

Just How Anonymous Is Your Employee Experience Program?





Your people are your biggest asset. And, most businesses have figured out why it's important to survey employees to understand their thoughts, feelings, and feedback.

If you need any more evidence about the power of employee experience (EX) here are three stats you should know about:

The average **employee exit** costs **33%** of their annual salary.

Employees that **don't feel comfortable** giving upward feedback are **16%** less likely to stay.

Employees who **don't feel supported** in their goals are **3x more** likely to be job hunting.

This paper is written by our InMoment Employee Experience (EX) experts, Dajana Koloper, Gemma Bartlett and Stacy Bolger. It's designed to help you move beyond basic employee feedback collection to a high-impact EX program that delivers actionable insights, while keeping your employees' identities completely secure.

How Does Your Business Stack Up in the EX Landscape?

Most companies are either too conservative with surveying employees, or they are surveying them constantly—neither of these are the right approach for an accurate picture. So, if people are your biggest asset, do you know what best practice looks like for gathering employee feedback? And do your employees feel comfortable giving you honest insights?



EX PULSE CHECK

We've put together a quick pulse check so you can see how your EX program stacks up against the status quo. Take inventory of your program below by rating your brand on these criteria:

1= We haven't implemented this yet

2= We sometimes do this

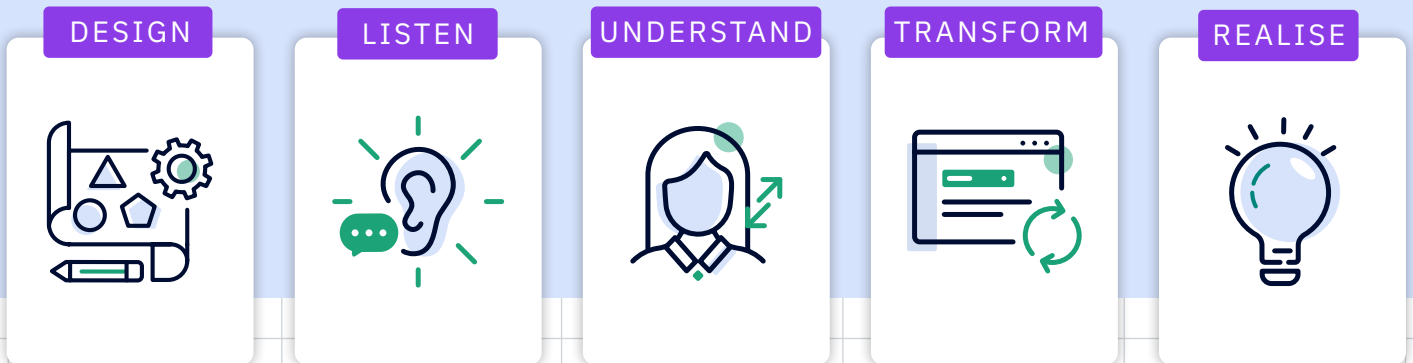
3= We always do this

- My EX program has a success framework that is documented and constantly referred to
- Six months after feedback collection, we send an email to our employees checking in on the progress
- Someone on the senior leadership team sends a follow up email to our staff, following feedback collection
- When our employees tell us areas for improvement, we take action on these
- When employee insights are gathered, we communicate themes to our executive team
- We have a 60%+ response rate when we survey employees
- My business pulse checks our employees once per quarter

Now, for the results. If you've scored 20+, your EX program is meeting the benchmark. If you've scored below 10, it's time to shake up your current program to meet the industry standard. Let us show you how!

What Does an EX Utopia Look Like?

There are three basic hallmarks of a gold standard employee experience program: **1) Employees feel safe and confident giving feedback, 2) The business takes action on the feedback, and 3) There are outcomes for the business as a result.** In order to reach this benchmark, we've put together a framework that will help guide you toward success. Anonymity should be present at every stage of your EX program:



We'll go through each of these one by one.

Is Your Program Fundamentally Designed for Success?



When designing an employee experience program for the first time, it might be tempting to jump straight in with a consulting company or voice of employee (VoE) provider and let them tell you what you should be doing. While these third parties can definitely help, there are some critical things that you should know about your organization's specific culture, history with feedback, and technical capability that will really inform the foundations of what you can—or should—do when thinking about design.

Understanding these elements up front will put you in the best possible position for success and help reduce some of the common pitfalls companies encounter when they enter the world of VoE feedback. Understanding these aspects of your company will also help you identify the right VoE provider by informing your requirements and preferred approach.

