Employee Engagement Surveys
The Quick & Simple Guide
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Why Run Surveys?

Everyone Wins

Employee surveys: How useful are they? Perhaps you are asking this as a company who has never run surveys before, or as a company with an existing survey process, but wondering how to get more value out of them.

Top employers like Google, Amazon, Intel, agree: surveys are one of the most relevant, useful ways to understand and engage employees.

Of course, a survey does not magically improve engagement. Surveys need to be thoughtful and well-designed, actionable, and used in tandem with other good people management practices.

Done well, however, good surveys benefit everyone: employees, managers, and companies.
What Engagement Looks Like

“Engagement” can seem like a fuzzy term, but an engaged employee has specific behaviours and mindsets that result in a commitment to the company, and their work. In short, they care more. As a result, engaged employees take more initiative, are more productive, come up with better ideas, do better quality work, and support their team better.
What Engagement Looks Like

An Engaged Employee...

- Feels contributions matter, and a sense of accomplishment in work
- Values the contributions of peers
- Takes initiative on tasks
- Feels emotionally committed to the mission and purpose of work, and aligned with company goals
- Feels they have opportunities to learn and grow
- Is focused on progress, and how to become better at their work
- Feels supported to do their work by their peers and manager
Prioritizing Engagement

If you have good data on employee engagement and perspectives throughout your company, you can take meaningful steps to improve engagement by targeting the areas that matter most to your employees. The results:

**Retaining Talent**

Gallup has found that businesses whose employee engagement scores are in the bottom quarter, have 30-50% higher employee turnover.

Gallup also found that compared to those who are disengaged, employees who feel engaged are 87% less likely to leave.

**Productivity and Profit**

The Harvard Business Review found engaged employees have 31% higher productivity, and 37% higher sales.

According to Gallup, organizations with higher than average levels of employee engagement see 27% higher profits and 50% higher sales.

Overall, companies with highly engaged workforces outperformed peers by 147% in earnings per share.
“When people are financially invested, they want a return. When people are emotionally invested, they want to contribute.”

Simon Sinek, Founder of “Start With Why”
Why Run Surveys?

Employees

Communicate You Care

Work is relational, and no relationship survives with only one-way communication. Asking for feedback says “we care about you, your experiences, and your opinions.”

Increase Engagement

Involve the employee in the company and its strategic planning, and also give the company specific data on ways to further improve and thereby build engagement.

Surface the Positives

With the right framing, employee surveys are not just a space for employees to vent frustrations, but also to reflect on positive experiences.

Involve Them in Solutions

Ask employees not just what problems they see, but how they could be involved in making things better. Ask employees to provide ideas on solutions.

Give Them a Voice

When paired with action-oriented follow-up by companies and managers, surveys give employees a voice, and make them feel heard.

Contextualize

Once the survey is finished, release anonymized, easy-to-read results. This provides employees with some perspective.
Why Run Surveys?

Managers & Team Leads

Understand Team Needs

Surveys do not have to be deployed on a company-wide level. Team surveys give leaders insight into the specific sentiments and issues of their own people.

Become Better Leaders

By learning what employees experiences and needs are, leaders can better meet those needs through their own actions.

Check the “Pulse” of Teams

Surveys don’t have to be long and tedious. Short, selective “pulse” surveys can provide fast, powerful insights.

Measure the Impact

Assess how much value your initiatives are providing, whether it is a work-from-home program, or any other changes you have made.

Achieve Team Goals

Use anonymous surveys as a way to check in on goals the manager is aiming for (ex, team engagement) and non-anonymous surveys for team check-ins on goals the team is collectively working towards - for example, through frameworks like Objectives and Key Results (OKRS).
Why Run Surveys?
Companies

Gain Valuable Data

The best way to get an answer is usually to ask a question. Companies can gain insight on employees’ issues and sentiments through various behaviour-based tools, but for now, surveys still outperform them.

What employees don’t say is also valuable data: Facebook found that employees who don’t fill out their annual surveys are 2.6 times more likely to leave in the next 6 months.

Achieve Company Goals

Employees spend 2000 hours a year at work: they know a few things about your company! Surveys are a way to capture information companies can use to learn and grow, whether in engagement, management and leadership effectiveness, work environment, strategy, and more. Gain both high-level and granular takeaways.

