

# Getting to the Heart of Engagement

How GuideOne Insurance Leverages Weekly Pulse Surveys to Measure Employee Commitment

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## ▶ IN THIS CASE STUDY

Founded in 1947, GuideOne Insurance has carved out a successful niche by catering to faith-based organizations including churches, senior living centers, colleges, and universities. The company's steady growth, however, has not been without challenges.

The company's recently appointed chief information officer (CIO) set out to interview the employees in his function to better understand the department's challenges and opportunities for improvement. His research revealed that most employees felt they were grappling with unrealistic workloads, outdated technology, and a lack of feedback and recognition from management.

Faced with a situation that could lead to costly turnover within a difficult-to-recruit employee base, the CIO sought out an anonymous employee feedback tool to empower his team to share concerns and proactively offer solutions.

*In this case study, we:*

- Look at the challenges facing GuideOne Insurance and its IT employees as they keep pace with rapid changes in both the industry and technology
- Examine how GuideOne's CIO took an active role in effectively identifying key employee pain points
- Explore how GuideOne implemented a real-time feedback tool to stay on top of employee needs
- Track GuideOne's results, including a significant decrease in IT voluntary turnover from 12.0 percent to 3.1 percent ↻

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## Company Overview

Founded in 1947 in West Des Moines, Iowa, GuideOne Insurance began business as an insurer of drivers who did not consume alcohol. The business was based on a risk assumption that these drivers would be more likely to avoid car accidents and, in turn, the company would incur fewer losses. During the 1960s, the company identified another underserved insurance market—faith-based institutions—and began offering this customer base a range of insurance services.<sup>1</sup>

By the mid-1960s, GuideOne had more than 900 agents selling insurance products to institutions and consumers in 29 states.<sup>2</sup> By the early 1990s, the company was insuring more than \$2 billion in assets. In 2014, the company was ranked on *Inc.*'s annual list of the 5,000 fastest-growing companies based on revenue growth over a three-year period.<sup>3</sup>

With its roots in serving faith-based clients, GuideOne prides itself on fast and compassionate claims service. Today, more than 1,800 independent and company agents offer GuideOne's products and insurance solutions in all 50 states. Its clients include nearly 50,000 institutions such as churches, senior living centers, and educational facilities ranging from kindergarten through high school and beyond. The company provides more than 74,000 consumers with auto, home, renters, and life insurance policies. GuideOne also operates its own construction firm, GC3, with a mission of helping churches, senior living centers, and other community institutions recover from fires, flooding, and natural disasters.<sup>4</sup>

### Figure 1: GuideOne Insurance at a Glance<sup>5</sup>

- **Year Founded:** 1947
- **Net Income (2014):** \$33.8 million
- **Company Assets:** \$2.1 billion
- **Employees:** 700
- **Headquarters:** West Des Moines, Iowa, United States

Source: *GuideOne Insurance, 2015.*

<sup>1</sup> Source: "Our Company History," guideone.com, n.d., [www.guideone.com/AboutUs/history.htm](http://www.guideone.com/AboutUs/history.htm).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Source: "Protection You Can Count On . . . Values You Can Believe In," GuideOne Insurance, 2015, [www.guideone.com/aboutus/PDFs/corporateprofile.pdf](http://www.guideone.com/aboutus/PDFs/corporateprofile.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

## Business Environment and Challenges

GuideOne has carved out a successful faith-based niche in the incredibly competitive insurance market. While the company is one of the largest insurers of churches and other faith-based organizations in the United States, other insurance companies also expressly target and market to this niche. Additionally, much larger brand-name insurance companies with massive marketing budgets and correspondingly high public profiles also offer insurance products and services to GuideOne's niche market. In fact, aggressive pricing is the norm in the insurance business, with large competitors often lowering prices in an effort to win business from smaller, more conservative organizations.<sup>6</sup> Larger companies can leverage the demonstrated benefits of enormous scale and cost-savings to offer lower-priced policies to customers. GuideOne competes against these larger organizations through their deep knowledge of their market, fair pricing, and excellent customer service.

