

**“The Impact of Account Management on the
motivation and performance of a sales team in an
Irish insurance company.”**

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Abstract

Title: The Impact of Account Management on the motivation and performance of a sales team in an Irish insurance company.

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This study aims to discover the impact of outcome based sales force control systems on the motivation and performance of sales people. Businesses strive for service efficiency, a customer relationship focus and most importantly growth in income. The case study focuses on one example of a control system used to meet these objectives in the form of account management introduced into the direct sales force of an Irish insurance company. It is also a means to performance manage employees and manage by objectives. But, there is a lack of empirical evidence to show how successful account management is in this context and its impact on employees' motivation to achieve those objectives which this study provides.

A quantitative research method is used to answer the research question by surveying a sample of the sales force using an online questionnaire. The data is analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics to summarise the findings.

The study finds that goals set for employees within account management satisfy the 5 key principles of goal setting and are motivating factors. Goals were also found to be specific, measureable, achievable, realistic and timely (SMART). Intrinsic motivators that have a greater effect on sales people were evident with one exception being the lack of personal recognition. The characteristics of job designs that positively influence psychological states were also satisfied by account management. Goals were found to be closer aligned to company objectives and employees believed that account management had a positive effect on their own and the company's performance.

The study concludes that employee motivation to achieve objectives and performance is enhanced by the introduction of account management and poses a further related research question by asking if goals are too challenging, difficult or complex do these goals then become demotivating factors.

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“The Impact of Account Management on the motivation and performance of a sales team in an Irish insurance company.”

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Jobs in which rewards are contingent on performance are more satisfying than jobs with a weaker performance rewards contingency” (Judge, Thoreson, & Bono, 2001, p. 392). The introduction of performance management in which rewards are based upon performance should therefore result in increased satisfaction and consequently, increased employee motivation according to Campion & Thayer (1987). However, does the introduction of a structure of account management compliment this satisfaction or is it potentially harmful?

The term ‘account management’ in this context refers to a system whereby each sales person within a branch structure of an insurance company is allocated a portfolio of customers, which will be referred to as a ‘Book of Business’ within this research, and are charged with the responsibility of servicing these customers and set targets and goals to grow the premium income of that portfolio.

The researcher seeks to investigate the merit of implementing a clinical outcome based sales control system of account management into the direct sales force of an Irish insurance company. The case study in focus in the research is based on a sales force that was primarily measured on new business acquisitions prior to the introduction of account management in January 2011. Account management measures total premium income earned annually by each sales person including new business acquisitions; retention of existing customers and growth of existing customers’ accounts via up-selling existing covers and cross-selling of additional products. This research will analyse the relationship between performance management and employee motivation and performance, but with a specific emphasis on the effectiveness of account management on the sales team of an Irish insurance company as a means to implementing a structure to support performance management. Has it added value to the organisation in the first 18 months since its implementation and more specifically has it created a positive or negative effect on

both the motivation of the sales team and their performance? This will be the focus of this research.

There are no guarantees of success for companies that adopt account management or similar control systems even if aligned to the strategic objectives of those companies. And even if successful the cost, if any, in terms of the potential effects on its employees is unknown.

Despite the quest for business to business service efficiency, most financial services companies know that they must not lose sight of the importance of relationship quality. As a result there is growing interest in Key Account Management (KAM) in these companies. Research on KAM is limited and little has been undertaken in financial services. (Hughes, Foss, Stone, & Cheverton, 2004, p. 184).

It is this lack of empirical evidence of the benefits, if any, which account management, can bring to the performance and motivation of a sales force that has encouraged the author to pursue this research, particularly in the areas of the Irish insurance industry and of employee motivation.

A review of the existing literature begins in the area of employee motivation and its links with Goal Setting theory (Locke, 1968) and SMART goal setting (Doran, 1981) which are still accepted in the 21st century accepted as important factors in employee motivation (Furnham, 2005). The researcher aims to understand if a system of account management is aligned with the theory in this area. Other traditional motivation theories are discussed with views from more recent commentators included. Similarly the review looks at Herzberg's Two-factor theory (Herzberg, Maunser, & Snyderman, 1959) and Parsons and Broadbride's (2006) application of this in a retail setting to understand what effects internal and external factors have on employee motivation in order to define the research questions. Hackman and Oldham's Job characteristics theory (Hackman & Oldham, 1976) is outlined to understand what job designs characteristics have an effect on employee motivation with the aim of making a connection between those theories and account management. The review also looks at motivators in the retail sector, agency theory and the appropriate selection of sales force control systems outlined by Dorman and Martin (2011).

The main research question or objective is focused on discovering if the introduction of account management has had any impact on the motivation and performance of a sales team in an Irish insurance company with specific reference to assessing if it facilitates the necessary principles of goal setting, provides for intrinsic motivators, incorporates a job design that stimulates motivation and aligns the goals of the company goals with those of its employees.

The research is basic and inductive in design as its intention is to explore and expand the knowledge in this field of study. A quantitative research method is utilised to conduct the research with a sample of the sales force and interval variables are used to measure variables in the research which was conducted using a questionnaire. The questionnaire is consistent with previous instruments used to research job design and its effect on motivation carried out by Campion & Thayer (1987). The questions used in the survey are outlined and aligned to the objectives of the research to explain their inclusion and what information can be drawn from the answers.

In summary, this study will review the relevant theories from existing literature that are applicable to this area of research. The research method is then discussed including the sub-objectives designed to achieve the overall objective; details of the sample and how they were selected; ethical consideration; how the questionnaire itself was constructed; the contents of the questionnaire and why selected; the method of analysis and some limitations of this research. A full analysis of the findings of the research is provided in detail with a further discussion of the salient findings relative to the objectives and the existing literature. The study concludes with a summary of the key findings and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

“Motivating other people is about getting them to move in the direction you want them to go in order to achieve a result” (Armstrong, 2006, p. 252). Success of retail firms is “dependent on a motivated workforce” (Mishra & Gupta, 2009, p. 509) and successful motivation of staff is key to the competitive performance of retail organisations (Bent & Freathy, 1997) which is why many firms try different forms of motivation and job design in order to maintain employee motivation and satisfaction. This connection between motivation and performance is further supported in a study by Ingram, Lee, & Skinner (1989) which provided empirical evidence of a positive link between motivation and employee effort in a sales team, and additionally that effort is positively related to performance. But, how do companies stimulate the motivation of a sales team to increase performance? This review will outline some of the key motivation theories that help formulate the research question which will explore the impact of a specific business operation level strategy on motivation. These include goal setting theory, motivation theory, intrinsic and extrinsic motivators, job characteristics, job design and control systems.

Goal Setting Theory

It is widely accepted that employees are motivated by clear goals and appropriate feedback since the analysis of Locke (1968) and furthermore that having a goal to work towards actually provides the motivation to achieve that goal, which in turn will result in increased performance. This goal setting theory was further developed by Locke and Latham (cited in Tosi, 1991) whereby they created a direct link between setting specific and difficult goals and employee motivation. In addition those goals should be agreed and understood in order to generate commitment from employees, provide regular feedback and be sufficiently complex. The theory states that goals should be framed from 5 set principles to achieve increased motivation, namely:

- Clarity
- Challenge
- Commitment

- Feedback
- Task Complexity

Regarding the agreement of goals with employees, Locke, Latham, & Erez (1988) had some disagreements on whether employees should actually participate in the process of setting their own goals or not in order to secure their commitment. They did however agree that whilst employee participation in their own goal setting could enhance their commitment to those goals, the same level of commitment could be generated by assigning goals to employees without any participation so long as the employee is provided with the rationale for their goals and these are agreed and accepted by the employee (Locke, et al., 1988). A more recent study by Li & Butler (2004) supported this argument and emphasised the importance of providing employees with the rationale when assigning goals.

These models are fundamentally built upon the concept of Management by Objectives (MBO) first originated by Peter Drucker in his 1954 book 'The Practice of Management'. According to MBO, goals should be formulated and then jointly agreed between manager and employee, which will then direct the employee's efforts in ways that will contribute to the high level goals of the organisation and subsequently these will serve as the basis for the evaluation of that employee's performance (Fulk, Bell, & Bodie, 2011).

The above goal setting and MBO theory is consistent with the SMART model of goal setting first devised by George Doran (1981). Performance management requires managers to manage by objectives and appraise employee performance against those same objectives, therefore Doran (1981) set out a framework for setting objectives for employees summarised by the SMART acronym:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable / attainable
- Realistic
- Timely

The connection between goal setting and employee motivation is further emphasised by the suggestion that people's actions are aimed towards achieving future outcomes

and therefore motivators such as goals are necessary in order to achieve those desired outcomes (Bandura & Wood, 1989). This is one aspect of social cognitive theory which is discussed further below.

Goal setting theory is generally accepted as a significant force in determining motivation and effort; however it does fall short of dealing with job satisfaction (Furnham, 2005). One of the objectives of this research is to discover if the introduction of account management satisfies these theories of goal and objective setting in order to achieve increased employee motivation, but the research will not provide any insight into its effect on job satisfaction.

Motivation Theories

Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory found that the motivation of human beings is based upon five basic needs in a hierarchical order of importance (Steers, Porter, & Bigley, 1996). Maslow argues that human beings can experience satisfaction from any one of these needs, but that partial fulfilment or gratification of any level of need is necessary before the human mind will focus its behaviour towards the next need in the hierarchy. The first need is the 'Physiological' meaning the basic life requirements such as food, drink and shelter. The next is 'Safety' which is a more sophisticated set of physiological needs such as security, stability and order. The third is 'Belonging' meaning the emotional connection to others such as family or relationships or being part of a team. Once these have been fulfilled or partially fulfilled then humans will crave 'Esteem' meaning reputation, achievement and respect. The final step is 'Self-actualisation' which rather than being a need is a humans desire to realise their own potential. Although this theory does lack in scientific evidence it is still widely recognised as a foundation for understanding what motivates human behaviour (Latham & Pinder, 2005) and is very much applicable to providing managers with an insight to employee motives (Steers, et al., 1996).

Another well respected theory of human behaviour and motivation is the Theory X and Y of management philosophies developed by McGregor (1957). These are two differing sets of assumptions and beliefs that managers hold of employees. Theory X is the view that humans are lazy, they lack ambition, dislike responsibility, they are

indifferent to organisational needs and resistant to change. The consequences of these assumptions is that managers designed procedures and policies according to these beliefs which actually cause workers to be lazy, lack motivation, and be resistant to those procedures. There is a circular cause and effect to this view and has ironically led to the management phrase “you cant get good workers nowadays” (Kopelman, Prottas, & Falk, 2012, p. 451). The alternative, positive and more favoured view proposed by McGregor is Theory Y which assumes that workers actually seek fulfillment in their job and their application is enhanced by management creating an environment that encourages their involvement and consultation and enables employees direct their efforts in line with the objectives of the organisation (Jacobs, 2004). Both the X and Y theories make the significant assumption that managerial practices effect employee motivation and behaviour both positively and negatively, however due to lack of sufficient measures of the core elements of the theories they remain relatively untested (Kopelman, et al., 2012).

According to the Theory of Needs (McClelland cited in Royle & Hall, 2012) motives and needs are either acquired or learned and individuals are motivated by achievement, affiliation and power. Those motivated by the need for achievement tend to share several common characteristics: they prefer tasks for which performance depends on effort rather than luck; tasks are of moderate levels of difficulty and at a more advanced level than their peers; they demand feedback and react very positively to good outcomes, but are upset by poor feedback or negative outcomes. This theory is widely recognised with many studies linking achievement striving with performance, specifically in the area of sales (Ambrose & Kulik, 1999). A more recent study by (Chi Keung Chan & Yong Ngee, 2010) continues to support this link by showing both the need for achievement and empowerment had positive effects on performance. This study found that the need for achievement was a more significant influence on performance as their findings showed that managers with higher levels of need for achievement do not require the same levels of autonomy or empowerment in order to provide a quality service.

Motivation has also been considered to be the combination of expectancy, instrumentality and valance according to Vroom’s (Vroom & Deci, 1970) long standing Expectancy Theory. The expectancy is the belief that people’s behaviours and choice of behaviours will lead to certain outcomes or performance; the

instrumentality is the understanding that the outcome will be rewarded; and the valence is the value that an individual places on the reward (Oliver, 1974). In the context of a sales force this theory suggests that employees may rationally evaluate the tasks assigned to them and only choose those which they find attractive, those which they believe they can achieve and which will lead to a valued outcome in their own eyes (Oliver, 1974).

Equity theory takes this a step forward and describes how employees seek equity between the inputs and outcomes of their work and the perceived inputs and outcomes of others or their peers (Adams, cited in Ambrose & Kulik, 1999). Inputs can be based on experience, qualifications, effort and competence whilst outcomes can be salary, recognition, status and advancement. People make their own assumptions about what is a fair return for their performance and then compare this to what they believe to be the return of others in a similar role from their employer. The theory states that fair treatment is valued and is a motivator amongst employees, however if people believe there is inequity between the rewards of others and their own then this can cause hostilities towards colleagues or managers and reduced commitment or increased employee turnover (Carrell & Dittrich, 1978). Equity theory has been criticised for being too broad and has been further developed by Greenberg (1990) who refers to it as distributive justice in his research of Organisational Justice. Greenberg (1990) distinguishes distributive justice from the topics of procedural justice which is the fairness of the processes used to determine performance outcomes or rewards for employees such as performance appraisals; and interpersonal justice which is how people are treated by the decision makers and how well their decisions are explained and justified. "The premise of organisational justice is that fair procedures enhance employee acceptance of organisational outcomes" (Latham & Pinder, 2005).

Most of the above motivational theories look at how external factors determine human behaviour, but the recognition that cognitive and personal factors have as much of an influence was developed in Social Cognitive Theory. Bandura and Wood (1989) argued that there is an interdependent and causal relationship between human behaviour, environmental or external factors and cognitive or personal factors. When applied to the management of organisations they found three aspects of this theory that were most relevant. Firstly, people can learn from one another by observing

what others do and the consequences of those actions. In turn they will remember and mimic those actions that lead to a valued outcome as they are motivated by the successes of other, but are less likely to follow those that they remember led to negative outcomes. Secondly, possessing the necessary skills or competencies is not enough for employees to achieve the desired performance. They also require self-belief in their own abilities or self-efficacy in order to be self-motivated to perform which can explain why 2 people with the same skill set may not achieve the same level of performance. There is substantial empirical evidence that shows levels of efficacy are a significant influencing factor in employee motivation and performance (Latham & Pinder, 2005). The third aspect is that people are self-motivated by the desire to achieve the satisfaction of completing a desired outcome and similarly motivated by the avoidance of potential discontent and disappointment of a substandard performance. Goals are therefore necessary to act as motivators to achieve the end desired outcome as discussed in goal setting theory earlier in the review.

