



Are employee
engagement surveys
a waste of time?

PeopleInsight

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What's going wrong?

As an employee engagement consultancy, the conversation around whether employee surveys are a waste of time has, naturally, captured our attention.

Employee surveys can be used to identify issues, measure progress and implement real change in a business. However, all too often the survey itself has little impact, as it's findings are not acted upon.

This eBook has been created to consider some of the common issues with employee engagement surveys – things that have raised this very question in the first place.

The backlash to the annual employee engagement survey has come about because too many of them are badly done.

Being “badly done” could mean anything from:

- Participation amongst employees is poor
- The survey isn't asking the right questions
- The results are slow to come out
- Employees don't hear the results quickly, or they sound 'spun'
- No one can see what's happened in the organisation as a result

Ultimately, if the **focus is more on just implementing a questionnaire** rather than analysing the results, making smart decisions and taking actions that employees understand, then there is little point in using employee surveys as a strategy for increasing engagement.

Waste of time #1

Doing a survey, but not acting on the results

Ignoring the follow-up actions

All too often a company will ask its employees to participate in an engagement survey, only to lose momentum when it gets to the most important part – acting on the findings.

It may even be the case that they found the results interesting, but can't see what changes to make, or how to make them. Or, they may not have the buy in from other senior stakeholders and action can be deprioritised in favour of some other competing issue.

The danger is, without action on the survey results, employees will end up feeling like their views are not being listened to, which is likely to reduce engagement in the workplace even more.

FOCUS EFFORT HERE:

6. Implementation – doing something about the results



Waste of time #2

Doing a survey, but actioning the wrong results

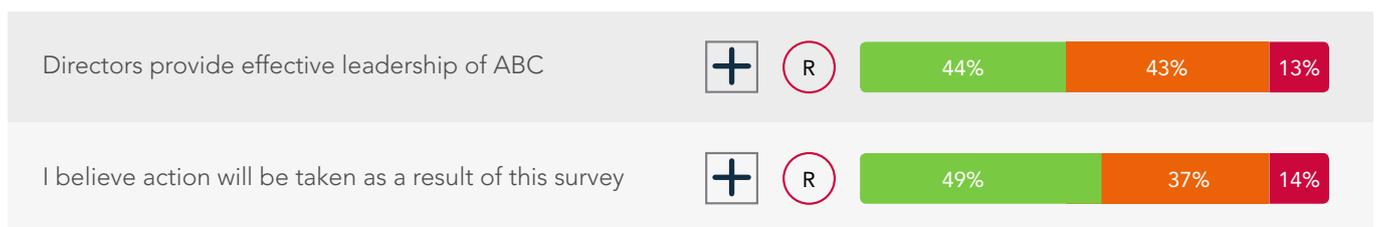
Figure out the unique challenges of your organisation

It's so tempting to focus on the worst-scoring questions of your employee survey results. But guess what? They may also be the worst scoring in many organisations.

In other words, trying to make changes to improve the scores on these questions may not increase your performance, or make you more competitive overall.

Understanding which issues are most likely to affect your overall engagement in your particular organisation should be the goal. Clever statistical analysis can predict which factors, when improved, will have the greatest impact on your organisation; this should be where you focus.

Prioritising action on the questions most strongly correlated with engagement in your organisation is most likely to lead to improvement.



Waste of time #3

Doing a survey, but not listening to other employee feedback

Ignoring certain points of view

Employees shouldn't be restricted to providing feedback purely by the questions given to them on a survey – whether annual, quarterly or more frequent. It suggests leaders won't listen the rest of the time.

A survey is great for generating quantitative data, and seeing how employees' views change over time. However, if an employee feels strongly about something else then they should be able to contribute these views, at any time.

All employees should feel like they can have their say, and an organisation should provide various communication channels in order for them to do this. Whether via email, face to face conversation, or enterprise social networks like Yammer or Slack – the channels with leaders or decision makers should be always open.



Waste of time #4

Not implementing changes quickly in between monthly/pulse surveys

Not having the ability to implement quick change

You can gather employee feedback as often as you like – but remember to only survey as frequently as you can take action.

Short, frequent employee surveys mean that feedback will be coming through on a far more regular basis than longer, less frequent surveys used to generate more in depth data.

Without the ability to follow-up this feedback with equally quick changes, your employees will likely start viewing the survey process as a waste of time; lowering their levels of engagement overall.

It's important to consider how often surveys are sent out to your staff. If you aren't able to act upon the results regularly, or if the issues raised need a strategic, long term solution, then avoid using monthly or pulse surveys which require almost instantaneous attention and action.



