

How to successfully deploy an employee engagement survey

OBJECTIVES OF THIS RESOURCE

The purpose of this resource is threefold:

1. To show you why **the best companies measure employee engagement**
2. To provide you with a [template survey to use](#)
3. To walk you through **how to implement and deploy** an employee engagement survey within your company

Engaged employees increase productivity and bottom-line performance while reducing turnover and costs

Companies with engaged employees outperform their peers in the following:

Company performance

21%
Greater profitability

20%
Higher sales

28%
Less shrinkage

Employee productivity

17%
Higher productivity

59%
Lower turnover

41%
Less absenteeism

An employee engagement survey is an important indicator of company health

- Employee engagement is how valued employees feel in their everyday work, and whether employees feel invested in their company's mission and success. Employee engagement surveys **measure how connected employees are to the outcomes of your company.**
- Unlike employee satisfaction surveys, which tend to ask employees about benefits, employee engagement surveys **solicit employee feedback on the overall work environment, trust in leadership, and feedback mechanisms.**
- An employee engagement survey ties to specific performance outcomes, so it gives a pulse read of current engagement levels and offers a **good way to spot areas for improvement** to increase engagement levels.

We've designed an employee engagement survey for you to use that covers a spectrum of questions

Types of questions

- Questions are a mix of “indicators,” or questions that gauge overall engagement levels, and questions where direct action can be taken to improve engagement levels
 - *Example of an indicator question: whether the company mission makes employees feel that their job is important*
 - *Example of an action question: whether employees feel that siloes exist within the company*
- The majority of questions are rating questions based on a 5-point likert scale, but also includes some open-ended questions to collect more qualitative feedback
 - We find that a 5-point scale encourages survey participation (less choices means it's faster to complete) and it gathers the right amount of detail
- ***We have added a gender-identifying question (i.e., “which gender do you identify with”) at the top of the survey to assess whether gender-based patterns arise in how employees are responding***

Categories of questions

- Our survey evaluates a number of key dimensions:
 - Organizational vision
 - Communication and feedback mechanisms
 - Role satisfaction
 - Employee enthusiasm
 - Managerial effectiveness

Before launching an employee engagement survey, make sure that you have the right pieces in place

Where do I start?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Use this survey that we've designed</u>
Who should lead our survey?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It's best to use an external, 3rd party to enforce confidentiality, but if that's too pricey or not accessible, select one person – often, a trusted and accountable internal lead – to deploy, collect, and anonymize results.
Who should be surveyed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All employees – no matter level, location or position – should be surveyed.
What are our survey ground rules?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Responses should be anonymous and confidential.

Section 1: Qualitative questions

Qualitative Questions (Part I/II)

1. On a scale of 0-10 (with 0 being least likely and 10 being most likely), how likely are you to recommend Company X as a place to work?

This question allows you to measure your **"Employee Net Promoter Score."**

2. Why or why not?

There is a strong correlation between employees who feel happy and valued at work and those who use positive words to describe their company's culture.

3. What motivated you to come work for Company X?

4. What keeps you at Company X today?

It's not uncommon for these questions to be different; understanding why people are joining your company and why they are staying will help you improve how you hire and retain good talent.

5. What three words would you use to describe Company X's culture?

Section 2: Organizational vision

Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being “strongly agree” and 1 being “strongly disagree.”

6. I am informed about the direction of the organization.

7. I believe Company X’s mission and vision are clearly defined.

8. I am proud to work for Company X.

9. Day-to-day decisions here demonstrate that quality and improvement are top priorities.

10. The mission and purpose of Company X makes me feel that my job is important.

11. Any other feedback on organizational vision?

This question is the top of the hierarchy of needs when it comes to alignment, so asking it is important to measure how well you’re communicating your strategic goals and objectives.

This question is called the “barbecue test” - would an employee be proud to tell someone where they worked? Scores on this question reflect levels of brand and mission affiliation and can give you insight into how your external brand is viewed by people internally.

This question is among the top drivers of engagement, particularly in high-performing, financially successful companies.

Section 3: Employee engagement (I/II)

Employee engagement: Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being “strongly agree” and 1 being “strongly disagree.”

