An agile approach to employee voice: Listen quickly and with ease

Produced by **People Insight**

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Inside this guide

1. What is an agile employee voice strategy?

Moving from annual or bi-annual employee surveys to a more agile employee voice strategy is something we champion at People Insight.

Agile listening empowers organisations to:

▸ **Keep up with change** and tailor strategies to reflect employee needs

▸ **Prioritise activities** based on evidence

▸ **Involve employees** in change and decisions

However, when people first hear about agile employee voice or agile listening, they often have questions like…

- *How would it work with our structure and processes?*
- *How often should we be asking for feedback?*
- *Will it be hard to keep on top of action planning?*
- *What listening activities are there that aren't surveys?*

In other words…is agile listening hard to do? If agile listening brings to mind an endless cycle of surveys, and mountains of data to wade through, then stick with us.

We're here to debunk the myth that agile listening has to be difficult.

An agile approach to employee voice means you can **listen to your people quickly and with ease**, at a pace that's right for your organisation.

There are three components that go into running a successful employee voice strategy:

1. **Motion**

2. **Speed**

3. **Ease**

By the end of this guide, we hope you'll be reassured by how easy it is to build agile listening into what you're already doing and feel confident that this approach can work for you.

Next up, we'll answer the question that comes up more than any other when talking about agile listening…. how often should we be asking employees for feedback?

Agile=
Moving quickly and with ease.

2. How often should you ask for feedback?

No matter how employee survey approaches change, the question that comes up time and again is around frequency and fatigue.

If an agile employee voice strategy means running more surveys, will people get tired of them?

At People Insight, we like to say that people don't get tired of surveys, but of a lack of change. **Our golden rule for survey frequency is to ask for feedback at the pace you can act.**

This frequency will vary by organisation and will depend on your priorities, resources, and the platforms you use.

Employee listening activities are often managed alongside other priorities. If that's the case, then running 1x in-depth employee engagement survey in Autumn and 1x check-in pulse survey in Spring could be the right frequency. This gives sufficient time between surveys to digest the data, identify where you need to act, and demonstrate what's changing as a result of people's feedback.

On the other hand, if your organisation has experience running pulse surveys or can dedicate more resource to employee voice, then it may be possible to run an annual employee engagement survey as well as 2-3 pulse surveys across the year, exploring specific topics such as employee wellbeing or asking for feedback on issues as they crop up.

5 tips to fight off survey fatigue

1. **Remove barriers to participation with online, accessible surveys, survey champions and allotted time to take part**

2. **Engage employees with the survey process so they understand why their feedback matters**

3. **Swiftly follow up your survey results with action planning sessions for leaders and managers**

4. **Communicate survey results company-wide and share how employee feedback has led to change**

5. **Share your action plan and tell people what they can expect to see change and by when – then stick to it!**

3. Building an agile employee voice strategy: 4 simple steps

1. In line with your strategy and programmes this year, what do you need employee feedback about?

This might include changes you know are coming that employee input could help shape. Or any areas that performed poorly in a previous employee survey which you need to collect more data about.

2. What's in place already and where are the gaps?

Consider the various listening activities you have in place, the timing of these, and what happens to the data from each.

Using existing channels in a more joined up way will help build an efficient, agile listening strategy and show where the gaps are.

Remember to include both formal and informal listening channels. You're probably already listening to your employees in a variety of ways.

Formal channels like your employee engagement survey, pulse surveys or 360 feedback programmes give you concrete evidence to base decisions on.

Informal channels like Slack or Workplace offer an opportunity to ask quick questions, launch polls and get ratings in a more ad hoc fashion. Take questions to existing colleague interest groups, or groups that represent the broader employee population. These groups (face to face, or online) can provide input to solve a challenge, come up with a solution to an issue (that's been raised in a survey, for example) or give a reaction to a company event.

3. Are you set up to act on feedback?

An agile employee voice strategy means you must also be agile in how you act on feedback. Forget lengthy meetings, long email chains and chasing people for deadlines.

Consider how your employee survey platform or software can make this process easier. For example, People Insight's survey results dashboard has a built-in action planning tool that helps managers and leaders swiftly identify actions, schedule tasks, and set reminders for deadlines.

