Using Employee Survey Questions To Support A People Analytics Practice

A Perceptyx Guide

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As the field of people analytics expands to incorporate data gathered through relational analytics, [organizational network analysis](#), and other streams, the employee survey remains a critical tool to support a comprehensive people analytics practice. Passive monitoring of email traffic, social media connections, proximity data, and other sources of data can indicate where there are strong and weak connections within organizations, but like demographic data or organizational hierarchy, these are descriptive statistics that do not measure the employee experience or how individuals perceive their workplace.

Responses to employee survey questions provide qualitative data representing the opinions and perceptions of employees throughout the organization. Without this data, HR can at best describe the workforce; it cannot get at how employees feel about the company or their work, or the why of employee sentiment regarding the company, leadership, management, or culture. Most importantly, it is difficult to infer what leaders can do to improve the business when they are limited to quantitative descriptive statistics. Strategic surveys that include questions related to culture, engagement, and the employee experience allow organizations to conduct crucial conversations at scale.

3 Important Points About Survey Design & Frequency

1 Surveys represent a two-way conversation.

When we frame the survey process as a conversation, business leaders and people analytics practitioners need to carefully design questions with the understanding that both the questions and their wording are a communication with employees and will influence their perception. This presents an opportunity to exert positive influence; employee satisfaction survey questions designed to align with the company's culture and values can reinforce core values and positive cultural traits; communicate that leadership is listening and cares enough to ask for opinions; and demonstrate a commitment to taking action on employee concerns. Questionnaires for measuring employees' satisfaction typically include questions about

engagement, management effectiveness, company culture, and other factors that impact the experience. All questions (other than those used to measure engagement) should be phrased so they are actionable, answerable through behavioral observation, and clearly written.

2 Survey design needs to align with the company's overarching strategy.

A survey approach tailored to fit leaders' goals for the process will yield more actionable data that aligns with strategic objectives. In addition to measuring engagement and the factors in the employee experience that drive it, topics central to company strategy such as clarity of direction, diversity and inclusion, or perceptions of change can be included based on what leaders want to measure or advance in the organization.

3 Survey design and strategy needs to be purposeful and flexible.

Leaders' need for information must be balanced against the employee point of view. While leaders may want a constant flow of daily feedback, keep in mind that surveying is a conversation with two sides. It can be frustrating for employees to be constantly poked with, "How do you feel now?" day after day. Organizations that seek to measure relatively stable constructs like culture and engagement too frequently are like people who want to lose weight and get on a scale every hour. There is a balance organizations need to seek. If data is not ready frequently enough, leaders can feel uninformed. If data comes too frequently, it can hinder leaders' ability to take a higher level view of the issue and may lead to some unintended consequences. It may be tempting to postpone action by waiting to see if a trend holds for another week or month where a quarterly or semi-annual measure could allow leaders to do something with the data they have at hand. Other risks of surveying too frequently include increased rater fatigue, decreased participation over time, and decreased data confidence due to smaller sample sizes. Finally, while organizations may significantly increase their survey frequency to help enable data-driven decision making, the firehose of data can undermine the speed and confidence managers have with decisions because they are left managing what could feel like conflicting messages in the data from one day to the next.

It's also important to avoid the other extreme: allowing too long of an interval between requests for feedback, particularly during periods of change. A survey strategy that relies solely on annual census surveys will likely miss critical moments in the employee experience and deprive leaders of information needed for managing change. Instead of a rigid survey schedule, a more agile approach can capture the most critical information at the most appropriate moment, while also reflecting changes and trends over time.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to surveying; the employee survey should be considered in terms of both people analytics and functionality, balancing the organization's need for information against what is asked, how it's measured, and how often.

In the chapters that follow we'll explore the key elements in the employee experience that need to be measured to understand the why behind responses to employee engagement survey questions. Some sample employee survey questions are also included, but the specific questions your organization asks will vary according to your strategy, culture, and values—as well as current circumstances within the organization, such as mergers or restructuring.

