

# Employee Engagement Surveys Get Results

Federation of Tax Administrators  
Award for Management and Organizational Initiative  
in State Tax Administration

Submitted by:  
Wisconsin Department of Revenue  
January 15, 2016



## **Employee Engagement Surveys Get Results**

The Wisconsin Department of Revenue (DOR) has a strategic plan that includes the goals of the department:

- Implement good tax policy
- Provide excellent customer service
- Promote efficiency and integrity
- Maintain a positive work environment

To support DOR's strategic plan and goals, the department needs its employees strongly connected to business outcomes that are essential to our success, including productivity, innovation, teamwork and customer service.

"Employee engagement" is the relationship between an organization and its employee where the employee:

- Sees the connection between what he or she does every day and the organization's success
- Feels valued by the organization
- Is enthusiastic about work
- Takes positive action to further the organization toward its goals
- Wants to stay and grow his or her career

DOR had undertaken previous efforts to measure employee satisfaction through employee satisfaction surveys. In 2014, the department went a step further and measured employee engagement through an employee engagement survey. Our objectives were to learn what drives DOR employee engagement and then determine how we could improve.

The terms "engagement survey" and "satisfaction survey" are often used interchangeably but are quite different. Strategic thinking organizations that understand the difference want to measure levels of employee engagement instead of satisfaction.

Engaged employees love their work and continually look for ways to improve their work experience. That has many implications for the organization's customers. Satisfied employees are typically happy if things stay the same, expectations are not changed and there is predictability about the workplace.

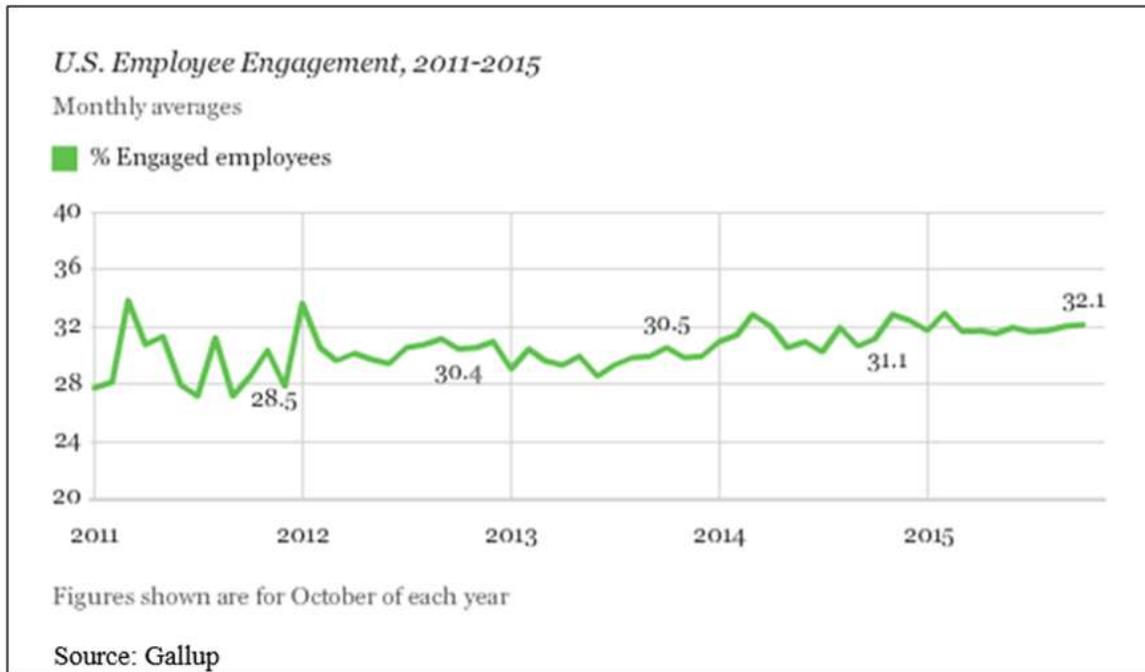
Organizations interested in engaging their employees are seeking active involvement from their employees, and employees are seeking work environments that allow them to develop, be creative or innovative, and share in the commitment to business and customer outcomes. There is a sense of energy, focus and commitment among employees and a shared responsibility for the organization's effectiveness and success.

With the November 2014 baseline survey and action plans to improve employee engagement in place in 2015, DOR offered another employee engagement survey exactly one year later, November 2015. From 2014 to 2015, employee satisfaction increased on all measured attributes with several statistically significant increases.

### **Gallup Background on Employee Engagement**

Gallup surveys employees in American workplaces and publishes employee engagement insights for organizational leaders. Table 1 below offers Gallup's employee engagement survey results for the last four years.

