

DENISON ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE SURVEY COMMUNICATION GUIDE



STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT



MERGER & ACQUISITION



TRANSFORMATION & TURNAROUND



TALENT MANAGEMENT

Why is Internal Survey Communication Important?

Internal communication is key to a successful survey. It should take place with both management and general survey participants. Communication prior to the survey builds awareness that the survey will take place and creates an understanding of the organization's purpose of surveying. These aspects can lead to a higher response rate as people are more willing to take the survey. Participants know the survey is legitimate and the organization plans to take action based on the results.

Post-survey communication is equally important. Participants should feel their opinions are valued in order to get them on board for change initiatives as well as future surveys.

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Communication Channels

Communication channels refer to how the information is delivered to participants. Often, organizations require multiple communication channels and/or multiple communications before the message is heard by all. We recommend utilizing the channels your organization normally relies on when delivering survey communication. This may be through emails, newsletters, blog posts, social media, posters, etc. We also recommend using more than one channel to make sure all participants are reached.

Communication Timeline

The timeline for survey communication differs for each organization, depending on organization size, survey scope, and communication norms. Pre-survey communication should begin at least 2-3 weeks before survey launch. The intention of this communication should be to announce that the survey will take place and to state the purpose of administering the survey. Larger organizations and/or larger scope projects should begin communication earlier, while smaller organizations and/or smaller scope projects may need less time.

To officially open the survey, either your organization or Denison will send out the survey links, depending on the type of survey administration.

Determine the schedule for survey reminders with your Denison Client Manager. We recommend 2-3 reminders. Who sends out reminders depends on the type of survey administration.

Post-survey communication should begin immediately after survey close. Participants should be thanked for their efforts right away and understand that there is a plan in place to analyze and act on the results. Survey results should be shared with participants and key stakeholders in a digestible manner.



Talking Points and FAQs

Culture

- What is Culture? An organization's culture is the beliefs, values, and behaviors that a group has adopted over time as a way to survive and succeed. Simply put, "culture is the way things are done around here."
- Why does Culture matter? Culture matters to us because we experience its effects on performance every day. Organizations are recognizing the need to manage their culture with the same skill and attention they give to their strategy, their financials, and other key performance measures.
- "The bottom line for leaders is that, if they do not become conscious of the cultures in which they are embedded, those cultures will manage them. Cultural understanding is desirable for all of us, but it is essential to leaders if they are to lead." –Edgar Schein, Ph.D. at MIT

Denison Model

- The Denison Model provides you with a common language and structure to talk about culture in meaningful and productive ways in your organization.
- The Denison Model is based on over 25 years of research on how an organization's culture relates to performance. Denison's research has found notable links between organizational culture scores and important performance measures such as Profitability (ROE, ROA, ROI), Growth (Sales Growth, Market Share), Quality, Innovation, Customer and Employee Satisfaction.
- The Denison Model captures the unique tensions that most of us face every day and presents them as not an "either/or" but rather an "and." Research has found that organizations that best manage these dynamic tensions outperform the organizations that do not.

- Beliefs and assumptions, and their associated behaviors, determine the culture of an organization. The Denison Model and surveys allow us to reveal the underlying beliefs and assumptions in recognizable and measurable ways that impact organizational performance.

Denison Survey

- What is the survey designed to measure? The survey is designed to measure the underlying beliefs, values, and assumptions held by members of an organization, as well as the practices and behaviors that exemplify and reinforce them. The survey focuses on the aspects of an organization's culture that have a direct link to business performance. The Denison Organizational Culture Survey will answer four key questions about our organization:
 - ◆ Mission: Do we know where we are going?
 - ◆ Adaptability: Are we listening to the marketplace?
 - ◆ Involvement: Are our people aligned, engaged, and capable?
 - ◆ Consistency: Do we have the values, systems, and processes in place to execute?
- How long will the survey take? The survey will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.
- Are my responses confidential? Your responses are completely confidential and will be presented only as part of the overall organizational profile or subgroup. It is important that you respond openly and honestly to the survey for accurate results. Denison does not report on any data segments with less than 3 responses.
- When is the deadline? Please complete your survey by [Survey Deadline Date]
- Who do I contact if I am having a problem? For general questions, contact [Company Contact]. There is a link provided on the survey itself to address technical questions.

