

# How to respond to your employee survey

A best practice guide

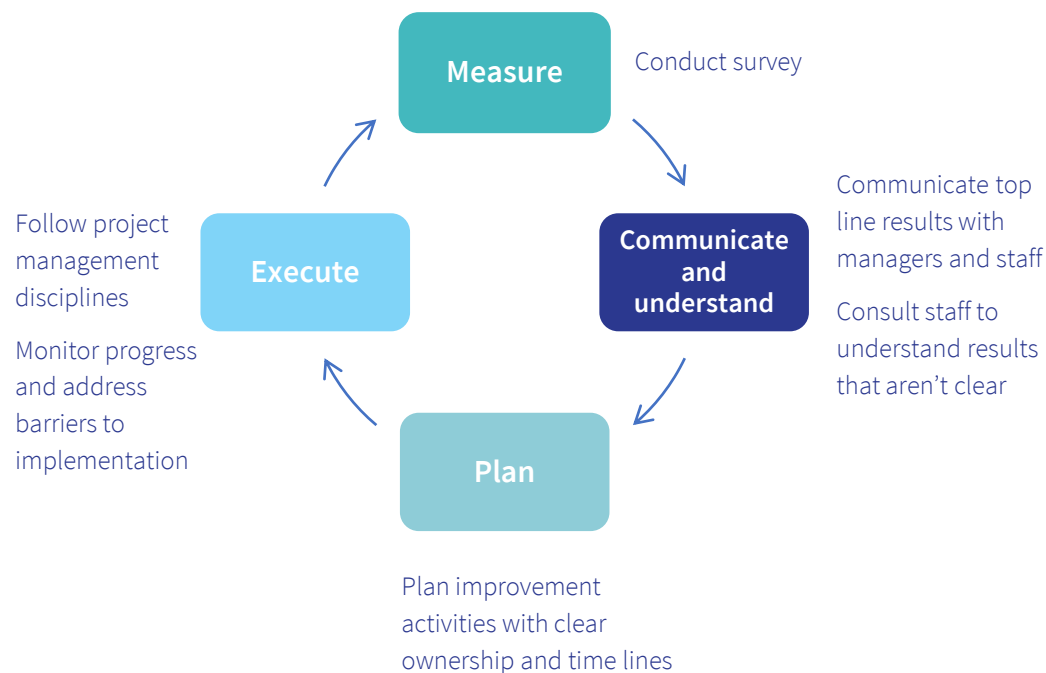


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## Closing the loop

Following your recent employee survey you will now be planning how to close the loop, by communicating the survey results, consulting employees to get more clarity where required, determining which issues should be addressed, setting improvement goals, planning how to address the issues and opportunities, and then following through with the required actions and regular communications on the progress being made. This guide will assist you in this process.



## Communicating results

The main thing employees need to hear following the survey is: “we have heard you”.

Communication with employees should take place very shortly after the survey. Delaying communication can lead to scepticism (doubting that something is true or useful) and the belief that the results could be “spin doctored”.

The best approach will depend on your unique circumstances but would normally include:

- Communicating and discussing the survey results and their implications with your executive and senior leadership teams
- An email from your CEO thanking people for their participation with a very brief summary of the key messages – what you are doing well and where you need to improve. Also what the process will be for responding to the survey results
- Face to face discussions with staff, either via an all-staff meeting or in cascaded meetings in departments or teams
- A communique of around 2 to 4 pages that adds a bit more detail to your CEO’s initial message, highlighting what you are doing well, where you need to improve and how you will respond (see Appendix 2)
- Regular updates on how you are going – at least quarterly. A great format for these is “you said”, “we have done”, “next, we will do”

## Understanding results

Sometimes it can be hard to understand why employees responded to a survey item as they did. For example, people might indicate that they don't feel that they are using their skills and talents to their full potential. You might be genuinely perplexed by this as the organisation puts a big emphasis on challenging and developing its employees. In a situation like this you have two broad options:

- Ask managers to seek more information and understanding in one-on-one meetings with employees or in team meetings. They can ask how people understood the question, what good looks like and what people would like to see changing. They might also probe what the organisation needs to do differently and also what each individual needs to do differently – often individuals also need to take greater responsibility to achieve the results they are looking for.
- Conduct focus groups. Gather together between 6 and 15 people to explore up to three topics in depth. We normally recommend focus groups of around two hours to be able to drill down into the right amount of detail, while still keeping people focused and fresh. For each topic you will explore how people understood the item, what they think the underlying causes of the problem are, what the desired future state is, and what practical actions will solve the problem.

