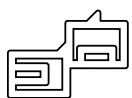
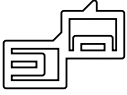


Organisation Climate Guide to Interpretation

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EmployeeSurveyOnline



Organisation Climate – What are we really measuring?

Current issues and long-term characteristics.

- The climate of an organisation is the response of its population to a range of factors that includes physical environment, processes, systems, organisation structure, management style and a myriad of characteristics attached to these major influences. Climate measures pick up on current issues as well as reflecting to an extent long-term dynamics of organisations that could be labelled as cultural characteristics.

As structures, processes and people are changing more frequently, the concept of organisation culture has to some extent been sacrificed.

- The culture of organisations is comprised of long-term characteristics in exactly the same way that ethnic cultures reflect characteristics and traditions that may date back centuries. The difficulty of measuring cultural features in modern organisations is the rate at which organisations change. As structures, processes and people are changing more frequently, the concept of organisation culture has to some extent been sacrificed. The culture of organisations is embedded in the behaviour of its members and in the organisational habits and rituals reinforced through processes and systems.

Our understanding of organisation culture may require modification as a result of a recent trend to the idea of the constantly evolving organisation.

- Constant change of these variables can introduce fundamental shifts in cultural norms via the loss of organisation memory and deliberate engineering to move the organisation onto a new platform of operating rules and values. Our understanding of organisation culture may require modification as a result of a recent trend to the idea of the constantly evolving organisation. The new concept is one which specifically seeks to avoid the pitfalls of cultural norms that may place an organisation at risk in its external environment, precisely because they represent limits on organisational capacity for adaptation.

Climate is a more utilitarian framework for understanding staff response to their working environment.

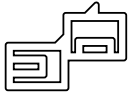
- We may have to accept that climate is a more utilitarian framework for understanding staff response to their working environment. It measures the impact of evolutionary processes, while still being capable of reflecting over time, those enduring features of organisations that probably constitute the culture.

It is not possible to control how individuals respond to the survey statements.

- Climate surveys pose a range of propositions to staff, which address characteristics of the working environment. It is not possible to control how individuals respond to the survey statements. They may base some responses on beliefs they have developed about the organisation and in some cases experiences that are no longer pertinent because of time lapses and organisation changes. Additionally, responses may be more reflective of current conditions in the workplace.

Current and recent experiences probably play a dominant role in the responses.

- The research work that we have carried out with organisational populations following climate studies indicates that current and recent experiences probably play a dominant role in the responses that people provide in climate studies. For this reason climate studies are an effective way of measuring staff response to changing conditions.



The Dynamics of Individual Response

Responses are driven by individual experiences within the organisation.

- When individuals respond to the survey, their rating of each statement will be driven by their experiences within the organisation. The range of experiences varies depending upon the length of time spent in the organisation, the jobs performed and the members of the organisation with whom they work. Those people with long service potentially have a large pool from which to draw their responses. Staff with limited organisation experience (up to 18 months) have less to draw upon and will normally take a more positive position in respect to the quality of the working environment.

People access their experiences as they respond. One experience can affect responses to a number of survey items.

- As people move through a survey form they access these experiences, either as a conscious action or as a more immediate 'gut reaction', which comes from global views that they have of the working environment. For example a statement such as *Managers keep us informed about the likely impact of organisation changes*, a Leadership item, may cause people to access memories of management briefings they have attended, or of informal information passed on by managers in day to day interactions, or they may think about written communications made available on change initiatives. Any or all of these may provoke a given response. But just as readily the same employee could access the same memories to respond to a statement such as *People in my work unit are clear about organisational goals*, which is a statement relating to Goal Clarity, but the origin of the response is the same body of experience.

Results reflect real experiences in organisational settings.

- What is important for organisations to understand is that climate survey results which they see reflected numerically in graph form, are the real experiences of their people in organisational settings. Ultimately it is this that organisations should seek to understand, because it is only at this point that it becomes evident what needs to be done.

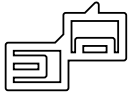
Dimensions of Climate

Dimensions of climate represent clusters of linked survey items.

- The dimensions of climate which are fully explained throughout this guide, represent clusters of survey items that are linked and are designed to collate staff perceptions on consistent themes. Communication, for example, in the Organisation Climate Survey, is concerned with information movement and there are a range of survey statements that ask about different aspects, such as ease of access and timeliness in delivery.

The soundness of the relationship between dimension items determines the extent of reliability.

- A range of correlated survey items constitute each climate dimension and the soundness of the relationship between these items determines the extent of reliability in each dimension. Reliability allows researchers to be more certain about the accuracy of a result and its ability to properly identify real issues within the organisation. The stronger the reliability the fewer responses you need to be certain of the result.



The Design of Survey Statements

Survey design has changed in recent years.

- Thinking about the design of survey items or statements has changed in recent years. Survey designers originally took the view that there was a need to use a roughly equal mix of positively and negatively stated items. Testing has since demonstrated that this is not necessary and it is possible, for example, to use only positively framed statements without damaging the quality of survey responses.

Positive and negative statements offer variety and don't damage survey integrity.

- Participants in surveys at times may offer advice on the use of positive or negative statements in the belief that a negatively stated item will naturally attract a negative response. This is not the case and designers **should not be** concerned about having a mix of positives and negatives.

The OCQ uses positive and negative statements.

- The Organisation Climate Survey has a mix of positive and negative statements. This is a function of the original design of the survey that used both, consistent with design theory at the time. We have continued to use both in new dimensions that we have developed and in some cases this is client driven, however it is a useful device for providing variety to survey participants.

How Scores Convert to Climate Graphs

The rating scale uses a 1–4 scoring mechanism.

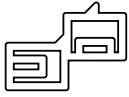
- When an individual responds to a survey item, the response automatically attracts a score from 1 to 4. A 'True' response to an item such as *I usually get information at the time I need it* will attract a score of 4. If the individual had responded 'False', then a score of 1 would have been allocated. In this way all the responses provided by staff are automatically scored as they are entered into the database. The score allocated to each survey item becomes a component of the final score for the dimension.

Each dimension has a raw score range between 6 and 24.

- Each dimension has a raw score range that lies between 6 and 24. The poorest possible view of all statements making up a dimension will yield a score of 6 and the best possible of all the statements will yield a score of 24. Most people of course record scores somewhere between these points and there are occasions when individuals will record extreme views at either end.

