2019 Employee Engagement Focus Group Results
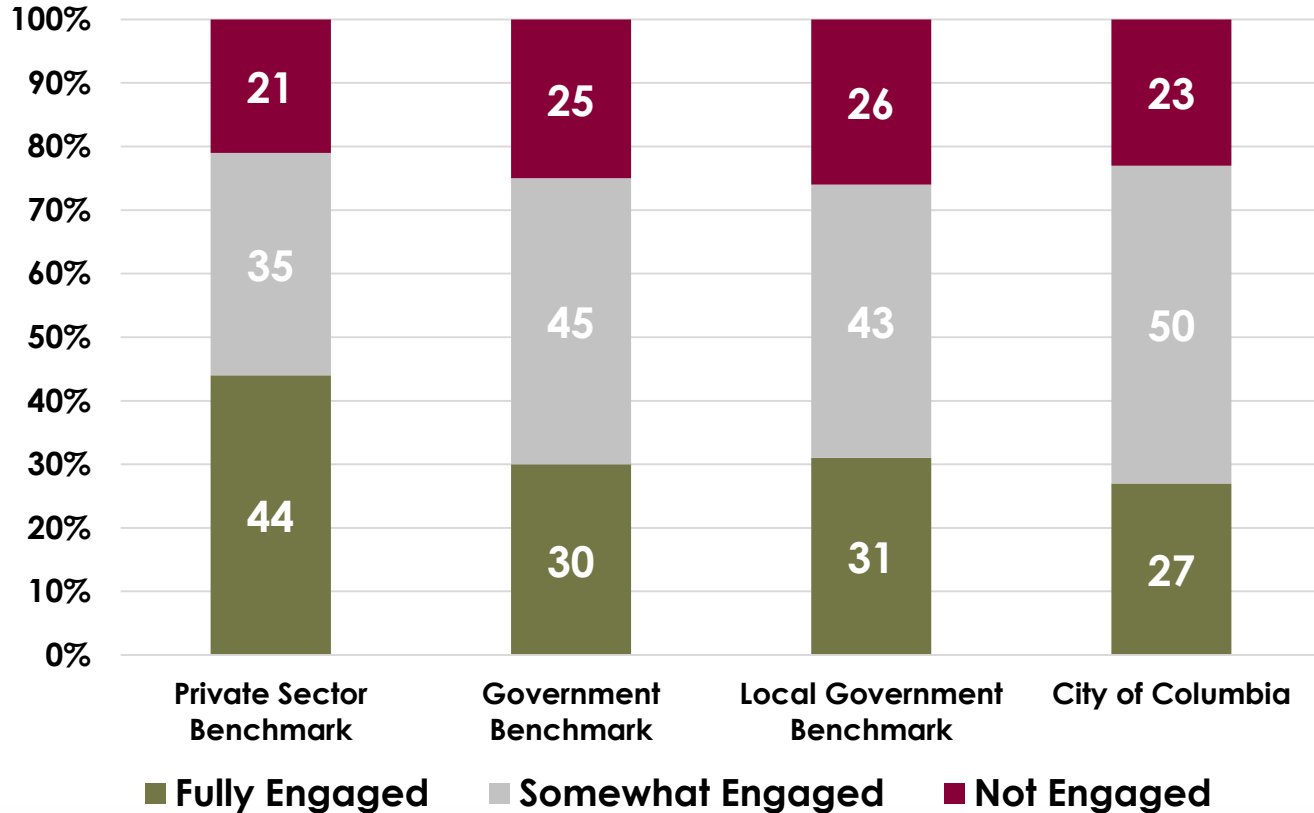
Columbia, MO August 19, 2019

Notable 2018 Survey Results

CPS HR CONSULTING™

Overall Engagement Levels

The fully engaged score for City of Columbia employees (27%) is below our benchmarks.

The City's somewhat-engaged score (50%) is above all benchmarks.