**Table 1 – U.S. Employee Engagement**



In October 2015, 32.1% of workers were engaged. Gallup reported that employee engagement was experiencing the longest period of stability since Gallup first began surveying U.S. workplaces in January 2011. High performing organizations had employee engagement levels double the national average -- about 64% of employees. While the U.S. average was two engaged employees for every one actively disengaged employee, the highest performing organizations were averaging nine engaged employees for every one actively disengaged employee.

### **DOR's Survey**

DOR's 2015 employee engagement survey is attached. DOR's Leadership Team served as the Steering Committee for the 2014 and 2015 surveys and made decisions on survey questions, analysis and resulting follow-up action plans. The Leadership Team was guided by an individual who is a marketing expert in our Lottery (a division in DOR) and who is trained in surveys and statistical analyses.

The Leadership Team decided on the engagement categories for survey questions:

- Job quality standards
- Performance and goals
- Shared values and alignment
- Teamwork and performance
- Management and support
- Value and recognition

Table 2 offers DOR's survey considerations and Leadership Team decisions.

**Table 2 – Survey Considerations**

Survey considerations	
Method of delivery	WDOR: used Survey Analytics
Optional or mandatory	WDOR: Optional but encouraged
Anonymity	WDOR: Yes, anonymous
Collection of section or bureau information	WDOR: Yes, but only if the section or bureau had 10 or more employees
Other information	WDOR: age, length at WDOR, gender, if manager or supervisor
Ability to write comments	WDOR: No
Length of survey	WDOR: 31 questions; avg. time to take survey: 5:30 min
Timing	WDOR: November, over an 8-day period
Frequency	WDOR: Each year
<b>And most importantly: the questions!</b>	

Survey questions were developed for each engagement category and then reviewed to ensure they were in plain language, unbiased, not emotionally charged, mutually exclusive and allowed for all possible responses. The same questions were asked in the 2014 baseline survey and in the 2015 follow-up survey to enable valid comparisons.

Table 3 has examples of questions from DOR's survey.

**Table 3 – Example Questions in Survey**

1 - Strongly disagree	2 - Disagree	3 - Neutral	4 - Agree	5 - Strongly agree
I understand how my work contributes to the overall success of WDOR.				Shared values & alignment
I feel like my opinions matter.				Value & recognition
I get feedback from my supervisor that helps me to improve my performance.				Management & support
Teamwork and collaboration are practiced in my work unit.				Teamwork & performance
I have an opportunity to participate in the performance goal setting process.				Performance & goals
My work unit maintains high standards of quality.				Job quality

While the survey was in process, a couple of reminders were sent to employees about the deadline for the survey. Employees were assured that the individual results were confidential and that the collective results were intended to help management take steps to improve employee engagement.

### DOR's Results

DOR's response rate was 84% to the 2014 survey and 81% to the 2015 survey. These are excellent response rates since 60% is considered good in employee surveys for organizations with 1,000+ employees.

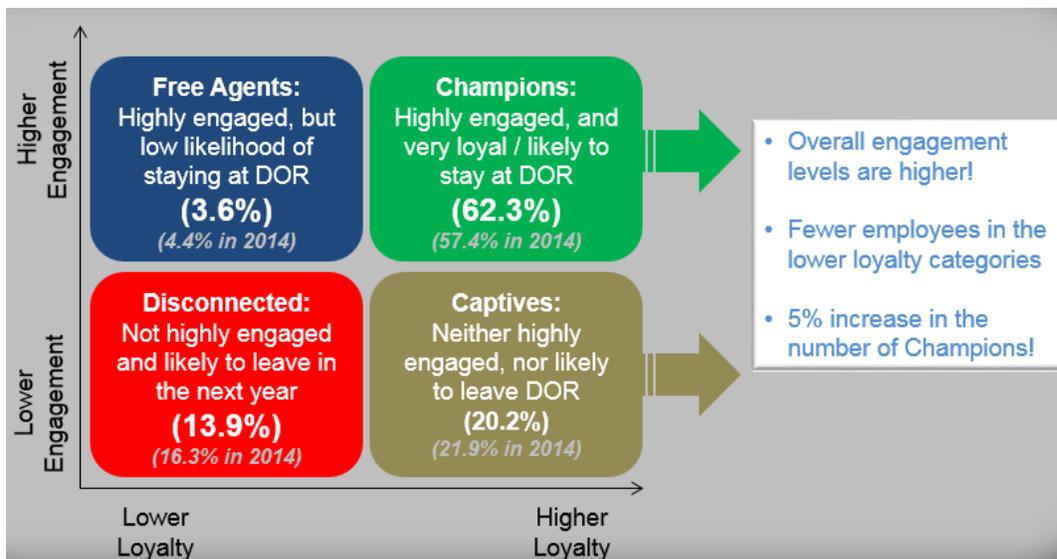
The surveys revealed the following improvements from 2014 to 2015:

