

# The OCS Handbook

Preparing to Use the Ownership Culture Survey™



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# *Welcome!*

Thank you for your interest in using the Ownership Culture Survey™ (or OCS), the only commercially-available employee-attitude survey for employee-ownership companies.

Along with a proposal from Ownership Associates, this booklet contains everything you need to know to get started using the OCS.



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# 1. Overview of the OCS

## ***Introducing the OCS***

The Ownership Culture Survey™ is a complete stand-alone assessment tool designed to help employee-ownership companies assess the strengths and weaknesses of their ownership cultures.

The standard configuration of the OCS consists of the “core” 71 survey items, three written questions, and a short set of demographic questions.

- ***Objective Items*** are survey items for which respondents choose a number to indicate their response. For example, a “1” indicates that they strongly disagree and a “7” means they strongly agree.
- ***Written Questions*** are open-ended, and leave room for respondents to write down responses in their own words. All responses to written questions are typed into a database, analyzed by theme, and included in the final report of survey results.
- ***Demographic Questions*** allow companies to explore how different groups of employees react to the survey. See page 16 for more information about choosing the appropriate demographic variables.

See page 9 for more about the core content areas in the OCS. Section 6 contains the complete list of all core survey items. The *Sample Ownership Culture Survey* booklet is a mock questionnaire containing the core survey items.

## ***Delivery Format***

The typical method of administration is to use ***paper questionnaires***. Each respondent receives a survey packet, consisting of

- the questionnaire,
- a cover letter, usually from the company President, to explain the purpose of the survey,
- a short list of answers to frequently asked questions about the survey, and
- a Business Reply Mail envelope addressed to Ownership Associates.

The survey is also available in ***electronic format***, suitable for use via the world-wide web. Such a site would be password protected to ensure that only company employees can complete surveys.

See pages 17 to 20 for more information about survey administration.

## **Time Requirement**

Employees typically complete the survey in 15 to 20 minutes.

## **Reporting of Results**

There are two forms of standard feedback reports:

- the *Executive Summary* is a 15 to 20-page summary of survey highlights
- the *Ownership Culture Profile* contains the complete survey results

A typical *Ownership Culture Profile* for a company using the core set of survey items would include six sections:

### **Ownership Culture Profile: Table of Contents**

#### **1. Executive Summary**

#### **2. Data Charts**

*Raw data charts, comparison to the OCS database, statistical significance testing, breakdown by subgroup, measure of consensus, non-response, relative strength.*

#### **3. Core Values**

*analysis and commentary on the results*

#### **4. Supplemental Analysis**

*cynicism, degree of consensus, respondent orientation, individual and observer items, etc.*

#### **5. Written Questions**

#### **6. Appendix**

For results excerpts from a sample company, see the *Sample Ownership Culture Profile*.

## **Languages**

The OCS is currently available in ***English and Spanish***.

The only additional charge for using Spanish-language questionnaires is for translating and analyzing Spanish-language responses to the written questions. Optional language services (such as translating cover letters to accompany the survey packet and translating feedback reports) will incur additional charges. There is no extra charge for Spanish-language objective items.

Ownership Associates can arrange to have the OCS and its supporting documents translated into other languages, for prices to be determined upon client request.

## ***Time Line***

The survey process moves through four phases. The length of each step depends on the particular circumstances at the company:

<b>Phase 1</b>	<b>Customization</b>	<i>0 to 15 business days</i>
<i>Adaptation of the survey takes from zero to 15 business days, depending on the degree of customization. (This phase may take longer when a committee helps develop company-specific items.) Once the exact content of the survey is determined, Ownership Associates will lay out a mock questionnaire for inspection by the client.</i>		
<b>Phase 2</b>	<b>Production and Delivery</b>	<i>8 business days</i>
<i>Once the client approves the layout, the survey packets will be delivered to the client within 8 business days.</i>		
<b>Phase 3</b>	<b>Administration and Collection</b>	<i>approx. 3 weeks</i>
<i>Depending on the way the survey is administered, the completed questionnaires generally arrive at the offices of Ownership Associates within three weeks of the date they are first distributed to the work force.</i>		
<b>Phase 4</b>	<b>Preparing Survey Results</b>	<i>5 weeks</i>
<i>Results are typically delivered to clients five weeks following the receipt of the final questionnaire at our offices.</i>		