12. I know what is expected of me in my job.

13. I have the tools, information and resources I need to do my job.

14. I feel my knowledge, skills, and abilities are aligned with my position.

15. My job gives me a sense of accomplishment.

16. I feel like I know our customer well.

17. I am motivated to contribute more than what is expected of me in my job.

19. I am motivated and encouraged to share information and resources openly across the organization.

Low scores here often highlight gaps in onboarding or ongoing management. If you score low on this question, it's important to address how knowledge is shared across the company.

Low scores on this question tend to signal when employees feel like the company does not have a clear promotion process, so could signal the need for the development of a role trajectory framework.

Employees feel more engaged if they feel like they know their customer, which gives them a greater sense of responsibility than their day-to-day work. This is an even more significant driver at impact-focused startups that target underserved customers.

This is a discretionary effort question that is getting at whether your company is motivating people to do their very best. In industries, like financial services, where tenure is low, this question is even more important.

Section 3: Employee engagement (II/II)

Employee engagement: Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being “strongly agree” and 1 being “strongly disagree.”

20. I feel comfortable expressing my ideas or concerns.

21. In the past year, I have had opportunities at work to learn and develop.

22. I feel respected as an individual.

23. I feel that employees of different backgrounds and personalities are valued.

24. If I were given the chance, knowing what I know now, I would reapply for my current job.

25. I see myself working for Company X one year from now.

26. Any other feedback on employee engagement?

Employees need to feel psychologically safe in their work environment to be able to thrive. Maintaining a culture of respect is part of this.

Learning and development is a consistent driver of employee engagement across industries, so how your people respond to this question is important.

Building a workplace culture that prioritizes belonging and inclusion is critical to engagement.

Together these questions give you a picture of present and future commitment and so you can calculate an overall retention index.

Section 4: Organizational communication

Organizational communication: Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being “strongly agree” and 1 being “strongly disagree.”

27. I have the information I need to do my job.

28. I feel comfortable giving feedback to my manager.

29. Communication between the management team and people at my level is very good.

30. There is adequate communication and collaboration between teams.

31. My team members are able to bring up problems and tough issues.

32. Any other feedback on organizational communication?

As seed stage startups grow, scores for these questions tend to decrease, so these 6 questions could serve as a short pulse check.

Employees should feel safe to talk openly and honestly. By removing fear, you help employees remain engage.

If scores are low for this question, you should further probe the problem: is it because employees don't expect management to listen or because they're not sure where to bring an opinion up?

At high-growth, fast-paced startups, it can be easy for siloes to form, so this question can highlight whether efforts should be made to drive cross-collaboration.

Asking if a team communicates well is tricky because it can be broken down many ways (e.g. 1:1s, project meetings, team meetings, etc...), so asking whether anyone can bring up a tough issue helps determine whether the team feels empowered to speak up.

Section 5: Organizational effectiveness

Organizational effectiveness: Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being “strongly agree” and 1 being “strongly disagree.”

33. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined within our organization.

Low scores on this question indicate that more attention should be paid to define deliverables, processes, and priorities across teams and roles.

34. Our organization leverages individual strengths.

For employees to be engaged, they need to be evolving and growing. This question gives you insight into how well you're utilizing your employees to their full potential.

35. I feel part of an effective organization.

36. I believe that leadership takes my feedback seriously.

This question helps to measure how valued an employee feels at work. It is equally as important to implement feedback when it is received.

37. Any other feedback on organizational effectiveness?

Section 6: Managerial effectiveness

Managerial effectiveness: Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being “strongly agree” and 1 being “strongly disagree.”

38. I believe that managers are held accountable for their actions, and the actions of their team.

39. I receive constructive feedback on my job performance.

40. I know what I need to be successful in my job.

41. In the past month, I have received recognition or positive feedback for doing good work.

42. My job gives me flexibility to meet the needs of both my work and personal life.

43. Any other feedback on managerial effectiveness?

Low scores are a signal that there is misalignment or misunderstanding on the individual level for what actions people can take to be successful. Setting OKRs or clarifying roles might solve for this.

