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PROJECT MANAGEMENT AS A TOOL FOR MANAGING CHANGES IN CORPORATE CULTURE TO INCREASE EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION

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ABSTRACT

In the dynamic business environment, enhancing workplace quality is essential for company success, particularly for newly established small businesses facing challenges due to limited resources and specialized staff. This article investigates the role of project management as a strategic tool in managing organizational culture change to improve employee satisfaction. Small companies often lack the resources for costly certifications or external consulting, which limits their ability to create competitive work environments. Therefore, fostering employee satisfaction through an improved work culture becomes crucial for retaining talent and ensuring continuity. Using standardized surveys such as Job Descriptive Index (JDI), the study assesses critical factors influencing employee satisfaction, such as work environment, organizational constraints, and demographics. Through a pilot project developed with the PMBOK methodology, key areas such as Transparent Culture and Employee Rotation are addressed as vital for boosting engagement and satisfaction. Results demonstrate that targeted project management can lead to substantial improvements in employee well-being, contributing to an organization's competitive edge without excessive financial outlay. Ultimately, the study highlights the potential for using project management strategies to prepare small businesses for future certifications, thereby advancing toward recognized standards like the Great Place to Work®.

Keywords: Project management, organizational culture, management, satisfaction, PMBOK®, Great Place to Work®

INTRODUCTION

In today's dynamic business environment, the quality of the workplace is one of the key factors in a company's success. Newly established companies face particularly challenging demands, often limited not only by their size but also by their financial resources. A limited number of employees in small companies frequently results in a lack of specialists. Natural employee turnover can cause to significant losses for these small, young companies, disrupting the continuity and growth of the organization. Moreover, limited financial resources prevent these organizations from investing in expensive certifications or external solutions to improve the work environment, placing them at a disadvantage compared to corporates. Intense competition forces even smaller companies to seek ways to enhance employee satisfaction and improve working conditions. The work environment, where employees spend a significant part of their day, directly impacts their performance and overall productivity. Therefore, it is essential to find effective solutions that support employee well-being and engagement, thereby increasing competitiveness.

FACTORS INFLUENCING EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION AND JOB PERFORMANCE

Employee satisfaction, as well as job satisfaction, is influenced by various factors, including the work environment, organizational constraints, and demographic characteristics. Understanding these factors is crucial for improving employee well-being and ultimately the company's performance. Dvouletý (2022) highlights primary aspects such as skill level, company size, and working hours, asserting that qualified professionals tend to be more satisfied, leading to higher productivity. Rožman, Treven, and Čančer (2017) note that older employees value flexibility and autonomy, while younger employees focus more on salary and career growth, both contributing to job performance. Hee et al. (2018) emphasize that reducing stress and improving communication can significantly enhance satisfaction and help retain employees. Pahirathan (2020), based on correlations with overall satisfaction, identified key factors such as delegation of authority, training, and rewards. According to Tso, Liu, and Li (2014), corporate culture, management, and well-being are critical components of employee satisfaction. They also emphasize career development opportunities and good workplace relationships as contributing factors. Vojinović (2018) states that both work-related and personal factors, such as fair wages, career opportunities, and good social interactions, are essential for employee satisfaction. Pandey and Asthany (2017) agree with thought of salary as a key factor, while adding company policies and working conditions to the equation. Although the authors' perspectives on the factors influencing employee satisfaction vary, their studies converge on fulfilling employees' needs, whether through rewards, growth opportunities, or a positive work environment.

Methods and Tools for Measuring Employee Satisfaction

From our perspective on employee satisfaction, companies must consider the dynamic nature of satisfaction, which tends to change with evolving work environments and personal circumstances. Companies should adopt a holistic approach, considering both individual and collective factors, to effectively enhance satisfaction across diverse employee groups. Various methods are available today for identifying and measuring employee satisfaction. Popular standardized questionnaires include the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS), the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ), and the Job Descriptive Index (JDI). The structure and applicability of the JDI, particularly when combined with standardized questionnaires Job in General (JIG) and Stress in General (SIG), appealed to us the most. The JDI, last updated by

researchers at Bowling Green State University, is renowned for its reliability in assessing five distinct aspects of job satisfaction: people on present job, work on present job, pay, opportunities for promotion, supervisor (Bowling Green State University, 2020). In contrast, JIG and SIG focus solely on specific areas—job in general and stress at work. Each questionnaire section begins with a single question to which employees respond using three options: Y, N, or?. For each question, 6 to 18 words and/or phrases are provided (depending on the examined area). These words and phrases are evenly balanced between positive and negative meaning. Employees write "Y" for words or phrases they find consistent with the question, "N" for those that do not match, and "?" if they are unsure. Before evaluating satisfaction, responses must be converted into numerical values. We have decided to follow recommended scoring rules based on Carter and Dalal (2010):