Waste of time #5

Doing a survey, but not communicating what's happened since the last one

Leaving employees in limbo

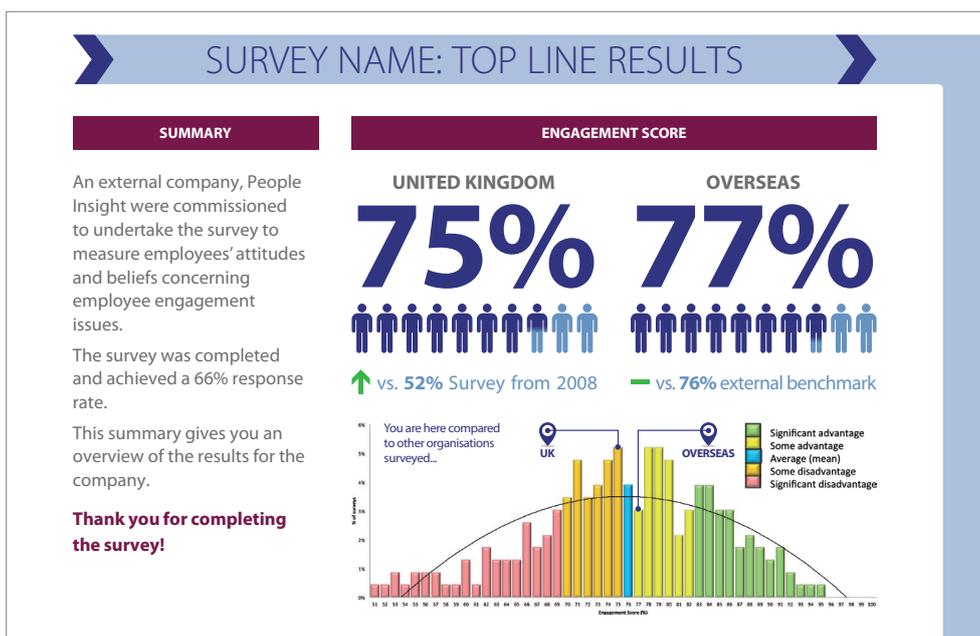
One guaranteed way to ensure low participation on your engagement survey is to not let your employees know what actions were taken by the company following the last survey that they took part in.

Whilst an employee engagement survey may help them feel like their views are being heard, if they do not think anything has been acted upon then they are unlikely to be as willing to participate again.

Some of the most engaged employees report that clarity regarding major decisions in the company is key to staying happy in their job.

Even if you have acted upon the survey results, make sure you communicate any changes you have implemented to the rest of the company as soon as possible – and continue to do so. You could even mark completed items with an “action stamp” to show visually how people’s input has been followed up on.

Infographics and videographics showing the top line survey results and next steps support transparency.



‘An action ‘stamp’ shows people which items in your internal comms came from survey feedback’

Waste of time #6

Making your surveys too frequent, resulting in fatigue & poor response rate

Causing information overload

Frequent polls offer real-time feedback. What's not great about that?

However, if delivered too frequently they could end up having a negative effect on your employees. If they get fed up of doing it, their hurried answers won't be valid, or they'll only answer with extreme views.

A balance needs to be struck between giving employees the chance to have their say, and leaving them to get on with their day-to-day jobs.

Overall, employees are more concerned that their feedback is going to result in change, rather than the frequency they are being asked for their opinion.

We are asked to say what we think or fill in a survey but we are not allowed to finish it. Within a few minutes we are told to get back on available and take calls. This makes us feel unappreciated, stressed out. And, why should we bother? Don't ask us our opinion unless you actually want it and are prepared to listen.

Why has car parking never improved? We all keep telling you about it but nothing is different!

Last year I told you what I thought but nothing has changed so what's the point

I could basically say anything in this survey – it's not like you are going to read it.

How to ensure employee surveys are NOT a waste of time

1. Focus on making change

Focus 1/5 of your energy developing a great survey and getting your employees to participate, and the other 4/5 of your energy making change happen

2. Analyse your results properly

Don't just focus on the obvious negatives; celebrate the positives, then make sure you understand, from all the data generated, where the real insights are and what will really make a difference to engagement.

4. Lead by example

Engage leaders, champions and an effective communications plan to stimulate a cracking survey response rate. Importantly, ensure all senior managers show staff they're take responsibility for action in their area as a result of the exercise.

3. Communicate

Tie organisation changes back to the suggestions from staff in previous surveys, and show your employees how you are preparing to act on their ideas next time.

Conclusion - Don't blame the survey

The survey itself isn't a waste of time. In fact, in organisations that understand the insights, act on the results, and make change happen, employee engagement surveys are thriving.

As such, engagement partners should be focused on helping their clients achieve change as a result.

It's not the question you ask, but what you do with the answer that counts.

People Insight's approach

People Insight use class-leading employee survey and reporting tools to visualise your results in beautiful, intuitive ways.

However, our main energy and focus is in developing real insights from your survey and people data. We look at the impact on your performance, so you know what to prioritise for real business benefit.

We then work with you to deliver organisational change.

"People Insight stood out because they are action planners. Not only do they collect the data, but they explained what that data told us and then worked with us to develop programmes and strategies to implement change."