If employees don't receive recognition, it's hard for them to stay motivated. Low scores indicate that employees are not feeling recognized for their work, and potentially, that they are unsure of the definition of success in their role.

Work-life balance is something that every company should be keeping an eye on. Like most other seed stage startups, this is probably something you can improve on with more flextime or vacation days.

Section 7: Qualitative questions

Qualitative questions (Part II/II)

44. What are the top three things that you would like Company X to continue to do?

45. What are the top three things that you would like Company X to start doing?

46. What are the top three things that you would like Company X to stop doing?

46. Who do you turn to when you have a work problem? _____

48. What are three values that you think would promote a strong and effective culture at Company X? _____

49. Any other feedback to provide that may have not been captured on this survey? _____

Responses to these questions tend to be on more tangible things that are directly actionable.

Having someone you can turn to at work has a direct link with employee engagement and productivity. Mentorship programs or "buddy" systems can help with this.

If people feel that you missed asking something in the survey, use that feedback to update your question set for your next survey.

When you're ready to deploy your employee engagement survey, communication is key

When to communicate	What to communicate	Who will drive communication
Pre-survey launch	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tell your employees what to expect and when. The survey shouldn't be a surprise and priming them to prepare for it will drive participation.• Share why you're launching the survey – what is the purpose of the survey and why now? Communicating the bigger picture will increase buy-in.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make sure the initial communication comes from the CEO and/or top leadership to show your commitment and to emphasize the importance of the survey results

Template Email for CEO to Send:

Dear team,

We're surveying all of [INSERT COMPANY NAME]. This survey will evaluate across 5 sections:

1. Organizational vision
2. Employee engagement
3. Org / team effectiveness
4. Communication
5. Manager effectiveness

Responses will only be reviewed in aggregate (i.e., individual responses will be completely anonymized), so please be as honest as possible.

While the survey should not take longer than 10-15 minutes, this is an opportunity to make your thoughts heard and improve your workplace, so be sure to share your thoughts, feedback, and suggestions candidly.

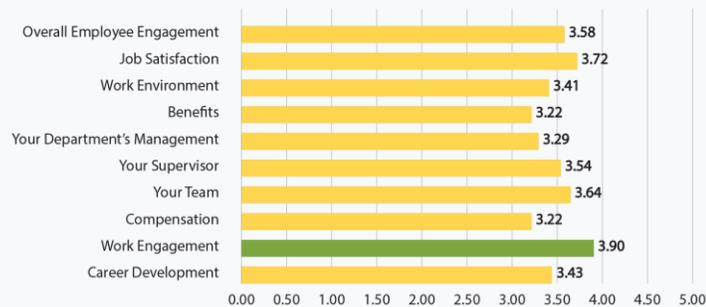
We will use this survey to improve organizational culture, increase effectiveness and productivity, and provide a supportive, growth-focused, and collaborative work environment.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to reach out to [INSERT SPONSOR EMAIL].

Make sure communication is equally strong during and after survey launch

When to communicate	What to communicate	Who will drive communication
During survey launch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Duration of survey - try to keep it to 10-15 minutes max - Deadline to complete the survey - typically 1 week • Ground rules: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - That the survey is confidential - That only aggregated results will be shared with management and that feedback will be anonymized 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designate a survey leader – either a trusted person at the company or a 3rd party expert - to make sure there's one process owner
Post-survey launch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remind employees when the deadline is approaching • We've seen companies offer a raffle prize for those who participate, but reiterating the purpose of the survey should be enough – employees can only drive the change that they want to see by providing their feedback and completing the survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey leader