Graphs tell the reader where their performance falls in terms of the wider marketplace.

- The raw scores are then placed against the range of raw scores held in the database and the graph tells the reader where the score falls in the marketplace. These are known technically as percentiles and help you to understand whether you are in the lower or upper end of the market. At the 50th percentile you are in the middle of market, however if you are placed at the 65th percentile it means that your score is in the top 35% of scores in the database or the upper 35% of the market.



What is a Good Result?

In climate surveys there are no ideal performance numbers.

- From time to time managers in client organisations have asked us ‘What’s the right number?’ when looking at a set of their results. In climate studies there is no ideal performance number or perfect percentile score. There are preferential positions on different dimensions and these points really define a level of functionality or contribution that the climate dimension will be making to the organisation.

The ability of researchers to create benchmarks that define ideal performance in these circumstances is limited.

- It is important to understand that climate results are derived from the perceptions, experiences and opinions of every employee who completes a survey. In a sense the results are a reflection of vested interests of individual staff and these are given numeric values and then reflected in graph form within the context of the external environment. The ability of researchers to create benchmarks that define ideal performance in these circumstances is limited and there is a substantial element of subjective judgment required. There are some researchers who would maintain that climate is a framework that cannot be benchmarked because of the level of volatility in the factors that comprise climate.

It is more important for organisations to consider the conclusions and inferences that can be drawn from the results.

- It is more important for organisations to consider the conclusions and inferences that can be drawn from the results rather than to utilise a set of benchmarks to make managers feel comfortable or not. Nevertheless, with the exception of Formal Control and Initiative, in broad terms it is healthier for an organisation to be in the upper half of the percentile score range. At these elevated levels the characteristics of the climate dimensions are more likely to be making a positive contribution to the organisation’s functioning.

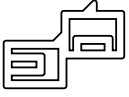
Formal Control and Initiative are more context driven than other dimensions.

- Formal Control and Initiative are more context driven than other dimensions and for this reason it is not possible to define preferred performance ranges in results. In environments such as manufacturing, transport and retail you can expect to find elevated Formal Control scores and moderate to low Initiative scores, precisely because of the business requirements that seek to limit risk factors and rely on control measures. Anomalies in the interpretation of these dimensions are discussed at some length under the relevant headings in this document.

Communication

Key Points

- Communication is one of the climate performance dimensions that is linked to the efficient performance of organisations.
- The dimension is driven by perceptions relating to the effective movement of information.
- Information technology has accelerated the information efficiency demands of staff.
- Key issues in the dimension include:
 - Ease of access to information
 - Speed of response to information requests
 - Managers being seen to share information.



Communication continued

Communication is a dimension that deals with all forms of information movement in an organisation. Our work with organisations across wide ranges of staff groups suggests that employee responses are most heavily influenced by their capacity to access information, which is particularly pertinent to their jobs. Broadly there are three categories of information which are:

1. Information which employees must have in order to their jobs.
2. Information which employees believe they should know or have access to.
3. Information which is nice to know.

Information systems effectiveness.

In environments where information passes primarily through technology systems and PC terminals, the capacity of people to access information through software applications, and the extent to which information databases can be easily accessed and navigated, have a very direct impact on the quality of responses which people record.

Physical environments introduce particular considerations.

In operational environments, such as transport, manufacturing and certain aspects of retail, where access to PC terminals may be difficult, quality of responses is more likely to be driven by written information and information which passes between individuals, although increasingly in these environments employees are gaining access to information via remote terminals.

Timeliness in information movement and capacity to access information.

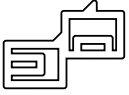
Timeliness in information movement and capacity to access information are two major aspects which will affect responses, however, it is important to understand that peoples' perceptions of the effectiveness of information movement is also driven by the quality of relationships shared between operational divisions, for example, or between corporate service areas. The functionality of organisation cohesion in this regard can also have a direct impact on the quality of responses that people provide.

There is an issue of visibility and the capacity of managers to effectively deliver information.

The role of managers in this particular dimension may not be as dominant as people are inclined to initially believe. Staff tend to have more globally based views about the role of management in information dissemination; that is that they should be generally informative about what is occurring at their level of the organisation, and from time to time should be seen to be directly imparting what is regarded at a management level as important information, to all staff. In this respect there is an issue of visibility and the capacity of managers to effectively deliver information in a way that staff find to be reasonably credible and lead them to believe that there is an element of competence in the way in which managers deal with issues affecting the organisation.

Speed of response in a network system is critical to staff and the 'friendliness' of screen formats and databases.

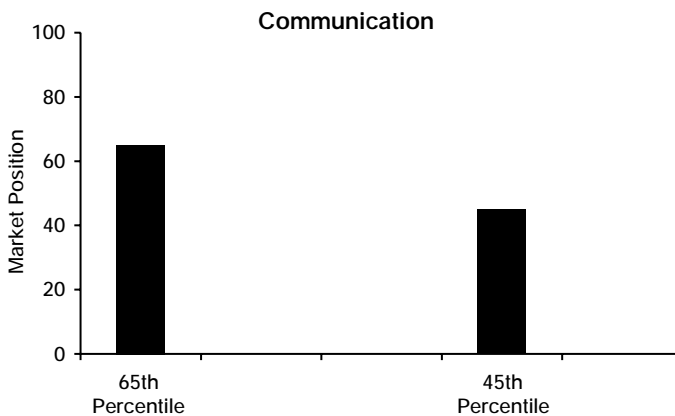
Sensitivity about the effectiveness of information movement has increased in organisations since the quantum leaps made in information technology over the past decade. Staff now expect to be able to work with leading edge hardware and software systems, which are expected to be increasingly useful from a user perspective. Speed of response in a network system is critical to staff, and the 'friendliness' of screen formats and databases are also major considerations.



Communication continued

Media have raised expectations of employees about the right to know information.

The capacity of ordinary people to access information and the level of disclosure about the performance of organisations in the media have raised expectations of employees about the right to know information pertinent to organisations. Under these circumstances the ability of the organisation to provide information of general interest and to manage information during times of organisation stress, will have a bearing on the perceptions that staff develop.



Preferred performance in this dimension would place an organisation in the upper half of market and preferentially in the upper 40% of score ranges, which means the 60th percentile or above. For further specific information about particular drivers that will affect staff responses to this dimension you can access the Climate Improvement Strategies exercise, which can also be directly downloaded from the website.