**Table 4 – Employee Engagement Survey Results** (percent of staff)

	<u>2015</u>	<u>2014</u>
Employees satisfied with job	76% ↑	74%
Employees committed to success of DOR	95% ↑	92%
Employees recommend working for DOR	69% ↑	64%
Employees both highly engaged and likely to stay at DOR	62% ↑	57%

The DOR engagement landscape shows improvements in overall engagement and champions from 2014 to 2015:

**Table 5 – DOR Engagement Landscape**



- Engagement index mapped against likelihood to stay at DOR yields the Engagement Landscape.
- The percentages of employees in each group are fairly consistent with other published engagement studies.

## Action Plans

After the 2014 survey, division and bureau managers used focus groups to develop action plans that focused on the key employee engagement drivers. Our goal was to improve the employee engagement results in the 2015 survey. Examples of DOR strategies intended to improve, enhance or preserve employee engagement drivers are shown in Table 6. Many involved communications.

**Table 6 – Strategies after 2014 Survey**

Prioritize:	Enhance:	Preserve
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● New staff recognition page on Intranet</li> <li>● One handwritten "Thank You" note per month</li> <li>● Acknowledge publicly when an idea by an employee is used in a decision or process</li> <li>● Hold open dialogue meetings</li> <li>● Solicit feedback from employee at monthly unit meetings &amp; quarterly section meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Morning meetings with the Secretary</li> <li>● Meet with each employee to discuss additional training they would like</li> <li>● Post Lean project successes on department internal blog</li> <li>● Supervisor and employee to discuss accomplishments and goals annually</li> <li>● All managers conduct one-on-one status meetings with staff at least biweekly</li> <li>● Provide survey feedback info to employees</li> <li>● Report training hours by bureau</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Chats with Secretary Chandler to emphasize WDOR mission and work</li> <li>● Write in blog about tools or resources that we add or are available</li> <li>● Train supervisors in performance coaching</li> </ul>

The 2015 survey results show that satisfaction was significantly higher in key areas where we focused our strategies, including management support and value and recognition. Even with the increase in satisfaction in these attributes, they remain areas for improvement going forward. Division and bureau managers will again develop strategies that focus on key employee engagement drivers that matter the most to DOR employees. See Table 7.

**Table 7 – Priorities after 2015 Survey**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Priority</b> (<u>key engagement drivers with which employees are less satisfied</u>):<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Recognition for a job well done</li><li>✓ Feeling like opinions matter</li><li>✓ Feeling valued for the work I do</li></ul></li></ul>	<p>Common theme: <b>Communication</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Enhance</b> (<u>key engagement drivers with which employees are marginally satisfied</u>):<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Encouraged to come up with new and better ways to do things</li><li>✓ I have the tools and resources I need to do my job effectively</li><li>✓ My work is rewarding</li><li>✓ Teamwork and collaboration are practiced in my work unit</li><li>✓ Feeling of teamwork and cooperation</li><li>✓ I provide input into my work unit's goals</li><li>✓ Opportunity to do what I do best every day</li></ul></li></ul>	<p>Common themes: <b>Innovation &amp; Teamwork</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Preserve</b> (<u>key engagement drivers with which employees are very satisfied</u>):<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ My job is important in accomplishing DOR's mission</li><li>✓ I understand the DOR's mission and goals</li><li>✓ I am encouraged to learn from my mistakes</li></ul></li></ul>	<p>Common themes: <b>Quality &amp; Contribution</b></p>

Conclusions and Recommendations

- Employee engagement is important in helping an organization achieve its lofty goals
- A disengaged workforce costs an organization real dollars in productivity, customer service and reputation
- Continuous process improvement and ongoing measurement of employee engagement ensures even higher levels of engagement and satisfaction
- Higher employee engagement is essential to our business outcomes and success in productivity, innovation, teamwork and customer service



**Survey: DOR-Employee-Survey-November-2015**

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding your experiences working at Department of Revenue.