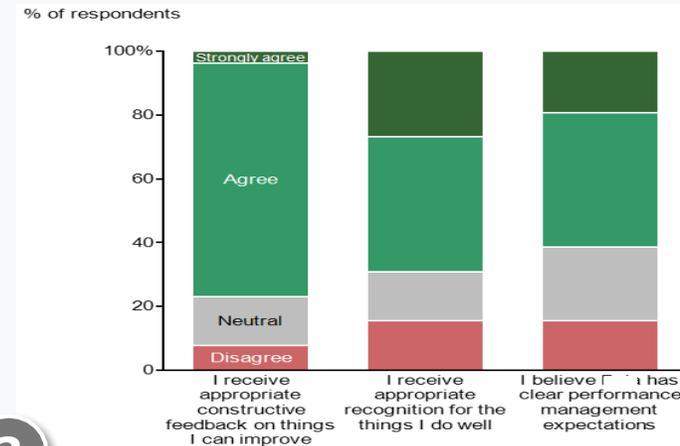
After collecting results, conduct a 2-part analysis of results to understand where you can drive change



1

AVERAGE SCORES

- Calculate by averaging the scores per question
- Pros:
 - Quick way to make sense of responses **across questions**
 - Helps get an **initial pulse read** on question response
 - Useful to **track trends** over time
- Cons:
 - Respondents often reluctant to express a strong opinion, so **responses gravitate to neutral midpoint**
 - Assumes emotional **distance between responses is the same**
 - Number **responses aren't actually numbers**, but a means of ranking responses; if numbers are replaced with letters, the idea of averages doesn't make sense



2

RESPONSE DISTRIBUTION

- There's mixed opinions here (t test or chi square) will give you the most comprehensive view, but **our recommendation is to display responses using a stacked bar chart**
- Pros:
 - Quick way to make sense of responses **within questions**
 - Makes it **easy to visualize the variability** of responses
 - **Shows where responses are polarizing** and require further analysis
- Cons:
 - **No common baseline**, so can be challenging to compare across questions
 - Don't show as much contrast as diverging bars, so can be **harder to compare Disagree, Neutral, and Agree percentages**

You'll gain deeper insights by combining your quantitative analysis and qualitative feedback

Tips for reviewing your qualitative feedback:

- **Dedicate enough time to reviewing all of the responses:** no matter the size of the your company, this analysis takes time and shouldn't be rushed
- **Use a word cloud to identify common themes across responses:** a visual representation will help you identify common words of solutions that could be overlooked in a tabular form
- **Listen to your employees:** take note of suggestions for improvement since these should feed into your action plan
- **Don't let perfect be the enemy of good and neglect the purpose of this survey:** it can get overwhelming combing through all the text, so make sure that you don't lose sight of the purpose of this survey – learning how employees really feel, *so you can take actions to increase employee engagement*

Addition of a gender identifying question to the survey (1/2)

Why it's important:

- Although companies are hiring more women at every level of their organizations, the **proportion of women in the global workforce is only ~32%**, and the **proportion of women in technical roles is only 23%**¹
- Women in tech were **disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic**, taking on more of the household chores & childcare responsibilities and experiencing greater degrees of burnout²
- Unequal gender representation in a company's workforce can lead to women finding it harder to:²
 - **Negotiate compensation**
 - **Achieve a healthy work-life balance**
 - **Prove their worth & achieve recognition**
 - **Request more flexible working hours to navigate childcare**
 - **Get promoted as quickly as their male counterparts**

Addition of a gender identifying question to the survey (2/2)

How gender-based employee assessments can help your organization become as friendly of a work environment as possible:

- Allow you to **identify gender-based patterns in employee responses**
 - For example, are women having a harder time achieving a healthy work-life balance than men? Or are they having a harder time communicating with their managers around tough topics like compensation and requesting flexible working hours?
- Ensure the **creation of an inclusive work environment**
- Establish more open communication channels, affinity groups, or mentorship programs

Use your survey results and analysis to build a prioritized list of next steps

EXAMPLE

Analyze survey results

- Identify takeaways from quantitative analysis, for example:
 - Employees want better communication and organizational effectiveness
 - Employees feel like they know our customer well and understand the company vision
 - Unequal distribution of responses for whether employees feel like they have opportunities for learning and development
 - Employees feel burnt out

Build list of potential initiatives

- Map potential next steps based on takeaways, for example:
 - Conduct monthly team-wide meetings
 - Develop annual OKRs
 - Continue weekly market visits
 - Continue spending time reviewing company vision in new employee onboarding
 - Provide budget for professional development
 - Host monthly “lunch and learns”
 - Bring in executive coach for office hours
 - Launch gym membership program
 - Implement work from home days