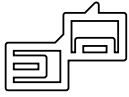
Formal Control

Key Points

- The dimension is largely independent of other climate factors and rising scores tend to drive Initiative scores down.
- High risk environments often derive stronger scores reflecting concerns over the operational need to limit risk damage.
- Prevalent styles of management have an impact on responses.
- Elevated scores can reflect more conservative, controlling and conformist characteristics.
- Low control models of management enjoy a level of popularity among management theorists.

Rules, regulations, policies and procedures.

This dimension is very much about rules, regulations, policies and procedures, which impact on the performance of systems and operations within an organisation. Responses in the dimension can be affected not only by the existence of these things, but also by the extent of emphasis that people see management as placing on the operation of these devices. In this regard there are aspects of staff responses that will be affected by styles of management that operate within the organisation.



Formal Control continued

Operational environments have higher needs in control.

There are certain environments in which researchers expect to find relatively elevated scores in this dimension. These include transport, retail and manufacturing, or like environments in which there is a strong focus around the importance of operational rules, which are put in place specifically to minimise the consequence of risk factors should they eventuate. In short, there are environments that can be regarded as low risk taking environments, and in these environments it is not uncommon to find that scores will place the organisation above the 50th percentile, in the upper half of market.

Formal Control scores will fall as you move up the managerial ladder.

When results from an organisation climate survey are examined, it is usual to find that Formal Control scores will fall as you move up the managerial ladder, and that scores will be highest amongst those in direct operational roles and lowest amongst those at a general management level.

The need for control varies between job functions.

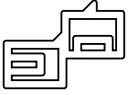
Certain types of job functions will also have a direct impact on the nature of scores that people provide. Functions such as sales and marketing, information technology, and professional environments such as legal and research, are normally expected to return relatively low scores in the dimension. The structure of jobs within these types of functions normally require that people exercise a level of independence and responsibility in their work, and consequently these types of employees return quite low scores.

Functionality matters more than benchmarks.

This is a dimension in which there are no preferred performance levels precisely because responses are affected by contextual factors, such as those which have already been discussed. It is worth noting however, that there are potential adverse characteristics to high and low scores in the dimension. In environments where there are strong Formal Control scores, and this reflects long-term characteristics of the culture, then it is possible to find that employees engage largely in conforming behaviours, and in more severe cases may exhibit a lack of willingness to accept levels of individual responsibility; employees may not seek to resolve situations because of the fear of retribution at a management level should their actions prove to be poorly chosen or harshly judged.

There are risks in results being placed at either extreme.

In low control environments it is common to find that individuals exercise wide levels of personal discretion in how they perform their jobs, and consequently present as more dynamic management propositions. Organisations need to be prepared to accept that in these circumstances staff may undertake activities and risks that carry the possibility of adverse impact on the organisation, and that the organisation is prepared in part to tolerate such risks.



Goal Clarity

Key Points

- One of the core climate performance dimensions related to efficient organisational performance.
- Results are driven by individual and organisational issues relating to clarity in work organisation and outcomes.
- The ability of management to define organisational direction has broad impact on staff perceptions.
- The effectiveness of performance management and review activities are directly linked to responses.
- More complex (management and professional) roles often produce poorer scores than operational areas.

Organisational and individual clarity.

This dimension is concerned with the extent of clarity that individuals have about their own job role, and the general understanding they have of the contribution they make to the organisation. Included in the dimension is the capacity of individuals to understand specific objectives for which they are personally responsible, and importantly the extent to which they believe those around them have some degree of clarity about their role within the organisation.

Quality of work planning.

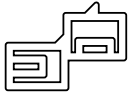
One of the factors that impact on the quality of responses in the dimension is the quality of work planning that occurs within the organisation and the level of diligence among managers in following up with people, reviewing job activities and the attainment of objectives.

Managers need to define directional changes.

Employees are often looking to managers to interpret major shifts or changes in the organisation and certainly to provide an ongoing clarity with respect to organisational direction and position within the marketplace. This aspect for managers is probably one of the most difficult in the dimension, particularly as organisations in more recent years are prone to sudden shifts in strategy and priorities; managers themselves are often left wondering about the true nature of the organisation's direction and priorities.

Clarity tends to decrease as complexity of roles increases.

Scores in this dimension are often strongest among those in straightforward operational roles where there is little doubt about the clarity of their work activities and the type of output they should be producing. It is not uncommon to find the weaker scores among those in managerial occupations, but particularly in corporate service functions where job roles are often much more susceptible to sudden shifts in organisational thinking and strategy implementation. There are some functions that can suffer more than most in respect to traditionally producing poorer Goal Clarity scores, and foremost among these are information technology functions. Responses among these populations are often adversely impacted upon by the process nature of some of the work for which they are responsible, and the intrinsic difficulty which IT functions often experience in completing projects on time and in successful implementation. Inability to meet time constraints and budget constraints are two common complaints in information technology functions, and both of these things have a negative impact on the types of responses which their people will provide in Goal Clarity questions.



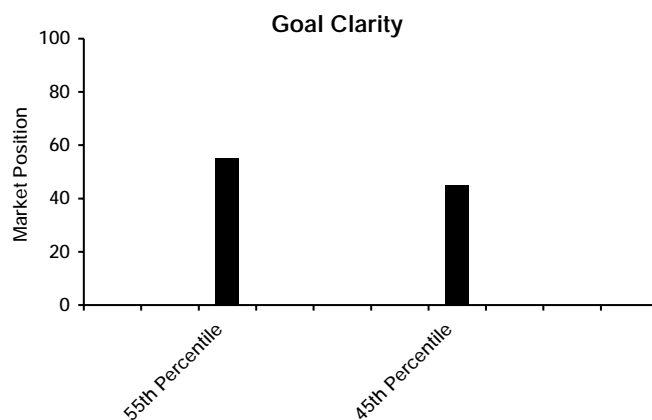
Goal Clarity continued

Change and stress place clarity under pressure.

Organisations undergoing significant change or labouring under duress can find themselves with diminished scores in this dimension. When organisations are under stress it is common for staff to look to senior managers for clarity over issues and clear statements of future direction. Similarly managers elsewhere in the organisation will be expected to provide information and a sense of understanding about the future. While staff may believe that managers should be well informed, the contrary is often true. Additionally, managers may feel constrained in the extent to which they can make firm statements and the result can be growing concern about the direction of the organisation and the impact on staff.

