

Office of the US Trade Representative

Annual Employee Survey

2008 Results

1. Interpretation of Results:

The 2008 Annual Employee Survey (AES) was conducted from August 1, 2008 to September 26, 2008 through OPM's Federal Human Capital Survey which contained the 40 questions used for the Annual Employee Survey. The AES survey focuses on five main areas: (1) Personal Work Experiences; (2) Recruitment, Development and Retention; (3) Performance Culture; (4) Leadership; and (5) Job Satisfaction.

The response rate for the 2008 survey was 61.8%; this was down 8.2% from the 2007 AES response rate. Annual Employee Responses for 2008 when compared to 2007 responses are mostly positive (favorable), with 34 out of the 40 responses scoring 50% or better and improvements in positive responses in 30 of the 40 questions. USTR also exceeded the government wide positive response rates in 30 of the 40 survey questions.

Questions under "*Personal Work Experience*" yielded an increase in positive responses for all six questions. The most notable increase by 8% over the previous year was on questions 5) "*I have trust and confidence in my supervisor*" and question 6) "*Overall, how good a job do you feel is being done by your immediate supervisor/team leader?*" Note that the increase in positive responses for question 5 was due to employees responding "agree" or "strongly agree" vs. "neither agree" or "disagree" as the negative responses only varied by 1.2% on question 5 and remained the same for question 6 where the increase was due to a switch in responses from "fair" in 2007 to "good" in 2008 yielding the positive increase.

In the second area "*Recruitment, Development and Retention*" there was an increase in positive responses in six of the eight questions. Question 8 "*My work unit is able to recruit people with the right skills*" had a decrease of one percent of positive responses, with a total favorable response rate of 77.6%. However, when analyzing question 7 "*The workforce has the job-relevant knowledge and skills necessary to accomplish organizational goals*" which had a positive increase of 3.9% and a positive response rate of 91.5%, there seems to be a disconnect, as one would presume that those two questions would have a correlation. If the agency is recruiting employees with the right skills, the workforce will have the job-relevant knowledge and skill necessary to accomplish organizational goals. One reason for this may be responses from employees in a division where no recruitment activity took place for the past year. While a 1% decrease is not significant it is important to be aware of all decreases in positive responses.

An area under this section that showed a decrease in its already low positive response rate of 17.2% is question 14 "*My training needs are assessed*", which decreased by 3%. USTR is already addressing this issue through USTR's Human Capital initiatives which

has made training one of its top priorities for 2009. In the last quarter of 2008, a skill assessment and training needs questionnaire was sent to all employees and supervisors under the Mission Critical Occupations (attorneys, policy analysts and administrative assistants) which is being used to develop a training plan to close identified skill gaps. A training budget has also been established and priorities will be set to address skills which are most needed by the staff. One noteworthy increase of 11.9% of positive responses in this area was on question 11 “*Physical conditions (for example, noise level, temperature, lighting, cleanliness in the workplace) allow employees to perform their jobs well*”; this was due to the amount of work the facilities section of the Administration division put into improving work spaces and communal facilities in both buildings this past year.

Under the performance culture there were improvements in positive responses in most areas. There were three areas where we had a decrease in the percentage of positive responses. Question 16, “*In my work unit, steps are taken to deal with a poor performer who cannot or will not improve*” showed a decrease of 3.4 % in positive responses for an overall positive response rate of 26.8%; however, due to the private nature of the issue most employees would either not know about steps taken to correct employee performance nor have a basis to judge as shown by the response rate of 55% in “*neither agree nor disagree*” and “*do not know*”. Another area which yielded an overall positive response rating of 52.1% and a decrease in positive responses of 5.9% was on question 17 “*Creativity and innovation are rewarded*”. One of USTR’s HC Goals is to increase the usage of awards and employee recognition; this was shown at the 2008 USTR Honors Awards Ceremony where several group awards were given out as recognition to employees for their participation in special accomplishments. Unfortunately, the awards ceremony was conducted after the survey took place and therefore we will not see the results of recent recognition changes until next AES in 2009.

