



Improving Staff Survey Response Rates

Build confidence that survey data will be used in a meaningful way

Before doing the survey, step back and ask:

- Why are we doing a staff survey?
- How do we intend to use the results?
- What value will employees get from participating?
- What actions can we absolutely commit to after results are in?

Considering these elements and having answers in mind will help ensure marketing and communications are strong consistent – which in turn will encourage employees to get on board.

Ensure and promote confidentiality

The survey has to contain enough demographics to make the information useful. This information, however, can make employees feel threatened – especially where they work within small work units or demographics.

- Use a third party (where possible) to manage and administer the survey
- Set a minimum number of people who will handle the raw data to avoid situations where individuals can be identified
- Clearly communicate confidentiality parameters and commitments to all participants

Make it easy to complete

- Consider access – literacy, accessibility, time available
- Be realistic in time estimates for completion of the survey – it is better to overestimate and have people happy when they finish earlier than underestimate and have them grumpy because it has taken longer

Set reasonable expectations for response rates

- Some research suggests that a rate of less than 65% is too low as the results are not representative
- In saying that, staff survey response rates typically range between 25-60%
- Internal surveys tend to fare better than external ones



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Explain next steps

Let employees know what to expect and when. When will the results be available? What will be happening after that? When can people expect some actions to occur?

Follow through on promises

Stick to timeframe – if delays occur, but sure to communicate these and advise new timeframes. Failing to do this can mean credibility is damaged and responses next time may be lower.

Incentives

There is research available both for and against the use of incentives. Research for incentives generally asserts around a 10-15% increase in rates when incentives are used (though estimates range up to 50%).

- Monetary incentives are generally not effective. Some research suggests 'useful and relevant information' is a great incentive for the current workplace (for example, a personalised summary of findings or access to results). A genuine assurance that information will be used and acted upon, is also effective.
- Research often recommends against making participation a competition, for example, a prize for the department who achieves 100% response rate or for particular individuals. These can be viewed as a bribe or as unfair and can encourage disharmony or division within the organisation.
- Company-wide incentives are generally regarded as a good idea, for example, donation to a charity if the company goal is achieved. Other research suggests vouchers are effective for longer surveys, or prize draws for shorter ones.
- Small prizes with a high chance of winning are generally more effective than bigger prizes with a small chance.

Other recommendations and considerations:

- Send a reminder within 10 days of launching the survey; this will generally boost responses.
- Allow a timeframe of at least two weeks for survey completion. This can help ensure staff who are away on leave have the chance to complete it.