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The 4 Measures For Employee Engagement Survey Questions

Employee engagement survey questions are the exception to the rule about survey questions being directly actionable, because they are purely a measure of employee perception and sentiment. Engagement is an outcome of the entire employee experience and is influenced by both internal and external factors. It's important to measure engagement because it's linked to performance and retention, and high engagement increases the likelihood of success for both the individual and the organization. But ultimately, measuring engagement is the equivalent of taking employees' temperature: While the responses may indicate a problem, they do not prescribe a cure. The employee survey questionnaire examples presented in subsequent chapters are actionable items that help to answer the why of responses to engagement questions.

Incorporating The 4 Measures of Employee Engagement In Survey Questions

The precise wording of employee engagement survey questions can vary slightly, but in all cases, what we are trying to establish is how connected employees are to the organization. Indications of disconnect in responses to any of the engagement questions signal the need to dig deeper.

The four measures of engagement are:

1. Intent to stay
2. Referral behavior
3. Pride in organization
4. Intrinsic motivation

Employee engagement questionnaires might include these sample questions to measure the indicators:

- **"I intend to stay with the company for at least the next twelve months."**

- **"I would recommend the company as a great place to work."**

- **"I am proud to work for the company."**

- **"My work gives me a feeling of personal accomplishment."**

It's important to keep in mind that a low score on any of these measures are indications of disengagement. For example, an employee may intend to stay in their job but have little pride in the company, satisfaction in their work, or willingness to recommend the company to others. To get an accurate picture, all the indicators must be considered, since no single one tells the whole story about the employee's level of engagement.

Reviewing the engagement measures reveals why they aren't actionable. There are a number of factors that might influence, for example, employee intent to stay: compensation, work/life balance, recognition, opportunities for growth and development, and more. Workplace satisfaction survey questions focused on these and other factors will spell out what drives the employee's intent to stay or leave, and are examined in the following chapters.

Go Beyond Measuring Engagement With A Strategic Survey Program

Pulse surveys that focus on engagement can be useful for taking the pulse or temperature of employee connection to the organization, but they offer no clues as to why employees are as engaged as they are or what leaders can do differently based on the results. Sometimes the reason for a drop in engagement is easy to discern; if the company is going through a major restructuring, scores will probably fall off until the

organization stabilizes and employees adjust to the new normal. But even then, all the engagement scores reveal is that employees are feeling stressed due to the change. A strategic survey program can uncover the reasons why and point towards improvements, making it a crucial part of any comprehensive people analytics practice.

To get answers to what is driving engagement scores lower or higher, it's necessary to measure all the various factors that shape and define the employee experience and, in turn, drive engagement scores. This doesn't mean that every factor needs to be examined on every survey, but over time, it's necessary to collect data on all of the different engagement drivers in order to get a complete picture and—more importantly— pinpoint areas where action should be taken to improve the experience. The employee survey questions that measure the drivers of engagement will be covered in the following chapters.

4 Types of Culture Survey Questions

Understanding the culture of an organization is critical to establishing an effective survey strategy. This can drive the development of survey content, the frequency of survey administration, and the approach to action planning and follow up by leaders. Company culture can be difficult to define and measure, but it impacts the work experience, performance, and success of everyone in the organization. Though it may be partially subconscious, it's a powerful force that guides behavior in the workplace, and it is inextricably linked to both values and engagement. Many organizations work to build culture through superficial perks such as game rooms, a relaxed dress code, or free lunches but culture runs much deeper than that.

The employee survey program provides a critical way for leaders to gain insight into the existing culture and determine how well it aligns with the organization's strategy and goals. Just as importantly, it can inform leaders' vision about the ideal culture for the company's future and how to achieve it.