- Y = 3 for positive associations and Y = 0 for negative ones.
- N = 0 for positive associations and N = 3 for negative ones.
- ? = 1, regardless of the word/phrase association.

When a company identifies opportunities to improve the workplace and increase employee satisfaction, how should be these changes implemented? What steps should companies take, particularly small ones with limited budget for certifications or difficulties to invest into external services? Can project management be used to prepare a project plan for changing corporate culture?

Role of Project Management in Corporate Culture Transformation through Change Management

In our opinion, project management is essential for managing changes in corporate culture. Cultural change, according to Kohnke et al., often involves shifts in power structures and corporate values, which can appear as significant challenges. Project management addresses these challenges by uniting key members of the company behind the initiative and empowering them to act towards project milestones (Kohnke et al., 2016). The advantage of project management lies in its structured framework, which facilitates transformation. Authors Nađand Zhitlukhina et al. argue that project management provides a structured approach to managing cultural changes by defining clear phases and activities, including action planning, impact assessment, stakeholder communication, and implementation monitoring (Nađ, 2022; Zhitlukhina et al., 2018). Failures in transformational processes often arise from poor acceptance of change and communication issues. Project management mitigates these risks by incorporating change management processes into project plans (Kohnke et al., 2016; O'Donovan, 2017). This integration ensures the successful implementation and sustainability of cultural changes. Such an approach combines strategic planning, stakeholder engagement, and continuous monitoring to align corporate culture with company goals. Additionally, by integrating change management into project management, companies can effectively transition from their current state to the desired future state. This integration can lead to positive employee reactions and a higher likelihood of successful change implementation (Murray et al., 2020; O'Donovan, 2017). Ulukan also supports integrating change management activities into project management, emphasizing that such integration is crucial for managing transformations to enhance employee performance and engagement. His study highlights that this integration helps mitigate risks and increases the success of transformational projects by aligning change management principles with overall project timelines and activities (Ulukan, 2020).

MEASUREMENT OF EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION IN A MANUFACTURING COMPANY

We conducted employee satisfaction measurement in March 2024 at a manufacturing company located in western Slovakia. We chose to measure satisfaction using standardized empirical questionnaires: JDI, JIG, and SIG. In our view, the combination of these three questionnaire methods—JDI, JIG, and SIG—covered six critical areas defining overall employee satisfaction. Unlike the original version of JDI, the modified version did not include the area focusing on employee satisfaction with pay. The questionnaire method in this composition was prepared in three language versions: Slovak, Hungarian, and Ukrainian. During the conducted satisfaction measurement, the total number of company employees was 69. A total of 42 respondents participated in completing the questionnaire, representing a 60% participation rate. In addition to demographic data, we also monitored the department in which the respondents worked and their preferred language version of the questionnaire. The percentage composition of the respondents is shown in Figure 1.

