

Ask your employees the right questions

Issued by [icandi CQ](#)

1 Dec 2020

Employee surveys are key to gauging, not only the impact of your internal communication efforts, but also as an indicator to the current mood and sentiment in your organisation.



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Do you know if your employees feel hopeful about the future? Your company? Your leadership?

If 2020 has taught us anything it is that we may have come up with more answers to greater challenges, but how many of us have also stopped to ask the right questions of the right people – your employees.

You don't have to have answers, but you do need to ask questions

As we saw during this year, in times of crisis, many companies focus their energy and resources on giving employees more and more answers in an attempt to reassure them. And that's not a bad thing. But employees don't always need more answers. What they need is for you to ask them questions, ones that show you care about their experiences, value their feedback and want to include their input and insights into creating new workable solutions going forward. Asking the right questions can help identify new challenges and potential solutions. Surveys also engage employees in a way that makes them feel more connected to the bigger picture, which is reassuring in itself.

Surveys can drive business success

The employee survey has always been an effective way to measure employee engagement, opinion, satisfaction and views on everything from how employees feel about the company and its leadership, to whether they feel a sense of purpose in their work. Since the onset of Covid-19, every employee now has their own unique life/work situation. Being able to unpack this and how it impacts everything from productivity to employee morale, is invaluable to the health and wellbeing of the employee, as much as the greater company.

Five tips for designing effective survey questions:

1. Have at least one key decision-maker on question design

Many people can have a hand in designing questions. Just make sure that at least one person on that team understands the purpose and strategy behind the survey. This will ensure a more concise process.

2. Spend time on purpose

Writing questions is the fun part. The important part is making sure you know what the purpose is behind each question. Make sure you spend more time questioning purpose than simply writing questions.

3. Don't make questions mandatory

It's tempting to make certain questions mandatory, but it can frustrate and even alienate people who genuinely can't answer the question. Survey questions, just like surveys themselves, should always be voluntary. Don't abuse your employees' trust by making questions mandatory.

4. Keep culture and context in mind

Survey questions are like the surveys themselves – they are specific to your company, its culture and the objectives you need to achieve. So always keep this cultural context top of mind when writing questions.

5. Allow for neutral feedback

People don't always have strong opinions or feelings on every question. Make sure you include a midpoint in your Likert scale to allow for people who feel neutral on a question. Not including this can inflate your positive feedback as people tend towards the 'positive' side of the scale rather than answering how they truly feel.

Top ways to increase participation

You may design the best questions, make the survey easy to complete and quick to access, but at the end of the day a survey is only as strong as the number of people who actually participate in it. So you need to design a communication plan that encourages employees to participate in it without making it mandatory. But also remember that poor participation is itself a measure of low employee engagement.

Make it fun

Who says surveys need to be dull? There are many ways you can make your survey more enjoyable to engage with. It can be as simple as using bold, colourful visual design elements or creating a theme that can be carried through in the communications or other internal social media elements. Consider getting leaders to record engaging video messages about the survey.

Independence drives participation

Employees are more likely to participate in a survey and even offer honest feedback when they know the survey is completely independent from the company, both in terms of the platform used and the people leading it.

Make it competitive

Is there a way to turn it into a friendly competition? This would depend on your company or team culture but if you can find a way to bring in a competitive element between teams or within the team, this can help drive participation.

Share the bigger picture

People want and need to connect to a greater purpose. An employee survey always has a greater purpose in mind, one that usually aims to make employee lives easier and the company better. Share this vision and purpose so they can both understand and fulfil their role in the bigger picture.

Reward effort with incentives and prizes

Offer the chance to win small prizes by participating. Small rewards go a long way.

Involve leaders

Get leadership involved, drive senior managers and leaders to encourage employees to complete the survey. You could get your leaders to share that greater vision and purpose and help people connect to the bigger picture.

And finally, for best results...

- Overlay employee survey results against customer satisfaction survey results, after all employee engagement directly impacts customer satisfaction.
- Measure your employee net promoter score.
- Share results and communicate actions that will happen as a direct result of information gathered by the survey.

Need help with your employee surveys?

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