**NOTE: Internet Surveys.** The time line above will be modified for companies using the Internet for survey delivery.

## ***Confidentiality***

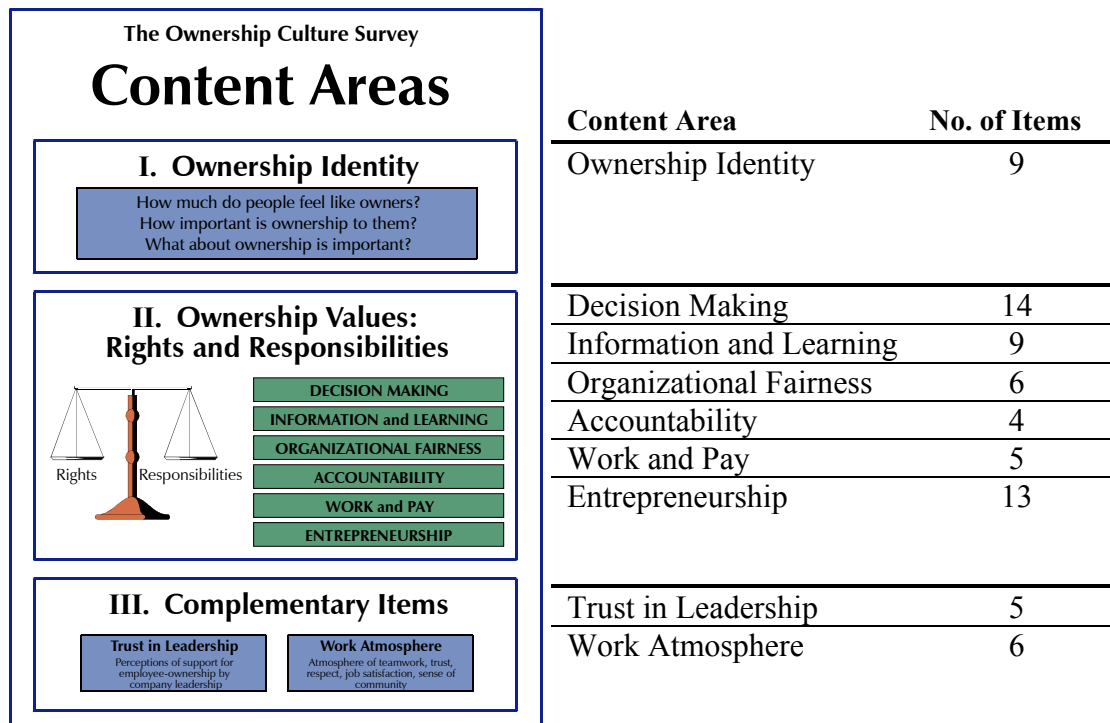
Whatever delivery format a company chooses, respondents will be clearly informed that their answers will never be linked to them individually and that their completed questionnaires will only be seen by Ownership Associates and our data entry contractors.



# 2. Survey Content Overview

The core items in the survey consist of the 71 items that have proven to be of the greatest value to companies. The core survey items are designed to create a comprehensive profile of a company's ownership culture and to facilitate comparative analysis with other employee-ownership companies.

The core survey items cover the content areas shown in the chart.



More information about the Ownership Culture Survey™, its content and management applications are available in the booklet *Surveys and Employee Ownership* and in the “online resources” section of [www.ownershipassociates.com](http://www.ownershipassociates.com). Resources include:

- *Ownership Culture Reports*: a series of working papers drawing on OCS data, covering topics such as cynicism, trust, participative management and motivation.
- published academic research, most recently by Dr. Douglas Kruse et al. (“Motivating Employee-Owners in ESOP Firms: Human Resource Policies and Company Performance,” Douglas Kruse, Richard Freeman, Joseph Blasi, Robert Buchele, Adria Scharf, Loren Rodgers, Chris Mackin, *Industrial Relations Research Association Conference*, January 2003, Washington, D.C. [www.ownershipassociates.com/motivate\\_eo\\_1.shtm](http://www.ownershipassociates.com/motivate_eo_1.shtm))

See section 6 for the complete list of core survey items, grouped by category.

Section 7 includes an extensive list of additional survey items.

The Ownership Culture Survey™ is designed as a flexible survey tool: part of the customization process is for companies to determine the exact mix of survey items that best meets their needs. Most use all of the core survey items, while others have selected a mix of core and additional items.