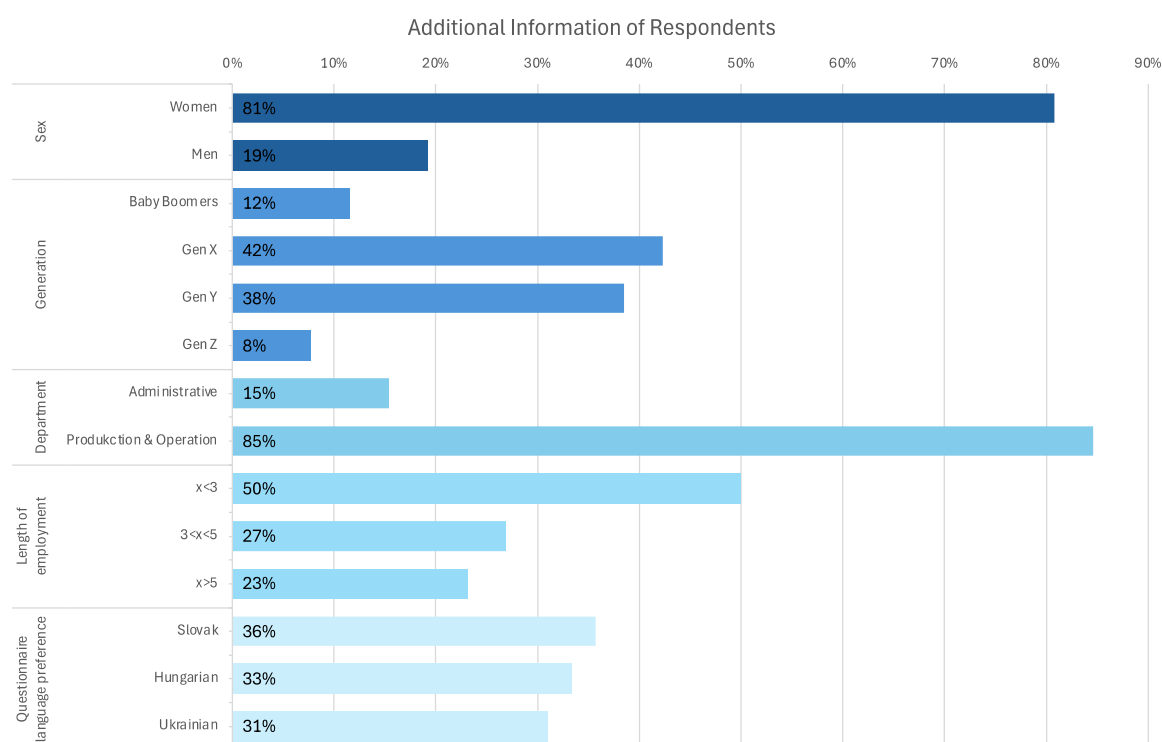


Figure 1 Graph of demographic data and additional information of respondents (Source: created by the author, 2024)

Majority of the respondents were employees from the production and operations department (85%), predominantly represented by women (81%). Among the employees who participated in the overall satisfaction survey, 80% belong to the actively working group (generations X and Y combined). The preference for the language version of the questionnaire method was relatively comparable: 36% of employees preferred the Slovak version, 33% preferred the Hungarian version, and the least preferred was the Ukrainian version (31%).

Data Analysis and Insights from Employee Satisfaction Survey

In this study, a statistical approach was used to ensure a comprehensive evaluation of employee satisfaction. While aggregate measures like the grand mean provide a general overview, they can obscure critical insights into how satisfaction varies across individuals

and specific groups. To address this, our approach to using statistical methods was designed to identify patterns and highlight differences in employee perceptions. Although we are aware of advanced methods such as factor analysis, which are often recommended for exploring complex relationships and underlying factors. The sample size in our study (42 respondents out of 69 employees) limited their applicability. Therefore, we focused on descriptive and inferential statistics to derive meaningful and actionable insights from the available data.

Based on the evaluation of the collected data, we can state that the highest employee satisfaction was observed in the area of Supervisor ($M_o=51$; $M_{dn}=42$; $M=36.36$). The lowest satisfaction values were reported in the area of Opportunities for Promotion ($M_o=11$; $M_{dn}=11$; $M=10.95$) and Stress at Work ($M_o=10$; $M_{dn}=10$; $M=12.50$). A detailed output of the examined areas, analyzed using descriptive statistics of the collected data, is presented in Table 1. The reliability of the obtained values was verified using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient (α_c). Across all areas, the value achieved was $\alpha_c=0.913$, which, according to the reliability scale by Hair et al. (2018), indicates excellent reliability. The Cronbach's alpha values of the examined areas, if item deleted, maintain the consistency of the data.

