

# Ultimate Guide to Workplace Surveys



# Introduction

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Workplace surveys are one of the most common tools used to sense employee pulse and to learn what is important to employees. They are generally aimed to measure satisfaction levels, concerns and confidence at work. Often these surveys also include free text fields which allows room for comments and suggestions. These surveys, therefore, provide hidden insights on specific as well as broad issues that go unnoticed by management.

*“Measurement is the first step that leads to control and eventually to improvement. If you cannot measure something, you cannot understand it. If you cannot understand it, you cannot control it. If you cannot control it, you cannot improve it.”*

**– H. James Harrington**



# Five reasons to conduct employee surveys

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## 1. Measure engagement

One common trait that differentiates a successful employee from a frustrated employee is the level of engagement. Employee surveys are the primary tool used to measure employee engagements. Given that engagement is such an abstract thing to measure, key drivers that can be measured are level of training, incentive program, salaries and benefits, job role, leadership, and environment.



## 2. Provide a platform for interaction

Surveys are open platform for feedback as it provides an avenue for employees to drive change and provide their opinion on myriad of issues. Involving employees in decision making makes them feel important and therefore drives motivation.



### 3. Increase the engagement

Measuring engagement is just the first step. Leaders must strive to work on the pain points and insights from the surveys. These surveys will alone not raise engagement levels unless management works on the enabling points that comes out from the surveys.



### 4. Growth of the organization

Look at surveys as first-hand indicator of what is working and what is wrong in the organization. They provide tangible goals for leadership to work on, hence directly linked to the growth of the organizations.



### 5. Compare yourself to Industry

Surveys are great tool for benchmarking your organization to the competition and norms in the industry. You can compare results from your survey to industry wide results to gain an understanding of your strengths and weaknesses.



# Common Types Of Workplace Surveys

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## Engagement surveys

Conducted once or twice a year for all employees and measures finer aspects of how employees look at the workplace. Engagement is directly linked to productivity and therefore linked with a company's overall performance. These surveys often contain complex questions and are repeated over a period to see an evolution of the company's performance levels.

- Key variables to measure using these surveys are leadership and communication compensation and benefits, recognition program, wellness, work life balance, culture, and personal development.
- Types of questions you can ask in this survey are:

- *Do you feel valued at work?*
- *How frequently does your manager recognize your efforts?*
- *Do you have adequate access to learning and development tools?*
- *Do you believe that the management provides you enough autonomy to work independently?*

*“People may take a job for more money,  
but they often leave it for more recognition.”*

**- Bob Nelson**

Employee engagement surveys can be conducted with **holistic employee engagement survey tools** that help with continuous real time insights helps organizations discover problems before they lead to issues like attrition or poor performance.