Question 19 “*In my work unit, differences in performance are recognized in a meaningful way*” had a decrease in positive responses of 8.1% for an overall positive response rate of 32.8%. This however is not a good representation as negative responses only increased by 1.2%, while “*neither agree nor disagree*” and “*Do Not Know*” accounted for 49.6% of responses. As part of its communication strategy, USTR posts the average performance ratings for all employees including SES and Non-SES on its intranet which is available to all USTR employees.

A factor to note is that while only 32.8% of employees feel differences in performance are recognized in a meaningful manner, 76.9% feel their performance appraisal is a fair reflection of their performance (question 21); one would think that there would be a correlation between these two questions. A question which also yielded a low response rate was question 20 “*pay raises depend on how well employees perform their jobs*” with a positive response rate of 34.6%. USTR is not under pay for performance and most employees are hired at the higher grade levels to serve as “trade experts” and therefore, pay increases are based mostly on within grade and COLA increases limiting the agency’s pay raise flexibility.

The fourth area “Leadership” did better in positive responses from those of the 2007 AES; of the 8 questions under this area, 5 questions had an average increase in positive responses of 6.3%. There were two questions where there was a decrease in positive responses; a significant decrease was on question 29 “*Employees have a feeling of personal empowerment with respect to work processes*”, which had an overall positive response rate of 53% down 10.3 % from last year’s responses. One observation is that while question 29 had a decrease in positive responses, question 34 “*How satisfied are you with your involvement in decisions that affect your work?*” in the job satisfaction section had a positive increase 8.9% and an overall positive response rate of 65.1%. One would think that if an employee has an involvement in decisions that affect their work this would include decisions on work processes. Another slight decrease was on question 30 “*My workload is reasonable*” with an overall positive response rate of 55.9% and a decrease in positive responses of 2%; this is mainly due to the nature of the work and type of mission at USTR.

In the last area under “*Job Satisfaction*” there were only two areas where there was a decrease in positive responses from those of 2007. Question 35 “*How satisfied are you with on your opportunity to get a better job in your organization*” had a decrease of 3.7% in positive responses for a total positive response rate of 39.1%. USTR is a small agency with a limited number of senior positions. Most employees are hired at the highest level due to their “expert” status limiting the career growth potential within the agency. The last four SES vacancies (3 in 2008) were filled by internal USTR employees and 76% of all Career SES at USTR were selected from within USTR, clearly showing that USTR backfills senior positions mostly from within the agency’s bench strength. A question which only yielded a response rate of 22.9% down 5.8% from last year’s positive responses was question 38 “*How satisfied are you with the training you receive for your present job?*”. As stated in the second area, USTR is making training its top HC priority for 2009 and expect to see positive changes for the coming year. Two note worthy increases in positive responses in this area where in question 34 “*How satisfied are you with your involvement in decisions that affect your work?*” and question 36 “*How satisfied are you for the recognition you receive for doing a good job?*” both with an increase of 8.9% each in positive responses.

Responses as shown above suggest that while training remains an issue of concern, the agency is doing significantly better in most of the other areas as compared to responses from the 2007 survey. Most of the areas which had a decrease in positive responses or scored below 50% will be addressed through additional management training, the Human Capital goals and communication strategies. USTR is committed to continuous improvement in its Human Capital processes and will continue to pursue a strong agency performance culture with strong leadership through a commitment in employee and leadership training for 2009.

2. **How the survey was conducted:** The survey was conducted by OPM online from August 1, 2008 until September 26, 2008.
3. **Description of sample:** 186 full-time permanent employees hired prior to January 2008.
4. **Survey items and response choices:** See the tables on following pages.
5. **Number of employees surveyed, number responded, and representativeness of respondents:** Of the 186 employees surveyed 115 responded. A discussion of representativeness is not required for USTR.

