

case study

Nissan shifts into high gear with sophisticated organisational development tools

Pulling a 180 in a car is a challenging manoeuvre. Try it with a multi-billion pound company.

Yet that's exactly what a leading UK car manufacturer has done. The company began a three-year business plan designed to produce growth, profit and zero debt. As part of that process, the organisation recognised that it had to have a clear understanding of the corporate culture among its 30,000+ direct employees. It needed to know what motivated them to give their best, as well as which corporate processes were working – and which weren't.

A shift in tradition

Traditionally, the company had conducted employee feedback reviews every 18 months to two years. These were informal surveys, taking place in the company cafeteria – in the style of an old town-hall meeting.

The process was time consuming and expensive. The collective format of the meetings meant that the production line actually had to stop so all employees could attend. In addition, all data was collected on paper, which made analysis difficult and expensive.

Recognising that this process was not sufficient, the organisation simply attempted to increase the frequency of surveys. But this only added to the problems by creating "survey fatigue" among staff, who had become tired of providing endless feedback that didn't appear to have much impact on management.

Need for a new system

"It was clear that we needed to change," said a spokesperson. "Our internal process had become far too cumbersome, so we sought external help from Getfeedback*, experts in organisational development."

Getfeedback were brought in to develop an innovative approach to the employee survey and development process. In reflection of the three year corporate plan, costs needed to be kept to a minimum and results needed to be achieved as quickly as possible.

Getfeedback conducted 1,500 online and 3,500 paper-based employee surveys. Response rates were high, thanks to of a clear communication plan by Getfeedback to ensure employees recognised the value of the new survey, as well as its confidential nature. The new results were then compared to those from previous surveys, and a complete corporate analysis was delivered only weeks later.

"It was important for staff and managers to see the results quickly, so the survey was not perceived as an attempt to appease employees, without making significant changes," said Alison Gill, CEO of Getfeedback. "Staff had seen too many failed processes."

After going through this process, the organisation realised it was on track to meet its objectives, with record-setting revenues and an industry-leading operating margin – truly shifting into high gear.

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