

Whiting Report – 2012

In several categories, survey results for Whiting employees exceeded (and in some cases significantly exceeded) the results of the Composite grouping. And Whiting also had a very high response rate with 65 employees returning survey forms. The attached chart shows how Whiting's responses compare to the Composite group, which represents an aggregation of responses from all seven communities that participated in the survey. Some observations:

1. Whiting employees and leadership are to be commended for the high rate of survey responses, the highest response in terms of percent of employees responding compared to total employers.
2. **Trained** Whiting employees exceeded the Composite group in several important ways:
 - Aware of the Code of Shared Ethics and Values – Whiting trained 88%; Composite trained 78%
 - Know procedures for reporting unethical behavior – Whiting trained 90%; Composite trained 77%
 - Ask for advice on ethics – Whiting trained 29%; Composite trained 22%
 - Believe that corrective action would be taken if unethical behavior is reported – Whiting trained 78%; Composite trained 72%
 - Believe that corrective action will be fair and appropriate – Whiting trained 78%; Composite trained 65%
3. As would be expected, **untrained** Whiting employees had lower scores than their trained colleagues. However, it is encouraging to note the Whiting untrained employees also exceeded the scores of the Composite untrained in all but two of these areas. The response of Whiting's trained and untrained indicates existence of a strong ethical environment in this community.
4. Even in Whiting's positive atmosphere, many employees, trained and untrained, express concerns about misuse of public resources, conflicts of interest and to a lesser extent favoritism. But it also should be noted that Whiting employees' concerns about these issues, while significant, are no greater and generally much less than the Composite group.

Whiting 2012 Compared to 2009

1. Whiting employee responses show significant increases in the percentage of employees giving positive answers in 2012 compared to 2009 for the following issues:
 - The percentage of employees who said they have had ethics training has increased from 29 percent in 2009 to 65 percent in 2012, the highest of any member community. However that means 35% still need to be trained.
 - Concerns expressed about misuse of public resources and conflicts of interest dropped significantly among both trained and untrained employees. Misuse of Public Resources: Trained 54% in 2012 and 80% in 2009. Untrained 23% in 2012 and 53% in 2009. Conflicts: Trained 32% in 2012 and 60% in 2009. With respect to favoritism, there was a slight increase among trained employees – 46% in 2012 compared to 40% in 2009. Among untrained employees, the percent expressing concern about favoritism actually declined—55% in 2012 and 73% in 2009.
2. Another group of questions produced lower percentages in 2012 than 2009, but these declines are probably positive for the cause of ethics in government.
 - The percentage of employees who said they witnessed unethical behavior was 32 percent in 2012 whereas it was 69 percent in 2009. The percentage also dropped for untrained employees 46 percent in 2012 compared to 69 percent in 2009.
 - A much smaller percentage of both trained and untrained employees reported seeking advice on ethics issues from their supervisors. Trained -- 29% in 2012 and 47% in 2009. Untrained -- 9% in 2012 and 23% in 2009. For trained employees, a possible explanation is that training has made it possible for employees to answer their own questions or they felt comfortable asking knowledgeable co-workers rather than supervisors. Then too, as already noted, employees reported seeing less unethical behavior and thus there was less need to discuss concerns with others. The decline in the percentage of untrained employees who sought advice may also be because there were fewer ethical infractions. Another way of phrasing it might be that an ethics culture is developing among the Whiting workforce.

- Consistent with the declines in seeing violations or asking for advice, the percentage of employees who say they have actually reported ethics violations has also declined dramatically. Trained – only 2% in 2012 and 25% in 2009. Untrained – 18% in 2012 and 32% in 2009.
3. In several areas Whiting employees held to 2009 levels. This is not a negative because the 2009 responses were very high and holding those high percentages in 2012 is an accomplishment.
- Awareness of the Code of Shared Ethics and Values – trained 88 percent in both 2012 and 2009. Untrained employees showed a very large increase – 71 percent were aware of the Code in 2012 compared to 18 percent in 2009 (another indication that an ethics culture may be developing among Whiting employees).
 - Knowing how to file a complaint presents a similar pattern – holding to high percentage for trained employees (90% in 2012 and 94% in 2009) while untrained reported an increased percentage saying they know how to file complaints (55% in 2012 and 21% in 2009).
 - For employees saying they would report ethics violations, the pattern repeats itself but with just a slight slippage in the trained employees' percentage. Trained: 76% in 2012 and 81% in 2009. Untrained: 80% in 2012 and 71% in 2009.
4. As positive as Whiting result are, there are still at least two potential challenges:
- Percentages of both trained and untrained employees declined for the question which asked employees to rate the importance of ethics training. Trained 63% in 2012 but 72% in 2009. Untrained: 66% in 2012 but 72% in 2009. These declines may indicate that employees have come to believe Whiting's ethics climate is good, that additional training is not necessary and that an ethics climate is self-sustaining. However, we note these declines as a warning sign that complacency may set in. Experience with other member communities strongly suggests that frequent training is needed to sustain a positive ethics environment.
 - Similarly, when asked if corrective action would be fair and appropriate, the percentage of trained employees who said yes declined (78% in 2012 but 88% in 2009. Untrained improved slightly – 55% in 2012 and 53% in 2009). While these results are still among the highest in member communities, possible further erosion is a risk that needs attention.

Recommendations

1. Keep doing what you have been doing. It seems to be working.
2. Since several employees continue to express concern about misuse of public resources, conflicts of interest and favoritism, future training sessions should give added focus to these issues.
3. It may be appropriate to review the City's procedure for responding to complaints since there seems to be some slippage in employee confidence that corrective action will be fair and appropriate. (However, it should be noted that, even the reduced positive percentage reported in 2012 compared to 2009, still places Whiting among the highest of our member communities).
4. To keep the positive momentum going, across the board ethics training should be scheduled again in the near future.