Smart guide

How to measure employee communication

4 ways to demonstrate the impact of your work

DAVIS & COMPANY

Why measurement matters

There are two dangerous assumptions you can make about employee communication:

- ✓ **First:** What you (or leaders) prefer about communication will appeal to all employees.
- ✓ **And second:** Just because you've sent a message, employees have received it, understood it, bought into it and acted on it.

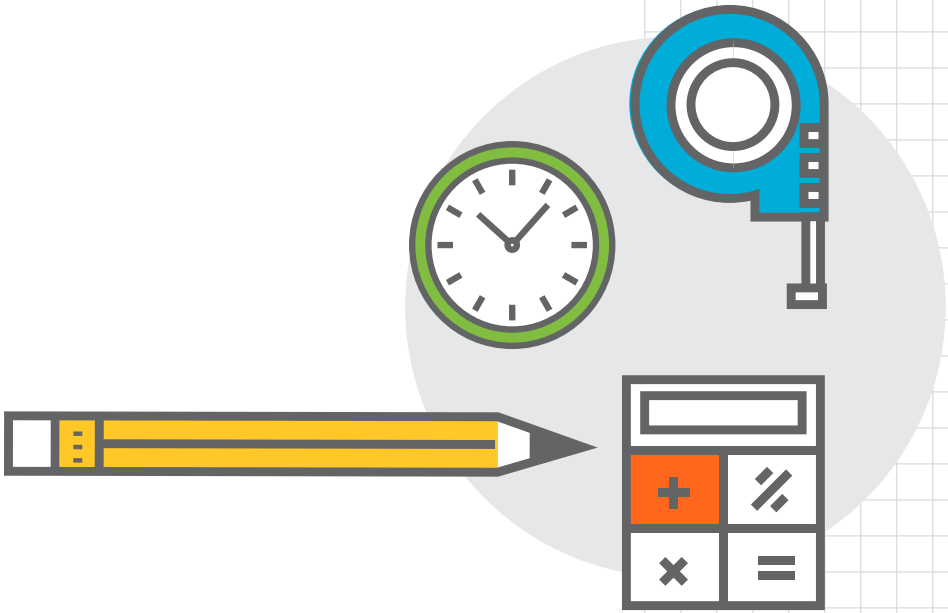
In fact, the only way to understand your employees is to assess their needs and preferences. And, when it comes to determining the effectiveness of your efforts, there's no substitute for measurement.

That's why it's surprising that communication professionals neglect measurement. Many think measuring communication is too time consuming, too expensive and too mathematical.

Good news! Measurement doesn't have to be difficult. This guide covers the essentials of measurement: surveys, focus groups and e-metrics, so you can build these methods into your ongoing program.

What is measurement?

In employee communication, measurement is the process of evaluating the effectiveness of specific tactics or an entire program. Key attributes that are often measured include activity, satisfaction, knowledge and actions.



What's inside

5 key reasons to measure communication

1. **Having survey and measurement data helps position you as an expert.** You move from "the person who helps us get communication done" to "the professional who knows what employees need."

2. **Employees have great ideas on how to improve communication.** So if you're stuck, simply ask the question, "What is one thing we can do to improve . . .?" and you'll get lots of suggestions.

3. **Measurement helps you speak the language of senior leaders.** Leaders are comfortable with data, so bringing metrics to the conversation will help you gain a seat at the table.

4. **You never have to say, "I feel . . ." when making your case.** Instead, you can say, "The data indicate . . ." or "Employees prefer . . ."

5. **Once you get started, you're in the game.** The biggest mistake communicators make when it comes to measurement is . . . not measuring. Paralyzed by fear or perfectionism, many communicators measure seldom or—worse—never. A short, incomplete survey is so much better than no measurement at all.

Don't say this: "It seems to be well received"

A while ago, members of a Davis & Company team had a meeting with a new client who was showing us the company's employee communication vehicles, including an intranet home page, an e-newsletter and a print publication.

"Nice work," we said, looking at the samples. "What do employees think? Are these vehicles meeting employees' needs?"

The communicator had a ready answer. "I get lots of good feedback. All of our vehicles seem to be very well received."

Why measurement matters (continued)

Here's the problem with that response. Unless you have tangible measurement from employees about how relevant and useful communication is to them, all of your efforts may be in vain.

Seems obvious, doesn't it? But far too many professionals who communicate to employees—whether it's about the company, benefits, compensation or other HR issues, change initiatives or any other topic—think that their job is done when they hit the "send" button. They're satisfied with positive comments from a few colleagues or their bosses, and assume that communication was effective because there was no negative feedback.

This particular company was spending a considerable amount of time and money creating communication that might go right into the trash can (digital or actual). Or, more likely, employees love some of it, are neutral about other stuff and think some is useless. But, since there's no measurement, nobody knows what's a hit and what's a flop.

If we were marketing a product, and not providing information, we'd be out of business. Communicators who don't measure put themselves in a weak position: Since we don't know what our customers (employees) want, need and use, we have no ammunition against a client (someone more senior) who wants to communicate a certain way.

Measurement provides powerful information that helps you develop meaningful communication, demonstrate the value of your efforts and make your case. And that's what it's all about, isn't it?

Know your audience

Understanding the needs and preferences of your audience is one of the key tenets of employee communication. Before you go down the path of measuring the effectiveness of communication, start by gathering all the data you have; such as, demographics, questions asked by employees and attitudes. Learn how with our Smart guide: Use deep insights to create breakthrough employee communication.