The insurance business also imposes its own inherent challenges, namely paying out claims in the event of catastrophes, fires, and unpredictable and disastrous weather events. In 2013, due in part to two large weather-related disasters, GuideOne posted its first loss after 11 years of operating with a healthy surplus.<sup>7</sup> After that anomalous year, the company returned to its consistent profitability in 2014.<sup>8</sup>

Beyond unpredictable catastrophes, the insurance industry often faces other significant challenges. In their *Insurance Industry Talent Trends 2015* report, the Jacobson Group, an insurance recruiting company, stated:

*The insurance industry stands at the brink of a talent crisis. The current workforce continues to age and near retirement, while a lack of incumbent talent is making it difficult to prepare for the impending skills gap.<sup>9</sup>*

<sup>6</sup> Source: "Protection You Can Count On . . . Values You Can Believe In," GuideOne Insurance, 2015, [www.guideone.com/aboutus/PDFs/corporateprofile.pdf](http://www.guideone.com/aboutus/PDFs/corporateprofile.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> Source: "GUIDEONE INSURANCE REPORTS 2013 YEAR-END RESULTS," GuideOne Insurance, March 5, 2014, [www.guideone.com/AboutUs/NewsReleases/14yearend13.htm](http://www.guideone.com/AboutUs/NewsReleases/14yearend13.htm).

<sup>8</sup> Source: "GUIDEONE INSURANCE REPORTS 2014 YEAR-END RESULTS," GuideOne Insurance, March 4, 2015, [www.guideone.com/AboutUs/NewsReleases/15year-endResults2014.htm](http://www.guideone.com/AboutUs/NewsReleases/15year-endResults2014.htm).

<sup>9</sup> Source: "INSURANCE INDUSTRY TALENT TRENDS 2015," The Jacobson Group, n.d., [http://chicagonwsurb.cpcusociety.org/sites/chp\\_chicnws/files/docs/event/InsuranceTalentTrends.pdf](http://chicagonwsurb.cpcusociety.org/sites/chp_chicnws/files/docs/event/InsuranceTalentTrends.pdf).

In an industry with only 2.5 percent unemployment and 27 percent of its employees under the age of 35<sup>10</sup>—circumstances that suggest a robust demand for talent—it is critical to attract and retain top-flight technology personnel. This problem was particularly acute in GuideOne’s headquarters location in Iowa—far from traditional tech centers such as San Francisco, Seattle, Chicago, Austin, and New York.

## Organizational Environment

GuideOne’s 94-person IT department is led by a CIO who also serves a dual role as the company’s senior vice president of business transformation. This executive team has an enormous responsibility within the company: Not only is GuideOne’s website the storefront for the business, but technology systems form the backbone of the organization, supporting everything from policy information to claims and billing data and enabling common business processes. The company is dependent on a robust data warehouse and IT infrastructure to enable the company’s 700 employees in their day-to-day tasks. Further, as of 2015, the department was working on a range of multimillion-dollar implementation projects.

As the technology demands of the company grew, many members of the IT team registered misgivings around having to use outdated software and infrastructure, which impaired their ability to complete assignments effectively and on time. The staff was also concerned about the company’s extensive use of outsourced talent and contractors, as these providers were not sharing knowledge across the IT organization. Overall, the team felt overwhelmed by the myriad tasks in front of them and beleaguered by the backlog of assignments that were not being addressed.

## Starting a Dialogue to Improve Engagement

Executives at GuideOne believed that the extraordinary demands being placed on the IT team were beginning to have an impact on employee performance and engagement. They feared that without addressing these issues, the problems would get worse and ultimately undermine the company’s ability to deliver excellent customer service and operate effectively.

The new CIO realized he needed to quickly and specifically identify the challenges facing the IT department. Therefore, within his first 90 days on the job, he set out to interview each of the department’s 94 employees. For these one-on-one interviews, he asked each employee three key questions:

<sup>10</sup> Source: “Finance and Insurance: NAICS 52,” United States Department of Labor / Bureau of Labor Statistics, n.d., [www.bls.gov/iag/tgs/iag52.htm](http://www.bls.gov/iag/tgs/iag52.htm).