1 The Culture Index

The culture index is designed to provide an understanding of the **strength and impact** of the company culture. It can help leaders understand the extent to which employees are aligned around a cohesive culture that contributes to their success. This index serves as an outcome measure, much like Employee Engagement, and allows organizations to identify barriers to strengthening the culture. It also provides a way to monitor progress

> Broadly defined, **a company's culture represents "who we are and how we get things done."** This defines **how employees work together, the way the company does business, and behavioral norms and habits in the work environment.**

over time. The employee survey questions used as part of this index are measured on a five-point "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" scale and answer several important questions:

- **How well-defined and understood is the culture?**

- **To what extent do decisions and behaviors align to the values?**

- **Is the culture contributing to performance and business success or impeding it?**

2 The Competing Values Framework

For organizations at the beginning of their culture or employee survey journey, defining and quantifying the traits driving their culture is a critical first step. The Competing Values Framework provides an easy and effective way to define the culture. Applying this model to survey measurement, specific traits are based on two axes:

○ *flexibility versus control* on one axis

○ *internal versus external focus* on the other

Employee responses to **multiple choice or rank order questions** aligned to each of the traits provide a consistent way to measure and profile the company culture, as well as a way to compare it to others. This is especially useful in identifying subcultures within an organization, or comparing a newly acquired company's culture to that of the legacy organization. This type of gap analysis can provide critical insights to establish alignment and work toward a cohesive culture.

1   Behavior-Based Culture Measures

Where the culture has already been well defined, leaders may elect to incorporate more actionable and behavior-based survey items that align to established or aspirational cultural traits. These items are often based on the company values, employee value proposition, or desired aspects of the future culture they are working to build. These types of survey items may leverage an agreement or frequency scale to provide insight into how well the behaviors are being adopted and lived throughout the company. Some common focus areas include building a culture of:

- **Innovation**
- **Risk Tolerance**
- **Agility**
- **Collaboration and Teamwork**
- **Customer Focus**

This can provide insight into hotspots and necessary actions to reinforce desired cultural traits and behaviors. They can also help leaders zero in on specific barriers to strengthening the culture and engaging employees. In many cases, these measures supplement the more common engagement focused survey topics such as work experience, leadership effectiveness and communication effectiveness.

4   Qualitative Research

Surveys are critical for defining and measuring culture, but the rich insights and stories that can be uncovered through dialogue and text are also important to really understanding the nuances of a culture. Open-ended items such as: **"What three to five**

words would you use to describe the current culture of the organization?" or **"What three to five words would you use to describe the ideal culture of the organization?"** provide robust data beyond the quantitative measures. Paired with scaled items, this allows leaders to understand how different aspects of the employee experience impact the perceptions and descriptions of culture. For example, how do highly engaged employees describe the culture compared to those who are less engaged? In addition, stakeholder interviews and employee focus groups can provide a wealth of stories and data to leverage in bringing the culture to life. Telling and re-telling these stories that represent and reinforce the culture is a powerful way to provide meaning to the traits and elements of the culture leaders are working to build.

Key Themes For Employee Survey Questions About Management & Leadership

Few things have more impact on day-to-day business operations and long-term business success than management and leadership. Leaders define the mission, strategies, vision, and culture of the business, and managers help ensure these strategies get executed.

Employee survey questions about management and leadership allow workers to provide feedback for those who lead the company and manage the work. Just as employee feedback typically includes both strengths and areas for improvement, management and leadership survey questions provide valuable feedback on what is working well and where leaders and managers can improve.

Employee Survey Questions About Management: What To Measure

Managers are in charge of managing both work and employees, which are equally important to business success. Questions about work management address these important aspects of the manager's role:

- Clarity about job and performance expectations

- Regularity and usefulness of performance feedback

- Clarity and fairness of performance evaluations

- Recognition of accomplishments and value of employee contribution to business

- Inspiration and motivation

- Communication of decisions and management through change

- Support for employee growth and development

When developing specific items, it is important to remember A-B-C: actionable, behavioral, and clear. Write questions that focus on observable manager behavior that will result in clear action for improvement. Avoid combining multiple actions into a single question to ensure the feedback is clear.

