



# THE ADVANCED GUIDE TO EMPLOYEE SURVEYS

*What you need for happy, engaged employees.*

## GREAT COMPANY CULTURE

STARTS WITH ENGAGED EMPLOYEES:



Disengaged employees have **33%** more absentee days



## ASK EMPLOYEES WHAT'S UP

You'll enjoy response rates as high as

**90%**

When offered the opportunity, **18%** of employees proactively provide new ideas and suggestions...

**18%**

**10%**

....And when you share and act on feedback, engagement increases up to **10%**

## THE RIGHT APPROACH TO SURVEYS



Keep it short and simple



Make it anonymous



Share the info



Take action



Send it regularly

## ACT ON GREAT INFO



**Be Transparent About Results**

Transparent companies beat the S&P 500 by **11.3%**



**Act on Survey Information**

**1/3** of employees become disengaged when management doesn't act on feedback.



**Use Surveys for Employee Recognition**

Companies with recognition programs enjoy **31%** lower voluntary turnover

# ADVANCED GUIDE TO EMPLOYEE SURVEYS



## WHY THIS GUIDE?

Here at TINYpulse, we get the question all the time from clients or prospective clients:

- How do I make a really good employee survey?
- How many questions is too many questions?
- How frequent should I send a survey out?
- What's the best thing to do with survey feedback?

And frankly, we're not surprised that so many people ask this question. Do a quick Google search for "employee survey," "how to conduct an employee engagement survey," or "best employee surveys," and you'll get a broad range of articles. Some are incredibly generic and fail to offer any real guidance. Others require you to have a PhD in statistics to understand the content.

After hearing the same questions asked repeatedly, we wanted to help people sort through these and some of the other commonly asked questions. This guide highlights best practices and tips for creating engaging and effective employee surveys.

We hope you enjoy reading it. We even threw in some fun stories to show you how any organization — whether it's in healthcare, education, financial services, or some other industry entirely — can successfully use employee surveys to create a better, more engaged workplace that leads to improved retention, recognition, and results.

## WHY WE WANT TO HELP YOU MAKE BETTER SURVEYS

*Raise your hand if you've ever ignored a survey.*

Well, you're not alone. Many employees ignore or despise employee surveys because they're usually long and because of the real or perceived thought that their responses won't lead to positive change. On the flip side, even the managers and HR leaders who employ traditional employee survey approaches get frustrated because collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the results is time-consuming and overwhelming.

Yet we still seem to get surveyed all the time. It's because surveys are the most cost-effective and efficient way to collect feedback. And it's because of this exact reason that online surveys get constantly abused. Managers can field surveys with little budget impact, planning, or foresight. That's why we're writing this guide to share how to avoid this common trap and to properly plan, strategize, and execute a successful employee survey.

***"If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail!" — Ben Franklin***

## WE CAN HELP YOU MAKE A BETTER SURVEY

TINYpulse has helped 1,000-plus organizations around the world survey their employees and has collected hundreds of thousands of responses. Organizations like HubSpot, Livingsocial and National Australia Bank leverage TINYpulse to help them get a pulse on how happy, frustrated, or burnt out their employees are before retention sinks and issues fester. Based on this experience, we offer 20 best practices and tips in The Advanced Guide to Employee Surveys so that you can create more effective employee surveys that lead to results and improve employee retention, morale, and performance.



## WHO IS THIS GUIDE FOR?

This guide is intended for any organization that's ready to poll its employees or hopes to improve its annual employee survey. You'll learn a lot from this guide if you're a:

- CEO
- Human Resource (HR) leader
- General Manager (GM)
- Head of a department
- Any employee's leader

## WHO IS THIS GUIDE NOT FOR?

- Those who aren't committed to change
- Those who can't handle seeing or sharing critical feedback
- Those who are unwilling to turn feedback into results

For employees, there's nothing worse than giving feedback and then not hearing anything in response. Don't fall into that trap.

## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Everyone has different levels of experience and requirements when it comes to surveying his or her team. After consulting this guide, you'll be armed with proven approaches and strategies to replace or augment your current employee surveys.

## WHY SPEND TIME IMPROVING EMPLOYEE SURVEYS?

***"You can't manage what you can't measure." — W. Edwards Deming***

Quite simply, polling employees quickly sheds light on workplace issues, allowing the surveyor to recognize culture problems that lead to employee disengagement.

And research reveals that employee engagement positively impacts:

- **Revenue.** Companies with engaged employees experience 3-year revenue growth of 20.1%, compared to 8.9% by industry peers, according to [CLC Genesee](#) the HR consulting and employee survey division of The Corporate Executive Board.
- **Retention.** [CLC Genesee](#) also found that engaged employees are 87% less likely to leave the organization than disengaged employees.
- **Creativity.** [Gallup Research](#) has found that 59% of engaged employees say their job brings out their most creative ideas, compared to only 3% of disengaged employees.

So if you want a stronger-performing organization, it's time to get your survey on.

# THE KEY TO EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IS TEAM LEADERSHIP

Take a step back for a moment and think about company culture as though it were a garden. A beautiful garden is something that you have to keep tended. With just the right amount of water, fertilizer, and sunlight, it'll flourish before your eyes. And the perfect garden has the right complement of plants and flowers that makes it come together.



But a once-great garden can get overrun without constant attention. Or it can wither away if you forget to give it water or the right nutrients.

Without a thoughtful, dedicated gardener, the garden will never reach its full bloom. The same can be said for any organization. Without tuned-in leaders committed to promoting positive culture and fostering employee growth, a work environment will never enjoy high levels of employee engagement. Whether they be CEOs, department heads, human resource groups, or team leads, only those in leadership positions have the position to effect cultural change.

**Consider this:** According to [HRZone](#), engagement programs initiated by senior management are **twice** as successful as those not introduced by company leaders.

So before you jump into the process, take a step back and make sure you have decision makers involved who can incorporate positive change. If not, get their buy-in to conduct an employee survey, review results, acknowledge opportunities, and take action based on feedback. And if you have the authority to undertake changes based on feedback, make sure you have the time, bandwidth, and dedication to follow through.

Of course, individual staffers contribute to improve company culture; however, successful, long-term improvement starts with managers.

## STORY TIME SHOW EMPLOYEES YOU'RE ALL IN

**Client:** Hundreds of satisfied TINYpulse clients

**Challenge:** How can managers show that they are invested in implementing organizational change?



**Story:** For TINYpulse clients, we encourage that all their initial survey emails be signed by the CEO, department head, or HR leader. While they could be sent with zero personalization, emails signed with these leaders' names acknowledge that they're invested in promoting positive company culture and are prepared to hear both the good and the bad to actively work on improving the workplace environment.

<b>Email Subject</b>
Forest Key Invite to Create Cultural Magic - TINYpulse
<b>Email Body</b>
Hi,
Every organization experiences its share of cultural wins and boo boos. We're no different and have the opportunity to grow and improve our work environment together.
And to do this, I need your help and honest feedback on how we're doing and how we can do better. At the end of the day, each and every one of us creates and owns the current and future direction of our culture. So I've signed us up for a service called TINYpulse to receive one simple email per week.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* TINYpulse will email you one question per week</li> <li>* Your responses are anonymous and even I can't peek</li> <li>* Since we can't improve what we don't measure, this allows us to grow as an organization</li> </ul>
Click here to get started: <a href="https://www.tinypulse.com/GENERATED_SIGNUP_URL">https://www.tinypulse.com/GENERATED_SIGNUP_URL</a>
Thanks in advance! Forest Key CEO, Buuteeq
<a href="#">Invite staff to TINYpulse &gt;</a>

# WHY SHORTER EMPLOYEE SURVEYS ARE BETTER

Putting a survey together and gathering data is only as valuable as the willingness to act on the feedback to implement positive change. Don't consume precious time and resources just to satisfy curiosity or check a box in your HR to-do list. Do it because you want to improve your culture, which will lead to improved bottom-line results.

