

Using Pulse Surveys to Engage Your Team

Team Communication

Job Aid Series: 6 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 sixth job aid in the series examines the issue of team communication, which is key to running an effective pulse survey and deriving the maximum benefits for team engagement.

Advance promotion

Early promotion of your survey generates interest and boosts participation rates.



Advance notice

Inform team members well before the launch date so the survey doesn't come as a surprise.



Preparation

Survey administrators should be able to discuss the goals of the survey and answer questions.



Branding

Align the pulse survey with your team or organizational branding and any broader engagement efforts.



Multiple channels

Promote the survey often using a variety of communication channels such as team meetings, email, etc.



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-J26



Canada School
of Public Service

École de la fonction
publique du Canada

Canada



Introductory messaging

Communicate the following messages when initiating the pulse survey with your team:



Support of team leadership

The support of team leaders is a strong indication of the value of the survey, as some follow-up can only be undertaken by them.



Reasons for the survey

Establish the context and underlying rationale for the survey, including supporting inclusion and giving all employees a voice.



Participation matters

Emphasize how input from team members can reinforce best practices and guide follow-up and potential improvements.



Privacy protections

Assure team members of the confidentiality of their responses and the protection of their personal information.



Time required and deadline

Be honest about how long the pulse survey will take to complete and note when the survey will open and close.



Follow-up

Explain how the pulse survey results will be shared and the plan for discussing and following up on results.



Acknowledgement

Take the time to thank team members for completing the pulse survey and contributing to the betterment of the team.



Reports on responses

The responses you receive from your team are a vehicle for valuable follow-up conversations on their experience of the workplace. In preparing your report on the pulse survey results, consider the following:



Team member-centric

Prepare separate English and French versions or a single bilingual version of the report using accessible formats to meet the needs of diverse audiences.



Report design

Carefully consider the format, content, colours and graphics used in the report.



High interest

Present the most important information and results first.



Comprehensive

Share both positive and negative results with the team, include raw results with any analysis, and note the response rates.



Accuracy

Verify numbers to reduce reporting errors and provide rounded numbers to avoid giving a false sense of precision.



Follow-up

Outline the approach for analyzing the results and doing any follow-up required.





Sharing results

It's best to distribute the pulse survey results among your team members as soon as they are available. Thank everyone for participating and remind them of the ultimate goal of the survey.



Share simultaneously

Share the same results at the same time with team leaders and team members.



Share results promptly

Quickly sharing results ensures that they are not ignored or dismissed as being outdated or irrelevant.

Tips on discussing the results

Pulse surveys provide a common vocabulary and the results offer an opening for team discussion, which is important for later follow-up and also to mark successes.



Positive mindset

- Be open and honest about the results, valuing all input.
- Be truthful and up front about the results.
- Be grateful to team members for their honesty.
- Be impartial and objective. Keep personal opinions or commentary to yourself.
- Be respectful of negative comments; see them as constructive criticism and an opportunity for positive change.
- Be mindful of keeping respondent identities confidential, to maintain trust.



Helpful actions

- Discuss the participation rate, and both the positive and negative results.
- Share the results promptly, so the feedback remains fresh.
- Encourage questions and ask open-ended or direct questions to verify your understanding.
- Outline the next steps for following up on results where warranted.
- Focus on the evidence rather than speculating or guessing about causes.

Communication channels

Pursue follow-up conversations on pulse survey results using multiple channels:



Negative feedback

Respond to negative feedback by:

- Being open to change:** Commit to working as a team to address concerns.
- Acknowledging it objectively:** Avoid impulsive or emotional reactions that might inhibit necessary discussions with the team.
- Trying to understand the issue:** Seek clarity and validate the feedback by getting more details and examples.
- Maintaining trust and a safe space:** Continue to welcome honest input and commit to follow-up where necessary and possible.
- Ensuring balance:** Focus also on what is going well.
- Taking nothing personally:** Embrace feedback as a positive opportunity for improvement and resolution of any issues.
- Getting real with the feedback:** Always address the feedback honestly—don't try to explain it away or spin it, which can damage team trust; do address possible misunderstandings, though.
- Addressing inappropriate language:** Offensive, harsh or overly critical language must be addressed to maintain a safe space within the team for constructive dialogue.



Ongoing communication

Keep the lines of communication open to maintain momentum for your team and to contribute to the success of the pulse survey.

Reinforce basic principles

Regularly remind team members of the goals of the pulse survey, the value of their input, the potential for positive impacts and privacy safeguards.



Recruit volunteer communication leads

Team members at all levels can contribute to the pulse survey by promoting the survey goals and discussing results and solutions.



Share successes

Inform the team on progress made in following up on suggestions, to build trust and boost future survey completion rates.



We welcome your [feedback!](#)



Up next
[Job Aid 7 – Pulse Survey Results \(TRN4-J27\)](#)

Job aid: TRN4-J26



Canada School
of Public Service

École de la fonction
publique du Canada

Canada