Using Pulse Surveys to Engage Your Team

Pulse Survey Results

Job Aid Series: 7 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 seventh job aid in the series looks at the pulse survey process from a variety of perspectives, to help you gain a comprehensive understanding of your results.

Sorting and comparing results

There are a number of different ways to sort and compare your pulse survey results, as presented below.

Big picture vs. details

Review the results as a whole before reacting to any individual part. General impressions can help direct your focus.

Numbers vs. narrative

1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9

Written comments provide the context for interpreting the numbers and add a human element to the feedback.

Positive vs. negative

Celebrate positive results; negative ones can be opportunities for improvement. Collect enough feedback over time to make inferences; discuss but don't react too quickly to what might be short-term negative results.

Individual vs. combined results

Consider certain results in isolation or combine them with similar results to broaden the view (e.g., somewhat positive + very positive = positive). Consider results on similar subjects together (e.g., results for engagement questions).

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-J27

Recent vs. past results

Compare current pulse survey results with recent past results. Are any patterns emerging in the results?

Consistency vs. sudden change

Certain results should remain steady over time, so note any sudden or major change. Follow up with the team as needed to understand the change.

Current vs. benchmarks

Compare current results with benchmarks chosen during the goal-setting stage of the process. Benchmarks can be internal or external (see below).

Whole team vs. subgroups

What do the overall team results tell us? How do responses to a particular question differ among subgroups?

Numbers vs. graphics

Visual presentation of the results can help the team better process their meaning. Determine the best method to display the results visually and facilitate interpretation (e.g., table of responses vs. pie chart).

High vs. low impact

Which results would significantly impact the organization if not addressed promptly? Which results can be addressed less urgently, if at all?

Simple vs. complex

Sort the results manually if the survey is straightforward. Use survey software for a more detailed analysis of the results.

Analysis vs. paralysis

Spending too much time on analysis can delay or hinder decision-making and any required follow-up.

Revising pulse survey questions

Some results may prompt you to revisit the wording of questions that are unclear or complex. Ask yourself the following:

- Are the responses for certain related questions inconsistent or random?
- Does the feedback for a question suggest possible follow-up activities?
- Are responses to a question contradictory, with large numbers answering at the positive and negative extremes?
- Are responses neutral, suggesting respondent uncertainty?
- Are responses nonexistent or lacking for some questions?

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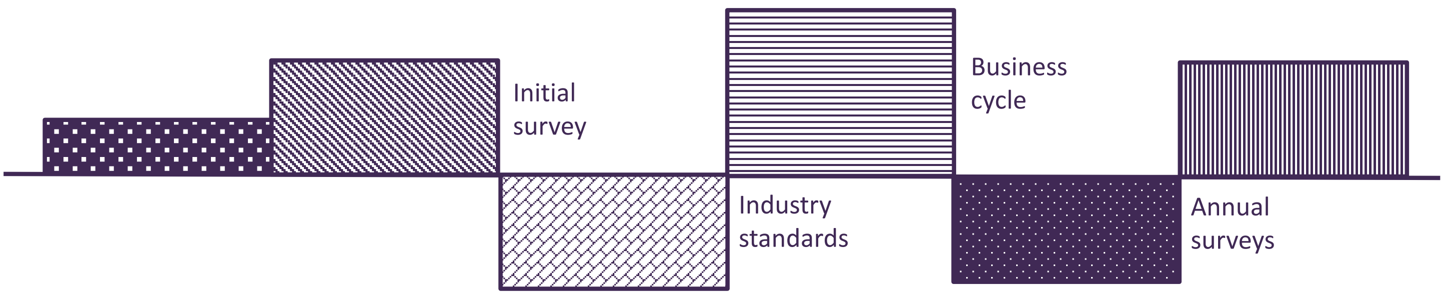
Benchmarking results

Some pulse survey questions are selected because the results can be benchmarked against those of comparable groups; they can also be compared to your own initial or recent results.



Benchmarking allows results and follow-up actions to be measured over time.

Initial survey

An initial pulse survey can serve as a point of reference for your later surveys, allowing you to compare results from the beginning.

Industry standards

If questions are drawn from standard question banks, the results of your pulse survey can be compared to broader public sector results.

Business cycle

Results collected over time can be compared at the same points in the year.

Annual surveys

Repeating certain questions makes it possible to compare annual survey results.

Pulse survey participation rates

Opinions differ about what counts as an acceptable participation rate. Consider the following points:

- A low participation rate may mean the results represent the views of only a portion of the work team, making decisions on appropriate follow-up questionable.
- Higher participation rates can add credibility to the results, offer a stronger mandate for taking action, and allow for deeper analysis.
- Low participation may suggest a lack of trust or low engagement, especially if there has been no follow-up to past pulse survey results.
- On smaller teams, the absence of one or two people from the survey has a major impact on the participation rate as a percentage.

Participation rates for pulse surveys increase when team members are motivated to complete them, making their feedback more candid and valuable. Here are some ways to improve response rates:

Respond to feedback

Be user-friendly

Email a reminder

Make it personal

Reinforce privacy

Discuss barriers

Adjust timing

Say thank you

We welcome your feedback!

Up next
Job Aid 8 – Team Follow-Up (TRN4-J28)