

# FIRST IMPRESSIONS MATTER

Bad outfit, bad hair, bad joke ... Face it: First impressions matter in every aspect of life. Work is no different. Having a strong new hire program is not a nicety; it's a corporate necessity for ensuring a positive first impression and long-term high employee morale and retention at your company.

We've always touted the benefits of a strong new hire program, and we're back with fuel to add to the fire. Over the past nine months, we have tracked five different groups of new associates over a rolling three-month period (after 30, 60, and 90 days on assignment) and evaluated their responses to survey questions measuring overall job satisfaction and their outlook on four facets of employment. The goal of this longitudinal study was to uncover response patterns that would help us better understand the employee psyche at different points in time. Specifically, we looked for answers to two questions: *Do different groups of employees share similar feelings at specific points in their assignment lifecycle; and/or Do different groups of employees share similar feelings at specific points in the calendar year?*

The answers to both of those questions was no.

But, we discovered something else:

*The first impression an employee has of a specific workplace program and the overall satisfaction an employee feels toward the workplace at the onset of employment usually carries forward.*

Here's how our study unfolded:

- We sent a survey to every working associate after 30, 60, and 90 days on the job.
- Just over 5,000 associates responded to *at least one survey*. Of those,
  - Nearly 300 answered all four questions about specific employment programs *on the first and last surveys*.
    - I feel like a member of the team. (Agree/Disagree)
    - I receive appropriate feedback from my supervisor. (Agree/Disagree)
    - Elwood provides me with superior customer service. (Agree/Disagree)
    - The environment I work in is safe. (Agree/Disagree)
  - Nearly 350 answered the workplace satisfaction question *on the first and last surveys*. Answers were collected on a 0-10 scale and grouped into three groups following Net Promoter Score® methodology for analysis: Detractor, Passive, and Promoter.
    - How likely are you to recommend your job to a friend or family member? (0-10)

And here's what we found:

## CHANGE IN WORKERS' FEELINGS ABOUT SPECIFIC EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

<i>I feel like ...</i>	% who changed answer	% who Agree at 30 and 90 days
<b>I am a member of the team</b>	6%	92%
<b>I receive adequate feedback from my supervisor</b>	13%	84%
<b>Elwood provides me with superior customer service</b>	6%	94%
<b>My workplace is safe</b>	4%	95%

Of the associates who answered the four questions about specific employment programs on both the first and last surveys, only a very small percentage changed their answer from the first to the last survey (between 6% and 13%), and—*good news!*—most associates (between 84% and 95%) agreed with each statement at both points in time. While not significantly different, we think it's worth pointing out that feelings about the supervisory relationship were more negative and more prone to changing than the others.

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## CHANGE IN WORKERS' OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH THE WORK ENVIRONMENT

	% who changed answer	Of those who changed answers ...	
		Higher at 90 days	Lower at 90 days
How likely are you to recommend your job to a friend or family member?	25%	44%	56%

Of the associates who answered the workplace satisfaction question on both the first and last surveys, 75% remained in the same group (Detractor, Passive, or Promoter) from the first through the last survey. It's worth noting that of the 25% who changed groups, about one-half (44%) had a more favorable outlook after 90 days on the job and about one-half (56%) did not.

### OVERCOMING AN 'UNHAPPY' WORKFORCE IS POSSIBLE

If a first impression is a lasting impression, there's no chance of a new program or onboarding procedure changing the minds of your workers, right? Not necessarily. Big changes in the workplace can bring about big changes of heart—after all, our data show that *some* people will change their minds. But, furthermore, there's no time like the present to break the cycle of discontent stemming from a poor first impression: Identifying and fixing specific areas means future employees will start (and likely maintain) a positive impression of your workplace. We recommend creating a strategic, calendar-based onboarding program that is used for every single new hire. You can find more data and a sample engagement timeline [here](#).

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