### KEY POINT

In an industry with only 2.5 percent unemployment and 27 percent of its employees under the age of 35—suggesting a robust demand for talent—it is critical to attract and retain top-flight technology talent.



### KEY POINT

Executives at GuideOne believed that the extraordinary demands being placed on the IT team could undermine the company’s ability to deliver excellent customer service and operate effectively.

1. **Where are you from?** The intent of this question was to simply find out more about each employee and their background, and perhaps find common interests.
2. **What challenges are you facing?** The goal of this question was to quickly identify problems within the department at large and also with specific projects. This would also help identify how employees were feeling about their work.
3. **What should we do about those challenges?** The CIO knew that those working on the frontlines, who were closest to the problems, would be able to identify inefficiencies and suggest ways to address problems.

These interviews revealed other consistent themes. Overall, the team felt overloaded and underappreciated. They felt they were not getting feedback or recognition from their managers—or from higher levels of leadership—for their continuous hard work. Many in the group also listed poor working conditions as a major complaint. This included everything from the physical space where the team worked to the department’s cultural environment. This discovery was particularly important, as a previous turnover report had noted that “working conditions” were cited as a reason for leaving by nearly half of departing employees.

*The first thing I usually heard in these interviews was that these employees had never had a conversation with the CIO before. But the second part was the real eye-opener. I learned that people were engaged to the organization but more so because of the people they worked with. They stayed because they felt loyalty to their team members, not the organization. That was scary because it meant that if one person left, I could lose a whole team.*

—CIO, GuideOne Insurance

Interviewing all 94 employees took 90 days. The CIO took notes on each interview and then consolidated the data into a 29-page assessments and recommendations report. This included a detailed SWOT analysis<sup>11</sup>, a catalogue of challenges, and a strategy for the future.

The CIO was happy to have the chance to get to know each of his employees and felt he had a grasp of the issues faced by the team. However, he was unsure of how to keep the lines of communication open.

<sup>11</sup> A SWOT analysis is a structured assessment evaluating the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and potential threats inherent in a project or situation.



## KEY POINT

Within his first 90 days on the job, the new CIO interviewed each of the department’s 94 employees separately.

*It was an important process. But I asked myself, 'How am I going to keep this momentum going?' It took over three months to complete all the one-on-one interviews.*

*I needed a way to hear from my team, to interact with them, and to keep them engaged, on an ongoing basis.*

—CIO, GuideOne Insurance

## Taking a Weekly Pulse

Intent on continuing the dialogue with his team, the CIO began searching for a solution that would help him maintain open lines of communication with his employees. The CIO wanted to stay engaged with his team and understand their challenges; he also wanted to go beyond dialogue to actually address the team's issues as soon as possible.

The executive had heard of an anonymous feedback-and-engagement platform called TINYpulse. This cloud-based software platform sends employees a scheduled email survey (e.g., once a week, bi-weekly, or monthly, depending on the client's preference) consisting of only one question. Employees can typically answer the question within seconds by selecting an answer based on a scale from 1 to 10. For example, a question might read: "On a scale of 1 to 10, how likely do you see yourself working here in one year?" Other questions are seemingly less conventional, such as: "What would your company's theme song be and why?" While somewhat offbeat, these unconventional questions are designed to help managers gauge their employees' mood. Upbeat songs, for example, often translate to positive and engaged employees.

The TINYpulse questions are designed to give executives regular insight into employee engagement and morale and to flag signs of trouble. Although the platform is preloaded with hundreds of questions developed by the solution provider's team of survey and engagement experts, executives can also create their own questions or edit the preexisting questions to better reflect their concerns. Executives can see not only how their own teams respond to questions but also how their employees compare against a benchmark comprised of responses from hundreds of companies.

The questions change every week, with the exception of one recurring question that appears approximately every four to six weeks across all of TINYpulse's client organizations. This question—"How happy are you at work?"—gets straight to the heart of employee engagement and gives a recurring benchmark against which executives can compare their teams within their business or across industries.

