

## How 1 CU Put Employee Morale To Work

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By Michael Bartlett, Reporter

PHOENIX-Happy employees equals happy members.

Many CUs say it, but not many take steps to measure how happy their staff is, much less take steps to improve the in-house level of satisfaction.

One exception is Desert Schools FCU, which received the 2008 Employee Feedback Award from Allegiance. The South Jordan, Utah-based provider of enterprise feedback management said Desert Schools had the highest average response and resolution time to employee feedback among its clients.

According to Brian Gregory, AVP of quality and product management for Desert Schools, the credit union's management looked into employee feedback systems because staff satisfaction "is one of our core corporate initiatives."

Jennifer Godel, Desert Schools' AVP- human resources, agreed, adding, "we want to tap into what the employees are thinking, and we want to get that feedback so we can help improve their work experience to improve the organization."

Desert Schools implemented three Allegiance components: EmployeeVoice, which gathers employee feedback-including suggestions, complaints, or concerns; EmployeePulse, a survey the company says is designed by PhDs to measure employees' satisfaction and "engagement" with the company; and, ActiveSurvey, a survey tool to design, collect and analyze custom surveys for a targeted group of employees.

Chris Cottle, VP of corporate marketing for Allegiance, said the goal of EmployeeVoice is, as the name implies, to hear the "voice" of the employee in real time. "Which is different from what most credit unions are doing," he said. "Most have a yearly employee satisfaction survey, on paper. We want to uncover issues before they start to boil. It is much easier and cost effective to fix something when it is small, before it gets big."

EmployeeVoice is accessed through a company's intranet and gives employees the ability to submit an item of feedback in anonymous or non-anonymous fashion. "A lot of things are not said if employees feel they will be ratted out," he explained. "Employees are terrific at understanding the business and knowing what would benefit the business, but a lot of companies aren't listening. People need to be confident they can give a compliment, comment or complaint."

Desert Schools' Godel and Gregory both reported the credit union's staff has responded well to the three feedback platforms. Godel said word of mouth has been useful because, "Once someone uses it they talk about it with other people. It truly is anonymous, and people have had positive experiences. The system allows feedback and employees are in control."

Gregory said some employees identify themselves while others do not. "EmployeeVoice allows two-way communication without revealing the person's identity, so we get to hear from people who might not otherwise have spoken up," he said. "We have been very quick to get responses back to employees who have made suggestions, which is why we won the award from Allegiance. That also helps encourage the use of the tool." Desert Schools even does regular newsletter articles about the program to continue to nurture it, they added.

Allegiance uses the "Software As A Service" model, providing far more than just updates online or on CD, Cottle said, noting that the software is hosted on Allegiance servers, so everything is always up to date. Customers have a secure log-in that leads them to a customized interface based on the products they bought.

But what do you do with all that data? Cottle said the Allegiance systems make recommendations based on trends analysis. "It can recommend based on the strength or weakness the event will have on engagement," he said, noting that engaged employees have higher productivity. "The credit unions that are going to get ahead are those that recognize the importance of their employee base and the impact on their member base," he added.

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