

Tackle your fear *of employee communication* measurement

Smart guide



Measurement doesn't have to be frightening

Surveyphobia. Measurementitis. Yes, these are made-up terms, but do they sound familiar? Have you put off measuring the effectiveness of your employee communication program because doing so is time-consuming, expensive or—most frightening of all—mathematical?

Twenty-five years ago, most communicators did not measure the effectiveness of their efforts. Collecting this data was not seen as part of the core responsibilities of a communicator's job.

But today, metrics have become a must, as senior leaders demand accountability and communicators seek to explore if they're getting through to employees. **Simply put:** you don't want to be the only person in the (board) room without data.

When it comes to determining the effectiveness of your efforts, there's no substitute. Measurement helps you move from a communicator with an opinion to a valued expert. With metrics in hand, you can be the counselor who explains what employees need and how communication will contribute to the business.

YOU KNOW WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT MAKING ASSUMPTIONS...

There are 2 dangerous assumptions you can make about communication:

- 1 What *you* prefer about communication will appeal to all employees.
- 2 Just because you've sent a message, employees have received it, understood it, accepted it and acted on it.

The only way to understand your employee audience is to assess their needs and preferences.



5 ways to overcome your fear of measurement



Having measurement data is key to understanding your audience and having the facts to improve how the organization communicates. Yet many communication professionals let fears about measurement stand in their way.

Let's address 5 common measurement phobias and how you can overcome them by measuring more systematically, consistently and easily.

Fear of:

Numbers Time

The unknown Change

Rejection

What to do:

Know your audience

Just do it

Start the conversation

Commit to change one thing

Look for quick wins



1 Fear of numbers



Solution: Know your audience

Measurement doesn't have to be difficult—or even include a lot of math! For example, one of the best ways to begin to know your employee audience is to learn their **demographics**. After all, the more you understand who you're communicating with, the better you can capture their attention.

Although not a foolproof predictor of behavior, demographics are so valuable that every communicator should have employee information at their fingertips to answer questions like these:

- How many locations are there?
- What is the average tenure?
- What are our employee age ranges?
- What percentage of employees work in manufacturing, sales and office positions?

Demographics provide insights into almost every aspect of what employees prefer: **how** information is delivered (for example, print vs. digital) and **what** topics are communicated.

HOW TO BEGIN

Paint a clear picture of the people in your organization by partnering with Human Resources to obtain data on 3 essential areas:

- **Geography:** Location, location, location. When it comes to how employees experience organizations (headquarters vs. field offices), geography is an important factor.
- **Tenure/length of service:** Longevity has implications for how much employees understand about the company—and what they remember about past events.
- **Age ranges:** Sociologists and marketers use terms like “baby boomers” and “Gen X-ers” to describe groups of people bound together by broad shared experiences.



Common phobias

Fear of missiles: Ballistophobia

2 Fear of the unknown



Solution: Start the conversation

Why seek employee feedback? The answer is simple: The more you know, the more you can create solutions that meet employees' needs.

Focus groups are a great option for exploring a variety of topics, from benefits to performance management, from corporate strategy to how leaders inspire.

One of the best reasons to use focus groups is to understand the why behind behaviors, perceptions and decisions. If you're asking, "Why is this true?" or "What does this mean?" then focus groups are the right research method.

With employees scattered around the world, you may dismiss focus groups because they take too long to organize or are too expensive. While it's true that face-to-face focus groups are the gold standard, it's also possible to gather valuable insights by conducting virtual focus groups via a web-meeting platform.

5 TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE VIRTUAL (WEB-BASED) FOCUS GROUPS

- **Choose the right topic.** Emotionally charged issues are best reserved for in-person groups.
- **Invite more people.** Studies show that people are more likely to miss a conference call than a face-to-face meeting. Over-invite so you end up with 10 to 12 participants.
- **Make it interactive.** Use visuals, real-time polls and live chats.
- **Create a level playing field.** Don't mix in-person and web-based participants during the same focus group.
- **Be a strong facilitator.** Since you can't observe non-verbal cues, be sure to call on participants by name and don't jump in right away if you have a few seconds of silence.



Common phobias

Fear of frogs: Batrachophobia

3 Fear of rejection



Solution: Just do it

“What if the survey shows that employees don’t like the communication work I’m producing?” “What will my boss say if focus groups bash the communication program?”

Ignorance isn’t bliss. Don’t let fear of rejection hold you back from measuring your employee communication. Finance measures profitability, Sales measures the number of units sold and you need to measure how well your communication program is meeting its objectives.