Cheryl Evans, HR Director at Marstons



On average, our clients improve their engagement scores by 7% after working with us.

Their employees are also 20% more likely to feel that something will happen as a result of the survey.

"It would be incredibly daunting to just have the results and then work out, on your own, what to do about them."



People Insight guided us. We asked them to do the rollout and deliver the results back to our management teams. It gave the whole process more gravitas as People Insight are the experts in this area. Staff loved their action planning sessions because it really hit home that this wasn't just a paper exercise but a vehicle for real change."

Sarah Sayles, HR Director at EnServe

People Insight's approach (continued)

We use a combined theoretical and practical approach to deliver organisation change.

Our process for doing this includes:

1. Developing surveys based on a robust engagement model



2. Visualising the results beautifully & intuitively on our dashboard in the cloud



3. Using statistics to make links, patterns and predictions from your results and your broader people data



4. Providing guidance and recommendations for action based on expertise and experience



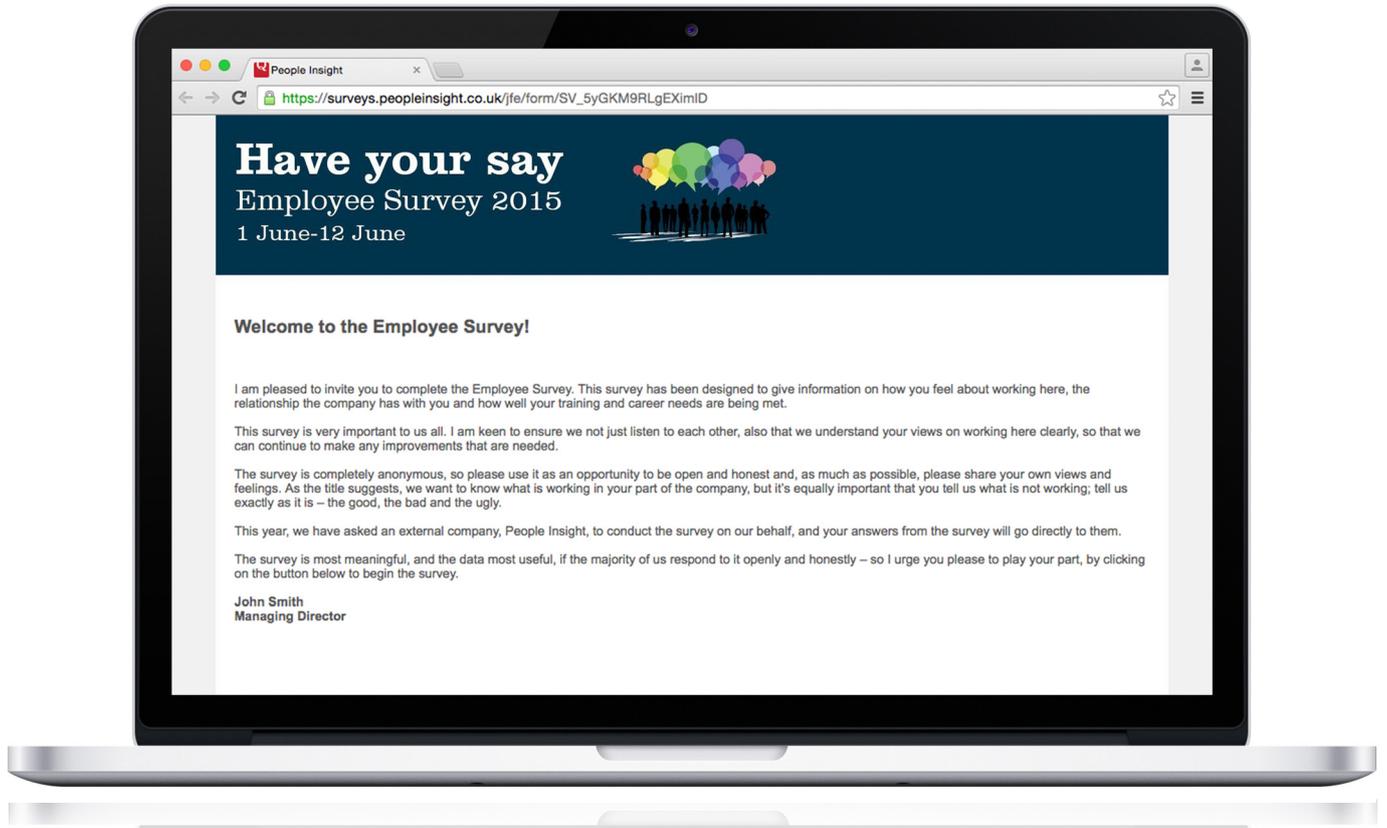
5. Providing managers with support at all levels to understand what they need to do



6. Making the whole process simple and easy to understand



Give our employee engagement tool a try



Interested in how employee surveys could improve engagement at your business? See for yourself how easy it is to use our survey tool.

For more information or to contact us:

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