This becomes that much more important when you consider recent research from BlessingWhite, an employee engagement consulting firm. BlessingWhite found that nearly a third of all employees become disengaged when employers ask for feedback but do nothing about it. Fielding a survey without the commitment to act on its findings is a recipe for apathetic employees.

## com·mit·ment

/kəˈmɪtmənt/ ⓘ

noun

1. the state or quality of being dedicated to a cause, activity, etc.  
"the company's commitment to quality"  
synonyms: dedication, devotion, allegiance, loyalty, faithfulness, fidelity More
2. an engagement or obligation that restricts freedom of action.  
"business commitments"  
synonyms: responsibility, obligation, duty, tie, liability; More

## ACTION BEST PRACTICES

While we'll go into far greater detail about how to collect, share, and act on survey information in future chapters, the following four tips are your go-to best practices for showing true commitment:



**1 EXPLAIN THE SURVEY:** If you want your employees to complete the survey, give them a heads up. Let them know it's coming, why you've decided to implement it, and what you plan to do with that information. Having that understanding helps them get on board.

**2 SHARE ALL FEEDBACK:** You're about to hear good news; you're also about to hear bad news. You must be ready to share all of that news with your team, a sign that you're receptive to hearing everything they have to say.

**3 SCHEDULE REVIEW MEETINGS:** Don't expect that you'll remember to schedule meetings to review survey feedback with your team. Put a recurring meeting in everyone's calendars to review feedback at least monthly. It'll keep you honest.

**4 DO SOMETHING WITH THAT FEEDBACK:** Listening without action leads to disengagement. A truly committed manager takes advantage of this wealth of knowledge and puts it to action.

## STORY TIME TAKE AN ACTIVE ROLE

**Client:** A construction company

**Challenge:** Overcoming employee skepticism that survey responses will result in inaction

**Story:** Our client, the CEO of a construction company, was relatively new to conducting regular employee surveys. Nevertheless, he was ready to dive into the deep end and to turn to his employees to look for ways to improve staff satisfaction and processes.



After investing a good deal of time educating himself on survey best practices, he sent an email to everyone in his organization explaining why he was implementing a regular survey tool. He followed up with in-person meetings with each department head to emphasize his commitment and to let them know that they would be empowered to drive change at the department level. Finally, to establish ultimate accountability, he also sent a calendar invite that highlighted which date they would review the first batch of results before the first survey was even sent out.

This level of commitment created a rich stream of feedback from all levels within his organization. It did require a high level of time and investment to analyze all the responses. But with the date set to review the responses with his team, he and his department heads worked diligently to identify high-level themes (many of which pleasantly surprised them). The CEO then shared the high-level themes with everyone in the company, and each department head followed up with more granular themes unique to their group.

Though early in the process, the CEO shared that he's been extremely encouraged by the small changes that have taken place already. Plus, he feels that everyone from entry-level individuals to executives are now all bought in to the process of regularly assessing, monitoring, and improving employee happiness.

# SUCCESSFUL EMPLOYEE SURVEYS: COMMIT TO ACTING ON FEEDBACK

Imagine a typical large company with 1,000 employees sending out its annual employee survey. That survey likely has at least 50 questions that each and every employee is expected to slog through. Even more alarming is the 50,000 responses that someone is expected to read and assess. The company has the right motives at heart, but the execution results in lackluster answers, employee apathy, and lower response rates.

This is why short, regular surveys are better for both employees and employers. The limited number of questions allows employees to be more thoughtful and leads to higher response rates. And, fewer questions prevent employer analysis paralysis: they can more easily absorb feedback and pinpoint trouble areas.



	DEFINITION	SURVEY APPLICATION
<b>MACRO GOAL</b>	<i>The big-picture items you want to somebody accomplish</i>	<i>The desire to keep abreast of evolving employee sentiment and being able to act on negative trends</i>
<b>MICRO GOAL</b>	<i>Minimum amounts of work that must get done every single day to make the Macro Goal a reality</i>	<i>Small, regularly sent out surveys that require little employee effort but help keep track of attitudinal shifts</i>

## TOP 5 REASONS WHY SHORTER IS BETTER:

1. Having fewer questions feels manageable, leading to higher response rates
2. Employees can offer deep, comprehensive responses if there are fewer questions
3. Short surveys collect less data, making it easier for managers to absorb information
4. Limiting the number of questions prevents survey question creep
5. One or two focused questions lead to focused, timely action

In our experience, sticking to a short, simple survey can result in sustained employee participation rates as high as 90%. And if you're wondering how to make an actionable survey that's short and simple, have no fear. We've got lots of great info on that coming up.

## STORY TIME A CASE FOR SHORT SURVEYS

**Client:** Fortune 500 technology company

**Challenge:** How to get quick pulses on employee sentiment when you already have an annual survey

**Story:** A senior team manager was at odds with how to deal with his company's annual employee survey. Because employees changed roles and jobs quite a bit, the annual survey didn't fully capture the nuances of new additions to the team, changes in managers, or evolutions in role responsibilities. Additionally, because the annual survey was so high level, it failed to capture team-level engagement that was much more relevant to him and his direct reports.

This manager was looking for an alternative to this process and was referred to TINYpulse. Upon implementing TINYpulse, he found it was a great complement to his company's annual survey. The annual survey provided department-level benchmarks, while TINYpulse's short, regular surveys supplemented that information by offering him insights into his team's unique dynamics, challenges, and successes. And given the frequent team member changes, it allowed our client to quickly get a read on how these changes affected team morale — something the annual survey never allowed him to do.





# HOW TO INCORPORATE COMPANY VALUES INTO YOUR SURVEYS

If you're a leader of an organization, you probably know your company values by heart. Right? Do you? Do your employees? The odds aren't good, and that's a problem:

In our [Employee Engagement Survey](#), we found that 58% of employees don't know their organization's vision, mission, and values.

39% of employees polled by [BlessingWhite](#) say their senior leaders don't act in accordance with their company's guiding principles, possibly resulting in mixed messages about what those corporate values really are.

Many organizations create a list of values, hang it up in the break room, and call it a day. People forget and ignore the list, and it gets less attention than the Chinese takeout menu hidden under the microwave.

Yet reinforcing company values is the surest way to ensure that employees aren't just embracing them but also reflecting them in their everyday work. And surveys are an excellent way to monitor if and how employees are integrating corporate values into their work performance.

## Consider these survey questions:

- With eyes closed and fingers crossed, can you recite your organization's vision, mission, and cultural values?
- What three words would you use to describe our culture?

Posing just one of these questions offers team leaders an immediate read on their employees' perception of corporate values. Some companies may find that their employees can recite corporate values with their eyes closed. More likely, there will be large knowledge gaps.

One great thing to remember is that responding to surveys is a surefire way to help instill those values in your employees. Every time you acknowledge responses, you promote the value of listening. And when you thank your respondents, even when they offer negative feedback, you demonstrate an openness to communication. Meanwhile, acting on feedback helps shows a commitment to change and action.

If you embody your values, they're bound to brush off on your employees and your overall corporate culture.



