



Finger on the Pulse: The Easy Guide to Pulse Surveys



@ELMO_Software



@elmo-software



@ELMOSoftware

Contents

Introduction	3
What is a pulse survey?	4
Why conduct employee surveys?	4
How do pulse surveys differ from engagement surveys?	5
3 things to consider before building a pulse survey	5
5 top tips for getting the most out of your surveys	6
Pulse survey example questions	9
Analysing survey data	10

Introduction

How well do you know your employees? In an age of almost constant change where the line between 'work' and 'life' is hazier than ever before, do you know if what your organisation is offering is hitting the mark? What do they like or dislike? What is your organisation doing well, and what needs to be improved?

Individual circumstances, preferences, aspirations, as well as every aspect of the employee experience (EX), are in a state of flux. Without obtaining insights about the sentiment of employees and gauging their thoughts on life both inside and outside of work, it's impossible to provide a nurturing, collaborative, and appealing workplace culture. In this environment, it's no surprise that employee pulse surveys are more valuable than ever before.

If your organisation is new to pulse surveys or wants to learn more about their advantages, this guide will provide you with all the information you need to know, including:

- **The benefits of conducting pulse surveys**
- **How pulse surveys differ from engagement surveys**
- **Things to consider before building a pulse survey**
- **Top tips for getting the most out of your survey**
- **How to analyse survey data and take action**

What is a pulse survey?

Pulse surveys are a mechanism for measuring feedback using shorter, more frequent check-ins. A pulse survey is a brief set of questions (approximately 5 to 15) sent regularly to employees. It is a way to check the “pulse” of an organisation, to touch base with employees on a particular topic, and gather all-important employee feedback.

Pulse surveys can address the following:

- **A change initiative**
- **Diversity & inclusion**
- **Candidate experience**
- **Onboarding**
- **Employee benefits**
- **Workplace policies**
- **Learning and development**
- **Staff satisfaction**
- **Corporate social responsibility**
- **Leadership effectiveness**

Why conduct employee surveys?

The benefits of regularly administering employee surveys are tenfold, for employees and employers alike.

Benefits for employers:

- **Measure engagement and gauge workforce sentiment** – When you use the right metrics, the right tools, and ask the right questions, an employee survey can be a powerful tool to reveal employee insights.
- **Facilitate communication** – Surveys can act as a launching pad for important conversations about organisational processes and workplace practices, and ensure employees feel they are valued participants in such conversations.
- **Predict worker behaviour and set benchmarks** – Collecting data from your own employees can help you make informed organisational decisions.
- **Identify and address concerns** – Surveying employees is a great way to uncover the good and the bad within an organisation so that leaders can address problems head-on.

Benefits for employees:

- **Improve engagement** – When employees are regularly surveyed by their employer, they are more engaged in their work, which boosts motivation, satisfaction, and morale.
- **Boost employee empowerment** – Employees feel empowered and valued when their opinions are heard, and regular surveys enforces this.
- **Build trust and connection** – When employees voice concerns and leaders address those concerns, it builds trust. After all, employees are at the coal face of an organisation so are well-placed to suggest changes.

How do pulse surveys differ from engagement surveys?

According to ELMO's [2022 HR Industry Benchmark Report](#), less than half (44%) of Australian and New Zealand organisations conduct pulse surveys to measure employee engagement, and many more (77%) conduct traditional engagement surveys (which are typically annual). However, there are many benefits of the former.

Pulse surveys are:

- Conducted on a more regular basis and therefore offer more frequent and relevant insights, rather than an annual engagement survey where employees are asked to feed-back retrospectively.
- Shorter (typically 5 to 15 questions) so aren't as time-consuming for employees as engagement surveys, and therefore get higher completion rates.
- Useful for focusing on a targeted topic area as opposed to an engagement survey that covers a lot of topics at once and can be overwhelming.
- Great for evaluating reactions to changes that are implemented in an organisation, whereas leveraging data from infrequent engagement surveys is more difficult.

Measure your employee Net Promoter Score®^ via a pulse survey

Organisations use Net Promoter Score®^ to measure customer satisfaction, but they can also measure employee satisfaction through an employee Net Promoter Score (eNPS®^). This score is a feedback metric derived from the survey question below:

On a scale of zero to ten, how likely are you to recommend this organisation as a place to work?

It is the ultimate measure of employee loyalty, satisfaction, and engagement. Depending on where employees rank on the scale, they will either be detractors (0-6), passives (7-8), or promoters (9-10). If most employees are promoters, it's a very good sign of organisational health.

Keen to know more about eNPS®^? Visit this [information page](#) from [PeoplePulse](#), an ELMO solution.

^Net Promoter, Net Promoter System, Net Promoter Score, NPS and the NPS-related emoticons are registered trademarks of Bain & Company, Inc., Fred Reichheld and Satmetrix Systems, Inc.

3 things to consider before building a pulse survey

1. Outline what you want to uncover/achieve from the survey

Before creating any employee survey, it's important to have a clear vision of the intent of the survey, define expectations, and predict outcomes. It may be worthwhile to have discussions with multiple stakeholders at different levels to determine the purpose of the survey.