# 3. Customizing the Survey

## **Three Steps to Customize the Survey**

- ➔ The **first** step in customizing the survey is to complete the *Basic Information Form* (on pages 12 and 13), which helps OA tailor questionnaire terminology.
- ➔ Step **two** is to select the survey items. (See page 14.)
- ➔ Step **three** is to determine which demographic questions to include. (See page 16.)

## **Who Takes the Survey?**

Most companies have the entire work force complete the OCS. Others give the survey to a subset of the company (i.e., a single department or location) or to a representative sample of the company. (Sampling is generally best used in companies with over 2000 employees. OA can help companies design an appropriate sampling strategy.)

Most OCS companies have allowed all employees, including those recently hired, to complete questionnaires. This allows them to track changes as tenure increases, and changes from one survey administration to the next. Other companies have decided to survey only those who have been with the company a minimum number of months, or who are already participants in the ownership plan.

## **Tips**

Companies make the survey experience most effective in by following some of these guidelines:

- **Create a working group** to guide the survey process. The working group should consist of three to eight people, ideally representing a cross-section of the work force. The group will help customize the survey, administer the survey, and report on the results. Working groups have proven to be the best way to maximize the response rate, to ensure that all survey items have been suitably customized, and to determine the best mix of demographic items.
- **Pilot test the survey.** After the initial round of customization is complete, the company will receive a draft questionnaire. If the company has customized the survey, the committee or another group of employees should complete the survey to ensure that all items are appropriate and interpreted as intended.
- **Use Ownership Associates.** Call or email with OA staff as often as needed. We are committed to making your survey experience one you will want to repeat.

## Step 1: Complete the Basic Information Form

**Return to Ownership Associates by fax: 617-868-7969.**

1. The person at our company who will be the **primary contact** for Ownership Associates is: \_\_\_\_\_

He or she can be reached at (*telephone number*): \_\_\_\_\_

2. **How many employees** should receive copies of the survey? \_\_\_\_\_

3. In the survey itself, **how exactly should we refer** to your company so that all employees will identify with the **name**...

...in a **formal** context? \_\_\_\_\_

...in a **less formal** context? \_\_\_\_\_

4. On the cover the questionnaire, what should the title be? **Please circle one:**

The Ownership Culture Survey    Other: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Which word do you usually use?    **customers**    **clients**    **other** \_\_\_\_\_

6. The survey typically asks about **three distinct levels of management**.

a. **What phrase should we use** to refer to the people who determine company-wide policies and strategies? **Please circle one:**

senior management.....executive management.....corporate management.....other:

b. **What phrase should we use** to refer to the people with responsibility for individual departments or divisions? **Please circle one:**

middle management.....plant management.....other: .....DOES NOT APPLY

c. **What phrase should we use** to refer to the people who play a direct supervisory or floor leadership role? **Please circle one:**

supervisors.....team leaders.....other: .....

7. **Which phrase should we use** to refer to the groups in which people work?

**Please circle one:**

work team.....work group.....department.....division.....other: .....DOES NOT APPLY

**NOTE: Items 8 to 16 are optional. Your answers will assist with analysis of survey results and with our continued research.**

**8. Year the ESOP was established:** \_\_\_\_\_

**9. The ESOP was formed primarily: (Check all that apply.)**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> To purchase stock from an owner             | <input type="checkbox"/> To improve productivity        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> To raise capital for the company            | <input type="checkbox"/> As an employee benefit         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> To encourage employees to think like owners | <input type="checkbox"/> To retain or recruit employees |
| <input type="checkbox"/> For tax advantages                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____                   |

**10. Were there any reductions in compensation (i.e. in wages or other pension benefits) that accompanied ESOP implementation?**

- Yes  
 No

**11. Percentage of payroll contributed to the plan in the most recently completed plan year:** \_\_\_\_\_

**12. Percentage of company stock held in the ESOP trust in the most recently completed plan year:** \_\_\_\_\_

*(Please include all stock in the trust, whether it has been allocated or not)*

**13. Which best describes your vesting procedure?**

- |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Standard 7 year step vesting  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Standard 5 year cliff vesting |                                       |

**14. What were the participation requirements in the most recently completed plan year?**

- Standard (1 year, 1000 hours, at least 21 years old)  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**15. Was there a loan to establish the ESOP?**

- Yes  
 No

**16. Please verify that the stock allocation formula is:**

- Based on W-2  
 Other formula: \_\_\_\_\_

**Return to Ownership Associates by fax: 617-868-7969.**

## Step 2: Select Survey Items

The mix of survey items may be adapted by each company to best meet its requirements and goals.

