

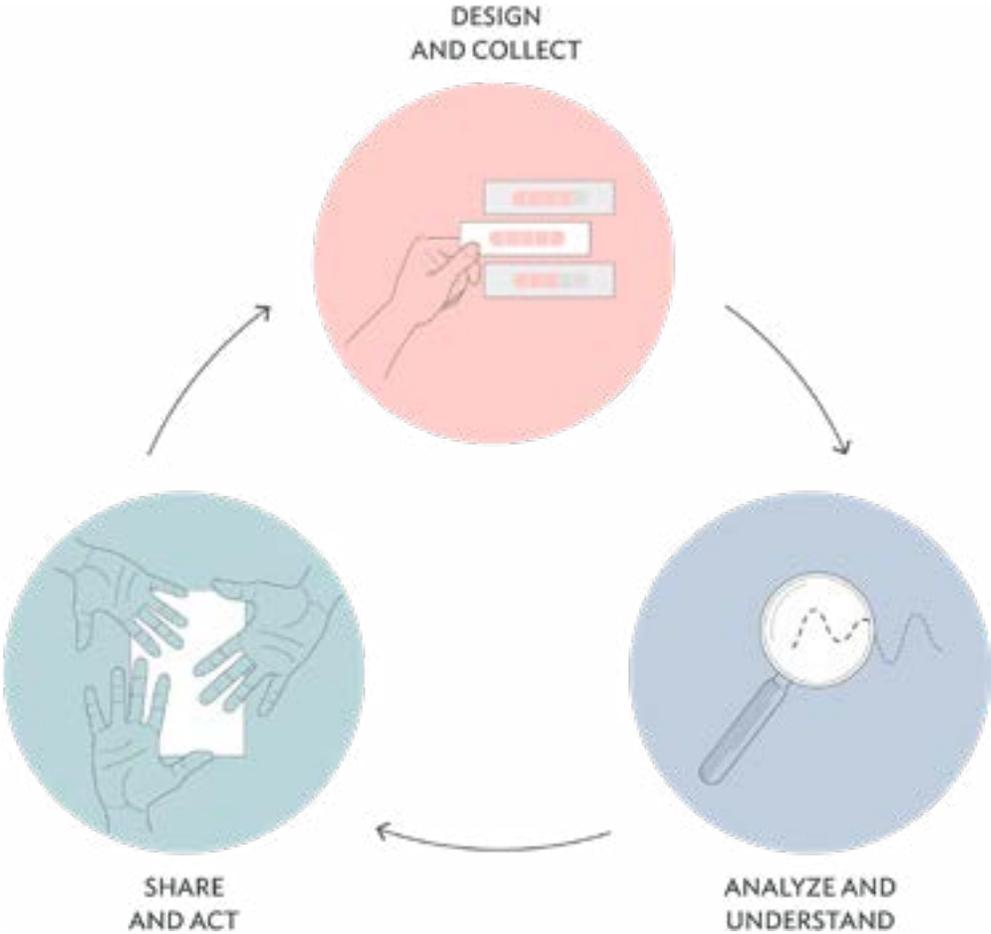
Employee Engagement

Building an action framework

Smart organizations recognize the value of employee engagement. They know that having engaged employees is proven to increase productivity, reduce turnover and boost the bottom line.

The first step for any organization looking to benefit from enhanced employee engagement is to gather reliable and useful data. Online engagement surveys and dedicated HR analytics tools are a great place to start.

Having reliable data and insights is just the start of the process, however. It's what you do with that data – the focus areas you identify and the actions you take to address them – that impacts employee engagement within your organization. Ultimately, engagement is the outcome of an ongoing process. The Employee Feedback Loop: collect, understand, act; is the formula for achieving – and maintaining – outstanding employee engagement.



This guide looks at the ‘act’ component of the process. We’ll outline the best way to drive meaningful change and organizational learning based on employee feedback.

Overcoming a history of (in)action

For many years organizations have been gathering employee feedback. In the past, there were inherent limitations in how quickly and thoroughly data could be compiled, analyzed and acted upon. Advances in online survey technology, however, have removed many of these limitations. Today, thanks to specialist [employee survey platforms](#) with sophisticated analysis tools and algorithms, organizations can capture and digest large amounts of employee feedback with virtually instant results.

However, we’ve seen that some organizations continue to struggle in acting on learnings. Many still create cumbersome and bureaucratic action-planning processes that are designed around an uninspired task-list infrastructure and compliance mentality. On the other hand, we’ve seen some great examples of organizations working together to shape and implement actions. Using their examples, and our own research on best practice, we’ve crafted this guide.

