Getting High Response Rates With the DPA

For a successful outcome using the Diamond Power Audit™ a high response rate and large enough sample size are necessary. The higher the response rate, the more representative of your organization results will be. A large enough sample size will allow for an in-depth analysis by showing how different employee groups experience the organizational culture.

Ensuring that you get a high degree of participation begins well before the survey is administered. It depends greatly on how the survey effort is communicated and publicized within the organization.

The following 10 best practices can maximize the participation of your employees, ensuring healthy response rates and a meaningful analysis of the data.

1. Inform your employees early and often about the survey

Start your promotional campaign well in advance of the survey launch, communicating to employees the purpose and importance of the survey. This means leaving enough time between the start of the promotion campaign and the survey launch for you to send multiple messages and reminders. We recommend one or more announcements before the survey launch using different communication channels, so that when the survey invitation arrives, employees are expecting it, and understand what it is and why their participation matters.

2. Send a clear and informative message

The message you send to employees should be clear, consistent, and informative. It should explain what the DPA is in simple, clear language, the purpose of the survey, why it is important, and how it connects to the organization's goals. Your message should also explain how the results will be used, and the potential benefit of the survey to them – how will it affect them and their work?

3. Set a deadline

Let employees know when the survey will begin and when it closes. A start time allows employees to plan for the survey and set time aside to complete it. A deadline elicits people's attention and provides a sense of urgency. In the absence of a deadline employees could see this as a less-important assignment and put it aside.

For most organizations we recommend a timeframe of two weeks for survey administration. Our research has shown that response rates do not increase notably beyond this timeframe.

4. Include a contact person in your messages and in the survey invitation

Your messages to employees should include the name and contact details for the person responsible for the survey. For large groups of employees, it may even by necessary to set-up a dedicated channel for employees should they have questions or concerns about the survey.

5. Have the message come from top leadership

Ideally, your communication should come from the highest levels of leadership. When the message comes from the top leaders it greatly enhances the credibility and importance of the initiative. It also boosts engagement. When employees see that the CEO or senior leaders are directly involved, they will view the initiative as more important and have more confidence that action will follow from their engagement.

6. Assure employees that their responses are anonymous and confidential

Assure employees that their responses are confidential and cannot be linked to any identifying information. Diamond Leadership which delivers the DPA, does not keep a record of how specific respondents answered individual questions or parts of the survey, and thus cannot disclose responses of individual employees (only groups of employees) to organizations.

Any demographic information that is collected on respondents (e.g., gender, age, position type) is provided solely for the purpose of providing a breakdown of results. However, information will only be presented if a large enough number of individuals (5 or more) responded from a respective group.

7. Let people know how long the survey takes

While this information is in the invitation, it is important that all messages, from the outset, state the length of the survey: 30 questions and most people complete it in less than 5 minutes. This demonstrates sensitivity to employees' time and can boost participation rates.

8. Send reminders

Even though you have notified employees several times before the survey invitation arrives, it is important to send several reminders after the invitation has been sent. Our research has found that 3 reminders is the ideal number of reminders. If you have selected the managed version of the DPA, reminders will be sent automatically on your behalf to those who have not completed the survey. In the self-managed version, you will not be able to track those who have completed, so you will need to send reminders to all, thanking those who have responded, and reminding those who have not yet responded to do so.

9. After the close of the survey, thank people for their participation

After the close of the survey, respondents should receive a thank-you message from the leadership, thanking them for their participation. This message should also remind them why the survey was conducted and let them know when and how they will see the results.

10. Share the outcomes with employees

After the leadership team has seen and discussed the results, it should decide how to follow up and share results with employees (See Guide to Sharing Results). Sharing results is not only consistent with the nature of the survey (on employee culture) but also rewards people for their effort, and results in a greater likelihood of future participation.