→ Select all or some of the *core survey items*.

The core survey items have proved to have the greatest value for clients, and they are recommended. The simplest and most common survey configuration is to use the entire set of 71 core survey items. These items are listed in section 6.

Companies are free to select all or any set of the core survey items. There is, however, value in keeping certain *blocks of survey items* intact. For example, including all of the core items under Information and Learning allows OA to measure how strongly employees at a company perceives themselves as having a *Right to Know* information as well as a *Responsibility to Learn* how to use that information. The blocks of questions apply only to core survey items, and the blocks are indicated in the list of items (section 6).

→ Select any additional *pre-written survey items*.

The OA library of pre-written questions covers a number of topics, including:

- ESOP Understanding
- OA Modules (Participation, Motivation / Perceived Benefits, Organizational Effectiveness, Business Literacy, Work Effort, Miscellaneous)
- Employee Involvement and Influence
- Job Satisfaction
- Work Environment and Expectations
- Employer-Employee Relations
- Psychological Ownership

These items are listed in section 7.

→ Design any survey items *specific to the company*.

Clients may construct these items themselves, or Ownership Associates will work with them to ensure that the questions are effective and produce meaningful data. Areas to consider:

- “current event” issues, including recent developments or policy decisions,
- company vision and direction,
- how well employees understand the market or the company,
- diversity issues.

See section 8 for guidelines for creating custom-written survey items.

→ Select *written questions*.

Written questions in the survey ask respondents for their opinions and provides space for them to answer in their own words in as much detail as they would like.

Three written open-ended items are included in the standard configuration of the survey:

- “When I think about employee ownership at [OurCo], the first thing that comes to my mind is:”
- “The most important thing the company could do to make me feel more like an owner is:”
- “Any other comments?”

Companies may choose the standard three written questions, as above, design their own, or select from pre-written questions available from Ownership Associates.

## Step 3: Demographics / Subgroups

A major value of the survey is comparing groups of employees within a company, allowing clients to gauge the strengths and weaknesses of different parts of the company.

Determining how to break employees into groups is a complex task and one that we typically do in partnership with our clients. Each demographic question in the survey allows a comparison among employee groups. We refer to the comparison resulting from a demographic question as a “*subgroup dimension*.”

There are **two** main challenges in determining the demographic questions to include.

→ The first challenge is determining **which subgroup dimensions** to include.

Clients typically use subgroup types such as:

- job category (i.e., management, production, engineering)
- location
- division / department
- age
- length of service
- gender
- salary range
- size of ESOP account

While it is tempting to include a large number of subgroup types, companies should remember that respondents feel less anonymous the more demographic questions they answer. We recommend that clients use only those subgroups they feel are essential for understanding survey results.

→ The second challenge is determining the **categories** for each subgroup dimension.

For example, typical categories for age would be:

- Under 25 years old
- 26 - 35 years old
- 36 - 50 years old
- Over 50 years old

Ownership Associates will work with companies to help determine what categories make most sense for each of the subgroup dimensions, in accord with the following principles.

- These categories should **cover all employees** and should **not overlap**.
- They should be **unambiguous** in that all people concerned should agree on the meaning of each category.
- There should be a **minimum of 25 people in each category**—smaller groups tend to compromise respondents’ sense of anonymity.

# 4. Administering the Survey

This section reviews the advantages and disadvantages of different ways to administer the survey, and suggests ways to maximize participation by employee-owners.

## → *Tips*

**Advance notice:** Let people know roughly a week in advance that they will be asked to complete a survey, and give them a short description of the content.

**Commitments:** If the company is comfortable, OA recommends that it commit in advance and publicly to how it plans to make the survey results public. There are a number of alternatives. (See “Follow-Up” on page 21.)

**Make it fun:** Some companies offer people a free lunch while they are completing the survey. Others offer small rewards (cookies or raffle tickets) for turning in surveys. (These ideas work best with administration methods 2 and 3, below.)

**Post response rates:** After people have received the surveys, post a record of how many questionnaires have been turned in. (OA will send a daily update.)

**Individual encouragement:** Especially if a committee is involved in overseeing the survey process, having someone talk with each employee to encourage them to complete the survey can increase response rates.

**Reminders:** Send a mass email, post a notice, or make an announcement roughly four days and again eight days after people first receive the surveys.

**Use OA:** We have samples from other companies and help clients draft their own announcements.

## → *Choose a method to administer the survey*

There are **five** main methods.

