



# the monthly croak

This year is just flying by, I cannot believe the first quarter has gone by and we are into April! This month has been pretty hectic for our team with a number of special events occurring, meeting some fabulous people and some exciting projects getting off the ground. This month's issue focuses on workplace surveys do's and don't's and includes our monthly book review - an interesting read of how to take engagement to the extreme. We hope you find this edition interesting and applicable to your workplace! If you are new to the list and would like to check out some back issues of our newsletter you will find there [here](#) on the resources page of the [Kissing Frogs website](#).

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## critical success factors for workplace surveys

On the premise that most organisations have at one time or another considered doing an employee opinion survey, and many who have done so have found the process less than fulfilling, and based on some of the horror stories we have heard, we thought it may be timely to offer some 'do's and don't's about surveys, and in particular, for taking the pulse of your workforce.

Obviously at Kissing Frogs we believe that employee surveying is best left to the experts such as ourselves but if circumstances do not allow for this investment then the following are what might be termed the 'Critical Success Factors' for using such surveys in the workplace.

**1. Commitment to the Process** - Organisations deploying an employee survey absent the genuine support and commitment of top management are wasting time, money, and valuable management credibility. In fact, they are running the risk of making things worse.

**2. Understand What You're Getting Into** - On the surface, conducting an employee survey (or any survey for that matter) is a relatively straightforward process...You compile some questions, go ask people what they think, and tabulate the results. Often overlooked is the realisation that the very act of doing so creates expectations on the part of those being surveyed - particularly when that population is your workforce. Expectations that:

- A. The results will somehow be shared with them
- B. Something will actually happen as the result of the survey, and
- C. No harm will come to them for telling you what they really think

Though we have no scientific data to back this up, our experience of dealing with employee surveys have produced a few hard conclusions. One of them is that it is imperative to do a good job of managing these expectations. One possible consequence of failing to do so is that you quickly reach a point where the only people who bother to respond to your survey are more interested in venting their spleen than offering helpful feedback.

Employee and customer surveys are, by nature, perceived by line managers as a threat, in that they inevitably ask questions about the quality of supervision (both direct and indirect). This makes it imperative that you establish and communicate clearly, right up front, why you're doing the survey, what will happen to the results, and what you hope to gain from the whole process.

If the results are to become part of your business metrics (they should), improvement over time should be a significant factor.

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## critical success factors for workplace surveys (cont)

**3. The Survey Itself** - Too often, organisations trip themselves up from the start by asking too many questions, questions that aren't relevant, or questions people don't understand or could interpret differently. When it comes to the actual number of questions being asked, more is definitely not better. The number will greatly depend on the type of organisation you have and the type of employees you have working for you.

Should you develop your own survey or use one that is commercially available? Clearly, there are advantages and disadvantages either way. The major advantage of designing your own survey is that it affords you the ability to ask exactly the questions you want to ask. The disadvantages are that you may shy away from asking questions you should be asking, and by definition, preclude any opportunity to benchmark your results to others.

**4. Survey Administration** - Some important things to consider here have to do with how the survey is actually administered (i.e., face-to-face, by mail, electronically, etc.), and the instructions people are given about completing the survey. Generally, face-to-face administration yields a higher participation level and the ability to answer any questions people may have about the survey effort. Administration via the Internet is faster and cheaper. Regardless of mode, it is vital to ensure that everyone gets a consistent message about why the survey is being conducted, what will happen to the questionnaires/results, etc. You need to think about data integrity BEFORE doing the survey.

**5. Data Presentation** - In this area, there are two important considerations:

A. The survey effort will be successful only to the extent that people below the rank of Senior Manager actually take ownership of the data. Take pains to ensure that the data presented to them is indeed relevant to them. Generally, each work group or team should get its own discreet report. (Hint – dumping a 50-page report on a manager's desk is not seen as helpful.) The data should be presented in a fashion that enables them to make sense out of the report and begin putting it to use without having to whip out their Statistics 101 text to look up what a standard deviation is, or become a 'survey expert'. In short, you should insist that they be provided usefully formatted data, accompanied by user-friendly tools.

B. Stale information is of little or no value, be it financial data or employee survey results. The time between the actual administration of the survey and the return of the results should be kept to a minimum...certainly no more than a month.