Intrinsic & Extrinsic Motivators

Hertzberg outlined 2 distinct sets of Motivational and Hygiene factors that affect employee motivation and job satisfaction: those factors that provide satisfaction in the work itself were termed 'motivators' and those factors that led to dissatisfaction (or were merely factors that helped avoid dissatisfaction) and were external to the work were termed 'hygiene' factors (Hertzberg, et al., 1959). The motivators in this Two Factor Theory that provide satisfaction and motivate employees were deemed to include achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, advancement and growth. On the other hand the hygiene factors that were deemed to cause or avoid dissatisfaction included company policies, level of supervision, working conditions, relationships with managers and peers and salary. It is important to note that the hygiene factors can be used to incentivise employees, but the theory suggests that these only provide short term effects because they are not intrinsic to the job itself (Hertzberg, et al., 1959). In a retail setting it has been found that the intrinsic motivational factors of the job itself such as responsibility and personal recognition were found to have a positive effect on employee motivation, rather than the

extrinsic hygiene factors of the context of employment such as the working environment or level of remuneration which were found to have no positive effect on motivation or performance (Parsons & Broadbride, 2006). Further research into Herzberg's two-factor motivation theory by Bassett-Jones & Lloyd (2005) confirmed that his theories are as relevant today as they were 50 years previously and furthermore, also found that extrinsic factors such as pay and working environment were not as important in stimulating employee motivation compared to the intrinsic motivational factors and job satisfaction. However, in contrast, compensation i.e. salary and bonus was deemed to be one of the most influential factors of employee satisfaction for sales people (Mehta, Anderson, & Dubinsky, 2000).

Job Characteristics

There are 5 job characteristics that have a greater significance than any other in effecting employees' psychological state and thus their motivation, performance and job satisfaction (Campion & Thayer, 1987). Those 5 factors according to the job characteristics theory devised by Hackman & Oldham (1976) are

- autonomy,
- skill variety,
- task identity,
- task significance and
- feedback

A more recent study in 2007 attempted to support the hypothesis that there still remained a direct relationship between these 5 characteristics of job design and employee motivation. Humphrey, Nahrgang, & Morgeson's (2007) findings in this study confirmed this to be the case which supports the argument that the earlier theories of Hackman and Oldham still apply today.

A comparison of job dimensions of a sales force and the leadership behaviours of their superiors in 1986 found that the sales person's motivations and performance on the job were influenced more by redesigning the dimensions of the work itself than by behavioural changes of their leaders (Tyagi, 1985). The dimensions noted in this study included establishing client-salesperson relationships to enhance skill variety

and task identity; increased freedom to manage own time provided an element of autonomy; and direct instant knowledge of individual performance provided the job feedback craved by sales people (Tyagi, 1985).

A further study of 114 sales employees in India found that amongst the most important motivators for front line sales personnel were skill development, individual recognition and role clarity (Mishra & Gupta, 2009).

Control Systems

Outcome-based sales force control systems involve measuring a sales person's results or outputs to evaluate performance; whereas behavioural-based control systems focus on monitoring methods used to achieve sales and inputs such as number of calls and number of quotes, but no research has recommended which is "the best" (Anderson & Oliver, 1987, p. 87). More recent research has sought to provide some clarity as to which control systems are most appropriate depending on the needs of an organisation rather than which is the best. According to the conceptual framework developed by Darmon & Martin (2011) two main factors are used to determine the selection of an appropriate sales force control system: 1) Management's objectives and the nature of those objectives and 2) the level of centralisation or decentralisation of responsibility which is usually reflected in the culture of the organisation.

Firstly, sales managers tend to have several objectives which are a combination of transactional objectives i.e. short term goals such as premium income targets; and objectives which are more orientated around longer term relationship building with customers such as customer satisfaction or customer loyalty (Sujan, Weitz, & Kumar, 1994). Therefore at least some objectives will be outcome based as opposed to behaviour or activity based and will tend to be of greater priority so an outcome based sales force control system is necessary (Darmon & Martin, 2011). Secondly, management will decide whether to provide their sales force with specific and detailed objectives such as premium growth per account or number of sales in given product lines which is described as highly centralised; or alternatively management can provide their sales force with direction or high level objectives with the broad autonomy to achieve those objectives by whatever means possible within reason.

The more centralised approach tends to be more short term focused and where an outcome based control system is necessary.

This conceptual framework lacks empirical evidence and therefore requires further research which this study intends to provide. The control system which is the subject of this research (account management) is an outcome based control system, but has its introduction into a sales force contributed more to performance than previous adopted behavioural based control and remuneration systems?

Lastly, Agency theory is an accounting approach to the divergence of goals between companies and its agents (Eisenhardt, 1985) and recommends approaches to the design of control systems in order to achieve compatibility and alignment between the goals of a company and the incentives and goals of its agents (Anderson & Oliver, 1987). Does the introduction of account management better align the goals of a company with its sales people and is there a direct effect on their performance?

Review Conclusion

The focus of this research is to study the impact of implementing a system of customer account management into the job design of a front-end sales force in an Irish insurance company and evaluate if it has any effect on their motivation and/or their performance.

In evaluating the effect on motivation, if any, the research will specifically look at the 5 principles of goal setting; intrinsic motivational factors; SMART goal setting, the 5 characteristics of job design theory and the alignment of company and sales person goals in order to examine if the introduction of an account management control system into a sales team has any bearing, positive or negative, on these factors of motivation and performance.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

Research Question and Objectives

Area: Employee Motivation

Topic: The impact of Account Management on the motivation and performance of a sales team in an Irish insurance company?

Sub Objective 1:

“To determine whether goals set for sales employees since the introduction of account management affects the motivation levels of those sales employees.”

Locke and Latham (cited in Tosi, 1991) outlined a direct link between specific and difficult tasks and employee motivation if those goals were based on 5 key principles. This research aims to determine if account management allowed management to set goals for sales staff that were consistent with these principles namely a) clear, b) challenging, c) understood and agreed to ensure commitment from employees, d) provide regular feedback to employees on progress versus their goals and e) sufficiently complex or difficult whilst also being achievable.

Sub Objective 2:

“To ascertain whether the implementation of account management facilitated the successful implementation of performance management and SMART goal setting into a sales team.”

Performance management is dependent upon SMART goal setting as outlined by Doran (1981) and this research intends to discover if account management allowed sales management to achieve this.

Sub Objective 3:

“To investigate if account management had any impact on the intrinsic motivation levels of the sales team, specifically achievement, recognition and responsibility.”

Parsons & Broadbride (2006) found that intrinsic factors had a greater effect on motivation levels for people in sales roles so this research intends to understand if account management triggered any intrinsic motivational factors.

Sub Objective 4:

“To determine whether account management introduced new characteristics into the structure of the sales persons job design that provided increased intrinsic motivation levels.”

Motivations of employees are dependent upon their psychological states, which in turn are dependent upon certain characteristics being present in the job itself (Campion & Thayer, 1987). Those characteristics are defined as skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). This research intends to demonstrate that account management introduced these characteristics to the job design of the sales team.

Sub Objective 5:

“To investigate if the introduction of account management better aligned the goals of a company with those of its sales people and if there is a direct effect on their performance.”

Appropriate sales force control systems are necessary to align company and employee goals (Anderson & Oliver, 1987), so this research aims to discover if this was achieved through account management and if this had a direct effect on the company’s performance.

Sample

The sales force in focus is that of direct sales channel of an Irish insurance company. It has a total of 298 sales employees comprised of 78 outdoor field based Sales Executives and 220 indoor office based Sales Advisors both spread over a network of 33 regional branch offices. This represents the overall population, each of whom are responsible for a portfolio of customers under the structure of account management which is the subject of this research.

A non-probability sampling technique i.e. volunteer sampling was used to secure the necessary sample for the research. Respondents were self-selected, by allowing them choose whether they wanted to participate in the research or not. This method was used in order to avoid any bias in the sample selection process.

The procedure adopted to conduct the research began with access and permission from the Irish Insurance company being sought and secured. This research was warmly welcomed and the findings of this research will be made available to the National Sales Director and Retail Sales Manager as a quid pro quo for allowing access to conduct this research. These two main contacts were not included in the research sample as the population in focus is limited to the actual sales force employees engaged in account management and not the management of same.

Once the research implement was designed, which was a survey questionnaire (see research instrument section below) an email was issued to the supervisor (senior indoor based Sales Advisor) in each of the 33 branches inviting them to participate in the research along with a web link to the survey. They were also asked to forward this email and survey link to another two members of their branch, one from the indoor based Sales Advisor role sand one from the field based Sales Executive role. The email outlined the background to the research, what it is trying to achieve and the reason why they were being asked to participate (see appendix 1).

The reason the invitation to participate email was issued to the supervisor of each branch and subsequently forwarded to both indoor Sales Advisors and field based Sales Executives was to help ensure the sample was as fair a representation as possible of the population across each of the branches in the sales network of the company and across each of the two distinct sales roles. This is important as the

results of the responses to the survey from the sample will be generalised to reflect the population.

The invitation was sent to each supervisor at the same time on a Tuesday morning asking them, and those they forwarded the invitation to, to complete the survey by close of business the next day if they opted to participate. The approach of sending the invitation to participate to all branches at the same time with the same deadline had two purposes. Firstly, it allowed the researcher target the relevant population, rather than the most accessible in order to further avoid any bias in the selected sample and secondly increased the reliability and consistency of the findings of the research.

Respondents could only each complete the survey once and was withdrawn after 48 hours to maintain the integrity of research reliability.

As the supervisors were asked to send the invitation to participate to 2 additional staff members per branch, the researcher can assume that the maximum sample possible was 99 if all invitees including supervisors were available at the time selected, read the email invitation on time and opted to participate. The final number of completed surveys was 51 which represents just over half of the maximum possible sample – 52%. There are no perceived reasons why 48% of invitees did not participate in the research aside from time constraints or availability. If any supervisors were absent then no one from their branch will have received the survey. The researcher has no way of identifying any individuals who received the invitation or participated in the survey. The sample of 51 sales staff also represents 17% of the overall sales force population.

As the sample includes both roles within the sales force the research may show differing results depending on role; however this only provides a different perspective rather than introducing another variable.

Research Ethics

There was no risk to the sample surveyed as they were not asked to disclose their identity in the anonymous survey. Their anonymity was assured via the research instrument used and identities protected.

Informed consent was sought from all participants before conducting the questionnaire and anyone who declined to participate did not receive any further correspondence, nor could they be identified. Participants were informed of the purpose and use of the research and reassured that it was sanctioned by their senior managers and that individual responses cannot be disclosed to their managers. The findings of the research shall be reported on the overall result of the sample only.

The question set of the questionnaire was provided to the Retail Sales Manager to get feedback on the appropriateness of the content of the survey before conducting the research. The volunteer sampling approach was also agreed in tandem with the Retail Sales Manager.

The researcher remained impartial at all times during the research and adopted a professional approach.

Research Instrument

The research design selected is one that will test the application of the theories in the literature and answer the questions posed in the research objectives. A quantitative method is used in order to achieve this in the form of a survey questionnaire.

The design of the research is 'Basic' in nature as the aim is to learn about the impact of account management on employee motivation rather than investigating how to increase motivation. Whilst quantitative methods will be used which is a positivistic paradigm of research, the data will be based on employees opinions and therefore somewhat qualitative in nature. Therefore, it can be argued that the research will adopt an interpretivist philosophy (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012).

Quantitative research is generally deductive in nature, however, the data in this research will be used add to existing theory and show what affect account management has on motivation. This is therefore an inductive approach.

The strategy of this research is quasi-experimental in design as it intends to discover if the introduction of account management incorporating the independent variables (see below) influences the dependent variable which is employee motivation. It is quasi-experimental as opposed to simply experimental because the independent

variables are not directly manipulated or influenced by the researcher during the course of the research. The independent variables that are measured in order to determine the effect of account management on employee motivation (the dependent variable) are as follows:

- Principles of goal setting
- SMART Goal setting
- Intrinsic motivators
- Job design
- Alignment of personal goals to company objectives

The objective of the research is to understand the impact on a sales team as opposed to gaining an insight into what motivates individual sales personnel so conducting a survey was chosen as the research strategy as it is the most efficient means of collecting data from a large population. Sampling was used to collect data and it was important that the sample was a significant proportion of the population in order for the findings to be representative of the entire population. The target sample proportion was 15 -20% of the population or 45-60 subjects. Therefore a survey was deemed to be the most appropriate instrument.

Other forms of quantitative research include experiments which is very suitable to this form of research, however it is necessary to have a pre-test measure of the dependent variable before an intervention is made (in this case the implementation of account management) and a control group to compare the results of the experiment with. There was no data available prior to 2011 when this control system was implemented nor was there a control group as the entire sales force is engaged in account management so an experiment was not possible.

An alternative approach could have been a purely qualitative approach involving interviews. Interviewing a number of the sales force and the management team was considered, but it was not considered appropriate as the subjective responses from a relatively smaller proportion of subjects would not provide the answers to the research objectives nor would it have been a fair representation of the population. The time cost is a considerable factor in conducting interviews, particularly if the target number of subjects was as high as 45-60 employees. Due to time constraints

and the availability of the proposed sample it was not possible to conduct interviews with that number of employees.

Researchers have used similar quantitative instruments when conducting research on employee motivation. Campion & Thayer (1987) constructed a job analysis questionnaire that can be used to evaluate the design of jobs and the effects on employee motivation the job after the job has been changed. This is referred to as the “The Motivational Job-Design Approach” (Campion & Thayer, 1987, p. 70). The questionnaire contained 18 questions which ask respondents to confirm positive or negative closed ended responses to questions such as “Task Variety: Does the job have a variety of duties, tasks, and activities?” (Campion & Thayer, 1987, p. 70). Positive findings from the survey were deemed to imply higher motivation and higher job performance. This research adopted a similar approach and conducted a survey using a similar questionnaire containing tailored questions aimed at answering the research objectives outlined below.

Survey Details

The measure in the research is based on variables that are continuous intervals. Respondants of the questionnaires i.e. the sample, were asked to select one answer for each question from a semantic scale with each question containing the same four answers ranging from highly demotivating to highly motivating.

The questionnaire contained 23 questions in total which were broken down into 5 sections (see appendix 2). Each section was aimed at answering one of the 5 sub objectives of the research.

Sub Objective 1: “To determine whether goals set for sales employees since the introduction of account management affects the motivation levels of those sales employees.” The first 5 questions of the questionnaire (listed below) relate to the 5 key principles of goal setting formed by Locke and Latham (cited in Tosi, 1991) which if present have a direct and positive link to employee motivation. A sixth question was included to ascertain if the employees believed these aspects of their goals were motivating.

1	My goals are clear
2	My goals are challenging
3	My goals are understood and agreed
4	I am provided with regular updates on my progress versus goals (reporting or in person)
5	My goals are sufficiently complex or difficult
6	I found the above aspects of my goals within account management motivating

Sub Objective 2: “To ascertain whether the implementation of account management facilitated the successful implementation of performance management and SMART goal setting into a sales team.” Questions 10 to 14 ask respondents if they believe their goals are SMART since the introduction of account management. Management by Objective theory suggests that SMART goal setting contributes to increased employee motivation and performance.

10	My goals are specific
11	My goals are measurable
12	My goals are achievable
13	My goals are realistic
14	My goals are timely (time-bound)

Sub Objective 3: “To investigate if account management had any impact on the intrinsic motivation levels of the sales team, specifically achievement, recognition and responsibility.” Questions 7 to 9 relate to these intrinsic motivators as Parsons & Broadbride (2006) found them to have significant effect on motivation of sales staff.

7	I get a sense of achievement from my work
8	I feel I get personal recognition
9	I feel I have a sense of responsibility

Sub Objective 4: “To determine whether account management introduced new characteristics into the structure of the sales persons job design that provided increased intrinsic motivation levels.” Questions 15 to 19 intended to establish if the sales force sampled agreed that their work shared such characteristics that the literary research suggests influences psychological states and in turn employee motivation.