### **1. Individual:**

Ownership Associates prepares survey packets (generally consisting of the questionnaire, a list of frequently asked questions, and a postage-paid return envelope) and delivers them in bulk to the client. The client distributes the survey packets to employees, who complete the questionnaires on their own time, and take responsibility for mailing them back to Ownership Associates.

This is the standard administration method, and recommended for use by most companies.

Pros	Cons
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Simplicity.</b> This method places minimal demands on the staff of the company.</li> <li>2. <b>Confidentiality.</b> Since employees complete questionnaires and mail them directly to OA, they have a high degree of confidence in the confidentiality of their answers.</li> <li>3. <b>Minimal down-time.</b> Since employees complete the surveys on their own time, there is no loss of work time.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Lower Response Rates.</b> Response rates using this method have typically ranged from 30% to 65%. While even the lower rates are acceptable from a validity standpoint, the maximum benefit comes from maximum participation.</li> <li>2. <b>Slower.</b> First class business reply mail typically takes three days longer to reach our offices than bulk overnight delivery.</li> </ol>

## 2. Large-Group

Ownership Associates prepares questionnaires and sends them bulk delivery to the company. The company organizes sessions in which a large number of employees (typically up to 150) complete the survey together. Employees seal the survey in an envelope, and the company collects the envelopes and bulk-mails them back to OA.

Pros	Cons
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>High Response Rates.</b> Response rates using this method have often been above 80%.</li> <li>2. <b>Speed.</b> We can begin data entry two days after the large-group event.</li> <li>3. <b>Questions.</b> If employees have any questions about how to answer survey items or any concerns about the process, someone can be present to answer them.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Logistics.</b> Company staff must arrange the meeting.</li> <li>2. <b>Confidentiality.</b> Since the company collects the questionnaires, respondents may be less willing to share negative sentiments. The company may wish to consider collecting the surveys, sealing them in a bulk delivery box, and mailing them as employees watch.</li> </ol>

### 3. Central Collection

This method is a combination of method 1 and method 2. Employees receive their questionnaires and complete them individually, as in method 1, but turn their completed questionnaires in to a central location or locations, as in method 2. A member of the company can track who has and has not turned in surveys and encourage people to participate.

This method is a compromise between the first two methods: it shares some of the advantages and disadvantages of each.

### 4. OA Distribution

This method is similar to method 1 (Individual) except that OA mails the survey packets directly to each employee's home. This method shares many of the advantages and disadvantages of method 1, with the following exceptions:

- postal and handling fees will slightly increase the cost to the company.
- the sense of respondent confidentiality is likely to be greater.
- the response rate may be lower.

### 5. Web-based Delivery

Ownership Associates sets up a web site to administer the survey. Such a site would be password-protected to ensure that only company employees are allowed to access the site and to complete surveys.

OA would send out an announcement via postal mail or email with the location of the web site. The announcement would also provide employees with a unique password. They would fill out the survey online on their own time.

Pros	Cons
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. <b>Simplicity.</b> This method places minimal demands on company staff.</li><li>2. <b>Low Cost for Large Companies.</b> Although set-up costs are higher than method 1, per-person administrative costs are much lower with this method.</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. <b>Low Response Rates.</b> Response rates using this method will tend to be the lowest of the five methods.</li><li>2. <b>Comfort.</b> Some people are uncomfortable using the world wide web for personal or sensitive information. Others are uncomfortable with computer technology or lack access.</li></ol>



# 5. Follow-Up

The actions taken by the company in response to the survey will be the most important factor determining how the survey experience will affect the company. OA strongly recommends advance planning for follow-up to the survey. OA can provide companies with in-depth support for acting on survey results.

## ***Reporting Results***

### **Presentation to Company Leaders**

Ownership Associates strongly recommends an on-site presentation of survey results to company leadership. Face-to-face interaction allows management to clarify the issues and to engage in a “real time” dialogue about the meaning of the results and how to proceed. These meetings typically involve four to 30 company representatives, and last between 90 minutes and four hours.

### **Workforce Presentation**

Reporting survey results to groups of employees can be a powerful experience. It closes the communications loop and allows people to feel that their voices have been heard. The survey results meeting can be a valuable occasion to engage the work force in the task of helping produce a more effective and appropriate ownership culture.

### **Results Newsletter**

Ownership Associates can write, design, and lay out a series of brief newsletters to share the results of the survey assessment with a general audience. OA can also support internal company staff in writing such newsletters.