In addition to receiving weekly answers to survey questions, leaders can private message respondents anonymously to delve deeper into employee issues and morale. This gives employees a way to share greater insight without divulging their identities.



### KEY POINT

The CIO wanted to stay engaged with his team and understand their challenges, but he also wanted to address any issues immediately.



### KEY POINT

The TINYpulse cloud-based software platform sends employees a regularly scheduled email survey consisting of only one question.



Intrigued by this solution, the GuideOne CIO signed up for a free 14-day trial and, with the help of an executive administrative assistant, had the platform up and running the same day.

The CIO launched the new TINYpulse survey campaign with an email to his staff that explained the engagement survey system, how it would work, and the reasoning behind it. (For the full text of this email, see Appendix II: TINYpulse Introduction Email from GuideOne Insurance CIO to IT Department.) He wrote:

*In an effort to stay in touch with the 'pulse' of our organization, and more efficiently than one-on-one sessions to gather information, I am trying something new.*

The CIO then laid out some example questions his team could expect, including:

- What's one thing that we're not doing that we should start doing to be more successful?
- On a scale of 1 to 10, how valued do you feel at work?
- Do you feel your manager has clearly defined your roles and responsibilities and how they contribute to the success of the organization?
- On a scale of 1 to 10, how likely do you see yourself working here in one year?
- What do you love about your job?

Importantly, the CIO personally guaranteed the anonymity of all respondents, something that was important to a group of technology professionals suspicious about the robustness of security systems. He also vowed to share the results of these surveys (both good and bad) with the entire staff on a weekly basis, underscoring the program's transparency and the importance of feedback.

*All I ask of you is to participate. Any suggestions on what we can do to make GuideOne a better place to work for you is appreciated. I will take this feedback seriously and promise to take appropriate action on trends we are seeing.*

—CIO, GuideOne Insurance

## Implementing the Weekly Pulse Surveys

The following week, GuideOne launched its new weekly engagement survey. Some employees cheered the opportunity to simply share general feedback; however, many went beyond just answering the posed questions and also



### KEY POINT

The CIO personally guaranteed the anonymity of all respondents, something that was important to a group of technology professionals suspicious about the robustness of security systems.

offered specific comments. By using the cloud-based dashboard provided by TINYpulse, the CIO could see the results of every question in real time and answer anonymous comments directly. He committed himself to answering every one of these written comments.

For example, in response to a question about how fun the work environment is, an employee wrote anonymously that: "I'm not here to have fun. I come here to work." The executive was then able to look at the anonymous employee's response to the survey question and reply. He first sought clarification, asking whether the employee was not enjoying work, or if "fun" was simply the wrong word to describe it (see Figure 2).

*I use the response feature as a way to get dialogue going. I try to respond in a way that is nonjudgmental and ask for more information so I can try to address any larger issues and see if there are any themes emerging.*