15	A variety of my skills are used in my role
16	I can identify the purpose of my work
17	I can identify that my work contributes to a bigger picture
18	I have discretion in scheduling my work and decision making (autonomy)
19	I get feedback on the effectiveness of my performance

Sub Objective 5: “To investigate if the introduction of account management better aligned the goals of a company with those of its sales people and if there is a direct effect on their performance?” The last 4 questions directly relate to this objective. The final question was asked to aid the findings of the research by providing a dependent variable that could be statistically compared with to measure relationships and differences with each of the independent variables including correlations.

20	My goals and objectives are better aligned to the company's goals
21	Account management has had a positive direct effect on my own performance

22	Account management has had a positive direct effect on the company's performance
23	Overall my motivation to achieve my objectives is increased

The survey was constructed using surveymonkey online survey tool. Respondents who chose to participate did so by accessing the survey from the web link included in the email invitation to participate. Respondents could abandon the survey at any stage and submitted their completed survey by clicking submit once all questions were answered. No other resources were necessary aside from the respondents own time which had already been committed by the company.

A pilot of the questionnaire was initially completed with two employees of the same company who recently vacated roles in the sales team. They received the email invitation and a draft version of the online survey. Based on their feedback the wording of the email was adjusted, one question was removed and two questions re-phrased. This helped the researcher ensure the research questions were clear and in a context that the sample understood which helped increase the validity or accuracy of the research.

Method of Analysis

The results from the survey were extracted from the surveymonkey online survey tool in two forms. Firstly, the results were downloaded to show the frequency of occurrence of values for each of the variables i.e. how many respondents strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed or strongly disagreed with each of the survey questions. This will be presented in the form of bar chart reports including counts and percentiles for each value. Secondly, the raw data from each of the completed surveys were downloaded to excel and the answers converted to numerical data i.e. strongly agree=1, agree=2, disagree=3 and strongly disagree=4. This data was then transferred and entered into SPSS software package which is a statistical analysis reporting tool. Two types of statistics were used to analyse the data: descriptive and inferential.

Descriptive statistics were used to describe and summarise the central tendency and the level of dispersion of data for each of the variables (questions in the survey). The central tendency for each variable which is the most common or average values or answers will be measured using modes, means and means. Mode provides the most frequent answer to each question while the means will provide the average score. The dispersion of data around the central tendency for each question or variable will be measured using standard deviations. This will measure the variability of the data or the extent that the data values for each variable are spread around the mean or averages i.e. if the standard deviation is low then the answers tend to be very close to the average.

Inferential statistics were used to make inferences about the population based on the sample of respondents to the research. It was necessary to use parametric style tests to measure differences and correlations between variables as the data is based on intervals from a semantic scale. Non-parametric tests are mostly suited to ordinal or nominal data and so were not utilised. Correlation tests can be used to assess the strength of relationships between variables. The Pearson product moment correlation coefficient (pmcc) test was the correlation test chosen as the data was converted to numeric form in SPSS.

Limitations of Research

There is no hypothesis developed that would allow the research to test the impact of the independent variables on the levels of motivations as it would have been difficult to measure the levels of motivation. Nor was there data on motivation levels available prior to this research. As the research is an inductive approach the objective is to find out if the characteristics of a motivated work force exist in the sales force which is the subject of this research since the introduction of account management and thus infer from the findings the impact on motivation and performance.

There are other possible extraneous variables that may have influenced the answers provided by the respondents. Account management was the vehicle and sales control system used by this company to implement performance management and management by objectives into its sales force. It is a clinical control system which provides daily updates on performance versus targets and annual remuneration; and

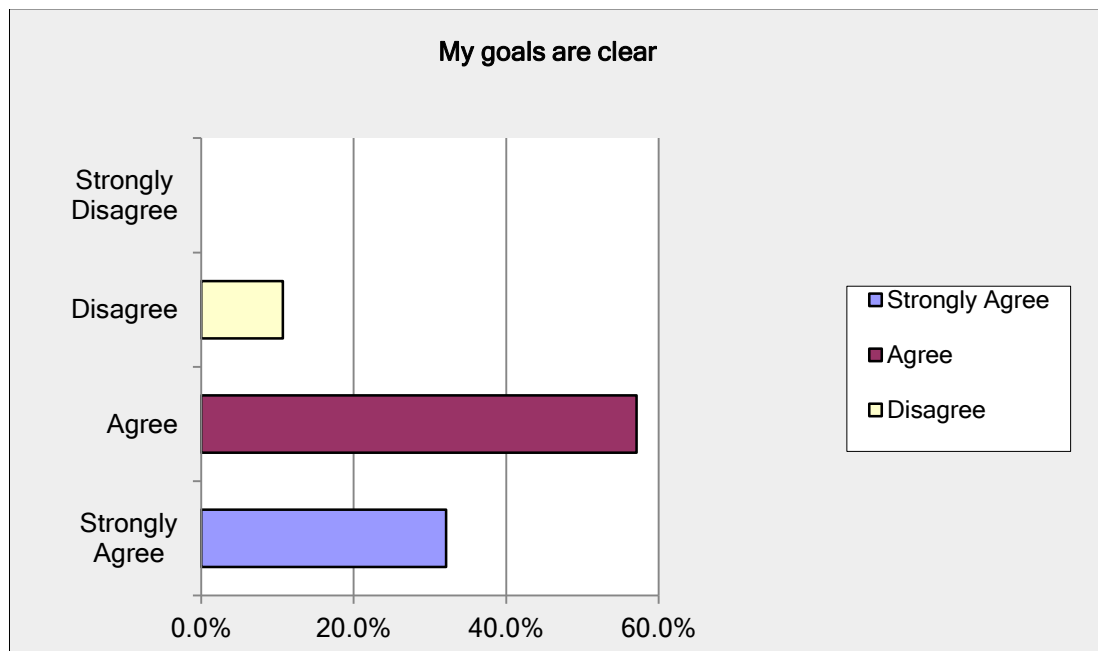
is fundamentally based on the outcome of employee's performance versus targets. Some respondents in the sample may have a negative outlook on account management due to reduced bonus payments based on their own poor results, compared with bonus payments in previous years based on more simplified performance measurement structures. In contrast some respondents may have experienced increased bonus payments and have a favourable outlook which could have influenced positive answers to the questions in the survey.

In addition, account management is only in its second year of operation in this company and as such the model is in its infancy. There are some disputes amongst staff in the award of premium in scenarios where one sales person may sell products to customers that belong in another colleague's account. A review was due to take place after this research was conducted to deal with these issues and potentially make changes to the performance measurements. Some respondents may have answered negatively to questions in the survey if they have negative perceptions of account management due to personal experience in such scenarios.

Chapter 4 - Research Analysis & Findings

The findings are broken down and presented in this chapter for each question. The significance of the findings in relation to the objectives and the literary review will be discussed in next chapter.

Question 1

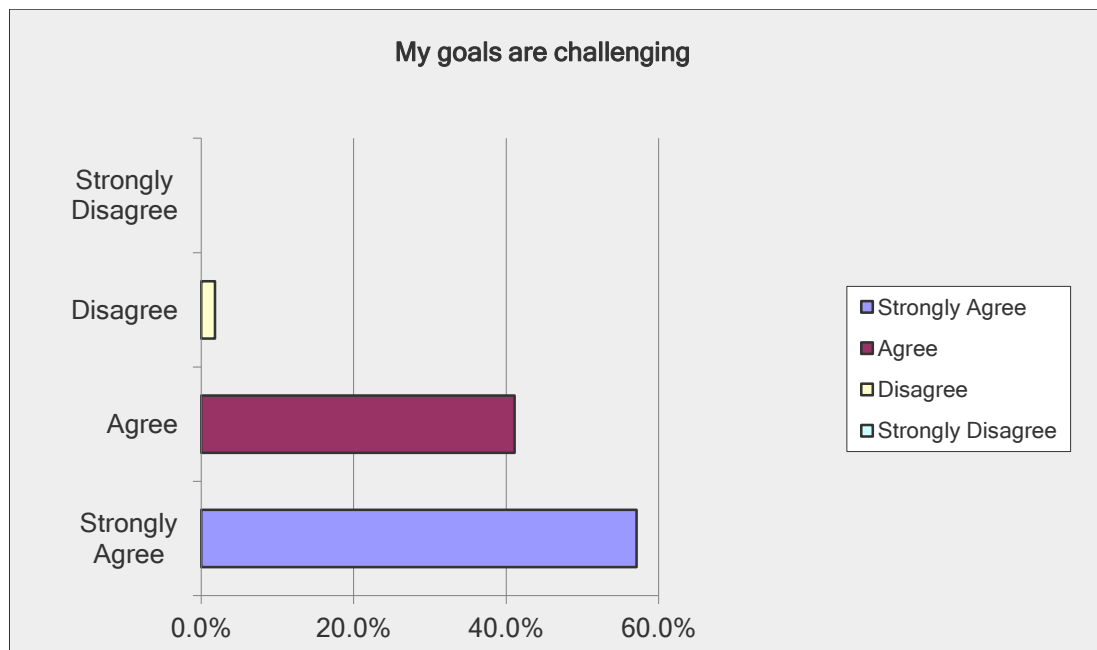


My goals are clear		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	32.1%	18
Agree	57.1%	32
Disagree	10.7%	6
Strongly Disagree	0.0%	0

Mode	32 from 56 Agreed
Mean	1.765
Standard Deviation	0.61
Pearson test - correlation between this variable and question 6	0.51 (p value .000)

The mode shows that the most common response to question one from the sample was that they agreed their goals are clear. The average score taken from the numerical data of 1.76 means that the average response leans towards highly agree due to the fact that 32% selected highly agree. The standard deviation is low so all answers tended to be close to the average. This provides confidence in taking the average score as a true representation of the sample and the population. If this score was greater than 1.0 then the average would represent a wide dispersion of answers e.g. half strongly agreeing and half strongly disagreeing.

Question 2

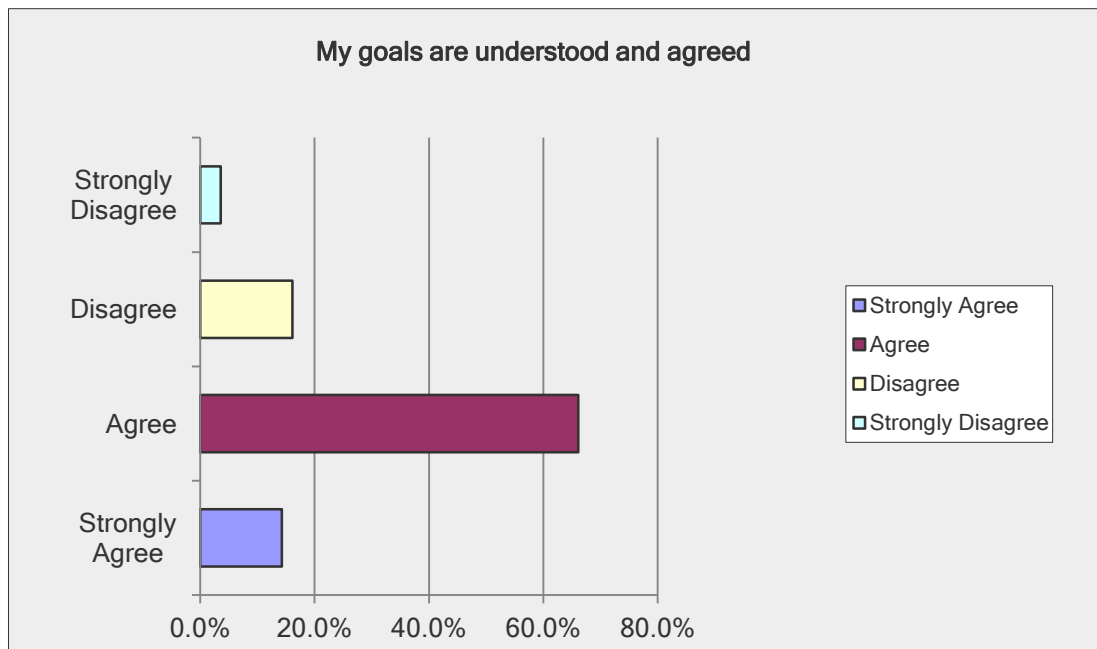


My goals are challenging		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	57.1%	32
Agree	41.1%	23
Disagree	1.8%	1
Strongly Disagree	0.0%	0

Mode	32 from 56 Strongly Agreed
Mean	1.41
Standard Deviation	0.49
Pearson test - correlation between this variable and question 6	(0.09) (p value 0.523)

The most common response to question 2 was the sample strongly agreed that their goals are challenging. The average score taken from the numerical data of 1.41 means that the average response was very close to strongly agree, in fact only one case answered negatively to this question. This is the lowest average score of all the variables in the survey meaning the sample strongly believe their goals to be challenging. The standard deviation is also the lowest in the survey which confirms the commonality in the answers.

Question 3

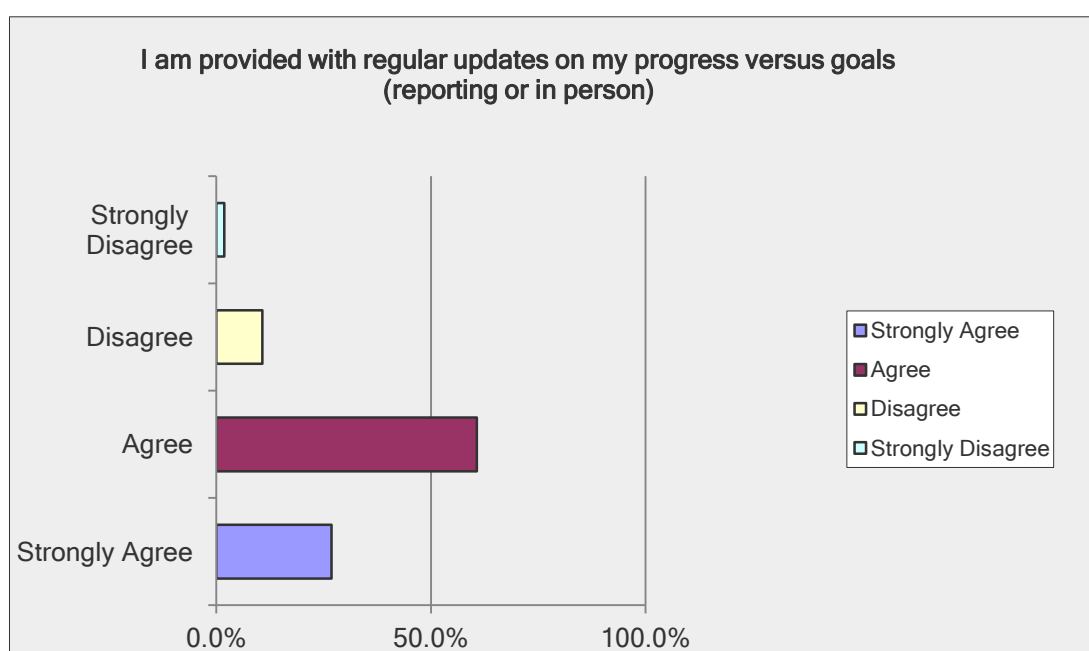


My goals are understood and agreed		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	14.3%	8
Agree	66.1%	37
Disagree	16.1%	9
Strongly Disagree	3.6%	2

Mode	37 from 56 Agreed
Mean	2.04
Standard Deviation	0.62
Pearson test - correlation between this variable and question 6	0.43 (p value .002)

66% of the sample in question 3 agreed that their goals are understood and agreed. The average score taken from the numerical data of 2.04 means that the average response was almost exactly 'agree' with an almost equal distribution of responses that highly agreed or disagreed. The standard deviation also confirms commonality in the answers.