## STORY TIME PROVING TRANSPARENCY

**Client:** Boutique consulting company

**Challenge:** How to prove to employees that an organization truly values transparency

**Story:** The CEO of our client company prided himself on transparency and was confident that he conveyed this to his team. Yet when he and other senior managers used a survey to measure their employees' attitudes toward company transparency, they were floored. The majority of employees agreed ... this was not a transparent organization!



To prove that they were truly committed to transparency, our client asked the ultimate transparency question of their employees: "Ask us anything, and we'll answer each and every question." Their employees took them up on that offer, asking extremely sensitive questions, including the maximum salary per position within the organization. And the team answered every single question. As the CEO explains it, "We shared our responses with the entire team — this was really well received, and we're going to do it regularly. Thanks to TINYpulse, we were able to identify and directly address the issue extremely quickly and effectively."

# SPICE UP QUESTIONS TO GET BETTER SURVEY RESPONSES

We can all agree that tasks are always easier to complete if they're fun and engaging, and adding a little humor or unexpected elements in the workplace can go a great way to increasing employee engagement. As [Forbes](#) notes, humor is a great tool for putting colleagues at ease and has been found to help build trust, morale, and productivity. Surveys are certainly not an exception to this rule.

Adding unpredictable questions into your surveys increases the chance of employees looking forward to surveys and completing the answers needed to garner these insights.

For example, consider the following question asked in our TINYpulse survey: "What would be your company's theme song, and why?" Imagine seeing one employee choose the theme from *Rocky*, while another chooses R.E.M.'s "It's the End of the World as We Know It."

Seeing which theme songs are chosen goes a long way to gauging your employees' perception of your company. By including the follow-up question of why they chose that song, a manager can zero in on problem areas that they were unaware of, or they may come to understand that an issue is much larger than they originally thought.

What may seem light and fluffy can actually be a deeply probing question. So do yourself a favor, lighten up, and add some humor to your surveys. You'll be amazed at the insights you uncover.



## STORY TIME WHY UNIQUENESS WORKS

**Client:** Premier multimedia agency

**Challenge:** How to gain insight into employee perception about a company's life cycle



**Story:** One of our TINYpulse survey questions is, "If our company were an animal, what animal would we be?" Mike Rose, the CEO of Mojo Media Labs, a Dallas-based inbound marketing agency, recounted two very different answers he received to this question.

One employee said their company was a cheetah because it was "fast, nimble, and strong." However, another employee called the company a "baby cheetah" because they were "still growing, learning, but getting faster and stronger each day." These two employees listed the same animals, just in extremely different life stages.

Mike was grateful for this insight. It allowed him to have open conversations with his team about the company's development and opportunities for professional training. Because Mojo Media Labs promotes the value of professional development, Mike was excited to use this feedback to delve into employee requests for additional training and guidance.

# WHY YOUR EMPLOYEES SURVEYS SHOULD BE ANONYMOUS

If you're the kind of leader who's committed to improving company culture, you probably fancy yourself as progressive, approachable, and easy to talk to. You've probably even told your employees about your open-door policy. But how many of your employees actually walked through that "open door" this week? This month? This quarter?



It's hard to be completely candid with someone if that person has the ability to fire you or make your life miserable. And given how booked many managers' schedules are, employees may find it difficult to even schedule some time to speak — even if that manager is completely open to the conversation.

## Enter the Anonymous Survey



In our experience, anonymous surveys help protect employees so they can speak their true thoughts without needing to play politics or save face. This type of feedback digs beneath the surface and offers the deep insight that employers truly want to hear. And, as 360-degree feedback consultants [Leanne Atwater](#) and [David Waldman](#) note, anonymous surveys offer managers the opportunity for "increased self-awareness and improved individual performance."

One key thing to remember with anonymous surveys is to focus on *what*, not *who*. Some managers might get a survey back, surprised by a few low scores on a particular question or alarmingly negative feedback. Anybody would want to identify the "bad apple," and a manager might be tempted to investigate, if not outright ask, which employees gave negative responses.



Don't fall into that temptation! If you want to develop trust amongst the team, an anonymous survey conveys that you respect employees' privacy and value their input, even on sensitive or unpopular topics. Breaking the promise of anonymity by seeking out the bearer of negative news destroys trust and sends the culture backward.

TINYpulse clients tell it best. Monica Wilke of Rider Insurance Company says her team's regular surveys "provide a lot of useful information as to how employees are feeling. Since employees can respond anonymously, we're getting very honest feedback. Also, the surveys give us a chance to clear up some misconceptions that employees have about various procedures in the company."

## STORY TIME TACKLING SENSITIVE TOPICS

**Client:** A nonprofit organization

**Challenge:** Overcoming employees' fear of sharing negative feedback

**Story:** Our client, the COO of a nonprofit, was new to his organization. When he first started, he interviewed each employee in person and asked for their candid assessment of the organization. As a whole, the responses were fairly positive.



However, after baseline TINYpulse survey responses came in, he was floored! It was obvious employees had tempered their original in-person feedback. He quickly saw only tepid levels of employee happiness. And with subsequent TINYpulse surveys, he realized a good deal of employees felt undervalued as well. It became obvious that only with anonymity did colleagues feel the freedom they needed to be completely honest.

Though jarring, our client included these findings in the next team-building meeting. He opened the topic for discussion, which allowed employees to not only voice their concerns but also proactively provide suggestions to improve the situation. By quickly taking action on some of those suggestions our client was able to show that he valued employee feedback and was committed to improving the work environment step by step.



# THE THREE MOST IMPORTANT EMPLOYEE SURVEY QUESTIONS

Think about some of the more complicated surveys you've taken. They probably look something like the following:

Q1: Was the employee onboarding process helpful?

- Yes • No

Q2: Why do you say that?

Q3: If you responded "No," what are the reasons it did not make sense?

- I didn't understand the contract/offer letter
- I didn't understand the 401k plan
- I didn't understand the medical plan options
- The dental/vision options were not fully explained
- It didn't cover company policies
- It didn't cover our intranet

Q4: How many meetings would you want to have during the onboarding process?

- 0 • 1 • 2 • 3 • 4 or more

Surveys like this become complicated to analyze. And even worse, you'll lose your employees' attention quickly.

Successful surveys don't require SPSS integration, skip patterns, or other challenging programming. To field an engaging, effective survey you need only rely on three types of questions:

## 1) Binary, 2) Scale, and 3) Open Ends.

QUESTION TYPE	EXAMPLE	PURPOSE	BEST USED WHEN...
Binary*	Yes or No: Do you have all the tools you need to be successful in your role?	Offers a simple, quick read on general employee sentiment	A manager needs to quickly tease out if there is a serious problem
Scale*	On a scale of 1 to 10, how happy are you at work?	Helps measure attitudes with more subtlety than a binary question	A manager is looking for nuance in general sentiment
Open End	What is the most common customer complaint you hear from our clients?	To gather deeper thoughts and richer examples	A manager is looking for more thoughtful feedback and solutions

\*We always encourage asking "why" after a binary or scale question. While the questions alone are great for top-line reads on employee sentiment, asking "why" probes deeper and helps provide the tangible facts you'll need to act on that feedback.

While it might be tempting to just use open-ended questions to get deep responses, they do take longer for employees to complete and can lead to survey disengagement if asked too frequently.

The best way to use these questions is to switch them up. If you do pulsing-type surveys, which are weekly or biweekly one-question surveys, make sure that you vary which type of question you use. If you're doing a short four- to six-question survey, include a combination of question types. Adding variety helps keep employees engaged and interested, helping you get better survey feedback.



