



Employee
Insights

Employee Pulse Surveys

Pulse surveys measure the health of an organization.

The word, “pulse,” is used to describe the regular or rhythmical beating of the heart. Having a pulse is a good thing; not having a pulse is disastrous. In organizations, the pulse can also be used to describe the health or well-being of the organization’s culture, climate and employees.

A pulse survey can be used to measure the health of employees within an organization or work group. Typically, a pulse survey is focused, geared toward collecting data on a limited number of questions or gathering data from a limited number of employees. A pulse survey can produce a single statistic or measure from which to track trends. The pulse survey can also provide a cost effective way to continually monitor the health of the organization over time by reducing the cost of an organizational-wide research project or large scale survey.

The types of questions included in a pulse survey should support your reason for conducting one in the first place. Ask yourself, “What do I want to know?”

Types of Pulse Surveys

▪ Snapshot

A “snapshot” pulse survey provides a glimpse or picture in time of the opinions, thoughts and ideas of a given employee population. Managers can gain insight into trends, differences or similarities among and between groups. A “snapshot” pulse survey typically provides a single, quick measure to aid in the decision making processes.

▪ Performance Indicators

A “performance indicator” pulse survey is administered in between the full employee survey administration cycles to track movement on key performance indicators. Leaders can then make knowledgeable changes to their action plans that will positively impact employee engagement.

▪ Follow-Up Survey

Many organizations conduct employee surveys on a regular basis such as once a year or once every two years. The “follow up” pulse survey can provide additional information to specific actions taken as a result of the annual survey and can help organizational leaders determine if progress is being made on employees’ action plans. The “follow up” pulse surveys serve as an interim check and allows leaders to change or redirect action planning efforts to better align with business outcomes.

▪ Sample Survey

A “sample” pulse survey includes a sampling of questions from a larger survey which is administered to all employees or it can be a full survey administered to a sample of employees. A “sample” pulse survey is designed to gather information on a select set of items or with a representative sample of people.



How often a “pulse” survey should be conducted can best be answered by understanding what you hope to accomplish from the information gathered. The frequency and timing are often driven by the urgency in which information is needed.

After Action Plans Have Been Implemented

Organizational survey programs typically follow a similar cycle – a survey is developed, data is collected, results analyzed, reports produced and distributed, interpretation of data takes place and action plans are implemented. Organizations usually work through the entire process. Even with well-intentioned action planning processes, organizations fail to implement changes for a variety of reasons. Rarely do organizations answer the question, “How well are we doing?” until the next survey administration. Pulse surveys conducted after action plans have been implemented measure the effectiveness of action planning efforts. Based on data collected, managers can keep moving ahead with plans or make adjustments to support improvements efforts.

In the “Off” Year

Some company-wide employee surveys are conducted on a periodic basis rather than every year. During the “off” year or years, many organizations conduct a pulse survey to track improvement efforts and to gain an early indication of whether or not survey results will improve during the next employee survey cycle. The standard or core survey questions can be administered to a sample of employees or a sample of the core survey questions can be administered to all employees in an “off” year pulse survey. Both methods provide a mid-cycle indication of the movement of survey results.

Pulse surveys help you see if your action plans are on target. Pulse surveys help you refocus and regroup as an organization once decisions have been implemented. Pulse surveys can be targeted to reach specific groups of people at the right time with the right questions, and pulse surveys provide a cost effective alternative when the need for information is critical but budgets are tight.

About TNS Employee Insights

DISCOVER A Changing World, New Territories, New Opportunities and Higher Business Performance

We deliver customized employee and customer surveys that measure the vital link between employee engagement, customer satisfaction and business performance. We help large organizations identify specific attitudes and behaviors that impact their bottom lines and convert survey data into actions that enhance both employee and company performance.

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