

8 Tips for Employee Pulse Survey Success from Ruth McCammont, Nurture Communications

Employee voice, or providing employees with the opportunity to communicate about what they feel is important and see that their opinions count, is a key enabler of business performance. It has a huge role to play in engaging employees and shaping company culture.

Employee surveys are one of the mechanisms used by organisations to encourage their employees to speak up and have their say. They can provide powerful insights into what's working well, what isn't and what might be missing in the workplace.

Over the last five years or so, there's been a notable rise in the use of pulse surveys to elicit feedback from employees. Why? Because employee engagement underpins business performance and it matters big time. So, it's no longer enough to confine the measure of employee engagement to an annual survey. The approach is now far more 'always on' and the use of short and frequent pulse surveys is contributing to organisations stepping up to the mark. If done right, pulse surveys can:

- encourage open communication
- act as a frequent reminder that senior management value employee feedback
- enable organisations to nip issues in the bud
- increase positivity and happiness in the workplace
- allow for an analysis of improvements over time

Just like many of you reading this post, I've participated in a fair few employee pulse surveys in my time-some good, some bad and some plain ugly! As an internal communicator, I've also had the pleasure of being on 'the other end' of pulse surveys, successfully leading audience specific and company-wide surveys for global organisations. My experience has taught me some valuable lessons around how to increase the likelihood of pulse survey success.

So, without further ado, here's my top eight tips:

Customise Your Survey: ensure you tailor your questions to address topics which are most critical to achieving your current business goals and objectives.

Get Senior Management Buy In: I can't emphasise enough how crucial this is. Involve senior leaders right from the get-go and remember employees are far more likely to respond if they believe that senior management are behind the survey, see the value of it and are prepared to act upon the feedback.

Communicate, Communicate, Communicate: prepare clear and compelling pre launch, launch, survey reminder and post launch communications. Make employees aware of the what, why, when and highlight how important their unique contribution is. And one thing that's often forgotten...remember to thank your employees for their participation at the survey close!

Keep It Short & Simple: aim for no more than 10 questions and keep language simple and concise. Employees are busy and attention spans are short. Ensure your survey is as quick and easy to complete as possible, so that your employees see it through to the end and return for more later.

Keep It Anonymous: if you want open, honest feedback don't make your employees reveal who they are. Reassure your employees that there is no way of identifying them as individuals. If you plan to include demographic questions which identify the participant at a geographic or functional level, ensure you clarify that local reporting will not take place if there are fewer than a set number of respondents in each group.

Provide Timely Feedback: don't be slack when it comes to sharing the survey results. Assign a dedicated resource (either in-house or agency) to prepare your reports, analyse the data and prep your post-survey communications. The quicker you get the results out to your employees the better. Leave it too long and you risk your employees switching off and thinking you don't value their feedback.

Be Honest: shine the spotlight on strengths and weaknesses within the organisation. Hold your hands up to what's not working well, it'll help to build trust and integrity and enable you to focus on what really matters to your employees. Attempt a cover-up and they'll see right through it.

Act on the Results & Update Employees: target the top 2 to 3 areas of concern and take action. Remember to provide your employees with on-going updates...do this and they'll realise that you really have listened.