When it comes to employee anonymity and the integrity of your program, there are two key elements you need to look into:

ELEMENT #1:

Understand Your Company's Tolerance for Organizational Risk

When we're talking about anonymity, "risk" might sound like a scary word—but, it doesn't need to be. It is simply about being deliberate about what information is appropriate to share, who it should be shared with, and how it should be distributed.

Start by looking at the way employees and management have responded to feedback initiatives in the past. Do employees trust the process? Or does trust need to be rebuilt? More trust means more opportunity for detailed, broadly shared insights and a greater ability to rely on people leaders to drive action from their insights.

With that in mind, you can then consider the company's culture around data and reporting to

begin with. Are you a business who believes in democratized data? Or do you believe in carefully regulated and curated insights distributed across the organization?

The important thing here is to look at your company objectively—businesses, like the people in them, are all different. This step is about understanding your environment to create a design that will allow the employee's voice to be heard in a way that will create trust and drive action.

ELEMENT #2:

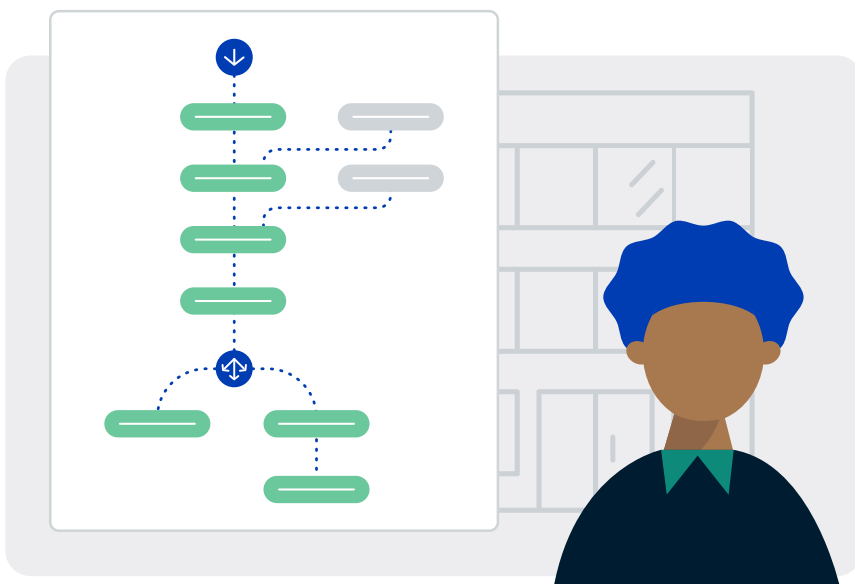
Make Sure You Know the State of Your Company's Employee & Hierarchy Data

Company hierarchies are complicated and, perhaps more importantly, they change. Take the time to find out how accurate your current data is, how easy it is to get out, and make sure that you have the data needed for your

preferred contact method. If you have tight deadlines and dodgy data, you may decide that the best approach for your first program is offline, business-wide insights. This way leaders have what they need to move forward and you don't need to worry about the risk of attributing the feedback to the wrong team.

If you do move ahead with hierarchy-based reporting, agree with your critical stakeholders what your hierarchy will look like when surveying employees. This way, if the hierarchy changes after the survey takes place but before results are released, your CMO understands that they might have a few extra responses for the team members that might have switched functions midway through. The feedback is still a reflection of their team at the point of collection and the results will still be relevant to their ongoing action planning.

Finally, the most important part of the design stage is to establish a baseline for employee experience. Take a baseline snapshot of your employee churn, your employee satisfaction levels, employee NPS, and any other key metrics that are important to your program's success. By establishing a benchmark up front, you will be well prepared to justify the cost of the program and showcase the hard work along the way.



Are You Listening While Protecting Employee Identities?

After you've launched the design phase, it's time to turn your focus toward listening with intent. After all, the tools and methods you use to listen to employees will have a direct reflection on their level of trust with your brand.

Employee Anonymity Is a Non-Negotiable

When employees give honest feedback, they're expecting complete confidentiality. We don't have to tell you how disastrous it is for your brand when this trust is broken. Without a bulletproof anonymity and employee privacy plan in place, you can easily lose valuable talent and corrupt employee culture.

Protect Employees Against Fraud at All Costs

Fraud is a force that EX practitioners must constantly be aware of and move against while running VoE programs. Unfortunately, it's something that must constantly be front-of-mind when conducting surveys

anonymously. You can take several measures to prevent fraud, such as requiring participants to enter secure codes and tracking participation that way. Analyze the resulting data and look for irregularities; spotting them can help reduce false information and its associated data noise. Be aware that employees may feel that demographic questions (race, gender) might give away their identity and thus compel them to lie if they feel distrustful of your brand or VoE effort.

