Using Real-Time Engagement Data to **#iterate** on Company Culture

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It's no secret that workplace culture is a driving factor for company success. You know that a strong, positive company culture is key to energizing employees and maximizing ROI. But it can be difficult to improve your company culture in a way that has lasting impact.

*We provide a **How-to-Guide** for defining, collecting and responding to real-time data to continuously iterate on and improve employee engagement in a scalable way.*

Why Real-Time Engagement Data Matters

Sometimes it can be difficult to understand what causes changes in employee engagement. The only way you can achieve an accurate, cohesive picture of what impacts engagement is by observing trends over time. You should seek to gather data that can help you pinpoint what causes changes in environment - from broad economic cycles to internal management changes. This will help you gain results that speak to retention trends as it relates to engagement.

Achieve Results

To build a dynamic HR function that continuously iterates to improve employee engagement using real-time data, you need to focus on three key steps:

DEFINE
Methodology & Setting Benchmarks

COLLECT
Real-time Measurement Using Lightweight Polls

RESPOND
Listen, Learn and Respond using Real-Time Data

Engaged employees are more productive, enthusiastic about the company mission, actively develop their skills, and provide superior customer experiences. Traditionally, efforts to improve employee engagement have been based on annual surveys that can't capture the dynamism of today's **connected workplace.**

Creating a culture that supports company growth requires one critical tool: real-time data on employee engagement and performance.

Getting Started with a Sample Methodology

Before you get started, you need to define what you are measuring and why. Doing so will also help you understand what the the results actually mean. Creating an effective methodology is a two-step process. First, you need to define a baseline metric to measure. Then, you need to define comparative benchmarks so you can understand what success means.

Step 1: Define a Baseline Metric

The Survey Question

While this varies per company, a good baseline is less than 3 survey questions, since you will need to ask it frequently in order to gather data in real-time.

Establishing a Baseline Metric

If you are going to ask one question, eNPS is the question to ask. It is proven to be the best measure of employee engagement. If you have not run these surveys before we recommend using the Employee Net Promoter Score (eNPS) as a baseline metric. eNPS asks one simple, high-quality question, proven to be the best indicator of employee engagement.

Employee Net Promoter Score (eNPS)

eNPS zeroes in on the metric with the biggest potential impact on employee engagement and customer loyalty with a single question:

"On a scale of zero to ten, how likely are you to recommend this company as a place to work?"

Leveraging eNPS for Real-Time Data

Data supports that eNPS is the single most important question you can ask your employees, which is why many companies are adopting the methodology. Because it is a single, lightweight question, eNPS will help you produce real-time data that can be cut various ways and leveraged for multiple functions: identifying issues, targeting key drivers of employee satisfaction, and testing new programs aimed at increasing employee engagement. When you have a better idea of your eNPS, you will be able to identify and fix issues immediately, before they make their way to Glassdoor or other public media outlets.

Step 2: Define Internal Comparative Benchmarks

After you define a baseline metric, how do you know what the data you collect means? For example, if marketing has an engagement score of 67 out of 100, how do you know if that is good or bad? You need to be able to compare the numbers you get against something else as a reference.

External or Internal Benchmarks?

While you can compare your company versus other company scores to see how you rank, this is not advisable. It can be difficult to accurately assess scores from other companies - even for the same questions, since cultures can vary. This is why most companies use internal benchmarks to understand what the numbers mean.

Three Types of Internal Benchmarks

By setting internal benchmarks you have a better chance at getting the right data that can inform your company how to take action. Each company culture is unique, so analyzing trends within your own company is most critical. There are three types of internal benchmarks you can set:

DATA OVER TIME FOR ONE GROUP

DATA COMPARING DIFFERENT GROUPS

DATA COMPARING DIFFERENT MANAGERS

Benchmark 1: Data Over Time for One Group

Compare data over time to see a frequent pulse on employee engagement. This will allow you to observe changes in engagement in real-time, and immediately react to those changes. Observing trends over time will give a clear picture of what causes changes in engagement, whether it be PR events, funding changes, quarterly earnings, new hires, layoffs or even broader economic cycles. You'll also be able to understand how engagement trends as tenure increases, which can help you understand retention trends.

