



The Route to Empowerment

A Guide to Practical Steps for Effective Involvement

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

From Consulting to Involving

Our 'Creating an Engaged and Empowered Workforce' series focuses on the organisational journey from a workforce that **consults** with its employees, to one that proactively listens to and **involves** employees in the efficient operation of the business, and finally to one that **empowers** the workforce to own and drive its own ideas for improvements – a key expectation of today's modern workforce.

And this isn't just management speak-hocus: according to a recent poll referenced by Forbes which sheds light on the hidden drivers of "The Great Resignation", nearly half of respondents (45%) say they don't believe their feedback leads to meaningful change.

In the first 2 guides in this series, we presented our top tips on employee consultation. In this guide, we move from consultation to employee **involvement**, sharing practical steps that can help leaders create a pro-active workplace that results in more change that is more meaningful to the employee more of the time.

EMPLOYEE INVOLVEMENT

Workforce involvement comes in many forms, but at its simplest means a two-way process where you and your employees:

- consider what everyone has to say
- seek and share views and information
- listen to one another's concerns
- solve problems together and make decisions together

And **trust, respect & co-operation** jump out to the smartcrowds team as key principles that sit behind all of these.

But how to get started? What are the characteristics of effective Involvement, and what are some of the tools that can be used to make it happen?

Read on for the smartcrowds guide to all things involvement-y!

Features of an Involved Workforce

We've all met business leaders who proclaim that their door is always open, that they want everyone to make a difference, and that having the right attitude is the only barrier to improvement.

But what that does that really mean? What does it look like in the real world? And how do the challenges of the modern hybrid workplace play into this?

Here's our take on the key features of an involved workforce in today's world.



OPEN-DOOR

A listening organisation promotes an always-on, open-door culture that puts people at the centre of the conversation.

Build on your feedback activities (such as surveys) using 2-way channels that get your managers and teams sharing & solving problems together.



LOCALLY DRIVEN

Process expertise and team familiarity means that employees are more likely to become heavily invested in local involvement initiatives.

Task your managers to identify areas most likely to resonate with their teams, and to create involvement initiatives that address those local issues first.



INCLUSIVE

More productive outcomes are achieved when everyone can contribute to ongoing discussions and share their expertise with colleagues.

Introduce a collaborative improvement framework that enables any employee to kick-start new initiatives and contribute to follow-on projects.



TRANSPARENT

Trust in leadership requires that transparent decision-making, planning and change is at the foundation of the organisation's culture.

Develop processes and training that gives both managers and employees the confidence to share information and to work on issues together.



RESPONSIVE

Organisations that fail to respond to employee involvement efforts or progress them to satisfactory outcomes create a disengaged workforce.

Introduce a measurable tracking and reporting framework that ensures that all employee involvement efforts are responded to in a meaningful way.

Workforce Involvement Tools

Involving your people more fully in the organisation seems like a daunting task, right? Luckily, there are lots of easy-to-adopt tools to help you join the involvement superhighway, and our top tips will help you get off on a steady, solid footing!

Q & A Channels



One of the easiest ways to get people involved is to open channels for team, departmental and organisational questions to be asked and answered.

Q & A channels help reduce process downtime, and free up those people who seem to end up answering the same questions time and time again!

OUR TOP TIPS

1. Start with a few quick win topics: HR policies such as holidays, sickness & benefits are great Q & A Channels for getting started with 'non-controversial' topics.
2. Add some departmental and team topics as and when you feel comfortable. And line up appropriate experts with the right experience to manage each area!
3. Communicate the benefits: faster access to information, removal of blockers, identification & rectification of gaps in the company handbook etc. are just a few.
4. [Gather 'value-add' question details*](#): over and above the question itself, this will help you address any gaps in published company information more easily.
5. Really involve your people by enabling the wider workforce to supply the potential answers. You'll quickly find out who knows your business processes best! Leaving your managers with the simple task of tagging the correct answer.
6. Point and link to your existing organisational documentation in all of your answers. This will bring the seldom used Quality Management System to the forefront of the workday, and prompt you to keep it up to date as questions are asked & answered!
7. Supercharge the A in your Q & A: Add your answers automatically to a searchable knowledge bank. And point to this as the first port of call for all employees

* [Download our handy 'Involvement Feedback Templates' guide here.](#)

Concern Corners



One of the top frustrations of the modern workforce is that their concerns are often ignored. And even when listened to, they are seldom acted upon.

Building outlets for employees to raise their workplace concerns (or risks) and working together with management to address them for mutual benefit is a cornerstone of an involved workforce.

OUR TOP TIPS

- 1.** Clearly publicise your Concern Corners as outlets for **non-sensitive, non-confidential concerns** - their purpose is to drive collaborative organisational improvement via transparent and inclusive workforce involvement.
- 2.** Take a moderation-first approach. Even with the clearest guidance, you'll still receive some concerns that need to be dealt with off-line. Moderation will keep a focus on those concerns that can safely drive collaborative improvement.
- 3.** Start with some common employee concern areas: topics such as 'Workplace Mental Health' and 'Health & Safety' will always drive high levels of cross-workforce involvement. When you're ready (and with appropriate training!) roll-out to your Departments and Teams to tackle local processes and policies.
- 4.** Identify appropriate owners for each area. The owner (and their backup) should be someone with the authority to deal with most concerns effectively and escalate them where required.
- 5.** **Gather 'value-add' concern details***: over and above the concern itself, this information will help you deal with it more effectively for both the workforce and the organisation.
- 6.** Implement a categorisation scheme: for concerns, 'Impact Level' always works well, but think about categorisation for follow-on work also. 'Corrective Action', 'Improvement Action' etc help employees quickly understand what is being done to act on the concerns that were raised.
- 7.** Commit to timescales for a response for both the concern and for follow-on work: There's nothing worse for employees than open-ended promises.