Question 4

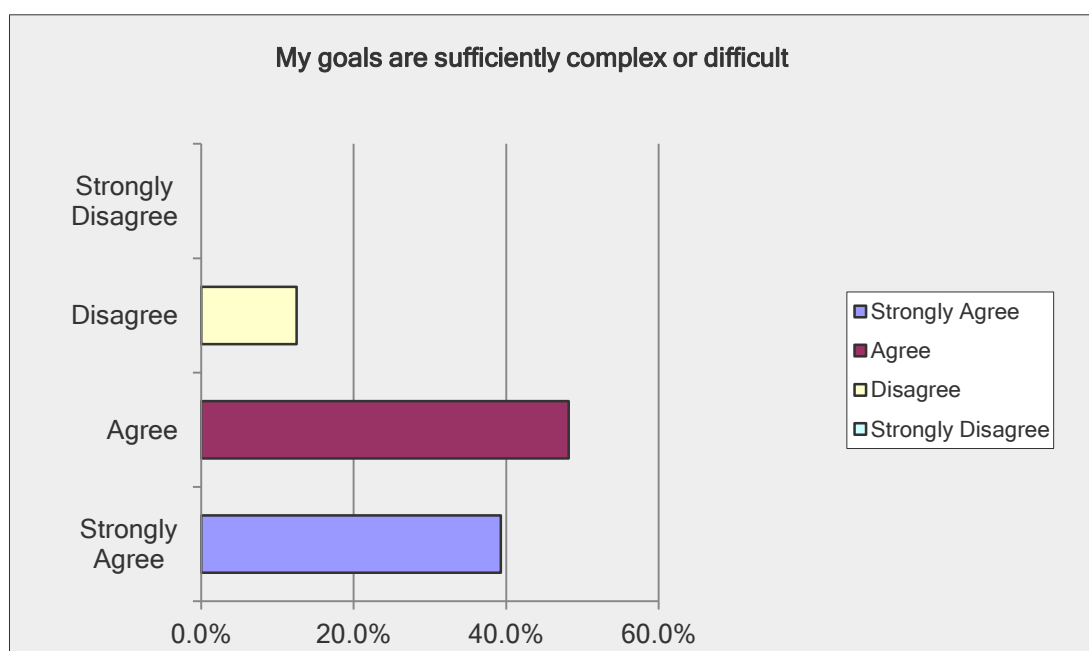


I am provided with regular updates on my progress versus goals (reporting or in person)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	26.8%	15
Agree	60.7%	34
Disagree	10.7%	6
Strongly Disagree	1.8%	1

Mode	33 from 56 Agreed
Mean	1.86
Standard Deviation	0.69
Pearson test - correlation between this variable and question 6	0.63 (p value .000)

61% of the sample agreed in question 4 that they receive regular updates on their performance or progress against their goals. The average score taken from the numerical data of 1.86 shows that the vast majority of the sample either agree or highly agree. Again the standard deviation also shows how close all the answers were to the average.

Question 5

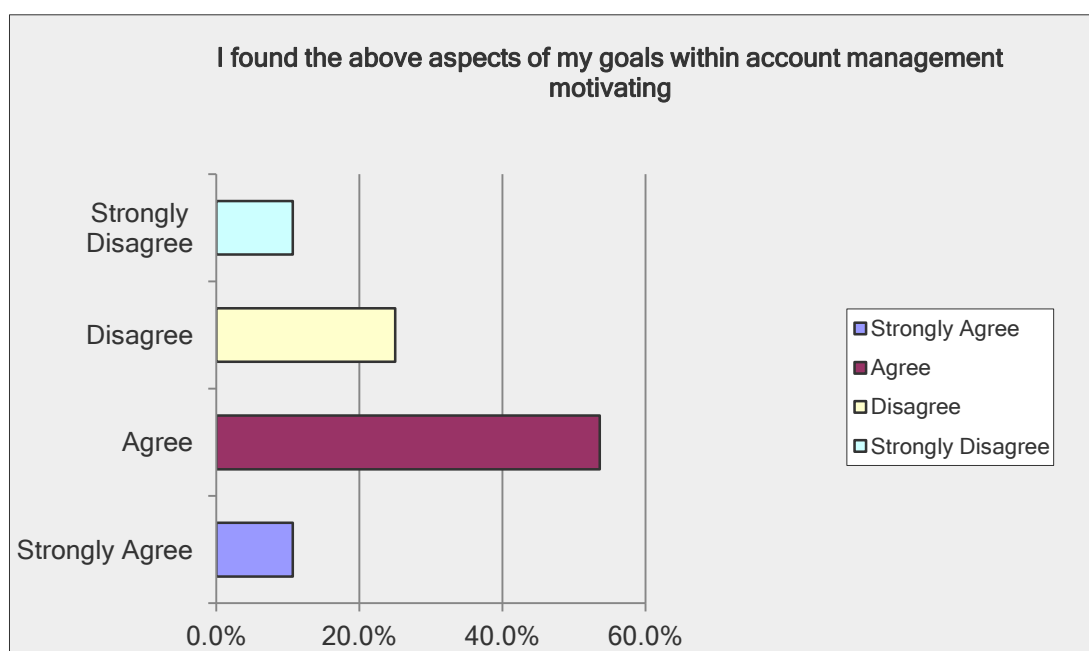


My goals are sufficiently complex or difficult		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	39.3%	22
Agree	48.2%	27
Disagree	12.5%	7
Strongly Disagree	0.0%	0

Mode	27 from 56 Agreed
Mean	1.75
Standard Deviation	0.68
Pearson test - correlation between this variable and question 6	(0.24) (p value .089)

The most common responses to question 5 was split between agree and highly agree with scores of 27 and 22 respectively, confirming that the sample believe their goals to be sufficiently complex or difficult. The average score of 1.75 also reflects this. A small proportion disagreed with no single case strongly disagreeing which is why the standard deviation is also only 0.68.

Question 6



I found the above aspects of my goals within account management motivating		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	10.7%	6
Agree	53.6%	30
Disagree	25.0%	14
Strongly Disagree	10.7%	6

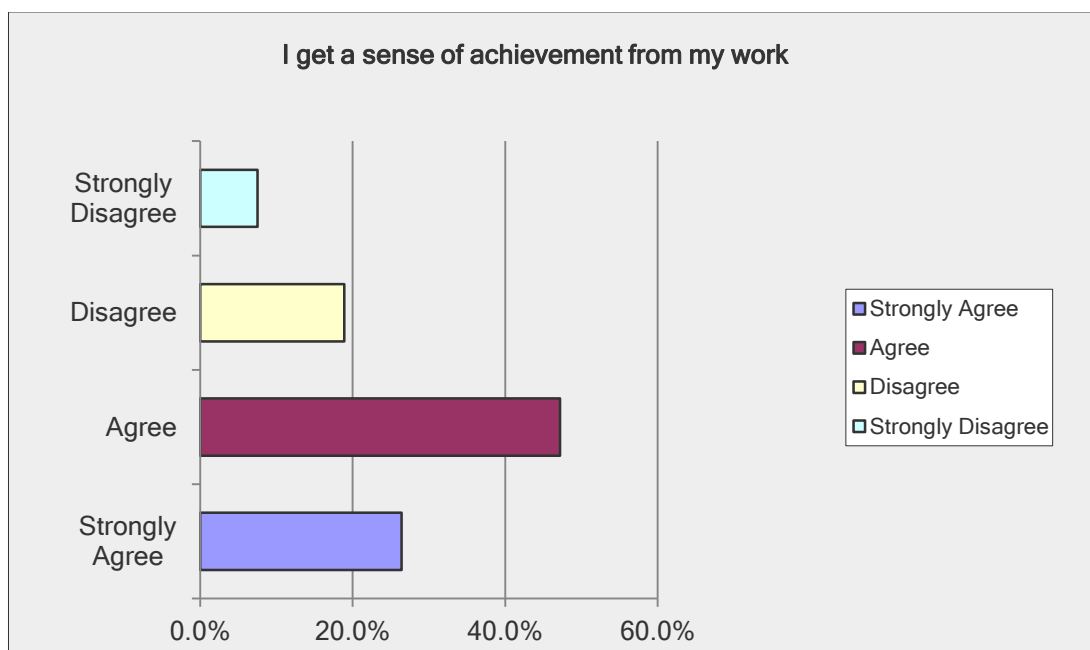
Mode	30 from 56 Agreed
Mean	2.27
Standard Deviation	0.77

This question was asked to explore if the sample found the characteristics of their goals within the context of account management (asked in questions 1-5) to be motivating. The most common response was that they agreed with a combined 64% either agreeing or highly agreeing. Although this is a majority percentage, the result also shows that a combined 36% did disagree or highly disagree that they found these aspects of the job motivating. The standard deviation also shows one of the largest dispersions in values in the survey at 0.77 so there is no strong common consensus here.

Correlations were measured separately between values in this variable and the values from each of the first 5 variables. The correlations between this variable and with goals are clear; goals are understood and agreed; and being provided with regular updates were 0.51, 0.43 and 0.63 respectively. This shows a moderate to strong positive correlation between these aspects of their goals and finding those goals motivating. The Pearson score of (0.09) with 'goals are challenging' means these two variables have no correlation. Finally, the findings show the relationship between goals being sufficiently complex or difficult and being motivators is actually a weak but negative correlation.

Note: Only 51 respondents fully completed the survey so only those 51 surveys are included in the Pearson test.

Question 7

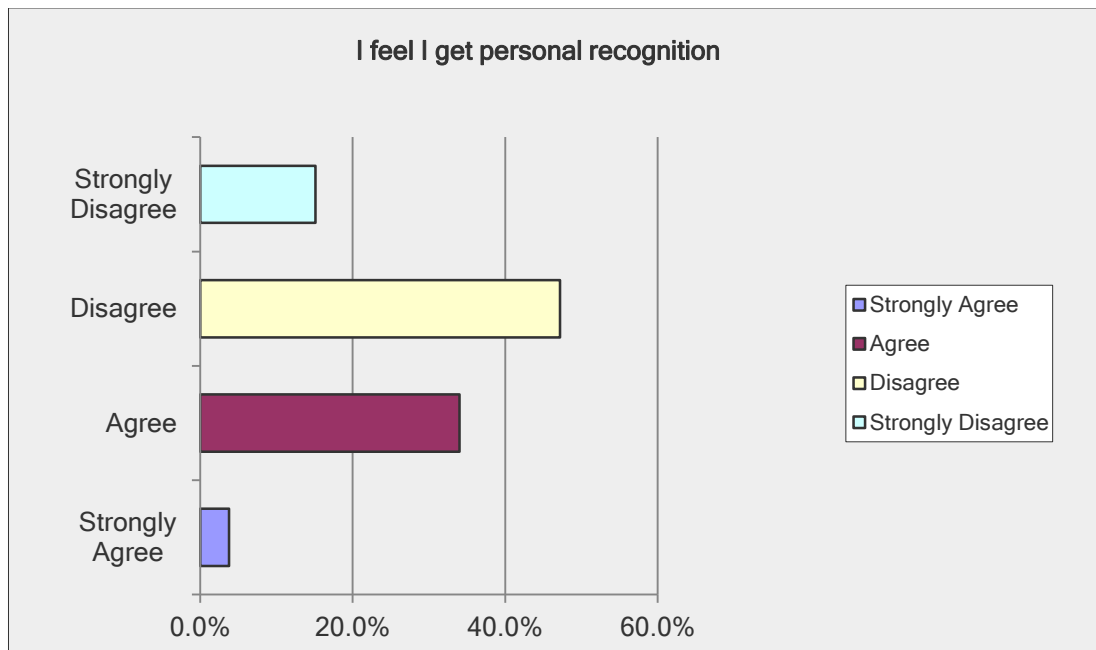


I get a sense of achievement from my work		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	26.4%	14
Agree	47.2%	25
Disagree	18.9%	10
Strongly Disagree	7.5%	4

Mode	25 from 53 Agreed
Mean	2.04
Standard Deviation	0.84
Pearson test - correlation between this variable and question 23	0.47 (p value .001)

The most common response to question 7 from the sample was to agree that they get a sense of achievement from their work and the average score of 2.04 supports this as it is almost exactly equal to a response of 'agree'. However, the standard deviation of 0.84 shows a broader dispersion than most of the variables with 26% highly agreeing and another 26% disagreeing or highly disagreeing. Note that 3 respondents abandoned the survey after question 6.

Question 8

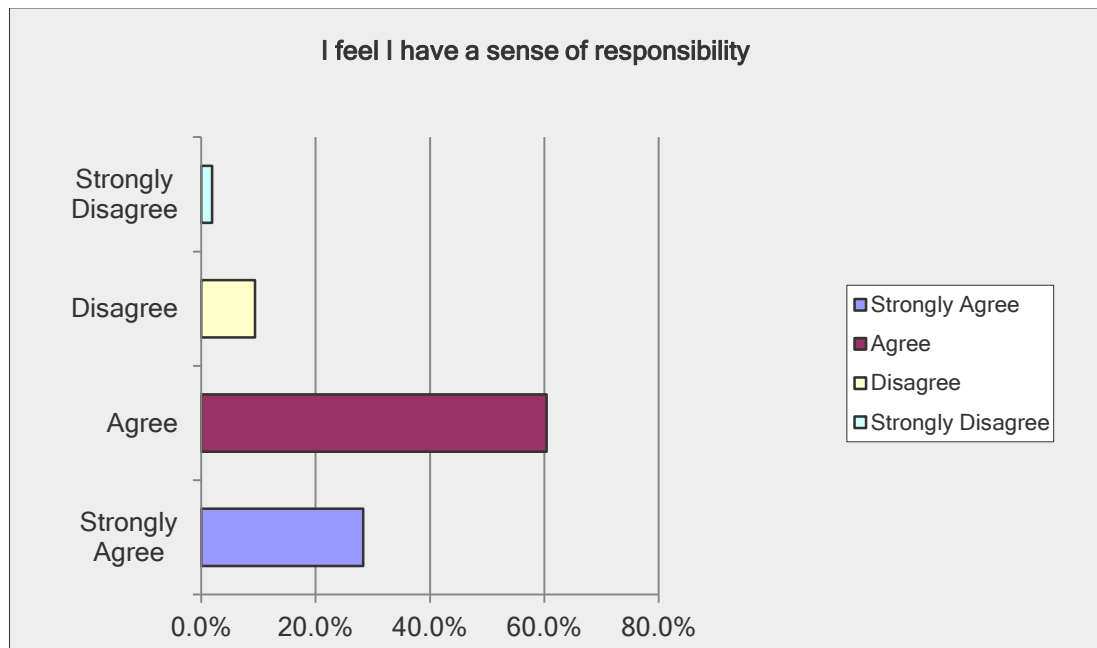


I feel I get personal recognition		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	3.8%	2
Agree	34.0%	18
Disagree	47.2%	25
Strongly Disagree	15.1%	8

Mode	25 from 53 Disagreed
Mean	2.71
Standard Deviation	0.75
Pearson test - correlation between this variable and question 23	0.46 (p value .001)

Question 8 had the largest number of negative responses from the survey with the most common response (47%) disagreeing that they feel they get personal recognition. While over a third did agree, there was 15% who highly disagreed which provides the average score of 2.71 (the highest in the survey and the only 'Disagree' average score. The standard deviation of 0.75 shows a broader dispersion from the average than most of the variables.