## Deciding which issues to address

We generally suggest prioritising no more than three or four opportunities for improvement.

These will be the areas where your absolute and relative (versus the benchmark) performance are lowest **and** where improvement will have the biggest impact on your success. You also want to get the biggest bang for your buck – focusing on areas that are already in your business plan and where the implementation effort is lowest.

### Prioritising actions

		<b>Prioritising actions</b>	
<b>Business impact</b>	High	<i>Evaluate business case for action</i>	<i>High priority</i>
	Low	<i>Don't bother</i>	<i>Quick win – create momentum?</i>
		More	Less
		<b>Resources and time to implement</b>	

## Setting goals

Consider setting specific goals relating to the areas you want to address. Choose a small number of survey items where you can move the dial and where an increase in percentage favourable would indicate that your planned actions have had an impact. For example if you were seeking to lift engagement, you might target a 5% increase in the percentage favourable for the following items:

Relationships	Our organisation cares about and is committed to me
Autonomy	I understand how my role contributes to our organisation's long term goals and strategies
Mastery	My skills and talents are used to their full potential
Purpose	Our senior leadership team has a vision for our organisation that inspires me

## Evaluating your response options

Your response options fall into three broad categories:

- Initiatives – setting up projects that have goals, tasks and responsibilities. Initiatives have a start and end point and consume money and time
- Simplification – identifying and removing barriers/roadblocks that make it harder for employees to get the job done
- Behaviours – changing the way you do what you currently do, without any further investment of time or resources. Adopting new habits and ways of interacting. Having different conversations and applying good practices as part of your daily activities

**Initiatives** – while the implementation of initiatives is generally necessary, it is preferable to prioritise the initiatives that you have already identified, considered and prioritised through your business planning cycle. Before creating new initiatives, it is good to consider the existing initiatives to see how they will address employee issues. It may be necessary to reprioritise, modify and increase support on a few current initiatives that will have the biggest impact on the organisation's performance.

Creating a new and uncoordinated list of new initiatives is as likely to exacerbate the problems as to fix them – initiative overload, increased stress, cynicism, burnout, very little being achieved.

## Evaluating your response options (cont.)

**Simplification** – many employee issues can also be addressed not by doing new things, but by addressing barriers and removing roadblocks. Many organisations are expending time and effort on wasteful activities – defined as activities that don't add value for clients, activities that reduce the time that can be spent directly caring for and working with clients.

**Behaviours** – changing behaviours, creating new norms and building a just culture can have a very significant impact on engagement and the organisation's performance without creating a lot of additional work (see RAMP framework in Appendix 4).

We suggest holding an action planning workshop to determine a well-considered and prioritised response to your survey results. A sample agenda for such a workshop is provided in Appendix 2. Insync has extensive experience of planning and facilitating action planning workshops and could assist if needed.

When designing your response, consider the following points:

- What has been tried in the past? Was it successful? What could be done differently? What existing practices could you better leverage from?
- What parts of the organisation are doing this well? What can you learn from them? How to you roll out good practices from these parts of the organisation into other parts of the organisation?
- What strategies have you seen in other organisations that might be effective here? What learnings can you take away from your experiences elsewhere?

## Following through

Agree on how you are going to track how well you are responding to the survey results. You might make it a monthly agenda item at your senior leadership team meetings. Alternatively, or in addition, you might set up a subcommittee or employee forum that takes responsibility for coordinating your response. Where possible use existing forums and management structures.

Setting specific measurement goals as outlined previously, with the intention to measure progress within four or six months, will help to keep people focused on implementing the agreed actions.

## Additional resources

We wish you every success as you respond to your employee survey results. To assist you in this process, the following additional resources are provided (and more are available upon request):

- Appendix 1 – How Insync can help you respond quickly and effectively
- Appendix 2 – Using a communique to communicate your survey results
- Appendix 3 – Designing and running an action planning workshop
- Appendix 4 – Using the RAMP framework to lift employee engagement

## Appendix 1 – How Insync can help you respond quickly and effectively

We are committed to your success. We have many research studies, templates and resources that will help to lift employee engagement and enhance your success. These are provided to our clients at no charge. Please don't hesitate to reach out to see if we have any specific resources to meet the challenges and opportunities you are facing.

The most commonly used resources are provided here as follows:

- Appendix 2 – Using a communicate to communicate your survey results
- Appendix 3 – Designing and running an action planning workshop
- Appendix 4 – Using the RAMP framework to lift employee engagement

Insync also provides a number of fee-based post-survey services that will help you to accelerate and focus your response. These are summarised below.