Benchmark 2: Data Comparing Different Groups

The other alternative to analyzing one group over time is to compare across groups. You can compare data across different teams, departments, locales, stores or offices. For example, it might be beneficial to compare marketing vs. sales vs. engineers. Or, if a company has multiple locations, comparing based on geography can yield important results about efficiency of teams.

Benchmark 3: Data Comparing Different Managers

A lot of people are of the belief that you leave your manager, not your company. By understanding the engagement level of a manager's direct reports, you can identify problem managers in your organization.

Most companies either send a long, 50 question survey annually, or bi-annually. Given the time it takes to fill out one of these surveys, you can't ask employees to fill them out more frequently. By using simple one question polls, you can measure engagement monthly, instead of yearly.
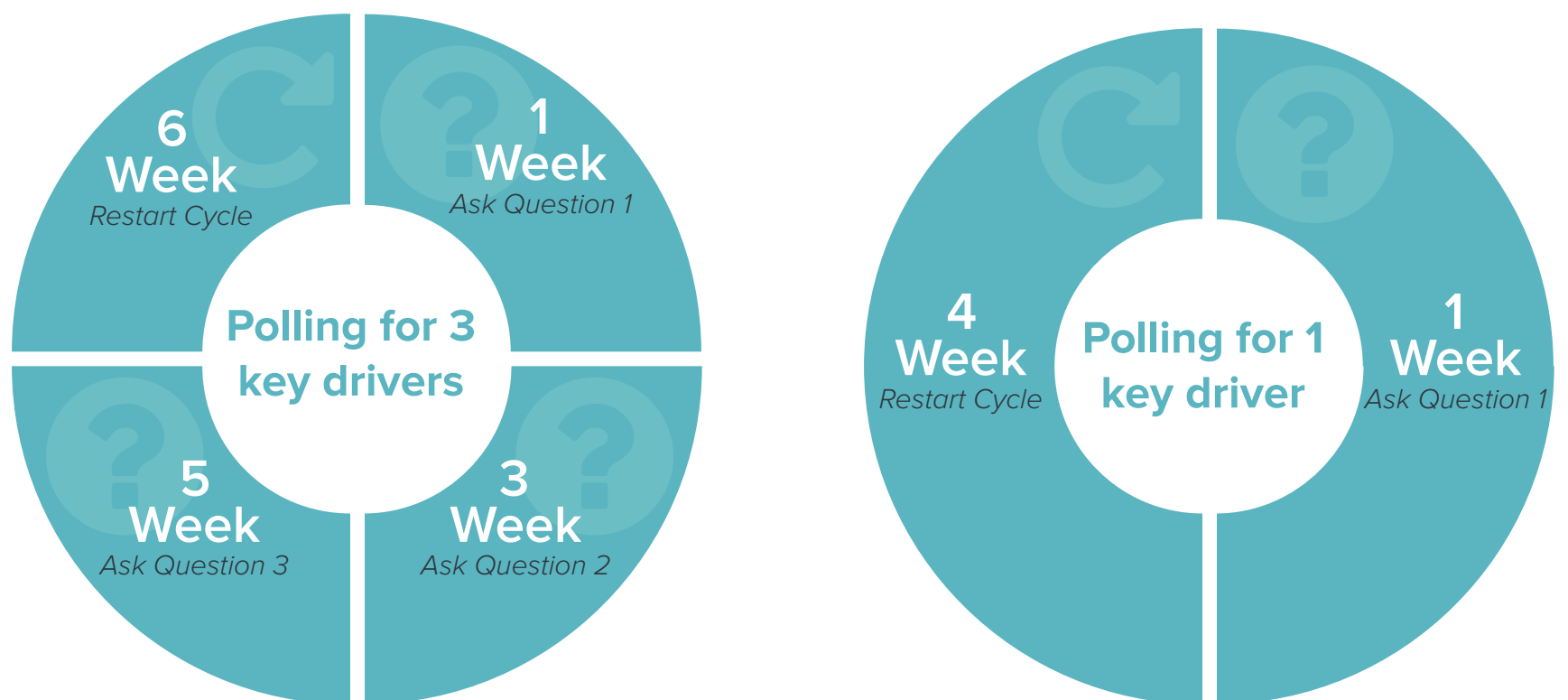

