

The VOICE of employees

SOLVAY PEOPLE SURVEY 2009

The results of the fourth satisfaction survey of Solvay employees have now been published. Participation in the 2009 edition was up sharply and the outcomes better than in 2006, even if the “areas of concern” are often the same.

Since 2000, the Solvay group has used surveys to determine how employees perceive the company. Following those of 2000, 2003 and 2006, the 2009 survey is already the fourth of its kind. The now well-established formula provides a pretty accurate vision of how things are evolving. Readers are reminded that this internal survey (anonymous, consisting of 56 questions, posed simultaneously in all Group units across the world) allows employees to express and analyze their perceptions of the management of the company and to point to areas in which they would like to see improvements. Let's take a closer look at the 2009 survey results.

INCREASED PARTICIPATION

First observation: participation is a real success! 22 624 out of the 26 269 employees invited to take part filled in their questionnaires. This represents a participation of 86%, or 8% better than in 2006. In this way one can genuinely consider the answers as representing the opinion of Solvay personnel.

One of the first conclusions concerns the degree of commitment of employees to the company. This describes the extent to which



Spotlight on some key indicators

Browsing through the SPS survey, certain indicators are particularly striking. We have selected a few of these.

86%

Participation (86%, against 78% in 2006) in the survey has been exceptional. This success is due to the communication effort preparatory to the survey, relayed particularly effectively by a hundred or so local correspondents.

77%

The survey also shows the strong commitment of Solvay employees (+3%, or 77% globally favorable), as well as their good understanding of the objectives of the Group and its Sustainable Development goals. This indicator proves that employees approve the Group's industrial choices and that it is correctly communicating its strategic priorities.

employees are willing to contribute their knowledge, talents and efforts to the company's performance. An improvement of 3% was observed on this point, with 77% positive responses.

LIVING OUT THE VALUES

For the 55 questions that could be compared, almost all the themes explored by the survey score

similarly (in 48 cases) or better than in the previous survey (in seven cases). No theme was identified as less satisfactory than in the previous survey. The survey highlighted employees' good knowledge of the Group Values (customer care, ethical behavior, respect for people, empowerment, teamwork). Solvay would appear therefore to be moving in the right direction here, but will continue to seek to improve the way these Values are lived out.



5 directions of response

Following the results of the survey, the Executive Committee has taken the following decisions, complementing at Group level those taken by managers locally.

➔ The *Solvay Corporate University* (SCU), which is addressed at Solvay managers, will be supplemented by the *Solvay Corporate College* that will offer customized training for the Group's non-cadre employees.

At the same time, training in safety at the workplace will bring us closer to our goal of zero accidents.

➔ Leadership style is not always positively perceived. A new *Management Development Series* training program will therefore be given to any person taking on managerial responsibilities.

➔ Performance assessment remains a concern. Measures will be taken to improve the assessment interviews and gradually extend the e-PDA to non-cadre employees.

➔ With innovation a focus of attention at Solvay, a Focus Group will listen to employees to analyze what can be improved.

➔ Despite progress on this item, the perception of compensation is still a weak point. The project of providing each employee with an objective comparison of his or her global compensation package is being revived. At the same time, four working groups are completing their review of the Group's remuneration policy.

Progress on these projects will be communicated at a later date.

61%

Innovation (+3%, or 61% of favorable opinions) remains a point of attention: Solvay still suffers from a certain internal heaviness, weak receptivity to young people and their ideas, and a low openness to creativity. This is something that should trouble us at all levels and in particular within management.

51%

Opinions on career development (51% of favorable opinions) and training (53% of favorable opinions) are not unanimous. This seems to be pointing to a cleavage in our Group between "cadres" and "non-cadres".

38%

Finally, the actions taken in response to the previous surveys have failed to satisfy employees (38% of favorable opinions, 22% of unfavorable opinions). This time, all managers will communicate to Human Resources the initiatives they will be introducing in their teams. These will then be consolidated and monitored.

Employees' understanding of their responsibilities and functions, their comprehension of the objectives of the Group and of their own departments, the belief that Solvay takes its environmental responsibility seriously, the availability of management and sense of belonging to Solvay are the elements that score best in the survey. The least favorable scores point to concerns about management style

(although the perception of the availability of people's direct managers is positive), about compensation, but also career development and performance evaluation. Finally, perception as to the effective use of survey results is not always positive.

For this reason the Executive Committee has decided to take action across the Group (see box), starting already at the end of 2009. ●