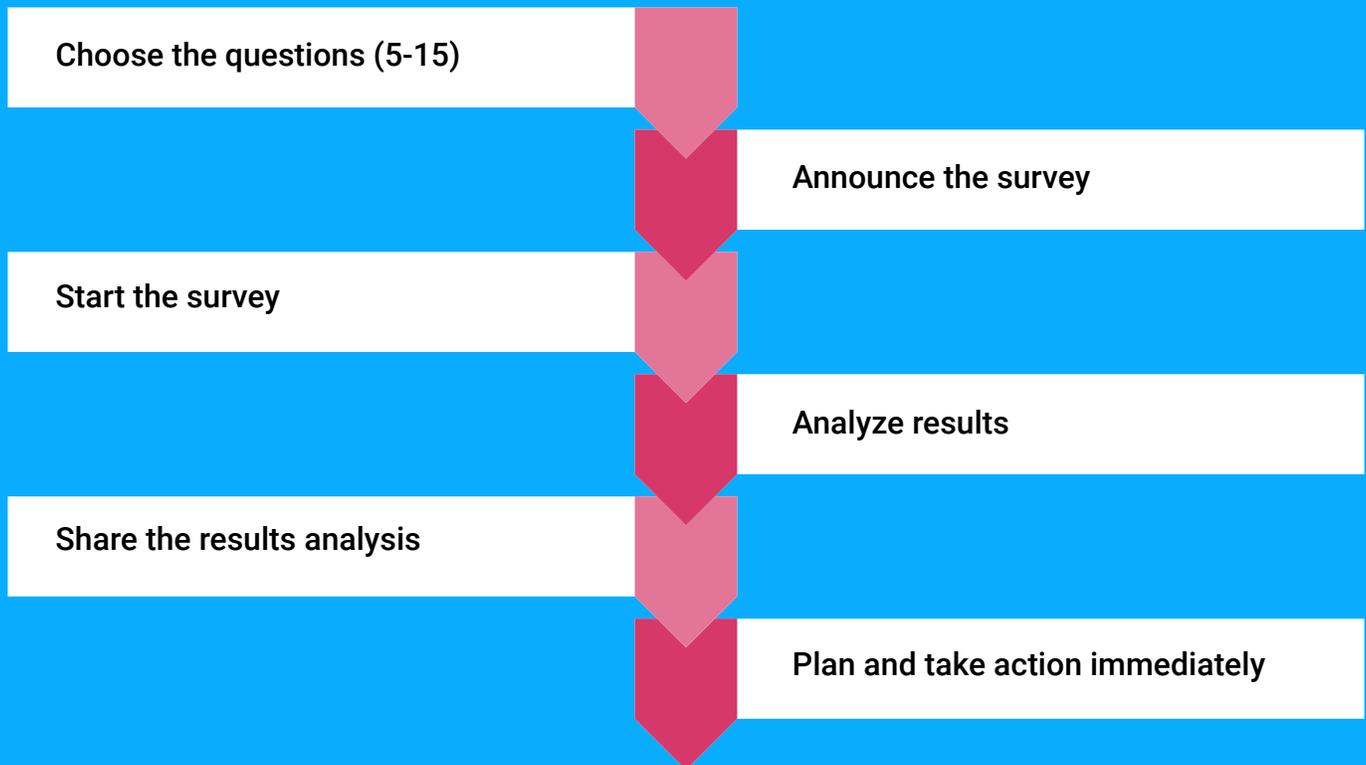
## **Pulse surveys**

Short surveys conducted frequently by department or on project basis allows real-time indicators for HR leaders to act immediately on ongoing developments in organizations.

- The pulse survey typically consists of 5-15 questions tailored for the target department. These surveys are easy to answer and can be completed in 3-5 mins only.
- Key questions to ask in these surveys are:

- *Is the senior management genuinely interested in your opinion and ideas?*
- *How effective is the coordination and communication between departments?*
- *Does your manager encourage you to take new initiatives and bring new ideas?*
- *Is there a work life balance in your current work?*
- *How likely are you to recommend your friend to this organization?*

# 6 steps in designing employee pulse surveys



eNPS is a north star metric for employee experience & engagement and can be easily administered through survey tools like Xoxoday's Empulse to uncover details of the eNPS results & identify what makes employees advocates or detractors through a follow up engagement survey.

## Satisfaction surveys/Employee Morale Survey

Although engagement and satisfaction are often used interchangeably these days. Satisfaction refers to the state of happiness and content at work. On the other hand, engagement is mainly about productivity and passion for work. The objective of satisfaction survey therefore is to measure success of tangible and intangible perks offered by the company vis-à-vis the industry norms.

- Key variable to measure using pulse surveys are autonomy, perks, salaries, creativity, management style and work life balance.
- These annual surveys are very extensive and consists of 60+ questions.
- These surveys are best used to get an exact image of what propels workers to remain with the organization, to be faithful to the organization and to accomplish their true potential.
- Key questions to ask in these surveys are:

- *Do you like the company's culture?*
- *Do you feel connected to your colleagues?*
- *Do you feel we are a dynamic organization?*
- *Is your feedback valued here?*
- *What is the primary source of company news for you?*
- *Do you feel that the management is transparent?*
- *Is the work distribution equitable in your team?*
- *Do you have adequate opportunities for advancement in your career here?*
- *Is your job role clearly defined?*
- *Are you happy at work?*

## Training Surveys

From new entrant training to offsite training programs, successful organizations spend a significant percentage of its budget on ongoing growth of its employees. However, not all training avenues are taken seriously by employees and most of the time, employees find them boring and repetitive. Training surveys not just reveal the quality but also the importance and impact a training program has on day-to-day work. These surveys are also important to understand which trainers are effective and which modules are popular in the organization.

