



Employee survey results often present boards and executive managers with complicated choices and decisions to make.

No-one likes complicated decisions and no-one likes too many options to choose from.

So, when faced with complicated choices, most decision-makers will often simplify their decisions by:

1. Doing what worked in the past (even if the circumstances are now different)
2. Doing what other people are doing (even if their own circumstances are different)
3. Doing what the experts recommend (because they should have thought through all the complicated issues)
4. Doing nothing (because there are too many other urgent things to do)

There is a 5th less-travelled decision-making process.

A classic one-liner attributed to Alice in Wonderland is:

“If you don’t know where you’re going, any road will get you there.”

But, of course, if you do know where you’re going, then that will simplify the decision-making process enormously.

When applied to employee surveys, it starts with executive managers making a decision about the sort of culture and the types of employee behaviours that will serve the organisation’s strategy best. They then use the employee survey results to get evidence that the culture and behaviours are shaping up the way their strategy requires, and if not, why not.

Culture must always serve Strategy.

For example, if you have decided that your organisation requires an Adaptive Culture in order to achieve its long-term goals, then your employee survey becomes a tool to achieve this purpose.

If you reflect on all the employee surveys you have ever encountered, how many of them had a clear-cut strategic purpose? And how many of them fit better with the “any survey will do” approach - the Alice in Wonderland quote sums it up beautifully.

At BPA, we have done thousands of employee surveys. In my view, the best ones always had a clear-cut purpose.