Benchmark

Asking some industry standard survey questions (ex, the Employee Net Promoter Score) at regular time periods gives you a benchmark against other companies, and against yourself. This provides meaningful context as you seek to improve over time.
Survey vs. Behaviour Tools

At Facebook, *asking employees in a survey* how long they planned to stay was *twice as accurate* as forecasts made by leading machine-learning software.

Source: HBR
Different Survey Options
Survey Use Cases

Standard Engagement

**Length:** Between 20-30 questions

**Frequency:** Annual, semi-annual, or quarterly, depending on the goals and the length of the survey

**Recommended if you want to:**
- Do a comprehensive, deep-dive into key company questions
- Understand where people are at both across the company, and within specific departments and teams

Pulse

**Length:** 5-10 questions

**Frequency:** Monthly, Bi-weekly, or weekly at some companies.

**Recommended if you want to:**
- Stay in touch with “pulse” of employees
- Allow company to more quickly sense issues and sentiments of employees, and make corrective changes.
- Better understand the link between changes at work, and changes in employee sentiments.
- Give employees more frequent chances to express sentiments and feedback
Survey Use Cases

**Team**

**Length and Frequency:** Depends on whether standard, or pulse, and what other surveys the company gives

**Recommended if you want to:**
- Leaders stay in touch with specific issues relevant just for a particular team
- Leaders can make faster, more relevant changes targeted at their team
- Employees can give team and job-specific feedback

**Check-ins**

**Length:** 3 to 5 questions. (Exs: “What progress has been made last week/month? What is planned for next week/month? Retrospective: What went well, what didn’t and how can we improve as a team?”)

**Frequency:** Weekly or bi-weekly

**Recommended if you want to:**
- Check-ins are typically non-anonymous surveys with a select group. Their goal is similar to an in-person check-in, or preparation for an in-person meeting.
- Example: check-ins on employee/team progress and needs for meeting Objectives and Key Results (OKRs).
Manager Feedback

You can use surveys to assess employee sentiments on not just the company as a whole, but managers and leadership, as well. For more help on this, check out Google's [Manager Feedback Survey Tool](https://managerfeedbacksurveytool.com).

With Leapsome, we recommend doing manager surveys as part of 360° feedback. During 360°s, managers receive feedback from their employees and peers. [Learn more about 360° reviews here](https://learnmore.com/360reviews).
Case Study: Intel

How Intel Runs Surveys

Intel is a multinational semiconductor company headquartered in Santa Clara, California, USA. They have over 5000 employees, and view employee engagement and satisfaction as a top priority. They use surveys to uncover employee pain points, and fix them.

Frequency

- Intel runs larger semi-annual surveys, as well as shorter, quarterly pulse surveys.

Type

- Recurring Organizational Health (engagement and satisfaction).
- One-time surveys, such as surveys on specific perks or benefits.

Benchmarks

- While iterating year over year, Intel keeps many survey questions consistent, or order to internally compare results over time.
- Intel benchmarks their results against other industry competitors.
Case Study: Intel

Goals

- Understand employee sentiments both at a broad level, and on specific topics.
- Assess topics such as organizational direction, employee commitment to work and likelihood to stay, trust, collaboration, and work environment.

Results

- Intel uses results to make decisions about workplace changes.
- Intel management sets goals on how to improve scores on certain questions. Employees know the survey is taken seriously.
- Intel is regularly cited as one of the top 10 companies in the US to work for.

Sources: Intel, Future of Work, Wall Street Journal, Sustainable Brands, SurveyMonkey
“What high-performance companies should be striving to create: a great place for great people to do great work.”

Marilyn Carlson
Carlson Companies
Focus

First, decide the purpose of the survey. Why do you want to run it? What hypotheses do you hope to test? What will you do with the results?

Only ask questions which you have the time and motivation to reflect about and act on later. Otherwise, employees won’t feel like there is a reason to keep completing surveys. Data for data’s sake is not an efficient use of company resources.

How to Focus

Decide exactly what you want to measure, with clear goals for why you are asking and what you will do with the results. Define target areas based on these goals.

