

Issue

“Employee engagement” is one of the current areas of focus important to the private and public sectors. There has been a lot of research on employee engagement and compelling hypotheses and data support the connection between an engaged workforce, low turnover, high retention, and enhanced productivity and outcomes. Given the strength of these arguments, it is no wonder that the USGS like many other governmental and non-governmental organizations is interested in understanding what engagement means to our employees and, further, how can our leadership continue to promote, enhance, and capitalize on engagement efforts for the benefit of the bureau.

One of the primary measures of employee engagement is the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) which measures employee satisfaction on a series of indices important to creating an engaged and committed workforce. This past year, we redoubled our efforts to enhance participation in the survey and saw an increase in the percentage of employees who took the survey, going from 47% in 2016 to 57% in 2017. The Department of the Interior and the government had response rates of 55% and 46%, respectively. While we will not know the survey results until Fall, we were encouraged by the interest employees had in completing the survey. Given the number of ongoing changes in the government and the bureau, we may find that our typically resilient scores demonstrate a change in how our employees’ are feeling. Only time will tell.

As part of encouraging people to participate in the FEVS, we hosted “FEVSuary,” the first town hall focused on the FEVS. We had good turn out and launched a series of videos featuring ELT members and how they and their organizations had used FEVS results in previous years. We featured Leaders Blog posts and videos and created a homepage where employees could check response rates and comment on activities in their own organizations.

It’s not just about the FEVS. The methods we utilized to communicate about the FEVS are also primary engagement techniques that our leadership uses to be engaged with employees. We know that communication from leadership to employees is not enough and we have taken steps to create a two-way flow of information. Bill Werkheiser, the acting director, has made it a personal mission to enhance interaction with employees and has done so via the Leaders Blog, town halls, Breakfast with Bill, Werkheiser’s Webex and more. We have hosted campaigns, including the one on the FEVS and a recent series on the President’s budget request and its possible impact on the budgets of the mission areas. Each associate director provided perspectives on the budget and discussed the difficult decisions they were facing if that budget were to be enacted.

So why highlight all of these efforts? To lead to the challenge for your action learning team. That is, what is next? What can the USGS do to further enhance employee engagement. In a time when money is tight and employees may feel, “here we go again,” what are the creative opportunities that you can think of? It is often during times of constraint that organizations find the most creative ideas to resolve problems—is this an opportunity disguised as a challenge? Is this a dilemma with an inherent polarity, for example, is there such a thing as too much communication or attempt at engagement?

The Challenge

Provide the champion, the sponsor, the class, and the ELT with ideas and perspectives on what to do next to enhance employee engagement. More money, more staff, and more time are not enough of an answer. Consider what we've done, what we haven't done and should do, and perhaps even what we should stop doing. What is possible at the center, region/mission, and headquarters level?

- The cross section of employees who end up on action learning teams working on these [scenarios](#) often come up with keen insights into the problem. Apply your wealth of perspective and be creative.

Resources*

Include links to engagement research

- Video: [What is sinking your boat?](#): This 4 -minute video goes over the importance and ROI of employee engagement.
- **[2016 FEVS ELT Briefing](#)**: The presentation that was given to the ELT regarding the **2016 FEVS results. The focus is on employee engagement.**
- **[FEVS Employee Engagement Index Questions](#)**: These are the 15 FRVS questions OPM uses for the Employee Engagement index, which if the measure of employee engagement.
- [Partnership for Public Service Employee Engagement Training workbook](#)
- [@theCore: ELT Encourages FEVS participation: This page includes videos from ELT members about how they use FEVS data.](#)
- [USGS FEVS results website](#)
- **[Maximizing Employee Engagement job aid](#)**:
- [Department of Commerce Employee Engagement Toolkit](#)
- [Department of Energy Employee Engagement Desk Reference for Managers](#)
- **[Keeping Employees Engaged during Periods of Uncertainty: GovExec article](#)**
- [The Five Factors that Drive Employee Satisfaction: GovExec article](#)
- **[Building an Engaging Workplace: Understanding and Using Engagement Drivers, U.S. Office of Personnel Management](#)**
- [A Report to the President and Congress of the United States by the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, The Power of Federal Employee Engagement](#)
- [Federal Workforce: Additional Analysis and Sharing of Promising Practices Could Improve Employee Engagement and Performance: GAO report](#)

*Resources in bold type are included in your packet