

Understanding Employee Surveys

Turn survey data into clear, actionable and defensible decisions.



Reason Why

The problem

Employee surveys should tell you what matters most. Too often, insight stays hidden, detail becomes overwhelming and opaque AI outputs are hard to trust or defend.

The risks are that you do too little or too much in response, or prioritise the wrong things, because you don't have true clarity on what matters most to whom. Without that clarity, deciding on the best next steps is difficult, and it's hard to gain commitment or investment for action.



becomes



Priorities

The issues that matter most and where action is likely to make the biggest difference.



Employee Segments

Clear groups of people who respond in similar ways, identified practically and privacy-consciously.



Next steps

Focused actions based on impact, cost, time and ease of delivery.

Simple outputs:

what matters



to whom



what to do next

Transparent, robust analysis - not generic benchmarks or black-box answers. Grounded in the way your people think about your unique organisation.

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Understanding Employee Surveys

Problem 1. Analysis is too simplistic



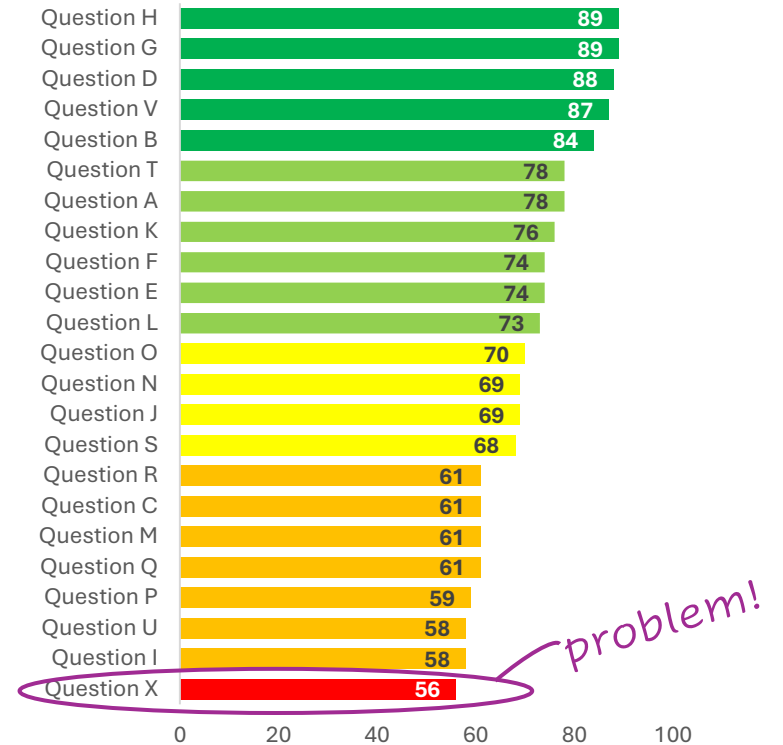
Turn survey data into clear, actionable and defensible decisions.

Often it goes: Question X scores 15% lower than the average, so we need to do something about Question X.

Let's say Question X is "My manager treats me with respect". If that's scoring low, then there may very well be a need to do something about it. But with this analysis it's hard to see what you're practically going to do about it. You can issue a direction, maybe offer training, for managers to be more respectful.

But managers aren't disrespectful in a vacuum, there are reasons behind this lack of courtesy or compassion. And some managers will be more respectful than others. Right now, with this analysis, you don't know the reasons for the issue, and you don't know the scope of it.

With this level of analysis, the action you take is likely to be ineffective and poorly targeted. And it will likely look like that to the people you need to convince to act.



Simple outputs:

what matters



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Problem 2. Analysis is too complex.