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Internal Pre-Survey Communication Samples: Communication to Internal Stakeholders

Sample 1

Dear colleagues,

As you know, we are currently working on our strategy and setting our priorities for the future direction of the company. In order for us to successfully execute against our business strategies, we need to have important cultural attributes in place and in practice. To help us better understand where our culture will act as a facilitator of our strategies and where it might act as a roadblock to our success, we will be conducting a culture audit that includes a survey of our employee population.

When most of us think of an employee survey, we think about the traditional measures of individual satisfaction, morale and engagement. While the individual connection to one's job and employer is important, our ultimate success depends on our "collective" ability to execute our strategies and business objectives. Thus, we will be broadening the lens as we conduct our audit and ask our leaders and workforce to make judgments about our culture—with emphasis on the level of clarity and alignment that we have created among the collective workforce regarding our internal practices AND the relevance/impact of our strategies and goals to the external marketplace.

This broader cultural lens will help us answer important questions such as:

- Are the individual development plans and activities resulting in a more capable workforce; and are the capability development activities grounded in a clear strategy for the future?
- Do we believe we have a "shared" understanding of strategies, goals, priorities?
- Do we have clarity across a range of drivers of employee engagement, including important predictors such as empowerment, capability development, core values, and vision?
- Do we have a "shared" understanding of customer needs and wants; and do we utilize customer feedback to shape our decisions?
- Do we have a clear set of values; and are those values practiced (vs. simply aspirational)?
- Have we created the appropriate collective boundaries (WHAT: shared vision, strategy, goals, and HOW: shared values, coordination, teamwork) to allow for higher levels of empowerment at the individual, team, and organizational levels?

As part of this effort to understand our current culture and to align our culture to our business needs, we have engaged the support of Denison Consulting, a firm that specializes in this field. In the coming days, we will be coordinating times for members of the Denison team to talk to you, one-on-one, to gather your perspective on the key opportunities and challenges facing [Company Name] today, as well as get your thoughts regarding the cultural strengths we should leverage and any cultural behaviors or practices that you think limit us and put us at risk for achieving our business objectives.

Thank you in advance for your participation and support of this important initiative. We will share the output of these discussions, along with the full range of culture data collected in the weeks and months to come, in an anonymous way that surfaces important issues while maintaining individual confidentiality.

[Name]

Sample 2

Dear colleagues,

As you know, we are currently working on our strategy and setting priorities for the future direction of the company. As we move forward with those strategies, it will be important to understand the extent to which our current culture will act as a facilitator of our strategies, and where it might act as a roadblock to our success. To that end, we will be conducting a culture audit that includes a survey of our employee population as well as some one-on-one interviews with key stakeholders like yourself.

When most of us think of an employee survey, we think about the traditional measures of individual satisfaction, morale and engagement. While the individual connection to one's job and employer is important, our ultimate success depends on our "collective" ability to execute against our strategies and business objectives. Thus, we will be broadening the lens as we conduct our audit and ask our leaders and workforce to make judgments about our culture—with emphasis on the level of clarity and alignment that we have created among the collective workforce regarding our internal practices AND the relevance/impact of our strategies and goals to the external marketplace.

The cultural elements that we will assess focus on important aspects of the organization that have been shown to impact important performance metrics such as profitability, growth, quality, innovation, employee and customer satisfaction. As part of this effort to understand our current culture and to align our culture to our business needs, we have engaged the support of Denison Consulting, a firm that specializes in this field. In the coming days, we will be coordinating times for members of the Denison team to talk to you, one-on-one, to gather your perspective on the key opportunities and challenges facing [Company Name] today, as well as get your thoughts regarding the cultural strengths we should leverage and any cultural behaviors or practices that you think limit us and put us at risk for achieving our business objectives.

I want to thank you in advance for your participation and support of this important initiative. We will share the output of these discussions, along with the full range of culture data collected in the weeks and months to come, in an anonymous way that surfaces important issues while maintaining individual confidentiality. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions regarding this process.