At Leapsome, we provide best-practice “question packs” with distinct focus areas. Individual questions can be removed from question packs, or custom questions written and added. Leapsome’s intelligent question rotation feature can be enabled, randomizing questions across employees. This allows companies to measure multiple factors in one survey, but not overwhelm individual employees with too many questions at once.
Best Practices: Questions

Sample Question Topics from Leapsome

- Accomplishment
- Autonomy & Enablement
- Engagement
- Work Environment
- Professional Growth
- Goal Alignment
- Open Communication
- Manager Support
- Meaningful Work
- Organizational Fit
- Teamwork
- Recognition & Feedback
- Reward
- Strategy
- Workload

Sample Questions

Sample Question Pack: Open Communication

- **Sample Question:** “My manager cares about my opinions”

Sample Question Pack: Engagement

- **Sample Question:** “I would recommend this company as a great place to work”
Question Formats

Ask quantitative questions which allow you to easily analyze results. Leapsome recommends a scale of 0-10. Check out this article for some good reasoning behind the argument for a 0-10 scale.

Enable optional comments on each question. This provides people the chance to provide additional input and feel heard, and provides you with qualitative data.

If desired, ask a few open-ended questions with specific objectives. (Ex, “Give 1-2 suggestions for how we can improve in X area.”) Don’t ask too many open-ended questions. You don’t want any comments to go unread, but you also do not want to overwhelm yourself with reviewing all comments.
Best Practices: Timing

Run comprehensive surveys at least twice a year, or ideally, quarterly. Complement these with shorter, more frequent “pulse” surveys.

Automate surveys to ensure they go out on time, and to the right people, every time. Use a software tool to help run this process and to then have the survey analytics available promptly and automatically.

At Leapsome, we make the survey process easy and efficient. Create survey templates that you can use to quickly create new iterations of surveys, or set the same survey to run automatically on a recurring basis.
Best Practices: Buy-in & Length

Buy-in

Engage leadership on the topic of surveys, and help them understand their importance. Get the leadership level excited about the survey analytics and the actionable insights that they contain. This buy-in also entails that leadership will be willing to reflect and act on the results of the survey.

It also means that leaders will promote the survey to their teams, increasing legitimacy and response rate. Surveys can be answered directly from within an email with Leapsome so that employees do not need to leave their email inbox to respond to a survey.

Length

Make surveys long enough to get the information you need, but not too long that people become fatigued completing them. Also consider your capacity to process and understand the data you collect. 20 questions is often just as valuable as 50, simply because it is easier for HR and managers to understand results.

Consider “smart sampling,” where not all employees are asked all questions. This allows you to test more questions, while not fatiguing employees. So long as enough people are sampled for a question, the result is still statistically significant. Leapsome enables survey question rotations.
Best Practices: Statistically Sound Surveys

Avoid Major Pitfalls

Understand and avoid the primary causes of survey-writing pitfalls which result in unclear or skewed data.

Train the Trainer

It can be helpful to train someone on your team in good survey methodology, who can then be a support to others. Take, for example, this Coursera Course on Survey Questionnaire Design by the University of Michigan.

Test Your Survey

User test your survey on a few employees in order to understand potentially confusing or poorly worded questions.

Assess Sample Size

Your sample size target will depend on the size of your company. Ideally, you will send an engagement survey to all employees, so they all feel they have a chance to provide input. In general, you want a minimum of 40% of employees responding before you draw any conclusions off your data.

Response Patterns

Check who is responding to your survey. Even though surveys are anonymous there is some additional data on user segments. Are particular departments, or levels over or under-represented? Why might this be?
Best Practices: Leapsome

Targeted Questions

Each Leapsome survey question has been phrased by professionals in a way to elicit a response on a single dimension. In other words, we don’t risk mixing different aspects that you want to learn about.

Sound Methodology

Leapsome ensures our overall survey approach and survey questions align with the best practices promoted by leading research and practice institutes, including Duke University’s Initiative on Survey Methodology, Harvard University’s Program on Survey Research, and Michigan University’s Survey Research Center within the Institute for Social Research.

Backed by Research

Leapsome bases our survey questions on the following research frameworks, used by the scientific and business community for their proven reputability and long-standing validation over time.