Besides gathering perceptions around managing the work, it is also important to understand how employees perceive managers' abilities to manage interpersonal relationships. The relationship aspects of management—managing people—can be measured through questions like these:

- *"My manager shows respect for employees."*

- *"My manager cares for employees as people."*

- *"I trust my manager to keep commitments."*

- *"My manager's behavior reflects company values."*

- *"I feel comfortable approaching my manager for discussion."*

- *"My manager seeks ideas from employees and responds to them."*

- *"My manager promotes teamwork."*

- *"My manager supports a good work/life balance for employees."*

Responses to questions about work and employee management can be structured in several different ways. Likert scales measuring *agreement*, *effectiveness*, or *satisfaction* are one possibility. Open-ended questions can provide further insights to better understand why employees responded in a certain way as well as suggestions for improvement.

Another method is "tile and drill," which highlights what is most important to employees and then provides more detail on how satisfied employees feel about those most important topics. For example, employees may be asked to select the three things they need most from their managers in order to be successful from a list of many options. Employees then rate the effectiveness of their manager on the areas identified as most important. This can help focus management development programs or other initiatives on areas that are most important for driving employee success.

Key Themes Of Leadership Survey Questions For Employees

Leadership effectiveness is also critical for driving employee engagement and retention. Important leadership perceptions can be measured on an agreement scale by questions like these:

- *"Leaders clearly communicate the mission, values, and purpose of the organization."*

- *"Company leaders keep employees informed about decisions that affect workers and the business."*

- *"Our company's leadership helps employees transition through changes more easily."*

- *"The company's leaders have positioned the company to successfully compete."*

- *"Company leaders inspire optimism about the future direction and success of the company."*

- *"Company leaders consistently model the values of the company."*

- *"Leaders are visible to employees."*

Responses to these questions will demonstrate whether employees have a good understanding of the business' purpose, direction, and future prospects of success—all critical to engagement. The perceptions employees have about leadership and management are critical to better understand the employee experience. Employee survey questions about management and leadership touch on one of the most important aspects of business success—and how effective leaders and managers are communicating a shared vision and motivating employees to participate in achieving it.

Are You Asking These Organizational Change Survey Questions? (If Not, You Should Be)

As the saying goes, the only constant is change, and nowhere are the stakes higher than in business. Recent years have witnessed an accelerated pace of change, as baby boomers retire and technology and other forces disrupt the business landscape. Whether an organizational change is planned or the result of external forces, getting good at change is an essential survival skill, if not the ticket to the top.

Change is a broad category and means different things to different people. What looks like a positive change to some may be perceived as a threat by others, due to the uncertainty and ambiguity inherent in new technology, procedures, or business organization. Employee responses to organizational change survey questions help leaders understand workers' perceptions of change and identify trouble spots for intervention and to smooth transitions. Surveying through change allows companies to develop their own best practices for moving through transitions and build agility for change management.

Surveying Through Change

Leaders are sometimes hesitant to survey employees while changes are taking place, believing that information gathered during periods of flux will soon be inaccurate or invalid. **But we know the best practice is to track employee opinions throughout periods of change.**

- **Before a change is implemented,** survey responses can reveal whether employees are aware of and prepared for the change.

- **While it is underway,** organizational change survey questions monitor employee perceptions, and allow leaders to be more responsive and make adjustments as needed during change implementation. This also tracks employees as they move through the change curve, ensuring that employees who need additional communication, training, or resources to adapt to the change are not left behind.

- **After changes have been fully implemented,** surveys paint a picture of the new normal and future direction of the company.

Timing is everything when surveying through change. For example, it's more important to measure at key junctures in the change process rather than on a set weekly (or daily) schedule. Think about intentionally measuring at the moments in the change storyline where feedback will allow leaders to make strategic decisions and interventions.

Consider this example: If the company is going through a re-organization and many people are impacted, either by shifts in their team environment in terms of managers and coworkers, and possibly in the nature of their roles and tasks, this is a pivotal time to survey. Understanding how employees are moving through the change is very valuable, especially when there cannot be dips in productivity or additional regrettable turnover due to low morale or uncertainty/insecurity. By measuring employee reactions following key communications or change implementation, leaders can provide support with more surgical accuracy that is more efficient and effective than a broader, diluted approach.

