



How do you get maximum value from your employee engagement survey?

Employee engagement is vital as it clearly influences employee productivity, their capacity to innovate and customer service^{1,2}. Companies with high engagement scores still out-perform their competition in the stock market.¹ To understand how engaged employees are compared to last year, compared to competitors, and between departments, a survey is an essential measurement tool. But this article considers how you can make your survey even more than that – turning it from a measurement device into a genuine vehicle for engaging your employees.

Action Based Survey Methodology

It is vital when carrying out a survey to see it as only one part of the overall employee engagement process. At People Insight, we break this down into 5 stages, called our 'Action Based Survey Methodology'. The only true way to get value from a survey is to follow all stages of the 5 step process below, and commit time, energy and resources up front to take performance enhancing actions as a result.

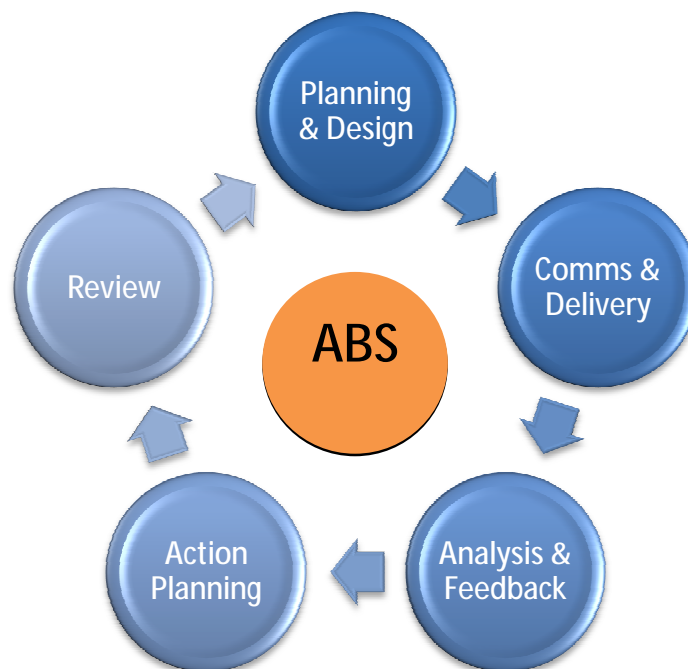


Fig. 1: Action Based Survey Methodology[®]

¹Macleod D, and Clarke, N (2009). Engaging for success: Enhancing performance through employee engagement. At: <http://www.berr.gov.uk/files/file52215.pdf>

² Finney, M. Career Landscapes. July 2011. At: <http://careerlandscapes.com/blog/engagement-9-2/>

Stage 1: Planning & Design

Ideally, the survey planning process should start well before the planned launch date, to ensure senior leaders are fully briefed and enthused on their roles and an engagement survey specialist is appointed (if required). Start with the end in mind. Be realistic about how many actions you can take and over what timeframe, and communicate your intentions to staff. View the survey as a positive engagement opportunity in itself; demonstrating you listen to staff and respect their views.

In terms of deciding exactly what questions you will ask, involve your people in this decision. Hold employee focus groups to identify the most critical themes. Make these staff members survey 'champions', involved in informal internal communication to encourage survey completion.

Once your survey themes are clear, your survey specialist should work with you to develop relevant questions. Survey questions should be written in plain English, posed consistently as positive statements and tackle only one issue at a time.



Stage 2: Communications and Survey

Your employees are going to respond best to a request for survey completion if they know it is coming, have heard endorsement from senior leaders and respected colleagues, and believe something will happen as a result. Start communications several weeks before the survey launches, but don't lose momentum – keep communicating to build up to launch day. Try a mix of familiar, trusted communication avenues, and some new ideas that will really get noticed. They do not have to be expensive, e.g. getting your message onto leaders' agendas, online notice boards or existing newsletters or cascading through department and team meetings.

Communication Channel	Comments
'Town Hall' or 'All Hands' meetings cascading to departmental and team meetings	Great opportunities to demonstrate senior leaders' enthusiasm for the survey. Repeating the message and reminding of their endorsement in smaller, less formal meetings facilitates individual comments and questions. Why not ask survey 'champions' – peers to raise the survey at departmental meetings?
Online news page, blog, notice board	Where the majority of employees have access to the company Intranet, use a variety of people, from CEO to secretary, to remind about the forthcoming survey and the benefits of participation.
Road show, exhibition stand	In organisations with multiple sites and less desk based activity, put up a simple display at lunchtime with posters, leaflets, and enthusiastic volunteers to communicate the survey timetable & benefits of participation.
Email, text message, voicemail, podcast	Follow up your initial announcements with direct communications. If you have field based employees, use channels that they commonly use – e.g. existing newsletters, voicemail messages, etc.
Electronic notice boards, posters, newsletter, desk drop leaflet	Keep the physical reminders going around the office in key spots: coffee areas, the way in and out of the building, at the printers, on individual desks.