One way your brand can combat this temptation to submit fraudulent data is to promise privacy, reinforcing confidentiality wherever possible. Promise to refrain from asking back-end survey questions that might connect a response to

a specific person and avoid asking for names. If you'd like, mention that all answers and submissions are presented in aggregate form, further creating anonymity. This tactic can build trust with employees, which helps ensure cleaner data.

Suppress Unique Identity Identifiers

A lot of what you'll be able to gather with your VoE program depends on how comfortable employees have historically been with such initiatives at your brand. In other words, your company's culture helps dictate how much personal information (race, gender, etc.) employees might be willing to share.

If you want to collect that information, you need to make sure your survey or other listening tools explains why you need it and why it's important to the VoE effort. Building that explanation up-front helps create trust and lets employees know that you want to be transparent with them about your program.

If you find that employees' willingness to trust in your VoE effort is low, start with a simple program that asks broad questions about the organization. This approach can help build trust if you find it's lacking.

Please state if you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Neutral	Strongly Agree	
I understand the reasons why the company is changing.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Management is focused on the long-term success of the company.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our customers will benefit from the changes our company is making.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how my job contributes to the success of our business strategies.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

How can we improve customer experiences?

Problems with coupon codes create a lot of frustration for customers. We need to ensure a seamless experience from retail to digital channels.

DETAILS

NEXT →

Identify the Best Listening Channels

Organizations that want to gain the most powerful intelligence should seek employee input on where, when, and how employees feel they can provide the most productive feedback.

When it comes to listening, you need to meet employees where they are. Employees are extremely sensitive about divulging critical intelligence, particularly within organizations that are early-on in their EX journey.

Organizations also need to be aware of how their employees receive information and plan their data collection methods accordingly. For example, defaulting to an in-house email directory might work for a corporate office, but not every employee at, say, a restaurant or an auto dealership is going to have an email address.

Decide which outreach method would be most effective at that business level or employee group, and execute with the same amount of anonymity you have planned for at the beginning.

It can't be overstated how important the element of anonymity is here. Employees won't share valuable information if they don't feel comfortable or safe doing so. Thus, it's important for your organization to understand both the value of anonymity when it comes to VoE and how your brand culture specifically reacts to it. Additionally, EX teams need to take care with how they present partnering with a vendor, if that's the route you decide to take. Depending on the optics, employees might get the impression that their information is being scrutinized by an unknown party. However, a good vendor with a powerful data digestion platform can be well worth bringing on in your VoE efforts.

Are You Ready to Deep-Dive into EX Data?

After listening to and collecting employee intelligence, it's time to shift through the data and discover important insights that will help you make important business decisions. Here are some tactical suggestions from our experts on sifting through employee data to help point you to the most meaningful themes:

Establish Minimum Response Thresholds

When deep diving into EX survey results, minimum response thresholds are of maximum importance. If there are less than 5 responses, we recommend hiding the data, which protects your employees from being accidentally discovered (<5 = no data populated). By implementing minimum response thresholds, users won't be able to place filters on the dashboard. For example, if there is only one 24-35-year-old female employee who has completed a survey, you would want to prohibit dashboard users from filtering this age group and gender, as her personal information would make her easily identifiable.

Discover True Drivers Between Engagement, Retention, and Churn

Every six to twelve months, we recommend taking a step back and looking at the drivers of engagement, retention, and churn. For example, when it comes to employee churn, you can combine new survey data with exit survey data and look for themes as to why employees are leaving the business. Perhaps there is an obvious pattern of not feeling valued, or lack of growth opportunities that keeps surfacing again and again. Depending on which themes occur at certain volumes, it's safe to say that recurring themes are the first point-of-call when it comes to addressing systemic organizational issues that are costing your business valuable talent.

Establish a Business Benchmark for Comparing Your Team

In all reporting, a benchmark is needed to see how you stack up. Look into what employees are saying about the business as a whole as a benchmark, then compare the feedback about your specific team. If employees across the entire business are unhappy, yet the marketing department is seeing different results, you'll know you're exceeding the business-wide benchmark.

Take Verbatim Themes from Offline Summaries

When reading verbatim from EX surveys, you have another critical opportunity to protect employee anonymity. There are cases when verbatim can easily identify a person. For example, if someone has a language barrier and is providing written feedback, they will be more easily identified by the person diving into the results. To maintain employee privacy, use text analytics to summarize the themes rather than use individual verbatim. Text analytics will group the verbatim into meaningful categories for you while simultaneously protecting employees' specific verbatim so they can't be identified.

Establish a Survey and Reporting Cadence

In order to keep insights timely and relevant, you'll need regularity when it comes to surveying employees. At the minimum, we recommend pulse checking employees once a year, whilst also having an always-on exit survey.