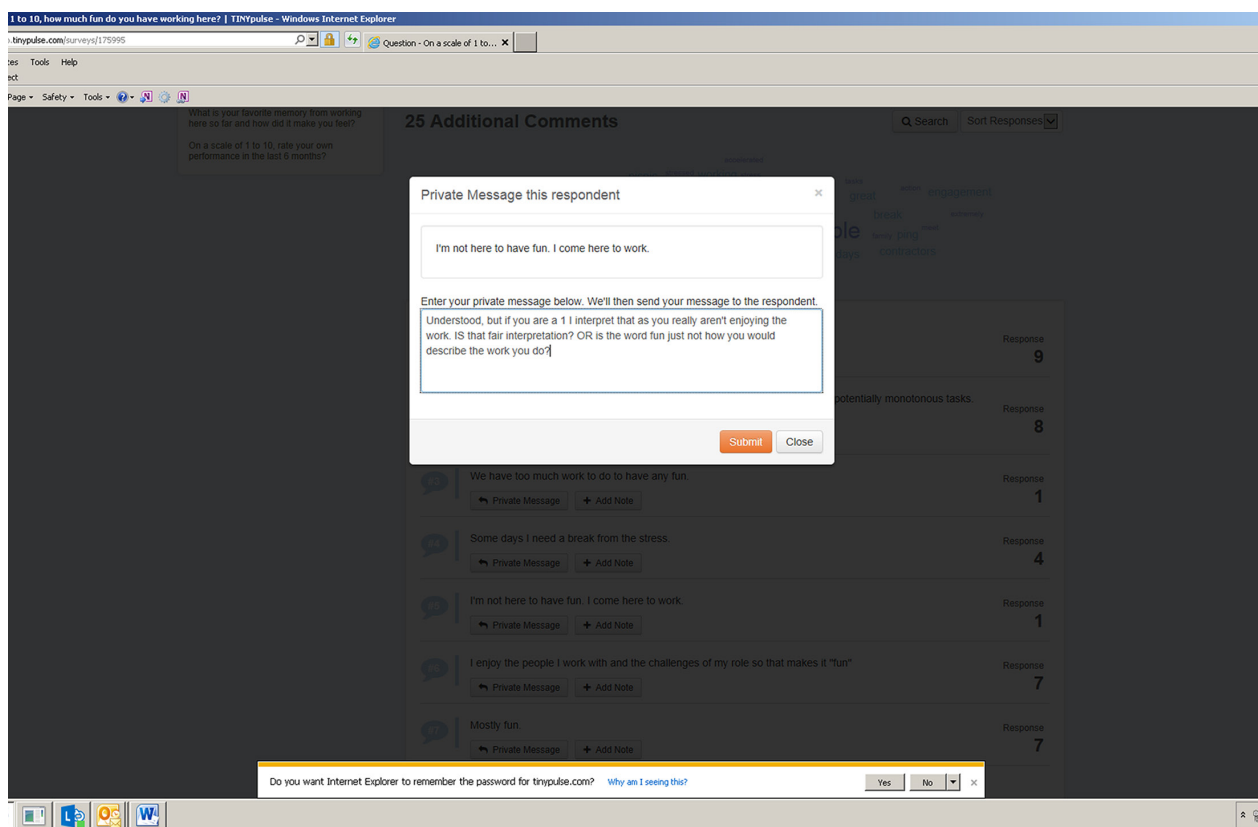
—CIO, GuideOne Insurance



## KEY POINT

Some employees cheered the opportunity to simply share feedback, while others went beyond just answering the posed questions and offered specific comments.

**Figure 2:** Private Message between GuideOne CIO and Employee



Source: GuideOne Insurance, 2015.

To promote transparency, the CIO uses weekly emails to his staff to share the results of that week's pulse survey—both positive and negative. Employees agreed at the outset to let their anonymous comments be a part of these emails.

One recent example comes from a May 2015 survey question that asked GuideOne's IT employees to rate "How much opportunity for professional growth do you have in this organization?" The answers to the survey were varied, and some employees wrote in additional comments complaining that there was no opportunity for growth, while others wrote "the opportunity has never been greater."

The CIO took this opportunity to discuss professional development at GuideOne in his weekly email. "To say GuideOne offers no training or development opportunities tells me we are not having the right discussions in one on ones," he wrote. He then went on to encourage employees to speak to their manager about why they were feeling blocked in terms of opportunity, and to also begin creating personal development plans. For employees who said they were experiencing opportunity, he asked them to continue the dialogue and "share your learning strategies with those struggling here." For the complete letter, see Appendix III: GuideOne Insurance CIO Weekly Email to Employees following a TINYpulse Survey Question.

*Doing this every week may seem like a lot, but this communication to my staff about these survey questions is one of the most important things I do. It is one way I drive participation, but it has also kept the dialogue open and helps us see where our challenges are—and where we are succeeding—on a weekly basis.*

—CIO, GuideOne Insurance

While the CIO believes that anonymity encourages participation, he also acknowledges that to truly solve problems, he needs to ask increasingly specific questions.

## Involving Senior Leadership

Survey results are also shared across the senior leadership team, including the CEO, the chief human resources officer (CHRO), the chief operations officer (COO), and the head of communications. This group has used the feedback from the IT department to make companywide adjustments to everything from rewards to recognition programs, internal communications, and scheduling call-center work hours. For example, some employees voiced a concern that they felt they were not considered when the company made business decisions. This feedback has led to more communication from the senior leadership team; further, the leadership group has asked business managers to conduct more team meetings to keep staff informed about new developments.