4. Put it all together into your employee voice cycle

The key to an agile employee voice strategy is a mix of real-time check-ins on burning issues and less frequent (perhaps annual) in-depth surveys.

Once you have identified which activities to include, plot them into an employee feedback cycle.

You could start small by adding in 1x pulse survey to check in on progress after your annual survey.

Or if you're confident acting on more frequent feedback, you could add in 2-3 targeted pulse surveys across the year on specific topics such as D&I or Wellbeing.

Below is an example of an employee voice cycle which incorporates annual surveys, pulse surveys and listening activities at specific points of the employee journey. The key is to make changes gradually; you don't have to do everything at once.

An example employee voice cycle

D&I

Pulse

Wellbeing

Annual / In depth

Annual / In depth

Joiners

Leavers

360 Feedback

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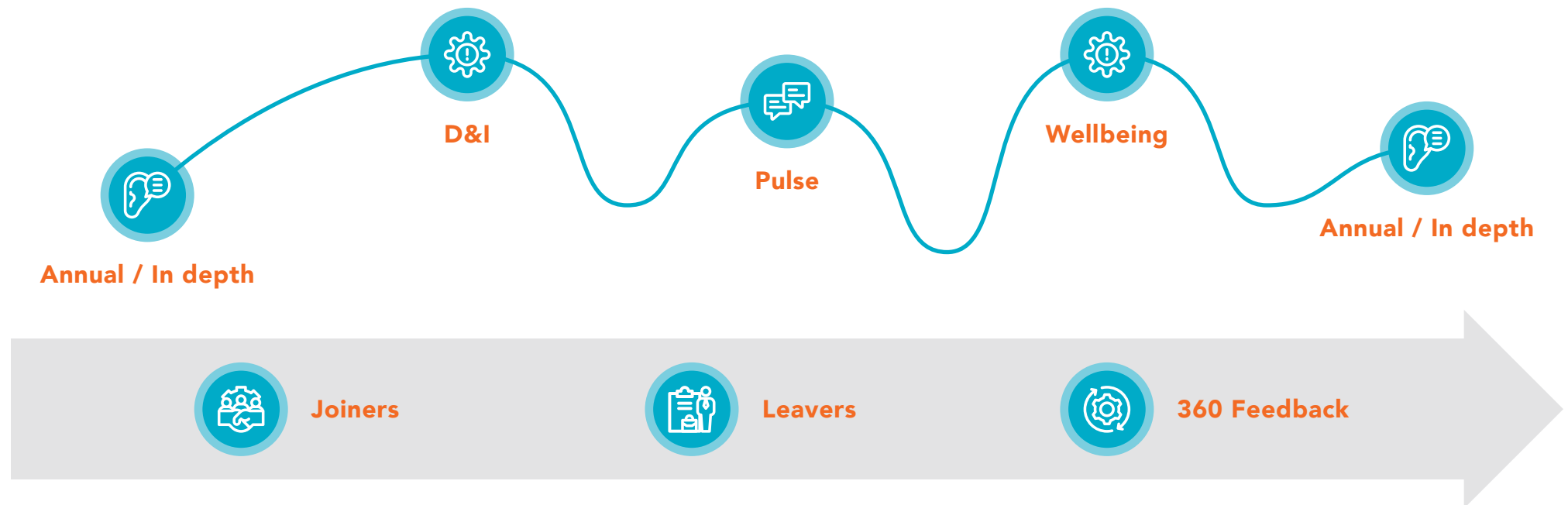
4. How agile listening works at the University of Surrey

The University of Surrey wanted "colleague voice" to be a golden thread that ran through and united departments.

They worked with People Insight to establish an annual employee engagement survey, with pulse surveys throughout the year for added flexibility.

Their onboarding and exit feedback surveys are run from the same survey platform, providing rich insights on their People Insight dashboard.

Getting started: To start, Surrey reviewed their annual survey and mapped the questions against key stakeholder requirements to make sure they met those needs. They communicated openly with stakeholders and leaders about their vision for the colleague voice strategy and the value it would bring.

Communication: The plan included a fresh look and feel, creating a strong brand for the colleague voice and demonstrating the opportunities to share views, feedback, and ideas at different parts of the employee life cycle.

