MEASURING EMPLOYEE ATTITUDES*

A. OBJECTIVES AND TECHNIQUES


This summary of interviewing methods distinguishes between the guided and unguided techniques, lays down general rules for each, and stresses the usefulness of interviews in improving management's understanding of employee attitudes.

Blankenship, Albert B. *Consumer and opinion research; the questionnaire technique*. New York. Harper & Brothers. 1943. 238 pp. $3.00.

A practical outline of questionnaire methodology covering: (1) statement of the problem—need an informal investigation to define issues; (2) makeup of questionnaire—questions should be unbiased, well-defined, and discriminating; (3) methods of giving—sample should be representative; (4) presentation of results—must check results for validity and use breakdowns with care. Bibliographies are attached to each chapter.


In Part I, practical examples are given both of the difference that wording and context may make in polling, and of the difficulties encountered in measuring attitude intensity. Part II discusses the bias that the background of the interviewer imparts by comparing interview results with a secret ballot.


Extensive experience in measuring employee attitudes leads this pioneer in the field to the conclusion that workers are more interested in individual recognition than pay, promotion, or working conditions. If companies attempt to gear their policies to individual demands, as revealed in attitude surveys, they may avoid the inevitable "class conflict" that results from a purely materialistic view of motivation.

* Items from this list should be ordered directly from the publisher. Addresses are given in connection with each reference.


From a careful examination of both the technique and results of attitude surveys made in his first article, the author concludes that "the specific morale situation can be genuinely understood only if it is seen against the whole background of modern industrial developments and current social disorganization." In the second article he urges that industrial psychology raise its sights from the limited objectives of company sponsored research to the probing of this broader background. Attitude surveys can examine worker reactions not only toward the job but also toward the mores and institutions of the community and thus reveal new insights into the problems of industrial peace. But if such generalized surveys are to be really useful, he points out in the third article, they must avoid the anti-labor bias that has warped almost all public opinion polls on labor issues.

Likert, R. "A technique for the measurement of attitudes." Archives of Psychology (Columbia University, New York 27), 1932. No. 140. 55 pp. $5.00 per volume.

Proposes an attitude scale based on a simple 1-5 rating of carefully selected questions pertaining to a central topic. It is particularly important that the questions are: (1) statements of desire not fact, (2) clearly worded, (3) pertinent to the attitude being measured, (4) discriminating between pros and cons. If questions are so selected, Likert holds, this method will be as valid as the more statistical Thurstone method. Usage appears to bear him out.


The derivation of the standardized Minnesota Scale for the Survey of Opinion is described in detail. While employee reactions are considered in context of the community as a whole rather than just the firm, the report gives excellent methodological examples of the difficulties inherent in measuring opinion, and considerable insight into the factors making for employee adjustment.


A general discussion of the nature of morale and the purposes of measuring it prefaces an outline of the interviewing method, the gen-
eral questionnaire, and the attitude scale. The chapter concludes with a sample questionnaire and some practical suggestions as to how it should be given.

B. Case Studies and Surveys: Methods and Results


A combined program of unguided interviews and questionnaires reveals that the maladjustment of the company’s large staff of engineers arose from a central organization which conflicted with habitual work relations rather than from inadequate pay—a practical demonstration of scientific methodology in action.


A case history of the philosophy, methods, routine, planning and material used by the LeTourneau Company in conducting semi-annual employee polls.

Factory Management and Maintenance. “What the factory worker really thinks,” an annual feature starting in October, 1944, and appearing in autumn issues each subsequent year. 35 cents.

This cross-section sample of worker opinion covers such topics as union regulation, company policy, government activities, and labor goals. While the results must be checked for bias in subject matter, wording, and presentation, the surveys are, on the whole, quite objective and revealing.


Reports two comprehensive surveys made by the O.W.I. in 1942-3 in an attempt to find the reason for low production and high absenteeism rates. Methods used included intensive interviewing, polling, and factual observation.


A survey of 30 companies on 17 basic morale factors leads the author to the conclusion that good morale on the part of the supervisory force
does not mean good morale among the rank and file and that the morale of supervisors is not always superior to that of their subordinates.


A survey of employees, union leaders, and management reveals that workers rate job security higher than compensation, with opportunity and type of work also important. Union leaders and management both rate compensation first with security and job factors further down the line.


Defining morale as including attitude toward the company, the supervision, and the job itself, this questionnaire survey proceeds to analyze the extent to which employment procedure is geared to the development of favorable morale. It finds the shortcomings to include abruptness in the employment office, irregularity in training, careless induction methods.


A carefully constructed and tested attitude scale consisting of 279 single sentence, multiple choice questions reveals that the order of adjustment of factory employees is foremen, clerks, workers. Breakdowns against intelligence and information tests show no correlation between satisfactory adjustment and either ability or knowledge of company policy.


Describes a standard employee morale test widely used by consultants consisting of two sets of multiple choice questions, one designed to measure general attitude, the other reactions to specific factors. Results show that high morale is correlated with a favorable attitude toward supervisors and craft skill, but not with pay or type of work.


Describes the use of organization surveys, both questionnaire and interview, in maintaining the general personnel relations of Sears Roebuck. Surveys are a means not an end; they are useful within a personnel policy that realizes good morale “depends on a complexity of social relations and cannot be achieved by a frontal attack.”