- Did the content of the training meet your expectations?
- Was the trainer able to effectively answer your question?
- On a scale of (1-5; 1 = unacceptable, 5 = Outstanding), how do you rate the content and relevance of the training?
- On a scale of (1-5; 1 = unacceptable, 5 = Outstanding), how do you rate the instructor?
- How frequently should we conduct these training sessions?
- Will you recommend this training to your colleagues?
- What are your suggestions to improve the training?



## New Hire Survey (also known as onboarding survey)

Managing first impression is key to overall employee morale and journey. New hire survey assesses the effectiveness of the interview process, buddy program and other new entrant training. It also tells you about your firm's competitive strength and effectiveness of hiring channels. This survey is generally light-weight and consists of 8-15 questions that takes about 5-10 mins to answer. You can break this survey into three parts:

- First impression survey (conducted within the first week of joining)
- Clarity of role survey (conducted 4-8 weeks) after joining to gauge employee's understanding of culture, teams, and purpose.
- Performance survey (2-6 months after joining) to gauge employee's performance and trajectory for growth.

*Onboarding surveys are not just about asking questions but asking the right questions. This is what creates successful onboarding. The feedback received from the survey should be part of a strategic outcome - one that is revised to improve the new hire's experience with carefully curated surveys.*



## 360° Survey

Also known as multi-rater feedback, 360° feedback provides evaluation from people who work with the employee. The rang providers could be managers, clients, peers, and juniors. 360° feedback improves self-awareness and provides a balanced view of employee's performance from cross department colleagues and clients. 360° surveys are done anonymously and hence a great way to find out one's blind spots. 90% of Fortune 500 companies use 360° reviews with their employees.

- 360° reviews should only be used to help team members as a development tool. This study should not be utilized as a rating instrument, and particularly not for choosing advancements or raises.



*“There is one thing we’ve personally seen  
that profoundly and consistently changes lives—  
what’s generally referred to as the 360°-degree feedback process.”*

**- Jack Zenger and Joseph**



## Culture-based survey

Each business has its own culture and values. They define the quality of talent companies attract and retain. Unlike satisfaction and engagement surveys, culture-based surveys measure long term values and how employees rate companies' performance to those values. These cultural values are key competitive advantages that are almost impossible to replicate, hence measuring and improving the culture is key to organization's long-term success.

- Key questions to include here are:

- *What would you evaluate our present organization culture?*
- *Do you feel motivated by the company's culture?*
- *Which areas of the company's culture are critical and must not be altered?*
- *How are the cultural things that you would want to be changed/improved?*
- *On a scale of 1 to 10, how do you rate the culture of collaboration in the organization?*

## Exit survey

You offer the best perks, salaries, and autonomy in the industry but still some high performing talent leaves the company every year. The loss is very difficult to fill but to gain a perspective on why these individuals started looking for another job and what could have been done to stop them can be understood by a well-designed exit survey.

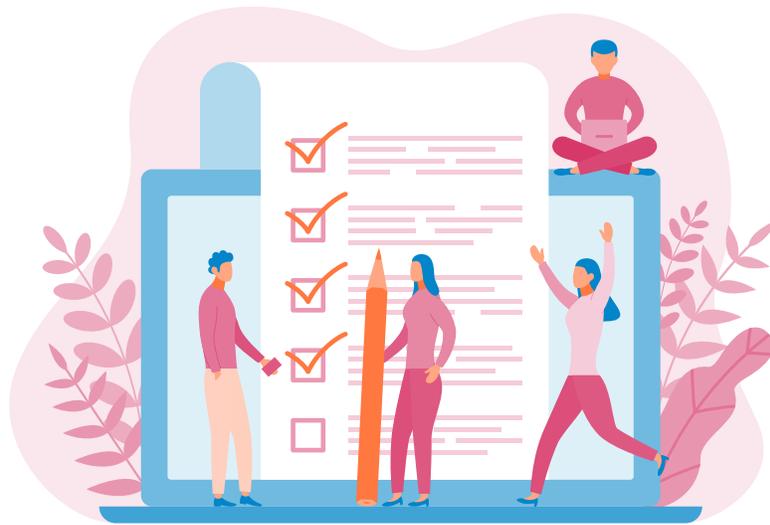
- Key questions to include here are:

- *What triggered you to start looking for another job?*
- *What changes in our organization will attract you back to this firm?*
- *Was your efforts and contributions fully recognized here?*
- *What are things you liked about this organization?*
- *What can the organization improve on?*

*"The goal of an employee survey is to make sure everyone feels safe in filling them out."*

**- Brandon Gaille**





## Timing and frequency of surveys

Annual employee surveys were invented about 100 years ago around the 1920s when big corporations started practicing asking people once every year about the workplace and job satisfaction. The attitude surveys were in fact developed during World War II, as a tool to gauge soldier's morale.