A new approach to post-survey action

The framework outlined in this guide aims to address what we’ve seen that hasn’t worked in action planning processes, and highlight what has worked. Based on years of working with some of the world’s leading culture first companies, analyzing employee feedback captured from hundreds of thousands of employees as well as testing approaches through our masterclasses, workshops, and customer interviews, we have learned what differentiates organizations that act effectively on survey results. Organizations that find

success in driving meaningful change based on employee feedback share these four key points of differentiation:

Focus on one opportunity at a time: Identifying just one focus area makes it easier to achieve alignment in effort, clarity in communication and visibility of impact.

Share and collaborate: Sharing results with employees and involving them in the ideation process encourages refinement of potential actions, and leads to greater employee commitment to an action plan.

Maintain momentum: Making action planning as lightweight as possible allows teams to move efficiently from results to action without cumbersome bureaucratic processes.

Track and communicate progress: Logging accomplishments in an open forum where employees can track progress ensures they can see that their original feedback was heard and addressed.

These principles underpin each of the below steps for acting on survey results.

Moving from results to action can be challenging. While there is often an inclination to jump to solutions when reviewing employee survey results, it's actually a great opportunity to re-engage employees in the process. We find that taking a more collaborative approach to acting on results by including employees in root cause analysis and idea generation creates a sense of ownership, enables creativity, develops trust and builds upon the momentum you've gained in sharing your results.

Narrow your focus

Employee surveys often yield a wealth of data. Organizations that are able to narrow their focus are much more effective in taking action on results. It usually starts with narrowing all the potential opportunities to three or four potential focus areas and then taking the challenging step of choosing just one to start with. There is no right or wrong way to select a single focus area, although it is important to consider both your results and your unique context and business needs. Generally, a focus area will be something that:

- has a strong impact on employee engagement, with lower favorable scores and larger negative gaps to available internal and external comparisons
- you are willing to put resources behind (money, effort, time, people)
- you feel optimistic about addressing and getting employees behind
- where possible, is aligned with your broader organizational goals and objectives

Note: If individual business units, departments or teams want to select their own focus area that is unique to their teams, in addition to supporting the company-wide focus, they would use the same criteria above to select their focus.

Frame a ‘how might we’ question

Once you have a focus, it is important to frame it as a forward-focused question. We find it is helpful to frame the focus in a ‘how might we’ question. Our goal with this framing is to make the focus area easy to think about as a question to solve.

Here are a few example ‘how might we’ questions that Culture Amp has used:

- How might we better demonstrate our values on a day-to-day basis?
- How might we better act on new or promising ideas?
- How might we improve collaboration across organizational boundaries?
- How might we better support individuals to feel that their workloads are reasonable?
- How might we make Culture Amp a place where we experience professional and personal growth?

The answers likely don’t exist in the confines of the leadership team but across the organization. Leaders should try to avoid identifying solutions and instead empower managers and their teams to engage in the process.

Understand the problem or opportunity more deeply

Once the leaders have framed the ‘how might we’ question, it can be quite valuable to involve employees across the business in exploring and discussing the underlying root cause. This can be done virtually or in a workshop setting where you ask employees to describe what they think are the underlying factors leading to the opportunity. Asking these three simple questions can help frame the problem:

- What does this focus area mean to you? (i.e. if the focus area was acting on new and promising ideas, you might ask: what does acting on new or promising ideas mean to you?)
- Where are we doing well? (i.e. what are some examples of where we do or have acted on ideas?)

- Where are we not doing well? (i.e. what are examples of where we fail to act on ideas?)

Generate ideas and narrow to a few key actions

Holding cross-function ideation meetings can be a fun way to generate creative ideas for addressing your focus area. We encourage asking for volunteers so that you get people who are truly invested in helping to address the challenge. Below is a brief summary of how we move through the ideation process.

Begin by encouraging divergent thinking

Encourage employees to work solo to generate as many ideas as possible and then break into small groups of four or five and share their ideas. Getting participants up and moving around using Post-Its, whiteboard markers, different spaces around a room and even drawing their ideas can help with the creative process.

Start to converge on the best ideas

Encourage each of the small groups to pick the few ideas they like best and then to summarize the ideas. They could give the idea a catchy headline, draw a picture and provide a written description.