Are You Ready to Take Action?



Continuous and genuine engagement with a VoE program relies almost exclusively on employees' perception on how their feedback is handled. If you have been running a program for a while and your response rate keeps dropping, this might be where you need to focus your efforts.

This area can present a real challenge to people and culture teams. Appearing to do nothing with the feedback is damaging, but sacrificing employee anonymity in the pursuit of making change can be even worse. Internal projects designed to address large scale

or even department specific improvements can usually be rolled out without causing stress to individual staff. But, how can you keep employees' trust and also address individual feedback that reports troubling behaviour or highlights issues that you have a responsibility to address?

It's important to note that the appropriateness of each of these steps will depend on what you found about your organization during the design phase, and each item should be considered within the context of the employee feedback culture that currently exists.

Set Expectations



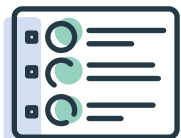
Addressing one-on-one feedback requires collection of that individual's identifying information. This will be apparent to your employees. If the expectation is set that all feedback is completely anonymous, and this expectation is broken, you will lose your employees' trust in the integrity of the program. If you plan on using feedback to address matters like bullying or to prevent individual employee attrition, take the time before sending your surveys to set the scene. Be clear on what the information will be used for, who will see it and make sure your employees understand that they will have autonomy and control over how their personal feedback is handled.

Get Permission



Allow employees to opt in to providing personal information (PII), particularly if PII information of an individual is only available to your EX provider. This will make it very clear to staff that their details will be available internally and allow them to decide if it's something they would like addressed directly. Keep in mind, however, that this will impact your employees' expectations. Indicating that they would like to discuss their situation with someone creates an implicit agreement that a discussion will be had. Ensure your team is ready to respond and consider who would be best to handle different kinds of issues ahead of collection.

Escalate Through Appropriate Channels



Spoiler alert: escalation often doesn't include the employees direct line manager—not at first. If your provider allows automatic routing of certain types of issues, ensure you have considered who the best person is and who will support them if they are on leave. These individuals are ideally impartial, understand how to handle sensitive matters and will not damage employees' trust by sharing the details of their complaint indiscreetly without the employee's engagement.

Can You Tie Better Employee Experiences to Your Bottom Line?

When it comes to realising business benefits from your EX program, best practice will vary between different organizations and maturity of programs. But, a few tactics will be consistent across the board:

Revisit the Established Benchmarks Set Up in the Design Phase

When you get to the benefits realization phase of your program, you will be so glad you set benchmarks early. It's time to revisit those metrics from the design phase and draw a line directly from your EX program to ROI.

- Are you onboarding employees quicker? Is this saving the business operational costs?
 - Are employees happier at work compared to program launch?
 - Has your customer experience program noticed any uplifts in performance? Do these coincide?
 - Has productivity increased?
 - Would more employees recommend working for your company (eNPS)?
- How many employees are churning now compared to when the program launched?



CUSTOMER STORY

70% Reduction in Employee Churn

While running an employee experience campaign with InMoment, a leading global food services received 40,000 unfiltered responses from its employees. This feedback was not only integrated into its brand refresh, it led to the launch of a global people platform for 300,000 employees resulting in reductions in turnover of up to 70% among participating locations and huge subsequent savings in replacement costs.

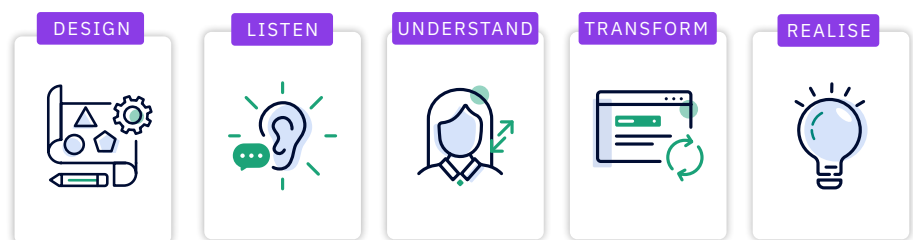


Use Program Momentum to Speak the Language of the Executive Board

Finding the funding for your VoE program can be a challenging process. But you and your team can secure funding from the C-suite if you demonstrate your program's ability to both listen to employees and create actionable intelligence. Tying your program to a financial objective also makes your EX success easier to quantify.

Keep Reinventing Your EX Program

There will always be room for improvement, and our experts suggest that you continually revisit this five step process.



The goal is to keep getting higher employee response rates, and changing metrics over time. Whilst the metrics might be influenced by factors out of control, the response rate will remain high if your people feel you are responding authentically to their feedback.

If you're looking for help optimizing your employee experience program, we would be delighted to help. Get in touch:

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