

Employee Satisfaction Survey and Agency Workplace Efforts

Mike Reissig, Deputy Comptroller

Korry Castillo, Assistant Director, Property Tax Assistance

June 5, 2018

Is the Comptroller's Office one of the Best Places to Work in Austin?

- Korry and I say yes
- Our fellow employees say yes and no
- The official result of the effort was no
- But that's not necessarily bad news
- When is another teachable moment ever really bad news? Well actually it can be, but not here

3,900 Comments!?

by 1,563 Employees

60 percent of which were negative,
so negative comments from nearly
1,000 employees

Comments in Three Main Categories

In Descending order of Emphasis (as far as I can tell)

- Work/Life Balance (Schedule)
 - Can I telecommute? Why can't I telecommute? Please for the love of God, more telecommuting
 - OK, I'm being a jerk. Telecommuting is a legitimate request. This category is also flextime, wellness time, leave policies, etc.
- People
 - My management likes, does not like, supports, communicates with or ignores me
 - I love (hate) my coworkers
- The work itself
 - The work is boring, fulfilling, challenging, no training, few (many) opportunities for advancement, cross-training (or not)

What Did the Representative Employee Say?

“At the Comptroller’s Office I do challenging and meaningful work in a supportive, inclusive, and friendly environment with a schedule that is tailored to my needs both in and out of the office.”

-Happy Employee

“The Comptroller’s Office is a very negative place where nobody cares about me or my ideas and I am forced to perform meaningless toil under an inflexible schedule with no hope of advancement.”

-Unhappy Employee

Is a Happy Comptroller Employee Just the Opposite of an Unhappy Employee?

- First, in practice, there aren't necessarily that many fully "happy" or "unhappy" employees. Most of us contain elements of each.
- The quotes on the previous slide, while representative and fun to write after six hours of reading, imply a symmetry that is not necessarily that pervasive.
- People appear to be more unhappy about insufficient life/work benefits like telecommuting and schedule flexibility; but also, favoritism, and lack of opportunity.

Is a Happy Comptroller Employee Just the Opposite of an Unhappy Employee?

- Those who are happy seem to put more emphasis on recognition and support from their managers and coworkers along with challenging work that helps others.
- There appears to be no full substitute for a sense of inclusion and respect that comes from operating as a team that transcends organization barriers both vertical and horizontal.
- In sum, if you could address all work/life issues perfectly you might keep employees from being unhappy, but you're not necessarily making them happy.

Characteristics of the “Top” Divisions

Divisions with a ranking of 1-5 (24 total, with Executive Administration #1) appear to share certain characteristics, not all of which are a result of excellent management. Feel free to take credit if you like, but recognize that you had a leg up:

- Small staff size
- Employees do more technical work
- Autonomy—results rather than process oriented
- Relatively well paid
- Empowerment (in the case of Exec overtly, and indirectly through autonomy in other areas)

Ideal Solution: Make all Divisions Look More Like Those that Finished 1-5

- Face to face mentoring and training for all management from team leads to Deputy Comptroller.
- Continue to ensure that pay and promotions are based on merit and that disciplinary actions are taken in a consistent and reasonable manner.
- Promote a division culture where everyone feels part of the team, understands the context that they work and is treated as an end in themselves and not just as a means to an end.

little things make a BIG difference

Things the Comptroller is doing himself:

- Monthly emails about work and family (with pictures)
- Tours of Divisions/Field Offices/Out of State Offices
- Open House
- Handwritten notes and Certificates for Employee Milestones
- Pizza with the Comptroller
- Employee Service Receptions

So We Learned Something, Now What is Executive Administration Doing?

Training Overhaul

- Focused training needs through agency survey resulting in new emphasis on small group seminars (managers) and technical/interpersonal skills (frontline employees).
- Increased Exec involvement in the agency's Leadership Academy. Every member of Exec assists in the active learning projects of Leadership Academy participants.
- Brown Bag seminars in morning and afternoon to increase participation.

So We Learned Something, Now What is Executive Administration Doing?

Increased Communication

- Monthly newsletter including messages from Comptroller, Exec, staff spotlights
- Face to face meetings and/or written responses in monthly newsletter “Ask Exec”
- Employee huddles, Management seminars

So We Learned Something, Now What is Executive Administration Doing?

Flexibility

- Specifically emphasized (mandated) more telecommuting. Followed up with survey.
- Researching remote offices in Austin metro area for commuters.

So We Learned Something, Now What is Executive Administration Doing?

Employee Engagement

- Employee Engagement division
- Employee Advisory Board
- Food Truck Friday with Sound Bites concerts
- Uncommon Gallery in café
- Researching bringing back eDay
- *Building improvements*

What did Tax Policy Learn?

- Maintained current telework policy
- Developed a career ladder in Taxpayers Services
 - Added supervisory level to management hierarchy
 - Promoted mid-level staff
 - Increased entry-level pay
- Acknowledging great work by front-line staff
- Increased face-to-face engagements