## ***Recommendations for Action***

OA can work with company leadership, a survey committee or other groups to design responses to issues identified in the survey. OA can provide strategic advice and concrete action steps to engage people in addressing issues from the survey.

## ***Participative Management***

OA has a number of tools for companies that wish to implement or enhance employee participation in decision-making. Data from the OCS can indicate the most effective next steps to build an active participative system at a company.

### ***Ownership Facts Training***

If the survey indicates a low degree of comfort with understanding the ownership plan, OA can develop and implement training on the basics of ownership, or support client companies in producing their own training.

### ***Ownership Value Training***

OA has created a proven training technique to increase understanding and belief in the rights and responsibilities of ownership.

### ***Communications Strategy***

OA can recommend ways to make company communications more effective and responsive to the issues and styles suggested by the survey results.

### ***Rewards Systems***

Survey results may indicate a dissonance in the reward system, including compensation, bonus payments, benefits and the ESOP itself.

### ***Employee Committee Support***

OA has experience helping companies establish, strengthen or re-energize employee-owner committees and suggesting ways they can most directly increase employee understanding and excitement about the employee ownership plan.

# 6. Core Survey Items

The 71 core survey items are listed on the following four pages. Companies are invited to select any mix of these items for inclusion in their administration of the survey. They should keep in mind the following guidelines.

## → Advantages of the Core Survey Items.

The core survey items have been designed, tested, and specifically selected to meet the following criteria:

- comprehensive coverage of issues related to the psychology of ownership
- balance between items focused on rights and on responsibilities
- appropriate number of negatively worded items

## → Maintaining Blocks of Survey Items.

The items in the core set of survey items are designed to function in blocks. Each item in a block is necessary to calculate the standard metrics of ownership culture. Although companies may omit any items they choose, removing individual items from within a block makes it impossible to calculate the standard metrics.

Each block is indicated in the list of core survey items on the following pages.

## → Intellectual Property.

The OCS items are copyrighted by Ownership Associates and remain our protected intellectual property. They are released for inspection purposes only and may not be copied, used, adapted, or disclosed to third parties without the permission of Ownership Associates.

## → Reading the List of Survey Items.

We have listed the items by their serial number. Words enclosed in [brackets] are customized using the *Basic Information Form* to reflect the terminology used in each client company.



# 8. Company-Specific Items

Many clients choose to develop items of specific interest to their work force. Ownership Associates is pleased to work with client companies to create effective items to explore these issues.

When designing their own survey items, companies should consider the following principles of designing surveys in an employee-ownership environment:

- **Keep the survey short** to increase both employee satisfaction with the survey experience and the overall response rate.
- **Objective questions are preferable in general** because such questions are easier for respondents and less time-consuming to analyze. (“Objective questions” are multiple-choice items and involve no writing.)
- **Avoid compromising subjects**—specifically, you must be careful not to compromise respondents’ sense of anonymity or ask questions that will be perceived as leading.
- **Involve employees** in the question-writing process. Done carefully, this can make the survey better targeted and can help generate “buy-in” in advance.

Some of the common areas for company-specific items include:

## A. Business Literacy

Two general approaches are possible.

➔ **First**, companies may develop a “quiz” asking respondents factual questions about the business and the key facts employees should know. This approach has the advantage of accuracy, but tends to focus on a limited number of “slices” of the overall literacy.

➔ **Second**, respondents may be asked to report how well they believe they and their colleagues understand specific areas of the business.

## B. Sources of Information

Respondents are asked how significant various sources of information are in providing them information about the company. Typical sources include: my supervisor, my co-workers, the company newsletter, company meetings, etc.

## C. Employee Subgroups / Diversity

These items explore the treatment of specific groups of employees.

## D. Mission, Vision, Business Plan

These items are designed to explore how well employees are acquainted with the basic statements of organizational purpose and with the organization’s plan to realize that purpose.

**E. Business Process**

Some companies have used the survey as an opportunity to gather suggestions from the work force about specific steps the company could take to improve the effectiveness of its operations.

**F. In-Depth**

The core items in the survey provide broad measures of corporate culture. Companies that know that a particular topic is of special concern to them may wish to explore it in more detail.

# Any questions?

Don't hesitate to contact Ownership Associates. We'll be happy to answer any questions, and we will work hard to make your experience with the Ownership Culture Survey™ one you'll want to repeat.



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