

Using Pulse Surveys to Engage Your Team

Developing Pulse Survey Questions

Job Aid Series: 5 of 10



Team pulse surveys are short, easy-to-complete sets of questions sent electronically on a regular basis to do a “pulse check” of employees in areas such as engagement, satisfaction, relationships, and the work environment. They are useful for getting feedback from your team members, monitoring team effectiveness, and identifying opportunities for improvement.

This fifth job aid in the series examines survey questions in detail. The success of a pulse survey depends in large part on the quality of the questions and the survey design. Consider the following best practices.

Developing questions: Do

- Provide clear instructions
- Consider whether respondents would be willing to answer the question and answer truthfully
- Ensure questions will be interpreted consistently
- Define key words that could be misinterpreted
- Ask questions for which answers are possible
- Ask questions for which answers suggest follow-up activities
- Use inclusive language
- Make questions short, clear and direct
- Be specific about what is being asked
- Use personalized language
- Specify a time frame in the questions as needed for clarity (e.g., “In the last month,...”)
- Validate questions against survey goals
- Pre-test questions and invite team input (individual, small group, and technical dry run testing)

Developing questions: Avoid

- Leading or biased questions (specific response suggested in question)
- Double-barrelled questions (that cover two topics but allow only one answer)
- Overly complex questions, jargon and terminology
- Overly broad questions
- Anything irrelevant
- Poor grammar and spelling, wordiness or confusing language
- Generic question templates that may not fit your team



This series of ten job aids explains how to design and administer pulse surveys to support team engagement, positivity, and productivity in the workplace. Each job aid offers background information and covers the key steps in the process of developing team pulse surveys. We welcome your [feedback!](#)

Job aid: TRN4-J25



Canada School
of Public Service

École de la fonction
publique du Canada

Canada



Response options

Match your survey question wording to the most appropriate response options.
You may need to test more than one.

Likert Scale

My organization promotes healthy and respectful workplaces.



Select one | Select all that apply

How did you learn about this learning series? (Check all that apply)

- Email Social Media Website Word of mouth

Open-ended

What is the most meaningful part of your job?

Answer: _____

Rating

Please rate the quality of our support services.



Pairs (close-ended)

Are you willing to volunteer to promote the team pulse survey ?

- Yes No

Fill-in-the-blank (single word)

I feel that _____ is the greatest strength of our team.



Examples of team pulse survey questions

Example 1

How would you describe your energy level right now?



Example 2

Are you recognized for the good work you do?

Never Always

Example 3

What was your first impression of our updated security pass?



Example 4

Do most of our work processes enable us to get our work done?

Yes No

What one work process needs urgent attention? _____

Example 5

What does our team do very well? _____

What can our team improve on? _____

Example 6

Rate your experience of the following professional development activities:

Learning and development: Weak Strong

Team leader guidance: Weak Strong

Developmental assignments: Weak Strong

Promotion opportunities: Weak Strong

Example 7

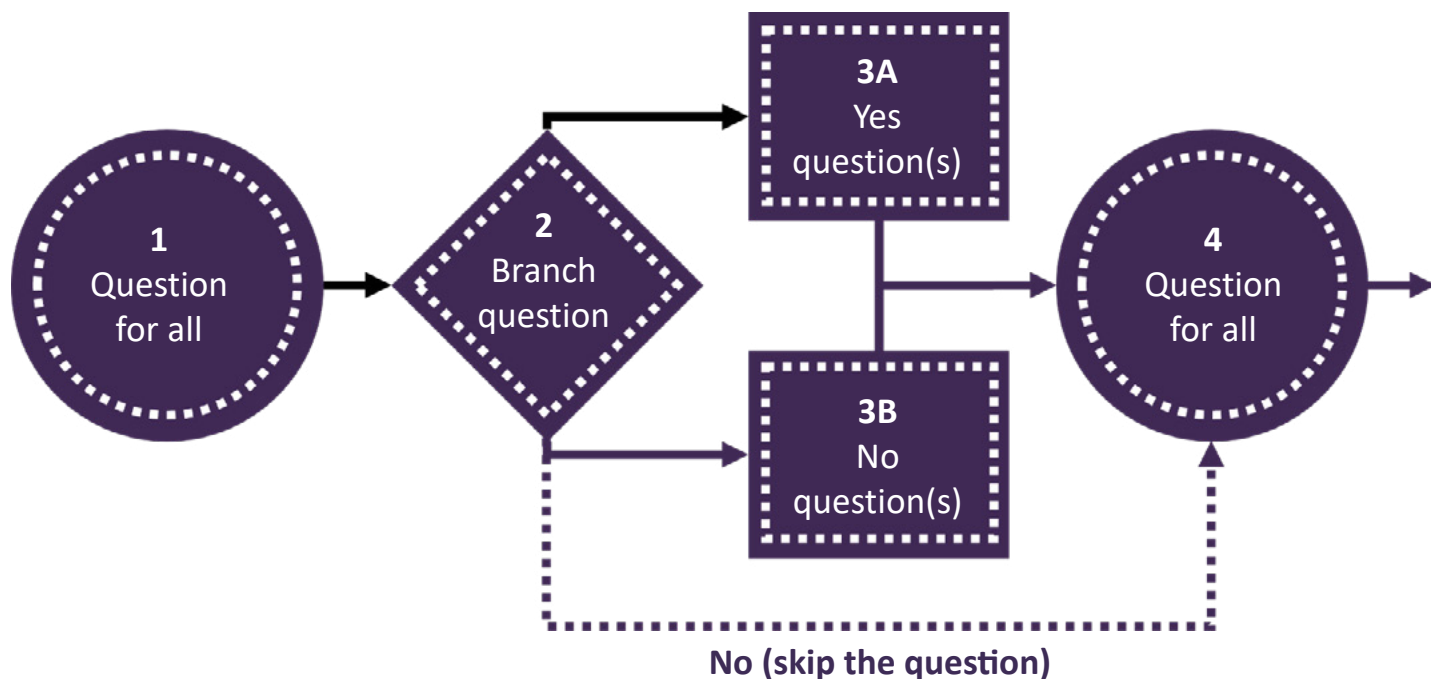
What technologies and workplace devices are essential to your ability to successfully work remotely? (select three)