The advantage of surveying through transitions is that, if something isn't working, it allows the failure to be seen quickly and adjustments or interventions to be made. Engagement scores will typically dip when change is underway; measuring progress through that low point helps make sure employees aren't stuck and festering in the change cycle and can instead be brought on board with the change. Measuring trends in responses to survey questions about organizational change (alignment and

understanding of strategy, reception of communications, etc.) are helpful for determining how the organization is progressing in relation to achieving a new stability. Responses may suggest questions to add to the next survey, opening up an agile, continuous listening process that zeros in on what needs to be tweaked to help employees and the company move into the desired future state.

While measuring progress towards the new, it's also important to identify the values and cultural traits that should be preserved and protected as the company transitions through change—both to maintain familiarity while the business is in flux and to make sure that core values, or "secret sauce," are carried through into the future.

6 Metrics & Organizational Change Survey Questions

This sample questionnaire on change management includes the metrics that are most important to measure during transitions. These six metrics represent strands in the rope that hold employees to the organization; they are the bare bones of what should be included in an organizational change survey.

1 **Communication:** *Do you have a good understanding of the implications of the change for your job?**

2 **Trust level:** *Do you trust the decisions made by leadership even if you don't know the details?*

3 **Morale:** *Are you still committed to the company's values and customer base?*

4 **Engagement:** *Do you feel connected to the organization?*

5 **Resources:** *Do you have the resources you need for this transition?*

6 **Productivity:** *Have you been able to handle your workload during the transition?*

*As with other measures, the exact survey questions used need to be aligned with the organization's strategy, both for the change and for long-term success.

Developing Agility For Change

Surveying through change not only helps organizations transition through current changes—it allows them to learn—by doing—how to be good at change (a competitive advantage everyone needs to pursue). Lessons learned during a current transition can be applied when the next change comes along. This is particularly important for many companies where change is the norm. Surveys create a continuous feedback loop as employees move through changes. This efficient back and forth builds trust and flags trouble spots to enable intervention to ease the transition—and allows the organization to develop its own best practices for navigating change. Developing this feedback loop and internal best practices for transitions add up to becoming proficient at change.

Change is almost never easy, but by using all the tools available in people analytics practice, organizations can survive and even thrive through disruption. Developing the proper best-practices infrastructure to allow for agility in change represents a big competitive advantage, so it's well worth the investment of effort required to become adept at managing transitions.

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8 Key Themes For Performance Management Survey Questions

Though "performance management" is a term still used in HR circles, it has a negative connotation for many employees as something to be feared. A better way to look at the concept is through the lens of *performance enablement or empowerment*. **In the context of today's workplace, when we talk about performance management, what we really mean is enabling the people in an organization to perform to their highest capabilities.**

This is critically important due to the pace of change relative to the organizational stability that was the norm 20 to 30 years ago. The rapid changes in today's business environment—including business mergers, new product introductions, and technological disruptions—create more opportunities for innovation, making it more important than ever to empower performance. Therefore, an agile approach to performance management is a big competitive advantage.

Agility requires timely performance review. In previous eras where the pace of change was slower, performance management was an HR process that generally operated on a one-year or six-month cadence. More frequent reviews allow more nimble response, allowing employees to correct areas in need of improvement more quickly and giving them confidence in the work they're doing well to bolster motivation.

The survey process supports performance management goals with employee feedback about the resources, training, management practices, and other elements that allow them to be most productive.

As with employee survey questions about work culture, management and leadership, and other themes important to the work experience, performance management survey questions are drivers of engagement survey responses.

With survey questions about performance management, the goal is to identify elements in the work experience that help or hinder employee productivity. The most important themes are:

1 **Clarity about the connection between the employee's work and the company's objectives.** Employees want to feel that the work they do matters, and that it contributes to a higher purpose. People are more motivated when they believe their work is crucial to the success of the organization.

2 **Clear communication between manager and employee.** In order for an employee to perform up to expectations, those expectations must be clearly communicated by the manager and understood by the employee.

3 **Regular constructive feedback.** Timely feedback reinforces good performance and encourages the employee to keep up the good work. In the moment, feedback also allows errors to be corrected immediately, improving future performance.