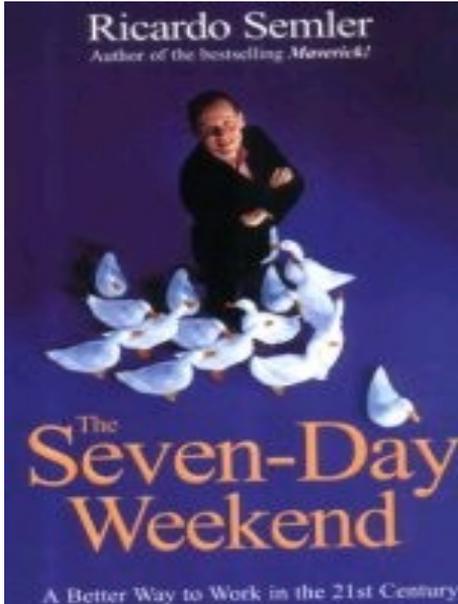
**6. Survey Frequency** - Given that one of the major benefits of a survey process is the opportunity to measure results over time, organisations should commit themselves to periodically resurveying their workforce. Much like an operational or financial audit, an annual cycle is generally an acceptable interval; except in cases where either the results themselves or the existence of some significant internal events might call for an earlier resurvey. Here again, more is definitely not better. We all have enough noise in our lives (can you say spam?), so be considerate and make your survey efforts count for something.

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## frog jokes

We received this oldy but a goody from Debbie at [Blue Planet](#): A frog goes into a bank and approaches the teller. He can see from her nameplate that her name is Patricia Whack. "Miss Whack, I'd like to get a \$20,000 loan to take a holiday." Patty looks at the frog in disbelief and asks his name. The frog says his name is Kermit Jagger, his dad is Mick Jagger, and that it's okay, he knows the bank manager. Patty explains that he will need to secure the loan with some collateral. The frog says, "Sure. I have this," and produces a tiny porcelain elephant, about an inch tall, bright pink and perfectly formed. Very confused, Patty explains that she'll have to consult with the bank manager and disappears into a back office. She finds the manager and says, "There's a frog called Kermit Jagger out there who claims to know you and wants to borrow \$20,000, and he wants to use this as collateral." She holds up the tiny pink elephant.. "I mean, what in the world is this?" The bank manager looks back at her and says... "It's a knickknack, Patty Whack. Give the frog a loan, His old man's a Rolling Stone."

## 7 day weekend - Ricardo Semler



In his best-selling book *Maverick!*, Brazilian businessman Ricardo Semler describes how he transformed his father's company, Semco, into a non-traditional workplace. In this sequel to that book, he traces Semco's foray into high-technology and how the company grew to become an organisation with multiple businesses, 3,000 employees, and \$160 million in revenue. This time, however, he focuses on how managers can help employees achieve a healthy work/life balance in order to create a sustainable company.

As Semler warns readers at the outset, his book questions everything we know about how to run a company. He turns most of our cherished notions about an effective workplace upside down, suggesting outrageous alternatives, and then tells us how these ideas have actually worked at Semco. His accounts will make even the most progressive managers shake their heads in disbelief.

Semler's main argument centres on the idea that our traditional weekend disappeared a long time ago. In times past, weekends allowed us time to be idle, think, and find a work/life balance. Now, in the age of laptops and mobile phones, we spend our weekends either working or thinking about work. We fill even our leisure time with things we must do, adhering to rigid schedules and leaving no time to relax and do nothing. This has created great stress for all of us.

As an alternative, Semler proposes a "seven-day weekend" -- a completely flexible schedule that can reduce stress and restore balance to our lives by allowing us to decide each day how to divide our time between our jobs and personal lives. We should learn how to go to the movies on Monday afternoon or go to a park and feed ducks with our children. By having the flexibility to work and play when we want, he argues, we can extend our "reservoir of talent" and live a richer, more contented life. This is critical for us as individuals. As Semler reminds us, life expectancy is increasing and may soon exceed 100 years; many of us will continue to work well past the traditional retirement age. Success and money are only distant relatives, he reminds us.

Helping employees achieve a healthy work/life balance is also critical for businesses. Employees with balanced lives are happier and more productive. Our current workplaces, Semler contends, operate like militaristic boarding schools, treating employees like adolescents. If democratic principles are good for other parts of our society, Semler argues, shouldn't they be good for the workplace? Why shouldn't we treat employees like adults and trust them to do the right thing? And this is what he did as head of Semco.

This is one of the most original and thought-provoking books I have ever read. Although the language is accessible and the colourful stories about Semco make for easy reading, it took me a long time to read the book, as I was constantly stopping to ponder another of Semler's "crazy" concepts. Also, as Semler is a big believer in serendipity, he disdains structure and advocates a rambling route through life. Whilst a truly democratic, employee led organisation may be out of the reach of most organisations the book contains a number of initiatives that would certainly add value to both organisations and their employees.

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## survey nightmares

Share with us your survey nightmares (we promise no names or identifiable specifics will be included when they are printed) and what you have learned coming out the other side. We have heard some horrors from 3 montly surveying to 8 page questionnaires!!

The best story will receive a lunch date with the Kissing Frogs Team at one of our new favorite resturants [Wagamamas](#) on Oxford Terrace.