**OFFICE OF THE U.S. TRADE REPRESENTATIVE
2008 FEDERAL HUMAN CAPITAL SURVEY RESULTS**

(Survey Administration Period 8/1/08 to 9/26/08)

PERSONAL WORK EXPERIENCES

			Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do Not Know/ No Basis to Judge	Percent Positive	Total
1	The people I work with cooperate to get the job done.	N	60	47	4	3	1	NA		115
		%	51.0	41.8	3.4	2.9	0.9	NA	92.8	100
2	I am given a real opportunity to improve my skills in my organization.	N	26	48	19	14	8	NA		115
		%	22.7	42.0	16.0	12.3	7.1	NA	64.7	100
3	My work gives me a feeling of personal accomplishment.	N	42	53	14	3	3	NA		115
		%	34.9	47.4	12.3	2.6	2.9	NA	82.2	100
4	I like the kind of work I do.	N	47	59	6	2	1	NA		115
		%	39.0	52.9	5.2	1.9	1.1	NA	91.9	100
5	I have trust and confidence in my supervisor.	N	40	50	13	8	4	NA		115
		%	33.9	44.4	10.9	7.0	3.7	NA	78.4	100
			Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor	Do Not Know/ No Basis to Judge	Percent Positive	Total
6	Overall, how good a job do you feel is being done by your immediate supervisor/team leader?	N	42	46	17	6	4	NA		115
		%	35.5	40.8	14.2	5.8	3.7	NA	76.3	100

RECRUITMENT, DEVELOPMENT AND RETENTION

			Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do Not Know/ No Basis to Judge	Percent Positive	Total
7	The workforce has the job-relevant knowledge and skills necessary to accomplish organizational goals.	N	44	61	5	4	0	1		115
		%	37.2	54.3	4.4	3.1	0.0	0.9	91.5	100
8	My work unit is able to recruit people with the right skills.	N	36	54	16	5	1	3		115
		%	30.2	47.4	14.3	4.9	0.7	2.5	77.6	100
9	I know how my work relates to the agency's goals and priorities.	N	48	58	6	1	1	1		115
		%	39.7	52.0	5.6	0.8	0.7	1.2	91.7	100
10	The work I do is important.	N	52	58	4	1	0	0		115
		%	43.6	51.6	3.7	1.1	0.0	0.0	95.3	100
11	Physical conditions (for example, noise level, temperature, lighting, cleanliness in the workplace) allow employees to perform their jobs well.	N	23	44	21	17	10	0		115
		%	20.0	38.5	17.5	15.2	8.8	0.0	58.5	100
12	Supervisors/team leaders in my work unit support employee development.	N	17	52	28	10	6	2		115
		%	13.8	45.1	24.6	9.4	5.5	1.7	58.9	100

13	My talents are used well in the workplace.	N	25	67	13	5	5	0		115
		%	20.5	59.6	11.2	4.5	4.3	0.0	80.1	100
14	My training needs are assessed.	N	3	17	29	43	17	6		115
		%	2.6	14.5	24.7	37.9	14.9	5.3	17.2	100

PERFORMANCE CULTURE

			Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do Not Know/ No Basis to Judge	Percent Positive	Total
15	Promotions in my work unit are based on merit.	N	15	45	27	8	7	13		115
		%	12.2	39.0	24.3	7.0	5.8	11.6	51.2	100
16	In my work unit, steps are taken to deal with a poor performer who cannot or will not improve.	N	4	28	39	15	6	23		115
		%	3.5	23.3	34.6	12.9	5.2	20.4	26.8	100
17	Creativity and innovation are rewarded.	N	21	40	32	11	6	5		115
		%	17.4	34.7	28.8	10.0	5.0	4.1	52.1	100
18	In my most recent performance appraisal, I understood what I had to do to be rated at different performance levels (for example, Fully Successful, Outstanding).	N	31	53	16	8	3	4		115
		%	25.4	47.2	13.8	7.5	2.4	3.7	72.6	100
19	In my work unit, differences in performance are recognized in a meaningful way.	N	9	30	35	12	8	21		115
		%	7.2	25.5	31.1	10.6	7.0	18.5	32.8	100
20	Pay raises depend on how well employees perform their jobs.	N	13	27	25	17	10	23		115
		%	10.7	23.8	22.0	14.4	8.7	20.2	34.6	100
21	My performance appraisal is a fair reflection of my performance.	N	25	65	17	3	3	2		115
		%	20.8	56.1	15.4	2.9	2.6	2.1	76.9	100
22	Discussions with my supervisor/team leader about my performance are worthwhile.	N	21	47	26	13	6	2		115
		%	17.5	41.4	22.6	11.7	4.8	1.9	59.0	100
23.	Managers/supervisors/team leaders work well with employees of different backgrounds.	N	37	43	14	7	5	9		115
		%	30.9	38.3	12.4	5.9	4.9	7.6	69.2	100
24	My supervisor supports my need to balance work and other life issues.	N	44	38	23	4	5	1		115
		%	37.4	32.7	20.5	3.6	4.9	0.9	70.1	100

