



Case Study – The Wedge

Industry: Agribusiness/Food Cooperative

Opportunity: Establish a baseline from which to discern levels of employee accountability, communication and leadership that are necessary to operate and grow the cooperative.

The Challenge:

Tradition in the cooperative movement dictates a respect for people as well as the earth. This vision started with the founding community members of The Wedge Community Co-op in 1974 and has continued as the Minneapolis-based cooperative has grown. It has grown from a neighborhood grocery in a member's basement to a full-scale grocery store with teaching kitchen, leased certified organic farm and field school.

Because members and staff already have a great passion for The Wedge, past employee surveys reported a high level of engagement. However, the organization still experienced challenges with supervisor and employee accountability, interpersonal conflict, communication, scheduling, customer service and turnover.

The Solution:

Two years ago, The Wedge engaged The Bailey Group to conduct an employment survey unlike any they had done before. The resulting action steps have made a significant difference in leadership skills and communication.

Principal Consultant and Licensed Psychologist Barb Krantz Taylor, MA, LP, worked with General Manager Lindy Bannister and the human resources director to define objectives for the survey. By understanding what The Wedge needed to gain from the survey, Barb could design open-ended questions for those concerns. Lindy was looking for a baseline of employee feedback that would back up her instincts about managing the co-op. She didn't want just yes or no answers.

By customizing the survey, The Bailey Group aligned The Wedge objectives with nine key drivers of employee engagement. The results of the survey would determine which drivers were prominent, which were missing and how this impacted engagement and performance.

The Bailey Group set up the survey electronically to allow employees convenient access on their breaks. Results were sent directly to Barb to avoid any perception that management adjusted the results. She reviewed and interpreted the results, then facilitated a presentation to management and employees. Most importantly, she worked with management to determine and implement action steps based on the survey results.

The Results:

Although the general manager had a strong feeling that the co-op had challenges in two departments of the store, she did not share this information with Barb prior to the survey. Even so, Barb's interpretation of survey results pinpointed specific weaknesses in those two departments. She also made recommendations for improvements.

The store implemented communications strategies — based on The Bailey Group's findings and consulting — that have helped supervisors take ownership of their roles, explain expectations and handle conflict more effectively. The co-op also made changes in some departments, some more dramatic than others, and noticed the difference it's made for staff and operations in the past year. They only went forward with these changes because of information provided by The Bailey Group.

Final Thoughts:

"It's been a struggle with some changes. But the employees are also fired up that we took initiative based on their feedback. One of the biggest things I learned is that we are not responsible for everyone's personal happiness, but we can give them a great job. It's up to them if it's a fit.

"The Bailey Group handled the whole survey process seamlessly so it didn't interrupt co-op operations. Their interpretation of the results gave us valid data to make decisions. Barb gets people very, very well. She gave validity to our gut instincts."

Next Steps:

The Wedge will conduct another survey soon, using the same questions, to determine if the changes made since the last survey have improved management effectiveness. Although new employees will take the survey, the co-op expects results to show progress from two years ago.

This client utilized the following services lines The Bailey Group offers:

✓ Align and Engage People to Execute Strategy