A factor with global impact.

Our own research into the impact of climate factors on organisation performance suggests that this is one of the key dimensions and as such organisations need to place some level of emphasis on this aspect of the working climate.



It is desirable to have scores placed in the upper half of market, above the 50th percentile, however for corporate environments or job roles that are more complex in their activity and output mix, a position around the middle of market is usual. Operational roles with easily understood outputs and well defined activities can be found to score around the 55th to the 60th percentile. For further specific information about particular drivers that will affect staff responses to this dimension you can access the Climate Improvement Strategies exercise, which can also be directly downloaded from the website.

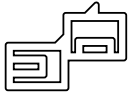
Work Standards

Key Points

- The focus of the dimension is on organisational emphasis related to standards.
- Results are reflective of the effectiveness of standards.
- The quality of resources available to staff has a direct impact on responses.
- Those in operational environments often provide the more reliable results.

Management emphasis.

This dimension is concerned with the level of emphasis people believe management places on the need to perform to specified standards, and deals broadly with the perceptions that people have about standards as they are applied in a quantitative and qualitative sense to work.



Work Standards continued

Are standards improving?

Responses reflect perceptions that employees have about the level of concern placed around the need to improve work standards and indeed the level of examination that takes place around the adequacy of those standards that are accepted as the norm.

Quality resources are important.

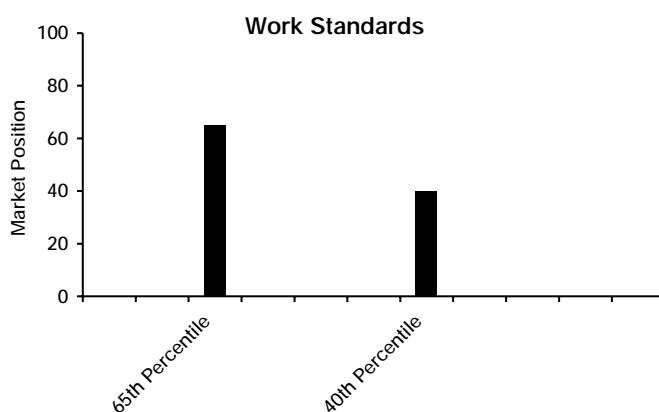
Survey responses in the dimension can be driven by observations that staff have to make about the quality of resources with which they have to work. In this regard, operational environments are particularly susceptible to the views that people have about the adequacy, for example, of capital equipment items. In organisations where technology plays a major role, the performance of computer hardware and software platforms will also have a direct impact on the quality of responses that people will provide.

Consistency in work practices.

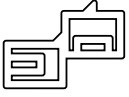
Consistency in the application of work practices is another organisational characteristic that will affect employee responses. Management behaviours, particularly as they relate to the interpretation of standards, is another aspect of organisational behaviour that will impact responses.

Application of standards in operational environments.

The dimension is not a statement on the existence of standards but it is concerned with the operation of standards. Perceptions of staff about the level of commitment in managerial ranks to maintaining and improving standards will impact on the quality of responses. Inconsistent application of standards in operational environments at a management level can rapidly unsettle staff views about the security of standards. Examples of this might include ad hoc changes to risk assessment models in insurance to suit the purposes of premium income, ad hoc changes in commercial lending models in financial services again to suit income demands and substandard raw materials purchase in manufacturing to suit cost reduction demands.



Performance in the dimension should be around the 60th percentile as a base point. In the case of specialised functions that function under specific business rules or are themselves responsible for the maintenance of operating standards elsewhere in the organisation, the 65th percentile and above would be more appropriate. For further specific information about particular drivers that will affect staff responses to this dimension you can access the Climate Improvement Strategies exercise, which can also be directly downloaded from the website.



Initiative

Key Points

- The dimension is often placed inversely to Formal Control, however this is not always the case.
- It is context affected, and high risk operational environments will often produce lower scores.
- In general Initiative scores will rise in conjunction with movement through the organisational hierarchy.
- Management styles will affect scores and the tolerance of management for independent behaviour will encourage strong scores.
- Strong Initiative climates are often characterised by individual accountability and the use of independent discretion in decision making.

This dimension, like Formal Control, has no defined performance parameters and again this is because the dimension is context driven and will vary from environment to environment.

Management style is a determinant.

The dimension is one that provides a measure of the extent of individual work freedom and the capacity of individuals to take personal responsibility for tasks and projects. As is the case for Formal Control, the responses to the dimension are impacted upon by management behaviours, and strong controlling styles of management are likely to produce moderate to low scores in the dimension.

Risk factors and cultural inclination.

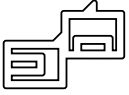
The dimension also provides a level of information about the capacity of the organisation to tolerate independent behaviour on the part of its employees, and this again is also governed to an extent both by the style of local managers and by the underlying characteristics of the organisation's culture. In some cases this may promote the idea that employees should be encouraged to take individual responsibility and be allowed to experiment and initiate ideas of their own. Because this creates a level of risk for the organisation, there are a number of environments that, because of operational imperatives, tend not to promote these values within the business. However this is not to say that it is not possible to find individual organisations of this genre where elevated Initiative scores are a function of pervading cultures that have been established by senior managers.

Job role differences.

Corporate services functions, including senior finance roles, human resources, corporate planning and strategy roles, can often be found to return results that have very elevated Initiative scores; again this tends to be consistent with the requirements that are placed on these types of job roles.

Initiative increases as you move up the organisation.

A general rule of thumb that can be used in interpretation is, the higher you go in the organisation hierarchy, the more you can expect to find increasingly strong Initiative scores. This tends to reflect the intrinsic changes that are taking place in the type of job role and the expectations that the organisation will place on job roles at more senior levels.



Initiative continued

'Good' scores are a qualitative judgement.

As with Formal Control, particularly elevated scores can be an issue for organisations, depending upon where the result can be found. While there may be no issues with finding scores for a strategic planning group at the 75 to 90th percentile range, in other areas, such as payroll and remuneration functions within human resources, this may be regarded as carrying unnecessary risk in terms of the level of freedom that is being provided to people in the decisions that they may be able to make. Certainly in operational areas it pays to inspect the results in this dimension with some care; it can be found from time to time that excessive levels of work freedom in operational groups can indeed lead to consequences from risks that eventuate as a result of accepted rules, procedures or guidelines being breached.