LEADERSHIP

			Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do Not Know/ No Basis to Judge	Percent Positive	Total
25	I have a high level of respect for my organization's senior leaders.	N	44	47	15	7	2	0		115
		%	37.5	41.2	13.6	5.9	1.8	0.0	78.7	100
26	In my organization, leaders generate high levels of motivation and commitment in the workforce.	N	28	50	21	10	6	0		115
		%	23.3	43.2	19.0	9.5	5.0	0.0	66.5	100
27	Managers review and evaluate the organization's progress toward meeting its goals and objectives.	N	17	53	31	4	3	7		115
		%	14.4	44.7	28.1	3.6	2.8	6.4	59.0	100
28	Employees are protected from health and safety hazards on the	N	21	61	18	9	1	5		115

	job.		%	18.0	52.8	15.8	8.1	0.8	4.5	70.8	100
29	Employees have a feeling of personal empowerment with respect to work processes.		N	17	46	31	10	5	6		115
			%	13.5	39.5	28.6	9.2	4.2	5.1	53.0	100
30	My workload is reasonable.		N	11	54	24	20	6	0		115
				%	9.1	46.8	20.7	17.9	5.6	0.0	55.9
31	Managers communicate the goals and priorities of the organization.		N	26	57	21	7	4	0		115
				%	21.5	49.4	18.9	7.0	3.3	0.0	70.8
32	My organization has prepared employees for potential security threats.		N	26	56	14	14	2	3		115
				%	22.3	48.4	11.9	12.8	1.7	3.0	70.6

JOB SATISFACTION

				Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Strongly Dissatisfied	Do Not Know/ No Basis to Judge	Percent Positive	Total
33	How satisfied are you with the information you receive from management on what's going on in your organization?		N	16	57	21	19	2	NA		115
				%	12.8	49.3	19.2	17.2	1.5	NA	62.1
34	How satisfied are you with your involvement in decisions that affect your work?		N	28	48	21	15	3	NA		115
				%	23.0	42.1	19.2	13.1	2.5	NA	65.1
35	How satisfied are you with your opportunity to get a better job in your organization?		N	13	33	41	21	7	NA		115
				%	10.6	28.5	36.1	18.9	5.8	NA	39.1
36	How satisfied are you with the recognition you receive for doing a good job?		N	19	57	26	11	2	NA		115
				%	15.3	49.8	23.1	10.1	1.6	NA	65.1
37	How satisfied are you with the policies and practices of your senior leaders?		N	23	55	27	7	3	NA		115
				%	18.3	48.4	24.7	6.1	2.5	NA	66.7
38	How satisfied are you with the training you receive for your present job?		N	5	22	49	29	10	NA		115
				%	4.0	18.9	42.4	26.0	8.7	NA	22.9
39	Considering everything, how satisfied are you with your job?		N	34	55	16	8	2	NA		115
				%	27.6	49.3	14.2	7.2	1.6	NA	77.0
40	Considering everything, how satisfied are you with your pay?		N	18	54	17	22	4	NA		115
				%	15.2	46.7	15.0	19.5	3.6	NA	61.9