

## Steering Porsche in the Right Direction

By Jennifer Taylor, CEO and President of Assessment Plus, Inc.

If a management team wanted to know how to keep their energetic, productive staff from taking jobs elsewhere, how would they discover what aspects of their job were most important to retaining them? Porsche Cars North America decided on a simple answer to that question over a year ago – *ask them*. To help in this endeavor, they called in Assessment Plus, Inc., an Atlanta based consulting firm with nearly 20 years of experience who specializes in customized survey solutions and organizational development.

Since 2000, Porsche has asked their employees to provide their opinions about what's going well and what they would like to see improved with their organization. Porsche and Assessment Plus collaborated to develop a customized employee opinion survey based on their corporate values and other aspects of work life that are important to the employees. All employees were asked to respond to the survey, which was administered at the various locations. Porsche's management team, while pleased with the overall level of satisfaction, discovered some areas that they felt needed to be addressed to enhance their ability to retain their best talent. The survey results were strategically used to involve employees in creating some highly targeted and innovative programs to address the most critical areas of concern.

For example, a peer-nominated reward program, *The Hour Glass Award*, was developed to recognize top performers and reward them with gift certificates,

tickets to sporting or cultural events, and cash. Porsche also implemented a "*Test Drive Program*" in response to the finding that employees did not have a clear understanding of how other departments operated. This unique program provided opportunities for employees to spend a day with someone in another functional area of the company, to give them insight into different roles and responsibilities and a better understanding of how all of the positions work together to make PCNA successful.

*The Exchange Program* was another initiative developed in response to the feedback received from the employees. This program addressed the distinct cultural differences between Germany and the United States and enabled employees to spend a short time working in a similar capacity in Germany, allowing them to better understand the culture of the rest of their organizational family.

Though Porsche achieved positive feedback from these new initiatives and generally felt that their culture was more positive, they wanted a more objective assessment of their progress and overall standing and called Assessment Plus back a year later to re-administer their survey.

The survey data collected a year later revealed that Porsche's initiatives had indeed been on target. Realizing a statistically significant improvement on nearly half of the survey items, the results also indicated that 95% of the employees were satisfied with the

company. Assessment Plus also conducted additional statistical analyses to shed some light on the specific reasons employees choose to stay with or leave the company. The analyses revealed that a few key questions explained the respondents "intent to leave the company" (70% of the variance explained). In other words, we can safely predict whether a respondent intends to leave the company based on how they responded to several key questions in the survey. These results translated into new actions steps, which included ensuring a better job fit and improving benefits in creative ways.

Between the information gleaned from the survey results, the multiple regression analyses, the comments provided by the respondents, and the resulting dialogues in the results-presentation sessions, the assessment process has enabled Porsche Cars North America to strategically focus on a handful of very relevant issues and make changes that they perceive have been beneficial and impactful. Porsche has continued to solicit feedback from their employees each year since this program was initiated and they continue to realize significant improvement.