When it comes to actual survey completion, make sure that staff have the maximum chance to participate. Consider what is easiest for them. Online surveys, invited by individual email, continually attract the highest completion scores. But if employees do not have access, offer them other ways:

- unique logon details for shared computers
- email invite sent to personal email addresses (with prior consent)
- paper surveys distributed within the company newsletter or sent to home addresses
- telephone surveys carried out with Interactive Voice Recognition Technology

To really boost survey completion rates, consider some healthy competition: a prize for the department or team with the highest completion rates, or offer a charity donation for every survey completed. If your surveys are being completed online, it is easy for your survey provider to track completion rates live and issue personal reminders.



Stage 3: Analysis & Feedback

At the planning stage, it is important to decide how you will organise the wealth of data that your survey will produce. Your senior leaders will want to know the important headlines: engagement scores, top and bottom 10 results, significant variances from benchmark norms or historical data. Your team leaders will want to see these headlines, plus detailed answers for their teams, and comparisons to other departments. Anonymity must be assured by only showing aggregated data to a minimum number of respondents (People Insight typically recommends a minimum of 8 respondents).

External benchmark comparisons will help set your scores in context and give you an idea of how you compete. However internal comparisons can arguably be more valuable, as you can take learnings from a department that scores highly on, for example 'My last appraisal meeting was useful in helping me do my job better' and apply them to a low scoring department on the same measure.

As the survey process itself is an opportunity to engage your employees, it is essential to plan how you will communicate the results of the survey promptly, sharing the good and the bad results to maintain transparency and trust. Follow a similar process to your pre-survey communications, e.g. start with senior leader feedback sessions, cascading the headlines at Town Hall meetings, followed up with manager-led departmental discussions. Consider also providing an online portal or emailed reports to individuals.



Stage 4: Action Planning

Action planning is the most critical stage of the survey process; there is no point in making the effort to find out how engaged your staff are if you don't plan to celebrate successes and set actions for areas of improvement. When planning your project, make sure you have a concentration of resources at this crucial time to move quickly from digesting results to deciding on actions. Try to incorporate the actions into existing projects, business and people plans for an integrated approach.

Action planning Checklist

- Schedule action planning workshops at each appropriate level in advance
- Make sure your survey supplier provides results in an actionable format
- Appoint a good workshop facilitator to channel energies into decision making
- Empower teams to create their own celebrations and actions at a local level
- Encourage best practice sharing workshops so teams can share scores and learn from each other what they do to achieve them
- Continue with internal communications, to ensure employees know which actions have been prioritised across the organisation

Stage 5: Review

It is important to review progress against the actions set periodically, particularly as new, hot topics inevitably come along to replace the energy devoted to the employee engagement survey process. A good way to ensure this happens is to set up communication milestones: report progress against actions through your online news page or blog, or regular newsletter, and report back to leadership teams / departmental teams on a monthly basis. Schedule pulse surveys, typically undertaken with a small sub group of staff looking at problem areas, to check progress between major surveys. Before you know it, you will be ready to consider the next survey cycle, which organisations typically undertake on an annual basis.

Sounds like a lot of work?

The survey process described above may sound daunting; with significant effort, time and budget required. However it can be efficiently managed by engaging senior leaders from the outset, keeping the survey on the internal comms radar, and critically, appointing a supplier who can help with all aspects of the survey process.



People Insight are specialists with over 20 years' experience in employee engagement and a great reputation for delivering a professional and responsive service. We have helped organisations big and small plan hundreds of surveys. We listen to your needs & create a bespoke solution to fit any budget. We offer practical advice on all aspects of the survey cycle, and because we specialise in engagement, we don't have other resources factored into our pricing.

Our employee engagement expertise includes:

- Running senior management briefings on the value of employee engagement
- Facilitating focus groups to capture staff imagination
- Advising on internal communications, from low tech to the latest social networking solutions
- Helping our clients to achieve excellent survey response rates (e.g. average 79% response rate online)
- Providing clear and easy to interpret reports
- Delivering feedback and action planning sessions that drive decision making with the people who can make a difference
- Benchmarking against all sectors, giving you the most comprehensive result, or against more specific subgroups such as company size, or industry sector
- Facilitating inter-client collaboration so organisations can share results and how they have made a difference on a 1:1 basis, via our LinkedIn group, or at our Engagement Factory events.

Whether you are considering running an employee engagement survey for the first time, or you are looking for a more impactful, cost effective approach, contact us today on **0203 142 6511** or enquiry@peopleinsight.co.uk to find out how easy it is to get started with People Insight.

Contact Us

Tel: +44 (0)203 142 6511
Barley Mow Business Centre,
Barley Mow Passage,
London W4 4PH

People Insight 

enquiry@peopleinsight.co.uk