



How to achieve a successful Employee Survey

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**Specialists in Employee Engagement Solutions incorporating 360
degree feedback**

<http://www.communicationchallenge.co.uk>

Using surveys is a very effective means of improving organisational performance. To succeed, they have to be carefully planned and well executed.

The keys to a successful survey

- Choose a supplier with 'proven' expertise who can manage the entire process for you
- Have clear objectives for the survey at the outset
- Gain commitment from Senior Management
- Choose the right time and right people
- Ensure you prepare adequately and brief everyone involved
- Have a plan in place once you have the results
- Ensure the system you choose offers:
 - Flexibility in grouping participants eg. by function, location, management level
 - Flexibility to add and remove participants
 - Clear instructions for accessing and completing the questionnaire
 - Simple, practical questions that are easy to understand by all employees
 - On-line access to a quick and easy process that is confidential and anonymous
 - Responsive 'help' facility
 - Ability to send reminders to participants to ensure a high response rate
 - Output that is easy to understand and interpret
 - Output that automatically identifies strengths and development needs, differences between groups and priority areas for action
 - An effective process for feedback, action planning and learning
 - A system that makes it easy to identify and measure progress over time

Planning your approach

Firstly, you need to understand how the proposed survey process fits with your current performance appraisal and people management processes. This will help you select the most appropriate questionnaire and process, and ensure that it produces real performance improvements.

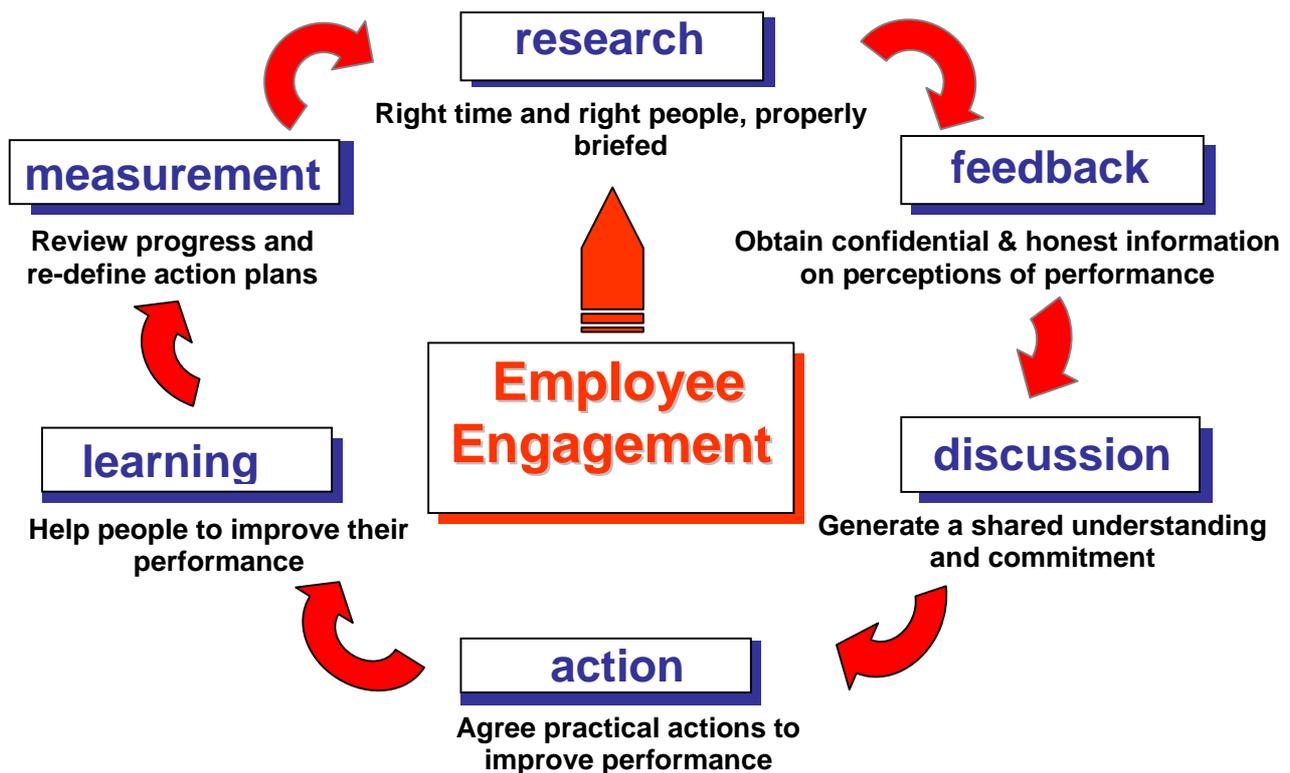
The level of investment in time and money that you make at the start of this process will pay dividends in the long-term. The first time you use an employee survey, you need to enlist the help of an expert so that you achieve the best possible outcomes. This will set the standard for future success and ensure that tangible performance improvements are achieved and maintained.

