

Customer Satisfaction Survey Results

What Our Readers Say



U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board
Office of Policy and Evaluation

June 1999

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Introduction

As demands for service grow and resources shrink, Federal agencies have been forced to re-examine their operations in order to achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness as well as keep up with modern technology. In this regard, Federal agencies have been tasked with determining whether or not their customer's needs are being met satisfactorily. This Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) internal report summarizes the findings of the Board's Office of Policy and Evaluation (OPE) Customer Satisfaction Survey conducted during the summer of 1998¹. The survey focused specifically on the Board's special studies of the civil service and other merit systems and annual oversight reviews of the significant actions of the Office of Personnel Management conducted by OPE.

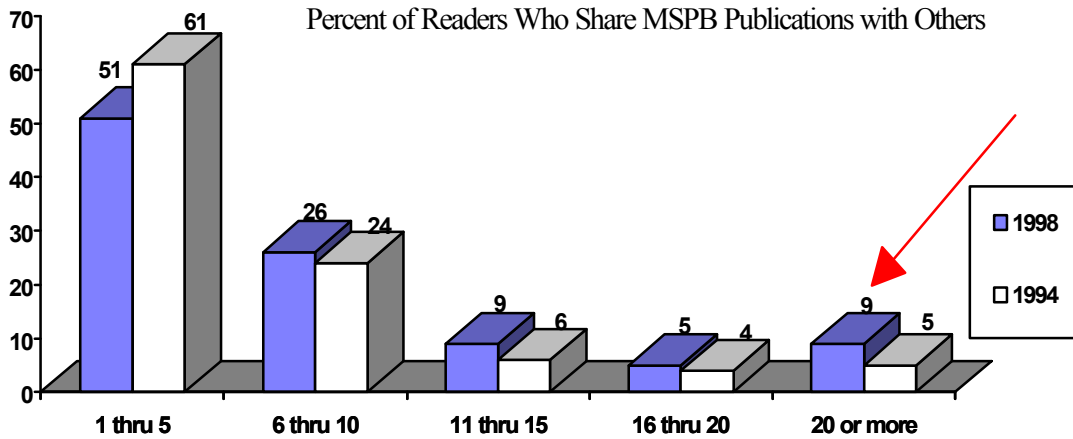
The data discussed in this report are based on responses received from 464 customers.

In some instances, these findings have been contrasted with those from an identical 1994 Customer Satisfaction Survey. The comparison of results show that changes made partly in response to suggestions received in 1994 have improved customer satisfaction.

The report concludes with a look at improvements that focus on the publication preparation time frames and recommendations to increase MSPB's website visibility. A copy of the survey instrument is located at the end of this report. The results are outlined in the following pages.

Our Readers Share!

"We look forward to receiving your publications. They have been among the most often used references by this office. Thank you for your continued excellent contribution."

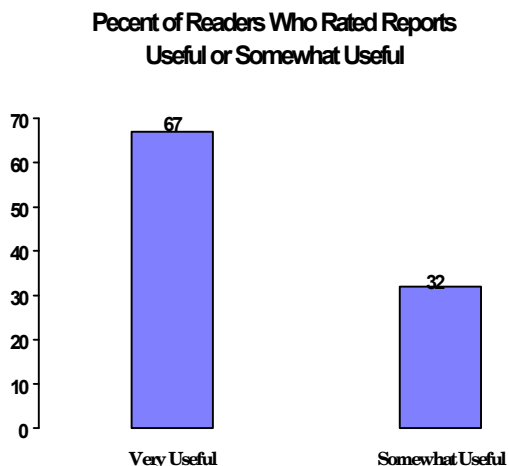


¹ In June of 1998 we mailed our survey to 1,761 individuals and organizations who regularly receive MSPB reports. These are public officials, personnel officials and staff, academicians, congressional staff, the media, professionals and labor organizations, students, program managers and supervisors, libraries and clearing houses, and others.

More MSPB readers are sharing publications with larger numbers of people than in 1994. For instance, almost 90 percent of our readers shared their publications with others and 9 percent of those readers shared their reports with 20 or more people. (See chart on the previous page.)

Readers Find Reports Useful

"...I have found the publications extremely useful and informative. The topics always seem very timely, and the coverage is excellent. Please keep up the good work!!"



