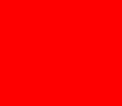


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You've Sent Out an Employee Engagement Survey, Now What?





A client of ours recently told us, “The worst thing we could do is conduct a survey and then do nothing.” And we couldn’t agree more. A big challenge that organizations face when conducting employee surveys is responding to them. All the while, employees are wondering, “What happened with that survey we took?” With no awareness or visibility into the process, employees often assume nothing is being done. It’s important to effectively communicate your process for taking action and driving change.

However, a common mistake organizations make is trying to do too much. They get results, identify ten areas for improvement, and then spend months fleshing out a strategy for how they are going to implement change.

The best way to think about what to do after you measure employee engagement is to be as transparent as possible. You just finished asking employees for their opinions on how they can change one of the most important aspects of their lives, they’ll want to be kept in the loop.

Here is what to do after you measure. Instead of spending a year strategizing on how you’re going to respond, learn from the success of Agile HR teams and take small, iterative actions. These actions will result in incremental change, so employees can see results faster. Then, you can then gather more feedback and make more improvements over time. In the spirit of tackling iterative action, here are a couple of ways to respond quickly to employee survey results.

1. Communicate the Results

If you sent out a survey, send employees a thank you note for completing it, communicate what the results are from a high-level, and potentially hold a town hall meeting to tell everyone what the next steps are. Team leaders should be communicating with their teams about what the results were, and everyone should work together to come up with a few items to improve.

Great Place to Work offers several different survey package options and if you opted for no data in your original package, don’t worry – this can always be added on a later stage to help you get the most from your employee engagement survey. Talk to us about your options for accessing your survey results today.

2. Pick a Couple of Things to Improve

There might be many things that you could possibly improve, but don’t overwhelm yourself or your team with that. Instead, pick one or two things to improve and focus on those. Start small, and brainstorm with your team on things like:

- How you can improve each item?
- Who will be held accountable?
- How you'll be able to measure its effectiveness? (set a goal)

3. Follow Up and Repeat

Continuously follow up with members of your team to see how things are going, and if there's anything you need to do to readjust and realign on the goal. In the end, you want employees to be happy, so keep checking in with them to see if they are.

Repeat the process over and over. This isn't a one-shot deal, engagement takes time and will always evolve, so it's really important to stay agile.

Now Take Action

In the past, 'listening' to your employees may have been enough. However, that passive approach fails in a major way—it doesn't trigger dialogue or action that paves the way for meaningful change. What matters is for companies to solicit feedback and act on it. Acting on feedback means that instead of hoarding the results at the top of the organization, results are accessible to managers to discuss the feedback with their teams, and to collaborate on how to take action based on the input.

Taking action at the local level—by giving managers access to the survey findings and empowering them to discuss the findings with their teams—enables more agility. Leaders and their teams can take micro-actions, measure progress, and course-correct as needed. Our research has shown that managers who take action can improve engagement at more frequent intervals.

Ask for Feedback Frequently

The primary purpose of measuring employee engagement is to discover the truth about what's helping or hurting your employees' engagement in order to do more or less of those things. Today's best workplaces are shifting their employee engagement approach—moving from traditional processes toward real-time feedback and ongoing conversations to gain more timely and meaningful insights. They get there by frequently asking for targeted feedback from employees using short, frequent surveys as part of a strategic and holistic measurement strategy.

Organizations that have made this shift to a more agile approach find that it enables better conversations with their people about what matters most. It helps the organization surface feedback quickly, identify more focused actions for improvement, and drive faster decision making—all of which result in better business and talent outcomes. As organizations seek to become increasingly agile with faster,

more focused feedback from and insights on their people, the right technology platform and partner can help. It enables organizations to have high-quality conversations about priorities, performance, and growth at the right time, with the right people, informed by data.

How to Respond to Negative Feedback

When faced with negative employee feedback, it's tempting to do nothing or take broad, overarching steps that totally reverse the course on what you've been doing.

Resist the temptation — especially with the former approach. Not acting on an employee feedback survey may cause greater damage to employee engagement than not taking a survey in the first place.

There's also more at stake than just increased disengagement, including employee turnover. Clear goals and engagement from management can significantly impact a person's desire to stick with the same company in the future.

The best way to respond to negative employee feedback is with clear, actionable goals — not all of which have to be big shake-ups. This implies a process in which organizations discuss survey results, identify specific issues to target for overall improvement, and create a plan to enact necessary changes.

Focus on what employees have told you isn't working, take specific steps, and you might just turn lemons into lemonade.

With all of this in mind, here are 5 ways to effectively deal with negative survey results.

1. Communicate Survey Results Openly

Don't hide survey results — even if they reveal widespread dissatisfaction or the findings seem embarrassing. Keeping feedback away from employees only deepens any mistrust that may already exist.