[Name]

Internal Pre-Survey Communication Samples: CEO Message to Management

Sample 1

We will be implementing our Culture Survey in the month of [Month], beginning on the [Date] and continuing through the [date]. This process will provide important insights regarding our organization's current cultural health—and will provide guidance for continuing to build. Your role in this survey process is of utmost importance. We are striving for 100% participation by all, because the future of the company and achievement of our business goals depends on the active participation of all employees.

The survey results are truly valuable only if individuals are honest, candid and straightforward in their responses. We need to hear “how things really get done” in our organization to be able to identify what's working and what's standing in our way in moving forward. Candid feedback ensures that we will be working on the right things to improve our culture and business results. Protecting individual anonymity is of utmost importance to us in this process because it allows employees to feel free to voice their honest opinions. All survey responses will remain confidential and will be sent directly to Denison Consulting to be aggregated. No one at [Company Name] will view individual survey responses. Remember, the purpose of the survey is to explore patterns and trends across the organization on an aggregated group level, not review individual responses or opinions.

It is crucial that everyone understand that this survey is supported by all levels of the company, starting with me—and that all of us will be participating. It is also important that employees know that their participation (in both the survey and the ongoing culture development process) is appreciated and necessary. If you have questions, feel free to contact [Contact Person].

Please discuss this upcoming process with your employees and teams. Let them know that this survey is forthcoming and that we look forward to their full participation.

Thank you in advance for your continued support and commitment to building a strong and successful company.

[CEO Name]

Sample 2

Our [Year] Organizational Culture Survey launches on [Date] and it will be open through [Date]. This is one of the most significant ways for us to hear honest thoughts from employees about our work environment here at [Company Name]. I am asking you to make it a priority to take the survey, to encourage your employees to take the survey, and to make sure that they have the time to do so.

On [Date], every employee will receive an invitation to be part of the [Company Name] Culture Survey from [Denison or Internal Sender Name]. You and your employees should be able to complete the survey in 15-20 minutes. The questions are straightforward—relating directly to our work environment. All responses are confidential.

We expect to share results with the [Target Audience] in [Date or Time Frame], along with our plan to address any significant issues that we find.

I would like to issue you a direct challenge to achieve 100% leadership participation. For this survey to succeed, we need everyone to participate and to be frank about the work life here at [Company Name]. Thanks for your support.

[CEO Name]

Internal Pre-Survey Communication Samples: CEO Message to All Employees

Sample 1

To all [Company Name] Associates:

As part of our effort to preserve our strengths and continually improve, you will be receiving an email invitation to participate in the Denison Organizational Culture Survey on [Date]. The purpose of this survey is to obtain your opinions about the way our organization operates. The survey will help us understand specific aspects of our culture and identify opportunity areas. As the survey measures opinions and perceptions, there are no "right" or "wrong" responses. The information will be used to assist us in planning for our future, specifically in the way we manage our business and build relationships—not only among ourselves, but also with our customers and suppliers.

Please be as honest as possible when completing the survey. Your responses are completely confidential and cannot be tracked. Individual surveys are collectively tabulated into a graphic profile that will compare our organization's culture to a database of other organizations. This will provide us with a measure of our organization's progress toward achieving a high-performance business culture.

After receiving the survey results, feedback sessions will be established to communicate and share the survey results in a timely manner. You may expect that we will work through a plan to address the key actionable items in a quick and expedient timeframe.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

[CEO]

Sample 2-Repeat Survey

We know that our PEOPLE are the key to our realizing growth and profit objectives. In order to have an effective and productive organization, we need to ensure that we have a healthy, well-defined, and consistent corporate culture. With this in mind, I am pleased to announce that we will again ask our teammates to participate in the [Company Name] culture survey. Last year, all teammates participated and we learned a great deal about our current cultural strengths and areas for improvement.

The survey measures opinions and perceptions; therefore, there are no "right" or "wrong" responses. I am asking all participants to be open and honest in their responses in order to best determine what is working and what is standing in our way in moving forward.

We are striving for 100% participation by surveyed teammates, because the future of [Company Name] and the achievement of our business goals depend on the active participation of all teammates. Your candid feedback will ensure that we are focused on the right things to improve our culture and our business. To ensure confidentiality, the survey will be administered by Denison Consulting. All responses will be sent directly to Denison. No one at [Company Name] will have access to individual survey responses.