Question 9

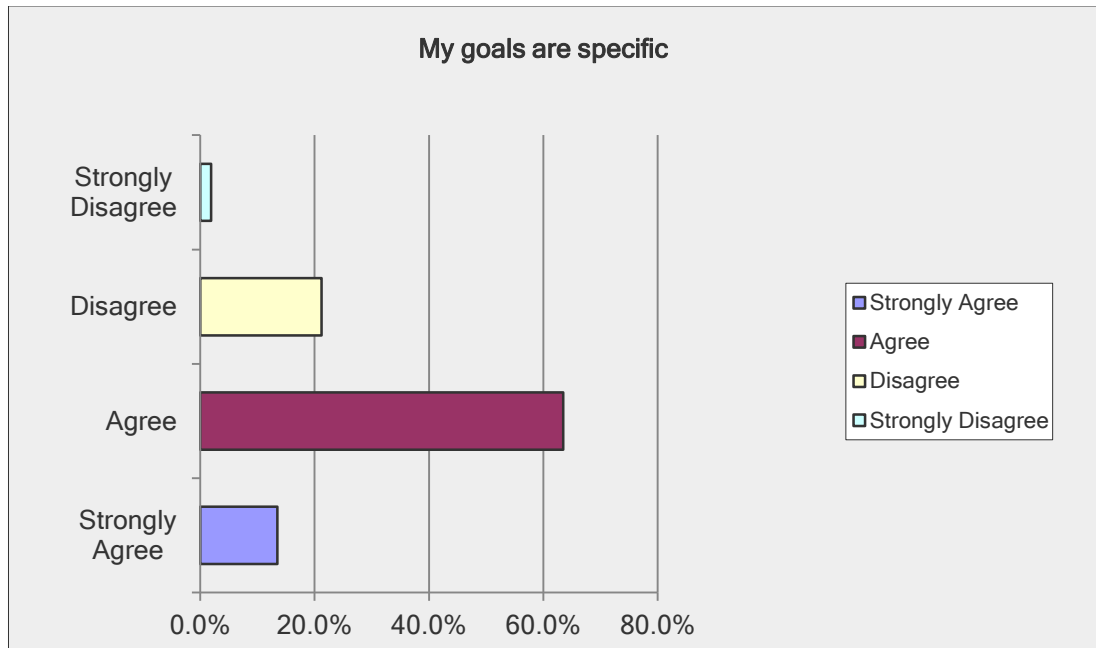


I feel I have a sense of responsibility		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	28.3%	15
Agree	60.4%	32
Disagree	9.4%	5
Strongly Disagree	1.9%	1

Mode	32 from 53 Agreed
Mean	1.80
Standard Deviation	0.59
Pearson test - correlation between this variable and question 23	0.38 (p value .007)

The most common response to Question 9 was ‘agree’ with 60% agreeing that they feel they have a sense of responsibility and an additional 28% highly agreeing. The average is therefore between ‘agree’ and ‘highly agree’ at 1.80. The standard deviation of 0.59 also shows how close the majority of responses were.

Question 10

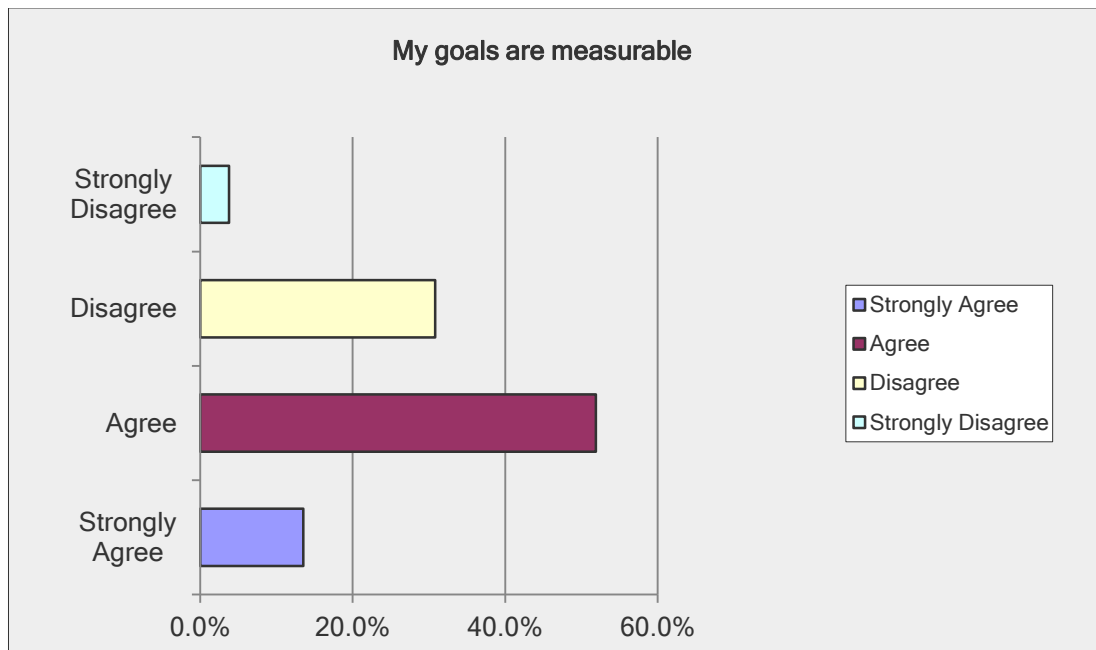


My goals are specific		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	13.5%	7
Agree	63.5%	33
Disagree	21.2%	11
Strongly Disagree	1.9%	1

Mode	33 from 52 Agreed
Mean	2.10
Standard Deviation	0.63
Pearson test - correlation between this variable and question 23	0.33 (p value .019)

64% of the sample agreed that their goals are specific. The average value was 2.10 which is very close to 'agree' and almost points to the majority agreeing their goals are specific, but there is 23% that disagreed which needs to be recognised. The standard deviation of 0.59 is low.

Question 11

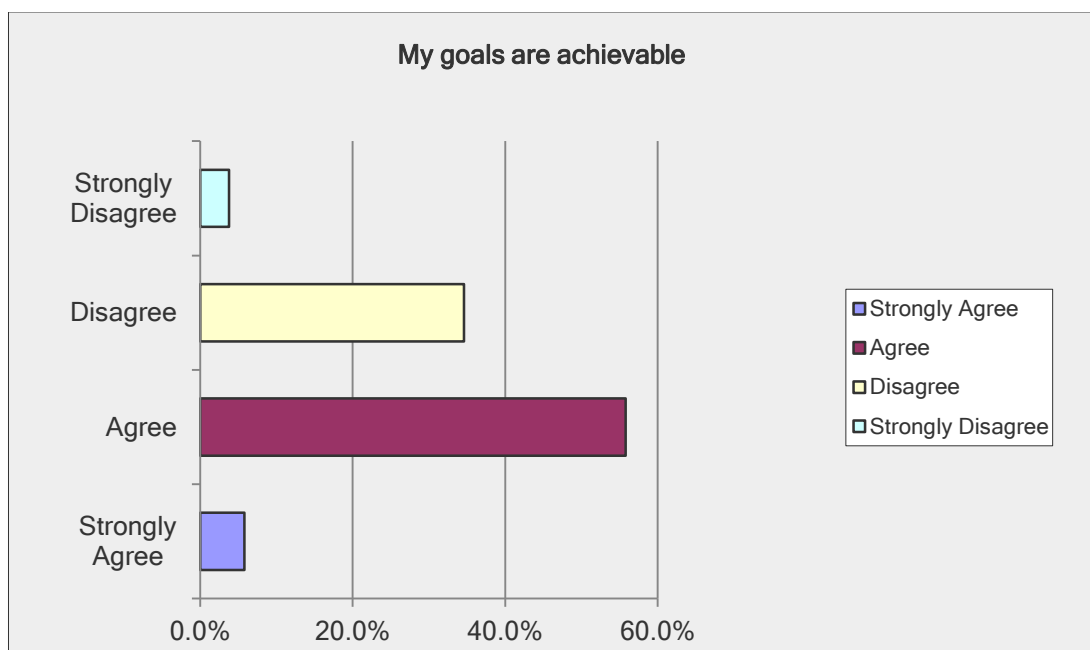


My goals are measurable		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	13.5%	7
Agree	51.9%	27
Disagree	30.8%	16
Strongly Disagree	3.8%	2

Mode	27 from 52 Agreed
Mean	2.24
Standard Deviation	0.73
Pearson test - correlation between this variable and question 23	0.40 (p value .003)

Again the most common response from the sample was to agree that their goals are measurable with 27 choosing 'Agree'. The sample chose 'Agree' on average with the mean of 2.24, but the standard deviation of 0.73 shows the variance of the values.

Question 12

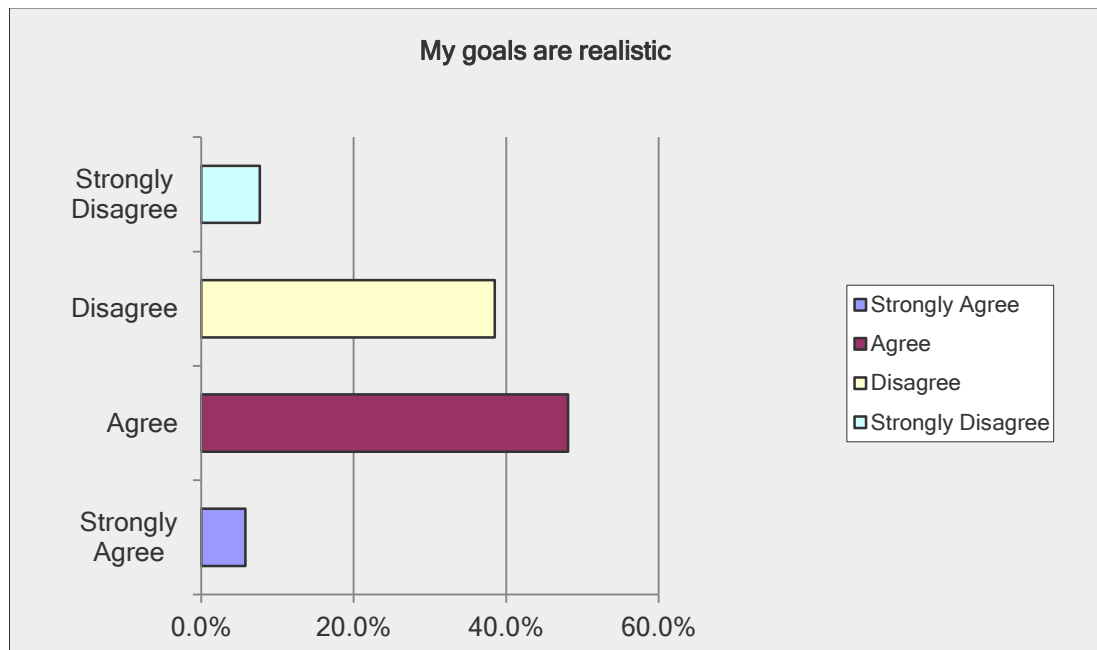


My goals are achievable		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	5.8%	3
Agree	55.8%	29
Disagree	34.6%	18
Strongly Disagree	3.8%	2

Mode	29 from 52 Agreed
Mean	2.33
Standard Deviation	0.62
Pearson test - correlation between this variable and question 23	0.36 (p value .009)

While the most frequent answer was to agree that their goals were achievable with 56% of responses, it is significant that 35% disagreed. The average of 2.33 does represent that the majority agree. The standard deviation of 0.62 is low as 90% of the values were split between agree and disagree with few highly agree or highly disagree responses.

Question 13

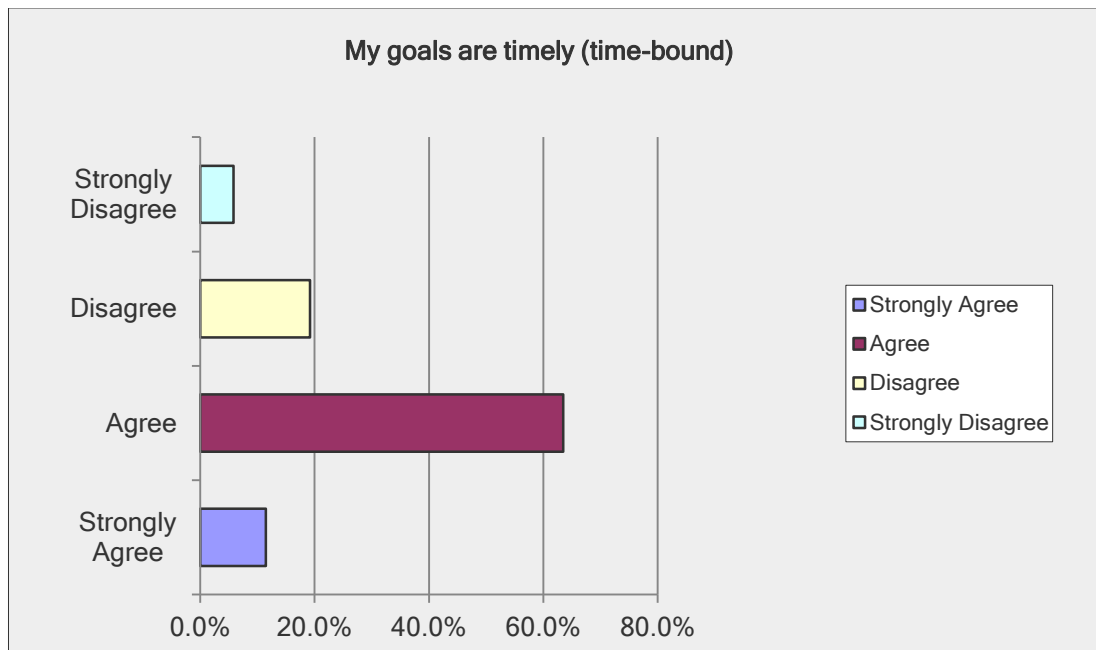


My goals are realistic		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	5.8%	3
Agree	48.1%	25
Disagree	38.5%	20
Strongly Disagree	7.7%	4

Mode	25 from 52 Agreed
Mean	2.45
Standard Deviation	0.69
Pearson test - correlation between this variable and question 23	0.31 (p value .027)

The most frequent response to question 13 was to agree that goals are realistic, but the average score of 2.45 only represents a marginal average 'agree' score as 38% disagreed. This is a rather inconclusive result and the standard deviation of 0.69 represents the split between positive and negative responses with 12% disagreeing or agreeing highly.

