

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY REPORT



A recent survey was launched after a large Montana-based accounting firm named Anderson ZurMuehlen merged in and became part of Pinion on January 3, 2023.

The Purpose



The survey was released to all employees (admin to CEO) as a "check in" regarding the integration of firms. The survey had a deadline of May 5, 2023, with goals of uncovering both the smooth and rocky roads established through the integration.

The Objectives



- 1 Assess the effectiveness of our integration activity
- 2 Uncover sources of friction that could be improved
- 3 Assess the current cultural health of the firm
- 4 Identify potential adjustments or improvements that could positively affect firm culture

What We Learned



Lowest Average Question
3.6



"I have enough information to effectively communicate with customers, vendors, and suppliers about our combined portfolio of products and services."

Highest Average Question
4.5



"My supervisor is supportive of my professional development."

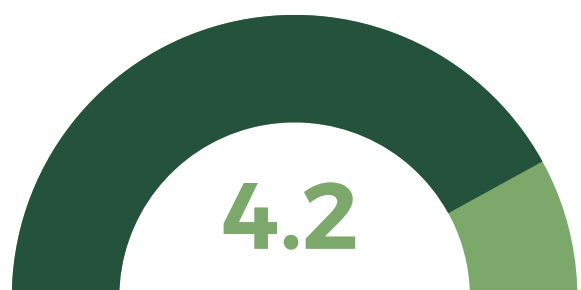


Receiving information was a popular topic and concern within the survey. However, results show the wide variety of ways employees prefer to receive information. Either information is getting lost along the way, or we have to have to be flexible in finding more efficient ways to get across information successfully.

Highlights



Overall Average



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Any integration is rough and I know it will get smoother every day. I also know it takes years to be fully integrated and our patience with the process will pay off.

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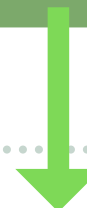
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It seemed to be well planned out and very systematic.

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Room For Improvement

- Communication about the integration specifically from supervisors and leadership teams.
- Relayed information as a whole was a large part of the survey that some respondents felt fell short during the merge.
- Timing is key. This includes not only staying on top of lists and software, but the time that the integration happened as well (tax season).



The Value



- Overall, the survey was proven to be successful as it not only uncovered areas in need of improvements, but also areas to celebrate.
- An integration is not an easy process, so for percentages to be as high as they were in a majority of categories shares a lot about the environment that Pinion has built.
- With this survey, we are able to now take this information to continue to grow as a firm. We can pursue what went well, while working to make changes for the future and for the betterment of Pinion as a whole.
- We know that a gap in the survey results lie between receiving information at the low end, and feeling supported by supervisors at the high end. The good news is, considering employees feel confident in the support they receive, they can trust that improvements to fill informational gaps will be in the works.

Solutions

- Analyze the way we approach communication. One on one check up meetings allow individuals to get a better sense of what is occurring, along with being able to ask questions directly.
- Clarity is key! Multiple responses suggested making sure that plans are clear to everyone in the firm, no matter what level they are on. The more information employees have, the more they can share with clients.
- An integration can be stressful on its own, so making sure that it's not at a prime point where stress typically occurs is key. Sometimes the time of a merge can't be prevented, so in that case making sure everything is set ahead of time can make all the difference.

My Takeaways

based on survey questions and objectives

Which questions on the survey align to which of the four objectives above? (one question may fulfill multiple objectives)

Objective: Assess the effectiveness of our integration activity



1. Overall, the process of combining firms is going well.

Through this question, we are able to see an immediate answer to the effectiveness of the integration. Either some people thought it was effective, therefore the process is going well. OR some people believe that it is not effective, therefore they would disagree with this statement. This question is also straightforward which gives us an accurate response in the simplest form, exactly what a survey needs.



11. I understand how the integration process is supposed to affect me over the next few months.

As long as people are understanding what comes out of integrating and how it will affect them, then the answers to this question assess the effectiveness of the merge. Ironically, this was one of the lowest scoring survey questions. So, if people are not understanding how a merge this big will affect them, then that is something that needs to be assessed regarding how effective the merge is.