	Private Sector Benchmark	Government Benchmark	Local Government Benchmark	City of Columbia
Not Engaged	21	25	26	23
Somewhat Engaged	35	45	43	50
Fully Engaged	44	30	31	27

Fully Engaged **Somewhat Engaged** **Not Engaged**

Highest-Scoring Questions (% Positive)

Category	Question	City	Gap w/Local Govt
My Work	I like the kind of work I do	93%	7
My Work	I know what is expected of me on the job	90%	-1
My Work	The work I do is meaningful to me	89%	12
My Work	My job makes good use of my skills and abilities	87%	9
Mission	My department's mission is important to me.	85%	8
My Supervisor	My supervisor is available when I need him or her	84%	14
My Team	People on my team cooperate to get the job done	83%	4
My Team	People on my team have the skills necessary to accomplish our goals	83%	-1
My Work	My work gives me a feeling of personal accomplishment	83%	8
Mission	I know how my work supports my department's mission	83%	-3

Lowest-Scoring Questions (% Positive)

Category	Question	City	Gap vs. Local Govt
Leadership and Managing Change	I believe that City Management will take action on the results from this survey	19%	
Leadership and Managing Change	I feel that change is managed well in my organization	19%	-19
Pay and Benefits	I feel that my pay adequately reflects my performance	23%	-24
Pay and Benefits	Compared to people doing a similar job in other organizations, I feel my pay is reasonable	25%	-34
Leadership and Managing Change	I feel that the City of Columbia as a whole is managed well	25%	-24
Leadership and Managing Change	I have a high level of respect for City Management	27%	-22
Leadership and Managing Change	I believe the actions of City Management are consistent with the City's values	30%	-26
Pay and Benefits	I am paid fairly for the work that I do	33%	-29
Leadership and Managing Change	City Management keeps me informed about matters that affect me	35%	-16
Resources and Workload	There are enough staff in my organization to get the work done	36%	-17

Employee Engagement Focus Group Results

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Focus Groups

12 Focus Groups (145 employees):

Line Staff: Public Works (12)
Utilities (32)
Customer Service/Administration (11)
Fire (8)
Police (12)
Parks & Recreation (14)
Professional/Non-Supervisor (15)

Supv/Managers: City-wide(25)

Dept Directors: City-wide(16)

Feedback - Positives

◆ "I like that I can shape things in the community where we live and raise our families."

◆ "A lot of people are good at what they do." "We work with high level, well-intentioned people who you can depend on." "People help each other, they are cooperative and supportive of each other. There is good comradery among employees."

◆ "Benefits package is a big positive and helps people – it's why people stay. Old pension is great."

◆ Job security is appreciated. "As dollars get tighter, the decision is to keep people and lose positions which has meant no layoffs."

Feedback – Positives – Interim City Manager

❖ "He is very visible, approachable, listens to anyone, more involved than those in the past and is authentic" and "communicates regularly via email".

❖ "It feels like he is trying to build a strong relationship with **_each_** division."

❖ "The ICM tries to understand the situation before making a decision. He doesn't seem to make snap decisions or judgments. He asks 'what's going on?'"

Feedback – Positives – Supv/Mgrs Speaking of Directors

❖ See their bosses as genuinely caring about people who work for them and noted that communications have improved since the reorganization.

❖ Some directors work for the city and not just their departments,

❖ Some directors roll up their sleeves and work, not just attend meetings. They are better at listening than in the past.

❖ Staff like that things are less siloed than in the past and appreciate the work/life balance, the casual/laid back atmosphere.

Feedback – Positives – Line Staff Speaking of Managers

Employees at one location spoke of the informal, relaxed environment.

❖ People don't feel micromanaged.
❖ Mistakes are treated as a learning experience.
❖ Manager coaches and teaches the staff, talks to them everyday and asks how their job can be made easier, sends Christmas cards, keeps door open so people can stop by to talk and isn't in a rush to get rid of you when you stop by, asks for input and truly listens and tries to address issues within her control."

Another group talked about a manager that buys lunch and pays for BBQ for the staff out of his own pocket. The employees really appreciate it. "He treats us like an equal and is continually looking for ways to improve the way we work."

Feedback – Positives – Department Directors About Themselves

❖ "We are increasingly working as a team. There is greater collaboration and a change in perspective – one that focuses on the collective interests and needs of the group."

