Advantages + Disadvantages of Various Tools for Determining Worker Concerns

Tools	Advantages	Disadvantages
Analysis of accident and injury data (first aid, workers compensation claims, absenteeism and sick leave)	- indicates where injuries have been a problem in the past - objective - although other factors can contribute to injuries - can contribute cost to data - legal requirement to improve jobs where injuries occur	- data is after-the-fact so injury cannot be prevented - may not have the numbers to see any trends - injuries are multi-factorial - actual injuries may be underestimated
Questionnaires (including symptom surveys)	- can sample a large number of workers quickly and inexpensively - information is anonymous - provide lots of opinions and questions can solicit solutions - symptoms provide early identification of potential problems - can sample where observation may be difficult - can get most workers involved, especially if done during work time	- requires knowledge and expertise to design good questionnaires - requires knowledge of statistics to analyse results - low return rates affect validity of data - literacy may be problem - some workers can misinterpret questions - may encourage reporting of problems that were before unnoticed by workers
Checklists (for risk factors or workstation problems)	- systematic gathering of information - allows observation of key risk factors - can solicit users to help answer questions - works well as an added technique with observation, informal interviews and job analysis - some checklists allow for quantification of results to compare workstations or evaluate changes	- some checklists require training to learn to use and interpret - key observations can be missed when focussing on specific questions - choice of appropriate and specific checklist important

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Tools	Advantages	Disadvantages
Interviews (informal and formal)	- valuable face-to-face information - allows clarification and discussion of issues - best for small numbers - most valuable when use structured questions and formal recording - most useful for perceptions	- can take a long time to get a representative sample - people may be inhibited to speak (setting scene and anonymity important), some may see responding as complaining
Job Analysis (including task description and analysis)	- systematic documentation of tasks, risk factors, and other concerns - can include measurement information (repetitions, duration, postural assessments etc.) - can use with other techniques (informal interviews, checklists) - can be augmented with videotaped recordings for later analysis - thorough breakdown of tasks and identification of concerns leads to understanding of problems and development of useful solutions	- time consuming, especially for non-routine jobs - must observe several workers performing the job - must observe task during various situations (routine, peak etc.) - requires considerable training especially in measurement and interpretation of data
Focus Groups (small group of users with similar interests brought together for facilitated discussion)	- fosters synergy of ideas among participants - useful for brainstorming problems and solutions - time effective - can illicit unique ideas	- setting the scene and ensuring people feel safe with the rules is important - requires good facilitation - can be dominated by a few strong participants - can get off topic - can be difficult to organize with several shifts participating

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