Toolkit: 10 Practical Tips to Get Employee Survey Right

Armezo

Employee Surveys

Employee engagement has become the leading business priority for top executives across the globe. In this rapidly transforming connected economy, business leaders know that having a high-performing workforce can be the difference between success or just survival.

71% of respondents rank employee engagement as very important to achieving overall organizational success.

24% of respondents say employees in their organization are highly engaged.

*HBR

It is also a highly recognized fact that highly engaged employees can have a positive impact on innovation, productivity, and bottom-line performance while reducing costs related to hiring and retention in highly competitive and skill-short talent markets. But while most top executives see a clear business demand to improve employee engagement, many have yet to develop structured ways to measure and improve employee engagement. One of the oldest and proven ways of gauge employee engagement is through employee feedback surveys.

Organizations can gain a lot from employee feedback surveys that highlights key areas for improvement. They are also invaluable tools to gain insight into employee job related experiences and they act as great tool for the development of a road map for improving engagement. However, an employee survey is only as good as the tool on which it's conducted, the relevance of the questions asked, and the follow-up actions to the survey. Also important is the preparation that goes into survey design that elicits most genuine responses.

Here is our short list of ten things to keep in mind to get the best of your employee surveys.

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1. Cover Most Pressing Relevant Topics

Nothing is more important in designing a survey than the topic of the survey itself. Best practice is to carefully consider topics that are impacting the KPI's. Care should also be taken to exclude topics where insights could be better collected via other means than surveys. Once a topic is selected, the next step is to prioritize them and then group them into similar areas to keep the survey focused on those areas.

For example, questions about food served in the cafeteria might be interesting (and the answers might be useful), but they're not particularly relevant in a survey aimed at understanding employees' overall satisfaction levels with company.

2. Choose the Right Audience

A mother of all companywide survey trying to get feedback from all on all topics possible would not yield many or the most accurate responses. Targeted specific surveys around a topics, issues, with the right audience getting impacted or having an impact on them should be conducted for best results and provide deeper insights.

3. Questionnaire Design

Survey questionnaire design is one of the most critical factors in conducting successful surveys. The pulse of survey lies in capturing organic and unbiased feedback free of stress bias and manipulation. If conducting surveys across multiple geographies, try and have multi-lingual surveys to garner maximum response. Depending on the objective of the survey, try and mix use of close-ended as well as open-ended questions.

4. Make Questions Objective and Direct

To make employee surveys most effective try and keep questions direct neutral without trying to influence the responses. The questions should be created using the language or terminology that the respondents are most clear without the risk of misinterpretation. Avoid abbreviations or acronyms, unless they're commonly used by all employees. With objective questions, employees are more likely to give a genuine response rather than what they think you want to hear.

5. Length of the Survey

Nothing discourages employee from providing feedback than a 50-100 questions multi page survey seeking their feedback. While there is a continuous debate in terms of what's the magic number in terms of number of questions, there is a near unanimous agreement that employees are most likely to respond to surveys that ask 10 or 20 direct questions. The best practice is to keep the survey process short and efficient. Conducting A/B testing in terms of number of questions, language as well as grouping provides greater insights before a full survey is launched.

6. Frequency of Survey

Employee surveys result in meaningful steps taken by the organization from the survey, they are more inclined to respond to the surveys. Therefore, one of the guiding principles for identifying frequency of the surveys is your ability and keenness to act on the feedback. Also, another guiding principle should be to keep the frequency sufficient to capture the important shifts in the organization.

It's a misconception that higher frequency leads to higher value. If employees don't see you taking any action on their feedback, they would lose interest in the process. The employee should see the change emanating out of survey results for them to be hooked on to the process and look forward to it.

7. Keep Responses Anonymous

Employee engagement survey responses should be anonymous. If the response can be directly tied back to an individual, the credibility and integrity of the survey process is compromised.

Without fear of being singled out, the employees are more likely to be honest in their feedback, specifically when the feedback in about their manager's or for others with authority. Anonymity also helps the person for whom the feedback is being taken as they can gain from knowing exactly what others think about their work styles and how they can improve.

8. Communicate and Take Action on the Feedback

The best course of action after you complete and analyse the survey results is to communicate as transparently as possible. Some of the things to follow would be-

1. Communicate the Results. More the gap between the survey and feedback the greater the risk of inactivity.

2. Pick a couple of Low hanging, high impact items to improve and share what steps the business proposes to take as quickly as you can.

3. Embrace Change. The typical tendency is to sugar coat the results if they are not favourable and hide the truth. If you do this, you run the risk of losing employee trust for good. Be ready to embrace change for top down. Creating plan of action is one thing but taking action on them is the real purpose.

9. Use the Right Application Area for the Survey

The choice of application area also defines the different constituents and design elements that go into creating a successful survey. Care should be taken not to mix and match different areas and create confusion in the minds of the employees. Some of the application areas include

1. Onboarding Surveys

2. Pulse Surveys

3. Training Feedback

4. 360 Degree

5. Exit

6. Alumni

7. Compensation benefit

8. Recruitment Experience, etc.

10. Use the Right Technology & Partner

Conducting employee surveys is about more than asking questions and collecting responses. There is a mushrooming of a lot of survey tools across the globe which are found wanting in terms of survey design, experience and confidentiality.

An effective employee survey platform offers a seamless way of soliciting employee feedback, analyzing results, and displaying analytical trends. A right partner is who has the ability and capability to design the questionnaire and manage the process end-to-end without core HR team getting stretched for their time. As a bare minimum select a platform/partner that allows
Scalability to meet your growing business requirements

1. Allows for anonymous response
2. Easily integrates with your processes and systems
3. Customizable to allow sequencing and flows including skip logic
4. Help-Desk to manage the end-to-end process
5. Hierarchy driven with security and access rights
6. Mobile Platform capable
7. Analytical Reporting

Employee surveys are most valuable tools in the hands of HR for collecting meaningful feedback, especially when special care is taken to design meaningful, relevant questions that get people sharing about their experiences with their job, manager, and colleagues. With the right employee survey platform and partner, you can collect feedback, provide employees with necessary follow-up plan of action, and achieve improved employee engagement and retention in the workplace.

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