❖ "We are working together to break down silos, better supporting each other's initiatives and be respectful in our communications."

Feedback – Overarching Issues

❖ Employees do not feel valued for the job commitment or work performed. Little or no recognition for a job well done. "Morale is tremendously low." There are no merit raises. There is no incentive to do well. A high performer is treated the same as a poor performer." "We don't feel respected by city management."

❖ Current employees feel they are treated differently than new employees. "People at the top don't fight for us. We are ignored and brushed under the rug."

❖ "Pay compression is a major problem. City-wide problems such as pay aren't addressed. There is a lack of strategy. Instead divisions are pitted against each other." "We fight fires without dealing with the underlying problems."

Feedback – Overarching Issues

❖ Being understaffed comes with a huge cost for the people carrying the extra load. On top of the stress placed on employees, there are untold risks placed on systems and services.

❖ While every job is important, the work/life balance of line staff whose job is to essentially be on-call 24/7 or work a schedule that precludes the ability to live a stable, healthy life adds a level of stress that employees feel is not fairly recognized.

❖ Regarding some directors, "it is hard to respect someone you don't see, never talk to and who doesn't seem interested in us."

Feedback

- ❖ Decision Making and Communications
- ❖ Fear of Reprisal
- ❖ Pay, Promotions and the Hiring Process
- ❖ Performance Evaluation
- ❖ Training and Career Development
- ❖ Rewards and Recognition
- ❖ Consistency in Following Rules and Treatment of People
- ❖ Continuous Improvement
- ❖ Enterprise Risk Management
- ❖ Employee Survey and Focus Groups

Feedback – Decision Making and Communications

❖ We could do a much better job of making and communicating decisions that affect day to day operations. Several examples were given that employees believe could have been better developed and communicated. But, "from the top down, no one cares what we think." "Regarding the City Council, it feels like they make uninformed decisions. They only know what they are told by division or department heads. They don't seem to do they homework."

❖ Decisions are not well-planned and executed. "There are ultimatums – we will "go live" no matter what. The leadership isn't willing to say we are not ready." "Basic stuff – job aids don't work or don't work well. No one seems to care" "MUNIS is complicated, requires double work and is not an efficient improvement. The telephones and voicemail don't work."

❖ "Once a decision is made, it takes several years to decide it doesn't work and needs to change. The staff have to do "work arounds" to accomplish what the new system or policy was intended to do but doesn't."

❖ "We don't know each other at the department or division level – street/transit – we don't have good communications across the organization." "Divisions don't share issues with the department."

Feedback – Decision Making and Communications

❖ "We need a way to manage ideas, opinions and suggestions." "We made suggestions and never heard back. "There is no "new" thinking, all ideas are brought from within. The Admin people need to move around. They need to understand the work environment needs before they make decisions about what to buy or build."

❖ "The leadership listens more to unionized groups than those without representation." "The 2% increase was calculated wrong. No one in HR would listen, went to the union and they hired a lawyer. Then people listened."

❖ "We need to do a better job of communicating what city workers do and the results of that work so that the community understands what they are getting for their tax dollars."

Feedback – Fear of Reprisal

❖ We need to be leading edge but if we stick our neck out, it will get cut off. (Line staff)

Feedback – Pay, Promotions and the Hiring Process

❖ "Pay is handled poorly. Knee jerk reaction. There is a lack of transparency – where did this decision [raise minimum wage] come from? Lack of understanding – what data were used to inform decisionmakers?" "The $15/hour was good for those at the bottom of the pay scale but the result created greater pay compression. Now the pay situation is in a crisis." "I have worked here for eleven years without a raise or a promotion and I am told I do a good job. It doesn't seem right."

❖ "Many have second jobs in order to make ends meet." Some can't have second jobs because of the nature of their work and work schedule. They feel further penalized.

❖ "Recent pay adjustments (midpoint of the pay progression) hurt people who have been loyal and committed to the city for a long time. For more than 15 years, reaching the midpoint was not funded." When funding was available recently, people were treated the same regardless of whether you were well past their midpoint or had just reached the five year mark. For many, it felt unfair. "Pay here isn't designed for fairness or for recognizing good performers."