4 **Accountability for performance.** Transparency in accountability is just as important as shared understanding of performance expectations. It is detrimental to morale if an employee is not pulling his or her weight and is allowed to continue to underperform, while other team members work diligently to meet expectations.

5 **Work environment.** To perform at full capacity, employees need both physical space conducive to their work and access to the resources needed to do the job.

6 **Encouragement for sharing ideas.** Employees who believe their ideas are valued are more motivated. Encouraging employees to share ideas about potential improvements to work processes can not only identify ways to boost productivity, but also encourage employees to think about ways to work better or smarter.

7 **Teamwork.** Innovation, growth, and development depend on cooperation and connection with other people.

8 **Recognition of work.** Everyone loves to feel appreciated; recognition for a job well done is an instant morale booster. Appreciation doesn't have to come from the top—a verbal pat on the back from a team member also has a positive impact on morale.

The following examples illustrate how the themes above might be worked into performance management survey questions:

- *"I understand how my work supports the mission of the organization."*

- *"My manager has given me a clear understanding of performance expectations."*

- *"My manager gives me constructive feedback on my job performance."*

- *"My manager holds all employees accountable for their performance."*

- *"I have the tools and training I need to meet performance expectations for my job."*

- *"My manager encourages me to share ideas for improvements."*

- *"I receive the support I need from other departments/co-workers to properly perform my job."*

- *"I feel my work contributions are appreciated."*

Questions like these help identify the current performance culture and pave the way to thinking about improvements and the behaviors that will promote and reinforce them. This data is crucial to people analytics practice as a baseline for understanding where things are now and where they should go. Responses to performance management survey questions create a snapshot to use as a starting point for creating a more agile performance culture, and to identify the biggest opportunities for improvement.

Creating A Performance Culture

As with all improvements that rely on changing behaviors, improving the culture to promote maximum performance is a gradual process. But don't do too much too fast; adjusting all the dials at once can be counterproductive if managers, departments, and groups within the organization have not yet bought in to the change. Think through the plan to create a performance culture in terms of wins, and start with the low-hanging fruit.

Use the approach that you are pursuing performance *enablement* rather than performance *management*. Achieving a performance-based culture starts at the top with a clear vision. Leaders must put principles in place to address all the themes related to performance, and realize that it will take time to create the desired culture in the organization.

Performance management survey questions help to establish a baseline for the current culture, highlight areas needing improvement, and monitor changes over time. The goal is to create a performance culture where employees are motivated by the importance of their work and recognition for the job they do, where their ideas are welcomed, and where they are open to learning from past mistakes and one another. Building such a culture has a huge influence on the subject of the next chapter—reducing turnover in your workforce.

Employee Retention Survey Questions: Critical Areas To Measure

Employee retention—especially of key talent—is a challenge for all organizations. In the recent strong labor market, employee turnover has been on the rise; around one in four employees changed jobs in 2018.

This churn in the labor market imposes high costs on business. One recent study estimated the cost of losing an employee at 33% of the annual salary for the position. Loss of key talent also represents a drag on productivity, as departing employees take valuable accumulated knowledge elsewhere and it takes time to recruit, hire, and train a replacement. To avoid the costs and disruption associated with voluntary attrition, it's well worth investigating the reasons employees choose to leave, and to make changes to address them.

> Feedback from **engagement survey questions can predict attrition risks, and exit surveys can provide the data needed to identify improvements** in the employee experience that can reduce attrition.

Employee Retention Survey Questions

Employee engagement can be an outcome of the employee experience; in turn, employee retention can be an outcome of employee engagement. Employees who have a strong connection to their work and their employer are much less likely to seek employment elsewhere.

The four standard engagement measures—intent to stay, referral behavior, pride in organization, and intrinsic motivation—also function as employee retention survey questions. The intent-to-stay question is direct; it asks for level of agreement with the statement: *"I intend to stay in my job for the next 12 months."* While the other measures of engagement are less direct with regard to retention, a low score on any of them indicates a higher risk of attrition.