More of our readers are finding MSPB reports “very useful.” According to their comments readers found the reports a valuable resource for teaching and research purposes. They further indicated that the reports focus on “real government issues such as employment discrimination; sexual harassment; and the changing Federal workforce, problems that they face within their workplace. A few readers described the utility of the reports this way:

“The topics always seem very timely, and the coverage is excellent.”

“Publications are useful in my classes as lecturer in MPA programs.”

“Your publications are very useful for comparative purposes.”

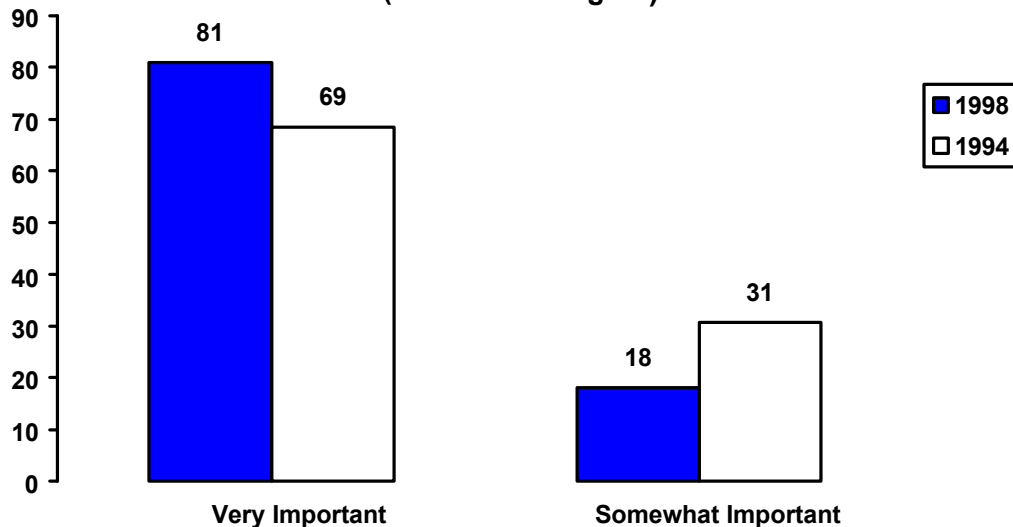
As can be seen in the figure to the left, an overwhelming majority (99 percent) of readers believed the reports were useful or at least somewhat useful. This should not be too surprising since the majority of the recipients of these reports are on the Board’s mailing list at their request.

Issues Identified in MSPB Reports Are Important

When asked “How important are the issues addressed in MSPB publications?” a large majority, 81 percent, said the issues addressed were “very important.” Another 18 percent said the issues were “somewhat important.” When these figures are compared to those of the 1994 Customer Satisfaction Survey, almost 13 percent more readers said the issues were important than in 1994.

Some of the issues addressed by MSPB in 1998 were: Federal employees’ views on working conditions, job satisfaction, and the quality of coworkers and supervisors; Federal supervisors’ role in strategic human resources management; and the role that OPM plays in conducting a Government-wide program to oversee the operations of our merit-based civil service system. These were just a few of the issues fresh in the minds of our readers at the time of the most recent survey which, no doubt, prompted them to respond in such a positive manner. The chart on the next page illustrates the percentage of readers who said the subject matter addressed in MSPB publications was important.

**How Important Are Issues Addressed in MSPB Reports?
(Percent that Agree)**



MSPB Reports Are Readable and Relevant

“I find the reports extremely well written and easy to read - easy for the non-technical reader as well as the experts.”

MSPB reports are “about right” when it comes to readability according to 94 percent of respondents. However, there were a few (3 percent) who thought the reports were “too technical,” and others (2 percent) who thought the reports were “not technical enough”. The percentage of respondents who found the level of readability to be “about right” was comparable to findings in the 1994 survey. Overall, MSPB continues to satisfy its customers in this important area of readability.

More than half of the respondents (63 percent) find the issues covered in MSPB publications to be “very relevant” to the issues they face in their jobs. A few respondents found issues such as employment discrimination, sexual harassment, and diversity particularly relevant.