Feedback – Pay, Promotions and the Hiring Process

❖ Within an occupational group, the "1s, 2s, and 3s (operators), for example, used to be tested to move up but not anymore. Since there isn't a pay differential, there is no incentive to know the job. No one cares about knowing their job."

❖ Pay affects recruitment and retention. "A skilled worker makes the same as a Walmart greeter. Applicants aren't from the skilled pipeline which puts tremendous pressure on the employees who need to train and supervise new staff." "No one with needed skills applies for the vacancies." "There are jobs we simply cannot fill because of the salary level, life guards for the pools, for example. There's lots of liability for half the pay one can get working at Target."

❖ "It takes four years to train a lineman and then they leave." Turnover is so great, we can't keep the people we train and we can't rely on the new folks to do the work needed of them." "50% of the staff cannot be left alone to do the job. They can't do the job. I have worked 84 hours this week because I can't leave people to do the work."

❖ "The lack of staff puts more pressure on current staff. It's not a good situation to force people to work with fewer staff. The newer staff are hurt the most regarding mandatory work. No wonder they leave." "We are burning people out.

Feedback – Pay, Promotions and the Hiring Process

❖ "We can't fill all of our fire trucks and have sufficient coverages during vacations." "We aren't meeting national standards for response time. We need 60 people right now in the Fire Department. We also need people to train others." "The Police Department is 113 people down based on the city population. We only have enough cops for band-aids and we are handling things by triage. We are a face to the citizens and can't provide the level of service we have promised."

❖ "We have also lost crucial institutional knowledge. We are doing nothing to address this situation."

❖ "It's conceivable that a person can leave the city, apply for a job to come back after 91 days has passed and make more money than the person who stayed with the city and applied for the same job. I don't know how often it has happened but it has happened."

❖ "Hiring takes so much time. Many applicants drop off. It can take up to five weeks to do a background check. We lose people we are trying to hire. Seasonal staff (less than three months) come back every year but if it has been more than 91 days, another background check is required.

Feedback – Performance Management

❖ "The performance evaluation is cursory, an exercise that is not taken seriously. We don't get feedback and we have no idea how the information is used." "Performance reviews don't matter. We will keep the job but with no reward." "We are told to write our own evaluation. Some of us are better writers than others. And, even when we try to do a good job of capturing our work, we are told to change it. It is terribly demoralizing."

❖ "Managers don't care about the performance evaluation. Sadly, it ends up being a joke and a waste of time."

❖ "We need to be holding people accountable for their performance at all levels in the organization." "Address issues of performance at the individual level rather than a shotgun approach that affects everyone."

Feedback – Training and Career Development

❖ People mentioned the need for supervisory and management training especially in the areas of expectation setting, holding people accountable for their performance, and being teachers and coaches.

❖ "When we are understaffed, as we often are, the good supervisors aren't able to teach or coach. They are too busy having to do the work of others or because positions are vacant." As a result, "we are being trained by people who aren't strong performers".

❖ "We need to cross train people to deal with personnel losses, vacations or sickness." "When we are on-call, we need to know other people's jobs so we can fix a problem without going in blind. When we don't know what we are doing in these situations, we have to call someone for help and things can be down for hours."

Feedback – Rewards and Recognition

❖ "We have no traditions, no ceremony." "We are just another guy in a seat."

❖ "There is little effort made to make people feel good about their contributions." "Few say thank you or give personalize feedback. People don't feel seen or appreciated."

❖ "The October High Five Awards – the same organizations get the rewards. We also need to recognize teamwork."

Feedback – Consistency in Following Rules and Treatment of People

❖ "There are no consistent policies city-wide on issuing contracts, billing, purchasing and doing purchase orders. No one tells you how to do things when you are new. People who review your work review things inconsistently so no one learns from their work." "Nothing has been updated in 5-10 years. And, there are no training manuals. As a result, we are highly dependent on institutional memory which may or may not have been done right." "The hiring process – one division has to post all vacancies and another doesn't have to post at all. Pay can be different as well as job descriptions for the same job. The process of creating new positions and providing advancement opportunities varies. Some groups can rewrite jobs to fit a person's qualifications and others can't."