### KEY POINT

To promote transparency, the CIO uses weekly emails to his staff to share the results of that week's pulse survey—both positive and negative.



### KEY POINT

The senior leadership team has used the feedback from the IT department to make companywide adjustments in a variety of areas.

## Business Impact

One key reason for adopting the TINYpulse platform was to engage the IT employees at GuideOne so that they would want to stay with the firm. In 2014, the year GuideOne implemented the survey-and-engagement platform, IT department turnover was 12 percent. While higher than leaders would like, this rate is almost exactly in line with turnover rates throughout the property and casualty insurance sector. Based on GuideOne's internal research, over a quarter of employees left because of retirement, but a third left because they were seeking career advancement elsewhere.<sup>12</sup>

At the end of the first half of 2015, roughly a year after the IT department began using the weekly pulse survey, GuideOne reported that IT turnover was down to 3.1 percent. Implementing TINYpulse has improved cross-departmental dialogue, empowered senior leaders to act on employee feedback, and given employees and managers a powerful tool to discuss opportunities and challenges while increasing engagement across the company.

There have been other positive signs as well. After years of complaints, the company invested a substantial amount of capital in improving the physical workspace of the IT department—a direct result of consistent feedback delivered via the weekly pulse surveys.

GuideOne reports that employee participation in the program is high, with 66 percent of employees regularly answering the weekly survey question. The response rate goes as high as 75 percent for simple questions and typically drops for questions that require more time to answer.

Because of the positive impact of the IT department's pilot of the TINYpulse platform, the company's 30-person customer care team has recently begun using TINYpulse as well. Says the company's customer experience manager:

*These are the people who talk directly to our customers. And we knew that if they were not happy at work, then they probably were not going to be happy when they talk to our customers and that is bad for business. Based on the results that they have seen with IT, we thought it would be a great tool to survey our group.*

<sup>12</sup> Source: "INSURANCE INDUSTRY TALENT TRENDS 2015," The Jacobson Group, n.d., [http://chicagonwsurb.cpcusociety.org/sites/chp\\_chicnws/files/docs/event/InsuranceTalentTrends.pdf](http://chicagonwsurb.cpcusociety.org/sites/chp_chicnws/files/docs/event/InsuranceTalentTrends.pdf).



### KEY POINT

Eighteen months after the IT department implemented weekly pulse surveys, IT turnover had fallen by almost 75 percent.



### KEY POINT

Sixty-six percent of employees regularly answer the weekly survey question.

## Leading Practices

- **Respond every week no matter what.** GuideOne's CIO made responding to the survey results a priority. He believed that if he did not actively engage with the feedback he was receiving, his employees would not continue participating. He was also committed to improved management transparency and more open communication.
- **Add value.** The CIO did not merely tally the survey results in his weekly emails to employees; rather, he also offered suggestions for how employees could improve particular scenarios. He also often suggested further opportunities for personal development, such as watching free online videos on various topics.
- **Respond to direct feedback directly.** Using the TINYpulse platform, GuideOne employees have the opportunity to respond to survey questions with anonymous feedback. This can include complaints about the work environment or even specific complaints about a manager. By responding to every employee comment, the CIO helps keep engagement high and also demonstrates that he is serious about creating a vibrant and exciting workplace for the IT department.

## Lessons Learned

- **Anonymity has its benefits but can also allow employees to hide.** Allowing employees to respond to survey questions anonymously is a key component of GuideOne's success with the TINYpulse platform and one reason response rates are high. However, some employees don't like the anonymity and feel people hide behind it, using the pulse survey comments as a "gripe session." While the CIO and his leadership team had some robust debate about this concern, they ultimately decided anything that encourages feedback is a good thing.

