

## Empowering Voices, Elevating Culture: The Power of Employee Listening



Employee listening refers to a comprehensive and data-driven approach to gaining regular employee feedback. A research study conducted with 443 employees in the United States found that when employees feel that the organisation listens to them, it positively impacts their feelings about the company. Furthermore, there is a strong link between customer experience and employee experience. Making the case for employee listening.

Ultimately an organisation leverages this data **to build a culture and employee experience (EX) that talented employees want to be part of**. Employee listening ensures that we bring the voice of the employee into how we shape employee initiatives and strategies. It is advised that employee listening information is contextualised in the business strategy, and information from other channels as well (customer feedback, social media listening, etc.).

### Questions that employee listening can help with:

Are people given opportunities to grow?  
Do people feel a sense of belonging?  
Are our benefits aligned to the needs of our teams?

### What is an omni-channel employee listening strategy?

The traditional once (or even twice) a year survey provides important point-in-time insights, but harvesting insights from various channels is essential to provide real-time information. Today's employee listening strategy gains insight into the employee experience from various channels, such as real-time surveys, performance reviews, exit interviews, and focus groups, to name a few. A 2022 survey found that

78% of companies use multiple employee listening channels. Anecdotal and in-person feedback is an important part of employee listening strategies. Managers and HR professionals constantly engage with people, and what they tell us matters. When you have a one-on-one or group session with employees, and they share their **personal stories, opinions, or experiences** with you: listen.

*“Leadership is not about being in charge. It is about taking care of those in your charge. And that starts with listening.” Simon Sinek*

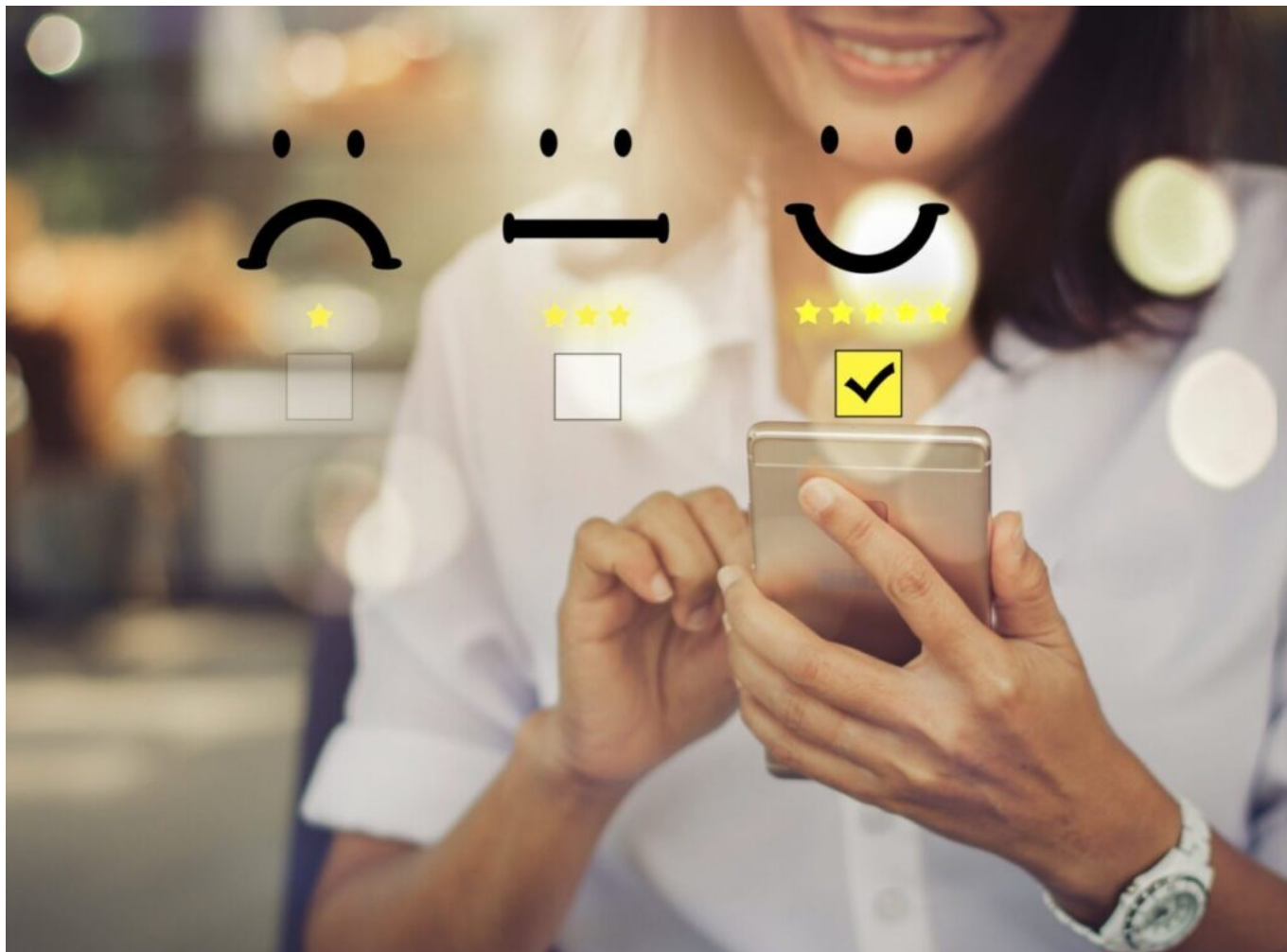
### **There are two approaches to follow when developing an employee listening strategy.**

When developing an employee listening strategy, you need two approaches. An organisational and ‘always on’ approach to understanding emergent themes. The second approach is more targeted.

