joyous

Stop the Survey Madness

Five Steps for Switching to Conversations That Drive Results

What if instead of sending another unwanted survey, you could have open conversations that leave employees feeling good about their contributions to your company? We'll show you five steps to switch from employee surveys to employee conversations and drive engagement and actionable results.

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Survey Fatigue vs. Feedback Fatigue vs. Survey Mistrust

Type "survey fatigue" into any search engine and you'll find studies and articles that date back to the 1990s. To understand survey fatigue and why surveys don't work, we need to define the terms that are flying around the internet.

What is survey fatigue?

Survey fatigue is divided into two types:

Survey Taking Fatigue

This usually happens when the survey responder stops taking a survey before they finish. It is a result of a single survey and may be due to an overly long or complicated or irrelevant questionnaire. This reaction is sometimes found in annual surveys and specific research projects.

Survey Response Fatigue

This is the type of fatigue most people think of when they say survey fatigue. This is a result of too many surveys and happens when people are asked too often for their opinion and get overwhelmed with requests.

Either one of these types of fatigue can lead to low response rates and high dropout rates.

What Is Feedback Fatigue?

Feedback fatigue is very similar to survey response fatigue in that the time between surveys is too short, but also organizations are asking too many hard questions. With more and more ways to ask employees and customers their opinions, companies have gone overboard on data collection. In fact, a 2017 study found that the more you survey people, the worse the experience you create for employees and customers.

What Is Survey Mistrust?

Survey mistrust is when the responder hasn't seen any action taken on previous surveys or has seen a negative reaction. They now mistrust the survey provider and often think, *why bother?* Survey mistrust is often a driver of inaccurate data or lack of response.

"Being asked for feedback doesn't lead to fatigue; absence of action does."

— Joyous

Five Steps for Switching to Conversations That Drive Results

You can do better than asking for feedback to see how your satisfaction numbers are trending. Or deploying an annual employee feedback survey that only captures sentiment from a moment in time. You want higher employee engagement and to create a better employee experience. But to drive real actionable results, you need to have regular conversations at a team leader level. We'll show you five steps to switch to conversations that drive real organizational change.

1.

Start With a Plan

Before you begin a program of conversations that create happier, more productive, and engaged employees, you need to have a plan.

Understand what open and owned feedback looks like and educate your employees

Most traditional employee feedback surveys aren't concerned about what happens with feedback once it's collected. It's aggregated and used in a PowerPoint presentation to inform the C-suite about how sentiment is trending. This is the very definition of chasing the number, not the result.

Owned feedback is different. At work, we take ownership of something when we know it's our responsibility: If it's our job to do a thing, we do the thing. Feedback should be no different. It's something we contribute, so we should have some responsibility for it. Therefore, it's only natural to understand that feedback should be owned by the people who give it.

Educate employees on why open feedback is better than anonymous feedback and what their roles and responsibilities are. Ensure they know that they should not only provide honest feedback but should be able to answer the question: What can we do to fix it? Allow them to take responsibility to work together to make the process in question better.

Create a safe space for open and owned feedback

Many organizations shy away from open feedback due to a lack of trust between employees, managers, HR, and even with the organization itself. Workers may worry there will be repercussions from management if they speak up, or worse, no action will be taken. This is a cultural red flag. It means there is some cultural groundwork that needs to be done to get the most out of feedback by making change happen and improving employee engagement.

We understand it's difficult to go from a lack of trust straight into conversations like this. You need to build psychological safety.

Psychological safety is important for employee engagement and growth. It's what gives us the confidence to share our ideas, opinions, and beliefs with others without fear of punishment or humiliation. In the workplace, it empowers us to offer suggestions or raise issues and concerns when we otherwise might keep quiet.
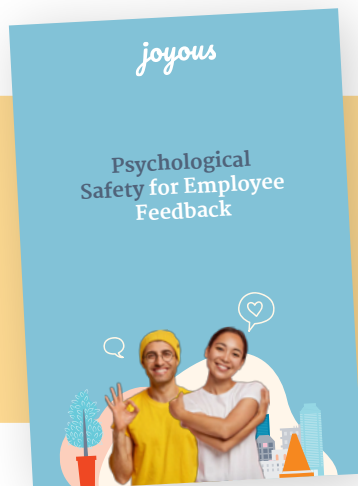
We have an e-book to help you improve your company's psychological safety and create a safe space for open feedback.