❖ "There is little consistency in how decisions are made and actions taken." "Each department and division follows their own rules. Certain people don't follow rules and aren't held accountable."

❖ Current employees are penalized when applying for a promotion. They compete with outside applicants but are restricted to a 10% promotional increase while there is no salary cap imposed on an outside applicant selected for the job.

Feedback – Continuous Improvement

❖ We lack a city-wide continuous quality improvement focus. "There is a cost of doing business that no one seems to pay attention to." "Costly, old practices should be evaluated."

❖ "Jobs can be restructured or reconfigured to be more efficient with better work flow. It would be easier on everyone. I made several suggestions but nothing ever changes." "There are people who are tied to their desk but may have downtime. We should be looking for how those people can help others that are struggling because of their workload."

Feedback – Enterprise Risk Management

❖ Employees are concerned about the city's infrastructure. "Preventative maintenance is non-existent. We are using band-aids to keep the water system operational."

❖ The pay and work schedule issues because of turnover "chips away at us and keeps us from answering the phone when we are at home but might be needed."

❖ Some people have jobs that require them to be on "emergency duty status" all of the time "because there aren't enough trained staff we can rely on. That means we can't take vacation or another job."

Feedback – Enterprise Risk Management

❖ The strategic plan – "a lot of good work but it got "bastardized" so now it is a good looking document that isn't strategic at all."

❖ "Liability concerns hamper good leadership. Rather than learning how to get to "yes", the default is "no" making us fearful of trying new things and limiting our ability to reach our potential." "There are many legal issues that the city has to deal with. We need much more timely response from our legal department."

Feedback – Employee Survey and Focus Groups

❖ For some employees, the survey questions seemed desk job focused. The work life environment for some occupations when required to work other than a Monday – Friday 9-5 schedule adds a level of complexity and stress that doesn't seem to be well understood.

❖ "We are surprised we had this focus group. Can we see the results? Will you come back and check on whether anything was done as a result of these conversations?" "It actually gives us hope that someone might listen." "It feels good to be able to talk about these things with others in the city. This type of thing has never happened before."

Feedback – Recommendations

◆ Invest in our people. Address the pay issues. Move people up the pay scale to helped those who have performed well and worked hard for many years feel they have been fairly treated.

◆ Create skills and pay progression requirements and incentives to encourage personal development and increase organizational capability. Because of pay compression, we have lost the distinction one should have in their performance progression but we need to have an incentive for people to grow in their jobs and to enhance/refine their skills and abilities.

◆ Address pay and promotion process inequities. Change the penalty for promotion.

Feedback – Recommendations

◆ Increase entry level salaries so that skilled talent will apply to our announcements and so we can attract the talent we need.

◆ Managers and supervisors need to express appreciation for a job well done. Pats on the back and thank you's can go a long way in recognizing the work people are doing. Go even a step further and show interest in the work people are doing. Personal notes, "huddles" with the team, internal team recognition, all show that the manager is personally invested and cares. Assistant Directors and above – "Just swing by. Spend a little time with us."

◆ Create Teamwork Awards – recognizing teamwork within and across departments and the city is needed.

◆ Lead by example – grab some overalls and get on the truck. Leaders need to know what a day in the life of employees is like.

Feedback – Recommendations

◆ For any new initiative or change, develop an implementation plan with clear action steps and timelines. Designate the people needed to oversee as well as successfully implement the change or initiative. Have an evaluation strategy that focuses on results so we are monitoring whether or how well we achieve the anticipated outcomes.

◆ Share the focus group results with employees so we know what was communicated to the leadership.

◆ Do the focus groups again in a year. We would like to see if anything has changed.

Questions

Judy England-Joseph
Strategic Consultant, Institute for Public Sector Employee Engagement
Jengland-joseph@cpshr.us

CPS HR CONSULTING™

Additional Contact Information

Bob Lavigna

Director, Institute for Public Sector Employee Engagement

rlavigna@cpshr.us

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