



Actionable Pulse Follow-Through: A Guide to Practical Steps for Reliable Survey Outcomes

Creating and Engaged and Empowered Workforce:
A Series of Practical Guides

From Warnings to Action

In our first guide in this series, we looked at how the reactions of employees from pulse surveys can put opportunities and issues onto the radar of business leaders – acting as an effective early warning system based on the very time sensitive, current views of the workforce.

A radar full of early warnings is all well and good, but the information that's available will always at best be at the highest level – providing insight into **where** to focus further effort in broad terms, but without the necessary detail to **pinpoint** the **root cause(s)** of those warnings.

In this guide, we look at how leaders can travel to the next stop along the engagement and empowerment highway – practising 'Actionable Pulse Follow-Through' at pace to make sense of those pulse radar blips and then, crucially, doing something meaningful with them.

ACTIONABLE PULSE FOLLOW-THROUGH

'Actionable Pulse Follow-Through' is a simple evolution of what you've always done – engaged and consulted with your staff, often using surveys and other collaboration tools – to find out WHY there is a possible issue, or WHAT the big opportunity is.

What makes it different is that the results are not 'stuffed into the back of a drawer', but are instead:

- Reviewed and assessed in line with the key priorities of the business
- Translated into clear plans for change with defined target dates
- Backed up with tasks that people can actually deliver
- Turned into improvement outcomes that are shared with everyone

So, traditional surveys then, but with a supercharged boost!

Features of an Actionable Pulse Follow-Through Framework

You've been alerted to a potential issue, threat, or opportunity from the results of your pulse survey - so what next?

Clearly (we think!) some form of follow-through is crucial if you're being serious about delivering on the empowerment promise you've made to employees.

Essential features of effective Actionable Pulse Follow-Through, in our eyes, are:



PULSE RESULTS MINING

A follow-up process should deliver rapid, clear insight into the early warnings or opportunities identified.

Employ Pulse mining survey techniques to quickly get to the bottom of the findings from your pulse questions and learn why they appeared on your radar.



ALIGNMENT/IMPACT IDENTIFICATION

Understanding the relationship between your findings and your business imperatives can help you prioritise what to do next.

Align each of your findings with your key organisational objectives and impacts to ensure that subsequent work always adds real value to your organisation.



AGILE WORK PLANNING

Adopting a work-planning approach that has momentum built-in to its foundations will lead to more and faster change.

Structure your plans for change into agile cycles that are geared towards incremental delivery and learning.



ACCOUNTABLE TASK-SETTING

Getting the right framework in place for managing tasks is crucial for delivering outcomes from the plans that you've set in motion.

Support a team-based agile approach that centres around task accountability and achievable deadlines that your people can commit to.



OUTCOME SHARING & LEARNING

Making outcomes from engagement work visible and easy to find is crucial for maintaining employee trust and building organisational knowledge.

Close the loop on your engagement efforts by sharing all outcomes, both positive and negative, with everyone involved as a matter of course.

Pulse Results Mining



It's not always easy or practical to get a diverse range of voices into a room to delve further into a finding from a pulse survey, so a short survey that's designed specifically to get to the nub of the issue can often be the best approach.

Use a Pulse mining survey to take an escalated issue (or opportunity) and pose a small number of highly relevant questions to tease out the reason(s) that the workforce has raised a red flag.

OUR TOP TIPS

- 1.** Follow-up with the same audience that was involved in your initial pulse survey. You'll demonstrate your commitment to empowerment by following through on your promise to listen and act.
- 2.** Keep your Pulse mining survey short and concise: you can normally get to the bottom of any issue with 4 or 5 questions. Asking less will limit what you learn. Asking more will make it harder to make sense of the results.
- 3.** Get your survey questions out fast on the heels of your pulse survey: since pulse surveys give rapid feedback on often topical, current and time-sensitive issues, waiting months (or longer!) to follow up will only be counter-productive.
- 4.** Compose your questions as assumptive facts to facilitate 'Strongly Agree' to 'Strongly Disagree' responses (or similar). This removes potential confusion created by negatives (or worse, double negatives!) in your questions.
- 5.** Assign scoring to your responses. Use scoring of 10 (Strongly Agree) down to 1 (Strongly Disagree) to provide enough scoring range to help you quickly identify the biggest areas of concern.
- 6.** Provide an optional free-text response area for each question – there will always be some nuanced feedback or golden nuggets of information that will help you make the best decisions.

Alignment/Impact Identification



Too often, employee feedback from surveys is compiled into a management report that makes comment on the statistical results – the facts and figures – but places little or no focus on the impact these results will have on the organisation.

With more emphasis on how the findings align with the organisation's goals and objectives, and on the level of impact those findings have on the business, leaders can make better informed decisions on what to act on first.

OUR TOP TIPS

- 1.** Compose one or more finding(s) for every survey question that has a surprisingly low or high score. Low (negative) scores will often drive improvement or corrective work, and high (positive) scores can be great for sharing and maximising opportunities.
- 2.** Keep your findings short and to the point – less than 100 words ideally. Everyone should be able to understand what has been found on a quick scan.
- 3.** Tag your findings with a **qualitative** measure: choose from a defined list that aligns to your organisational or business unit goals or values – for example 'Improving Health & Safety', 'Reducing Waste' or 'Improving Workforce Mental Health'. This will help you identify who needs to get involved to take things forward.
- 4.** Complement this with a set of **quantitative** measures which can be scored – for example 'No Impact (1)' through to 'Significant Impact (10)'. These will help you focus on highest priority areas first.
- 5.** Consider the use of a second qualitative measure – this time based on the level of difficulty or uncertainty associated with your survey finding. This can help you identify quick-wins and move them along at more pace.