Remember, the purpose of the survey is to explore patterns and trends across the organization on an aggregated group level, not review individual responses or opinions.

We will begin the survey on [Date] and continue through [Date]. Please take 15-20 minutes to complete the survey. Thank you in advance for your continued support and commitment to building a strong and successful company.

[CEO]

Internal Pre-Survey Communication Samples: Corporate Message to All Employees

Sample 1

As part of our effort to preserve our strengths and continually improve, you will be receiving an email invitation to participate in the Denison Organizational Culture Survey on [Date].

The purpose of this survey is to obtain your opinions about the way our organization operates. The survey will help us understand specific aspects of our culture and identify opportunity areas. As the survey measures opinions and perceptions, there are no "right" or "wrong" responses. The information will be used to assist us in planning for our future; specifically, in the way we manage our business and build relationships, not only among ourselves but also with our customers and suppliers.

Please be as honest as possible when completing the survey. Your responses are completely confidential and cannot be tracked. Individual surveys are collectively tabulated into a graphic profile that will compare our organization's culture to a database of other organizations. This will provide us with a measure of our organization's progress toward achieving a high-performance business culture.

The results of the survey will be communicated during the week of [Date]. At that point, we will then work together to develop a specific and targeted action plan to address key issues by no later than [Date].

If you have any questions about the Denison Organizational Culture Survey, feel free to contact [Company Contact Name] at [Contact Email].

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Internal Post-Survey Communication Samples

Example 1

The [Company Name] results from the Denison Organizational Culture Survey are now complete. Nearly [Number of Participants] employees completed the survey back in [Month] and I thank you for your participation. As you may recall, the survey results are designed to measure the underlying beliefs, values, and assumptions that are held by members of an organization, as well as the practices and behaviors that exemplify and reinforce them.

Our survey results identified that we can improve in the areas of Empowerment and Capability Development, which could be a result of the residual effects of going through a rough business climate. We will try to gain further insight from you on specific actions to improve these areas and will monitor this in future surveys.

The third area of improvement is Goals and Objectives that indicates not everyone is clear about the mission and strategic objectives of our company. In response to this, we will organize team meetings to discuss and refresh our Mission Statement. We will also include our culture, priorities, and strategic objectives in monthly communication meetings to solicit your feedback and involvement.

Some of our higher scores were in the area of Creating Change and Customer Focus highlighting our Adaptability. We make certain that the right hand knows what the left hand is doing. Additionally, with respect to Consistency, we scored high in Agreement, identifying that there is a clear agreement about the right way and the wrong way to do things.

So that we may monitor the progress of our organizational culture, we will request that all employees complete the Denison Survey again at the end of this year.

We will continually monitor our progress annually and look forward to your continued participation. I want to thank you again for taking the time to complete the survey.

[Name] [Title] [Company Name]

Example 2

To: All employees who received a survey invitation

Subject: Denison Culture Survey Results

Just a few short weeks ago, many of you participated in the Denison Culture Survey. I want to thank you for your enthusiasm and input—we achieved a [Percent] response rate! That's a tremendous reflection of your participation, as many organizations our size only hope to reach [Percent].

I'd like to share the high-level results of the survey and what we learned from them. Overall, [Company Name]'s culture is remarkably healthy and balanced, particularly given the recent merger activity. However, it appears that our considerable strengths are being challenged by three issues: healthy collaboration across boundaries, adequate input into decisions from those who are closest to the work, and a thorough, comprehensive explanation of the "why" behind decisions, especially as they relate to the customer.

Below is a more detailed list of key findings and what we need to work on:

- Core values are strong, and provide a base for agreement about how things should be done, but people find it difficult to work across organizational boundaries
- Learning is valued and information is distributed well throughout the organization, but people struggle to convert what they learn into new and improved practices
- Short-term goals are understood and tracked, but are not seen to align with a longer-term vision and strategy
- Skills are invested in and improving, but something is preventing them from being used effectively
- The customer is thought of as understood, but often ignored in the decisions that are made

In the coming weeks, your leaders will receive results more specific to their teams. As they receive those results, they will be sharing them with you, asking for your input on what should improve and how to make those changes. Thank you again for your participation in the survey and for your continued commitment to making [Company Name] the best it can be through your feedback.

[Name] [Title] [Company Name]

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