

7 proven tips for effective action planning

You may be surprised to know how few organisations undertake action planning following a comprehensive employee survey. But if there is no effort to translate employee feedback into meaningful action, then what is the value of undertaking the research, to begin with?

Here are 7 proven tips that have helped Insync's clients establish an effective action response following their engagement survey.

Start with conclusive data not just opinion

1.

While not a hard and fast rule, action planning should seek to address themes and trends identified from a survey. This is not an absolute rule in the sense that action planning can follow a more qualitative process such as brainstorming, but you want to make sure that the data collected represents a group's position and not just the opinion of the more vocal few.

Allow the group to table their grievances before shifting to planning

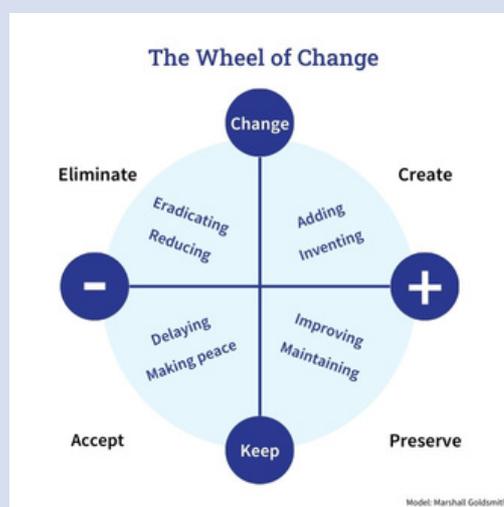
2.

You need to start where the group is at. If they feel aggrieved, you need to give them time to table it and feel heard. At the same time, when you shift into action planning, you must be prepared to call it out when they recede into the problem. It's a balance (sometimes at Insync we separate these two elements into two sessions).

Take a methodological approach

3.

Don't fall into the trap of thinking that action planning is just asking a team 'What can we do better?'. Structure and participatory processes are important for getting the most from the collective wisdom and energy of the group. Initially developed as a coaching model, Marshall Goldsmith's 'Wheel of Change' is a process that applies well to action planning.



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4.

Foster a safe space for participation and remove inhibitors

Ask yourself, what is needed for this group to feel 'safe' in speaking what's on their mind and having their voice heard.

Some important considerations here include:

- How will you establish collective working agreements at the onset?
- What is the role of managers in the process? Do they even need to be present?
- What are the promises that you will make to the group?
- Where grievances may be deeply entrenched or trust may be low, we recommend engaging with experienced, independent facilitators.

5.

Swiftly transition from planning to action

How quickly you communicate the 'where to next' is critical. The group needs to see tangible actions as a result of their work, and these should be communicated promptly. That's not to say that all ideas should or can be acted on and this should be clearly articulated through the process so that expectations are managed.

6.

Empower employees to take ownership of solutions

If the team owns the problem, they are probably best equipped to implement the solution or outcomes. Of course, some plans or ideas always require a higher level of approval or strategic focus; however, we should always look for the 'quick wins' where team members themselves can take direct accountability. Giving the work back helps to break down the 'them and us' mentality by changing the narrative from 'what can be done for us' to 'what can we do for ourselves'.

7.

Celebrate the successes

Let the team know how they are doing and what is changing as a result of their work. Don't just assume that people can see the changes. Telling the good stories is important to realigning the team and building engagement.