Share the survey results with employees in a way that highlights both the good and the bad. Resist the urge to put a positive spin on the negative employee feedback. Acknowledge that there are things you need to work on. And, most importantly, be sure to clearly outline the steps you'll be taking to create an action plan.

2. Brainstorm to Improve Future Engagement

If you're committed to improvement, you should also be committed to trying new approaches. Conduct a brainstorming process to collect ideas, whether in working groups or within smaller teams in each specific department. Of course, managers and

leadership should bring ideas to the table as well and not expect employees to be the only source for solutions.

3. Survey Again

If you've made a number of changes across departments, you'll want overall feedback on whether these changes have made a positive difference. That's right — time for another survey! Whether this is as all-encompassing as the last one is up to you. But taking another pulse is the best way to get insight into whether the changes you've made along the way have added up to improving workplace culture and employee engagement.

4. Remain Committed

The process doesn't end after the next survey. The best workplaces are those where managers and leadership are committed to continuing to work alongside their employees to make improvements.

5. Dig Deeper

If all survey results are positive or don't provide any kind of actionable sentiment, it's time to dig further. Ask your employees to point out any negative aspects they're dealing with at work. Every employee has at least one bad thing to complain about — trust us!

No negative employee feedback at all is bad news. It means your employees either don't care about your surveys or are too scared to voice their real thoughts.

Support an open culture from the very beginning by encouraging feedback and even constructive criticism. If you do notice your team is too scared to share negative feedback, consider keeping feedback surveys entirely anonymous. Nevertheless, make sure you act upon this negative input too so they'll be motivated to share more about the things that bug them in the future.

Employee surveys are an excellent tool to measure employee engagement. But surveys without follow-up action are useless and could even be detrimental to your success.

Negative feedback from a survey can be alarming — and perhaps even embarrassing. The best response to the sentiments is a clear, constructive action plan.

Survey your employees and act on their feedback, and you won't be simply measuring employee engagement. You'll be actively supporting it!

Improving Employee Engagement

If employee engagement has taken a hit in your workplace, don't panic — every organization is susceptible to changes in their team's engagement levels, which is usually a result of a shift in their company culture.

There are, however, several low-lift employee engagement initiatives you can enact now to yield real results. Below, we'll explore 7 employee engagement strategies that you can implement as quick fixes and long-term tactics to boost employee engagement.

1. Model Your Core Values

Employees are more engaged when there's a goal they can get behind and a purpose to inspire them. Your core values and mission statement are the foundation of your company culture, which plays a large role in how engaged your employees are. Start by creating a concise list of company core values, then train each employee in these values. Doing so will guarantee employees understand the importance of the company's values, how they positively impact the business and what's expected of each individual. Lead by example and hold every member of your team accountable.

2. Focus on Engaging Management

Your managers' levels of engagement has a direct effect on their teams. While your workforce engagement strategy should account for the individual needs of every employee, focusing on middle management is an effective way to quickly increase employee engagement across the board.

3. Prioritize Physical and Mental Health

It's easy for individuals to engage with their work when the organization makes an effort to enhance their overall wellbeing. A company-wide wellness initiative is a great way to improve employee engagement.

4. Recognize and Reward Achievements

Engaged employees will go out of their way to go the extra mile. However, they still want to know that leadership sees and appreciates their efforts. Take time to acknowledge your employees and allow them to do the same for their peers.

5. Conduct Employee Engagement Surveys Frequently

Not only will regular employee engagement surveys help you understand what's working in your organization, it'll make your employees feel valued. Giving each individual the opportunity to voice their opinions encourages honest, open communication. Employee feedback is essential to successfully engaging your workforce.

6. Offer Opportunities for Professional Development

Outlining a path for growth will keep employees engaged and help you retain top talent. Contributing financially or otherwise — to your employees' individual growth shows that you value them, in addition to their work. Knowing that their talents are appreciated by the company is a motivating factor for employees.

7. Train Your Managers on Employee Engagement Best Practices

In addition to their individual responsibilities, a manager should act as a coach for their reports, offering encouragement, constructive criticism and paths for growth. Proper training ensures that managers know how to effectively engage their team, but it doesn't replace the vital step of talking to employees. Having a conversation about how they enjoy receiving feedback and being recognized will enable managers to engage employees in a way that's meaningful to them.

Sustaining Employee Engagement Levels

Keeping the momentum to follow through on survey actions is critical to sustaining employee engagement levels. Many organizations view employee engagement surveys as a one-off "must-have" HR exercise, but those that understand the value of employee insights will enjoy improved performance levels across the organization.

Be thoughtful with your approach to increase employee engagement, and you'll reap the rewards of an engaged workforce for years to come. Remember that employee engagement isn't a temporary project — engaging and keeping employees engaged is a serious endeavour that requires your constant consideration.

Let Us Help

If you're already thinking about your next employee engagement survey and its following plan, we have extensive experience in empowering organizations to achieve and sustain positive cultural and organizational change. Learn more at www.greatplacetowork.ca