In addition to functioning as a questionnaire for attrition on annual and pulse surveys, engagement questions are useful for predictive purposes. For example, employees who score low on the intent-to-stay measure are the most likely to leave—and the lower they score, the sooner they tend to depart. Although responses to engagement and other survey questions do not in themselves reveal the reasons why employees choose to leave, they offer clues. Their predictive power goes beyond analyzing responses to the intent-to-stay question: By comparing all survey question responses of employees who left against those of employees who stayed, it may be possible to detect patterns in responses which predict attrition risks.

To dig deeper into the *reasons* why employees leave, exit surveys provide additional actionable data, useful for reactive purposes. This qualitative data can pinpoint precise elements of the experience that failed employees, so those elements can be addressed.

3 Areas Of Questioning Explain Why Employees Leave

Strategic census surveys and pulse surveys can help predict which employees are most likely to leave, but may not illuminate the precise reasons individual employees choose to leave. Exit surveys can fill in this missing information.

To understand and address the most influential reasons for attrition, exit surveys focus on these three areas of questioning:

1 **Reasons for leaving**

2 **Influencing factors**

3 **Employee experience**

Exit surveys should be brief; a short blend of agreement, multiple choice, and open-ended questions will yield richness and insights. Responses to open-ended questions may touch on more than one of the three areas you want to examine. This sample question from an employee turnover questionnaire, *"What does the new job offer that we didn't?"* has a range of potential responses. These might include opportunity for advancement, better work/life balance, and better work culture—all of which are influencing factors and touch on the employee's experience in the organization.

Unlike other types of surveys, exit surveys aren't typically scheduled in advance; they are administered on an ongoing basis as needed. The same survey questions should be used for all departing employees so apples-to-apples comparisons can detect trends; if a trend is detected, questions can be tweaked or additional items added to gain insight to the trend. Using the survey results, organizations can prioritize improvements in specific areas and act on the key areas of the most influential reasons for leaving.

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Gather Additional Data With Follow-Up Exit Surveys

Organizations that conduct exit interviews or surveys can also gather additional information with follow-up surveys. There are three stages of the exit where information can be collected; the messaging for each is slightly different:

1   **Pre-departure:** Information is collected in a face-to-face interview with the manager or HR immediately following employee notice of resignation. The primary purpose is emergency intervention, to see if the employee can be persuaded to stay. If not, other important information can be gathered by asking:

- *"What were the critical issues that influenced your decision?"*
- *"What does the new position offer you that our company didn't?"*
- *"What was the root cause of your decision to leave?"*

2   **Departure:** Information is collected in an online survey, either prior to the last day on the job or in the month following departure. The purpose is to communicate that the employee is welcome to return. The survey should ask:

- *"Would you like to hear about future opportunities?"*

3   **Post-departure:** Information is collected in an online survey or phone interview, one to six months following departure. The purpose is to ask if the employee would consider returning. In addition to questions about the employee experience and the root cause of the decision to leave, post-departure survey questions can include:

- *"What would it take to get you to return?"*
- *"Does the new job meet your expectations?"*

In addition to providing a better understanding of the reasons employees decide to leave, exit surveys can also be used to thank departing employees, hold the door open for their return, and help to build an alumni network.

Because of the high costs associated with attrition, improving retention is an area where HR can show a significant return on investment. Comprehensive people analytics, including engagement and exit surveys, will help you identify attrition risk and identify the areas of the employee experience in need of improvement to increase retention.

Methods For Measuring Diversity [& 5 Critical Inclusion Survey Questions]

In the workplace, diversity and inclusion are important not only for basic fairness, but also for business success. Research has shown that diverse, inclusive teams make better decisions—and more diverse companies generate above-average returns. At first glance that might seem surprising; why would diversity impact profitability? The answer is fairly simple: People are most productive when they feel that they are seen and appreciated for who they are.

> **A diverse workplace where all employees feel respected is more productive and hence, more profitable.**

In the past, diversity and inclusion survey questions were often included on employee surveys as a way to monitor compliance. The question was often posed in a checklist: *"People in the company are treated fairly regardless of: gender, race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, physical disability..."*

The checklist for the question might include a dozen or more qualifiers. The problem with this approach is that responses don't elaborate on who might be the target of discrimination, or provide information on problematic behaviors.