Communicate	In Appendix 2 we provide the suggested content and layout for a communicate that will be of assistance if you choose to produce the communicate yourself. If you would like assistance we can also assist in creating the content and producing the document relatively quickly and cost effectively.
Focus Groups	If you would like an independent party to conduct focus groups on your behalf (especially if there are sensitive topics to cover) we have extensive experience of designing, facilitating and extracting the key messages from employee or customer focus groups.
Action planning workshops	In Appendix 3, we lay out the suggested topics and approach for holding action planning workshops. If required, we can provide a skilled and experienced workshop facilitator to design, facilitate and record the key outcomes from your action planning workshop.
Vision and strategy facilitation	Employee surveys often indicate that employees don't understand or fully buy into the organisation's vision and strategy. We have published research on how to engage employees more effectively in your vision and strategy that we can refer you to at no charge. We can also assist in designing and running a process to engage your employee more effectively with your vision and strategy.
Cultural change	We have tools and resources for measuring and improving your culture as required. We follow a five step process that includes: measurement, design, leader alignment, communication and embedding.
RAMP workshops	These are two hour interactive workshops for up to 20 managers at a time to understand and act on the RAMP framework as outlined in Appendix 4.
Train the trainer	These are three to four hour workshops for selected managers and change agents to provide them with the detailed knowledge and tools needed to interpret, communicate and respond to your employee survey. Topics include: (1) and in-depth understanding of engagement and how to interpret survey results (2) how to communicate survey results to managers and employees and (3) how to go about action planning to identify and prioritise the actions needed to address the issues and opportunities.

# Appendix 2 – Using a communique to communicate your survey results

Insync has found that a four page communique often provides just the right amount of detail to help employees understand the key messages from the survey and how you intend to respond. A high level of transparency and authenticity will make your employees feel that you have truly heard them. An example layout is provided below.

## Front cover:

- CEO message / strategic context
- Overall results
- Summary of key messages
- Overview of strengths and improvement areas
- Dual branding (yours and Insync’s) or simply your brand if you prefer

## Middle pages:

- What we’re doing well
- Where we can improve
- Bring out three or four key themes for each topic using selected survey items supported by free text

## Back cover:

- A few more free text comments (some positive, some negative) to give more flavour and texture to the survey results
- A brief overview of next steps
- A final thank-you for participating

**Axus Foundation**  
Alignment and Engagement Survey 2018

**A note from our CEO**  
Dear team,  
Thank you for taking the time to respond to our 2018 Alignment and Engagement Survey. The fact that you took the time to complete the survey says a lot about your interest in and commitment to Axus Foundation. The results of the survey tell us a lot about ourselves – our performance, our culture and values, our relationships and how we go about our work. Your feedback identifies what we do well, but also where we need to improve and what to put in place now and in the future. The Board and Executive are pleased to know that Axus Foundation’s employees are highly engaged and proud of the work we do to make a difference in our community. The results recognise that employees feel we have a strong set of organisational values that guide our everyday behaviours. However, we understand that employees are seeking strong leadership, greater clarity and participation in times of change. We will continue to improve in areas around our pay, how we reward and recognise our employees. It is important to recognise that rather than a ‘quick fix’, and we the improvements we need as a Team remain completely committed through on your feedback so that better inspire and support our volunteers to deliver on our vision. We want to ensure we’re doing our employees to work together most marginalised and disabled live with choice and opportunity.

**John Smith, CEO**

**In summary...**

- The survey was conducted in March 2018
- Over 121 people provided feedback (76% of employees)
- Being a strong representation of the opinions of Axus Foundation employees, this gives us a good indication of what we are doing well and where we need to improve

**What are the results telling us?**

**What we’re doing well...**

- Team leadership**: 82% The person I report to is trustworthy. 77% The person I report to values my opinions.
- Autonomy & work-life balance**: 81% The person I report to trusts me to do my job well. 63% Axus Foundation helps me to achieve the ideal work-life balance.
- Ethical & community awareness**: 75% Axus Foundation contributes to the wider community. Axus Foundation dignifies the potential of all employees regardless of gender, ethnicity or disability.
- Investment in systems**: 83% I am confident in the skills and knowledge of our IT department. 67% Our email and other electronic communications systems work well.

**Where we can improve...**

- Communicating vision & goals**: 26% I am kept updated on Axus Foundation’s progress towards its overall goals. 35% The message for significant organisational changes are explained to me.
- Measuring performance**: 40% My work group uses challenging goals to increase performance. 37% My work group regularly reports on how well it has performed compared to its plans, budgets and forecasts.

