 21-25 years
- 26 or more years

**Where do you work?**

- In the Central Office in Columbia
- In a field location (such as a park or welcome center)

**Do you work in the SC State Park Service?**

- Yes
- No

**SC State Park Service Employees Only: Please identify which area of the park program you work in:**

- Maintenance Staff
- Interpretive Staff
- Operations Staff

**What is your gender?**

- Male
- Female

**How old are you?**

- Under 20 years
- 20 - 29
- 30 - 39
- 40 - 49
- 50 - 59
- 60+

**Which of the following best represents the highest level of education that you have completed?**

- Some high school or less
- High school graduate
- Attended some college
- Associates degree
- Bachelors degree
- Post-college graduate

**With which of the following groups do you most identify?**

- African-American/Black
- Asian-American or Pacific Islander
- Hispanic/Latino
- Native American
- White
- Other

**Which of the following best describes your annual salary you received from SCPRT in the past 12 months?**

- Under \$19,999
- \$20,000 - \$24,999
- \$25,000 - \$29,999
- \$30,000 - \$35,999
- \$36,000 - \$39,999
- \$40,000 - \$45,999
- \$46,000 or more

**Overall, how much do you like working at SCPRT? Please use a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 means "dislike it a lot" and 5 means "like it a lot".**

- 1 - Dislike it a lot
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 - Like it a lot

**How motivated are you to see SCPRT succeed?**

- Very motivated
- Somewhat motivated
- Not very motivated
- Not at all motivated

**How well does SCPRT communicate its goals and objectives within the organization?**

- Always communicates
- Usually communicates
- Sometimes communicates
- Rarely communicates
- Never communicates

**Do you feel that employees are recognized as individuals?**

- Always
- Usually
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

**Do you receive enough opportunity to interact with other employees on a formal level?**

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

**Do you receive enough opportunity to interact with other employees on an informal level?**

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

**How often does your manager communicate to you about your department's activity and performance?**

- Always
- Usually
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

**How often does your manager give you feedback on your job performance?**

- Always
- Usually
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

**Does your manager give you credit for your accomplishments?**

- Always
- Usually
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

**Do you feel that you have enough freedom in your position to take independent action when needed?**

- Yes, all of the time
- Yes, most/some of the time
- No

**Do you feel you have the equipment you need to perform your job function?**

- I strongly agree that I have the equipment needed
- I agree that I have the equipment needed
- I disagree that I have the equipment needed
- I strongly disagree that I have the equipment needed

**Do you feel that you have enough freedom in your position to do what is right for the public?**

- Yes, all of the time

- Yes, most/some of the time
- No
- My work does not directly affect the public

**How many tasks do you have at work?**

- Too many
- Enough
- Not enough

**Do you feel you have been provided adequate training to perform your job duties?**

- Yes
- No

**How would you rate the training opportunities afforded to you by SCPRT?**

- poor
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5- excellent

**How stressful is your job?**

- 1 - extremely stressful
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 - not at all stressful

**How would you rate opportunities for professional advancement at SCPRT?**

- 1 - poor
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5- excellent

**Do you still want to be working at SCPRT 5 years from now?**

- Yes
- No
- Not sure
- Plan to retire within 5 years

**What could be done to make SCPRT a better place for our employees?**

## **Appendix B Preliminary Survey Notification**

Agency wide e-mail sent November 1, 2002 at 1:45 p.m.

Subject: Employee Satisfaction Survey

This month each permanent, full-time employee of SCPRT will be invited to participate in an agency wide Employee Satisfaction Survey. The purpose of the survey is to "take the pulse" of the collective staff. The satisfaction level of employees is an indicator of the overall health of an organization. Certainly, we all know employees *are* the heart of any organization. Without them, the work would not be accomplished.

This will be the first, formal, agency wide employee satisfaction survey to be conducted in SCPRT's recent history. The results will do two things for us. First, it will provide us a baseline from which to make future comparisons about employee satisfaction. And, hopefully, it will give us insight into areas where we need to focus attention and make improvements throughout the agency.

As you know, one of the agency's goals is to have a trained, motivated and diverse workforce. This survey will help us gauge our progress toward this goal.

Participation in the survey is voluntary, and individual survey responses are anonymous. Monday you will receive an email from Beverly Shelley that contains a web link to the survey. Please complete the survey and help us gauge employee satisfaction within SCPRT. Your input is important and will help shape the future of SCPRT.

Thank you.

Ron Carter and Amy Duffy

## **Appendix C Survey Notification and web link**

Agency wide e-mail sent November 4, 2002 at 7 a.m.

Subject: Employee Satisfaction Survey -- ACTION REQUESTED BY NOV 17, 2002

TIME SENSITIVE

As you may have read in the e-mail sent Friday from our Deputy Directors, Ron Carter and Amy Duffy, SCPRT is conducting an employee satisfaction survey to establish baseline data about overall employee satisfaction and to identify areas where we may need to continue to make improvements.

This is the first time in recent history that the agency has conducted an employee satisfaction survey. A secondary goal of the initiative is to insure that every full-time, permanent employee is extended the opportunity to participate in the survey. Special arrangements have been made for employees in field locations, who may not have computer access, to complete a hard copy version of the survey.

The results of the survey are important to the future direction of the agency, so your participation is important. Please take time to provide your input by completing the survey. Survey results will be shared after the first of the year.

**Between Monday Nov. 4 and Sunday, Nov. 17, 2002, please take time to click on the following weblink and complete the on-line survey:** <http://gandalf/PRTsurveys/employeesurvey.htm>

Each employee is asked to complete the survey only once.

Thank you for your participation in the survey.

Best regards,

Beverly Shelley  
Director of Tourism Sales  
South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism  
Phone: 803-734-0126 Fax: 803-734-1163  
e-mail: [bshelley@scprt.com](mailto:bshelley@scprt.com)

**Appendix D SCPRT Employee Satisfaction Survey Reminder**

Agency wide e-mail sent November 11, 2002.

Subject: Survey Reminder

The final day for responding to the SCPRT Employee Satisfaction Survey is Sunday, Nov. 17, 2002. If you have not yet completed the on-line survey, please take the opportunity to complete it by clicking on the following web link: <http://gandalf/PRTsurveys/employeesurvey.htm>

Thank you for your participation.

Beverly S. Shelley  
Tourism Sales Office  
South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism  
1205 Pendleton St.  
Columbia, SC 29201  
P: 803-734-0126 F: 803-734-1163  
[bshelley@scprt.com](mailto:bshelley@scprt.com)

## Bibliography

Buckingham, Marcus and Coffman, Curt, (1999). First Break All The Rules, New York; Simon & Schuster.

Perseus Development Corp., (1997-2001). Perseus Survey Solutions User Guide, Braintree, Maine.

Salant, Priscilla and Dillman, Don A., (1994). How To Conduct Your Own Survey, John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Simpson, Liz. (2002). "*What's going on in your company? If you don't ask, you'll never know*" in Training, June 2002.

South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism, (2001). SCPRT Strategic Plan.

South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism, (2002) South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism Annual Accountability Report, Fiscal Year 2001-2002.

Timm, Paul R., and Farr, Rick C., (1994). Business Research: An Informal Guide, Crisp Publications, Inc.