Conducting frequent surveys alone never increases engagement but working on the results do. Experts believe that engagement and cultural surveys that are aimed to measure long term HR goals are best conducted annually.

Surveys are very similar to doctor's visits. We go annually for an overall health check-up but is that enough?

Pulse survey or training surveys are like ongoing health matters and caters to tactical issues or on a subset of employee groups.

### **Length of the survey:**

- *Monthly pulse survey: less than 3 mins*
- *Satisfaction survey: less than 10 mins*
- *Annual/bi-annual Engagement Survey – less than 20 mins*

# Issues and guidelines

## CONTENT

- Focus on observable behavior
- Avoid thoughts and motives
- Measure items that can be verified

## FORMAT

- Keep sections unlabeled
- Don't make questions mandatory
- Similar items together
- Keep demographic questions at the end

## LANGUAGE

- Avoid terms with strong associations
- Change wordings for 33% of questions so that answers are negative
- Avoid merging questions

## ADMINISTRATION

- Keep it anonymous
- Analyze results by department
- Max survey time should be 20 mins

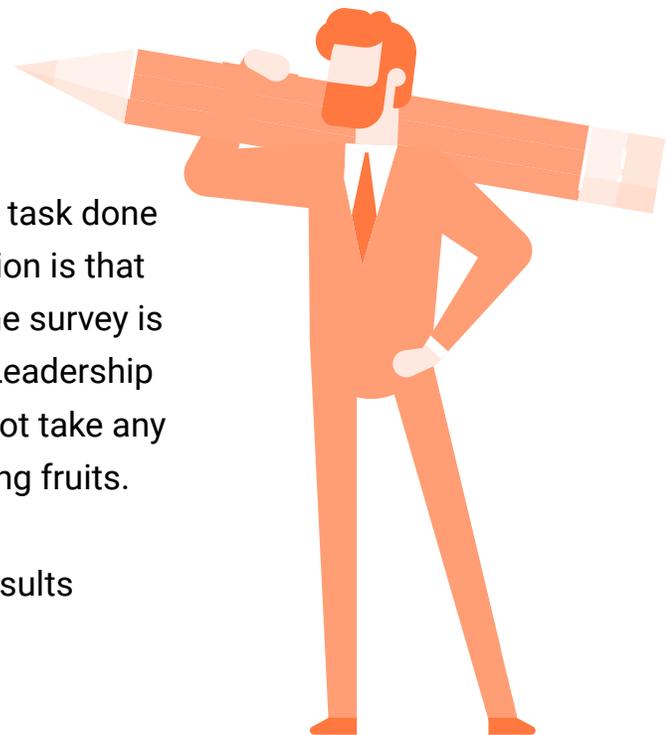


## Survey are too long:

One of the biggest issues with surveys today is that about 50% of employees do not fill them up because they are too long and time consuming.

## Lack of confidence:

Sometimes surveys are also seen as a repetitive task done just a tick in the box. Hence, the general perception is that the management will not take any action after the survey is over. A recent survey of HR executives done by Leadership IQ shows that ~60% of organizations either do not take any action based on results or just look at low hanging fruits. Another survey of middle managers in Europe shockingly reveal that 27% never even see the results of these annual surveys.



## Organizations value customers and reputation:

Some organizations do not read or value these surveys because the issues raised in these surveys are expensive to fix. Some even ignore these as they do not affect their customers. They would rather investigate issues highlighted on Glassdoor as it affects reputation and therefore the organization's abilities to hire good talent.

## Employees believe that the surveys are not anonymous:

Surveys are rarely truly anonymous, and employees know it. This is probably one of the biggest barriers and organizations must make it anonymous and use external platforms to boost further confidence for this.

