



Amy Grubb

What the Experts are Saying

About Amy Grubb

Amy Grubb, Ph.D. is the Senior Director, Organizational Development and Talent at the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). She has been leading change and presenting the story of the FBI through its employees for nearly 20 years. Amy is an internationally acclaimed speaker who has presented numerous workshops and plenaries on leadership, change, working with others, engagement, organizational culture, and storytelling.

Interpreting Survey Results

In looking at data, we have the tendency to look at what is “high” or “low” and make that our focus of action. Sometimes, as in life, the story isn’t the big splash or the loudest thing, it is the quiet undercurrent and the movement of ideas; it is that some populations might have a very different perception than others. It is the nuances that are actually more interesting in data. Every data point has a story behind it; people can actively choose to rate things higher and lower than each other, so why did they rate THIS lower than THAT? It is important to not only look at highs and lows, which are important stories, but also relative weighting of different perceptions. Does that make sense for this community? And if not, what do we do about it?

Survey data is also complex -- most things are inter-related within ecosystems of organizations and people. Taking a singular finding or a few findings without really thinking through the common levers or mutual contributors --- or how those data points might exacerbate others if they reach a certain level --- can dilute the true nature of the result. Some questions might be mutually exclusive --- if one item is high, the other has to be relatively low because both ideas might not be able to coexist.

Not all survey data is meaningful or a call to arms. Some data are more tone-setting or palate cleansing. Not everything is actionable either. Sometimes data tell the the setting of the story. Sometimes they narrate action (or inaction). Sometimes data are their own characters in the story. When reading data and thinking through its implications, be sure to know which data are characters, which are context, and which data will be *seen* as more important --- and which data *actually* are more important to the situation at hand.

Finally, data are neutral. *Humans* put value judgments on data, but data in and of themselves are neutral markers in the ground. Thinking about data and not putting a “value” of good or bad on its meaning can often enhance perspective and interpretation.