2. Draft the questions

As a rule, a survey should have one primary theme, and the questions should not be ambiguous or vague. Completing Step 1 is crucial before drafting the questions as it will help to inform the direction of the survey.

3. Set goals and objectives

Set clear goals and objectives is the first step to building effective staff surveys. To ensure goals are meaningful, use a formula like SMART. Smart stands for: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound.

5 top tips for getting the most out of your surveys

1. Reconsider your scales to achieve accuracy

When building surveys, most organisations will use the Likert scale to measure attitudes and opinions with a greater degree of nuance than a binary 'yes/no' question. The Likert scale typically uses a 5-point scale, with 1 being 'strongly disagree' or 'very dissatisfied' and 5 being 'strongly agree' or 'very satisfied', for example.

- **5 = Highly satisfied**
- **4 = Satisfied**
- **3 = Neutral**
- **2 = Dissatisfied**
- **1 = Highly dissatisfied**

However, there is a flaw with using the 1 to 5 scales. This is because, using this approach, a 'neutral' response is 3 out of 5, equating to 60%. This is not representative of a mid-point score (50%), meaning the data will not be accurate or meaningful.

The solution is simple: retain the 5-point scale but weigh it as follows:

- **4 = Highly satisfied**
- **3 = Satisfied**
- **2 = Neutral**
- **1 = Dissatisfied**
- **0 = High Dissatisfied**

Using this approach, a 'neutral' answer in a score of 2 out of 4, or 50%, which is representative of the respondent's sentiment.

2. Limit the number of demographic questions

Collecting the demographics of survey respondents – age, gender, division, location – allows employers to cut and slice the data and gain better insights. The challenge is that adding too many demographic questions to a survey will add significant length. After all, people are time-poor and will not willingly spend more than 10 minutes completing a survey, and the longer the survey the greater the survey drop-offs and the lower the response rate.

Demographic questions can be placed at the beginning or end of a survey, but each has its own risk and reward. For example, asking 10 demographic questions before the survey has begun will distract from the main survey content, perhaps causing some to abandon the survey, which will not result in a good response rate.

On the other hand, adding demographic questions at the end could skew the data. For example, if 15% of your audience drop off and don't make it to the end of the survey – to the demographic questions – there will be holes in the demographic data and the ability to make meaningful comparisons will be compromised.

Examples of important staff demographics:

- Age
- Gender
- Race/ethnicity
- Tenure
- Job role
- Division/department
- Location

Best practice for using demographic questions in a survey

- Determine which demographic questions to include, depending on the survey's content and the end-goal. For example, if the purpose of the survey is to gauge staff satisfaction around managerial support, it may be enough to ask one or two demographic questions: a) What division are you in? b) What location are you in?
- Use asterisk (*) next to demographic questions to indicate that they are mandatory.

3. Beware of industry benchmarking

Industry benchmarking is a good idea within lots of organisational functions. However, it's important to avoid the trappings of benchmarking because it does have limitations.

For example, for benchmark data to be useful and meaningful, it must be:

- Easily available
- Held in one central location
- Created using common questions and definitions
- Created using an adequate sample size
- Collected at the same time

Unfortunately, this isn't always the case with benchmark data, and so should be taken with a pinch of salt.

Benchmarked data, when available, should be used as one of the tools to help inform your decision-making process. Just be aware that, given the challenges outlined above, the validity of such data needs careful consideration before any major decisions are made from its review.

It is therefore advised that, as well as external benchmarks, organisations leverage internal benchmark data, where their own trend data is analysed for movement from one period to the next, as it can often be a more rewarding and relevant approach.

Armed with internal benchmark data, an organisation could, for example, look at their exit survey data and determine the typical engagement profile and persona of an employee who has departed the organisation, and then benchmark results from other surveys against the persona.

Beyond that, if a new hire completes the 3-month onboarding survey and records data like that of a typical departing employee profile, they could be flagged as a potential flight risk. With this insight, an employer could strengthen their retention efforts to maximise engagement and stop people walking out of the door prematurely.

4. Remember the importance of pre- and post-survey comms

Pre-survey communications

Before sending a survey invitation to employees, a leader within the organisation should communicate the purpose of the survey. This way, employees understand the objectives of the surveys and are ready to complete it.

Pre-survey comms are vital for boosting participation rates because it will signal to employees that their opinions and feedback is valued, and employees are prepared to be honest and upfront with their responses.

Pre-survey comms should cover areas such as:

- Why the organisation is running the survey, what it is seeking to understand, and why the employee should participate in this survey and all future surveys (which may require incentivisation).
- Who is running the survey (if managed by an external party).
- Whether the survey is confidential and/or anonymous, and who will see their responses.
- When the survey invites will be sent and how long they will have to complete the survey.
- What will happen after the survey has run and what staff can expect.