To encourage participation, Surrey took over live screens in offices, placed kiosks with iPads so on the ground teams could access surveys, and used QR codes to make it easy for people to take part. Managers were invited to various online knowledge sessions where they could get to know the survey results dashboard and ask questions about all parts of the surveys. All attendees could then request a user licence to access their team's data.

Reporting back: Once their employee engagement survey had gone out, Surrey started reporting back each month to drive action. Reporting back regularly meant that people could see movement, so became more eager to get involved. To measure progress between annual surveys, Surrey introduced "Quick check-in" pulse surveys which were run twice a year.

UNIVERSITY OF SURREY

"Our colleagues (employees) have had to be agile and more responsive to the needs of our students over the last two years. As we emerge from the pandemic, we want to utilise this time to become more human centred, take the time to listen, respond and act. The people survey is proven to be the fabric of a great people strategy utilising our colleagues' views and ideas to weave in various initiatives that all our colleagues have identified as important."

Lisa Hughes,
Employee Experience specialist and lecturer

READ THE CASE STUDY ❯

As Surrey had hoped, colleague voice has become a journey that encourages people to come along, rather than the survey team pushing people towards it.

A summary of Surrey's Colleague Voice programme
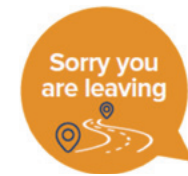
People Survey	Quick check-in	Welcome to Surrey	Sorry you are leaving
1x Annual People survey	2x Quick check in survey (Pulse survey)	Onboarding survey	Offboarding survey
Autumn	By executive board	Asked at day 33	30 days before leaving
Pan – University	5 questions	21 questions	20 questions
41 questions	5 demographics	41 questions	Alumni option
19 demographics		9 demographics	
130 Dashboard users		Peer opportunity offered	

5. Agile listening: Our tips for success

When looking at organisations with a strong employee listening strategy, there are three elements that indicate an agile approach.

1. Using multiple channels

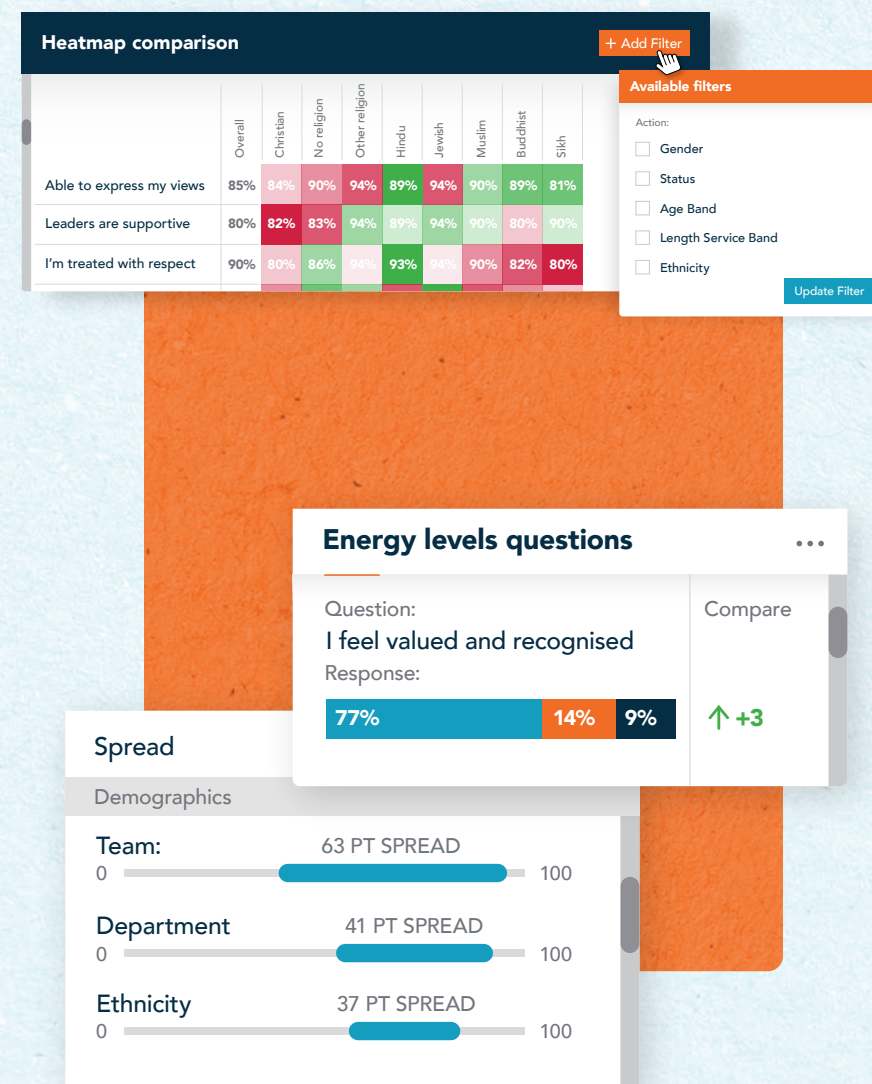Use a blend of formal and informal channels to always have your finger on the employee voice. Formal activities like employee pulse surveys, joiner/leaver surveys and 360 feedback are great for gathering in-depth insights. While some great informal methods that are easy to start using include 121s, team meetings, channels on Slack or Workplace, and employee groups that represent different perspectives. Use these to check in on what matters to your people and get fast feedback on burning issues.