## STORY TIME OPEN ENDS OFFER NEW IDEAS

**Client:** A publicly traded regional bank

**Challenge:** Identifying what professional development tools or programs to invest in



**Story:** Sometimes managers don't know what they don't know. But they trust their employees to inform them. One TINYpulse customer wanted to encourage professional development but wasn't sure which types of classes, programs, or training his employees would most prefer.

Our client served the following open-ended question to his employees to begin sourcing ideas:

**In terms of training and professional development, what would you like to see us offer or continue to offer?**  
These could be classes, skills training, mentoring, book clubs, brown bag lunches, etc.

#1 Mentoring program and a special focus on compliance and leadership...

Private Message Add Note

#2 More focused training to fit individual department needs.

Private Message Add Note

#3 Mentoring to less experienced employees, career paths to (job titles), junior employees job shadowing senior employees and something that would familiarize junior employees with bank operations outside of their respective departments

Private Message Add Note

What the manager saw was a consistent request for additional mentorship of junior employees to better train them on more complex tasks.

While he had a hunch this might be the case, it was only after seeing several employees offer the same responses that he knew this was the right course of action to take.

# HOW AND WHY TO INCORPORATE A VIRTUAL SUGGESTION BOX IN YOUR SURVEYS

The suggestion box. That wood-grained lonely-looking box that sits quietly in the corner of the employee break room. It's a nice idea in practice, but when was the last time you or someone you knew slipped an idea in that little slot?

Enter in ... you guessed it — the online suggestion box via employee surveys. While an online survey question may drill down on a specific topic, it's important to offer an open-ended suggestion box too. Our [Employee Engagement Survey](#) found that when asked, 18% of respondents include useful, actionable feedback. These invaluable insights wouldn't bubble to the surface without the simple inclusion of a virtual suggestion box.

Consider this real-life example that an anonymous online survey uncovered regarding a daily morning phone conference. One participant couldn't avoid driving during his team's regular phone conference, resulting in the following feedback:

#5

Hosting conference calls while driving in rush hour traffic is highly dangerous.

Private Message (1) Add Note

By bringing up this concern, his team became aware of the issue and came up with an easy solution: they changed the conference time. A straightforward solution to a potentially dangerous situation emerged, thanks to a humble virtual suggestion box.

Here is just a short list of low-hanging fruit and more involved suggestions that we've seen in our own TINYpulse virtual suggestion box:

- Requests for squeezing out the kitchen sponges to avoid smelliness
- A desire for more team happy hours to help get to know a growing team
- A suggestion that a manager offer more guidance to his direct reports

That these suggestions range from seemingly trivial to quite serious isn't a mistake. After all, what is top of mind for an employee shifts from week to week. When considered in aggregate, these suggestions allow a manager to address not just the little things that make a workplace more enjoyable but also the big things that help retain employees. Plus, addressing the low-hanging fruit opportunities builds up goodwill within the organization for future changes.

But keep in mind that an anonymous survey can reveal uncomfortable criticism. When it does, be that much more prepared to act. In 2011 research published in the [Journal of Business Ethics](#), it found that employees who felt listened to were better team players and provided input more frequently. And as we mentioned in [Chapter 2](#), if you don't act on survey feedback, your employees will become disengaged.

So if you really want a collaborative, engaged team, get ready to tackle all kinds of feedback from the desire for more shelving in a restroom to the way you handle one-on-one employee meetings.

## STORY TIME VIRTUAL SUGGESTIONS AT WORK

**Client:** A New York City-based nonprofit

**Challenge:** An organization is unaware that standardized processes weren't uniformly adopted



**Story:** Our client recently implemented a new professional development framework for its managers and believed that the changes were being well adopted. As part of its weekly TINYpulse survey, our client asked if any employees had any recommendations for the team.

The result was the following response:

#7

We worked hard to create a Framework for professional development, and implement 2x2 rounds for feedback, which has been an incredible process, and has received positive feedback all around. However, not all staff members are using the format or process (program team is, but admin is not) - we should find a way to align so that all team members are developed and supported the same way, in whatever way works best for everyone. Then this process should also be part of the onboarding routine.

Private Message Add Note

By proactively asking for suggestions, our client received greater insight not only into the extent to which teams were adopting new processes but also how to think about helping slower teams catch up.

This bottoms-up approach to solving problems helped our client develop a standard process for getting existing teams on board with new standards, an approach they later used to educate new employees on their internal practices.

# REMINDERS, THE OFT-OVERLOOKED BEST PRACTICE TO OPTIMIZE RESPONSE RATES

Perhaps you're one of those rare individuals who can remember the birthday of every member of your family, the exact time of dinner with your friends next week, or the day your dry cleaning will be ready. But, if you're like the rest of us, you're grateful for the little "ping" from your online calendar that helps keep you on track.

Smart online surveys are designed with the knowledge that employees sometimes also need this little ping. They may have every intention of completing a questionnaire, but an unexpected phone call or meeting can derail them and make them forget. A little extra push may be required to get them back on track.



**Consider this: 25-50% more employees respond to a TINYpulse survey after they receive a reminder to take the survey.**

One reminder email is enough to boost participation rates high enough to give a truly accurate picture of the issue you're exploring.

A good online survey respects people's time: it should be short and efficient, and not clutter email in-boxes of those employees who have already responded. However, a company can demonstrate how much they value employee feedback with an unobtrusive ping to someone who just needs a little reminder.

## QUICK TIP: DON'T THINK ABOUT SENDING SURVEYS — AUTOMATE THEM



If you rely on yourself to hit the "send" button, you'll likely forget to send the employee survey. Don't let your surveys languish due to human error. Automate them so that they get sent regularly, and employees are reminded to take them.

When it comes to sending survey reminders, consider these two options:

- 1. One reminder:** If you send surveys weekly, consider automating one reminder three days after the survey is sent to those who don't already take it. It keeps the survey top of mind for your employee and is well spaced relative to the next survey that will be sent out.
- 2. Two reminders:** If you send surveys biweekly, consider automating two reminders, spaced four days apart, to anyone who didn't yet take it.

As you can imagine, always avoid sending these automated reminders to people who have already completed their surveys to avoid confusion and cluttering their inbox.

# SPREAD THE LOVE WITH A SURVEY-BASED RECOGNITION TOOL

Integrating peer-to-peer recognition in your survey does wonders to increase engagement, build team spirit, and just make people feel good at work.

Ample studies show that recognition impacts people in a big way, especially at the office. Just look at these stats from [Bersin & Associates](#). It found that organizations with effective recognition programs:

- ✓ **Enjoy a 31% lower voluntary turnover rate versus companies with no such programs**
- ✓ **Experience 14% higher employee engagement and productivity than those without recognition**

The challenge lies in what type of recognition program to use. Legacy programs that gift watches, pins, or plaques for years of service are highly dated and reflect a time when employees spent 25 years or more at a job. And as Talent Analyst and Management Consultant Lesley Schumacher reports, even cash isn't enough of a motivator in today's millennial-filled workforce.

## THE ONE CONSTANT MOTIVATOR TODAY IS PEER RECOGNITION

In our TINYpulse [Employee Engagement Survey](#), we found that employee happiness depends more on the relationship between an employee and their coworkers than with their direct manager. As a result, a recognition system shouldn't be limited to the manager-subordinate relationship. Instead, it should tap the entire peer network to reflect the shift toward cross-functional teams and multidisciplinary roles in today's workplaces.

So creating an easy-to-use channel for people to frequently share gratitude makes great sense and leads not only to more positive work environments but higher employee retention in the long run.

