



# Improving Staff Survey Response Rates

## **Build confidence that survey data will be used in a meaningful way**

Before doing the survey, step back and ask:

- Why are we doing a staff survey?
- How do we intend to use the results?
- What value will employees get from participating?
- What actions can we absolutely commit to after results are in?

Considering these elements and having answers in mind will help ensure marketing and communications are strong consistent – which in turn will encourage employees to get on board.

## **Ensure and promote confidentiality**

The survey has to contain enough demographics to make the information useful. This information, however, can make employees feel threatened – especially where they work within small work units or demographics.

- Use a third party (where possible) to manage and administer the survey
- Set a minimum number of people who will handle the raw data to avoid situations where individuals can be identified
- Clearly communicate confidentiality parameters and commitments to all participants

## **Make it easy to complete**

- Consider access – literacy, accessibility, time available
- Be realistic in time estimates for completion of the survey – it is better to overestimate and have people happy when they finish earlier than underestimate and have them grumpy because it has taken longer

## **Set reasonable expectations for response rates**

- Some research suggests that a rate of less than 65% is too low as the results are not representative
- In saying that, staff survey response rates typically range between 25-60%
- Internal surveys tend to fare better than external ones



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## **Explain next steps**

Let employees know what to expect and when. When will the results be available? What will be happening after that? When can people expect some actions to occur?

## **Follow through on promises**

Stick to timeframe – if delays occur, but sure to communicate these and advise new timeframes. Failing to do this can mean credibility is damaged and responses next time may be lower.

## **Incentives**

There is research available both for and against the use of incentives. Research for incentives generally asserts around a 10-15% increase in rates when incentives are used (though estimates range up to 50%).

- Monetary incentives are generally not effective. Some research suggests 'useful and relevant information' is a great incentive for the current workplace (for example, a personalised summary of findings or access to results). A genuine assurance that information will be used and acted upon, is also effective.
- Research often recommends against making participation a competition, for example, a prize for the department who achieves 100% response rate or for particular individuals. These can be viewed as a bribe or as unfair and can encourage disharmony or division within the organisation.
- Company-wide incentives are generally regarded as a good idea, for example, donation to a charity if the company goal is achieved. Other research suggests vouchers are effective for longer surveys, or prize draws for shorter ones.
- Small prizes with a high chance of winning are generally more effective than bigger prizes with a small chance.

## **Other recommendations and considerations:**

- Send a reminder within 10 days of launching the survey; this will generally boost responses.
- Allow a timeframe of at least two weeks for survey completion. This can help ensure staff who are away on leave have the chance to complete it.