*** Download our handy 'Involvement Feedback Templates' guide [here](#).**

Solution Spaces



Everyone faces blockers in their job (some more regularly than others!) that could often be addressed with input and experience of other people in the organisation.

Creating spaces where employees can post current issues, problems and blockers that they are facing is a great way to break down silos, get people talking to each other, and add oodles of efficiency into your processes.

OUR TOP TIPS

- 1.** Solution Spaces work best with technical & professional disciplines: IT, Legal, Finance etc can be great spaces where current blockers can be posted and solved with examples of work that's been done elsewhere in the business.
- 2.** Use light-touch management. Unlike Q & A Channels and Concern Corners, your employees will take most of the solution proposal strain, so the owners of each space can focus on nudging the community where solutions aren't forthcoming.
- 3.** Allow your solver communities to be self-forming. Unknown expertise & experience can be found all over your business, so publicise all of your spaces and enable anyone to 'subscribe' where they feel they can add value.
- 4.** [Gather 'value-add' problem/blocker details*](#): As well as stating the current challenge being faced, this information will help your budding 'solvers' avoid proposing approaches that have already been tried.
- 5.** Make use of your knowledge base: Like all involvement efforts, pointing to a searchable knowledge base that is automatically added to with new solutions will dramatically increase the productivity of your workforce.
- 6.** Tag appropriate solutions. Whilst there will normally be at least one that 'Solved' the issue for the original poster, also be sure to tag any 'Alternatives' that might act as useful avenues for other people facing similar issues.
- 7.** Recognise your solvers: your problem solvers are taking your company culture and values seriously, so look at ways that their effort can be recognised. A 'Top Solvers this week' is easy to organise with some simple surveys!

*** Download our handy ['Involvement Feedback Templates'](#) guide [here](#).**

Post-Project Reviews



Teams across your business are running projects all the time, but are they learning from them? Will your next projects build on the successes (or the shortcomings!) of the projects that preceded them?

Carrying out regular end-of-project reviews, or retrospectives, gives the project team and other stakeholders (including the customer!) an outlet for honest, constructive feedback that will lead to meaningful process improvements.

OUR TOP TIPS

- 1.** Post-Project Reviews aren't 'always-on' – they're only 'on' for the duration of each project. But don't make the mistake of only asking for feedback at project closure. Open the feedback channel at the very start so that your project team can record their opinions as the project progresses.
- 2.** Make it a habit, not a hindrance. Project reviews aren't a tick in the box exercise, they are a vital aspect of workforce involvement for driving continuous improvement, so do them for every project – no matter how small.
- 3.** Get the full team involved. Your projects will always have a customer, and often partners and other stakeholders. Their input is just as valuable as your own team, so make sure you use it.
- 4.** Introduce repeatable feedback processes. Whether it's a project delivered with multiple 2-week sprints, or a longer project with clear phases, you'll find it easier to run reviews with consistent pre-defined feedback templates for each.
- 5.** [Gather 'value-add' project review feedback*](#): This is an opportunity to learn not only what went badly and should be avoided in future, but what also went well and could be used elsewhere in the business.
- 6.** Categorise your findings: Using all of your feedback, compose meaningful findings that can be categorised appropriately. 'Went Well', 'Went Badly' & 'Lesson Learned' are simple examples that can help inform the course of action to be taken next.

* Download our handy ['Involvement Feedback Templates'](#) guide [here](#).

Quality/Audit Rooms



Any high performing organisation needs a regular programme of audits to ensure that continued quality expectations are met. But are your staff **really** involved in making sure that your processes are always tip-top?

Putting the input of your employees at the centre of your process quality framework not only keeps quality expectations front of mind but acts as a foundation for involving them meaningfully in continuous improvement efforts.

OUR TOP TIPS

- 1.** Focus on non-compliant & non-performant processes: Use your Audit Rooms to invite observations from the workforce on business processes that aren't following procedure or aren't performing to expected standards.
- 2.** Align with your quality review timeframe: If your quality review framework is annual, create audit rooms for your key processes that will accept observations spanning the course of each year – this will help you capture and address issues in the correct audit period.
- 3.** Create appropriately scoped rooms: broad enough that you don't have 100's of rooms, but narrow enough that observations can be managed by people with the right expertise. Topics such as "Workplace Safety" and "IT Systems & Security" are about the right size in our experience.
- 4.** [Gather 'value-add' non-conformance details*](#): As well as finding out what isn't meeting an expected standard, you will learn more about the impact on the business and be able to prioritise resolution appropriately.
- 5.** Tackle issues as they arise. You'll avoid a build-up of lots of non-conformant processes that need to be dealt at your annual quality review (or worse your ISO Accreditation Visit!).
- 6.** Categorise 'accepted' non-conformance reports appropriately to aid in prioritisation of work. Level of 'Criticality' always works well, but go beyond this to also categorise the work that is planned: Remedial Action, Correction Action and Preventative Action are great examples that will keep everyone informed.

*** Download our handy ['Involvement Feedback Templates'](#) guide here.**

What's Next?

Find out how smartcrowds can help you empower your workforce.



Book a **smartcrowds**
EMPOWERMENT &
IMPROVEMENT 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,
“The Final Step to Empowerment:
Practical Steps for Meaningful Ideas”

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.



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