**A further sample of your views...**

- “Managers are available to discuss problems that arise and actually listen to your concerns.”
- “Axus Foundation provides services and support to people in a timely and without judgement.”
- “On the ground, staff are committed to obtaining good client outcomes and achieving the best results for their clients.”
- “Offers a wide range of services for the community...”
- “Axus Foundation could improve... communicating changes and why.”
- “Axus Foundation could improve... office space and access to building.”
- “Axus Foundation could improve communicating the strategy goals and actions to staff.”
- “I support each other through difficult times.”
- “Axus Foundation could improve... office space and access to building.”

**Next steps**  
Thank you again for your participation. So far we have had Board and Senior Leadership Team reviews of results and will soon be commencing workgroup/team results presentations. Our next steps are:

- Clarifying Axus Foundation’s long term direction and aims
- Communicate top line results back to staff
- Employee validation sessions to present workgroup/team results
- Focus on devising sustainable action plans that are monitored regularly

We will keep you informed on our progress to improve in the areas you have identified. Look out for opportunities to provide your input and feedback. This is a great opportunity to make a positive contribution!

**Thank you for participating!**

**“Managers are available to discuss problems that arise and actually listen to your concerns.”**

**“We need to be more financially viable, however we must ensure our staff are taken care of and not burnt out in the process of trying to balance our financial position.”**

**insync**

## Appendix 3 – Designing and running an action planning workshop

### Format

We suggest that you should always hold an action planning workshop following your employee engagement survey.

If the survey results are clear and expected, and if many of the issues have already been factored into your business plan for the year, then the workshop might just take 1-2 hours to review and reconfirm goals, priorities, responsibilities and timelines.

If the survey results are somewhat unexpected and indicate that there are more serious issues to address then we recommend a more intensive workshop that might take 3-4 hours and include some of the elements outlined below.

### Participants

Executives, sometimes with senior managers as well (typically 6 to 20 people).

### Purpose

To identify and prioritise a limited number of actions that will lift employee engagement within 4 to 6 months.

### Preparation

Participants review the survey results ahead of the session and identify three items that should be prioritised to improve employee engagement at the organisation overall plus three items to improve engagement within their divisions/teams.

Considerations for selecting these items include:

- The degree to which the management team can make a big improvement to the item (i.e. it is directly controllable)
- Difficulty of implementation (items that don't require significant effort or expense are preferred)
- The organisational benefit from improving the item (it must have a big impact on making you more successful)
- Whether or not it has been identified as a priority in your business plan (leveraging what is already in the plan is preferable)

**Workshop topics** (*illustrative* – exact format of workshop will depend on your specific context and goals)

- Session 1: Introduction and objectives
- Session 2: Review current situation and agree targeted improvement areas (what needs to be fixed)
- Session 3: Set improvement goals for targeted improvement areas
- Session 4: Overview of response options - initiatives in business plan, simplification – reducing complexity, behaviour change (e.g. RAMP framework, appreciative enquiry, storytelling)
- Session 5: Develop/review improvement plans for targeted improvement areas
- Session 6: Summary and close - agree immediate next steps, agree communication plan with the organisation, review workshop outcomes



# Appendix 4 – Using the RAMP framework to lift employee engagement

## What is employee engagement?

Employee engagement is an critical enabler of organisational performance.

It refers to the degree to which your employees feel: a) emotionally connected to the organisation b) have positive attitudes and c) go the extra mile to help the organisation succeed:

- Emotional engagement (heart) – job satisfaction, being proud and committed to the organisation. When employees are engaged emotionally you will observe that they are happy, energised and alert at work.
- Cognitive engagement (head) – having a positive frame of mind, enthusiasm and a belief in the importance of contributing to the success of the organisation. Employees displaying cognitive engagement will express a positive attitude at work, even when they are faced with difficult situations.
- Behavioural engagement (hand) – exerting discretionary effort for the benefit of the organisation. These employees will display a willingness to help others and assist with projects and tasks that might be outside their immediate area of responsibility.

