



THE CLIMATE ASSESSMENT PROCESS



A climate assessment is a systematic procedure to gather data about an organization and provide insight to how that organization is functioning to meet its mission. It provides leaders a “snap shot” in time about the key factors of an organization as it is perceived by its members as it relates to race, gender, color, religion, national origin, sexual harassment, sexual assault and other organizational effectiveness factors. The assessment can provide both positive and negative insight into an organization’s command climate.

A complete organizational assessment usually consists of a comprehensive organizational review using all or a combination of four distinct assessment methods: surveys, interviews, observations and records/reports review.

While not every method may be used, each area has the ability to support another and provides its own unique perspective of the organization. Viewed together as a whole these areas provide a more comprehensive and true assessment of the organization.

The initial organizational assessment tool is the survey (DEOCS). The DEOCS provides perceptions of the organization’s members on a variety of assessment factors. The DEOCS provides the commander the initial indicators on what may be going right, or wrong, within the organization as perceived by its members. This survey identifies key areas that can impact mission readiness and unit cohesion. Upon completion the following steps need to be carried out:

- Examine the Climate Factor Subgroup Comparisons in Section V, to determine whether any Below Service Average (i.e., red color-coded) findings exist among any subgroups. Then examine the Overall Unit Summary provided in Section VI, to determine whether there are any unit level Below Service Average findings, which are often created when numerous subgroups harbor more negative perceptions.
- In cases where low unit-level averages are obtained, examine the demographic subgroups to determine whether diminished perceptions are more common among specific groups.
- After identifying the specific climate factors with low averages and those demographic subgroups that harbor negative perceptions regarding them, use these findings to plan follow-on assessment efforts. Conducting follow-on assessments is crucial to determining the source and extent of specific perceptions.

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Interviews - (Focus Groups and Individual Interviews). Based on the identified indicators highlighted in the survey, the commander may wish to validate these perceptions with randomly selected groups of members or through individual interviews. Specifically developed follow-on questions to the survey can provide additional information to further quantify and qualify survey results. Again, information collected using this method is more perceptual in nature, and may not be factually accurate, and should also be validated through other assessment methods. Still, this assessment method allows the leader to clarify and/or gain additional information on other areas that may not have been asked or identified in the survey.

Observations. Observational data have relatively high face validity. While people in the organization may doubt the validity of questionnaire responses and may attempt to deny the validity of interview data by arguing that people did not answer truthfully, well-documented observational data have a great deal of strength and believability because you are collecting data as the behavior occurs. However, self-reports mostly describe behavior that has occurred in the past, and could be distorted. Observation deals with behavior that is occurring now. People tend to reinterpret earlier events in the light of what occurred later.

Records and Reports. This is the “hard” or unchangeable data about the command: the facts. This data are used to prove or disprove, support or not support, or quantify perceptions from other data sources. A thorough review of organizational records and reports can validate perceptions and concerns identified from the survey analysis and interviews. These facts can be easily correlated to support or refute the perceptions identified elsewhere.

Once the issues have been clearly identified, it is necessary to develop an action plan, and to communicate the plan with the organization’s members. Set a timeline for the action items designed to address each specific validated concern, and provide timely feedback on progress. This will demonstrate your willingness to listen to your subordinates, and take action to improve conditions when possible.

The Assessment to Solutions area of deomi.org is designed to support leaders and equal opportunity professionals by providing tools and products designed to address the mission-impacting issues identified during the climate assessment process. Assessment to Solutions has products and training material to help organizations overcome negative perceptions; these can also aid in the development of an action plan. The Assessment to Solutions area is broken down into the main assessment areas of the DEOCS, which are EO/EEO/Fair treatment, Organizational Effectiveness and Sexual Assault Prevention and Response. Each area is further broken down by the factors included in these main areas of the Climate Assessment, and a host of products are provided to assist in overcoming negative perceptions at an organization.