Freedom to act needs to be tempered against operational realities.

The theories about management and management cultures that have developed over the last 20 years support models of management where people are not unnecessarily stifled and have the capacity to contribute to the organisation as a result of utilising their skill and competence base. These attributes are seen as being more positive in terms of their impact for the organisation, however this particular view of organisation cultures needs to be tempered against operational realities.

Recognition

Key Points

- This is a dimension directly affected by the quality of management practices.
- Staff perceptions are also affected by the existence of performance schemes and other instruments/practices that reinforce performance achievement.
- One of the underlying drivers in responses is the extent to which staff believe they are valued.
- When organisations are under stress staff will tend to look for more demonstrative management expressions of appreciation.

Management impact.

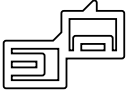
This is a management practices dimension and the quality of staff responses will tend to be strongly influenced by the quality and frequency of contact with their managers/supervisors. The dimension is also impacted upon by wider organisational issues, such as the general structure of remuneration, systems and particularly reward systems that may be in operation; however most of the work that we have done with organisations suggests these are secondary to the issue of management practices.

Acknowledge effort and contribution.

The dimension measures the extent to which employees feel that they are valued by the organisation and acknowledged for the contribution that they have to make to the organisation and of the value that attaches to their effort.

Recognition as a cultural value.

In particular, the dimension provides some feedback on the ability of managers to recognise or acknowledge staff effort when it is beyond standard or normal requirements. Importantly the dimension reflects how staff read the overall cultural balance of the organisation. This takes into account whether the underlying value is one that recognises and values the efforts of staff or whether it is a value that is more inclined to recognise errors in work.



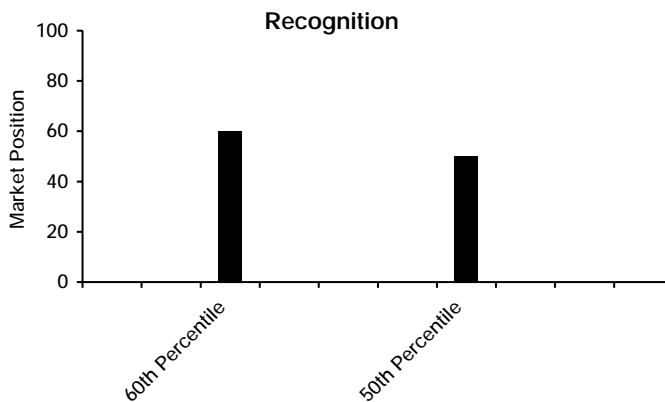
Recognition continued

Under-developed management competence.

The difficulty for organisations in this dimension is that this is an area of management competence in which is not uncommon to find the majority of management populations are under-developed. It is an area for which managers often require specific development and, surprisingly, a high proportion of managers rarely manage to gain anything but rudimentary skills in terms of their ability to provide people with individual feedback in a way that employees find a positive experience. In addition, managers often fail to understand the need to provide informal acknowledgment on a day-to-day basis to their people and, it is this aspect of management behaviour which staff often find most disappointing.

Systemic approaches and refined practices.

In more recent years we have resorted to advising clients that one of the strategies for addressing improvements in these areas is to institute systems of team process, which enable feedback to come to people as a result of their contact with a wide range of team members. This reduces the need to rely strictly upon the efforts of an individual manager or supervisor who may never fully possess the capacity to do so at a level that staff find genuinely acceptable. The systemic approach, which may include remuneration reward components, has some attractive features, including the promise of higher guarantees about the consistency of recognition practice.

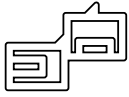


Performance in this dimension above the 50th percentile is a preferred position and indeed in the upper 40% of results, above the 60th percentile is much more preferred as a long-term feature in organisation results. For further specific information about particular drivers that will affect staff responses to this dimension you can access the Climate Improvement Strategies exercise, which can also be directly downloaded from the website.

Working Relationships

Key Points

- This is the most consistent climate performance indicator related to efficient performance.
- Physical environmental characteristics will impact on the status of the dimension.
- Structural features of work groups and employment types (full-time, part-time and casual) also impact on the ability of staff to relate and communicate effectively.
- Significantly reduced perceptions of this dimension will adversely impact other climate dimensions.



Working Relationships continued

Social cohesion is central.

This dimension is one that tends to have a global impact on the impressions, perceptions and opinions that staff develop about the quality of their working environment. Our research, and that of other consultancies, for example in the USA, consistently suggest at an anecdotal and statistical level of analysis, that social cohesion is a factor that has a substantial impact on the perceived quality of the working climate.

Strong correlation with team factors.

Interpretation of this dimension is often done in conjunction with the Team Identification dimension, and the relationship statistically between these two is particularly strong. Growth or decline in one of these dimensions will almost certainly be reflected in the other. The dimension is concerned with, as the term suggests, the quality of relations between people, and tends to measure the extent to which individuals see themselves as being similar and as sharing beliefs and values. In a simple sense it is very much about the extent to which people in the organisation like one another and their ability to cooperate and understand one another.

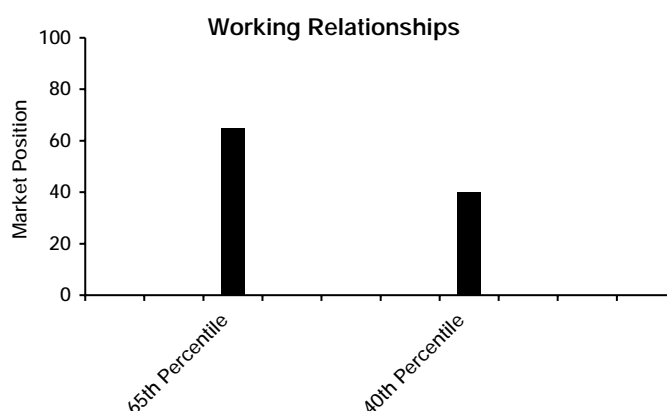
Environmental influences.

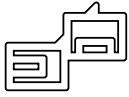
Certain work environments are much more conducive to stronger scores in this dimension, and these include office environments, where physical locations make it easier for people to interact. In these environments work and organisational structures, the type of work being done and the idea of organisational membership, results in people with similar profiles being employed in the organisation.

