

Industry News

Survey: One in Three Employees Never Asked for Advice

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One in three employees is seldom or never asked for advice on solving a problem at work, according to a nationwide telephone survey by CO2 Partners, a Minnesota leadership development and executive coaching firm.

Being asked to contribute a suggestion is a sign of regard by one's employer, said CO2 Partners President Gary Cohen.

"Organizations are always striving for higher employee engagement, but evidence indicates they unnecessarily create fundamental mistakes," Cohen said. "People needed to be respected and listened to."

The survey of 599 employed Americans was conducted Aug. 25–29. In response to the question, "How often does your boss ask for your advice on solving a problem at work?" here is what the respondents said:

Seldom/Never: 32.6 percent

Often/Occasionally: 62.6 percent

Don't know: 3.9 percent

"If our survey question had asked about solving an 'important' problem, it would probably have been a majority of U.S. employees that expressed such alienation," Cohen said. "Despite a trend toward greater teamwork and maximizing individual contribution, it's disturbing that the input of so many people is still ignored. After all, employees are a key source of valuable information needed to enhance organization performance."

Among the other findings:

- Women are somewhat less likely than men (34.7 percent versus 30.8 percent) to be asked for input by an employer.
- The less education an employee has, the less likely he or she will be asked to contribute an idea. Forty percent of those with just high school or less reported seldom or never being asked for advice compared with 20.9 percent of college graduates.
- Likewise, 45.7 percent of employees earning less than \$25,000 annually reported never or seldom being consulted compared with 24.7 percent of those earning more than \$75,000.

There were no significant differences among age groups.

The survey findings reflect topdown bias, Cohen said.

"How foolish to think just more educated or higherranking employees are worthy of being consulted?" he said. "It's less educated workers that are actually making the stuff or are on the front line, dealing with customers — they're the ones I'd want to talk to first."

But Cohen cautioned employers against asking questions for its own sake.

"Going through the motions isn't going to convince employees and would cause even greater alienation," he said. "A sincere effort to ask the right questions of everyone and to consider their ideas can be a powerful tool for improving both individual and organizational performance."

For more information: <http://www.co2partners.com/>