Addressing findings with appropriate plans for improvement is key to making change happen, but all too often those plans fall apart at the first hurdle – usually for the same old reasons.

Lack of momentum is a classic improvement killer, so it's important to put in place some effective agile work planning principles that break through the inertia barrier.

OUR TOP TIPS

1. Use your findings' quantitative measures to identify and prioritise the areas of highest impact, and your qualitative measures to determine which part(s) of the organisation is needed to take them to the next stage.
2. Record and categorise the work (your Plan(s) of Action) that needs to be done for each priority finding – we find the following categories helpful:
 - **Investigation Action:** we need to determine whether this is actually an issue or not
 - **Exploration Action:** we need to explore and find solutions on how best to fix or improve this
 - **Remedial Action:** we need to make a change to correct a non-conforming process
 - **Preventative Action:** we need to stop this from happening (again)
 - **Improvement Action:** we believe that proactive change will make this better
3. Where exploration work is needed, tackle the biggest uncertainties first. Work through the uncertainties in short exploration cycles, recording the outcome of the work and adjusting what you'll do in the next cycle accordingly.
4. Don't forget about the quick wins. Identify findings with high or moderate impact, and low uncertainty/difficulty, and get busy planning out solutions asap!

Accountable Task-Setting



Turning plans into meaningful improvements isn't something that just happens overnight. Without a focus on the delivery part of your plans, nothing is going to change fast.

Assigning ownership of appropriate, achievable tasks along with an effective framework for managing progress is key to building and keeping up momentum as the delivery team works towards a set of goals.

OUR TOP TIPS

- 1.** Accountability is key - an action with many owners is a sure-fire way to kill momentum. Split out your plans into smaller, actionable chunks that can each be assigned to **one** person, even if that person needs a small team to help.
- 2.** Split your actions into chunks of work that can be delivered within 1 or 2 weeks (or less). This will enable you to build agile 'sprints' around the work to keep momentum high.
- 3.** Get your delivery teams into an agile mode of operation - getting commitment from team members that work will be progressed ahead of each sprint review will lead to more and faster outcomes.
- 4.** Use an electronic tool to share and track your actions. Cloud platforms like Trello can be useful for this, or better still find a solution like smartcrowds that keeps your actions in the same place as your engagement activities.
- 5.** Find a way to share the actions that are being worked on across the business. Someone else might already have a solution or input that can help deliver the task at hand, so find a way to make this work for you.

Outcome Sharing & Learning



What's the single biggest frustration amongst employees with workforce engagement programmes? Yes, you've got it: Lack of visibility of what the organisation has learned, and more importantly what it's doing about it.

Promoting a culture of shared learning from your engagement efforts not only encourages deeper future involvement, but also builds up the organisational knowledge that is vital for keeping your business at the top of its game.

OUR TOP TIPS

- 1.** Everyone wants to know what's changed as a result of their feedback. Find a way to share the outcomes from each area of work that you started - an engagement and empowerment platform like smartcrowds can be great for this, but trusty old email can always do a job.
- 2.** Positive outcomes are great, but even negative outcomes create value. Whilst they often won't result in improvements, the 'things that didn't work out' will always result in employee learning which, if shared, will help the organisation improve.
- 3.** Re-use your qualitative and quantitative measures to help the workforce understand **where** the changes and improvements have created value, and the **amount** of impact associated with them.
- 4.** Compile and share a Findings Summary report. Pull together the initial **purpose** of the engagement, the **questions** that led to key findings, the **work** that was done, and the **changes** that are now in place as a result of your engagement activity. This root-to-branch view will really help your people understand the true potential that an engaged and empowered workforce can bring.

There's lots in this guide to consider, so to help you make sense of it all we've created an example 'Findings Summary Report' using a format that we think works well for sharing. You can [download it here](#).

What's Next?

Find out how smartcrowds can help you empower your workforce.



Book a smartcrowds **SURVEYS** (Pulse & Traditional) Demo

REQUEST AN ROI CALCULATION

Our Innovation Consultants will carry out a short review and prepare an ROI Calculation for you that highlights the areas where the most significant return is likely to be achieved.

FIND OUT
MORE

REQUEST A SMARTCROWDS IMPACT DEMO

Our smartcrowds IMPACT demo is delivered around the key innovation performance indicators described in this guide. In the demo you'll find out how smartcrowds helps you engage better with your workforce, empower your employees to make change happen, and turn more ideas into more outcomes,




CONTACT US TO
REQUEST A DEMO

Look out for our follow-up guide,
“More Routes to Empowerment:
Practical Steps for Effective Listening”

ABOUT SMARTCROWDS

At smartcrowds, we work with organisations looking to empower their employees, at all levels, to make sustainable, positive contributions to business change and innovation. Our smartcrowds IMPACT programme has been designed to deliver repeatable return on innovation investment, through a 5-step programme that is built around the key leading indicators of innovation performance measurement.



-  www.smartcrowds.com
-  hello@smartcrowds.com
-  0333 577 5088