

## STARK COUNTY REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY

### Employee Experience/Satisfaction Study



## ANALYSIS

SARTA is a dynamic organization that provides transportation service to a community that consists of over 381,000 constituents in Stark County, Ohio. It employs over 200 administrative and union staff. In the past few years, SARTA has experienced both a decline in workplace morale and tumultuous contract negotiations. The limited internal research measured basic workplace attitudes and provided little guidance to qualitatively improve the employee experience, which ultimately impacts customer satisfaction and community support, including continued provision of taxpayer dollars. Synergy designed and implemented a comprehensive qualitative and quantitative study, which provided detailed guidance to improve communication, trust, and employee engagement.

## HYPOTHESIS

If we undertake the following, **then** SARTA can craft effective Human Resource Management (HRM) strategies to improve the employee experience:

- Determine underlying reasons for employee satisfaction (i.e. motivations); and rationale for employee discontent (i.e. obstacles).
- Delineate effective HRM and communication strategies, based on data collected from all levels of management.

## RESEARCH METHODS

A two-pronged research approach was employed:

- First, exploratory, qualitative interviews were conducted across the organization, including senior management, administrators, middle management, drivers and maintenance staff, and customer service staff. Thirty (30) in-depth, one-on-one interviews ranging from one to two hours in length were conducted. These allowed considerable exploration of ideas, feelings, thoughts, and innovative solutions to some of the organization's most daunting challenges.
- The interview protocol was designed using the situation specific approach designed by Maxwell (2005). The research employed the Bergadaa (1997) method, which allows the respondent to be the expert of

their experience and endeavors; and allows the researcher to comprehend rather than judge each participant. Qualitative findings were incorporated into a quantitative study for validation purposes.

- Second, 151 online surveys were conducted in an all-employee survey distributed across the organization, garnering an 80% response rate. Similarities and dissimilarities of employee attitudes and experiences were analyzed, yielding a wealth of information regarding trust, communication, quality, training and strategic initiatives.

## **RESULTS**

A communications strategy, messaging, operational implications and recommendations were shared with SARTA upon conclusion of the study. Synergy continues to partner with SARTA on the Enhanced Employee Experience Initiative.