Table 1 Descriptive statistics of examined areas (Source: created by the author, 2024)

Examined Areas	Mode (M_o)	Median (M_{dn})	Mean (M)	Minimum Value (Min)	Maximum Value (Max)	Variance (σ^2)	Standard Deviation (σ)	Standard Error (SE)	Cronbach's alfa (α_c)
<i>People on Present Job</i>	22	26.5	31.90	12	54	175.31	13.24	2.04	0.872
<i>Job in General</i>	20	27.5	32.12	4	54	170.64	13.06	2.02	0.869
<i>Work on Present Job</i>	20	24	28.67	3	51	153.98	12.41	1.91	0.875
<i>Opportunities for Promotion</i>	11	11	10.95	0	23	24.39	4.94	0.76	0.931
<i>Supervisor</i>	51	42	36.36	16	54	217.11	14.73	2.27	0.903
<i>Stress at Work</i>	10	10	12.50	0	24	54.11	7.36	1.14	0.912
SUM	111	138	152.50	55	246	3320.65	57.63	8.89	0.913

By including the JIG into the JDI questionnaire, we were able to conduct paired two sample t-Test analyses on the areas of Job in General and Work on Present Job. The null hypothesis was set as follows:

H₀: General Job Satisfaction and Job Satisfaction at the Current Workplace are rated equally.

The examined areas simultaneously exhibited high variance values ($\sigma^2_{JIG}=170.64$; $\sigma^2_{JDI}=153.98$) as well as high correlation values ($r=0.906$). The inherent nature of the examined areas, along with the descriptive statistics outputs, suggests a similarity between the areas. However, based on the paired two sample t-Test results presented in Table 2, the null hypothesis is rejected. At the chosen confidence interval ($\alpha=0.05$), the p-values reached $p_1=0.00012$ and $p_2=0.00023$.

Table 2 Results of t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Mean (Source: created by the author, 2024)

	<i>Job in General</i>	<i>Work on Present Job</i>
Mean	32.12	28.67
Variance	170.64	153.98
Observations	42	42.00
Pearson Correlation	0.906	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	41	
t Stat	4.04	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.00012	
t Critical one-tail	1.68	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.00023	
t Critical two-tail	2.02	

The consistency and relationship of the areas, as well as their potential influences on evaluations from one area to another, are also confirmed by the correlation matrix of the examined areas in Table 3. The correlations between individual areas range from $r_{64}=0.351$ to $r_{32}=0.906$.

Table 3 Correlation matrix of examined areas (Source: created by the author, 2024)

Examined Areas	<i>People on Present Job</i>	<i>Job In General</i>	<i>Work on Present Job</i>	<i>Opportunities for Promotion</i>	<i>Supervisor</i>	<i>Stress at Work</i>
<i>People on Present Job</i>	1.000					
<i>Job in General</i>	0.896	1.000				
<i>Work on Present Job</i>	0.856	0.906	1.000			
<i>Opportunities for Promotion</i>	0.489	0.471	0.576	1.000		
<i>Supervisor</i>	0.782	0.786	0.690	0.389	1.000	
<i>Stress at Work</i>	0.693	0.687	0.719	0.351	0.480	1.000

In addition to correlations between the areas themselves, we also examined the correlations and dependencies between the areas and the demographic data and additional information of respondents. From the results of the overall correlation analysis, we selected only those correlations that met the established criteria. The exclusion criteria followed these rules:

1. The correlation had to include at least one demographic factor or add. information.
2. The correlation area had to belong to the range of moderate to strong correlations.
3. The resulting p-value had to be smaller than the confidence interval ($p < \alpha$; $\alpha = 0.05$).

Table 4 presents the final results of thirteen correlations after excluding redundant items between areas and the demographic data and additional information of respondents. Additionally, Table 4 includes items labeled “*Dummy UA*” and “*Dummy HU*” These items were used to mathematically represent the selected language version of the questionnaire. The correlation values range from negative to positive, with the Length of Employment factor emerging as the most dependent. Based on the input data and the correlation between Dummy UA and Length of Employment ($r = -0.511$), we conclude that the length of employment for employees who preferred the Ukrainian language version of the questionnaire is shorter compared to those who preferred the Hungarian and Slovak language versions. The impact of length of employment on employee satisfaction was demonstrated as

an influential factor in the available outputs of correlations between demographic data and additional information.