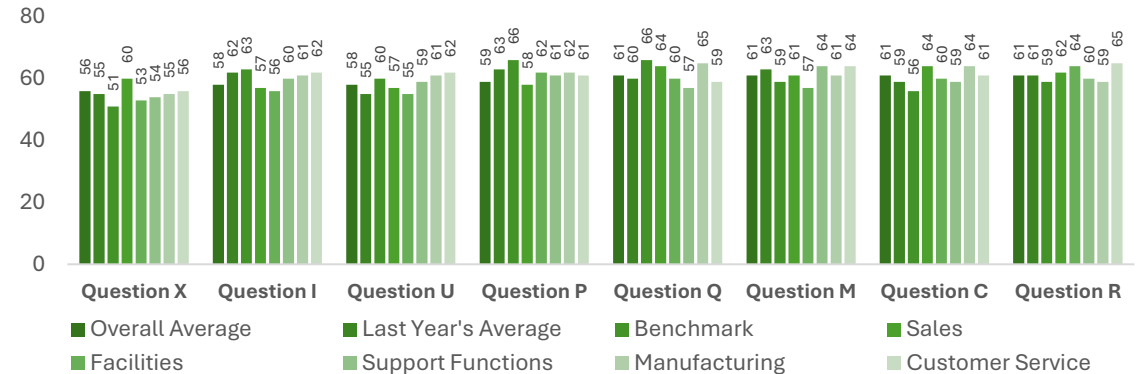
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Often it goes: Question X scores better for Sales (+5%pts) and Facilities (+6%pts), but lower for Support Functions (-7%pts). But Support Functions were 4%pts up on last year, although still 2%pts below benchmark. But then if we compare that with Manufacturing...

Very quickly, it becomes hard to see the wood for the trees.

And there is a significant risk that with so many numbers to look at, you will find it hard to convince the people that matter which of those numbers they should be focused on.

If – in all the data they see – they can find a positive result, they may very well not see a need for action or change.



	Overall Average	Last Year's Average	Benchmark	Sales	Facilities	Support Functions	Manufacturing	Customer Service
Question S	68	72	65	71	69	67	64	65
Question Q	61	60	66	64	60	57	65	59
Question M	61	63	59	61	57	64	61	64
Question C	61	59	56	64	60	59	64	61
Question R	61	61	59	62	64	60	59	65
Question P	59	63	66	58	62	61	62	61
Question I	58	62	63	57	56	60	61	62
Question U	58	55	60	57	55	59	61	62
Question X	56	55	51	60	53	54	55	56

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Problem 3. AI can help, but you may not know how



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Often it goes: “I don’t really know how to start with this, but I trust my AI tool of choice to tell me what’s significant in my data.”

And very often, that tool will do a great job.

The questions you need to ask yourself are:

1. Do I know what it has done, exactly?
2. If I wanted it to do the same task – next year, or now but with a minor change of emphasis - would it repeat the same process?
3. Can I explain and defend the validity of these results to the people that matter?

And if you can’t answer yes to all of those, you may be storing up issues.

You may be undermining the validity of and trust in your analysis. And the result of that is likely to be inaction from the people you need to act or advocate for you.



Your data

The AI
“Black Box”



My Survey Report

The slick report
– but can it
build trust?

- Headline Findings
- Key Takeaways
- Action Areas

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Problem 4. Simplifying, not in the right ways



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Often in surveys, we group questions in sections. E.g. questions about leaders, managers, team dynamics etc.

We might also be able to see that other themes cut across these sections, themes like communication or process.

But that might not be how your employees think about things. They might have priorities that link different combinations of questions. So, reporting on those pre-determined sections and themes may be a red herring.

Similarly, we often know a lot about who took the survey: their division, their team, their gender, their tenure etc. But we don't know if any of them are the best ways to segment your workforce, based on what is important to get right for them. So, these thinking in these terms may again only be an illusion of substance.

The cost, again, is in the validity and trust in your results.

	Leadership	Line Management	Team Dynamics	Communication	Collaboration	Processes	Tools and Equipment
Division A							
Division B							
Division C							
Division D							
Sales							
Facilities							
Support Functions							
Manufacturing							
Customer Service							
Female							
Male							
Under 6 months							
6 months to 1 year							
1 to 2 years							
2 to 3 years							
3 to 5 years							
5 to 10 years							
10 to 20 years							
20+ years							

Simple outputs: what matters → to whom → what to do next

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A different approach to employee surveys



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The four problems that I have described mean that a different approach is required.

- One that finds the right balance between **simplicity** and **detail**
- One that follows a **robust** and **repeatable** process
- One that is enhanced by **technology**, but driven by a **human**
- One that seeks to understand better how **your people** feel about working in **your unique environment**

The Reason Why process does that in two main ways:

1. Looking at the priorities of your people, in their own terms
2. Looking at the relative importance of those priorities to different segments of your workforce

Which then gives a simple snapshot that can be used to plan action

Simple outputs: **what matters** → **to whom** → **what to do next**

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Step 1

Many questions become one priority



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In this example survey for ACME Co, we've used a statistical process to identify the questions that tend to be answered in similar ways. That allows a reduction from many questions down to a far smaller number of the most relevant themes – which are bespoke to every organisation. That's much easier to understand and react to.

