

## **Engaging Internal Stakeholders (Staff and Contractors) at Honda UK and Honda Finance Europe – ‘More Forwards’**

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### **The Context**

The Honda brand has a fantastic reputation, (innovation, integrity, sustainability...the list goes on...) and few would not want to be associated with it, whether outside or inside the organisation.

Honda Motor Europe, Honda UK and Honda Finance Europe experienced a major organisational restructure in 2006/7 as part of a general rationalisation of the region, and HDA partnered with them through this process to manage the people component of the change process.

The positive effects of any organisational transition always go hand in hand with a degree of fear for the future within an organisation, resistance to change where that change is not well understood, or not considered valid, and possible disengagement with the objectives of the organisation. This has potential to impact team morale, performance and subscription to organisational values and forward strategy.

Whilst the Honda restructuring was handled particularly well, in accordance with an organisation which was proud to be voted in the top-40 Sunday Times 100 Best Companies to Work For organisations between 2003 to 2006, and despite excellent results achieved in 2003,4,5 from Honda's own internal European 'Spirited Independence' survey, the organisation's leadership nevertheless believed that a targeted survey of engagement levels across the organisation, post transition, would be an essential initiative to positively take the business forward with firm commitment to agreed principles after a brief period of dissonance.

### **Our Objectives**

HDA and Honda communicated the objectives of the engagement measurement process to Associates and contractors under the following key headlines:

- We are setting out to 'pulse test' the degree to which people across the organisation are 'engaged' with the objectives of the organisation, and the degree to which there are any specific factors across the organisation which need to be managed to improve Associate engagement levels.
- We are aware that there are many creative minds working within the organisation and this survey provides the opportunity to capture and nurture some of your ideas.
- We are keen to identify manageable issues which can be constructively dealt with – despite the organisation conducting regular internal surveys, we are not about measuring opinion, or creating metrics, or creating benchmarks(\*) in the first instance, but, rather, we want to get a feel for how engaged people are with the objectives of the organisation during 2007 and moving forward, (with specific reference to Honda's 84ki strategy). (\*Bearing in mind that any internal engagement benchmarks will of course be referenced in future surveys by Honda)

- For this reason, the survey process is not overly complex, and it is intended that the results of the survey are capable of being followed up in a managed, systematic fashion
- We want to place ourselves in a position to comprehensively manage reasonable continuous improvement in the organisation, based on survey outcomes

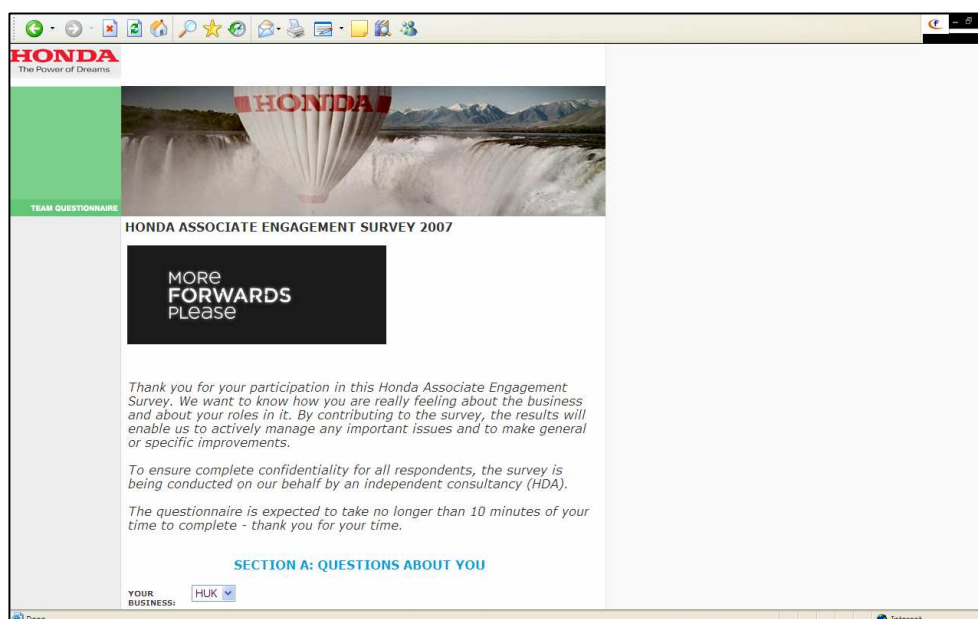
Our Objective then was to measure and deliver meaningful feedback on Associate engagement across Honda, diagnose the real situation, and take measurable actions to continuously improve the organisation.

### The Project

HDA worked with Honda to identify an optimal question set to measure key responses across a number of key components of the business, including, views on:

- How easily things get done
- Satisfaction with role
- Values
- Work-life balance
- Information
- Rewards & Recognition
- Management
- Work Environment
- Products and Service

The HDA survey was conducted 100% online across Honda UK (HUK) and Honda Finance Europe (HFE) under a general 'More Forwards' theme, and included all Associates and contractors.



Both quantitative and qualitative questions were included; the latter adding rich verbatim accounts of life within Honda.

Whilst participation was on a strictly voluntary basis, 85% of Honda UK and targeted Honda Motor Europe Associates and contractors participated in the survey, and 89% of Honda Finance Europe Associates and contractors participated. This very pleasing response rate was driven by a highly transparent process and committed communication within the organisation.

## The Outputs

The survey results provided rich insights into levels of organisational engagement, and guidance was provided by HDA for Honda to independently move forward as follows:

1. Agree a Strategic Response to the Survey:
  - with regards to talent attraction,
  - with regards to talent engagement,
  - with regards to talent retention,
  - with regards to a sensible combination of these, in line with existing strategies in these areas
2. Acknowledge the most likely Associate engagement opportunities and threats for the organisation as a whole and focus managerial attention on these.
3. Agree on areas that are commercially out-of-bounds.
4. Identify potential 'quick wins'.
5. Openly communicate company-wide survey outcomes with the Associate team, and agree a manageable mechanism for tracking 'More Forwards' progress against those outcomes which the organisation believes are manageable.
6. Engage a cross-functional team to consider implications of the survey, and opportunities for addressing company-wide issues via intelligent quick wins which are indicative of positive intent around the 'More Forwards' theme.
7. Identify any demographic exceptions of interest / concern, assess and manage these.

Whereas many organisations undertaking staff surveys set out to benchmark themselves against other organisations and within sectors, with little context as to why results across different organisations may be different; HDA strongly discourages organisations it partners with from taking this largely academic approach where the survey itself is seen as the end in itself, rather than a means to a more valuable end which commits the organisation's leadership to transparently act on the results of any survey conducted, given the commitment that respondents are putting into participating in the survey.

One of HDA's key themes therefore in working with Honda, was that Honda should seek to identify and feed off of internal benchmarks for the organisation – ie. engagement exemplars for the organisation as a whole, whether these be at business unit level, at departmental level, or whether these exemplars are located within a specific demographic group, eg. short-service staff within customer services with less than 2 years' service, etc.

On this basis, HDA identified a number of exemplars of notably high engagement levels within the organisation, including within Honda UK Press and PR, Honda UK Customer Service (Cars), Honda Finance Europe New Business & Customer Service and HR Operations. Honda was encouraged to consider what qualities stand out in these areas across the engagement components measured, and to feed any internal learnings from this process across the organisation.

Honda has gone on to transparently address key issues identified by the survey process, with reference back to the survey, and it is envisaged that the process will be replicated.



Talent  
Management

For more information on any of the above or to learn more about HDA's Engagement Services,  
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Career  
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