

Case Study | Linguistic Analysis and Conversation Design for Employee Development

Client: mid-size financial institution (MFI)

Background & Core Objective

MFI received the results of their first annual Gallup Engagement Survey. While the overall results were very high (above 70%), MFI was puzzled by one of the lowest scoring questions: *“Someone at work encourages my development”*

The low results of this question stood in strange contrast to other, very similar questions from the same Gallup Engagement Survey that did NOT have low scores:

- (1) *“Someone at work talks to me about my progress”*
- (2) *“This last year, I have had opportunities to learn and grow”*

MFI hired Memra Language Services as a part of their Engagement Action Plan to:

- (1) Investigate where, why, and how miscommunications are happening related to “progress and development”
- (2) To develop a linguistic process that would help them ensure that: *Supervisors (1) have regular conversations about career goals with employees, (2) focus on progress towards those goals and what support employees need, and (3) give employees the opportunity to participate in special projects or stretch assignments.*

Details

PART 1

Memra Language Services Analyzed MFI’s

- (1) Gallup Survey Results
- (2) Internal Culture Document (Business Plan)
- (3) Several examples of Company-Wide Communications

The analysis looked at where there were similarities and differences between Gallup and MFI in the language used to talk about the key concept “progress and development”.

Based on the analysis, Memra Language Services made 4 linguistic recommendations for Organizational Documents and 3 linguistic recommendations for Company-Wide Communications.

PART 2

Memra collected its own original data from MFI managers to investigate:

- (1) How managers at MFI think about development, progress, learning, and growth
- (2) How managers at MFI use the words development, progress, learning, and growth in real situations
- (3) How certain types of managers (men, women, younger, older, etc) understand the words differently from one another

Results

Based on the analyses, recommendation, and poll results, Memra and MFI:

- (1) Created and agreed on a unified definition for development, progress, learning, and growth.
 - (a) *Unified Theory of Employee Development Infographic*
- (2) Created templates that can be used as guides for discussing these concepts with employees.
 - (a) *Employee Growth Conversation Guides for Supervisors*
- (3) Organized existing employee development resources according to the new unified definitions of these terms and link them to the relevant templates.
 - (a) Created new Employee Handbook section 9.3 *Personal and Career Development Process*

Final Outcomes

- (1) Employees hear consistent and clear language surrounding development, progress, learning, and growth at work that aligns with the way Gallup talks about these concepts.
- (2) Employees have access to resources that match each of the concepts outlined by Gallup.
- (3) Employees can more accurately answer questions about development on the Gallup Engagement Survey.
- (4) Scores for *Someone at work encourages my development* have increased to match other progress, learning, and growth scores