- | | | |
|--|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Sit-stand desk | <input type="radio"/> Ergonomic chair | <input type="radio"/> Locking cabinet |
| <input type="radio"/> Smartphone | <input type="radio"/> Laptop | <input type="radio"/> Second monitor |
| <input type="radio"/> Collaboration software | <input type="radio"/> Satellite internet | <input type="radio"/> Ergonomic mouse |



Branching questions

Consider using branching questions to improve the flow of your team pulse survey. Based on the response to a previous question, you can add or skip questions for individual respondents.



Example of branching

1. Pulse surveys can help us improve team engagement.

Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree

2. Are you willing to volunteer to promote our team pulse survey to team members?

Yes – Continue to question 3a No – Skip to question 3b (or 4)

3a. When are you available to start? (Check one)

Today Next week Next month

3b. What is preventing you from volunteering? (Check all that apply)

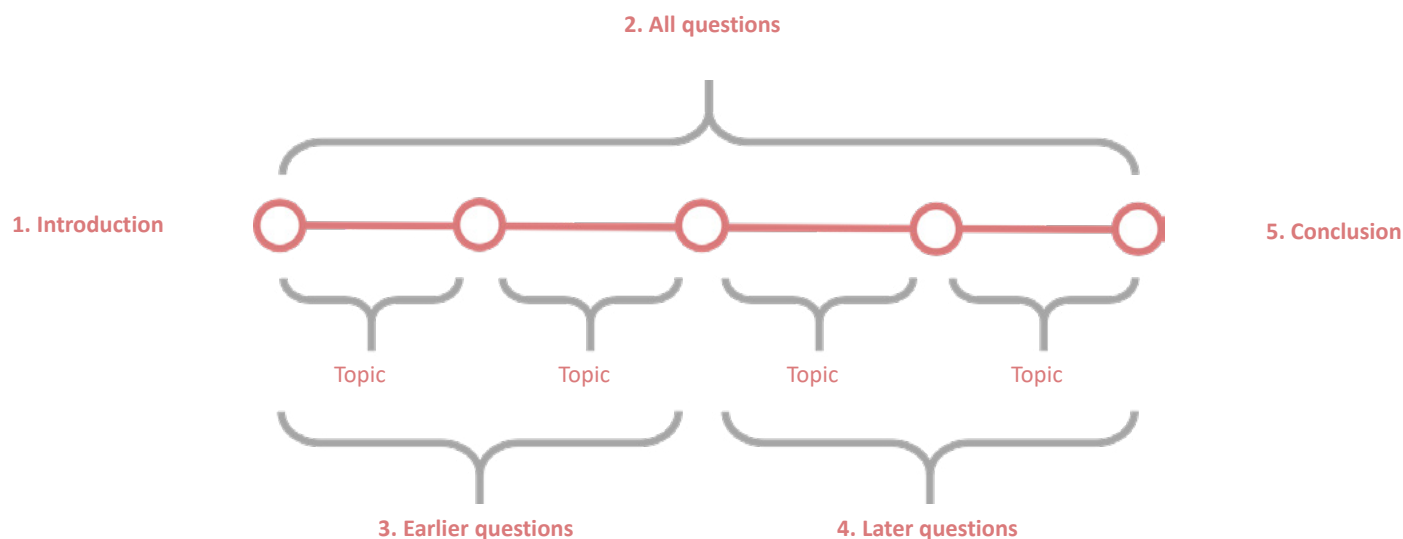
Little interest Lack of time Low comfort level

4. What other ways can we improve team engagement? (25 words or less)



Order of questions

Give careful consideration to the order of your pulse survey questions as it can influence the responses you get. Follow the outline below:



- 1. Introduction:** Provide a brief introduction and instructions on completing the survey.
- 2. All questions:** Order questions logically within topics (i.e., general to specific) and randomly order similar questions. Use branching where appropriate and review questions to see if earlier answers could influence later ones.
- 3. Earlier questions:** Place more general or higher-interest questions first to engage respondents, and follow with important and open-ended questions.
- 4. Later questions:** More detailed or potentially sensitive questions should come later, with any demographic questions coming last.
- 5. Conclusion:** End the pulse survey by thanking the team and explaining how and when to access the results.

Final checks

Consider the following aspects when reviewing your pulse survey questions:



Plain language

Ensure clarity and understanding on first reading



GBA Plus factors

Assess how different women, men and gender-diverse people may experience the questions



Answerable

Questions are straightforward and easily answered



Biases or sensitivities

Sensitive questions or language is carefully employed and potential bias is removed



Response choices

Response options are sufficient to cover a range of answers



Overall flow

Questions are thoughtfully ordered and branching is maximized



Official languages

Intended meaning is clear in both languages and writing is of equal quality



Other considerations

Various remaining issues or weaknesses are addressed



We welcome your [feedback!](#)



Up next
[Job Aid 6 – Team Communication \(TRN4-J26\)](#)