Question 14

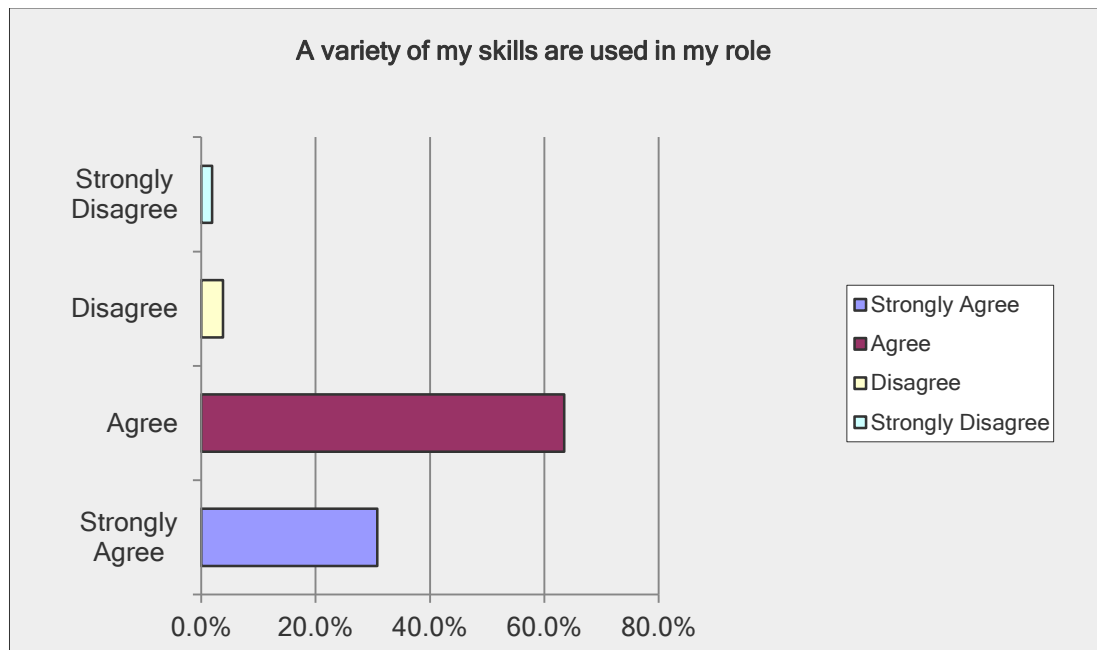


My goals are timely (time-bound)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	11.5%	6
Agree	63.5%	33
Disagree	19.2%	10
Strongly Disagree	5.8%	3

Mode	33 from 52 Agreed
Mean	2.16
Standard Deviation	0.67
Pearson test - correlation between this variable and question 23	0.12 (p value .419)

In the last question regarding SMART goals the majority of the sample (33) agreed that their goals were time bound and the average score of 2.16 also reflects this. Again it is noted that 25% did disagree or highly disagree. The standard deviation of 0.67 indicates the spread of answers whilst the majority are close to the average.

Question 15

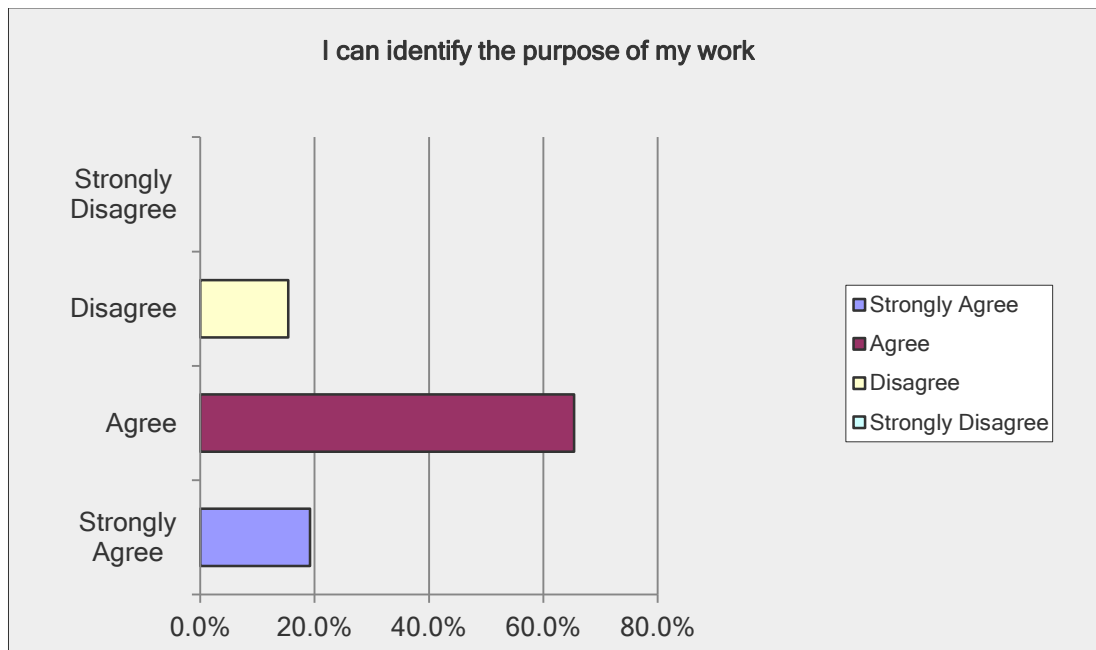


A variety of my skills are used in my role		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	30.8%	16
Agree	63.5%	33
Disagree	3.8%	2
Strongly Disagree	1.9%	1

Mode	33 from 52 Agreed
Mean	1.76
Standard Deviation	0.61
Pearson test - correlation between this variable and question 23	0.44 (p value .001)

The findings from the first question relating to job characteristics (objective 4) showed a combined 94% agreed or highly agreed that a variety of their skills were used in their role. The average is therefore between 'agree' and 'highly agree' at 1.76. The standard deviation of 0.61 is low as the vast majority of responses were close.

Question 16

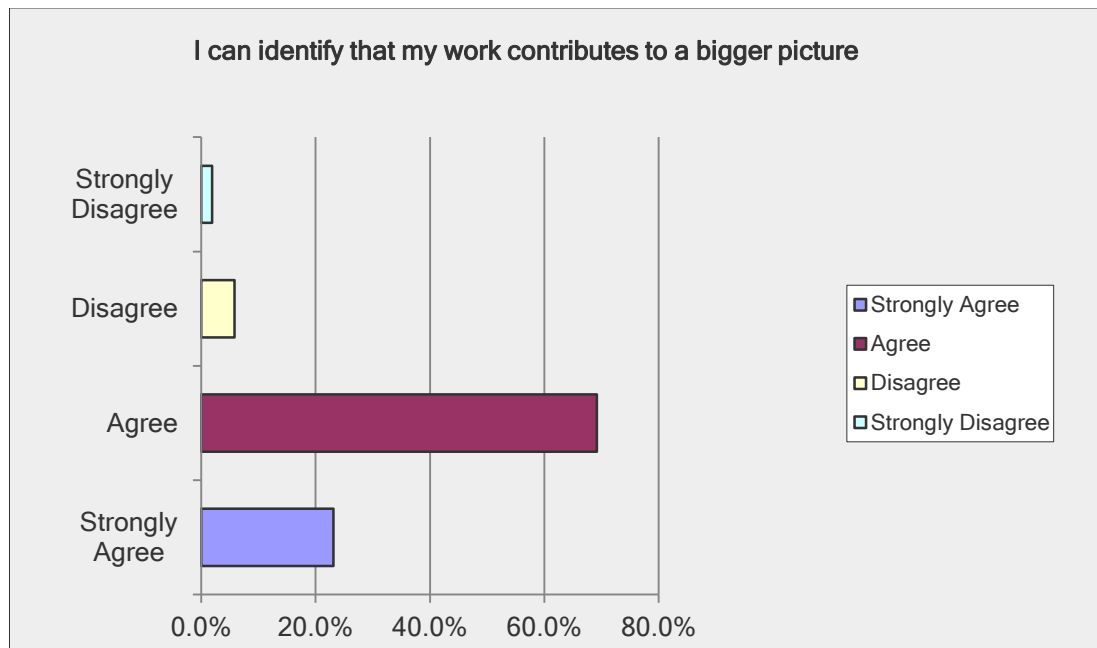


I can identify the purpose of my work		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	19.2%	10
Agree	65.4%	34
Disagree	15.4%	8
Strongly Disagree	0.0%	0

Mode	34 from 52 Agreed
Mean	1.94
Standard Deviation	0.57
Pearson test - correlation between this variable and question 23	0.36 (p value .009)

The largest response from the sample to question 16 was to agree that they can identify the purpose of their work with a combined 85% agreeing or highly agreeing. The average of 1.94 and the standard deviation of 0.57 show how close the findings are to the average response of 'agree'.

Question 17

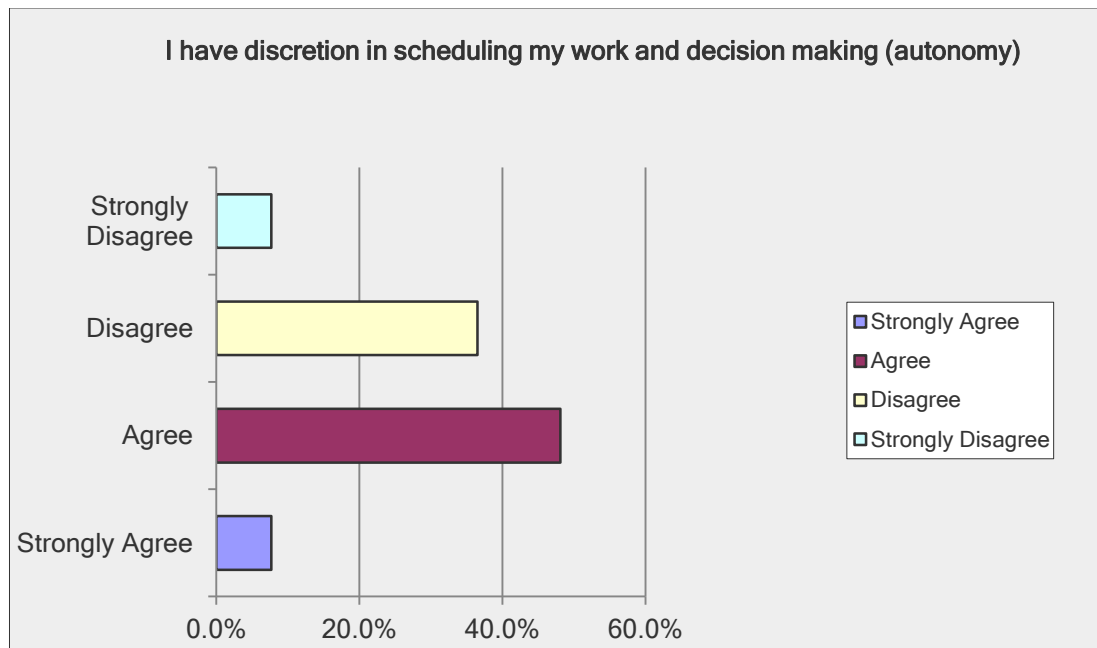


I can identify that my work contributes to a bigger picture		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	23.1%	12
Agree	69.2%	36
Disagree	5.8%	3
Strongly Disagree	1.9%	1

Mode	36 from 52 Agreed
Mean	1.82
Standard Deviation	0.51
Pearson test - correlation between this variable and question 23	0.27 (p value .058)

The sample answered affirmatively that they can identify that their work contributes to a bigger picture with a combined 92% agreeing or highly agreeing. The majority agreed with a mean of 1.82 and the standard deviation of 0.51 means the distribution of answers were very close to the average.

Question 18

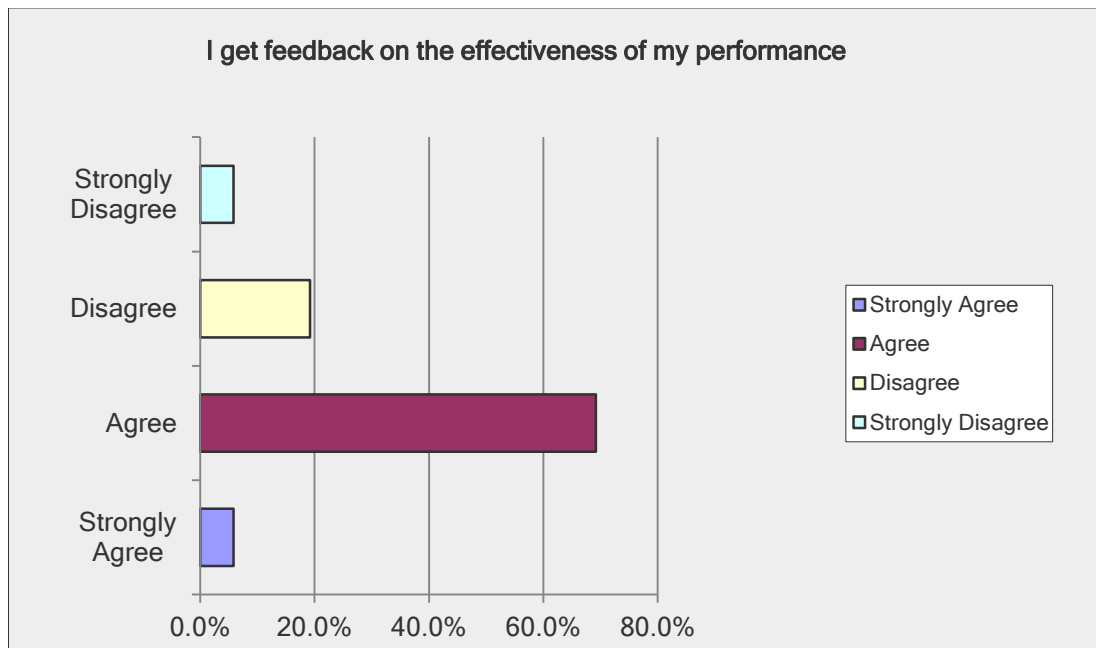


I have discretion in scheduling my work and decision making (autonomy)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	7.7%	4
Agree	48.1%	25
Disagree	36.5%	19
Strongly Disagree	7.7%	4

Mode	25 from 52 Agreed
Mean	2.45
Standard Deviation	0.75
Pearson test - correlation between this variable and question 23	0.56 (p value .000)

The response to was less conclusive from the sample regarding having discretion in scheduling their work and autonomy. While the most frequent response was ‘agree’ the average of 2.45 was only marginally pointing to ‘agree’ over ‘disagree’. The standard deviation of 0.75 indicates that the answers were more dispersed on this occasion than most other variables.

Question 19

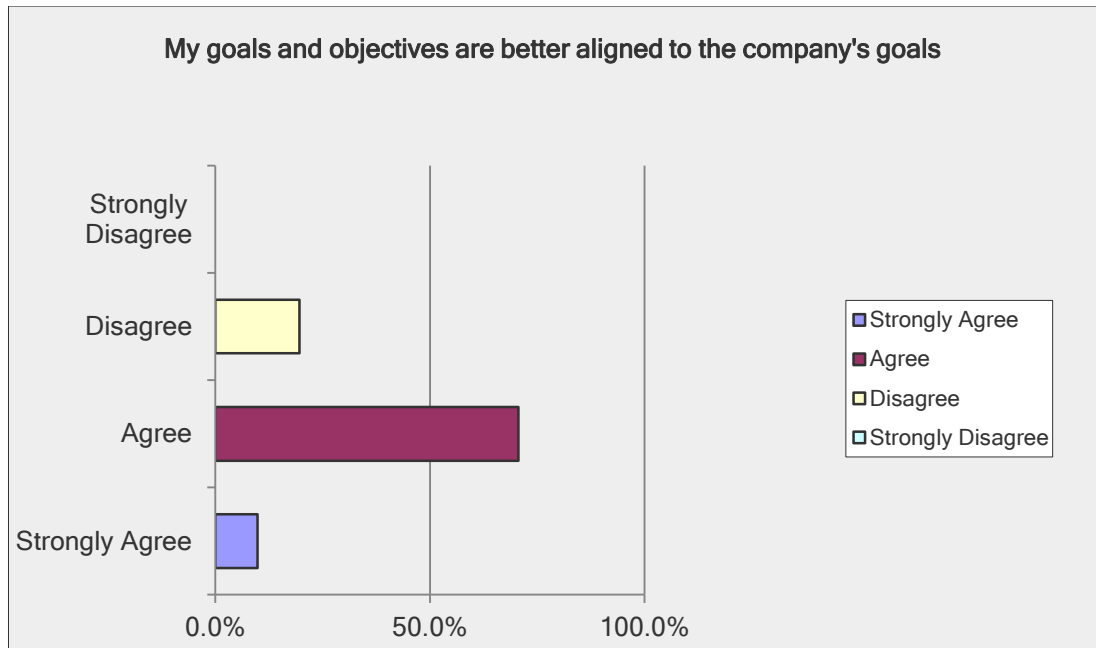


I get feedback on the effectiveness of my performance		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	5.8%	3
Agree	69.2%	36
Disagree	19.2%	10
Strongly Disagree	5.8%	3

Mode	36 from 52 Agreed
Mean	2.22
Standard Deviation	0.60
Pearson test - correlation between this variable and question 23	0.42 (p value .002)

The most common response (69%) to question 19 was again to agree that they get feedback on the effectiveness of their performance. The average score was also to 'agree', but it should be noted that 25% either disagreed or highly disagreed. The standard deviation is low but in comparison to with the rest of the survey with is neither high nor low.