Here is what some of our readers said:

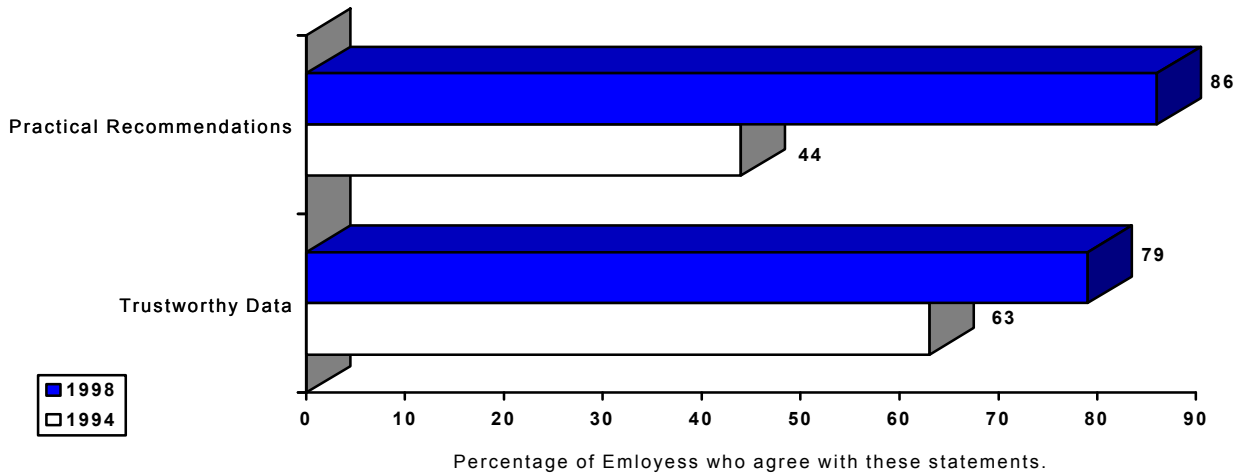
“Your reports help me keep in touch with issues in the field - and in some of my projects, they have been invaluable because they deal directly with the issues under review.”

“Thank you for keeping me updated on hot employment issues through your publications. The publications are effective tools...”

“I am regularly surprised at how relevant and useful your reports are. I enjoy reading them and find them useful.”

Of the remaining readers, 35 percent found MSPB report issues “somewhat relevant” to issues they face in their jobs. The Board realizes that customers have specialized interests, however, resources only allow a relatively limited number of issues to be focused on at any given time. However, the Board’s customers remain relatively satisfied in this area.

Statements that Generally Describe MSPB Publications



Areas Improved that were Found Weak in 1994

The two categories listed in the chart above reflect areas where customer satisfaction greatly improved. The 1994 figures were positive but showed some areas where the MSPB study function could improve. Since then, OPE has worked hard to provide practical recommendations and make its data trustworthy. And our efforts paid off. The survey results show 42 percent more readers found our recommendations practical. Furthermore, 25 percent more found the data trustworthy. Other areas reviewed also showed an increase. The data clearly show that survey respondents remain very satisfied and are continually becoming more satisfied with critical aspects of the MSPB reports.

Report Distribution via Cyberspace

When MSPB asked its customers “Have you visited our website?” Only 31 percent said

“yes.” However, many respondents indicated by their comments that they intend to visit the Board’s website in the future. When they do they will join a number of people who have already been downloading reports directly. For example, according to the Government Printing Office’s Web Trends” report from August 1998, four of the studies ranked in the top five of the most downloaded files from MSPB’s website. During the month of September 1998 three of the studies ranked in the top five of the most downloaded files. In addition, the hundreds of downloads of reports reduces the Board’s distribution and administrative costs considerably.

Improvements and Recommendations

After a careful review of all the results, and comparing them to those of the 1994 Customer Satisfaction Survey, MSPB reports continue to be viewed in a positive light by their customers. There are, however, several areas that could be improved.

⇒ **Reduce preparation and publication time frames.**

Since the report preparation and publication process can, at times, be lengthy. To make the process more efficient MSPB's Office of Policy and Evaluation has already initiated several steps to improve timeliness of information sharing by:

- 1) Periodically issuing "Perspective" Reports based on an overview of the growing body of MSPB research, cutting down on report preparation time.
- 2) Continuing to publish the newsletter, "Issues of Merit" enabling OPE to share research information prior to releasing a full report. This vehicle is also used to disseminate timely information that has been collected, but not yet reported on. The six page, two color, newsletter provides findings and recommendations drawn from OPE's research on topics and issues relevant to the effective operations of the federal merit systems and the significant actions of the Office of Personnel Management.
- 3) Gathering data quickly on time-sensitive issues by surveying the standing panels of supervisors and managers, personnel specialist, and union officials established in 1995. Then produced reports (or share information via newsletter) on these issues in a timely fashion.

