MEETING PULSE

AN INSIDER'S GUIDE:
Enhancing Employee Engagement with Interactive Meeting Software

Meeting culture is undergoing a revolutionary transformation. In order to retain high caliber employees in a competitive environment, organizations are seeking more innovative solutions that unite employees and encourage real-time communication.

Thanks to interactive meeting software, any business can transform standard one-way meetings into healthy forums for open exchange. Traditional meetings are falling behind, as they only allow a handful of employees to voice their opinions. Due to inefficiencies and limited opportunities to contribute, employees often view company meetings as a waste of time.

At **MeetingPulse**, we are looking to change that. We are part of a movement that champions transparency and aims to give everyone a voice – for the good of administration and employees alike.
We've prepared An Insider's Guide to support companies as they transform standard meetings into more participatory, well-rounded experiences.

This ebook will cover the following:

The basics of employee engagement

The drawbacks of traditional employee engagement surveys

The collective meeting as an engagement enhancer

Real-time feedback technology

Types of audience response devices

The advantages of browser based meeting solutions

Effective use of polls and questionnaires

Using Q&A sessions to increase engagement

Employee Engagement: The Basics

A truly engaged employee cares deeply about their personal contribution to a company and its goals. A paycheck or promotion may be secondary to the work of such an employee. Here are a few key points related to employee engagement:

- **Employee engagement is powerful.** An engaged worker will go the extra mile without being asked. Engaged employees work harder and enjoy their work more than unengaged employees. Simply put, they are more productive, more dedicated workers.

- **Employee engagement is profitable.** Studies have shown that companies that focus on engagement yield higher net profit margins and higher shareholder returns over time. It's estimated that "actively disengaged employees cost the U.S. $450 billion to $550 billion in lost productivity per year" in accidents, absenteeism, and other inefficiencies.*

- **Employee engagement is shaped by environment**. A supportive, satisfying environment has the power to attract the best workers – and keep them around. Following the lead of companies like Google, Airbnb, and Facebook, organizations are increasingly integrating special features that boost workplace culture. From evening socials, massage services, hackathons, nap pods, standing desks, and living walls, companies are investing in employee experience like never before. This includes feedback technologies that both give employees a voice and allow administration to respond to employee concerns. Employees are increasingly seeking a healthier balance between home and work life. A great environment – both physically and socially – has the ability to set an organization apart.

- **Employee engagement is not easy to maintain.** Cultivating a constructive workplace culture with good management is no easy task. Business owners, managers, and stakeholders must maintain supportive communication with employees, while continuously crafting a satisfying environment. Collecting and assessing feedback, identifying problem areas, and pinpointing solutions are essential when it comes to maintaining high engagement at every level across an organization. Typically, organizations use a series of surveys to collect data. Over time, this data reveals important information that helps an organization to meet its employee engagement goals.

The Drawbacks of Traditional Employee Engagement Surveys

For more than 30 years, companies have been using engagement surveys to evaluate employee satisfaction and identify opportunities for improvement. These surveys cover various topics including benefits, career development, relationship management, compensation, and work environment.

Hundreds of survey providers offer data collection tools intended to assess engagement. Human resource departments typically issue engagement surveys annually in connection with employee performance reviews. These surveys may be conducted via poll, questionnaire, or direct feedback collection. Engagement surveys are still commonly used, but they are losing popularity due to the powerful features of new solutions on the market.

What are the drawbacks of employee engagement surveys?

Engagement surveys are not created or conducted in real time, so they often lack relevant focus, detailed approach, and timely content. They also allow for identification of employees, thus decreasing the likelihood of obtaining honest feedback. Traditional survey questions are often generic in nature, so they don't always allow for the level of detail needed in order to produce actionable results. These surveys are typically limited and pre-set according to traditional practice, which means that they don't generally take into account the complex breadth of work-related issues relevant to the modern workforce.

What opportunities lie beyond the traditional survey method?

There is a widening gap between traditional methods and the demands of today's workforce. Employees expect a more enjoyable work environment than their grandparents endured. They expect clearer communication, more opportunities to participate in company decisions, and invitations to effect change within their organizations. Thanks to technological advances, modern employees can voice their opinions not only in person, but via email, text, applications, and specialized meeting software.

What options should an organization consider when it comes to taking the leap beyond the basic survey methods? First, we will take a look at collective meetings, which offer administrators and employees a chance to directly communicate in person. Later, we will explore the integration of technology.

The Collective Meeting:
An Engagement Enhancer

Various types of collective gatherings allow members of administration to addresses employees and stakeholders simultaneously. All-hands meetings, town-hall meetings, and broad periodic meetings fall into this category. These meetings are held on a regular basis in order to keep associated parties up-to-date regarding important events, major issues, and company milestones. This approach delivers value by thoroughly informing all parties simultaneously and inviting them to provide direct feedback.