To build on your feedback-friendly culture, leadership needs to accept that feedback and conversations are potential sources of strategic advantage; then it should get as much attention as other strategic objectives. Also, as a part of building psychological safety and a feedback-friendly environment, you should use a tool to prompt conversations in a safe environment — in other words, there is no dismissing a concern or repercussions when an employee needs to be heard.

Remember: In some cases, employees bring bad previous experiences to their current job, so it may take time to earn their trust to get truly useful open feedback. Plan to find ways to model and encourage real talk.

Have an objective for your conversation

Whatever your conversation starters are, they should align with business goals and objectives. Think first about what outcomes you want from conversations and deploy the right questions to garner those outcomes.

## Figure out what questions you want to ask and why

What are your business objectives behind the conversations?

- Are you implementing a new software system? Ask about training, comfort level, and other change management conversation starters.

- Working on employee engagement? Ask questions about new or old benefits programs.

Select software that makes it easy to start conversations

Finding software that allows you to start conversations can be tricky. It needs to be open. It should be mobile-first, and it needs to be flexible to drive the conversation up the ladder when needed.

Pssst: We have a solution for that.

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The
Agile
Employee
Feedback
Manifesto
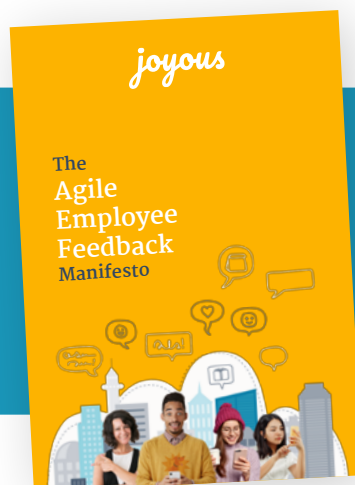
Have an immediate action plan in place

To avoid survey mistrust, you must take immediate action when feedback is given. Having discussed and trained on what action is best to take is really important. Managers need to know they are supported when an employee has feedback, just as the employee needs to know that their feedback is heard, understood, and the right action is taken. That action can be as simple as asking how they would fix it. Preplanning ensures your managers can take action.

Psst, there's a <u>cheat sheet</u> for working with owned feedback.

2.

Give Your Conversation Starter an Intro

Don't just send out a random question and ask for feedback. It's best if you begin your request with:

- Because we learned X, we are taking action Y

  (or)

- Our goal is to understand how the company changes are working for you

3.

Communicate Results Across the Organization to the Front Line

Once survey results are known, you need to make sure they're communicated to the entire organization — not just to top leaders.

For example: To ensure the results of their culture diagnostic reached all employees, a company used multiple channels to promote them, including internal social media posts, digital signage in manufacturing plants, and a series of readouts and discussion sessions with front-line and hourly workers.
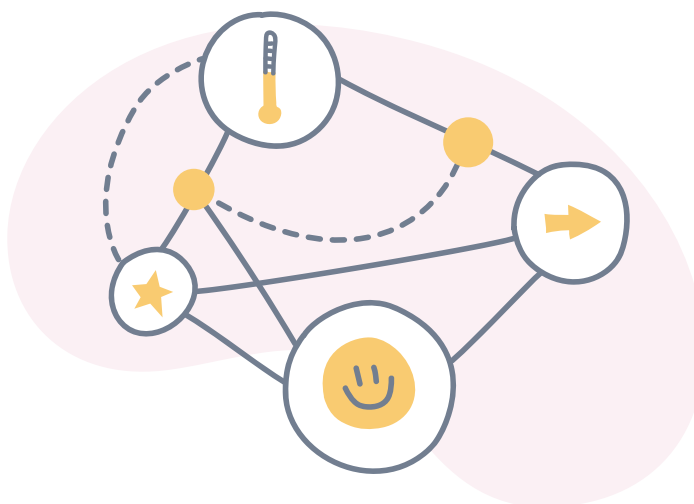
4.

Take Action

Action is the most important step to take in getting the most from your open feedback. Even small actions at the edge of the organization can make a big impact. Here's how to help:

General action principles

You can encourage action by adopting the following principles:

- Get employees involved in feedback by sharing responsibility, such as asking how they would solve the problem.

- Look for quick wins that show you are listening and that employee feedback can make a real difference.

- Allow yourself time to show progress on the action before sending out the next conversation starter.