*I'd rather encourage people to speak up under anonymity than say nothing and hold these feelings in.*

—CIO, GuideOne Insurance

- **Sometimes employees may need to identify themselves to allow executives to address their issues.** When tangible issues arose, the CIO has to ask specific questions via the tool's private message feature to address the issue. While the platform allows for anonymous discussion between a manager and his employees, addressing some issues requires asking individuals to identify themselves. In some

cases, employees have sent the CIO a direct email and were ready to enter an open dialogue about a specific situation. Other employees haven't identified themselves, requiring the CIO and his leadership team to problem solve on their own.

## Next Steps

As of mid-2015, the TINYpulse platform has moved beyond GuideOne's IT department and is now in use in its customer care team. The program is gaining traction across the organization, enabled by the tool's ability to support many administrators across departments. Additionally, the company is now considering adding a net promoter question into the regular rotation of questions as a way to help gauge departmental effectiveness.<sup>13</sup>

GuideOne has recently implemented a formal employee engagement survey across the organization, and company executives are looking forward to correlating the TINYpulse engagement scores to overall results.

## Conclusion

During the first quarter of 2014, a new CIO at GuideOne insurance undertook an exhaustive 90-day review of his department, including individual interviews with each one of the department's 94 employees. Following these interviews, the CIO assembled the information he had gathered and produced a report on the challenges facing the department. While employees said they were loyal, this statement came with a caveat—they were principally loyal to their coworkers, while their loyalty to the company was relatively weak. At a time when demand for tech talent is incredibly fierce, the CIO saw a potential threat: If one employee left, several others might follow him or her right out the door.

The individual employee interview process—and subsequent report—was an invaluable exercise in addressing the IT department's needs, focusing its mission, and engaging with employees. However, the CIO was unsure of how to keep this momentum going. Conducting daily interviews and spending a month producing results was not realistic for the long term, and also not reflective of the quick pace of business at GuideOne.

<sup>13</sup> "Net promoter" is a term used to describe a simple survey generally sent to a customer or client that asks the recipient to rate a vendor on a scale of 1 to 10 in terms of whether the customer would recommend this vendor to others. In this instance, employees across the organization would be asked to rate the IT department.

To maintain dialogue with his employees and monitor employee morale, the CIO engaged TINYpulse, a cloud-based survey-and-engagement platform provider that sends out weekly emails to employees and asks them a range of questions about their job, their work life, opportunities for development, management skills, and more. Beyond collecting instant feedback on how employees feel about the department, the CIO uses the platform as a way to communicate directly with employees through anonymous online dialogue and weekly emails in which he shares survey results and offers ideas on how the department can improve.

As of mid-2015, the TINYpulse solution has been in place for 18 months at GuideOne, and the company has used the survey results to improve their internal communications, spur dialogue between managers and employees on development opportunities, recognize employees, and much more. While it is too early to draw a direct correlation, the company's IT turnover rate has dropped nearly 75 percent in the 18 months since the program's adoption.

## Appendix I: Topics for Discussion and Learning

The following sections will provide you with considerations for sharing and implementing the leading practices highlighted in this report.

### Ideas for Action

Below is a list of actions to help apply or implement the key practices highlighted in this report. These actions can enable effective implementation of an employee feedback platform:

1. **Survey your team members on key challenges they are facing.** As GuideOne's CIO began his new position, he interviewed his entire team. His goals were to get to know his employees better; to identify problems within the department at large and with specific projects; to identify how employees were feeling about their work; and to identify inefficiencies and explore possible solutions to departmental issues.
2. **Try out different solutions.** Before committing to a solution, GuideOne's CIO ran a free two-week pilot of the TINYpulse survey platform.
3. **Use a pulse survey solution to start a dialogue—but don't stop there.** GuideOne's CIO did not simply use the new platform to get answers to a set of questions. He took his efforts further, following up directly with every comment from his employees and probing into employee suggestions and complaints.

### Questions to Consider

Below is a list of discussion questions to facilitate implementation of an employee feedback platform:

- Do you regularly assess employee engagement (e.g., annually or biannually)? If so, are you able to act quickly on the findings from those surveys?
- When was the last time you—or your managers—surveyed your team on challenges and opportunities facing your department?
- Do you have an ongoing method or channel of communication to hear from your employees on important issues?
- Do you have a framework in place for following up on employee suggestions or complaints?