As companies leave traditional practices behind, periodic collective meetings are becoming more popular as an employee engagement strategy. Broad organizational meetings address common communication challenges and provide increased transparency.

Collective meetings retain audience attention more consistently than standard meetings. Broad organizational meetings also...

- **Build company culture.** They unify attendees. Everyone leave with a shared comprehension of the company mission, goals, and future trajectory.

- **Increase transparency.** Presenters are on display personally, sharing key information with everyone in real time. If given the opportunity to ask questions and provide input, employees may personally contribute to an organization's decisions. Leadership has numerous channels for receiving input from the top down, but all-hands meetings provide a chance for the workforce to deliver valuable input directly.

- **Enhance community.** Large collective meetings blur the boundaries between leadership and team members. Direct communication actively brings everyone into a shared conversation, which creates a stronger sense of community and collective identity.

While organizational meetings provide a broad forum for open communication, there's still room for improvement. Organizational meetings become even more effective when real-time feedback solutions are introduced.

Real-Time Feedback Technology

Collective meetings are a great time to integrate real-time technology, which allows for more effective communication between presenters, organizers, and attendees. Meeting organizers may use special employee engagement software to issue polls, surveys, or quizzes. Attendees answer questions or provide feedback via specialized hardware or mobile device. The resulting data is then processed and distributed as appropriate.

A wide variety of real-time feedback systems exist that allow facilitators to do one or more of the following:

- **Measure Audience Sentiment in Real Time.** Instant audience feedback gives everyone a chance to share sentiment while they're attending a meeting, so organizers know what's working — and what isn't. Employees are much more likely to respond via technology while they're actually in a meeting, rather than by email or survey afterwards.

- **Invite Peer-to-Peer Interaction.** When audience members are invited to interact with each other via technology in real time, everyone feels included. Honest Q&A sessions and sentiment surveys have the power to create unity and a sense of shared experience.

- **Conduct All-Inclusive Q&A Sessions.** Most employees want to have a voice and feel that their opinions or concerns are welcome. Effective Q&A sessions invite employees to ask any type of question. In these forums, all opinions are valued — especially those that are challenging or present new ideas.

- **Instruct or Train a Group.** Real-time solutions allow organizers to gauge how well attendees are grasping instructional content. Presenters tend to breeze through concepts they understand, but real-time audience feedback can indicate when a deeper explanation is necessary. Real-time interactive technology also allows facilitators to track audience comprehension in training sessions for compliance purposes.

- **Integrate Gamification.** Real-time quizzes, contests, raffles, and games have the power to shake up stagnant gatherings. Fun interactive activities provide a shift in pace, uniting audience members via healthy competition and lighthearted play.

Types of Audience Response Devices

Various types of hardware can be used to enable real-time interaction during meetings. Some devices are costly, require training, and carry liability – while others are cost-free and intuitive for audiences to use.

- **DEDICATED HARDWARE DEVICES**
  Also called clickers, these devices are similar to remote controls. Organizers prepare content and the crowd responds via their device. Audience members can respond to queries and ask questions. Clickers must be distributed before a meeting and collected afterward.

- **CUSTOM-CONFIGURED TABLETS**
  Some flagship events provide a custom-configured tablet device for each attendee.
  This allows for rich interaction, but it's costly and requires distribution and collection before and after an event, much like clickers.

- **SMARTPHONES AND OTHER MOBILE DEVICES**
  Many of the latest audience response systems allow participants to contribute via their personal mobile device, whether it be a smartphone, tablet, or laptop. Audience members may use their device to provide feedback via app, text message, or browser-based software.

Allowing audiences to use their own devices has significant advantages:

- Personal devices are cost-free for facilitators.
  There is no need to purchase specialized hardware.
- No training is necessary; users are familiar with their own devices.
- Facilitators aren't responsible for loss or damage.

When it comes to choosing a device, smartphones are often preferred because they are a portable, intuitive, effective, and low-liability means to gather feedback from an audience. Most meeting software and apps for mobile use are customizable, so personal device solutions are highly flexible. Feedback can be gathered via text messaging or app, but browser-based software rises to the top as a preferred method for a number of reasons.

The Advantages of Browser Based Meeting Solutions

The popularity of browser-based solutions has risen along with personal mobile device use. Today, most people have a smartphone, tablet, or laptop on hand, which has opened up a wide array of new possibilities when it comes to employee engagement assessment. Although texting solutions and apps have a lot to offer, browser-based software is generally more accessible, more effective, and easier to maintain.

Consider the following advantages posed by browser-based solutions:

- **There's nothing to download or install.** Audience members simply follow a link to join a meeting. There's no need to download software in advance.