- Follow up on all feedback.
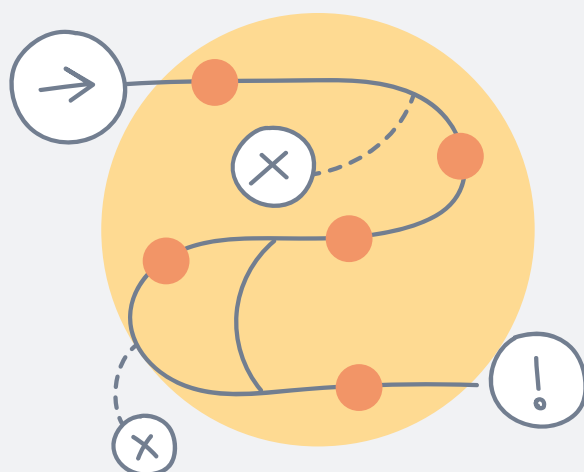
Create action at the edge

The smartest thing to do with feedback is get it out of HR and into the hands of managers who can help make small changes. Here's how:
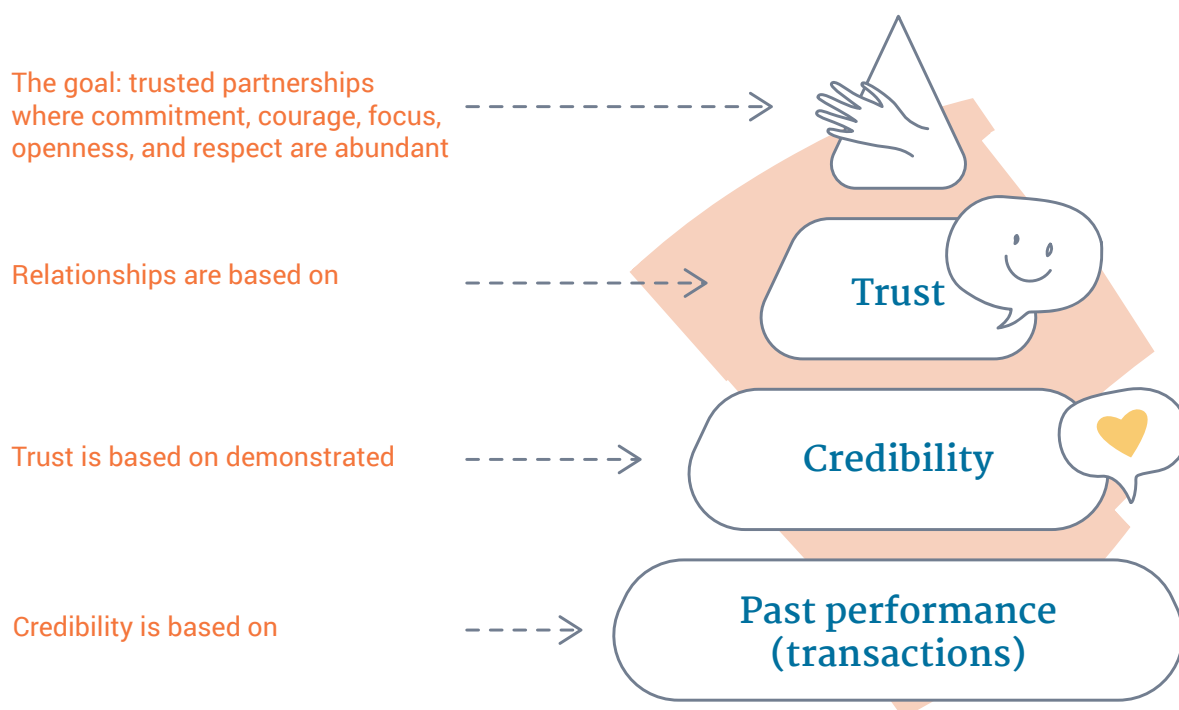
- Ensure leaders at the edges of the organization are part of the feedback loop.

- Coach managers and leaders on how to respond quickly and act on feedback whenever possible.

