

# Understanding Employee Engagement Survey Providers: A Guide to the 6 Vendor Types

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As employee engagement has become one of the top concerns for executives around the world, many companies have developed new and innovative solutions to measure employee engagement. This has created a challenge for organizations as they try to decide on a method and survey provider that best matches their unique needs. Here we have identified the six vendor types from do-it-yourself software tools to full-service consulting firms with a variety of choices in between. This guide will help you understand the employee engagement survey provider landscape so you can accurately compare like providers and select the best solution for your organization.

## 6 Employee Engagement Survey Vendor Types

### 1. Survey Platforms:

At the far left of the spectrum are survey software tools. These vendors offer a general do-it-yourself survey platform for a variety of applications. Think marketing surveys, customer satisfaction, employee surveys, etc. The tool typically provides many survey templates to choose from with the ability for users to customize the survey to meet their needs. Reporting ranges from basic pre-defined templates with some vendors providing more robust capabilities. These types of survey tools are generally more suited for organizations that have I/O psychologists on staff or experienced professionals who know the science behind surveys. They also work well if the organization has enough staff to run the process internally and enough time to learn how to use the software platform.

### 2. HRIS Platforms:

Some human resources information systems or performance management systems provide an add-on employee survey tool. These applications are typically not as robust as other specialized survey tools but do an adequate job of basic survey administration. Most companies use them to survey employees on topics such as current benefit offerings or training programs. However, they are limited in their use as a comprehensive survey tool to administer a yearly employee engagement survey.

### 3. Pulse Survey Platforms:

Pulse surveys have become more popular as a method to collect frequent and targeted feedback from employees. They are typically purposed as a tool for managers to stay in touch with employee sentiment real-time. These platforms work well in environments where all employees have corporate email accounts and managers are committed to using the system.

Pulse surveys pose a challenge in that participation is most frequent by those who are either very satisfied or most disgruntled leading to disparate results. We recommend pulse surveys as a compliment to a yearly comprehensive employee engagement survey to target specific initiatives and to gauge action planning progress.

#### **4. Engagement Survey Platforms:**

Think of these tools as a “survey-in-a-box.” The service typically includes a standard employee survey with little or no customization, templated reports, benchmarking comparisons, and prescribed recommendations. This solution works well for organizations looking for a simple process with basic guidance. These tools are generally not a good option for organizations looking to customize their survey, with large and/or complex organization structures, or looking for deeper analysis and guidance on their results.

#### **5. Engagement Survey Specialists:**

These vendors offer a full-service employee engagement survey offering that typically includes customized research-based surveys, robust online reporting, industry benchmarks, in-depth analysis, action planning tools, and expert consulting. The survey data is also housed on the provider’s servers which adds a layer of confidentiality to ensure employees that no one in the company can see their individual results. These vendors are focused on providing unique insights and recommendations as well as implementing change within the organization. Companies in this category are expert partners that apply their field experience and best-practice recommendations to solve organizational problems.

#### **6. Management Consulting Firms:**

At the far right of the spectrum are large management consulting firms that provide a variety of HR and talent management services, including employee surveys. These vendors typically have broad experience in employee surveys and may publish research on a variety of topics. They offer many additional services including help with mergers and acquisitions, compensation plans, workforce planning, and benefits structuring. Employee engagement survey vendors like these are frequently used by large organizations that may already have an existing business relationship or are looking for added workforce services.

#### **Which Type of Employee Engagement Survey Vendor is Best?**

Running an employee engagement survey is a high-stakes event. When done well, it provides critical insights and leads to improved retention and company performance. When done poorly, it compromises trust between the organization and its employees, creating more questions than answers.

The best employee survey vendor for your organization depends on the budget, experience, internal resources, company size, and expected outcomes you have for the survey. Small companies with limited budgets and simple expectations might be best served using a Survey Platform for their first employee survey. If you have a large employee population and want to drive change using the results, your best option is to work with an Engagement Survey Specialist. Once you decide on the best employee survey provider type for your organization, you can make an accurate “apples-to-apples” comparison and select the top vendor.