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Is Over-Surveying Fact or Fiction?

Medallia's Stance: FICTION

At Medallia, we are a strong proponent that you won't have to worry about the dreaded "Survey Fatigue" issue as long as you follow a few best practices.

We see this scenario play out quite often: You're getting ready to send another survey to your employees when your colleague asks, "Have we sent too many surveys lately? Won't employees feel survey fatigue and become unwilling to participate?" This is a common and reasonable concern.

It's important to keep in mind that employees actually want to share feedback about their experiences at work, especially since work is such a large part of their lives. As long as you create a program that is designed with our best practices in mind, over-surveying employees won't be a concern. Our best practices dictate that Employee Experience (EX) leaders communicate the purpose of each survey, take action on results, and streamline all employee experience surveys through one centralized source. We will discuss each of these best practices in greater detail below.

Follow these best practices to ensure employees keep coming back to share feedback each time you ask.

Communicate the Purpose

Ask Yourself: Why is it important for employees to share their feedback on this survey? What am I going to do with this feedback?

Explaining the purpose of each survey in a way that resonates with employees is a critical component of motivating them to participate. Employees and managers want to know what is in it for them, why the survey is important, and what you will do with their feedback. Employees are motivated to participate in surveys when they clearly see that their feedback will have a direct impact on their day-to-day job. Given this, it is critical to have an internal communication and change management plan that clearly communicates the value of the survey in a way that resonates with all key stakeholders (e.g., employees, senior leadership, managers).

Take Action

Ask Yourself: Do we have commitment and processes that will allow us to take action in a timely manner?

When employees provide feedback, they expect that something will be done with this feedback. Research suggests that survey fatigue has less to do with too many surveys and more to do with frustration at the lack of action on previous survey results. The most successful employee experience programs establish a platform that allows their managers to identify and address issues quickly. Set your managers up for success by establishing action planning best practices and clear timelines in order to take action on results in a timely manner. Create buy-in with your feedback program by educating all levels of management on the importance of providing an excellent employee experience and the impact it will have on your organization's performance metrics. When it comes to Employee Experience feedback programs, we always say, "Don't ask if you don't intend to act!"

It is incredibly important that employees have visibility to the actions you are taking, especially if you are making changes based on suggestions they provided. Transparency builds trust with employees, and it is rewarding to know leaders are actively listening to concerns and improving the organization. Employees who do not see action being taken are less likely to participate in future surveys, so if you are seeing low response rates, this could be a contributing factor.

Another aspect to consider when sending multiple employee surveys is what we call "Action Fatigue." We hear stories from managers who feel that they do not have enough time to implement changes before the next round of employee surveys are launched. We also hear stories about managers who become fatigued after attempting to take on too many issues at once. To fight this sentiment, encourage your leaders to select 1-2 important focus areas to make incremental improvements each time they receive feedback from employees. Keep action planning simple and make it part of your organization's natural operating procedures. Remember, only survey employees as frequently as you can take action.

These suggestions are just a few examples of how taking visible action can prevent the feeling of being over-surveyed. If you're interested in learning more, Medallia has in-depth action planning resources available to ensure the actionability of your Employee Experience feedback program.

Ultimately, when you ask employees for feedback, be prepared to tell them what actions you took as a result of previous surveys, and communicate your plan to take action on the new feedback.

Streamline and Centralize

Ask yourself: Do we send multiple surveys from several sources? Are our surveys targeted and concise?

Leaders in the Employee Experience industry follow the best practice of requiring all employee experience surveys to flow through a clearly-defined, centralized team in order to ensure survey scheduling and messaging is cohesive. This team is ideally comprised of a cross-functional group of individuals from HR, Marketing, Communications, IT, and more. Once program governance is established, the team can identify all major company-wide surveys, align on a strategy and communication approach, and take steps to avoid sending multiple surveys to employees at the same time. In some cases, the use of Medallia's quarantine technology could be a useful tool to prevent employees from receiving several surveys at the same time. Since the centralized approach lends visibility to all methods of asking employees for their feedback within your organization, it also ensures no one is duplicating efforts and minimizes survey overlap with similar questions inadvertently asked on multiple surveys.

All of this centralization ultimately results in an Employee Experience program that is easy to understand and creates a culture of continuous feedback and response. When the program becomes part of your culture, employees will not see these surveys as a burden, but rather an opportunity to actively participate in the company's wellbeing.

Additionally, it is critical to ensure your surveys are concise and feature targeted questions that are specific to the purpose of each survey. A streamlined and easy-to-use survey will help reduce survey fatigue. Research shows long surveys can cause fatigue and increase the likelihood that employees will abandon the survey partway through. Our best practice is to keep employee surveys succinct and specific. We suggest the following survey lengths:

- Employee Engagement Surveys:
  30-35 questions / 10-15 minutes
- Pulse Surveys: 5-10 questions / 3-5 minutes
- Micro-Pulse Surveys: 1-3 questions / 1-2 minutes
- Moments Surveys (e.g., Recruiting, Onboarding, and Offboarding Surveys): Typically no more than 10 questions / 5 minutes

Your Medallia Professional Services team can provide expertise and guidance to ensure your organization's Employee Experience program is well-designed and fits your company's unique needs.

Conclusion

In our experience, companies who follow these best practices and create well-designed Employee Experience programs do not experience issues with over-surveying employees. At Medallia, we understand that each company and their employees face unique challenges, which is why we provide a team of experts in the employee experience industry to help you create a best practice program.

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