Post-survey communications

Immediately after the survey has closed, send a note to thank employees for their time and candour. Communicate the participation rate, and even hint at one or two of the common themes you have received that will be analysed further and reported back on.

Emphasise that the organisation is eager to tackle any issues that arose in the responses and excited to about the positive changes ahead. Employees should also be told an approximate date when the high-level results will be shared with them.

Sharing some of the key cumulative results with employees signals trust, openness, and respect. It's therefore important that organisations are honest and share a balance of positives and areas that require more focus.

It's also important that an organisation communicates an action plan that summarises how the feedback provided will be actioned.

5. Offer response anonymity

When employees trust that their responses are anonymous, they are more likely to be honest and forthright with their answers, resulting in more meaningful data for the organisation.

Surveys should also offer a comment section under each question so that employees can

6. Define survey cadence

Survey cadence is an important – albeit sometimes forgotten – consideration. There's a fine balance between overloading employees and falling short of gathering enough meaningful data to compare/contrast.

To determine the right cadence for your organisation, ask the question: how frequently does the business need to see results from the survey? This will depend on several factors, including the amount of change and fluctuation occurring in a particular area, and the time needed to action any issues raised.

For example, a change initiative such as returning to the office may experience developments week on week, therefore measuring engagement weekly makes sense. What's more, in the case of diversity and inclusion, addressing issues may take months, and so measuring employee engagement before change has occurred is redundant.

Pulse survey example questions

If you're unsure what questions to put into your pulse survey, below are some examples to get you started, broken into survey topic areas.

Change management questions:

- I understand the organisation's plans for future success.
- I trust our senior leaders to lead the organisation to future success.
- I have received adequate communication about [change] and my questions have been answered.

Diversity and inclusion questions:

- Our organisation values diverse opinions and ideas.
- My opinions count at work.
- People of all different backgrounds, characteristics, and beliefs are welcome here.

Onboarding questions:

- My first [period of time] at the organisation has been well-organised and informative.
- I feel accepted by my immediate co-workers.
- My immediate manager cares about my development.

Employee benefits questions:

- My first [period of time] at the organisation has been well-organised and informative.
- I feel accepted by my immediate co-workers.
- My immediate manager cares about my development.

Returning to the workplace after COVID-19 questions:

- I have received adequate communication about returning to the workplace and my questions have been answered.
- I feel comfortable returning to the workplace.
- I am excited about returning to the workplace.

Analysing survey data

The real job begins after you've gathered the survey responses. Armed with the data, the next steps are as follows:

- Look for common areas of company strengths and weaknesses.
- Categorise the data and organise it accordingly. Classify it into behaviour patterns, psychographics (i.e., psychological characteristics and traits, e.g., values, desires, goals), and demographics.
- Summarise the entire survey and build a report.
- If applicable, share the data with employees to show transparency (as discussed on the previous page).
- **Act:** The real success of the company comes down to taking the required actions, so be prepared for implementing changes in the organisation. For example, if the feedback is that the workplace does not offer enough flexibility, the logical next step is to quickly review the flexible work policy and discuss implications with leaders and other key stakeholders. Delayed – or worse, resistant – action on poor feedback will break employer-employee trust and cause employees to walk out of the door.
- **Benchmark:** Running regular pulse surveys will mean an organisation can benchmark results and compare future results against changes the organisation is implementing.
- **Review and repeat:** The nature of pulse surveys means they should be regularly repeated to yield meaningful insights. Continue to review responses to see if progress is being made in areas where changes are being implemented.

When it comes to managing employee data, most organisations opt for paper-based, burdensome processes. According to [ELMO's 2022 HR Industry Benchmark Report](#), most organisations (43%) rely on spreadsheets to record employee data, including survey data. Using this approach makes benchmarking and comparing data hard, and insights near impossible to visualise. Not to mention, spreadsheets are fraught with risk, such as version duplication, accidental deletion, etc.

It's advised to use a cloud-based tool to house and view your survey data, to make sure you get the most out of your pulse surveys.

Our recommendation

Collect, manage, analyse, and compare data with [ELMO Survey](#)

- Access to HR survey and benchmarking
- Real-time updates and reporting
- Easy collection and analysis of data

[ELMO Survey](#) enables organisations to conduct and manage staff surveys throughout all points of the employee lifecycle to gain actionable insights into your employees' attitudes and opinions towards work. Access a range of ready-made HR survey templates built by industry professionals with over 18 years of experience to make better business decisions. ELMO's survey software fully integrates with the entire ELMO cloud HR & payroll suite.

How ELMO can help?

ELMO Software (ASX:ELO) is a cloud-based solution that helps thousands of organisations across Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom to effectively manage their people, process and pay. ELMO solutions span the entire employee lifecycle from 'hire to retire'. They can be used together or stand-alone, and are configurable according to an organisation's unique processes and workflows. Automate and streamline your operations to reduce costs, increase efficiency and bolster productivity.

For further information:

[Contact us](#)

Disclaimer: This document contains general information and is not intended to constitute legal advice. If you need legal advice, we recommend you speak to a qualified lawyer.