There are alienating characteristics that make the development of close working relationships somewhat more difficult.

There are environments, such as manufacturing, retail, logistics and transport, where the physical characteristics of the working environment and the organisational characteristics, such as shift work and rotating shifts, tend to have an adverse impact on the quality of scores. This in some respects is a reflection of the social reality that these populations experience, and may be simply highlighting the fact that there are alienating characteristics that make the development of close working relationships somewhat more difficult than in a finance, IT, administration or insurance environments.

There are differences in the kinds of scores that are returned on an industry basis; for example in the insurance, financial services and public service sector it is not unusual to find scores that place organisations in groups at the 60th to the 65th percentile. In these cases researchers can look at results using this as a proxy for an expected industry standard and make their recommendations based on interpretations from this viewpoint.





Working Relationships continued

Other industries, such as retail and transport, cannot expect necessarily to find scores that are equivalent to these. This does not necessarily mean that this becomes an issue for these organisations, but rather, given the nature of their physical and operational arrangements, it is unlikely that views held by staff about social cohesion will ever be as buoyant as those in the other sectors. While this does create issues for these sectors in terms of the sense of organisational and team membership that results, it may not alone limit the capacity of these organisations to function effectively. For further specific information about particular drivers that will affect staff responses to this dimension you can access the Climate Improvement Strategies exercise, which can also be directly downloaded from the website.

Team Identification

Key Points

- **A dimension that is a barometer of the sense of team membership among staff.**
- **Similar to Working Relationships, physical and structural work arrangements will impact on the quality of responses.**
- **Responses are more sensitive to local team conditions and issues, which can be isolated from wider organisational issues.**
- **Management behaviours and the extent to which they favour individuals will impact on the sense of team.**
- **Established team-based processes/rituals are normally associated with stronger scores in the dimension.**

Local team factors.

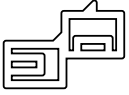
This dimension is one that provides a clear idea of the extent to which people readily identify as a member of a specific group within an organisation, either at a local team level or at a broader divisional level. The dimension more particularly measures local team factors, rather than organisational team factors and the dynamics of relationships between larger groups. Relationships between operating divisions will be reflected in the Organisation Cohesion dimension rather than in this dimension.

The ability of managers to work with people as a group, rather than to work with individuals.

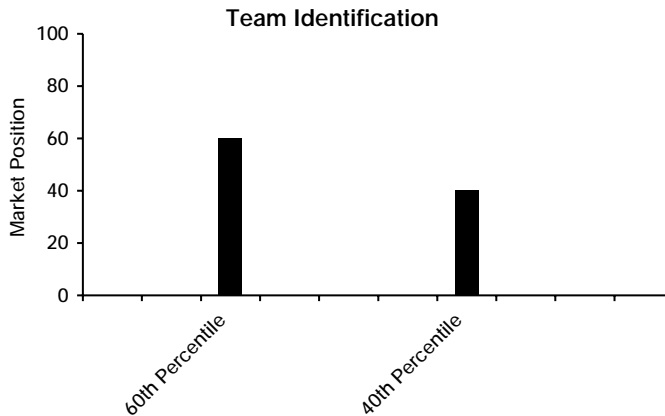
Responses will provide an idea of the extent to which people believe they are able to place reliance on the efforts of those around them and their views about the intrinsic understanding and cooperation that takes place between people in their work efforts. Management practices do have an impact on the scores in this dimension. The ability of managers to work with people as a group, rather than to work with individuals within the group, is an aspect of management practices that will affect the quality of scores. Those managers who have a propensity for individual rather than group management will find that their teams tend to produce lower than average scores in the dimension; in the more extreme cases these managers will be seen as exercising a culture of favouritism, rather than a culture of team effort.

The physical environment and the operational structure will impact on the quality of responses.

As with the Working Relationships dimension, the nature of the physical environment and the operational structure under which people work will impact on the quality of responses. There are environments, such as manufacturing and transport, where individuals function for the majority of their working day in isolation from others and you would not expect necessarily to find strong scores. In cases where you can find environments such as these with elevated scores, it is usual to find that there are specific initiatives or management practices that the organisation promotes in order to maintain a sense of team membership.



Team Identification continued



Performance in the upper half of the percentile ranges, above the 50th percentile, is preferred in this dimension. However, in environments where there are clear limits placed on the quality of responses, scores positioned at around the middle of market position (50th percentile) may not be unusual and may indeed be entirely functional in terms of organisational requirements. For further specific information about particular drivers that will affect staff responses to this dimension you can access the Climate Improvement Strategies exercise, which can also be directly downloaded from the website.

Development Opportunity

Key Points

- The term can be interpreted differently by people to mean general skills/competency development, professional development and specific training and development.
- The outlook for an organisation can impact on the quality of responses.
- Ease of access to development activities is important to staff.
- The visible support of managers is a key foundation for positive responses.

Access to development.

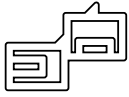
This dimension broadly measures the perceptions that people in the organisation have about their access to development in its various forms. The dimension is unusual in as much as it also addresses the issue of gender in access to opportunity; this sets it apart from other dimensions that remain gender free in the queries that are posed to people.

Access and support.

Items in this dimension test the global view that staff have about broad access to opportunity. More particularly it probes whether they believe there is access to specific training and development activities, and the level of support that can be expected from managers as people attempt to pursue options that are available to them.

Equity of access.

Importantly, the dimension probes the issue of equitable access for gender groups, and asks about the extent to which women are able to address obstacles to development and whether people believe there is a cultural bias which prevents women from being acknowledged in the same way as their male counterparts.



Development Opportunity continued

Discriminating gender positions.

These aspects of the dimension were deliberate in the original design, and they have remained both stable and reliable contributors to overall results in the dimension and remain as core items. We have had instances where men within organisations take exception to the survey specifically addressing issues relating to women, however these incidences are relatively few, and the dimension has broadly been quite successful in being able to discriminate levels of difference in the general positioning that men and woman have with regard to their beliefs about access to development.

Global factors impact general positioning.

In research we have conducted into those factors which lay behind peoples' responses to these particular items, we have come to understand that there are global factors that have some degree of impact on how people respond. In situations where organisations are undergoing substantial change, and where organisations may be having some level of difficulty in terms of their overall performance, it is not unusual to see poorer scores recorded in this dimension. Staff may develop the broad idea that the future of the organisation is under some question, and as a result, their individual careers and career paths may also be under some cloud.

