



An engaged employee is a productive one.

LEARN HOW TO PUT TOGETHER A SURVEY THAT WILL YIELD VALUABLE INSIGHTS TO HELP IMPROVE THE WORKPLACE.

Conducting an employee survey is a great way to understand issues and improve productivity in your company.

“Any organization that cares deeply about their business, their employees and their organization should have an employee engagement strategy,” says Trent Burner, vice president of research at the Society for Human Resource Management.



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Establish a Project Plan

Create a timeline for the survey process, outlining time to structure the survey, narrow down key areas of focus, write it, get employees prepared and deploy.

It's best practice to conduct an employee engagement survey once a year, but exactly when depends on your company and its goals. You'll also want to consider your organization's size.

“If you're a small organization, it might not be arduous at all. But it can be a long process if you're a medium to large organization, or if you are running multiple locations in multiple states,” Burner says. Large companies may want to shoot for a project plan of nine to 10 months.





Structure the Survey

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An effective survey contains both quantitative and qualitative questions. Quantitative questions are answered on a rating scale — usually “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree” — which lets you analyze results numerically and compare answers with industry averages. Qualitative questions are open-ended and leave room for participants to write a response.

“You want to make sure you have the quantitative questions to really pinpoint the problem areas and prioritize. And you need the qualitative to be able to understand what’s going on and what to do about it,” says Bill Freund, vice president of marketing and business development at CustomInsight, which creates surveys for customers.



Ask the Right Questions

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“At a high level, look at two main areas: engagement with the organization and engagement with the managers,” Freund says.

As you write questions, keep them geared specifically toward employee engagement. For example, ask questions that help reveal their level of motivation and willingness to go above and beyond, such as if they are passionate about their work or how committed they are to their work.

Avoid questions that gauge employee happiness, because engagement is not the same as satisfaction. High satisfaction does not always correlate with high performance, but strong employee engagement does.

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Write Efficiently

Keep questions simple and focused. Use neutral language, avoid leading questions, and keep the vocabulary straightforward so you don't confuse participants.

For example, avoid a question like, "Are there too many staff for a company our size?" Ask, "Is our number of staff appropriate for a company of our size?"

Precision is important when asking questions, Freund says. "If they're vague or overly general, then the information provided in response may not be specific and actionable."

Consider the length of the survey as well.

"Keep the survey short enough so that people give it adequate attention. I suggest keeping it close to 50 items," Freund says.



5

Foster Employee Participation

Without enough respondents, the results of the survey won't be an accurate reflection of your workplace.

To encourage participation, send out a message from leadership to get employees' attention, one that reminds them of the survey's goal and its benefits: solving key issues within the company.

“The more employees understand that they have a voice that is heard, the more willing they are to show up every day and give their all,” Burner says.



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Help Employees Feel Safe Being Honest

Ensure anonymity, either by not asking for names on the survey or by hiring a third party to collect and analyze the data for you.

“The survey results are best when they’re honest. To foster that candor, you need to provide some assurance that they can speak without concern, without retribution. If they express something that’s negative, they don’t have to worry about that hurting them in any way,” Freund says.





Deploy the Survey

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In the days before your deployment date, send a reminder email about the survey with a deadline to complete it.

If possible, provide the survey in multiple mediums. Leave printed versions at a convenient location in the office, and then email a version to anyone who is not in the office. As employees take the survey, be ready to answer any questions that may arise.

Be transparent about what you plan to do with the results. “What disengages people is, ‘I answered the survey, and it’s just part of this black box. No one came and told me the results, what we’re going to work on and how we’re going to get it done,’” Burner says.

Tell employees when you expect to analyze the data and that you will keep them informed of any action plans.

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