- Job Characteristics Model (Hackman & Oldham).
- Employee Engagement Theory (Kahn).
- Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow).
- Employee Net Promoter Score (eNPS).

For more information on the theoretical and practical foundations of our survey design, check out our Help Centre article.
Leapsome Questions: Backed by Research

Job Characteristics Model (Hackman & Oldham)

A comprehensive model created by leading organizational psychologists. Their research finds five core drivers of engagement - job autonomy, significance, identity, variety, and feedback - and applies their model to job design. Leapsome measures these core drivers as applied to the job context.

Sample Question Pack: Autonomy

Employee Engagement Theory (Kahn)

Developed by William Kahn, professor of organizational behaviour at the School of Business, University of Boston. Kahn’s research shows employees are most engaged when they feel they are doing meaningful work, they feel psychologically safe in rewarding and supportive relationships at work, and they are given the physical and psychological resources to do their work well.

Sample Question Pack: Open Communication
Leapsome Questions: Backed by Research

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow)

When applied to work, states that employee satisfaction must come not just from fulfilling lower-order needs including salary, benefits, health and safety, and work environment, but also higher-order needs including achievement and recognition, growth and development, autonomy and purpose, and belonging and support.

Sample Question Pack: Professional Growth

Employee Net Promoter Score (eNPS)

Pioneered by global consulting firm Bain and Company to assess employee satisfaction and engagement.

Sample Question Pack: Engagement
“A good survey is a lot of work; a bad survey isn’t worth doing.”

Google Mantra
Using Survey Results: Take Action

Use Your Survey

One analysis of surveys showed...

“20 percent said their boss never bothered to follow up any concerns raised”

“52 percent reviewed survey results but took no action”

“27 percent of managers never review survey results at all”

*Source: Huffington Post*

If you want people to take your survey seriously, you have to act on the results. Otherwise, people feel like their participation is not meaningful or worth their time. Response rates will drop, along with employees’ sense of motivation, and value at the company.

You do not have to address each specific piece of feedback given by all employees, nor do you have to implement all changes suggested. It is impossible to make everyone happy. It is important though, to make sure everyone knows they have been heard.
Using Survey Results: Take Action

Release a Summary of Results

Release results to employees via a company-wide channel. At a minimum, release results to all people managers so that they can review and discuss the results with their teams.

- Use easy-to-understand summary statistics and basic graphs.
- Show how wide the spread of opinions was, so people have context on where their own opinions lie in the spectrum of results.
- Include some direct, representative quotations to communicate individual’s comments are read, and people are not just statistics.
- Outline specific, time-bound ways the company plans to respond.

**Autonomy & Enablement**

7.83 / 10

Last category score:

- Up 1.83
- 12 observations
- 0 comments

Questions influencing the Autonomy & Enablement score:

- I feel I am given enough freedom to decide how to do my work 5.83 / 10
- I have access to the equipment and tools I need to do my job well 5.67 / 10
- The information I need to do my job well is readily available 4.17 / 10
Using Survey Results: Take Action

Be Timely

Ideally, release results within one month of the survey’s end. Stay relevant. It is hard for employees to care about a survey they did six months ago.

Hold Town Hall Meetings

Highlight the main strong and weak points at town hall or team meetings, to emphasize they are being given priority, and allow further discussion.

Seek Further Feedback

Create ways to gain further feedback on specific topics, and make sure action on them is taken.

Involve Employees

Give employees a change to be part of the solutions to problems. Companies gain valuable ideas, and employees feel like they have an impact.
Leapsome

- Theoretical and Practical Foundations of Leapsome Survey Design
- Unlocking Your Company’ Potential: What if Feedback Culture was the Key?
- Behind the Buzzwords: What Google People Analytics Looks Like

Google re:Work

- Guide: How to Run an Employee Survey
- Blog: How the Federal Government Surveys One Million Employees
- Case Study: NYC Department of Education: Understanding Learning Using Surveys

Harvard Business Review

- Employee Surveys are Still One of the Best Ways to Measure Engagement (Facebook People Analytics; Adam Grant)

Gallup

- What To Do With Employee Survey Results
Leapsome is an AI-powered All-in-One Platform for engagement surveys, continuous feedback between employees, 360° performance reviews and OKR tracking.

To learn more, visit

www.leapsome.com