- Make it easy for small changes to happen quickly, without feedback having to go all the way to HR and back again before action is taken.
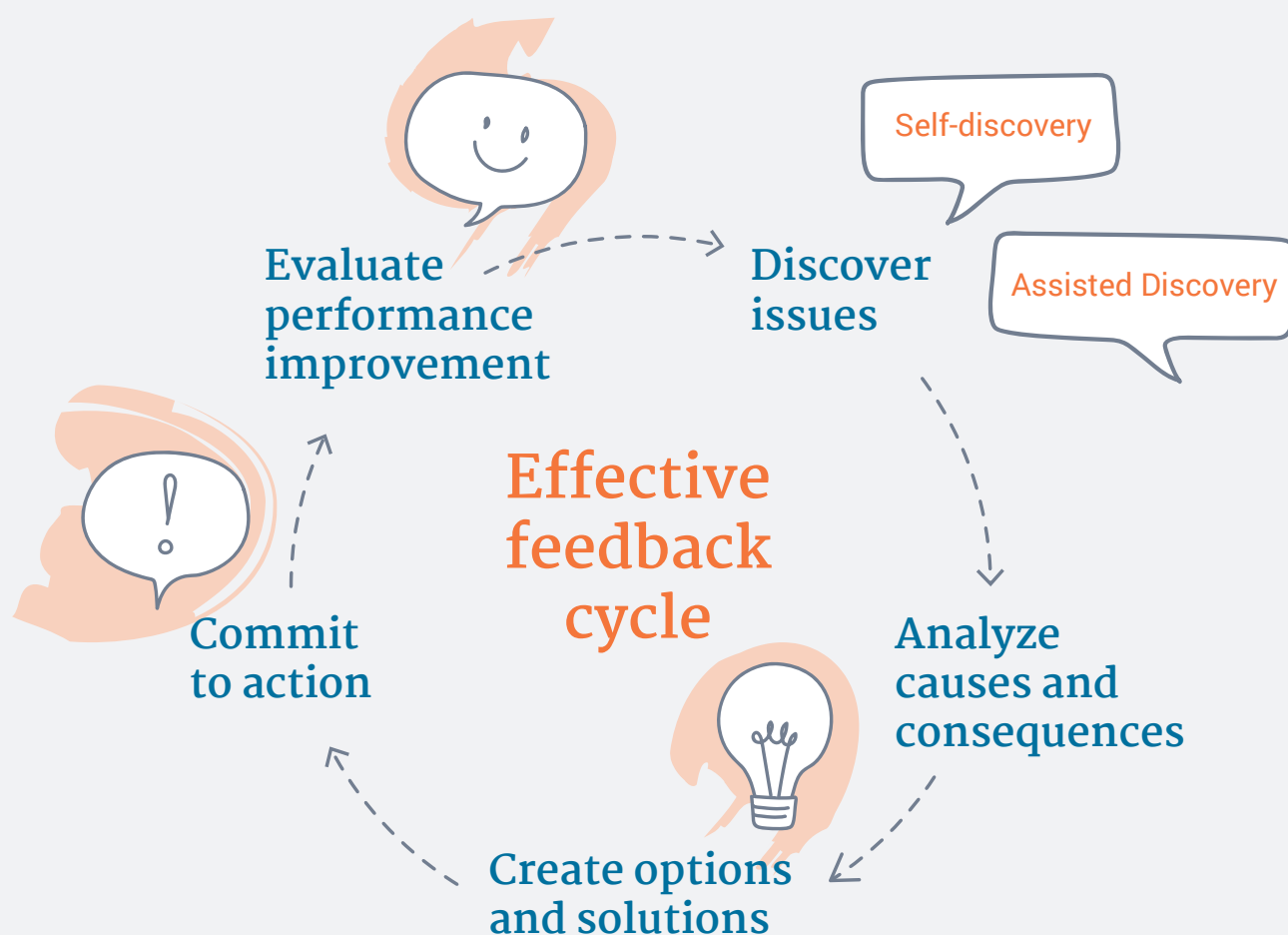
5.

Make Continuous Open Feedback the New Norm

Create an open and transparent work culture to reduce feedback-related stress. By championing a bottom-up approach throughout the organization, you create a trusted partnership between employees. That partnership in turn drives engagement, productivity, and real growth.

The goal: trusted partnerships where commitment, courage, focus, openness, and respect are abundant

Relationships are based on

Trust

Trust is based on demonstrated

Credibility

Credibility is based on

Past performance (transactions)

As it's become easier and easier to survey employees, organizations have become focused on the survey numbers, not the results. This makes employee survey fatigue very real. But employee feedback can drive engagement and real change in an organization. Open conversations with actionable plans offer a better way to engage employee feedback. Take these five steps to improve engagement and productivity today!

Want to get started on open feedback conversations? Reach out now to schedule a demo!

Schedule a Demo