From an **organisation and ‘always on’ perspective**, the key would be understanding trends and formulating action plans around them. The emerging trends must be linked to the business strategy and overall HR Strategy, as we cannot listen and act on everything. For example, if your business is in an industry marked by innovation and accelerated change, you would want to listen and act upon concerns around fostering a culture of idea-sharing and providing avenues for creative problem-solving.

Augmenting your always-on employee listening strategy with a **targeted approach** enhances the depth and precision of understanding employees’ experiences. You could launch a Pulse Survey and run focus groups as an example around a specific topic. For instance, if the business has recently introduced a new employee benefit. Or if the company recently went remote, you would want to do a Pulse check on those elements.

### **Amplify your employee listening strategy with these channels**



To amplify your employee listening strategy, you need to complement annual surveys and explore different channels to gain holistic insight into the employee experience.

### **1. Employee Experience platforms**

Choosing the right employee experience platform that aligns with the organisation's goals is essential. You would also want the platform to be flexible so that you can customize the tool to your company. The frequency of the surveys is important. You may want to conduct surveys throughout the year, including Pulse checks and so on. Employee experience platforms, such as Culture Amp, enable businesses to have their fingers on the Pulse with a user-friendly platform, amplified by science-backed approaches.

A key aspect of choosing the right digital platform is ensuring the data can be effectively leveraged. Data can inform HR decisions and improve its outcomes.

### **2. Skip Level Leadership meetings**

A skip-level meeting is when a manager's manager engages with employees directly. This enables employees to have direct access to leadership and demonstrates an open culture. A skip-level manager can gain enhanced insight into business operations, customers and employee matters by engaging directly with employees.

### **3. Stay Interviews**

A stay interview aims to engage a targeted group of individuals to proactively understand what is and is

not working. Start with your high performers and highly engaged employees. Not only will it ensure that they feel heard, but they may also have key input into the employee concerns. When you understand what is working, you can extrapolate this to the rest of the company. Furthermore, as you unpack what is not working, you can intervene before getting to a scenario where an exit interview is needed.

#### **4. Lifecycle surveys focused on the moments that matter**

To enhance the employee experience and to build a high-performance culture, the experience across the full employee experience value chain must be understood. Organisations are now capturing feedback at various stages, such as onboarding and other **employee moments that matter**. If your organisation has a promotion cycle in the business, why not conduct a lifecycle Pulse survey with this group and stakeholders around the promotion experience? A promotion is a significant milestone for many individuals, and we can learn how to enhance this aspect of the employee journey. Similarly, we can also link lifecycle surveys to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DE&I) initiatives. For example, an employee who has just returned from maternity leave may be engaged to understand how the process and policies of the company enabled her during this significant milestone.

#### **5. Reverse mentoring**

In the traditional mentoring set-up, senior employees mentor and coach more junior employees. A different approach is for a junior employee to provide mentoring and insight to a senior leader. There are various benefits to reverse mentoring, such as:

**Bridging the generational gap:** Younger employees will offer a fresh perspective and insight into trends and emerging practices, while senior leaders will impart their wisdom and experience.

**Leadership development:** Junior employees are exposed to senior-level decision-making and leadership challenges. Through this experience, they accelerate their professional growth.

**Agility and innovation:** Reverse mentoring can infuse the company with innovative ideas and approaches as younger and older generations collaborate.

**DE&I:** reverse mentoring can also form part of a company's DE&I initiatives as it allows senior leaders to bring diverse perspectives into the decision-making process.

#### **Drive executive sponsorship with employee ownership of initiatives and action**

One of the biggest drawbacks of employee listening is the lack of consistent action planning and monitoring. In many organisations, the action plans fall to HR. Although HR plays a key role in the employee experience program, action planning needs a holistic approach. Action plans must be sponsored and owned by executives, with strong employee participation. Inclusive and participatory approaches to action planning lead to a stronger sense of ownership. The company is building an **ecosystem of ownership and accountability** of its employee experience.

#### **Bring the human experience into the conversation**

As much as it is important to understand the channels and tools to use for employee listening, the most important skill to apply is listening. As an HR Professional, a significant amount of effort is dedicated to guiding leaders in actively listening and, therefore, to truly 'see' their employees. When hearing employee concerns, many leaders react defensively instead of seeking to understand first. To take

employee listening and the employee experience to the next level, action has to be championed by the executive. There needs to be a belief that we as a collective, HR, the Leadership team and the CEO need to hold space for employee feedback. It is imperative to build a culture of continuous conversation where employees feel safe to share feedback. That being said, it is also key to guide employees to take ownership where required as well. Ultimately, an effective **employee listening strategy is a collaborative effort across the whole company.**