Looking through the Glassdoor: Trends in employee reviews of Walmart

Walmart can understand both the positive and negative sentiments being expressed by its employees through the application of topic discovery methods on Glassdoor employee reviews.

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<th>Challenge</th>
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<td>Walmart has a high employee turnover rate and needs to understand what their employees consider to be the benefits and costs of working for them.</td>
<td>Idibon is able to identify the positive and negative themes that Walmart employees express in company reviews.</td>
<td>3,845 Walmart employees (out of 10,000) say that good co-workers are the top ‘pro’ to working at Walmart.</td>
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Walmart is a large American multi-national corporation that operates discount retail stores worldwide. Its stores cover a wide variety of services including supermarkets, drug stores, convenience goods, and limited financial services. Founded in 1962, it is the third largest public corporation in the world with a market capitalization of $242.53 billion.

Understanding employee turnover and Walmart’s challenges

As one of the largest employers in the world, Walmart has been given considerable media attention for its high employee turnover rate and the high cost that is associated with this. In recent years, they have announced various initiatives to address these concerns, ranging from new benefit packages to educational course offerings.

Nevertheless, Walmart continues to see a high employee turnover every year, which is almost 30% higher than that of its closest competitor, Costco. It is likely that differences in their respective turnover rates are due to differences in average hourly wages, health insurance coverage, and retirement plan coverage. Current and former employees’ stories about their experiences can provide Walmart with valuable insights regarding how to boost employee satisfaction and retention.

Identifying positive and negative employee opinions

There are thousands of employee reviews for Walmart on Glassdoor containing rich metadata such as job titles, star ratings, locations, and employment status. Analyzing a sample of 10,000 reviews delivers key insights into employee sentiment.

The Glassdoor data contains 10,000 employee reviews of both the pros and cons of working for Walmart, which are essential to understanding the recurring themes.
Idibon’s topic discovery algorithms identify these recurring themes using patterns or words that frequently occur together in documents. These can then be clustered into groups as shown above, with colored circles labeled with a topic and the number of reviews in which it was featured.

An examination of these topics reveals valuable insights:

- Generally, negative topics are much more numerous and specific in nature, which is often to be expected in reviews or surveys, as individuals tend to be more descriptive with complaints than they are with praise
- There are many topics which appear both as pros and cons, including management and pay, indicating a difference of opinion among employees. Further investigation may show which kinds of employees hold which opinions and the conditions which create the differences among them
- The only uncontested positive topic is ‘co-workers’, suggesting that this is one common source of appeal in working for Walmart
- Some aspects of the work environment appear only as cons, particularly work/life balance

Looking for more detailed insights

Management, work/life balance, and training & expectations come under criticism even from those who are generally positive about working at Walmart. Among those who are generally negative, co-workers and flexibility (“fits my schedule”) are still praised. Also notable is that former employees are often less enthusiastic about pay after leaving Walmart.

This analysis shows how topic modeling enables the identification of key themes in employee review data and how these themes can inform Walmart’s strategy for addressing employee dissatisfaction. For instance, Walmart may want to review employee discontent related to training and expectations, adjust wages, and conduct an in-depth examination of the current managerial structures. Focusing employee retention initiatives will enable Walmart to improve its reputation as an employer and will lower the cost of employee turnover.