If you're implementing an unobtrusive, easy-to-use online survey regularly, take the time to also integrate a peer-recognition feature for employees to call out coworkers who have gone above and beyond, demonstrated great teamwork or customer service, or somehow demonstrated the company values in an exceptional way. It's an inexpensive and simple tool to share gratitude and set a company standard for visibly promoting good behavior.

Just be sure employees can actually see their recognition. Unseen recognition is like not getting any recognition at all.



## STORY TIME HAVING FUN WITH RECOGNITION

**Client:** A global healthcare company

**Challenge:** How to help celebrate the little wins



**Story:** Our client was an extremely large employer who knew that no team manager could possibly keep up with all the positive things happening on their team. But our client wanted to acknowledge all acts — big or small — that employees contributed that helped improve company culture as well as improved the company's overall financial performance.

Our client implemented the TINYpulse Cheers for Peers feature, which lets one employee recognize another for anything they feel their colleague deserves.

Here are just a few Cheers one employee received over time:

Feb 26, 2014 TINYpulse — 2
Thank you for taking me to the field meeting last week. It helped me understand what the field team is doing out there and how we could better support them.
Feb 19, 2014 TINYpulse — 1
For bringing in donuts and making us all feel loved.
Feb 5, 2014 TINYpulse — 1
For being a supportive ear to listen to my ranting last week.
Jan 22, 2014 TINYpulse — 2
Thank you for staying late with me last week whilst I was rushing around completing finance updates for two franchisees! although it was not required, your support and tea making skills were greatly appreciated!
For taking on the opportunity to organise and run the session at the Medical Conference. A great way to showcase how we can add value and build new relationships with the medical personnel.

What started as a slow trickle quickly turned into a flood of Cheers. Employees started getting so excited about giving Cheers that they looked forward to the weekly employee survey. Not only did morale grow thanks to implementing survey-based recognition, but so did response rates.

# INVOLVE DECISION MAKERS IN THE SURVEY REVIEW PROCESS

Now that you have surveys running, you might be tempted to pass off the task of reviewing survey feedback to your colleagues or HR personnel. Do not fall into that temptation!

As an organization leader, it's up to you to set an example. After all, if you don't show interest in survey responses, who will?



Consider the learnings from [DDI](#), a top talent management consultant agency. DDI points to senior leaders as playing the role of a navigator, a person who “clearly and quickly works through the complexity of key issues, problems and opportunities to affect actions.” Few things are as potentially problematic to a company as employee concerns, and leaders must be involved in the survey process to truly understand employee sentiment and bring organizational change.

At the same time, you should rally other managers and individual employees to help analyze survey feedback and add context to the rich responses you're getting. You'll be consistently pleased with the deeper insights you get from involving your entire team and the clever solutions that you'll collectively create.

## QUICK TIP: INVOLVE EMPLOYEES IN THE SURVEY REVIEW PROCESS



Few things make employees feel as valued as having their recommendations implemented. Survey feedback is a great opportunity to make this happen. When responses bring up problem situations, use this as a chance to gather employee suggestions to come up with a solution. This crowd-sourced approach will not only give you ideas you wouldn't have thought of but also increase the chances of solutions being adopted. After all, if employees came up with the idea, they are more likely to like it.

Here are four tried-and-true ways to start this process:

- 1. Share feedback:** It sounds obvious, but employees can't take part in solving the problem if they are not first aware of it. Schedule regular sharing sessions to keep everyone abreast of feedback.
- 2. Encourage discussion:** Ask your employees to talk about the responses. Do they agree or disagree? Starting the conversation helps to get them thinking about the problems and what the key pain points are.
- 3. Ask for solutions:** Oftentimes, employees may already have solutions in mind, but haven't been asked. Asking for solutions starts bringing these ideas to the table and lets colleagues get excited and on board with the solutions.
- 4. NO judgments:** This should be a positive, collaborative process. Rather than knocking down ideas, encourage that all ideas be listened to. Certainly some might seem better than others. But you never know when that zany idea might turn into a brilliant one.



Thanks to reading [Chapter 11](#), you're now on board with making sure all managers are part of the survey review process. But you can't stop there. Company culture doesn't belong to just you and senior managers. It belongs to everyone in the organization. So share survey responses with everyone to make sure each and every member of your team has a vested interest in fostering a positive, collaborative culture.

## TRANSPARENCY — MAKE IT HAPPEN

Survey feedback will show you the good and the bad in your organization. Though you may want to only share positive responses, you'll be better off being completely candid about all the feedback you receive.

We found in our [Employee Engagement](#) research that there is an incredible correlation between employees' self-reported happiness and management transparency. Also remarkable is research from labor scholar Warren Bennis. In his recent [book](#), he cites a 2005 study finding that the top 27 companies considered "most transparent" beat the S&P 500 by 11.3%.

Sharing data from surveys is a simple way to demonstrate transparency and to start engaging employees. It demonstrates an openness to tackle even the toughest of questions and address even the most minute employee concern.

## SHARE FREQUENTLY

The traditional employee survey happened every year, took up to an hour to complete, and often took months for a manager to review. Given how vital employee engagement levels are for an organization, this approach only hurts your business.



With the advent of online surveys, this issue can disappear. Lightweight, automated surveys allow for extremely fast answer collection, meaning you can begin analyzing results quickly and begin sharing them with your team.

Stay committed to a regular sharing timeline, and keep yourself accountable by publicizing this timeline when you first introduce your employees to the survey (see an example of this introductory email in [Chapter 1](#)).

## THE BEST WAY TO SHARE SURVEY RESULTS

To effectively share survey results, you'll need to present findings in a way that allows employees to easily understand those findings. Follow our four steps outlined below to get your employees on board and part of the process.

### FOUR STEPS TO EFFECTIVE SURVEY SHARING

- 1. Prescreen results:** Review all data ahead of time to make sure it doesn't reveal information that's embarrassing or offensive to another employee.
- 2. Set it so you don't forget it:** Make sure to set up a convenient time to review survey data when most, if not all, participants can gather and discuss the findings.
- 3. Transparent conversation:** Use the findings to begin a healthy discussion of problems, not a jumping-off point for accusations or witch-hunting. One good way to initiate this is to discuss all the good points highlighted in the feedback and recognition portion.
- 4. Determine next steps:** Be sure to create an action plan to follow up on issues.

Leaders who follow this process regularly may find it challenging at first but will see changes rather quickly. Like changing eating habits or exercise, doing something new feels like a burden at first. But increasing collaboration, transparency, and communication in a regular, visible way transforms company culture.

Warren Winch of Watson & Winch, a telecommunications franchise, said that doing an online survey is a "great way to stay in touch with all levels of your team. It helps you make decisions regarding the team *on actual data rather than gut feel*." Warren also appreciates the need to share that data with his employees: "I also love the way it forces you to have regular conversations about staff engagement rather than just talk about needing to talk about staff engagement — it forces you to *implement actions*."

## STORY TIME GET OUT OF THE WAY

**Client:** Leading advertising technology company

**Challenge:** How best to engage employees to collaboratively solve issues

**Story:** A B2B agency focused on optimizing digital media placements wanted to make sure that employees were truly on board with regularly providing survey feedback. As a small company, our client was especially invested in retaining employees because it knew that losing any given person would be a major blow to the organization.



After educating its staff about the process and what to expect, our client created a biweekly company lunch in which survey feedback was shared.