**Overall, I am satisfied with my job. \***

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following as it relates to your work at DOR:**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
My work is challenging. *	<input type="radio"/>				
My work is rewarding. *	<input type="radio"/>				
I am committed to the success of the Department of Revenue. *	<input type="radio"/>				
I am proud to work for the Department of Revenue. *	<input type="radio"/>				
I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day. *	<input type="radio"/>				
I would recommend working at the Department of Revenue. *	<input type="radio"/>				
I intend to stay with the Department of Revenue for at least another 12 months. *	<input type="radio"/>				

**Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following as it relates to your work at DOR:**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel like my opinions matter. *	<input type="radio"/>				
I know what is expected of me at work. *	<input type="radio"/>				
I have an opportunity to participate in the performance goal setting process. *	<input type="radio"/>				
Performance expectations have been clearly communicated to me. *	<input type="radio"/>				
I get feedback from my supervisor that helps me to improve my performance. *	<input type="radio"/>				

**Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following as it relates to your work at DOR:**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I understand the Department of Revenue's mission and goals. *	<input type="radio"/>				
The Department of Revenue's mission is clearly communicated. *	<input type="radio"/>				
I provide input into my work unit's goals. *	<input type="radio"/>				

My job is important in accomplishing the mission of the Department of Revenue. \*

I understand how my work contributes to the overall success of the Department of Revenue. \*

**Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following as it relates to your work unit at DOR:**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
There is a feeling of teamwork and cooperation in my division. *	<input type="radio"/>				
My work unit maintains high standards of quality. *	<input type="radio"/>				
My work unit is focused on customer needs. *	<input type="radio"/>				
My co-workers generally go beyond what is expected for the success of DOR. *	<input type="radio"/>				
Teamwork and collaboration are practiced in my work unit. *	<input type="radio"/>				

**Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following as it relates to your work at DOR:**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I am encouraged to learn from my mistakes. *	<input type="radio"/>				
Improvements in my work unit's processes and procedures have resulted in better service. *	<input type="radio"/>				
I receive the training I need to do my job well. *	<input type="radio"/>				
My supervisor encourages and supports my development. *	<input type="radio"/>				
I am encouraged to come up with new and better ways of doing things. *	<input type="radio"/>				
I have the tools and resources I need to do my job effectively. *	<input type="radio"/>				

**Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following as it relates to your work at DOR:**

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The environment in the Department of Revenue supports a balance between work and personal life. *	<input type="radio"/>				
When I do good work, I receive the recognition I deserve. *	<input type="radio"/>				
I feel valued for the work I do. *	<input type="radio"/>				
The Department of Revenue Discretionary Merit Compensation (DMC) process is transparent and clearly communicated. *	<input type="radio"/>				
I feel safe at work. *	<input type="radio"/>				

**The last few questions are optional, and allow us to gain an understanding of the opinions of different groups of employees.**

**What is your gender?**

- Male
- Female

**How old are you?**

- 18-24 years
- 25-34 years
- 35-44 years
- 45-54 years
- 55-64 years
- 65+ years

**How long have you worked for the Department of Revenue?**

- Less than one year
- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years
- More than 20 years

**Are you a supervisor or manager?**

- Yes
- No

**In which division do you work?**

- Enterprise Services Division
- Income, Sales & Excise Tax Division
- Lottery Division
- Research & Policy Division
- Secretary's Office / Office of General Counsel
- State and Local Finance Division
- Division of Technology Services

**In which bureau / section do you work?**

- Business Services Section
- Financial Management Services Bureau
- Human Resource Services Bureau or Administrator's Office

**In which Bureau do you work?**

- Audit Bureau
- Compliance Bureau
- Customer Service Bureau
- Tax Operations Bureau

- IS&E Administration

**In which section do you work?**

- Business & Pass-Thru Income Section
- Corporation Section
- Director's Office, Program Development Unit, or WINPAS Integration & Automation Unit
- Individual Income Tax Section
- Sales & use Tax Section

**In which section do you work?**

- Central Compliance Section
- Director's Office or Compliance Services Section
- Field Compliance Section

**In which section do you work?**

- Director's Office, Customer Communications Section, or Refund Research & Return Services
- Income Tax Section
- Business Tax Section

**In which section do you work?**

- Business Tax Section
- Director's Office or Unclaimed Property Section
- Income Tax Section

**In which section do you work?**

- Administrator's Office or Technical Services Office
- Criminal Investigation Office

**In which bureau do you work?**

- Administrator's Office or Admin. Services & Communications Bureau
- Product Development & Marketing Bureau
- Retailer Relations & Sales Bureau

**In which bureau do you work?**

- Administrator's Office or Office of Technical & Assessment Services
- Equalization Bureau
- Local Government Services Bureau
- Manufacturing & Utility Bureau

**In which office / section do you work?**

- Application Environment Support Section
- Business Intelligence Services Section
- Customer Support Center Section
- Data Capture Section
- Development Center Section
- DTS Administrator's Office
- IS&E Business Applications Development or Director's Office
- SLF Business Applications Development Section