The hard truth comes out one way or another. You’ll earn more respect by measuring and making changes than by putting your head in the sand. For example, if you survey employees to assess if your CEO’s strategy is understood, you can proactively take steps to address issues rather than blindly continuing down the wrong path.

And, remember, feedback not only identifies areas for improvement, it also highlights what’s working well.

Just do it. Conduct one measurement activity this quarter. It’s not as scary as you think.

DIAL A FRIEND

Luckily, you aren’t on your own. Measurement help is just a phone call or click away.

If your organization has a marketing department, chances are you have MBA-trained survey gurus within your company.

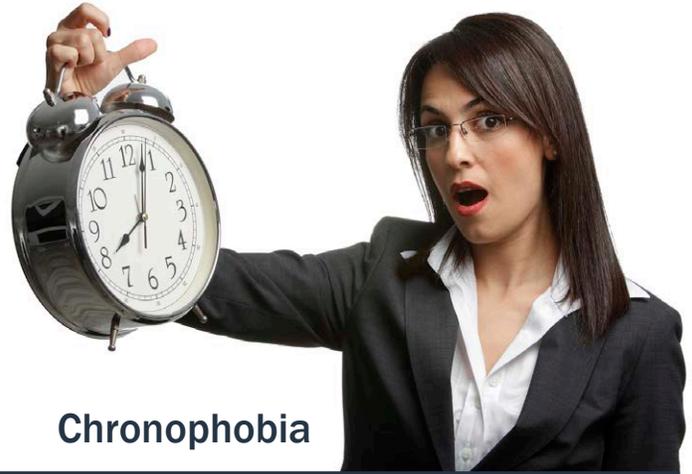
Or, you can sign up for a web workshop, attend a training class or devour a self-help book.



Common phobias

Fear of string: Linonophobia

4 Fear of (not enough) time



Chronophobia

Solution: Look for quick wins

You can't afford not to measure. With a buzzing BlackBerry and more meeting requests than you can tackle, it's common for communicators to face an overwhelming to-do list. Too often measurement falls off that list.

Yet, you could be missing important data that shows you where to spend your time and helps you reduce—or even eliminate—communication that employees don't value. Why spend hours on communication that isn't being read?

Use measurement to focus on those communication vehicles or topics that matter most. Here are some options to get you started quickly:

- Launch an online survey after your CEO's next town hall meeting
- Collect metrics on email opens and intranet site visits
- Analyze existing data from past engagement and attitude surveys
- Conduct quick focus groups limited to 1 or 2 topics, like your e-newsletter or company blog
- Commit to posting a monthly one-question poll on your portal

JUST 5 QUESTIONS

Whether you are measuring a town hall meeting or newsletter, you can quickly obtain valuable feedback with just a few questions.

Consider launching an online survey with 4 close-ended questions (using a "strongly disagree, disagree, agree and strongly agree" scale) such as:

- 1 Reading the newsletter is a good use of my time.
- 2 The newsletter helps me understand the company's new strategy.
- 3 Newsletter content is relevant to me.
- 4 Articles are easy to understand.

And, 1 open-ended question:

- 5 If you could change or improve one thing about the newsletter, what would it be?



Common phobias

Fear of spiders: Arachnophobia

5 Fear of change

Cainotophobia



Solution: Commit to change 1 thing

You may like the way your communication vehicles look. Or, you don't have the budget to make major revisions. Very few people like to change.

Yet, one small step is all it takes to make improvements that can boost the effectiveness of your communication, as well as how you, as a communication expert, are perceived by management.

A good way to get started is to focus on one communication vehicle or topic to measure and improve. You don't need to toss everything, just commit to using data to make a few changes that matter most, such as:

- Creating an info graphic that explains the company business initiative that employees don't understand
- Modeling future articles on those with the highest hit rates or that receive the most "likes"
- Adding more time for Q&A during the next CEO town hall based on survey feedback

The possibilities are endless once you tackle your measurement phobia!

SHARE RESULTS WITH EMPLOYEES

Now that you've invested the time to research, analyze key findings and make changes, don't forget to close the loop by reporting back to employees.

Show your employees that their feedback mattered by posting a short wrap-up article on the intranet or in your company newsletter.

Sharing survey results and what actions were taken in response goes a long way toward making employees feel understood and appreciated.

Common phobias

Fear of clowns: Coulrophobia





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