## Appendix II: TINYpulse Introduction Email from GuideOne Insurance CIO to IT Department

Dear team,

It has been some time since I have sat with each of you and heard what is going well, what isn't, and how you'd like to see us change in IT.

I learned a ton from you, was inspired by your teamwork and customer service passion, and was thankful to get to know each of you a little better.

I hope you feel I've listened, made some changes that moved us in the right direction, and are helping to lead our business to a bright future where technology is a key enabler and value driver.

In an effort to stay in touch with the "pulse" of our organization, and more efficiently than one on one sessions to gather information, I am trying something new.

It's called TINYpulse and is a very inexpensive service that trends the pulse of IT over time against ourselves, and against 400 other clients in their database. Click here for more information:

<https://www.tinypulse.com/>.

The concept is pretty simple: Ask a single question of your employees each week, and let them send you a quick "pulse" back of how they are doing.

It is completely anonymous (unless you identify yourself with remarks) and takes less than a minute per week to participate.

The questions you will be asked each week will vary but below are examples:

- On a scale of 1 to 10, how valued do you feel at work?
- What do you love about your job?
- On a scale of 1 to 10, how likely is it that you would refer someone to work here?
- On a scale of 1 to 10, how likely do you see yourself working here in one year?

So, I will be launching the first survey this week and you will start getting a survey question once a week (on Wednesday) for the next six months.


*(cont'd)*

My administrative assistant will get the weekly results and will share how we are tracking over time (GuideOne IT) and against our peers being asked the same questions.

Our IT leadership team will review results in our weekly meeting and discuss what actions we should take in response.

All I ask from you is that you participate. There will be an opportunity for you to also add comments (anonymously).

Any suggestions on what we can do to make GuideOne a better place to work for you are appreciated. I will take this feedback seriously and promise to take appropriate action on trends we are seeing.

Looking forward to hearing from you weekly and getting a pulse on how we are doing as a team. Thanks for participating! 

## Appendix III: GuideOne Insurance CIO Weekly Email to Employees following a TINYpulse Survey Question

The question this week was “how much opportunity for professional growth do you have in this organization?”

The answers were very broad, from “none” to “opportunity has never been greater,” so it appears this answer really lies in the eye of the beholder.

To say GuideOne offers no training or development opportunities tells me we are not having the right discussions in one on ones. What is your development plan? Do you understand what benefits are offered by GuideOne for continuing education? Are you getting valuable experience working on technology projects that GuideOne is investing in? There are many learning opportunities, so I would ask you to have this discussion in your next one on one. I’ve worked for several large global organizations where you get boxed in and work on one thing over and over and there is not much learning in that. I don’t believe GuideOne limits us that way but need to understand why people feel limited, as I truly want to change that. Can you speak to your manager about why you are feeling blocked? Are you seeing other coworkers taking a different approach to learning that seems to work for them?

I believe every person at GuideOne has a tremendous opportunity to make a difference in this organization, but it is fair to say “that is left up to the employee,” as there is truth to that in any company. It is up to you to excel at your job and in your life. You certainly can expect your manager to help you with that at work but if you don’t have a development plan or are not taking action to learn, it won’t happen.

If you are someone that answered “I am learning a ton in this project-rich environment,” please share your learning strategies with those struggling here. We can all be teachers, supporters, and mentors to some degree. And managers, please talk to your staff about the many learning opportunities at GuideOne. We are investing like never before in technology, so I am concerned we are not taking advantage of that investment by exposing our people to as much as they want to learn.

I’ll leave you with an idea that is easy to implement for your professional development. Have you ever watched a TED talk video? There are literally thousands of these on about any topic

*(cont'd)*

you want to learn about. They are inspirational, led by some of the greatest minds and orators in the business world, and downright entertaining. I encourage you to read more here:

<http://blog.ted.com/ted-ideas-in-business-aims-to-shake-up-the-same-old-thinking-on-professional-development/>.

Enjoy the rest of your weekend!

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