Table 4 Correlation output of demographic factors after excluding redundant items (Source: Hirtl, 2024)

	Pearson Correlation	Sig.	95% Confidence interval	
			Lower	Upper
<i>Dummy UA - Supervisor</i>	0.535	0.005	0.176	0.759
<i>Dummy UA - People on Present Job</i>	0.452	0.021	0.069	0.710
<i>Dummy UA - Job in General</i>	0.413	0.036	0.023	0.686
<i>Dummy UA - Work on Present Job</i>	0.395	0.046	0.001	0.674
<i>Length of employment - Supervisor</i>	- 0.735	<<0,001	- 0.870	- 0.475
<i>Length of employment - Work on Present Job</i>	- 0.690	<<0,001	- 0.846	- 0.402
<i>Length of employment - People on Present Job</i>	- 0.682	<<0,001	- 0.842	- 0.388
<i>Length of employment - Job in General</i>	- 0.673	<<0,001	- 0.837	- 0.375
<i>Dummy HU - Supervisor</i>	- 0.646	<<0,001	- 0.823	- 0.334
<i>Length of employment - Stress at Work</i>	- 0.518	0.007	- 0.750	- 0.154
<i>Dummy UA - Length of employment</i>	- 0.511	0.008	- 0.745	- 0.144
<i>Dummy HU - People on Present Job</i>	- 0.443	0.023	- 0.704	- 0.059
<i>Dummy HU - Job in General</i>	- 0.420	0.033	- 0.690	- 0.030

SUMMARY OF RESULTS AND KEY FINDINGS

Employees mainly consists of workers from the Production and Operations department. From the evaluation of employee satisfaction, the highest satisfaction was demonstrated in the area of Supervisor. However, this area also showed the highest variance ($\sigma^2_{\text{Supervisor}} = 217.11$), indicating significant differences in perceptions of satisfaction within this area. The lowest satisfaction was in the area of Opportunities for Promotion. Using the two paired t-Test, we rejected the null hypothesis, which tested Job in General against Work on Present Job. Based on the paired t-Test results and the obtained values, significant differences exist between the examined areas. Employees are generally more satisfied with Job in General compared to Work on Present Job. Using correlation analysis, we identified the Length of Employment factor as the most dependent on overall satisfaction. The dependency of satisfaction on the length of employment was reflected both as a standalone factor and as a secondary factor when evaluating satisfaction among employees who preferred the Ukrainian language version of the questionnaire, which was associated with a shorter length of employment.

Strategic Project Proposal for Enhancing Workplace Culture

Based on the results of the conducted employee satisfaction survey, a project proposal was developed with the aim of improving the work environment and guiding the company on a path that aligns with the principles associated with being recognized as a Great Place to Work®. The project proposal considered the theoretical foundation and areas identified by the survey as needing improvement. The provided project was prepared in accordance with the PMBOK® methodology. The project proposal included a Product Breakdown Structure (PBS), which consisted of thirteen parts. Out of the total 13 PBS components, Tables 5, 6, and 7 present three selected parts. On the left side of the tables, the name of the PBS component is listed, while the right side contains the corresponding Work Breakdown Structure (WBS). To the left of the WBS, numerical designations for each task are provided.

The first number represents the numerical identification of the product, and the second number indicates the sequential number of the specific task.

The nature of the products and tasks within the project will directly influence and transform the corporate culture. Therefore, the first proposed product is a transition to a Transparent Culture (Table 5). We believe that in managing change, transforming corporate culture, and implementing new approaches, employees will be more understanding and willing to accept a shift from established attitudes and practices to new ones. The aim of implementing a transparent culture is to ensure timely and clear communication with employees about both current and future developments within the company.

The initial work package in the PBS Transparent Culture includes conducting an analysis of employee trust. Analysis of employee trust in the company aims to clearly assess the current state while also enabling potential comparisons after implementation. Another key WBS element (1.9) within the first PBS is ensuring that leaders and supervisors will adopt positive roles. We consider this work critical because management significantly influences employees and should stand as role models and ambassadors of the change management message.

Table 5 Work breakdown structure - Transparent Culture (Source: Hirtl, 2024)

PBS	No.	WBS
Transparent Culture	1.1	Employee trust analysis.
	1.2	Evaluation of employee trust.
	1.3	Preparation of introductory meeting materials.
	1.4	Conducting the introductory meeting.
	1.5	Assigning a recorder.
	1.6	Assessment of employee perspectives on transparency.
	1.7	Goal setting.
	1.8	Development of new transparency processes and standards.
	1.9	Ensuring leadership adoption of positive roles.
	1.10	Presentation of the transparency strategy to employees.
	1.11	Strategy implementation.
	1.12	Compliance monitoring.
	1.13	Consultation on corrective actions.
	1.14	Implementation of corrective actions.
	1.15	Feedback collection.
	1.16	Continuous improvement process.