Take the time to prototype

Once each group has some really solid ideas, it is worth taking the time to flesh them out using a prototyping or ‘plan on a page’ methodology. Include:

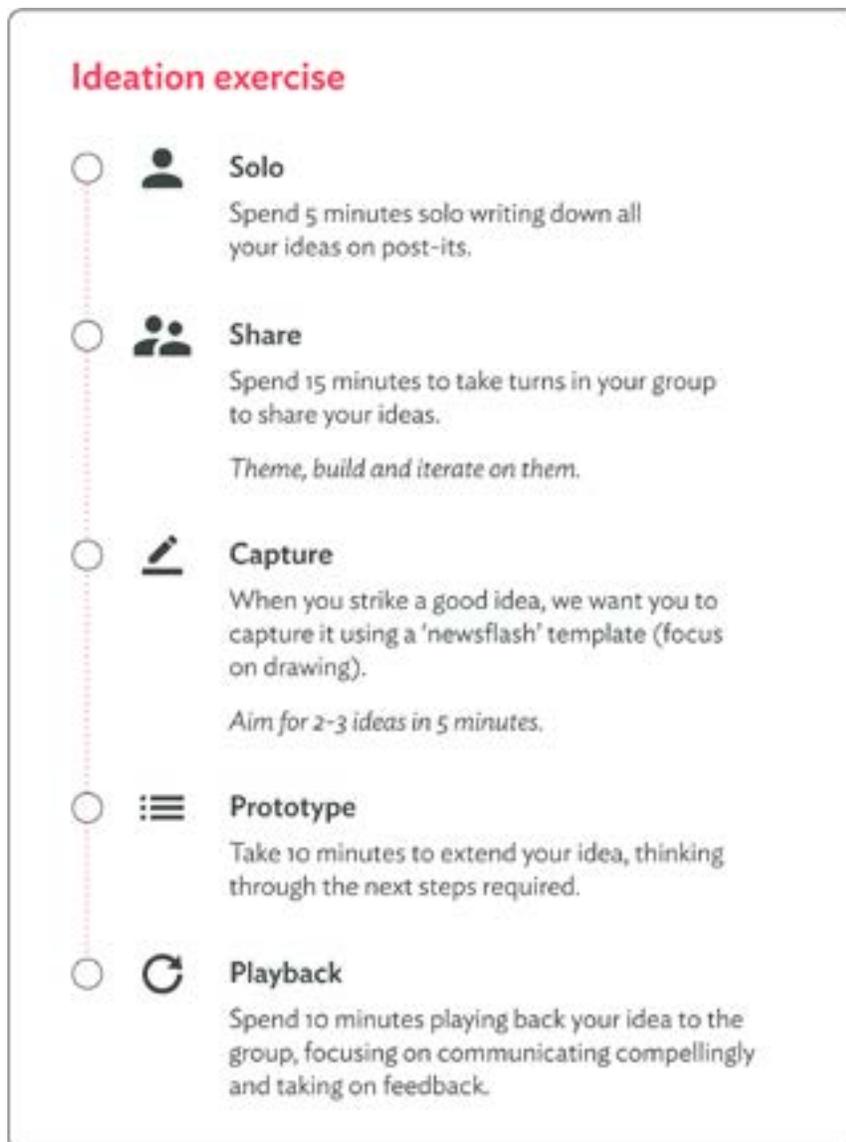
- The idea headline (which problem is it solving?)
- How might this idea work?

- What would the first three steps look like to get it off the ground?
- Possible downsides?
- What resources might be required?

Playback to the broader group

Give each group an opportunity to share their prototypes and get everyone involved in the workshop by having them vote on the top two or three ideas.

Below is a visual of the process we go through at Culture Amp:



By involving employees across the business from sharing through action, framing the opportunity as a forward-focused question and enabling divergent idea generation you give your organization the greatest chance to come up with truly creative ideas.

Now act

This is often the point where organizations get stuck. They have expended a fair amount of energy to get to a set of actions. We find that those organizations that are most successful at seeing the actions come to life and have an impact have:

- Identified clear owners of the actions
- Aligned actions to business needs and goals
- Clearly defined the resources needed

But most importantly, we encourage you to take an experimentation and iterative approach to employee feedback based action. Don't fall into the trap of getting stuck in planning.

At this point you will have captured valuable employee feedback, analyzed it and involved employees in the root cause analysis and idea generation process. Now try out a few of the employee ideas. A big hurdle in ensuring you maintain momentum is shifting the organization from a compliance and achieving best practice mentality to an iterative and testing approach that prioritizes learning over perfection. We encourage you to start testing different ideas as quickly as you can. Then you can easily communicate progress on actions, gather feedback from employees and make any necessary adjustments.



How can we help?

We built Culture Amp, the world's most powerful employee feedback and analytics platform, so that professionals like you have the insights they need to help employees succeed at their fingertips.

www.cultureamp.com