

When Just Engagement is Not Enough

Delivering Workforce Insights, Meaningful Action, and
Change

CEB Workforce Surveys



Executive Summary

Engagement is critical, but engagement initiatives are largely unsuccessful. HR organizations need to reinvent what they can influence not just to address factors within the HR domain but to uncover strategic insights that will drive the organization's success. This means:

- **Measuring what matters**—Design the survey to not just measure employee perceptions but to uncover more relevant and prescriptive information about how to reach the company's goals.
- **Attracting and retaining the right people**—Understand your employment brand (EVP) and benefits (Total Rewards) to attract and retain the right talent.
- **Translating survey insights into action**—Get the resources and tools to help you apply survey results to drive change and action at the firm level and support managers at the local level.

Find out how leading companies are already using these approaches and how CEB can help.

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If your organization's culture does not actively support your strategy, it is holding you back. The average large organization stands to lose \$9 billion in a five-year period because its organizational culture is preventing good ideas from materializing.

Measure What Matters

Design the survey to not just measure employee perceptions but to uncover more relevant and prescriptive information about how to reach the company's goals.

The design of a workforce survey ultimately determines its power to drive meaningful action. The survey should go beyond telling you whether your workforce is engaged and to what degree. You need to know whether all that engagement is being applied in fruitful ways. Our ClearAdvantage approach looks beyond engagement and assesses two broad types of workforce capabilities:

- **Fundamental business drivers** that every organization must master: engagement, alignment, and agility
- **Strategy-specific capabilities and business priorities** that are the source of an organization's competitive advantage, such as a focus on efficiency, customer-centricity, innovation, or quality

For example, if a business strategy calls for innovation to enter new markets or launch breakthrough products, that strategy calls for a workforce that is open to new ideas, willing to challenge the status quo, and tolerant of failed innovation attempts. If a business strategy hinges on being the low-cost provider, managers need a workforce that has a “team over individual” mentality, is comfortable with standardized and centrally coordinated operating processes, and understands that not all customers' requests for customization can be met.

By reframing your survey to measure strategy-specific workforce capabilities, managers automatically put the survey at the center of what matters most to the organization and what leaders have already been asked to deliver.

We drew on our proprietary research on business and workforce performance to unlock the key capabilities that define success, and we created survey content to assess these capabilities.

The workforce survey can be an efficient way to measure whether the culture and capabilities that support a transformation are present in the organization. Managers can preempt cultural pitfalls by using the survey as a leading indicator of transformation-related risk—including those that could derail a transformation effort—or other business priorities the organization is pursuing.



“By adopting the CEB ClearAdvantage model and understanding the connections between engagement, alignment, and agility, we were really able to take what has historically been truly an HR function—the engagement survey—and really turn it into a company-wide communications platform.”

Melanie Steinbach
Chief Human Resources Officer
Milliken & Company

Milliken & Company Improves Employee Alignment to Business Objectives

For 150 years, Milliken & Company has been innovating in specialty chemical, floor covering, and performance materials and has accumulated more than 2,200 US patents and more than 5,000 patents worldwide. Employee engagement had always been central to everything at Milliken, and its leaders wanted to ensure that the workforce was truly engaged and aligned with the company’s business strategy for achieving aggressive growth over the next 10 years.

Challenge

Milliken had been on a transformation journey for several years, but that transformation had largely centered on the bottom line. Despite success on that front, Milliken was having less traction with top-line transformation efforts.

Despite having very high engagement scores, Milliken still was not moving the needle quickly enough on the top-line transformation, and it could see that engagement alone was not giving its leadership enough information to act on. Milliken realized that it needed a survey partner that could help bring enterprise-wide change and a cultural shift that would align its workforce to its growth strategy. It turned to CEB to access the gaps, find cultural misalignments, and make improvements where needed.

Solution

CEB’s ClearAdvantage framework delivered a holistic solution that helped Milliken change its focus from merely administering an engagement survey to:

- Defining engagement more accurately (e.g., pride, energy, and optimism instead of discretionary effort),
- Getting a better understanding of how agile and aligned its workforce was to business goals,
- Layering in business priorities by assessing organization capabilities that CEB research has shown necessary for implementing its strategy,
- Building an employee survey program as an anonymous, optional invitation instead of a tracked requirement, to build employee trust, and
- Enabling the leadership team to turn results into insights and insights into action,

Results

The newly revamped survey was well received by the HR team and Milliken’s associates, exceeding its participation goal by nearly 20%

CEB developed action plans that were shared with the leadership of the company all over the world, ultimately shaping leadership conversations and better enabling HR leaders to provide insights into business problems and issues raised by associates through the survey. This work led to an overhaul of Milliken’s communication strategy as well as the senior leadership’s outreach to manufacturing plants.

Survey insights were also used to develop a campaign that coincided with the company’s 150th anniversary and informed not only the launch of that anniversary celebration but also the company’s strategy for the next 10 years. In the process, Milliken transformed its employee survey from an HR-centric administrative function to a strategic tool that helped drive organizational performance.