In this example five (or more) questions are reduced to a single priority that we know people at ACME Co care about.

Questions	Priority	Interpretation
1. I feel secure in my job 2. I understand the organisation's future direction 3. Leaders make decisions that give me confidence in the future 4. I can see a future for myself here 5. Change is managed in a way that gives people confidence etc	 becomes Stability and certainty for the future	People want reassurance that the organisation is steady, credible and heading somewhere they can trust and belong in

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Step 2 All questions become a handful of priorities



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Continuing this process for ACME Co allows a reduction from dozens of survey questions across multiple sections to just a handful of priorities.

Priority		Interpretation
1. Stability and certainty for the future		People want reassurance that the organisation is steady, credible and heading somewhere they can trust and belong in
2. Supportive colleagues that have time for one another		This is about whether teamwork feels human and practical: people having each other's backs in day-to-day work
3. Trust in, and consistency of, communication		People want communication they can rely on: clear enough to act on, and consistent enough to believe
4. Ability and authority to be creative		This is the difference between being told to contribute ideas and being genuinely trusted to shape better ways of working
5. Clear expectations at all stages of work		People perform best when the goalposts stay still: clear standards, clear priorities and clear feedback throughout the job
6. Chance to build skills and keep learning		Employees want to feel they are progressing, not standing still: learning matters because it signals investment and future opportunity
7. Small scale flexibility to work around life		Small, practical flexibility often signals whether the organisation trusts people to manage work alongside real life demands
8. Being able to deliver really effective customer service		Great customer service is an internal capability first: people need the tools, trust, and backing to help customers well

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Step 3 Which priorities matter to which people?



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For the ACME Co data, we've then used another statistical process to identify groups of people who tend to respond in similar ways. That allows segments to be created, based on the true needs and priorities of employees, not what we already know about them.

		 Anchored Believers Stability, trusted communication and clear expectations	 Growth Balancers Learning, flexibility and communication to help them grow	 Proud Collaborators Team support, creativity and delivering great customer service	 Future Builders Security, development and pride in doing effective work for customers	
1. Stability and certainty for the future						High Priority
2. Supportive colleagues that have time for one another						
3. Trust in, and consistency of, communication						Mid Priority
4. Ability and authority to be creative						
5. Clear expectations at all stages of work						Low Priority
6. Chance to build skills and keep learning						
7. Small scale flexibility to work around life						
8. Being able to deliver really effective customer service						

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Step 4 A meaningful plan of action



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Understanding what matters most to whom gets us to the foundation of an impactful action plan. Simply, powerfully, accurately, robustly, repeatably.

	 Anchored Believers Stability, trusted communication and clear expectations	 Growth Balancers Learning, flexibility and communication to help them grow	 Proud Collaborators Team support, creativity and delivering great customer service	 Future Builders Security, development and pride in doing effective work for customers
Value Now	Stability, clarity, dependable leadership, and communication they can trust. These employees value order, predictability, and knowing where they stand	Good communication, development, and practical flexibility. They value feeling trusted to grow while balancing work with life	Teamwork, service, and the chance to improve how work gets done. They value supportive colleagues and meaningful contribution	Security, growth, and doing useful work for customers. They value progress with purpose.
Want for the Future	Greater confidence in long-term direction, and change handled in a way that feels consistent, credible, and well explained.	Clearer progression routes, stronger manager support for growth, and more room to keep developing without losing flexibility.	More authority, fewer barriers, and better tools to turn ideas into better customer outcomes.	A stronger link between learning, career future, and the organisation's direction so growth feels purposeful and secure.

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As well as survey analysis, Reason Why insight and strategy services also include:

- Design and distribution of surveys
- All other kinds of data analysis, drawing together many different sources
- All forms of qualitative research inc. interviews, focus groups, chat rooms – run within and outside your organisation
- Desk research - compiling useful information from multiple sources – also from within and outside your organisation
- Combining all these insights into a clear picture, that enables actionable planning

We'll tell you what people think about you as an employer, and – crucially – the reason why.

Simple outputs: **what matters** → **to whom** → **what to do next**

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