

Helping the South East Regional Skills Forum (SERSF) Evaluate The Skills Needs Of Companies Across the South East

Introduction



The Forum was created as part of the Irish Government's National Skills Strategy and is tasked with helping meet the emerging skills needs in its region by strengthening links between employers and the education & training sector.

The Challenge



The Regional Skills Forum is an energetic, proactive and focussed organisation – always striving to match the current and future needs of businesses with what is (and is planned to be) provided by education and training providers. However, this work, though very valuable, can often be labour-intensive.

The effect? No matter how effective its systems and processes, the Skills Forum was finding it difficult to work directly with as many stakeholders as it wished to. This was particularly challenging in an environment where there are a large number of different sectors and where the Skills Forum wanted to ensure that the economic recovery is not impeded by skills deficits.

One of those sectors where the Skills Forum needed a broad and detailed view of the recruitment and skills landscape was that of engineering and manufacturing companies. This information was needed to help inform the course provision of education and training providers such as Waterford IT, IT Carlow and the Education & Training Boards (ETBs) within the region.

The Solution



SurveyGuru was brought on board to advise on, devise and implement a solution to this challenge. The targets for the research were mainly business owners and senior executives. How best to reach these particularly busy people to get a view of their workforce's skills, their recruitment efforts, and their skills needs?

The approach decided on was to seek the businesses' views by means of an online survey and phone interviewing.



The Solution

SurveyGuru designed the questionnaire in partnership with the Skills Forum and also rendered the questionnaire as an online survey.

The respondents were first given an opportunity to take the survey online or, if they chose or preferred not to do so, they were interviewed by phone. This approach was both effective and responsive – each of the target companies being able to engage in the manner that best suited them.

The response rate achieved was over 80%. The responses provided a very comprehensive picture of the employment situation and skills needs within the target companies. SurveyGuru produced a detailed report and then partnered with the Skills Forum to present the report to the ETBs and also the Forum's board which included representatives from the Institutes of Technology.

The Benefits



The Skills Forum now has a data-driven, up to date and representative view of where Engineering and Manufacturing companies are at in terms of their employment plans and skill needs.

This picture has also been disseminated to all stakeholders in the education sector – allowing them to ensure that the voice of industry is factored into their decision-making on what courses to provide.

One bonus that emerged from the project was that it was identified that there already are courses in place that satisfy some the skill needs identified. The Skills Forum can now relay that positive news to those companies with those skill needs.

“Brendan from SurveyGuru took care of this project in a flexible and efficient manner. I found his service very responsive to my needs, very efficient and thorough in delivery, and Brendan was very good at summarising and presenting the findings. Brendan's accessibility was a key part of the project's success. He also kept me informed of progress right throughout the project which was great. The combination of him using an online survey backed up by telephone interviewing was very effective in reaching a significant number of companies. SurveyGuru also provided very good value for money. I consider the service very useful and appropriate for representative bodies, local authorities, support agencies, and education & training providers. It should also be very useful for private market research in Ireland.”

Edmond Connolly, South East Regional Skills Forum