## Why is it important?

Quite simply, when you build an engaged team your employees will:

- work harder for the organisation
- stick with the organisation for longer
- have a positive impact on workplace culture
- be more satisfied and committed to the long term direction of the organisation
- take care to understand and meet the needs of internal and external customers

## How can you improve employee engagement?

To engage employees more effectively, Insync has developed a practical framework called the RAMP model of engagement. These are the four main factors that will help you to lift employee engagement:

R	Relationships – build genuine relationships with team members; understand their goals and aspirations, know their strengths and development needs and provide support
A	Autonomy – empower team members to be innovative and accountable, foster mutual trust and provide a flexible work environment
M	Mastery – provide challenges and opportunities for growth, encourage ongoing learning and development and provide constructive feedback
P	Purpose – help team members understand how they contribute to the organisation’s success and celebrate major wins when they are achieved

## Appendix 4 – Using the RAMP framework to lift employee engagement (cont.)

**R Relationships** – understand and respond to employee aspirations, opinions and concerns

### Survey Indicators:

- Our organisation cares about and is committed to me
- The person I report to is interested in my job satisfaction

### Tips and suggestions:

- Take time to walk around and greet people. Take an interest in their lives – hobbies, family, sport. Remember what was discussed last time and follow up. Show them that they are making a valuable contribution to the group. Discuss how their efforts contribute to team outcomes.
- Hold regular one on one meetings with employees. Get to know their goals and aspirations. Talk about where they want to be in three years' time. Talk about how to develop them. Ask them what you can do to support them.
- Provide employees with regular feedback on their performance. Recognise good and bad performance. Demonstrate that you know what they are doing. Show appreciation.
- Free up available resources to help employees during times of increased demand. Sometimes it is also possible to modify the tasks or demands of the job to improve working conditions.
- Provide employees with 'air time' to express their opinions and air their grievances. This can be a great way to show that you are committed to their wellbeing at work.

**A Autonomy** – encourage latitude and discretion in how team members go about achieving organisational outcomes

### Survey Indicators:

- I understand how my role contributes to our organisation's long term goals and strategies

### Tips and suggestions:

- Empower your people to be innovative and accountable by giving them the discretion (within agreed parameters) to voice their ideas and take ownership of process improvement initiatives; and by accepting that not all initiatives will enjoy equal success.
- Enable employees to work flexibly and promote the importance of work-life balance.
- Focus on outcomes and results by setting and reviewing goals, and ensuring that reward schemes are based on a combination of individual, team and company goals.
- Encourage team members to take ownership of their roles and work environment through having some discretion relating to their tasks, teams, time management and techniques used. In other words once the expected goals and outcomes have been agreed (defining what must be done) allow your team members as much discretion as possible in determining how it will done. Naturally the amount of discretion that can be applied will depend on levels of capability and experience, but increasing autonomy often lifts both engagement and productivity.

## Appendix 4 – Using the RAMP framework to lift employee engagement (cont.)

**M Mastery** – make work as meaningful and rewarding as possible

### Survey Indicators:

- My skills and talents are used to their full potential
- My work group is committed to improving productivity
- Our organisation is committed to high standards of performance
- Our organisation is committed to best practice in our industry

### Tips and suggestions:

- Set challenging but realistic role expectations and learning opportunities in collaboration with employees. Review progress during one on one meetings and link this to the organisation's goals.
- Give employees the opportunity to grow via challenging projects including inter department roles. Develop existing skills via secondments, skip-level meetings, rotations in chairing meetings and mentoring. Explore opportunities for your employees to take on more responsibility.
- Build a recognition culture: handwritten notes of acknowledgement to employees can be more meaningful than prizes; employees appreciate it when managers highlight good work to their 'boss' boss'. Increase your 'thank you's'.
- Look at how the organisation can improve its systems and structure to improve performance. Where are the bottlenecks? What can you do in your team to demonstrate commitment to continual improvement?
- Explore new practices that could be implemented to streamline processes for employees. What support would you need to help reduce inefficient practices? Are there areas for improvement in delegation, communication, planning and prioritising?

**P Purpose** – help employees understand how they contribute to the organisation's success

### Survey Indicators:

- Our senior leadership team has a vision for our organisation that inspires me
- Our everyday actions and performance assessment are clearly linked to our organisation's goals

### Engagement Strategies:

- Have a clear understanding of your organisation's vision, strategy and goals that you can discuss in plain language with your team.
- Regularly communicate the vision, strategy and goals with your team members – in emails, in team meetings, in one on one's, in visual material. Use words that resonate.
- Regularly explain the link between the organisation's vision, strategy and goals and team member's roles and daily activities. Show how team, departmental and divisional goals fit with the overall organisation's vision. Show your team how they contribute to the bigger picture.
- Ask employees to describe how their role connects with the organisation's and the team's goals – use this as a discussion tool in one on ones. Follow up in regular reviews.
- Identify and eliminate any actions/tasks/behaviours that are not aligned with the organisation's goals.



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