Interestingly, rather than always leading the discussion, our client's CEO made sure that a team member was chosen every week to read the survey results and guide the team's discussion. By empowering employees to be actively part of the process, our client was able to not just get employees to respond regularly to surveys but also take an active role in developing and implementing improvements based on survey feedback. At the end of the day, it's not the CEO's culture but everyone's culture, so reinforce that even in how you discuss feedback.

Of course, every company has a distinct culture, but for larger organizations, they'll have subcultures too. For example, a company may have regional offices or multiple departments with diverse populations and varying interests. How can you address different cultures within one organization?

This is where segments come in handy. Breaking respondents into segments — for instance, the technical team versus the sales team or the New York office versus the London office — lets you better understand unique populations that likely have different priorities and personalities.



Creating and analyzing segments manually would be an incredible burden and would likely prevent anonymity. Luckily, sophisticated online survey tools make this easy. For example, platforms like TINYpulse allow you to place employees into segments (in groups no smaller than five, to maintain anonymity) before asking questions. When the results are in, the administrator can view the responses for each segment, but not each individual. This yields incredibly rich feedback such as, why does one group or office routinely outperform another? And what can we learn from this to improve overall?

Commonly created segments:

- By office location
- By function
- By line of business

## STORY TIME SEGMENTS SAVE THE DAY

**Client:** Global public relations agency

**Challenge:** Company was fearful that its high-performing culture was in widespread decline

**Story:** This client started seeing a noticeable drop in employee happiness at work and became concerned that a pervasive trend was hitting her company. Thankfully, she had segmented the employees by their functional teams and was able to look at results with this fresh lens.



What she quickly discovered was a localized problem in one functional team — other teams continued to express high satisfaction levels. Relieved that she had a limited problem on her hands, she embarked on the hard work of raising the low-scoring team's satisfaction levels. After sharing the survey feedback with that team's leader, our client publicly acknowledged the issues the survey brought to light. Together, they held several small working groups with the team to tackle the root causes of the issues, and over time, they began seeing her investment pay off as that team's happiness score began increasing.

Anonymous surveys are great for providing topline feedback, and even for finding unexpected issues via open-ended questions. What they usually fail to let you do is probe deeper — sometimes an issue arises that is interesting and requires additional information. Most survey tools leave you hanging.

You might consider using all-hands meetings to probe into these deeper issues. But for most people running a company with many employees, this would be time prohibitive. Plus an employee may not be comfortable unmasking their anonymity to provide more context regarding their feedback. This is why survey platforms with anonymous messaging tools are invaluable.



The best online survey systems allow communication to occur between an anonymous respondent and the manager running the survey. In a nutshell, here's how an anonymous private messaging solution works:

- 1. More probing needed:** A manager reads anonymous feedback that isn't clear and needs further clarification. Or perhaps reads feedback that seems to be an outlier and needs more information.
- 2. Select the private message function:** With private messaging, the manager can select to send a private message to the original writer. The system knows who the respondent is but does not reveal this to the manager. Anonymity is retained while allowing for further probing.
- 3. Message received:** The respondent receives the manager's request for greater clarity and can continue using the private message function to remain anonymous.
- 4. Continue the conversation:** The respondent and manager can continue messaging each other until all information has been gathered.

Let's look at an actual example of this process. After asking the question, "On a scale of 1-10, how flexible is your work schedule?" a manager saw someone give a response of "3" with the following comment:

Not too flexible, we have the same schedule as other companies in our country, which is very traditional. We should look at the "kurzarbeit" project in Germany. It's let them reduce time at work but improve efficiency.

[Private Message](#) [Add Note](#)

---

**Private Messages**

Respondent said 2 months ago

Many thanks for your response. Can you kindly share a link to kurzarbeit. Also, would you like for us to address/explain why we have a policy regarding start and stop times? Would that be helpful?

---

Respondent said 2 months ago

<http://www.rttnews.com/1296996/kurzarbeit-a-german-achievement.aspx>

This approach isn't really applicable on a 1 to 1 basis in our company, but it's helpful to see and maybe get ideas from a process that's trying to improve efficiency while providing better work hours. It'd be nice to have more family time.

We don't need an explanation about our standard work hours, but I think we'd benefit from considering how to better focus on results and less on work hours.

The respondent offered an example the manager wasn't familiar with, so the manager used the private message function for further clarification, and the following anonymous conversation ensued:

Handled with care and sensitivity, the private message function served as a powerful communication tool that respected the initial respondent's privacy while letting the manager address the concern directly.

And sometimes, just the act of reaching out to someone will give the anonymous employee the confidence and trust necessary to broach the topic in person with their manager.

## STORY TIME PRIVATE MESSAGING ROCKS

**Client:** Cutting-edge travel service provider

**Challenge:** The open-door policy wasn't being used, and they needed other outlets to capture employee feedback



**Story:** It's not uncommon to forget to bring up an issue — problems that are inconveniences often get forgotten once the next fire has to be put out. And our software client was no different. After they moved to new offices, feedback kept coming in about the facilities. However, by using private messaging, our client was able to narrow down the issue to an IT problem that was no doubt affecting the entire organization.

Take a look at the actual back-and-forth between an employee and the HR manager, enabled by private messaging. Multiple conversations like this showed employees that their concerns would be addressed, and that they were expected to be active participants in improving company culture. Thanks to wins like these, our client enjoys record marks for employee happiness.

Private Message this respondent

Wifi quality in the office, especially in the conference room is getting worse. It is getting the way to communicate with people outside our office all the time and making collaboration with people in different locations very difficult. We need to resolve this problem soon. It is damage team's productivity.

---

**Private Messages**

Respondent said 3 months ago

Thank you. Are there particular conference rooms that are worse?

I will pass this along to IT so he can work on it.

---

Respondent said 3 months ago

No. But I use some rooms more often than others. This morning in our all hands meeting no one looked too happy with our Wifi either.

---

Respondent said 3 months ago

Correct! IT called our provider and gave them an earful. It might be time to look at better options.

Survey data can be a rich source of employee feedback. But sometimes, especially with open-ended questions, you want a quick snapshot of what employees are thinking before reading through responses. Visual representations of data can do the trick.

Consider this question given to employees in a recent survey: “What do you love about your job?” This question garnered over 160 responses, but a simple word cloud like the one below lets the reader see that people, flexibility, and the environment are some of the main answers given.



Visual interest and graphic detail engage participants, and if the survey is well designed, the graphics help communicate the information. In fact, 90% of information transmitted to the brain is visual, and the brain processes visuals 60,000 times faster than text, according to [3M Corporation](#) and [Zabisco](#).

Since the objective of keeping surveys light and manageable is to help the entire team stay in the habit of doing them, using graphs and visual detail helps one digest the data.

If you already have a survey tool that graphs responses for you, you're well on your way to presenting your data beautifully. Select the data you want to present and the time period needed to show any trend information, and let it create an easy-to-read graph. But if this isn't a solution you have, worry not. Simply open Excel and start making your own graphs. It might be a bit more work, but you'll be assured that your employees will be far more engaged and receptive to the information you're sharing.



## STORY TIME A MORALE PROBLEM REVEALED

**Client:** A U.S. school district

**Challenge:** How to gauge employee dissatisfaction

**Story:** Our TINYpulse survey includes a question about how likely employees would be to recommend someone to work with their employer, which is a way to understand why an employee is satisfied or dissatisfied with her work environment. After all, you would only recommend a friend to your employer if you thought they would enjoy working there.

