



## Using staff surveys to enhance an already special relationship

**Client:** Ottakar's

**Sector:** Retail

**Service:** Employee Survey

### The Client

Prior to its acquisition by the HMV Group in 2006, Ottakar's bookstores had expanded rapidly to 140+ branches. James Heneage, the founder, remained as Manager Director throughout and continued to have a significant stake in the business. He was keen to retain and develop the unusual spirit and culture of the organisation and believed that the ideas and opinions of people at all levels were crucial to the success and development of the company. The Company also recognised that rapid growth was a potential threat to this culture and that positive steps should be taken to protect and enhance this. The objective was to find ways to make Ottakar's an even better place to work, improve job satisfaction and help to define HR strategy for the coming year and beyond as well as embedding this HR strategy within the functioning of every part of the business.

### employesurvey's Contribution

When hired to carry out a staff survey, our first step was to carry out a number of focus groups to help us develop the questionnaire. The focus groups revealed that staff had an unusually strong affinity with the business. We set out in the survey to try to understand better the drivers of this commitment to Ottakar's that seemed to be so widely held amongst staff at all levels.

The survey received a very high response rate. The results confirmed that employees were exceptionally positive towards the Company.

### The Outcome

Ottakar's management immediately saw the value in the survey. It provided very clear feedback on what the staff valued the most in the company and what made them so committed and loyal. It was evident to them that these aspects needed to be protected and where possible accentuated. Also innovative ideas emerged through further staff involvement to address issues around career progression. These were implemented swiftly through speeding up the introduction of on-line training, a change to the reward structure for staff and through further development of existing systems.

The survey also helped to identify where there were distinct issues affecting certain departments, some of which had not been fully appreciated prior to the survey. These were quickly and simply addressed and the survey results the following year indicated rapid improvement in the satisfaction of staff in these areas.



## Case Study

For the second year, the response rate was even higher, and the ratings had improved across all areas covered by the survey. Ottakar's management responded to the issues that were raised and staff in the business had confidence that their views would be considered and that appropriate action would be taken. The Company had also had learned to appreciate the nature of the relationship with staff and found methods of overcoming the difficulties placed upon this by the size and rate of growth of the business.

At the time of the takeover by the HMV Group, HMV were very keen to understand the special relationship that existed within Ottakar's and how much it contributed to their success on the High Street.