## Statistical Significance:

Using a scientifically tested survey is the first step to a right analysis. Scientific surveys questions are well-thought and built with an eye for validity, reliability, generalizability, and replicability. This is important because you would want to compare the survey results with past year results and between teams.

- *Choose direct, simple, unbiased, and unambiguous questions*
- *Do not ask leading questions*
- *For smaller organization, people filling the survey vastly impact the results its reliability*
- *Dichotomous answers (yes, no; agree- disagree) are great for precise data only – they should not be used for qualitative/behavioral assessment. For instance, asking an employee about their happiness cannot be judged with yes or no.*
- *When using Likert scale, stick to a 5-point system*
- *Do not overwhelm respondents with multiple rating matrix questions*
- *When using frequency scale, ensure that the scales sequentially ordered and easy to understand*
- *Use a forced ranking scale for prioritizing products, training etc.*



# 15 Questions you must ask in employee surveys

1. Are you planning to continue working here in the next 12 months?
2. What makes you stay at this organization?
3. Given another offer by a competitive firm, will you move?
4. Why do you like or dislike your job and position?
5. Do you feel the management listens to you?
6. Will you recommend your friends/family to work here?
7. Does the organization provide enough resources needed to do your job efficiently?
8. Do you trust your manager?
9. What qualities do you value in the organization?
10. What would you do if you become the CEO for one day?
11. Do you think the company lives by its values?
12. What are the things we should not change?
13. Are you proud to work here?
14. Are you satisfied with your salary and benefits?
15. Are there problems with the culture?

# Case Studies



SAP, one of the most successful software company in the world, identified employee health and well-being as a part of its key business strategy.

To gauge the effectiveness of several initiatives it took for employee's well-being, SAP Introduced yearly survey called Business Health Culture Index (BHCI). In 2014, this survey based index was correlated with employee engagement, employee retention, and operating profit.

~ 72,000 employees participated in 2018 with a response rate of 73%. The SAP Integrated Report shows that with 1% increase in the index delivers a \$90-\$100 Million (EU) impact on their operating profit.



Facebook, one of the world's most renowned tech organization, applied several predictive analytics models about employee behavior. However, when it comes to employee engagement, surveys are integral part of the way behaviors are measured.

Facebook's employee turnover forecasts done by machine learning are only half as accurate as forecast by surveys. Those who do not fill the survey are 2.6 times more likely to leave in next 6 months.

95% of people complete engagement surveys, ~75% fill the annual diversity survey and ~50% fill the benefits survey, which reflects that employees value having a say if their suggestions are not implemented.

# Tips for increasing participation

You might have the best intentions and willingness to act but getting a critical number of responses is key to accuracy of the survey. Hence, you should design a communication plan that motivates employees to participate in the survey without making it mandatory.

- **Keep it short:** Average response rate for surveys that are lesser than 7 minutes is ~80% while surveys which are shorter than 12 questions result in response rates of ~83%
- **Make it interesting and share the purpose:** You can start with ditching boring templates and use colorful graphics for the survey. You can even ask a few leaders to record a video about the purpose and importance of the survey.
- **Make it independent:** People leading the survey and platform used vastly affect participation. Honest feedback is often only shared when employees feel confident about the anonymity of the platform and trusts the leader
- **Turn it into a small competition:** Depending on the company's culture and importance of the survey, you can gamify the survey experience. Small rewards are magical.



# Final Thoughts

Surveys are probably the best tools available for getting a pulse of employee's engagement and motivation but conducting a survey is only the first step towards greater engagement. The biggest failure of a survey happens when a survey is conducted before any action is taken for the last survey conducted. Hence, even before running a survey, create a plan to act on the results and implement changes that are visible to others.

Some organizations even share the results and action taken from previous surveys as a show of transparency and trust to the employees.

Employee experience solutions like **Xoxoday Empuls** helps companies measure, analyse and improve the various factors that affect engagement, productivity, turnover and performance of employees and Build a people first culture with continuous employee feedback & continuous improvement with custom built surveys for employee lifecycle milestones like onboarding, exit, wellbeing, diversity & inclusion.



At Xoxoday, we deeply understand the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and engagement drivers of people, be it an employee, supplier, contract staff, gig or consumer. We bring simplicity and continuity to a complex, everyday problem.



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