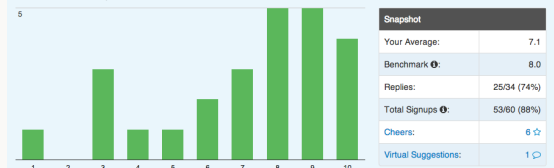


When our client asked this question and saw how the answers appeared when graphed, she knew there were issues to tackle.

**On a scale of 1 to 10, how likely would you refer someone to work here?**

1 being extremely unlikely (I would physically deter them down to my last breath) - to 10 being extremely likely (it's the best place to work)

Date Asked: Jun 4, 2014



Our client saw that not only was she below the benchmark, but several respondents also skewed to the lower end of the scale, meaning several would *not* recommend her organization as an employer.

Thankfully, this question also asked respondents why they provided that particular rating. When she saw this graph, she was prompted to read the responses immediately and noted several concerns about burnout rate, workload, and new hire onboarding.

This feedback led our client to start thinking about her onboarding process as well as how to help colleagues cope with the pressures of an intense work environment.



# HOW TO PRIORITIZE YOUR SURVEY FEEDBACK ACTION PLAN

Right about now, you probably feel like a survey ninja. You know what types of questions to ask, and you know all about adding in company values and using open ends. And you're not just ready to share survey feedback but also ready to act on both the positive and negative comments. But before you earn your survey ninja stars, ask yourself, "Do I know how to prioritize which pieces of survey feedback I should act on first?"



As crazy as this sounds, we'd rather you don't do a survey at all than send it out to employees with no plan to respond or act on the results. After all, as the magazine [Fast Company](#) is quick to point out, "If you have asked for feedback before and done nothing with it, employees will be distrustful and suspicious." But knowing how to tackle that feedback is key to letting employees feel heard.

## If you field employee surveys, be ready for one of these two types of feedback:

1. **Smaller, easier challenges:** These include concerns like overflowing trash cans or not having the right type of computer or technology, concerns that are generally simpler to solve.
2. **Bigger, difficult challenges:** The primary issues you'll have to address here are recurring interpersonal issues, managerial style, or disengagement with job roles.

How and when you choose to tackle these challenges will speak volumes to your employees.

Acting on one or two smaller challenges immediately is a great way to show your team that you're following through on their feedback. Because these can be tackled quickly, acting on them shows your commitment to change and encourages your employees to continue answering the regular surveys.

Bigger, difficult challenges are harder to address but will have longer-term impact on your company culture. From the first moment you get survey feedback, start thinking about how to address these issues.

Don't worry about not knowing how to act immediately. The fact that you're addressing the smaller challenges buys you time with your team to create an action plan for these issues. Just don't forget to continue being transparent about the problems and open about the action plan you're creating to resolve these bigger issues.

## QUICK TIP: BEST PRACTICES ON HOW TO ENGAGE EMPLOYEES



You'll often get great feedback in your surveys. Rather than running solo with it, encourage your employees to offer their own solutions. A simple three-step process to do this includes:

1. **Thank the respondent:** Always show your gratitude for any type of response. Responding to surveys may not be customary for your employees, and saying "thanks" shows that you value that feedback.
2. **Acknowledge their feedback:** Tell them that you understand their concerns and that you see why the issue is troublesome. When you empathize with others about a situation, your employees will be more likely to open up about the issue at hand.
3. **Ask them for a solution:** Employees sometimes know how they would fix a problem. Asking them how they would fix a problem further captures their feedback and lets them be part of the solution. If you have private messaging enabled (see [Chapter 14!](#)), this is a great time to use it to probe for answers anonymously.

When you follow this process, you start creating a culture around employee-led change. By asking employees to not just bring up challenges but also brainstorm solutions, you empower them to take the lead and institutionalize the value of proactive action.



What does getting an average of 7.2 on a scale of 1 to 10 tell you? Is it good? Is it bad? Well, it depends on what the benchmark is for other organizations that have responded to the same question. Plus how your organization responds to the same question over time.

The benefit of doing surveys frequently in a “pulsing” style is the ability to track results over time. Take our own TINYpulse survey as an example. We regularly ask a question about employee happiness. This not only creates an employee satisfaction benchmark that organizations track over time but also comes in handy when companies need to know how new initiatives or other events affect employee attitudes.

We certainly understand that downward trends can be scary, and it's easy to fall prey to the “[Ostrich Problem](#),” a common behavior where people avoid measuring progress for fear that there may be a negative drift. But organizational changes are bound to make employees uncomfortable and will result in short-term negative sentiments. However, a commitment to measuring trends will let you see just how negative that sentiment is and if efforts to improve that sentiment are actually working.



The same can be true for comparing yourself to other companies. You may fear that another workplace is better than yours, and you don't want to bring this to light. But once again, that's the knowledge you need to start righting the course.

## BENCHMARKS

A truly robust survey platform includes a benchmark average to let you compare your own results to other organizations while also letting you keep track of your own performance over time. It's a simple way to determine how an organization stands against other companies while seeing how actions you're taking are affecting employee sentiment. (Need some ideas about how to prioritize your action plans? See [Chapter 16](#).)

## STORY TIME BENCHMARKS & TIME AT WORK

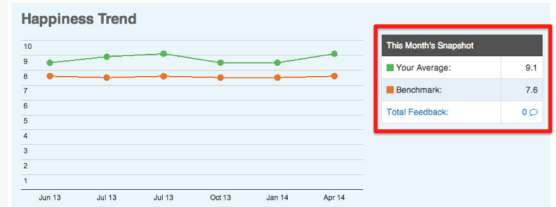
**Client:** IT service provider

**Challenge:** Maintaining a great culture while growing explosively

**Story:** Our client was going through a growth spurt, and employees were being hired at a dizzying pace. He traditionally had extremely positive employee morale but was concerned that the process of absorbing so many new employees into the organization would strain his team.



Fortunately, he was committed to regularly asking his team how happy they were and was able to see this sentiment trend over time:



He was delighted to see that, if anything, happiness was going up. Bringing new people into the organization took some of the heavy workload off of existing colleagues, making them even happier with their roles.

More importantly, he was able to see that this was not a fluke. By benchmarking happiness against other companies, he could see that this was not a universal trend. His organization was experiencing morale boosts that were unique to them alone.

Imagine getting the results of an *annual* company survey saying that employees are dissatisfied ... six months after two of your best employees gave notice. Annual surveys by themselves are obsolete in today's fast-moving organizations. The lag between when they're taken and when an issue arises is too great, making them "nearly useless," says corporate culture consultant [Alexander Kjerulf](#).

Business guru [Verne Harnish](#) points out that one of the key pillars of a successful organization is communication rhythm. It's only through effective patterns of well-organized and regular communication that an organization can be properly aligned and held accountable.



Frequent surveys let you do just that. Small, simple surveys fielded on a weekly or biweekly basis give managers a way to measure data fluctuations and match trends against changes in the workplace.

This all becomes much simpler when you automate this process. After all, automation gives management the time and power to focus on what the survey results mean, not on the logistics and administrative side of creating a dialog.

The survey cadence you choose should reflect your current business environment.

- **Weekly or biweekly:** Choose this cadence if you've never sent surveys before or if you know there are major weaknesses in your organization. This pattern will give you more regular trend information and quick reads on the extent to which new efforts are changing perception.
- **Monthly:** This cadence is appropriate if surveys are already the norm and if there are no big corporate or departmental changes happening. This gives you general reads on trends to make sure things are running smoothly.

But please, never let your surveys lag more than once a month. If you do, you'll miss the pulse of the constant changes and fluctuations in employee sentiment that have the potential to grow into larger HR problems.