Transparency is only one of the key elements while improving the work environment. In practice, the use of reciprocal communication and the active involvement of employees in company operations has proven to be successful and effective. Participation and Communication, shown in table 6, includes the proposed initiative “Bridging the Communication Gap”. The individual work packages are intended for the preparation and organization of meetings between employees and management. The aim of the initiative is to instill in employees the belief that the company is genuinely interested in addressing their needs while also clarifying unresolved questions. The initiative is designed to be voluntary, with rules established and communicated by the company in advance.

Table 6 Work breakdown structure - Participation and Communication (Source: Hirtl, 2024)

PBS	No.	WBS
Participation and Communication	3.1.1	Conduct introductory meeting.
	3.1.2	Define rules and guidelines.
	3.1.3	Set the frequency.
	3.1.4	Define the duration.
	3.1.5	Determine meeting venue.
	3.1.6	Select moderator.
	3.1.7	Define documentation process for meetings.
	3.1.8	Set deadline for employee proposals and unanswered

		questions.
	3.1.9	Select distribution method for program outcomes.
	3.1.10	Brief leadership on program and guidelines.
	3.1.11	Inform employees about the initiative and the “Bridging the Communication Gap” guidelines.

From the employee satisfaction evaluation, the area of Opportunities for Promotion obtained the lowest score. Based on the findings, Employee Rotation was included as the eighth product package in the project. The proposed tasks within this package align with the company’s plans for training, onboarding, and employee development. The rotation plan also contains feedback, ensuring the objectivity of evaluations from the rotating employee and their supervisor.

Table 7 Work breakdown structure - Employee Rotation (Source: Hirtl, 2024)

PBS	No.	WBS
Employee Rotation	8.1	Documentation of completed training plans.
	8.2	Integration of uncompleted training plans into employee development.
	8.3	Establishing rules for the pilot rotation program.
	8.4	Determining the duration of employee placement at another workplace.
	8.5	Collecting feedback from employees.
	8.6	Providing feedback from supervisors and assistant production supervisors.
	8.7	Evaluating feedback.
	8.8	Proposing corrective actions.
	8.9	Implementing corrective actions.
	8.10	Continuous improvement process.

CONCLUSION

Our proposed project, which leverages project management as a tool for managing changes in corporate culture, has demonstrated significant primary benefits. During the project preparation phase, we utilized and highly valued the availability of project management tools and methods. These tools facilitated clarity, logical structure, stakeholder participation, and ensured a clear division of tasks and responsibilities. By integrating change management into project management processes and structures, the proposed project ensures that all stakeholders are well-informed. Additionally, the utilization of the RACI matrix clearly defines roles and responsibilities. This tool helps avoid overlaps and ensures accountability by assigning who is responsible, accountable, consulted, and informed for each task. Time tracking has been integrated into the workflow to monitor project progress and maintain adherence to schedules, which is critical for maintaining momentum and meeting project deadlines. Conducting a risk analysis proactively identifies potential challenges, and by developing contingency plans, reduces the likelihood of setbacks. The CANVAS model can also be used as an action plan to visualize and communicate the project strategy, aligning all stakeholders with the project’s goals and processes. In the adapted CANVAS structure, we decided to include and define success criteria for the project. These criteria, established at the outset, help ensure that everyone understands the desired outcomes and provide a foundation for evaluating the effectiveness of each initiative. The project breakdown structure and work breakdown structure further helped organize the project into manageable activities, streamlining the implementation process and ensuring a more systematic approach.

Looking ahead, our approach lays the foundation for establishing an inclusive "For All" culture—creating an environment where every employee feels valued and included, regardless of their background or role. We believe that this project proposal can position the company as a strong candidate for the Great Place to Work® certification. This recognition

could attract talent and enhance the company's reputation as an employer that prioritizes employee satisfaction and development. The proposed project is designed to enable the company to identify the current state of the work environment as well as its potential for future development and direction. At the same time, it serves as a preparatory step for official certification if desired. In other words, the company significantly aligns itself with the principles of a Great Place to Work® before certification. An additional advantage for the company is the flexibility to modify and adapt the project based on internal circumstances and developments.

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