Individual interpretation of the term 'development'.

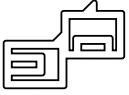
One feature of responses to this dimension is the kind of interpretation that individuals may place upon the concept of development. In some environments staff have very particular views about the type of activity that would characterise development. This may be of a more professional development nature, rather than activities that might be broadly developmental in their general intent. Environments such as professional services firms or specialised public sector organisations such as human services, usually contain audiences that adopt this particular interpretation of the words 'development opportunity'. In the original design of the dimension the position was that it should address development opportunity in the broadest possible sense. However, when interpretation is being undertaken, it is well advised that those presenting results understand the specifics of work environments in which they may be delivering results, and address results accordingly.

Development frameworks well regarded.

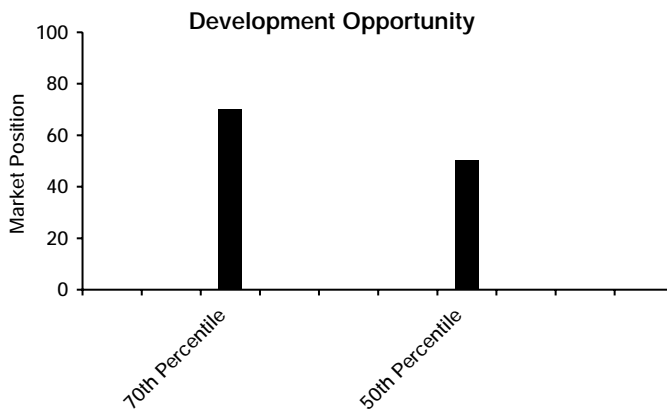
In results we have collected over several years in this dimension, it is apparent that environments where there are clearly identified programs of training and development for staff and schemes that allow staff to enter into tertiary development programs, scores tend to be substantially elevated. In these cases it is not unusual to find organisations placed at around the 65th to the 70th percentile.

Management support.

Individual management behaviours do have an impact on the dimension; there can be instances where staff believe managers create unnecessary obstacles in their attempts to access those channels of opportunity that are made available to them, and in these instances, of course, poorer scores can always be expected.



Development Opportunity continued



In short, if learning and development do not have a reasonable level of visibility in the organisation, and if these processes are not seen to be successful in delivering hard outcomes, then organisations cannot reasonably expect to perform well in the dimension. Scores that produce a performance range between the 55th to the 60th percentile are considered adequate, although the 60th to the 65th percentile is where organisations should be aiming. For further specific information about particular drivers that will affect staff responses to this dimension you can access the Climate Improvement Strategies exercise, which can also be directly downloaded from the website.

Customer/Client Service

Key Points

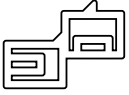
- The dimension is most reliable when tested on staff who are in direct contact with customers/clients.
- The dimension is an internal view of the health of service factors.
- The perceived adequacy of resources will affect responses.
- Management support for service activities is a key issue for staff.
- While views about resources and support can be positive there may still be concern about the quality of the final service outcome for the customers.

The internal service view.

This dimension measures a range of internal views about the quality of customer or client service activities and infrastructure. Ideally the results in this dimension should be compared with the results of external surveys of customers in order to gain an understanding about the nature of differences between internal perceptions and external reality.

Support and commitment.

Items in the dimension seek to establish the extent of agreement on the level of commitment the organisation has towards customer/client service, while investigating the level of management support which staff enjoy for pursuing activities that would ensure that service is delivered within the standards that are regarded as being acceptable.



Customer/Client Service continued

Resources, responsiveness and delivery.

Staff are also asked to comment on the adequacy of resourcing that is in place to ensure customer/client service, and seeks to establish the extent to which management is responsive to staff inputs with regard to customer service/client-based issues. Importantly, the survey asks about internal perceptions of customer dissatisfaction with the organisation's customer service delivery.

Visibility of the service paradigm.

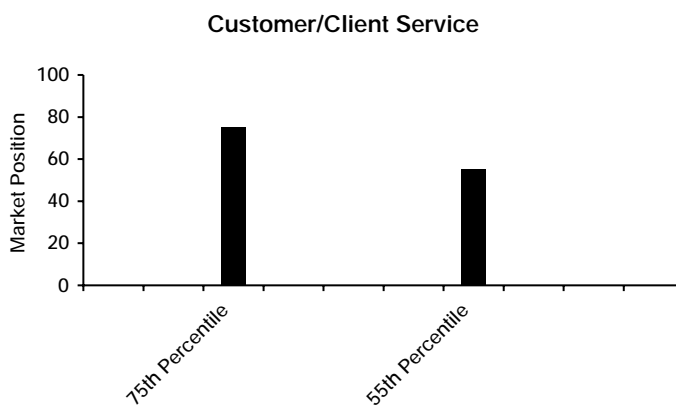
Customer/client service is a topic that continues to enjoy strong visibility in modern organisations. In some respects seeking to establish whether staff believe the organisation has a strong commitment to standards of customer/client service is somewhat redundant, however, the presence of the enquiry is regarded as basic.

Customer/client service experience is critical.

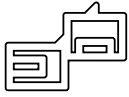
One of the more interesting aspects of this dimension is the level of focus that staff develop about the adequacy of the final service experience from a customer or client perspective. It is not uncommon to find that significant minority populations of staff hold quite a critical view of this aspect, despite the fact that they may hold comparatively positive views about the general health of the service infrastructure. This may be particularly the case among operational populations where they have very direct experience of customer responses.

Operational results your best real indicator.

Operational populations as a whole tend to produce somewhat more reliable results than those in management populations, and often reflect a more critical view of the performance of the organisation in service delivery. Statistically the dimension is in fact more reliable among operational populations, suggesting that the more removed populations become from direct customer/client contact, the more inclined they are towards positive views of the organisation's performance.



In terms of understanding a preferred position in this dimension, the 65th percentile should be regarded as a relatively basic performance level, and organisations ideally should aspire to return results which focus above this point within the database. For further specific information about particular drivers that will affect staff responses to this dimension you can access the Climate Improvement Strategies exercise, which can also be directly downloaded from the website.



Leadership

Key Points

- The dimension is useful as a general indicator of how staff read the quality of management practices.
- Results provide clear indicators to managers of their role in maintaining organisation climate.
- It reviews a range of key management practices that are indicators of the quantity and quality of contact between managers and their people.