Objective: Uncover sources of friction that could be improved



2. Through their actions, our senior leadership team demonstrates their commitment to making the transition period as fast and smooth as possible.

3. Our executive leadership team is effectively retaining the mission critical strengths of the two companies as we work through integration.

10. Teams have been collaborating well to coordinate efforts and maximize the success of the transition to one combined company.

7. My supervisor has been a good resource for me during the integration process to date.

During an integration, communication and leadership is HUGE. Just based off of these questions, if employees are responding with a disagreement, then that causes a source of friction. Collaborating falls in the same category as communication and I don't think an integration can be successful if we aren't maximizing resources. Individuals are chosen as leaders for a reason, however so is every employee within Pinion, which means in order for the merge to run like a well oiled machine, everyone at each level has to do their part.

My Takeaways

based on survey questions and objectives

Objective: Identify potential adjustments or improvements that could positively affect firm culture

Like stated above, communication is HUGE. I truly believe that supervisors or leaders checking in on individuals with meetings can make the biggest impact. Although an employee doesn't have the power to stop an integration, acknowledging that their opinions or feelings matter can make the biggest difference in how situations are handled. No matter what title you hold, when it comes to the process of integrating, it's important to make every employee/colleague feel welcomed and reassured.

Continuing to present data of improvements since the merge can positively impact firm culture as some people may come to peace learning that the merge has proven positive results. KEEP UP WITH CLIENTS AND EMPLOYEES!! It's so important to check up on everyone. This can be work related, or even just mindset.

Objective: Assess the current cultural health of the firm



12. I am confident that because we joined forces, Pinion will be able to deliver greater value to our customers.

13. I believe our customers are confident in our ability to deliver greater value to them as a result of our companies joining forces.

4. I have been able to ask questions and get answers about integration throughout the combination process so far.

Confidence is KEY!!! If employees agree to either of these questions, it shows how confident they are in the atmosphere and relationship that Pinion has created. Having confidence that the firm is healthy enough to maintain a positive environment and deliver greater value says a lot.

Employees deserve to feel like they can ask questions and get answers about events that affect them, whether it's good or bad. If they don't feel comfortable, then maybe that says something about the environment that's been created.

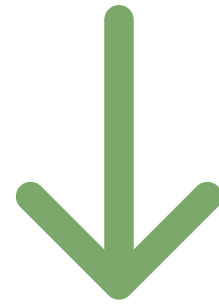
In a firm as big as Pinion, there has to be a priority to keep both employees and customers happy. It's all about balance.

Setting objectives helps to ensure we are on the right track and provide clarity. The four objectives used for this survey have allowed questions and results to be categorized, determining if goals have been met, and what needs to be improved. There is always room for improvement, which we have found within the survey responses. We also know that nothing is perfect, as the definition of perfect doesn't exist. Instead, we try our best and we focus on parts that we can make better.

My Takeaways

based on survey questions and objectives

Demographic Survey Questions



Demographic questions help collect data from customers/employees that can be used to differentiate and divide groups. I think that these questions play a large part in the data collected in the Pinion survey. However, we also have to remember that these were not questions asked to customers, therefore all the responses are employees of Pinion and allow for a slightly clearer segment of data.

To start off, asking age is important because different generations of people have different opinions. They might have grown up being taught different ways because of their age category, therefore feel differently about specific questions.

Although age in a survey is ideal, I believe how long people have been a part of Pinion ranks priority. People who have experienced more years with Pinion will have more background with the firm, therefore might respond differently than someone with less experience with Pinion. It may be interesting to ask if people have experienced a merge before, and if so how this merge compares to others. Utilize employees, they have so much valuable knowledge to offer that we might dismiss if we don't ask questions.

Work locations (remote, hybrid, etc) have a HUGE impact on the results of the survey. One group may find that the integration has been more difficult if they work in an office location as opposed to remote, or vice versa. We have to take into account how it might affect someone more based on their location and more importantly, why.

Overall, demographic questions do play a large role in the feedback received in the survey. It's important to continue to take that into account in future surveys, and work to satisfy all employees at all levels.