Long-term performance improvement can only succeed if you have an accurate picture of where to start and if the majority of employees believe it is in their best interests to work together to improve.

Executing your plan

The Engagement Cycle below illustrates the proven engagement process we recommend.

The Engagement Cycle



Research

Make sure that:

- Your chosen supplier has a full understanding of your needs and organisational culture
- You choose the right time to undertake the exercise
- Employees are properly briefed on the importance of their role in the success of the survey
- There is a plan to act on the results of the survey and this plan is communicated to your employees

Feedback

First you need to obtain an accurate picture of your employees' perceptions of the **current** situation. This must be:

- Obtained in a confidential and practical way which will not take up too much of their time
- Tangible and reliable to ensure that you have an accurate picture of what is working and what needs to be improved

The best way to do this is to use a straightforward on-line questionnaire which can either be 'generic' or 'bespoke'. The benefit of using a 'generic' questionnaire is that it is 'tried and tested' and you will be able to compare against the other organisations that have used it. Don't try and 're-invent the wheel' – most organisations have the same challenges and a properly constructed generic questionnaire will bring out any issues that are important.

In general allow 10 working days for questionnaire completion, any shorter may not give people sufficient time and any longer will not give the survey the level of urgency and importance it requires.

Questionnaires - Key Features you should look for

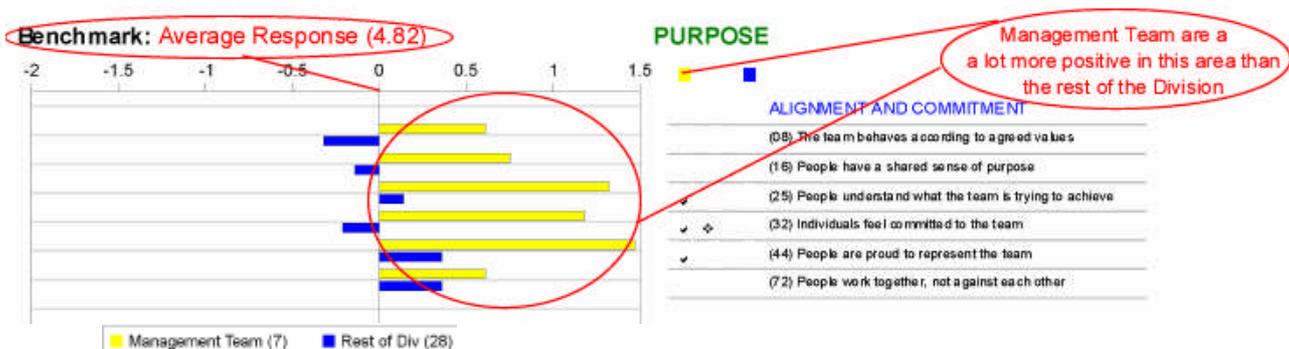
Here is an example of an on-line index360 questionnaire that we provide for our clients.