Heatmap comparison   + Add Filter

	Overall	Christian	No religion	Other religion	Hindu	Jewish	Muslim	Buddhist	Sikh
Able to express my views	85%	84%	90%	94%	89%	94%	90%	89%	81%
Leaders are supportive	80%	82%	83%	94%	89%	94%	90%	80%	90%
I'm treated with respect	90%	80%	86%	94%	93%	94%	90%	82%	80%

Available filters

Action:

- [ ] Gender
- [ ] Status
- [ ] Age Band
- [ ] Length Service Band
- [ ] Ethnicity

Update Filter

Energy levels questions   ...

Question:
I feel valued and recognised
Response:

77%	14%	9%

Compare

↑ +3

Spread

Demographics

Team: 63 PT SPREAD
0 ———————————— 100

Department   41 PT SPREAD
0 ———————————— 100

Ethnicity   37 PT SPREAD
0 ———————————— 100

2. Being adaptive

World news and events will change the behaviours and needs of your employees **so being adaptive and reactive to these is vital**. Most recently we've seen companies use surveys and listening activities **to understand how hybrid working, the cost-of-living crisis, inclusion and wellbeing are affecting the employee experience**.

3. Action orientated

Share insights you collect through surveys at multiple levels throughout the company. Doing this will benefit you for a few reasons. Firstly, it will ensure that the responsibility to act on feedback is distributed fairly and not just left up to HR (also making it quicker to achieve outcomes,). Secondly, **it will clearly link together employee voice, actions and positive change** so that everyone understands the process. Action planning tools help maintain **momentum after your survey closes and keep people accountable** for change.

How satisfied are you with:

	Home	Office	Difference
Managing others	78%	93%	15%
Focussing	92%	70%	-22%

● Better in office   ● Better at h...

∨ **What more could we do to support you with remote working?**

Allow different working patterns with a core hour policy...

Theme: Leadership

Question	Compare	Action
I believe action will be taken as result of this survey	↓ -12	⊕
42% 35% 23%		

Add action

Action:

Looking for inspiration?

Example 1: Follow the example of LSBU's action planning process

6. Take control of employee voice with the People Insight Platform

More and more organisations are combining annual and pulse surveys to keep up with change and act on feedback fast. The People Insight Platform gives you rich feedback on the full employee experience at the pace that's right for your organisation.

Choose between fully managed surveys, self-serve platform access or a combination of both for a flexible and fast employee voice programme.

▸ **Flexibility** to run surveys yourself, or with help from our experts

▸ Create **unlimited** pulse surveys

▸ **Design your own** questions or use our **templates**

▸ **Act fast** to keep up with change

▸ **Powerful dashboard** for all your survey insights

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Partner with People Insight

to achieve the most actionable surveys you've ever done

PI Platform

Rich employee feedback at the right pace for your organisation

Expertise

Consultant guided design, interpretation, facilitation and coaching to help you take action

Support

Flexible for light touch to full programme planning and implementation at pace

Peopleinsight

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