



Case Study

Client



Company

FirstBank started from humble beginnings in 1963, and has since grown to be one of the largest privately held banks in the nation with over \$19 billion in assets and over 100 locations throughout Colorado, Arizona, and California. The company attributes its growth to one simple belief since its inception: *do what's right for customers, communities and employees, and good things will happen.*

Key Achievements

- Winner, Top Workplace Regional Award, 10 years in a row
- Bank branch evaluation surveys highlight satisfaction with HR team
- Dramatically enhanced employee communications
- Significantly increased employee engagement

CHALLENGE

As a company, FirstBank participates in *The Denver Post* "Top Workplaces Regional Awards" every year. These awards showcase companies which stand out to their employees, talent, and customers. In order to win, participating organizations have employees submit an employee engagement survey. Top Workplaces then compiles and scores the survey responses it receives, and determines the Regional Award winners based solely on feedback captured. Having won the award for the last 10 years in a row, FirstBank realized they were sitting on a treasure trove of employee feedback. Christinne Johnson, President, Human Resources at FirstBank, explains, *"We wanted to understand what people were saying, and how they were responding to change."*

FirstBank also didn't want to find itself in the position of suddenly not receiving the Top Workplaces Regional Award one year, without fully understanding why, or having been proactive about any employee issues that needed to be addressed. Despite this, the sheer volume of feedback surveys, coupled with limited internal capacity to address the information contained therein, meant the company had no other option: They needed to call in outside help to comb through the survey results and **identify data and trends.**

"Employee communication is now much more woven into how we operate."

—Christinne Johnson, President, HR

WORK

Ideally, Johnson wanted to find someone who could engage a Voice of Employee (VoE) lens to provide insights into employee needs, while **providing employees with more of a voice and a stake in the business.**

Impressed with her approach to VoE and her way of unlocking valuable employee feedback, Johnson hired Heather R. Younger, CEO & Founder at Employee Fanatix, and introduced her to leaders responsible for Employee Engagement and Learning; Development at FirstBank. Younger rapidly became an indispensable advisor to the team.

Instead of just looking at the response scores objectively, Younger went another level deeper. By reading through all the available comments and assigning a sentiment to each one, she was able to categorize them into something meaningful that FirstBank could then take action on. By putting an action plan in place, Younger empowered FirstBank to begin using their new insights to **improve their company culture and employees' experience** in line with their company philosophy and mantra, "banking for good."

“Communication is much more woven into how we operate now as an HR team and has been a huge benefit.”

The committee then decided on five key priorities to take action on, before forming groups to take responsibility for each and monitor progress over time.

One of those first action steps was to form a **cross-functional employee engagement committee**. Younger led the first-ever session and helped the committee review the employee results together and in breakout sessions.

In addition to this initial engagement, Younger has gone on to attend senior leadership meetings to help move initiatives forward, as well as coach some of the organization's executive leaders. She also helped Johnson put together their first-ever DEI survey for employees to determine whether they felt included, and has been helping the team go through those responses and identify next steps. Johnson shared, "Heather has continued to assist us in a number of ways. She is passionate, and her energy is contagious. She is excellent at driving the process that she's created, and making it clear why the process is valuable in the first place. She's also extremely responsive, and I appreciate that about her."

RESULTS

Not only has FirstBank continued to win the Top Workplace Regional Award year after year, but the company is now much more disciplined about communication. In the past, Johnson admitted they would usually collect employee survey responses in a vacuum, without taking the time to say, "Hey, thank you so much. We listened. Here's what we're doing, and stay tuned."

After working with Younger, the team is now more disciplined about its priorities and thoughtful about connecting the dots for employees. By meeting regularly as a committee and relating any new initiatives, and the

“What was great is that we had very clearly defined initiatives to implement.”

feedback that led to them, back to employees consistently, FirstBank is able to keep its employees informed and engaged - instead of leaving them waiting and wondering.

Bank branch evaluation surveys have also revealed how much employees appreciate the fact that the new changes being implemented directly correlate to the feedback they're providing. Johnson regularly reads comments like, "Great programs you guys are rolling out," and, "Really appreciate how much this company cares about its employees."



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