



Technical School Uses Employee Feedback to Strengthen Workplace Dynamics

Being Recognized as an Oklahoma Top Workplace Is an Honor for Meridian Technology Center, but Capturing Employee Feedback Is the Real Reward

With a mission to educate, enrich lives, and secure economic futures, [Meridian Technology Center](#) is a driver of economic development and offers full-time career training programs, short courses, business and industry services, and entrepreneurial support. The technical school fosters a positive work environment where its 100+ staff take pride in their work, in addition to providing an extraordinary learning experience for its students and clients.

In fact, Meridian employees feel so strongly about the organization that it has been recognized as a [Top Workplace](#) in Oklahoma for three consecutive years. With increased ratings in the areas of workplace culture and supervisory support, Meridian moved from number seven to a number four spot in the midsize business category in the past year. In addition, the school received a special award for training.



Improvement Starts with an Annual Employee Engagement Survey

Meridian, however, does not rest on its laurels. The educational institution administers the [Workplace Survey](#) every year to capture employee input and gain a better understanding of where they can strengthen the company.

“The goal is to hear from our employees and to continue to strengthen our workplace and the long-term impact employees can make on our organization by listening to their feedback,” said Monica Savory, Personnel Assistant/Administrative Assistant at Meridian Technology Center.

A committee of volunteers, representing a cross-section of Meridian staff, reviews the survey results to make recommendations for strengthening the organization. Previous surveys have indicated employees wanted more professional development and team-building opportunities. As a result, Meridian implemented several training programs for staff members.

“One of the opportunities that we offered was Gallup’s strengths based training for employees,” explained Savory. “That training allowed workgroups and departments to sit down with each other and learn about their strengths together so that they could build on their own work and make even more of a positive impact on our customers.”

Survey Results Inform Meridian’s Five-Year Strategic Plan

Survey feedback also provides Meridian leadership an opportunity to identify key areas for their strategic plan. After reviewing the latest survey results, one area of focus Meridian identified is how the organization fosters innovation and brings employee ideas to life.

“Meridian has a family atmosphere that makes it easy to share ideas,” said Savory, noting the importance of employees knowing their ideas are heard and that they have a hand in moving the organization forward. The company is working to develop a more formalized process for employees to share innovative ideas, determine which ones will move forward, and build in accountability timelines for implementing new ideas.

In formalizing Meridian's five-year strategic plan, the company also sought input from 13 customer groups including high school and adult students, businesses, parents, counselors, school district staff, and board members. Combining this input with survey feedback provides Meridian a holistic view of their operations and offerings both inside and outside the company.

The strategic plan is focused on the five core areas of students and clients, community, people, finance and operations, and quality. The technology center has formed strategic initiative teams comprised of employees who volunteered to serve on or lead each initiative. The ultimate goal is to have a central location – a type of war room – where progress and timelines for the strategic initiatives, as well as innovative ideas, can be visualized and reviewed.



+9%

“New ideas are encouraged at Meridian Technology Center.”

Meridian Technology Center experienced a 9 percent improvement over last year's survey results and scored 6 percent higher in this area compared to its competitors in the Education benchmark.

Source: 2016 [Workplace Survey](#)

One innovative idea the school recently implemented is how they deliver their curriculum. “Based on an idea of blended learning that was proposed last year, a couple of programs began offering a portion of their content online as part of their traditional classroom,” said Savory. “Soon, with a more formalized process across our campus, employees will be able



to share ideas, which will encourage an even stronger collaborative and innovative culture.”

Communication and Transparency Lets Employees Know They've Been Heard

In addition to creating a forum for employees to share ideas, Meridian invests time in delivering organizational results back to staff on a personal basis. Last year, Meridian Superintendent/CEO, [Dr. Douglas Major](#), met one-on-one with work groups to review the survey. “It’s important to be transparent with our staff and communicate results so that they know management is taking actionable steps based on the feedback they invested time in sharing with us,” notes Savory.

While the survey is anonymous, the school has seen a slight decrease in the employee participation rate. “More important than being able to break the data out by work group when someone selects their salary or whether they are a senior manager or support staff is that they tell us how we’re doing as an organization,” said Savory, who plans to reiterate with employees that those particular fields are optional before the next survey.

“We want to ensure our employees feel comfortable providing feedback regardless of if we can separate the responses at the departmental level,” she added. “That way, Meridian can continue to improve its operations through authentic employee responses at the organizational level.”

Retention and Recognition are Testimony to Meridian’s Commitment to Building a Strong Organization

Keeping employees engaged in their job and the company is important to Meridian – so important, in fact, that the company plans to add Gallup’s Q12 survey to measure

engagement and learn from employees what they need to succeed. Using a combination of results from the Gallup survey and the Workplace Survey will provide valuable insights on what action is required to maintain a healthy, positive work environment.

The organization already has identified several key areas of focus to ensure its employees stay engaged. "I enjoy having the professional development opportunities and resources to be able to do my job well," shared Savory. "Employees know that Meridian gives them the tools and environment to do their best."

A high employee retention rate and recognition as an *Oklahoman* [Top Workplace](#) are testimony to Meridian's ongoing commitment to its employees. It also helps them recruit the best talent, with prospective employees seeking to work at a company recognized as one of the top in the state.

"We often hear from new hires that they are eager to be employed by Meridian and have been persistent in applying for our openings until they're hired," said Savory. "We have a strong employee retention rate because the work we do at Meridian is making a difference, and this is a great place to work."

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