Get the Data. Now.

Unlike waiting for a third-party firm to cut and distribute massive amounts of data, these simple, iterative, and easily digestible polls enable a continual focus on action and adjustment. With real-time data software, you get an even faster information turnaround that supports a culture of improvement.

Determine Frequency

The more you measure, the better your data will be. If you want to collect more data, more often, you need the shortest survey - which is a poll. If you are looking at polling for 3-4 key drivers, distribute these polls over a 5-6 week period. If you are polling for 1 key driver or eNPS, you can poll as often as every 3-4 weeks.

Here's an example schedule for when to poll:

6 Week *Restart Cycle*

1 Week *Ask Question 1*

Polling for 3 key drivers

5 Week *Ask Question 3*

3 Week *Ask Question 2*

4 Week *Restart Cycle*

**Polling for 1 key driver**

1 Week *Ask Question 1*

Be Mindful of Response Rate

Collection is all about response rates. If there is a problem in your company culture, you want to know about it so you can act on it - and fast! This is why it's important to get real-time data.

Roll Out to a Beta Group, and then Scale

When deciding what frequency to poll questions, it is important to iterate on the process. After all, every company has a different culture that can affect how often you poll for data. By starting out with a smaller, beta test group you can figure out the frequency that works best, and in the process cultivate employee buy-in to the process. Begin with a few polls, with longer periods of time between each poll. Measure response rates and iterate on the frequency until you get to a point where you are getting enough data while maintaining a good response rate. Once the results look good, scale to larger and larger groups.
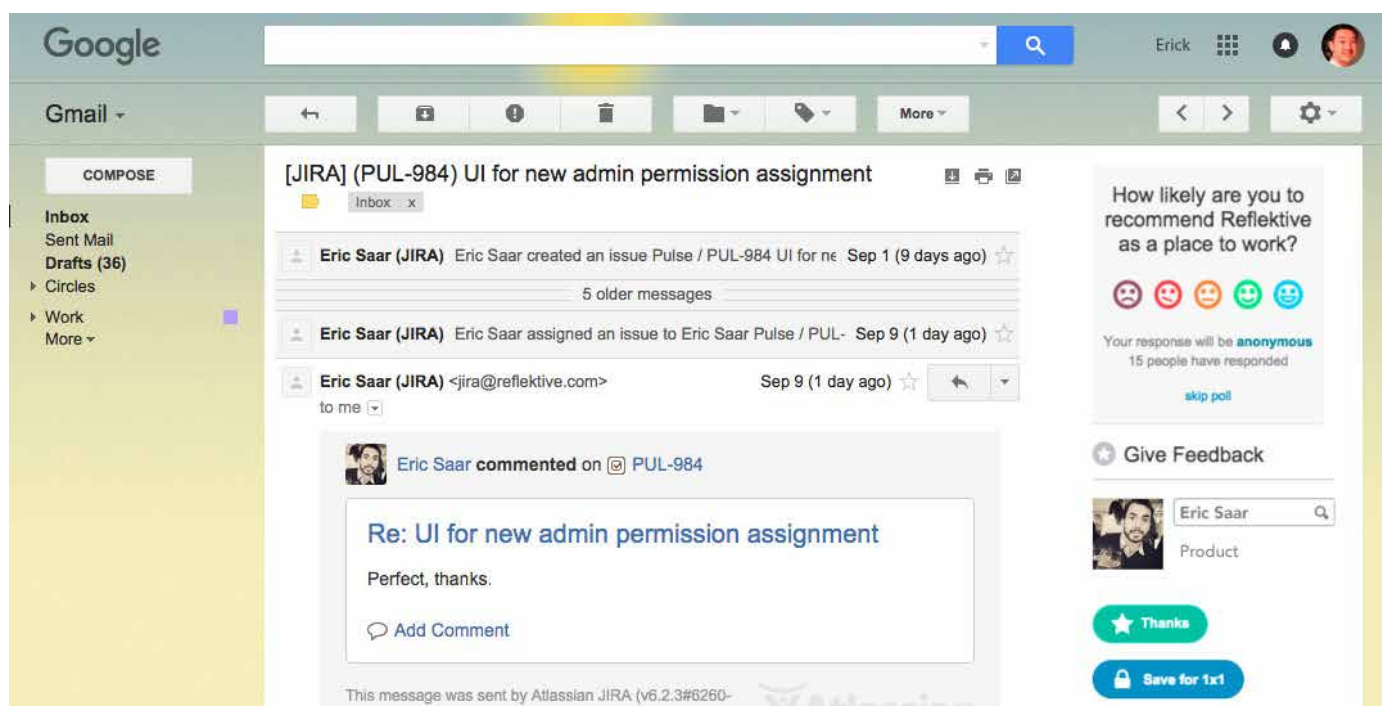
Don't Disrupt Your Employees Workflow