And don't forget, regular surveys mean regular sharing (see [Chapter 12!](#)). It's one thing to put a regular survey platform in place. It's another to regularly review survey findings with your team to keep the transparency doors open.

Four Steps to Making Regular Surveys a Reality:

- 1. Keep it short:** Limit your survey to 1-3 questions. No exceptions!
- 2. Keep it simple:** Keep each question straightforward and specific.
- 3. Keep it regular:** Commit to a standard survey cadence — once a week, twice a month, and so on — to make constant feedback and improvement part of everyone's regular routine.
- 4. Make it automated:** We all have rushed to the urgent at the expense of the important. Avoid this by using a system to automate the sending, reminders, recognition, virtual suggestions, etc.

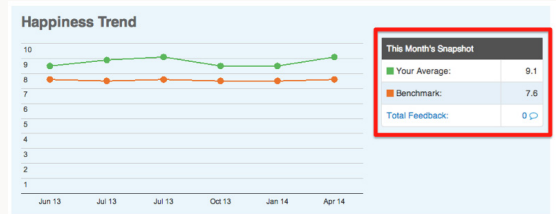
## STORY TIME MEASURE TO IMPROVE

**Client:** Janitorial company  
**Challenge:** How to turn employee disengagement around

**Story:** Our client began using TINYpulse because he wanted to see how satisfied employees were at their jobs. By tracking how happy they were, thanks to the regularly asked happiness question, our client initially thought the company was on a solid path to employee happiness.



But over time, he started seeing the following dip in their numbers:



While the benchmark stayed relatively constant, our client saw month-over-month dips in his employees' happiness scores. Thanks to his consistency in asking and reviewing scores over time, our client was able to see that cultural issues had developed that affected overall happiness. This would definitely have been a blind spot that he would have missed without regular tracking. (In fact, blind spots are common management issues that surveys are great at uncovering. Read how TINYpulse sheds light on blind spots in this [Harvard Business Review](#) article.)

Armed with this knowledge, our client was able to probe deeper with subsequent survey questions to uncover the details of the issue and start tackling them. He's now empowering everyone to collectively improve their culture — not his culture. He shared that he sees this as an opportunity to further engage the employees to shift from a sense of entitlement to ownership.

In today's increasingly millennial-filled workplace, happiness matters. [Dan Schawbel](#), an expert on millennials in the workplace, notes that millennials "want companies ... to eliminate the traditional 9-to-5 workday [and encourage] collaboration instead of isolation ... Millennials, relative to older generations, are all about giving back to communities that align with their core values." Quite frankly, they want to be fulfilled by their jobs.



And imagine how powerful it would be if you could show that you offer that fulfillment. That you are a flexible, transparent organization that values employee sentiment. After all, it's an ultra-competitive fight out there to recruit top talent, and you sometimes you have to take out all the stops.



**Erika Klics** @ekRecruits · May 22

Is it necessary to say "top talent"? As if anyone wants mediocre, or bottom of the barrel, candidates. [#recruiterproblems](#)

Expand

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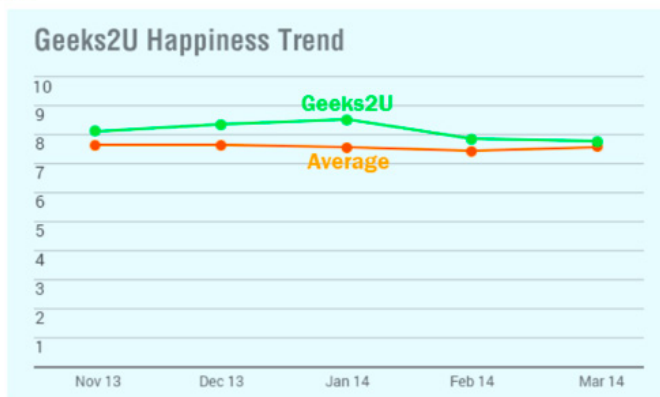
Rather than list in bullet points why your company is an awesome place to work, let your employee surveys speak for you. The fact that your company focuses on employee engagement should be something that any employer would want to emphasize to potential recruits.

Look at what Geeks2U, a computer and laptop repair company and TINYpulse client, does on its [Join Our Company page](#):

#### People are happy here

That's a fact.

We use software called **TINYpulse** to constantly improve our workplace happiness. TINYpulse asks everyone who works at Geeks2U how happy they are, on a scale of 1 to 10, every 4 weeks. Here's a graph of our all-time results:



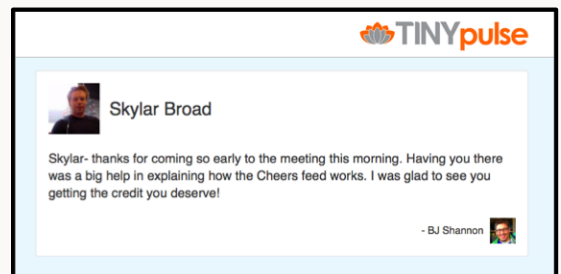
As you can see, our company's happiness score is way above average. This is especially so given that TINYpulse's average is already high – the companies which use it generally really focus on happiness and culture!

## QUICK TIP: HOW TO MAKE PEER RECOGNITION EVEN MORE VISIBLE TO JOB CANDIDATES



Public acknowledgements of a job well done are always appreciated. And they're all the better if they help you snag that candidate you really, really want.

Nothing shows potential recruits how much you value your employees more than physically posting their accomplishments where everyone can see them. You can do like we do in our office and put all those great peer-to-peer recognitions on a monitor where they can stream live for all to see:



Or if you prefer a lower-tech solution, print out those positive acknowledgments and create a peer recognition wall.



## Okay, this time you're pretty sure you're a survey black belt, right?

Well, if you've followed the steps we just outlined to **creating, reviewing, sharing, and acting on survey data**, we'd say you just earned your black belt.



But don't stop there. Now that you know how to foster great employee engagement through surveys, don't you want that same great engagement from your clients?

Sure you have a client or two who you know is unhappy — most of us have clients who make endless demands. But what about a client that unexpectedly quits your service, leaving you to wonder what you could have done better?

You might wonder whether customer service needs improvement, if the product lacked features they needed, whether the competition had some edge over you, or whether maybe they needed help with price.

With surveys, you don't have to be left wondering. This is why we created CLIENTpulse, a survey tool that allows you to proactively ask clients for feedback and get a jump on client concerns before they leave your service.

And, unlike employee surveys, client surveys don't require anonymity; customers don't risk anything by being honest. This honesty lets you identify specific client issues and prioritize them for triage before the customer becomes dissatisfied and "quits." As with employee surveys, sometimes just hearing and responding to such requests, even if they don't make it on to your road map, will delight your customers and reassure them that you're paying attention and trying to improve.

## QUICK TIP: HOW TO APPROACH CLIENT SURVEYS



- **Keep it short and simple:** Remember, your client is doing you a favor by giving you feedback. Respect your clients' time by giving them a quick survey.
- **Include a benchmark question:** Regularly including a benchmark question like, "On a scale of 1 to 10, how happy are you with our service?" will give you quick reads on client sentiment and shifts in perception.
- **Leverage open-ended questions:** Don't be afraid to ask clients direct open-ended questions like, "What would make this product better?" They're already thinking it. This way, you at least know what's on their minds.
- **Get ready for action:** If you start seeing new ideas for service improvements or an onslaught of negative comments, be prepared to act. Being responsive to client feedback will catch their attention and could very well be the thing it takes to keep them on your roster.



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