- **Browser-based software is always up-to-date.** Developers of browser-based audience response solutions take care of all updates, maintenance, and security patches, ensuring that the application is always current. Audience members and facilitators are always using the same version.

- **Participation is free for attendees.** Audience members have free use of the internet, so browser-based participation doesn't come with a price tag. Alternatively, audience members may be charged for text messaging. Particularly if a meeting takes place abroad, text messaging may be impossible or cost prohibitive for some participants.

- **There's no need for dedicated IT support.** Browser-based solutions allow clients and general system users to use the software without having to worry about maintenance or compatibility issues. Providers take care of all updates and improvements, enabling organizers to create polls, prepare surveys, and access real-time data without any special knowledge or IT support.

- **Browser-based solutions are accessible from anywhere, anytime.** Anyone with a device and internet access can easily participate from anywhere in the world.
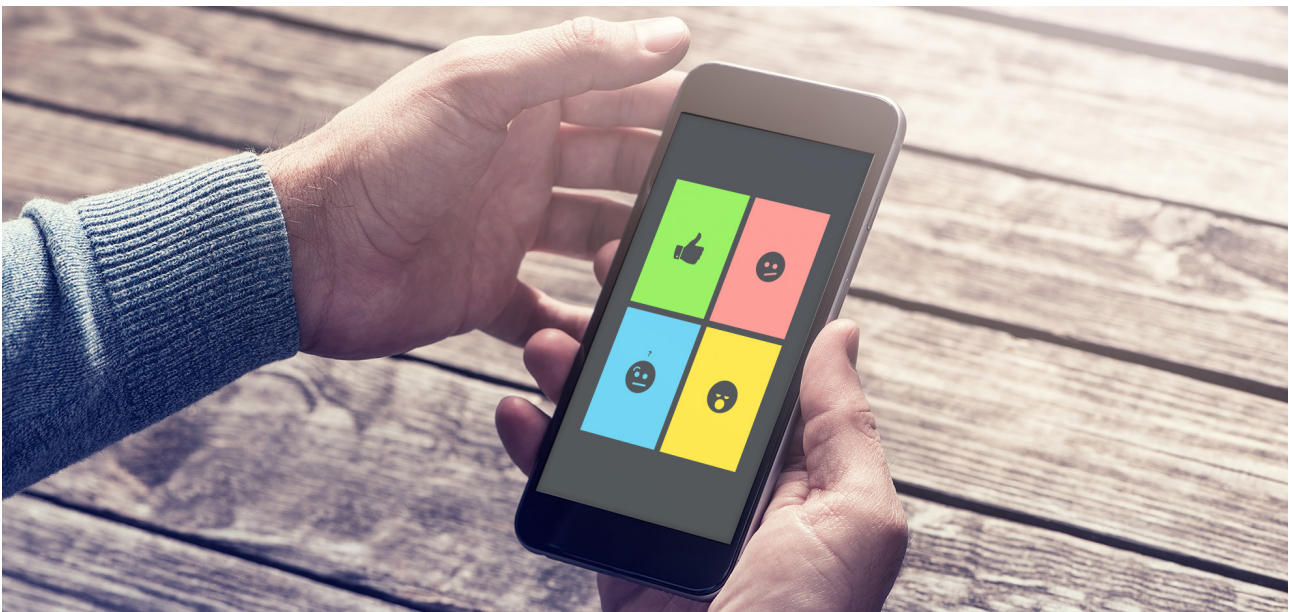
It is important to choose a browser-based solution that is easy to use, secure, and effective. Look for the following features:

- **Authentication methods** ensure that only designated users have access to ballots, questions, surveys, and data.
- **Flexibility** allows users to access content via any device with internet access, whether it be a smartphone, tablet, or computer
- **Encryption** ensures the confidentiality and integrity of data.
- **User-friendly interfaces** require little to no training.
- **Templates simplify** the creation of polls and surveys.
- **Reporting tools** allow for accurate recordkeeping and tracking.

Regardless of the device or system you choose, understanding how to properly create and conduct polls, questionnaires, and Q&A sessions is key to obtaining actionable results.

Effective Use of Polls and Questionnaires

Knowing how to ask the right questions is key. Developing polls, conducting surveys, and gathering employee sentiment isn't as easy as throwing a few questions together and hoping for the best.

Keep the following in mind as you formulate questions:

- Brief, specific questions increase accuracy of results.
- Questions should focus on one topic at a time, rather than combined concepts.
- Clear response options are more effective than options that may be subject to misinterpretation.
- Multiple choice responses convert easily into usable data. Consider responses based on lettered options, a 1-5 scale, a yes/no, or levels of agreement/disagreement.
- The order of response options can bias poll results. For example, users may be more inclined to choose the option at the top of the list. In order to prevent bias, some audience response solutions allow for auto-shuffling.