Question 20

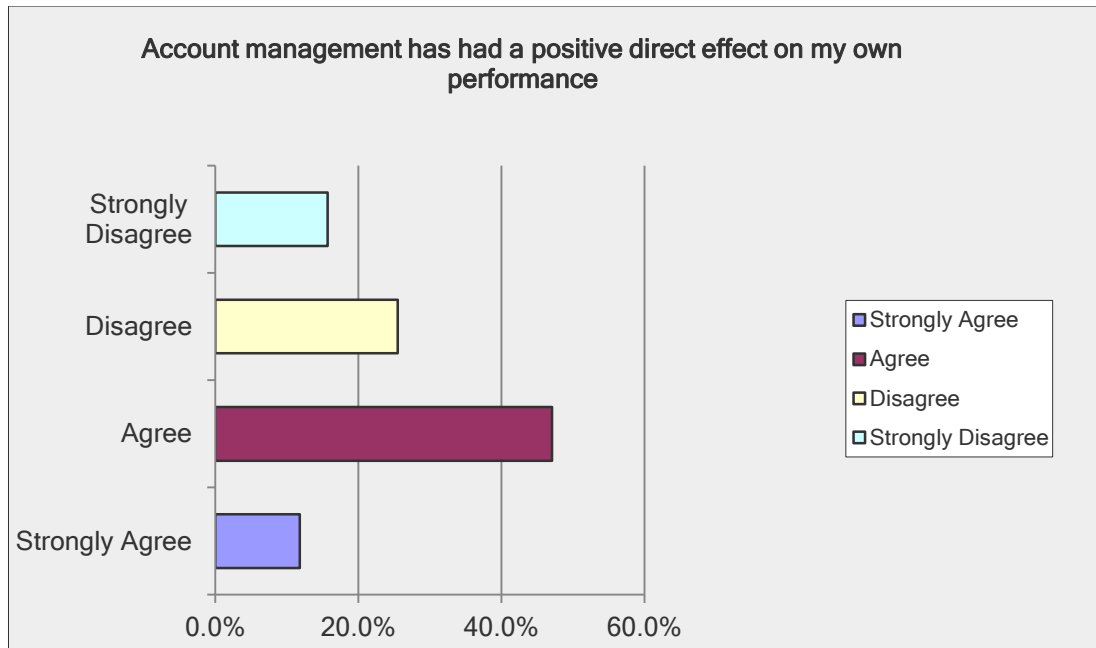


My goals and objectives are better aligned to the company's goals		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	9.8%	5
Agree	70.6%	36
Disagree	19.6%	10
Strongly Disagree	0.0%	0

Mode	36 from 51 Agreed
Mean	2.10
Standard Deviation	0.53

There were 3 questions relating to sub objective 5. The sample firstly agreed that their goals and objectives are better aligned to the company's goals since the introduction of account management with an average score of 2.10 and 70% selecting 'agree'. The standard deviation was low at 0.53 with no cases returning a strongly disagree response.

Question 21

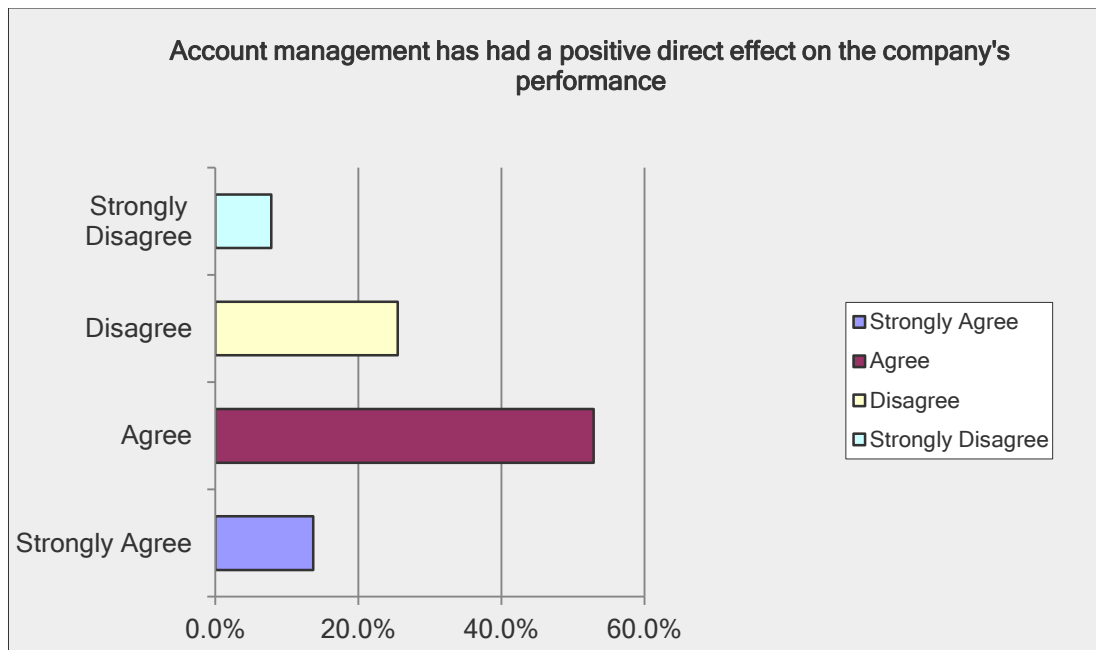


Account management has had a positive direct effect on my own performance		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	11.8%	6
Agree	47.1%	24
Disagree	25.5%	13
Strongly Disagree	15.7%	8

Mode	24 from 51 Agreed
Mean	2.45
Standard Deviation	0.89

The findings were less conclusive in question 21. While the most frequent response was to agree that account management has had a positive direct effect on their own personal performance with 47%, the mean score of 2.45 shows that the sample only marginally agreed on average. The standard deviation of 0.89 is the largest of the survey indicating widest dispersion of answers in the survey.

Question 22

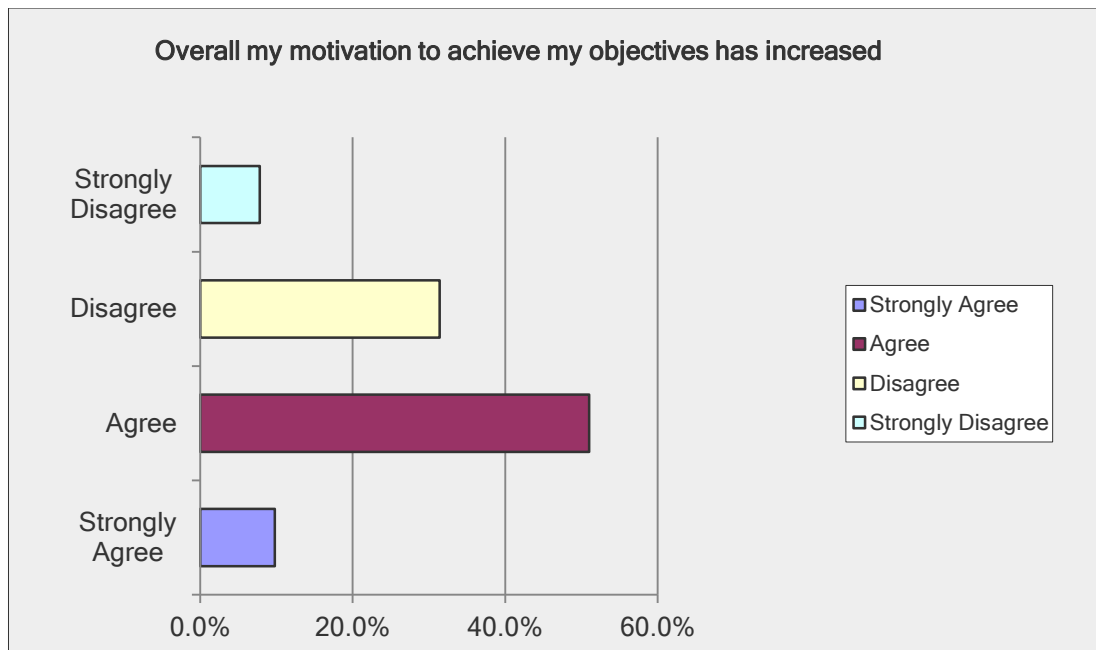


Account management has had a positive direct effect on the company's performance		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	13.7%	7
Agree	52.9%	27
Disagree	25.5%	13
Strongly Disagree	7.8%	4

Mode	27 from 51 Agreed
Mean	2.27
Standard Deviation	0.79

The most frequent response here was to agree that that account management has had a positive direct effect on the company's performance with 53% selecting 'agree'. This is a more positive response than the previous question relating to their own personal performance with an average of 2.27. The standard deviation is high at 0.79 also indicating a dispersion of answers with 33% disagreeing or highly disagreeing.

Question 23



Overall my motivation to achieve my objectives has increased		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly Agree	9.8%	5
Agree	51.0%	26
Disagree	31.4%	16
Strongly Disagree	7.8%	4

Mode	26 from 51 Agreed
Mean	2.37
Standard Deviation	0.77

Findings from the final question in the survey show that 51% of the sample agreed and a further 10% highly agreed that overall their motivation to achieve their objectives has increased since the introduction of account management. However 39% either disagreed or highly disagreed. The average of 2.37 reflects this which leans towards an average of 'agree', but only by a small margin.

There were 13 correlations measured between this variable and each of the variables contained in questions 7 to 19. They all showed positive relationships and no

negative correlations. 9 indicated a moderate positive relationship and 4 a weak positive relationship.

Chapter 5 - Discussion on Findings

This chapter analyses the findings of research in relation to each objective to establish if they satisfy the objectives and links this back to the theories found in the literary review.

Objective 1

The findings from the first 5 questions all relate to the first objective which was to determine whether goals set for employees since the introduction of account management affected their motivation levels. Firstly, it is clear from the findings that a significantly high percentage of the sample agreed or indeed highly agreed that their goals are clear; challenging; understood and agreed; sufficiently complex or difficult; and agreed that they are provided with regular updates on their progress versus goals. The sample also agreed (based on the average) that they found these aspects of their goals motivating which satisfies the objective, however not in a very high percentage (64%) and the dispersion of results for question 6 was one of the largest in the survey.

The Pearson correlation tests were mainly moderate to strong positive results, but the significant findings here was that while the sample agreed strongly that their goals are challenging and complex or difficult the correlation between these variables and finding these aspects motivating were non-existent or actually negative in the relation to the latter. Whilst not directly asked in the survey it could be inferred that a proportion of the sample believes their goals to be too challenging or difficult and don't find them motivating in their own opinion.

The literature argues that where goals incorporate the 5 key principles of goal setting they should have a direct and positive link to motivation Locke and Latham (cited in Tosi, 1991). This research would support this argument, but offer some modifications regarding how challenging or difficult to achieve those goals should be. A recommendation for further research is to gauge how difficult goals within an account management structure are and if too difficult does this then become a demotivating factor?

Objective 2

The objective was to determine if goals set within the structure of account management were SMART in order to facilitate the successful implementation of performance management. The findings show that the sample agreed on average that their goals were specific, measurable and time bound which are critical aspects of management by objectives (Doran, 1981).

The sample also agreed on average that their goals were achievable, but it is important to note that 38% did not agree. In addition there was only a marginal split in favour of 'agree' in regard to goals being realistic. The objective is satisfied in the main as the goals are deemed SMART and facilitate performance management by objectives, but attention needs to be drawn again to the proportion of the sample who do not believe their goals to be realistic or achievable which is consistent with the findings from the first objective. This may however be due to other extraneous variables not measured in this research and not account management i.e. targets for new customer acquisition may be set too high or the branches are under resourced causing employees to be responsible for a book of customers that is too large to manage alone. It is also important to note that the general insurance market in Ireland has significantly contracted in consecutive years prior to this survey being conducted and has continued to contract in the financial year this survey was conducted which may point to company objectives and in turn employee goals being overly aggressive and unattainable.

Less meaningful findings in this section were the correlations measured between the variables relating to this objective and the data from the final question (my motivation to achieve my objectives has increased) which are all positive although 3 of the 5 were only weak positives. Goals being specific and time-bound had a much larger positive majority than the final question and goals being realistic had a much lower majority which explains the weak relationship although still positive.

Objective 3

This objective in the research set out to explore if employees experienced any of the key intrinsic motivators in their work since the introduction of account management. The findings show that the sample largely agreed that they get a sense of

achievement from their work and a greater number agreed that they feel a sense of responsibility in their work. However, on average the sample disagreed that they feel they get personal recognition. In relation to the objective the research therefore finds that account management does partly meet intrinsic motivational needs, but with one notable exception. Further research is required to establish why employees feel they don't get recognition within this structure or perhaps this is simply a flaw in the performance appraisal approach within the organisation that is the subject of this research.

The theory in the literary review which is widely accepted states that achievement, recognition and responsibility are internal motivators that provide job satisfaction and are strong motivators for employees, specifically for sales employees (Parsons & Broadbride, 2006). There are moderate positive correlations between each of variables in this section and the final question indicating the relationship between achievement and motivation; and responsibility and motivation which supports the theories in this area. Despite the negative finding regarding personal recognition this variable also had a moderately positive relationship with motivation suggesting that a strong proportion of the sample who did not agree they that they get personal recognition also disagreed that overall their motivation increased, therefore doesn't contradict any of the theories reviewed.

Objective 4

The findings in the questions relating to sub objective 4 show that the sample agreed in high numbers that a variety of their skills are used in their role; they can identify the purpose of their work; and they can identify that their work contributes to a bigger picture. They also agreed, although to a slightly lesser extent, that they get feedback on the effectiveness of their performance and only marginally agreed that they have discretion in scheduling their work and decision making. The marginal finding on autonomy with 44% not in agreement could be due to the fact that the employees' schedule is largely driven by the renewal dates of the customers in their portfolio which is a feature of account management. Their autonomy in decision making may be due to extraneous factors such as manager's control of discounting customer premiums, but this is not clear and could be an area to be explored further.

Each variable had a moderately positive relationship with ‘motivation to achieve objectives being increased’ variable, aside from the ‘identifying that their work contributes to a bigger picture’ variable which had a positive but weak correlation.

These findings satisfy the objective of determining if the characteristics of job designs that positively influence the psychological state, as defined by Hackman and Oldham (1976), are incorporated into the job design of employees within an account management structure. Thus, according to the theory these characteristics contribute to employee motivation as motivations are dependent upon the psychological state (Campion and Thayer (1978)).