- On-line, password protected - easy to access
- All positive statements - easy to complete
- No jargon, short and unambiguous - easy for everyone in the organization to understand
- Rating scale 1 to 7 (1 = disagree, 7 = agree) - each response is thought through
- Should take no longer than 20 minutes to complete
- Optional 'Comments' section - adding value
- Totally anonymous - honest and reliable feedback is obtained
- Based on an individual's 'perception' - which is their 'reality' - it is not a psychometric test
- 'Save' facility - if you run out of time you can 'save' and return later to complete it
- Easy page navigation
- Full 'Help' facility - easy to use and understand
- 'Contact Us' facility - guaranteed response within 24 hours.

Output - Key Requirements

The format of the output from the questionnaires is crucial to the success of the process. The use of bar charts around a 'benchmark' makes it much easier for the participants to understand.

Here is an example of output from index360 that we provide for our clients.



- No complicated statistics and graphs - make it easy to engage individuals
- uncluttered pages - make it easy to understand and work with the data
- key strengths and development needs highlighted - to quickly see the priorities
- gaps in perception between individuals and groups clearly shown - to allow you to open up discussion and prioritise

- measurement of trends and change over time - to review progress and maintain commitment
- individual and group profiles and comparisons - to highlight the priority areas and 'blueprint' best practice

Discussion

Gathering feedback is only the start. The information you'll get from the survey won't provide you with the solution – but it will act as a 'catalyst' to help you find out why people are feeling this way. By involving them in an **independently** facilitated discussion of the results, you can generate a shared understanding and commitment to work together to improve, by building on strengths and developing areas of weakness.

The ability to compare feedback from different groups also helps you to 'blueprint' best practice across the organisation.

Focus Groups are particularly useful when working with large numbers to build on the information obtained from the surveys and questionnaires. They are based on interactive interviews, with a maximum of 10 employees in each group. They will provide more detailed information on where to focus attention to improve performance. It will also help to engage employees across the business in working together to improve.

Action

Facilitated discussion drives out practical actions, agreed by everyone, on how they will work together to improve performance. These actions must be SMART - Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely.

Learning

It is helpful if you have 'ambassadors' within the organisation who take on the responsibility for ensuring that actions are kept alive and everyone remains motivated .

Ongoing support to achieve your action plan is essential. This support is likely to involve a combination of independent facilitation, training and coaching depending on what needs to be achieved.

Measurement

How do you know things are improving and how do you ensure that the momentum is maintained?

Regular progress reviews are critical to sustain enthusiasm and commitment. Ideally you should repeat the survey process on a regular basis, preferably every nine to twelve months, to monitor and review progress and re-define your action plans, based on the results.

Benchmarking

In our experience internal benchmarking is the most useful as all organisations are different, and by undertaking internal benchmarking you are comparing 'like with like'. This may involve benchmarking progress over time, as set out above, and can include comparing different parts or levels of an organisation at the same time.

Suggested Workplan for your Employee Survey

1. Meet with your chosen supplier to discuss your requirements and their approach.
2. Set the timescales for the survey.
3. Plan your questions – do you need a generic or a bespoke questionnaire.
4. Agree the structure of the report (e.g. grouping and comparing data).
5. Define the briefing process.
6. Brief participants.
7. Undertake the survey.
8. When the survey is closed, thank everyone personally via email and outline the next stages.
9. Initial feedback session with the Senior Management Team within two weeks of receiving all responses.
10. If appropriate, conduct Focus Groups as soon as possible to maintain momentum and interest.
11. Develop the action plan and get commitment from all stakeholders.
12. Communicate the details of the action plan to everyone in the organisation.
13. Maintain motivation and commitment to the plan through ongoing support and advice.
14. Repeat the survey within 9 to 12 months to measure improvement.

About the Author

Valerie Heritage has been providing Employee Engagement Solutions to a wide range of organisations, in both public and private sectors, for the past twenty years.

Using index360©, a proven on-line feedback solution, she provides organisations with a practical and reliable way to engage people in working together to improve performance.

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