Targeting managerial responsibility for climate.

This dimension was originally built to test perceptions that staff have about a range of management practices. This dimension contains the widest range of items within the survey, and this is specifically because it attempts to gather information from a number of different perspectives relating to the performance of managers. The terminology applied to the label of the dimension was deliberate as clients were concerned about having a dimension that would adequately convey to managers the fact that they bear a level of responsibility for the condition of the working climate. The presence of the dimension makes it difficult for managers to maintain that the results of the climate survey in a general sense are more reflective of management, rather than being particularly reflective of their own performance. In this regard the dimension has been relatively successful, and it often serves as a timely reminder for managers about their role in maintaining the health of working climates.

Examining core themes in management practice.

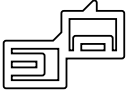
The queries in this dimension examine the core themes in management practice, including the level of encouragement that managers provide to staff for innovation and initiative. It also tests to establish the quality of feedback that people receive from their managers about their performance. Items also address the extent of management support for teamwork, for encouraging improvement in the way in which the organisation functions and, importantly, investigates whether managers appear to help staff understand strategic direction and primary goals pertinent to the wider organisation.

Access and information.

The dimension also tests whether managers provide people with information about organisational changes and the impact that it may have upon them, and attempts to address in a wider sense the level of access that people feel they have to managers and the degree of responsiveness that managers have to direct feedback from their staff.

Accurate reflection of management performance.

The dimension is comprehensive in its coverage of essential management practices, and is a good independent indicator of the general view staff have about the level of management competence. In this regard the dimension often serves to illustrate that other climate dimensions are not always directly tied to the role and performance of managers; for example in the interpretation of results it can be found that while staff have concerns about specific dimensions such as Communication or Working Relationships, these concerns are not necessarily strongly reflected in the responses that they provide to the Leadership dimension. This is specifically because there are particular issues that are driving responses in these other dimensions, which may not be directly attributable to the performance of managers.

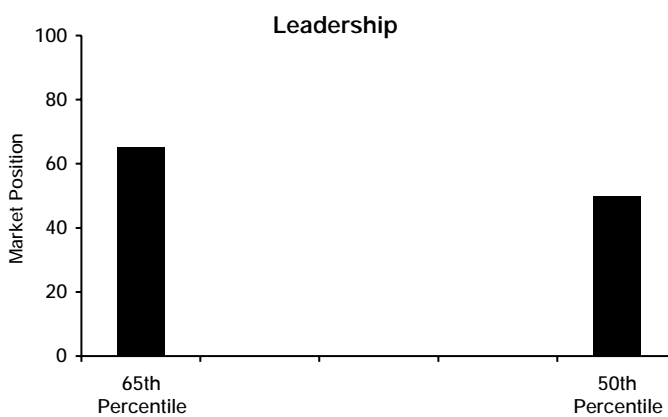


Leadership continued

These distinctions are important and help to avoid misinterpretation about the role of managers in having to address specific climate issues, although it is true to say that managers will always have a role to play in helping to address the resolution of specific climate issues.

Efficient issues analysis.

The comprehensiveness of the dimension makes it possible, when interpreting results, to understand the particular concerns that staff may have about specific management practices. For this reason a thorough reading of item responses is always worthwhile and creates a level of efficiency in isolating specific problems that can be addressed.



Performance between the 55th to the 60th percentile is acceptable, however organisations should be looking at the 60th to 65th percentile range as a more desirable performance level in the long-term. For further specific information about particular drivers that will affect staff responses to this dimension you can access the Climate Improvement Strategies exercise, which can also be directly downloaded from the website.

Organisation Cohesion

Key Points

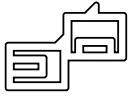
- The dimension is directed towards establishing the quality of relationships between functional groups and teams.
- Results provide insights into the level of functionality in the relationships.
- Responses assist in understanding the differences between desire for cooperation and positive outcomes in the conduct of relationships.

Organisational relationships.

This dimension addresses the quality of relationships shared between operating groups within organisations. At a corporate level this is typically between divisions, while at an operational level it may be the nature of relationships between different teams; this is also the case for divisional populations.

Cooperation and understanding.

The dimension seeks to establish the level of willingness to cooperate between divisions and groups, while also attempting to identify the general level of understanding that exists between groups within the organisation.



Organisation Cohesion continued

Effective information flow.

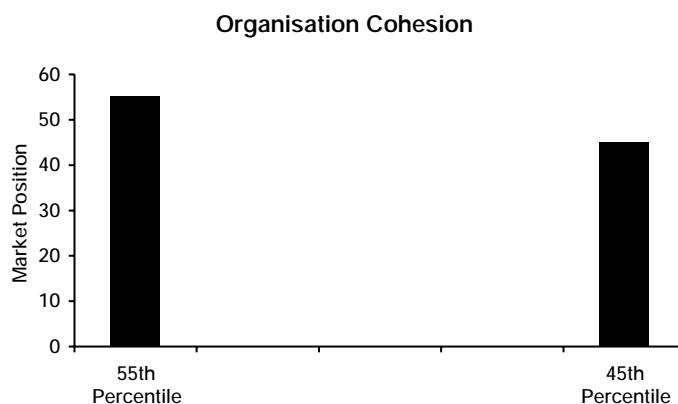
Importantly from the point of view of interpreting results and identifying issues, the dimension is quite useful for establishing the effectiveness of information flow between groups, and tests for responsiveness and timeliness in the movement of information within the broader organisational framework.

Effectively pinpoints issues.

This is a remarkably efficient dimension as it contains only four items, however, it has been consistently reliable in being able to pinpoint the presence of issues and problems in relationships between functional groups.

Desire doesn't match outcomes.

When interpreting results it is not uncommon to find that there are perceived difficulties in the relationship between operating divisions and corporate service functions, and similarly in the relationships between state-based functions and head office functions, and these are classic areas for initial examination. It is not unusual to find that while staff may hold to the view that there is an underlying desire for cooperation between functional groups, there is nevertheless a failure to realise the positive outcome despite the desire for such.



Scores that produce a ranking between the 50th to 55th percentile should be regarded as adequate, however, the upper end towards the 65th percentile is preferred. For further specific information about particular drivers that will affect staff responses to this dimension you can access the Climate Improvement Strategies exercise, which can also be directly downloaded from the website.