To reap the benefits of a diverse and inclusive workplace, organizations should follow these two recommendations:

1 **Throw out the compliance angle; instead seek actionable data.**

2 **Understand that diversity and inclusion are separate variables in terms of corporate culture and employee experience.** An organization can be inclusive but not diverse and vice versa. Both are needed to get optimal outcomes.

Because diversity and inclusion are separate, they should be measured separately. In the following sections, we'll look at the different ways to measure the two variables.

5 Measures Of Inclusion For Diversity & Inclusion Survey Questions

There are five broad themes indicative of an inclusive organization. The following sample survey questions illustrate each of these themes:

- **Caring:** **"My manager cares about employees as people."**

- **Openness:** **"Employees in the company are encouraged to share their ideas."**

- **Fairness:** **"I believe that I am treated fairly at work," or "I feel valued by the company."**

- **Respect:** **"My manager treats employees with respect."**

- **Opportunity:** **"I believe the company offers me career opportunities," or "The company offers me opportunity for growth and development."**

After the survey is conducted, responses to these questions can be analyzed by demographic groups. This can reveal whether the organization has an overall inclusive culture, or if there are groups who are underrepresented or do not experience the inclusive culture in the same way as the majority of employees. Analysis of these measures can pinpoint areas where leaders should focus efforts to make sure all groups have a voice at the table.

Measuring Diversity

Typically there are no questionnaires for cultural diversity in the workplace; this information is derived from demographic data. The HR management system should have data reflecting job levels, tenures, job titles, departments, genders, ages, and sometimes, ethnicities. Companies who lack this data, or the ability to use it while preserving confidentiality, can use self-reported demographic data from surveys.

If relying on self-reported demographic data, it's important to ask for that information at the end of the survey, to avoid bias in responses to survey questions. Studies have shown that asking for this information at the beginning of a survey or test can affect responses. Some respondents may not want to provide this data; if it is requested at the beginning of the survey, they may decline to answer *any* survey questions. These are typically employees who score lower on trust, inclusion, and respect, perhaps as a result of past experiences within the organization or at a previous workplace. Even if they aren't willing to provide demographic data, it's important to get their feedback on other survey questions. Including demographic questions at the end of the survey and providing an option for "prefer not to respond" will help ensure that less-trusting employees participate in the survey and provide honest responses to the questions they are willing to answer.

Diversity & Inclusion: Identifying Problem Areas

Sorting responses to inclusion measures and comparing results from different demographic groups will identify areas for improvement in diversity and inclusion. This comparison can highlight problems that stand in the way of achieving strategic goals.

For example, suppose a company has the goal of increasing gender diversity in its executive ranks. This has been a goal for several years, but little to no progress has been achieved. Survey analysis shows that scores for men and women trend the same up to a certain level of the hierarchy, and at that level, women's scores drop while men's scores rise. The data might also show that, at this level, attrition of female employees dramatically

increases. By the time women reach the level where the company recruits executive talent, they have exited or are preparing to depart. The company has failed to achieve diversity in leadership ranks because they are losing the women they hope to eventually promote to executive positions before they can be promoted.

Assume that further analysis of the data shows that when female employees reach this critical point on the leadership track, their scores for perceived opportunity for growth, encouragement to share ideas, and empowerment all drop dramatically.

The data in our hypothetical highlights the biggest challenge: At a specific point on the leadership track, women feel excluded. Leadership can address the problem with initiatives to include women at this level in discussion and decision-making, and by consistently communicating respect for them and their work. Over time, these initiatives can increase retention of women employees on the leadership track, so the company has a pool of qualified women to choose from for promotion into executive positions.

Not every situation is as clear-cut as the above example, but collating responses to inclusion measures with demographic data offers a much clearer picture of where and how interventions can be made to increase diversity and inclusion. Taking the actions required to achieve a diverse and truly inclusive workplace pays off with increased productivity and profits—and a win for HR.