⇒ **Increased website visibility**

Currently MSPB reports and OPE newsletters are placed on MSPB's website the same day the publication is released to the public. OPE now notifies the Federal Communicators Network² via e-mail with a

press release concerning new publications and information about how they can be obtained, including downloading them from the website.

As stated earlier when OPE asked customers "Have you visited our website?" Only 31 percent said "yes." This figure is relatively low considering the extensive access Federal employees have to the internet (57 percent according to an NPR survey³) However, a few suggestions have been made for increasing website visibility for the reports by:

- 1) Conducting a periodic review of MSPB's website, specifically the studies and publication page, ensuring the most current information is available and that plug-ins for downloading publications are working properly.
- 2) Conducting a periodic review of other sites that link to MSPB's website to ensure hyper-links are working properly and information cited is accurate.
- 3) Including an on-line form allowing individuals the opportunity to join an email group which would get future press releases and newsletters electronically. This form should also include a feedback area. In turn this e-mail data base would then become another avenue for MSPB's outreach activities.
- 4) Including MSPB's website address on every piece of printed material used. This includes letterhead, business cards, and fax cover sheets.
- 5) Encouraging other agencies and organizations to link the MSPB website to their own.

² At the request of Vice President Al Gore, the National Partnership for Reinventing Government, formerly the National Performance Review, organized the Federal Communicators Network in 1996 as a national organization for Federal communicators to help bring reinvention information to front-line Federal workers and "create an environment for reinvention to flourish." One of the

promote better communication through the identification and sharing of communication knowledge, skills, and resources across government.

² National Partnership for Reinventing Government (NPR), Briefing on the NPR Survey to the President's Management Council on December 2, 1998, Washington, DC.

6) Exploring the possibility of increased interaction with MSPB's customers on the internet. Using news groups and other forums to exchange information with MSPB customers and panel members and hosting forums to gather data from focus groups participants and customers.

7) Ensuring MSPB's website can be found by all the major search engines.

Conclusion

MSPB takes customer satisfaction very seriously and is aware of the importance of providing high quality and timely reports to their customers. The office of Policy and Evaluation recognizes customer feedback and assessment of customer satisfaction as key ingredients in MSPB's organizational success. Therefore, with each report, OPE is determined to identify issues of concern and problems that may threaten the integrity of the merit system evaluated. OPE will give serious consideration to suggestions offered by Board customers and continue to conduct surveys of their customers from time to time to see how well they are meeting their customers' needs and expectations.



United States Merit Systems Protection Board

To better serve you...
please answer the questions below.

Do we have your name and address correct? Yes. No, make changes below.

Title prefix: _____ First Name: _____ MI: _____ Last Name: _____
Title: _____ Office/Organization: _____
Department/Agency: _____
Street Address: _____ Rm/Bldg: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Telephone: () _____ Fax: () _____ E-mail address: _____

1. Do you regularly share MSPB publications with others (e.g., circulate within your office)? Yes No
If yes, how many others would normally read a publication sent to you?
 1 - 5 6 - 10 11 - 15 16 -20 More than 20

2. How would you rate the usefulness of the MSPB publications?
 Very useful Somewhat useful Not useful

3. How important are the issues addressed in MSPB publications to the Federal Government?
 Very important Somewhat important Not important

4. How readable are MSPB publications?
 Too technical About right Not technical enough

5. How relevant are the issues covered by MSPB publications to the issues you face in your job?
 Very relevant Somewhat relevant Not relevant

6. Do the following statements generally describe MSPB publications?	Yes	No	Don't Know
Topics are timely.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Data are trustworthy.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Conclusions are sound.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Findings are supported.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recommendations are practical.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Background information is informative.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Executive summaries are useful.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The layouts are attractive.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Have you visited our web site at <http://www.mspb.gov>? Yes No

Comments: (You may also contact us via e-mail at pe.contact@mspb.gov) _____

You may FAX this completed survey to (202) 653-7211

Or tri-fold, tape together and mail this postage-paid reply form

MSPB OPE CS2(06/98)