Objective 5

The findings with regard to the final objective of the research clearly show that employees do believe that their goals and objectives are better aligned to those of the company since the introduction of account management. The employees also believe that account management has had a positive direct effect firstly on their own performance and secondly on the company’s performance. However, it is important to note that this is only a marginal majority in relation to their own performance which suggests that a proportion of those sampled believed that whilst the company’s performance benefitted under account management their own performance did not. This has emerged as a common theme in the research following the findings from objectives 1 and 2 relating to challenging and achievable goals.

Outcome based control systems such as account management are more suitable where detailed objectives are set by management i.e. are centralised and are based on short-term (up to one year) objectives (Darmon & Martin, 2011). The findings above would tend to support this position.

Finally, the majority of employees do believe that overall their motivation to achieve their objectives has increased since the introduction of account management. This is a combined majority of 61% which can be argued is not a convincing majority. Therefore it is possible that a portion of the sample felt motivated in their role before account management was introduced and therefore disagreed that their motivation actually increased. There are limitations to these findings given that there is no data available in relation to the motivation of the sales force in focus prior to the

implementation of account management. Also, if some employees actually felt demotivated by account management this wasn't captured.

Chapter 6 - Conclusions and Recommendations

In summary, the 5 key principals of specific and difficult tasks that are linked to employee motivation were satisfied and therefore it can be inferred that the goals set for employees under account management do have a positive effect on their motivation. However based on the findings of the opinions of the sample in this research, tasks that are challenging and sufficiently complex or difficult may not have the same influence on motivation as the other principles. In fact, if overly challenging or difficult those tasks may not have any effect on motivation or even have the opposite effect and this may be a field for further research by motivation theorists.

Goals were found to be specific, measureable and timely, but only small majorities agreed they were realistic or achievable. This is a common theme with the findings from the first objective and may be due to the challenging economic environment and market conditions already mentioned, but it can be inferred from the findings that account management has successfully facilitated the implementation of performance management in this company and is an appropriate sales force control system that can be utilised by similar companies or industries currently operating within or planning to introduce a performance management structure.

Account management had an impact on 2 of the 3 measures of intrinsic motivation levels which have a greater effect on people in sales roles. The findings show employees feel a sense of achievement and a sense of responsibility, but a majority clearly feel they do not get personal recognition. This was one of the most surprising findings in the researchers own opinion as this clinical outcome based control system provided employees with daily updates on individual performances versus objectives within their team so high achievers would be clearly visible to their immediate colleagues. Employees did agree that they are both provided with regular updates on performance and get feedback on the effectiveness of their performance, but this is clearly not meeting the recognition need of employees. Therefore, there is a requirement by managers to supplement this need outside of account management.

The 5 characteristics of job designs that contribute to positive psychological states that in turn lead to increased intrinsic motivation levels were also satisfied by account management. It was noted that discretion (autonomy) in scheduling and decision making is not as strong as the other characteristics. This is an important aspect of job design not to be overlooked by the company in focus or any other organisations adopting similar sales control systems.

Employees feel that their goals are better aligned to the company objectives since the introduction of account management and that it has had a direct effect on their own performance; and interestingly to a greater degree on the company's performance which is its ultimate vindication.

Overall this research has shown that employees believe that their motivation to achieve their objectives has increased since the introduction of account management and this is probably the most significant contribution of this study to motivational theory in relation to sales control systems.

The main benefit for the company in focus in this research is that it now has a point of reference that it can make comparisons with for future motivation surveys of staff. It is recommended that motivation levels are measured again after any changes to the performance measurements are made to the structure of account management following the planned review of same. In addition the company needs to further research and gauge how challenging or difficult employee goals are within the account management structure and perhaps benchmark against other sales roles in similar organisations or industries. Personal recognition and levels of autonomy provided to sales staff are important considerations for management that also need to be addressed if they want to further increase employee motivation.

The data captured in the research allowed the researcher make inferences about the motivation levels of the population to meet the objectives of the research. The questions used were chosen to find links between account management and specific areas of motivation theory due to the lack of empirical evidence in this area. An alternative approach would have been to design the questions to directly ask respondents if they are directly motivated by each of the specific variables such as my goals are clear and I find them motivating or there is skill variety in my role and I find this motivating. In addition the scale of responses could have provided the

sample with options from highly motivating to highly demotivating including a neutral option whereby they could indicate no impact on their motivation. This could provide future researchers with more defined data. Proven and tested motivation questionnaires could also be used to more accurately measure motivation levels and assumptions could then be made that the job design within account management is a major influence on the findings in order to achieve similar research objectives.

In light of the findings the sub objectives could have been focused on establishing the level of response towards each variable i.e. how clear, how challenging or how much skill variety with a semantic scale of options ranging from too high – high – average – low – too low. This would have provided more answers regarding the motivational influence of each variable.

Quantitative measures could also be used to compare the overall performance of the sales team in the first 18 months of account management with results from previous years to evaluate its effect or contribution to performance.

Purely qualitative instruments can be used to achieve the same objectives as those in this research. If this study was to be repeated it would benefit from a series of interviews and/or focus groups that could involve a similar sample size and provide more in-depth findings into what aspects of the sales employee's role they find motivating. This would compliment a questionnaire in an inductive approach by providing the researcher with initial data that would aid in the design of the focus group agenda and provide direction in outlining further objectives during the research.

Alternatively a further hypothesis could be drawn from this research. Whilst employees themselves may believe their goals to be too challenging or difficult to achieve and therefore de-motivating in their own opinion, they are still subconsciously motivated if the goals set still stimulate the actions necessary to achieve those objectives – despite being ultimately unattainable.

From a motivation theory perspective the most important research question posed by this research is if goals are too challenging, difficult or complex do these goals then become demotivating factors? Getting the balance right between challenging and difficult goals with being achievable at the same time is probably the benchmark

organisations should strive for. Further research is required in this area to understand at what point do levels of difficulty or complexity and the challenge goals represent do they become unachievable and therefore demotivating? Obviously this will vary from organisation to organisation, from role to role, for different market conditions and economic environments and therefore can only truly be gauged by managers and their knowledge of what can be expected from their staff in terms of performance. But motivational theory could be advanced to provide new tools for managers in settings goals that are set at appropriate levels of difficulty and complexity for employees to stimulate the optimum level of motivation whilst avoiding goals being too challenging that they become unachievable and demotivating factors.

Account management does provide for a motivated sales force, but it is not known what the effect is on job satisfaction or employee loyalty (the rate of retention/turnover of staff) and further research in this area would be beneficial. Personal recognition is an important intrinsic motivator for sales people as motivational theory suggests and this was found to be lacking in this particular study. However what form of recognition is unclear and further research is necessary to provide companies with recommendations as to how recognition should be provided in order to meet this intrinsic need.

This research is relevant and beneficial to the sales management team and the human resources department within the organisation that was the subject of this study. It will also be useful for the insurance industry as a whole and to other financial institutions with medium to broad customer bases that are focused on retention and growth of business accounts as much as new customer acquisitions.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Email invitation to participate in research:

To Branch Supervisors:

"The impact of Account Management on the motivation and performance of a sales team in an Irish insurance company"

I am conducting research to explore the impact of account management on employee motivation and performance. You are invited to take part in this research which is being conducted as part of a masters dissertation in the School of Business at the National College of Ireland.

Participation involves completing the attached online anonymous survey which contains 23 multiple choice questions and should only take you 10-15 minutes.

I've sent this request to all SDC's and would ask you to also forward onto one or two of the sales advisors in your office and a sales executive as I require at least 50 respondents to this survey from a random mixture of outdoor and indoor staff to get a valid sample. I'd like to get as many responses back by tomorrow evening if possible.

Your participation would be greatly appreciated to allow me complete the research as part of my dissertation, however participation is completely voluntary and so you are not obliged to take part. Participation is also anonymous and confidential. Thus responses cannot be attributed to any one participant.

The questionnaires will be securely stored on a password protected account that only I have access to.

It is important that you understand that by completing and submitting the questionnaire that you are consenting to participate in the study.

click this link to access the survey

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/AMmotivationsurvey>

Please contact me should you require any further information about the research. My mobile is 0876209974.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

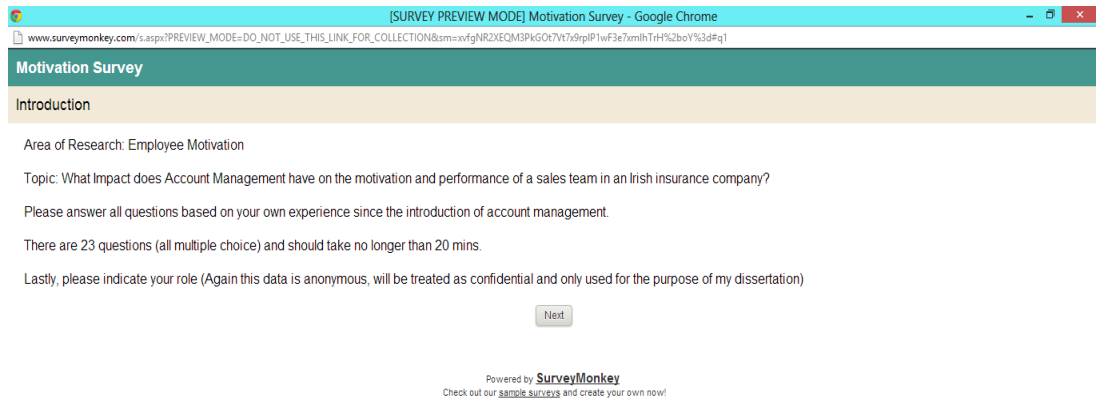
Brian

Brian Fahey | Manager - Sales Systems & Processes

Appendix 2

Survey questionnaire:

Page 1



[SURVEY PREVIEW MODE] Motivation Survey - Google Chrome
www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?PREVIEW_MODE=DO_NOT_USE_THIS_LINK_FOR_COLLECTION&sm=xyfgNR2XEQM3PKGQf7W7d9rpIP1wF3e7zmIhTfH%2boY%3dFq1

Motivation Survey

Introduction

Area of Research: Employee Motivation

Topic: What Impact does Account Management have on the motivation and performance of a sales team in an Irish insurance company?

Please answer all questions based on your own experience since the introduction of account management.

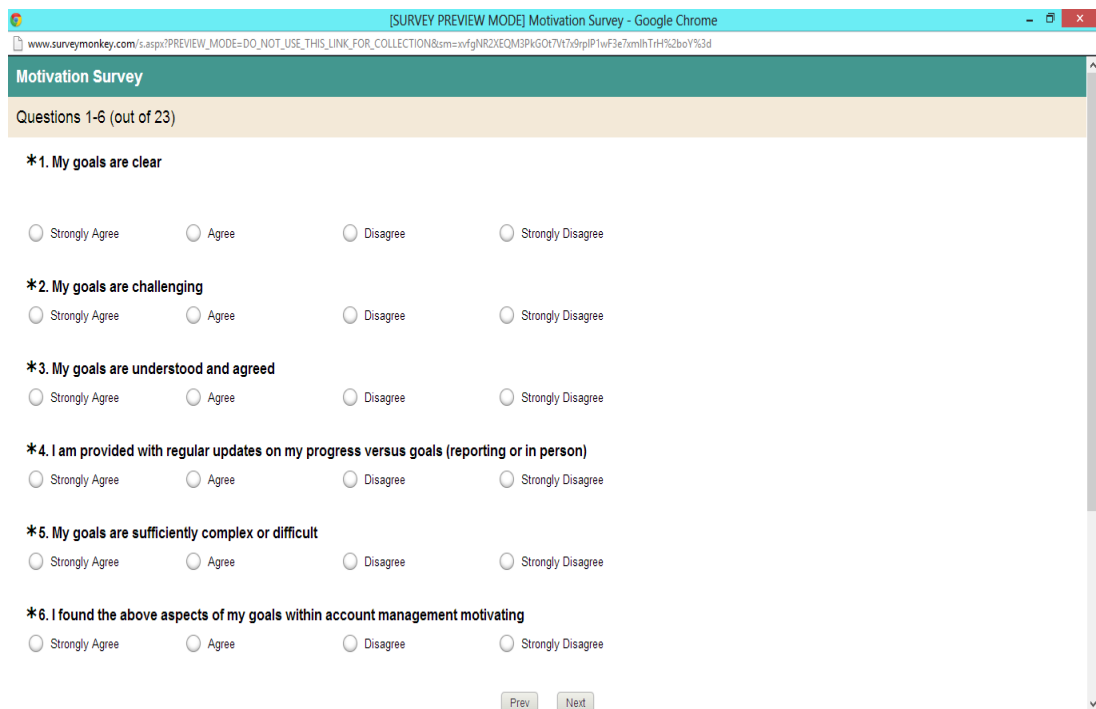
There are 23 questions (all multiple choice) and should take no longer than 20 mins.

Lastly, please indicate your role (Again this data is anonymous, will be treated as confidential and only used for the purpose of my dissertation)

Next

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Page 2



[SURVEY PREVIEW MODE] Motivation Survey - Google Chrome
www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?PREVIEW_MODE=DO_NOT_USE_THIS_LINK_FOR_COLLECTION&sm=xyfgNR2XEQM3PKGQf7W7d9rpIP1wF3e7zmIhTfH%2boY%3d

Motivation Survey

Questions 1-6 (out of 23)

***1. My goals are clear**

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

***2. My goals are challenging**

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

***3. My goals are understood and agreed**

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

***4. I am provided with regular updates on my progress versus goals (reporting or in person)**

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

***5. My goals are sufficiently complex or difficult**

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

***6. I found the above aspects of my goals within account management motivating**

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

Prev Next

[SURVEY PREVIEW MODE] Motivation Survey - Google Chrome
www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?PREVIEW_MODE=DO_NOT_USE_THIS_LINK_FOR_COLLECTION&sm=xfjgNR2XEQM3PKG0t7W7d9pIP1wF3e7mlihTfH%2boY%3d

Motivation Survey

Questions 7-9 (out of 23)

***7. I get a sense of achievement from my work**

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

***8. I feel I get personal recognition**

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

***9. I feel I have a sense of responsibility**

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

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Motivation Survey

Questions 10-14 (out of 23)

***10. My goals are specific**

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

***11. My goals are measurable**

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

***12. My goals are achievable**

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

***13. My goals are realistic**

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

***14. My goals are timely (time-bound)**

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

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www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?PREVIEW_MODE=DO_NOT_USE_THIS_LINK_FOR_COLLECTION&sm=xfjgNR2XEQM3PkG0t7V7d9rplP1wF3e7xmhTrH%2boY%3d

Motivation Survey

Questions 15-19 (out of 23)

***15. A variety of my skills are used in my role**

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

***16. I can identify the purpose of my work**

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

***17. I can identify that my work contributes to a bigger picture**

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

***18. I have discretion in scheduling my work and decision making (autonomy)**

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

***19. I get feedback on the effectiveness of my performance**

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

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[SURVEY PREVIEW MODE] Motivation Survey - Google Chrome
www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?PREVIEW_MODE=DO_NOT_USE_THIS_LINK_FOR_COLLECTION&sm=xfjgNR2XEQM3PkG0t7V7d9rplP1wF3e7xmhTrH%2boY%3d

Motivation Survey

Questions 20-23

***20. My goals and objectives are better aligned to the company's goals**

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

***21. Account management has had a positive direct effect on my own performance**

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

***22. Account management has had a positive direct effect on the company's performance**

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

***23. Overall my motivation to achieve my objectives has increased**

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

***24. Lastly, please indicate your role (This is also anonymous and confidential)**

Indoor SA or SDC Outdoor BM/SE

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