Integrated Polls

The best polls can produce rich real-time feedback without over-riding daily routines, so your questions must be easy to access. Choose an integrated interface that allows employees to respond without leaving their core workflows: more convenience means a higher chance of response. You can ask questions every month, then go into your automated system to easily check results.

Listen to Employee Issues in Real-Time

By polling your employees monthly, not only will you get fantastic quantitative data, you will also get rich comments written by your employees. Listen to the issues your employees are dealing with immediately. Rather than letting responses sit unread, assign an HR member to read employee responses as they arrive in real time.

Respond Right Away

Timing matters. Responses lose their relevancy the longer they sit, so the traditional route of hiring a consultant to process data won't work here. Employees in a networked age are used to working through issues in real time, so they want HR to do the same: they want to feel they're being treated as a person, not as a statistic.

Addressing employee issues in real-time improves engagement because you are showing that the company actually cares.

Take Action

You have all this data - now is the time to use it! Once infrastructure is in place to respond to issues personally, HR can start to pass along major issues to directors and managers, along with guidelines for appropriate action. With frequent polling, you can respond in real time to real issues, which will make your employees feel valued. If you don't learn to respond in a timely manner, response rates will drop as employees lose faith in the efficacy of the process.

Empower Managers with Engagement Data

Maximize your data's value with software designed to handle real-time data, and then distribute this power data to the people that need it most; your managers. By empowering managers with data on how their employees are doing, you can raise awareness of previously unknown issues.

Iterate

Learn from what your data is telling you and go back to your hypothesis to see if your expectations were accurate. Check that you continue to ask the right questions at the right frequency. Maintain a strategic approach and build consistency with your methodology. By making use of a standard procedure, you'll build a data set you can trust.

Scale with Software

By utilizing a dynamic platform for distributing polls in a non-invasive way you'll find that the process becomes streamlined and less taxing for employees. When employees feel that issues are being heard in a forum that feels safe, their overall experience at work will improve drastically.

You are well on your way to achieving a strong, positive company culture with productive and satisfied employees. And the best part? With real-time polling, you'll see the data you need and be able to implement the steps to improve - fast! Through defining, collecting and responding to real-time data you will find it's easy to continuously iterate on and improve employee engagement in a scalable way.