Once results are in, they must be converted into usable data. Employee engagement solutions typically include key analytics tools that collect and process the results of polls and questionnaires, thus allowing the data to tell a story. This technology allows organizers to identify trends and pinpoint issues that may need to be addressed. Recordkeeping and tracking tools allow organizers to evaluate the overall performance and efficacy of engagement and human resources initiatives over time.

Using Q&A Sessions to Increase Engagement

It is important that employees feel free to speak and that their contribution is welcome. Leading companies in employee engagement often hold regular Q&A sessions that invite employees to ask any type of question. In these forums, all opinions are valued.

Successfully conducting a Q&A session is not easy. Leadership must be ready and willing to fully engage and answer even the most difficult questions. Studies show that open forum Q&A opportunities are especially important when it comes to millennials, who will soon represent the majority of the workforce. Younger workers prefer active participation and a sense of personal ownership, thus they are unlikely to remain engaged as a mute part of the machine.

When conducting regular Q&A sessions, consider the following best practices:

- **Seed questions:** Create and sustain a healthy culture that encourages direct, honest inquiry. When initiating a town hall meeting practice or employee engagement program, consider anonymously submitting difficult questions yourself. Thoughtfully responding to even the most challenging questions will show participants that it's okay to ask intelligent, difficult questions. Set the standard of engagement or the current meeting — and all meetings to come - from the very beginning.

- **Allow for Anonymity:** Allow for anonymous question submission. Anonymity is powerful when it comes to airing out employees' real concerns. Use Q&A sessions as an opportunity to honestly address any demotivating factors that may influence your employees. It's especially important to talk about the elephants in the room.

- **Follow Up:** Let employees know that their concerns will be addressed. If employees ask a question or initiate a discussion during a session, they should receive a response. Without effective follow-up, an engagement session — which is meant to be motivating — can turn into a de-motivator. Answer questions thoughtfully and make time to follow-up at a later time if necessary. If questions are left hanging, ensure that there is a mechanism in place so that they are adequately addressed afterward.

- **Measure and Analyze Results:** Measure and conduct a post-mortem analysis on any initiative that results from employee discussion. Regular, honest post-mortem analyses make it easier for your employees to embrace new initiatives, whether or not they fully agree with the decision

CONCLUSION

In this exciting period of technological and corporate transformation, more and more organizations are seeking innovative meeting solutions. Thanks to interactive meeting software, any business can transform traditional meetings into powerful forums for open exchange.

Engaged employees are significantly more productive and dedicated. For more than 30 years, companies have been using traditional engagement surveys to evaluate employee satisfaction and identify opportunities for improvement. Due to major shifts in technology and corporate culture, the engagement survey has become outdated.

The demands of contemporary management call for more relevant, interactive, timely, and actionable results in order to retain valuable employees – and ultimately to secure corporate success. Collective meetings present the perfect opportunity to integrate real-time technology, which allows for more thorough communication between presenters, organizers, and attendees. A wide variety of real-time feedback systems exist, but browser based solutions are the most powerful and flexible tool on the market today.

Browser based solutions are always up-to-date, cost-effective, and easily accessible from anywhere, anytime. More importantly, they allow organizations to more efficiently address leadership issues, implement appropriate changes, and boost engagement among employees.

MeetingPulse is our own easy-to use, effective live audience solution. With the help of our specialized software, any organization can transform their traditional meetings into engaging, participatory experiences. MeetingPulse software:

- Operates directly from a browser, so there's nothing to download, maintain, or update.

- Requires no hardware investment. Audience members simply participate via their own smartphone, tablet, or computer.

- Allows facilitators to conduct polls, distribute surveys, and gather critical information.
   Is incredibly easy to access. Audience members can access the platform anywhere, anytime –
   as long as they have internet access.

- Offers encryption options and authentication methods, ensuring security and accuracy. Is simple and customizable. It is easy to tailor the software to fit any type of meeting.

- Allows anonymous query submission in order to ensure the privacy of participants. Incorporates reporting and analytics tools that give meaning to collected data.

- Displays live poll and survey responses, enabling everyone present to simultaneously review results in real time.

MeetingPulse is a powerful browser based solution designed to gauge real-time sentiment, conduct polls, and measure impact over time. Our technology has increased engagement for client companies up to a stunning 350%.

Contact us *for more information about our technology. We invite you to sign up for our regular blog updates related to employee retention, real-time feedback technology, and the power of creating and maintaining an exceptional workplace culture.*

Notes
"How to Tackle U.S. Employees' Stagnating Engagement," Gallup.com, June 11, 2013.
www.gallup.com/businessjournal/162953/tackle-employees-stagnating-engagement.aspx. Accessed January 8, 2016.