Create action plan

- Prioritize next steps based on ease of implementation, cost, and impact, for example:
 - Conduct monthly team-wide meetings
 - Develop annual OKRs
 - Continue weekly market visits
 - Continue spending time reviewing company vision in new employee onboarding
 - Host monthly “lunch and learns”

Providing employees with feedback on the survey results and action plan will drive buy-in

<p>What to communicate post-survey</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey responses – Not all companies will feel comfortable sharing the full survey results, so if this is the case, show your employees an abridged and aggregated view of select questions. • Your thoughts – Make the survey human. Open up to your employees and tell them what you learned from the survey. If answers surprised you, be honest. This openness can elicit greatest openness among your team. • Next steps – It’s important to communicate how the survey will lead to results, so share your action plan. Make sure employees know exactly how and when you’ll carry out next steps.
<p>How to communicate post-survey</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior management in-person – We recommend having a smaller meeting between senior management to initially digest the results and discuss next steps. These meetings can range between 1 hour to a full day, so build in time buffer to allow for rich discussion. • Team-wide in-person - After your senior management meeting, you should host a team-wide meeting or town hall to share some or all of the survey results. Make this meeting at least an hour to give employees time to ask questions and share additional feedback.
<p>What to communicate on an ongoing basis</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to share ongoing feedback about progress on your action plan. Share a short monthly employee pulse survey to get a quick check on ongoing engagement levels. • Conduct your employee engagement survey on an annual basis. As you start to run this survey every year, you’ll be able to compare trends and responses.
<p>How to communicate on an ongoing basis</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whatever works best for you and your team – depending on the size, location, and needs of your team, you can use email updates or team-wide meetings to continue to share progress. Make sure the cadence is regular and consistent – we find that monthly or quarterly often work best.

An employee engagement survey is just one piece of talent management

Other ways to gauge employee engagement:

- **Monthly pulse survey:** Employee engagement surveys should only be conducted on an annual basis – you don't want to exhaust your employees and it's important that you let time run its course for statistically relevant results – but a monthly 5-10 question survey can allow you to monitor high-level engagement levels among your employees.
- **Performance reviews:** Use reviews as a way to solicit feedback from employees on their performance, but also on the overall company management, communication, and engagement. [Read more in our performance management resource here.](#)
- **Team meetings:** Participation and collaboration during meetings can be a good indicator of engagement levels. Are employees speaking up and participating in discussion or are they on their computer and multitasking? There might be several reasons for the latter (an emergency, too many competing priorities, poor time management, etc...), but if you sense that employees are disengaged in meetings, it's worth probing a little deeper to understand why.
- **1:1s:** weekly meetings between managers and direct reports are a good opportunity to get employee feedback on the overall work environment, commitment to business outcomes, and how valued the he/she feels. **ACCION**

After running your annual employee engagement survey, use these questions for a monthly pulse check

Section 1

1. On a scale of 0-10 (with 0 being least likely and 10 being most likely), how likely are you to recommend Company X as a place to work?

2. Why or why not? _____

Section 2: Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being “strongly agree” and 1 being “strongly disagree.”

3 I feel like the work I do is adding value to the team and company as a whole.

4. I am satisfied with my work-life balance.

5. I feel inspired, motivated, and valued in my work.

6. We have fun working as a team.

7. We as a team are living our values.

8. We've addressed, as a team, the issues raised at our last check-in.

Section 3

9. Why or why not do you feel like the work you do is adding value to the team and company as a whole? Any examples you can share?

10. Why or why not do you satisfied with your work-life balance? Any examples you can share?

11. Why or why not do you feel inspired, motivated, and valued in your work? Any examples you can share?

12. Why or why not do we have fun working as a team? Any examples you can share?

13. Why or why not are we as a team are living our values? Any examples you can share?

14. Can you elaborate more on your ranking for “we've addressed, as a team, the issues raised at our last check-in?”

15. Any shout-outs or recognitions from the past month?

16. Any other thoughts or comments worth sharing?

Thank you