When and how to measure?

Part of addressing the challenge of measuring employee communication is understanding the tools that are available:

Research tool	Description
Annual survey	• A comprehensive survey (30 to 40 questions) • Designed to gather ideas/feedback and assess the effectiveness of a program, including knowledge of key topics, satisfaction with communication channels and attitudes
Spot survey	• A short survey (5 questions) focused on a topic or communication channel • Often used to establish a baseline, check progress or get feedback after an event
Focus groups	• 60- to 90-minute, in-person or web-based sessions • Often used to dig into the results of a survey, gather input for a plan or assess the effectiveness of communication
Interviews	• 30- to 45-minute one-on-one sessions • Perfect when you need perspectives from leaders or the topic is sensitive
E-metrics	Usage data for digital communication channels; for example, page visits, opens and clicks

How will you use it?

The research tools you use will depend on how you intend to use the data. If you plan to keep the data for yourself and use it to inform a plan or adjust communication, you'll likely focus on less formal research methods. But if you want to demonstrate impact and influence leaders and other stakeholders, you'll want to have a measurement strategy—whether you use one research method or several.

Why measurement matters (continued)

Here are three scenarios and recommended research tools to consider:

When you want to understand:

Scenario	If your annual communication program is having an impact	How a channel is performing	If your communication plan for a specific initiative is achieving its objectives
Research methods	• Annual survey • Focus groups • Interviews with senior leaders • Spot surveys • Sport surveys after events, such as a Town Hall • E-metrics	• Spot survey, followed by one to two web-based focus groups • E-metrics, if applicable	**Before launching the plan** • Focus group to test the plan or key parts • Spot survey to set a baseline **During implementation** • Spot surveys to demonstrate progress and assess information gaps • E-metrics **After the plan is complete** • Spot or comprehensive survey • Focus groups • E-metrics
How to share results	• Scorecard that can be updated quarterly and demonstrates impact on business goals	• Report with recommended updates	• Report that links communication results with business goals • Scorecard if the plan runs for more than six months
Use the results to...	• Demonstrate impact to leaders and/or stakeholders • Use results to shape next year's program	• Make changes to the channel or remove it • Use data to develop communication plans	• Adjust the communication plan and tactics to address information gaps • Demonstrate impact to leaders and/or stakeholders

Measure effectiveness with surveys

Surveys run the gamut from large to small, but if you're just starting, think small.

Aside from testing the effectiveness of your program, the data you acquire from running surveys will help build your case for senior leaders and influence your internal clients. You will have empirical evidence about what works and what doesn't.

TIP Don't forget to share your results and act on them!

Establish your research objectives

Every research study requires objectives as a place to start. Before writing survey questions, first decide what you are trying to learn as a result of your research. Come up with three to five outcomes—what you will learn—as a result of your measurement effort. Use these objectives as a framework to create questions.

Like most things in life, measurement needs focus. Objectives are the best way to frame your research. They provide a clear focus and help you decide how and what to measure.

Purpose

Begin by considering the purpose of your survey. For example, you might be conducting research to:

- ✓ Measure the effectiveness of your communication program
- ✓ Assess how well employees understand the company's new mission
- ✓ Gauge the effectiveness of your intranet
- ✓ Determine how well managers are communicating

Choose the right measurement tool

What's right for your research needs: focus groups or surveys? See our handy table on page 5 for guidance.

Measure effectiveness with surveys (continued)

Objectives

Now that you have a sense of the bigger picture, you can establish objectives that align with your purpose: What am I specifically trying to learn? Your objectives will guide your entire research effort and the decisions you make along the way.

The best research objectives are simple and specific. Below are a few examples of how this approach will help you develop better objectives.

Attributes	What not to do	How to improve
Simple In research, simple objectives are best. Create a separate research objective for every outcome you want to measure.	**Make it too broad** For example: Determine if employees have connected the dots between their work and the corporate strategy	**Separate objectives into targeted outcomes** For example: • Determine employees' level of knowledge about the corporate strategy • Determine employees' perceived ability to support the corporate strategy
Specific Research is all about making strategic decisions about the kinds of information you need to collect. The more ambiguous your research objectives, the more your data will be subject to interpretation.	**Be too broad** For example: Identify employees' communication preferences	**Focus on what matters most** For example: Identify how employees prefer to get information from their immediate supervisors

3 questions to help with setting objectives

1. What changes to the program can you make?
2. What actions are you willing to take?
3. Which research topics are "need to know" versus "nice to know"?

Determine your participant sample

You've finalized your survey objectives and now it's time to decide whether you send the survey to all employees (census) or to a select group (sample). While it's often easier to hit the send button and deliver the survey to everyone, there are times when using a sample is more appropriate. Here are four questions that will help you determine your target population:

1. **How many employees work here?**
   When the company population is small—fewer than 1,000 employees—it's better to survey everyone to ensure you get good representation. But with larger organizations, a sample is easier to manage. For example, with a population of 10,000, you only need 964 responses for a statistically valid sample.
2. **How long is my survey?**
   When doing short surveys—three to five questions—a census is fine, since these quick surveys don't place a big demand on the organization.
3. **How many surveys are employees asked to complete each year?**
   Assess the survey landscape at your organization. Is this the first survey employees have been asked to complete or the fifth? HR may be sending its annual engagement survey and IT may be surveying employees about their technology use. If multiple surveys are scheduled throughout the year, consider using a sample of the population. Watch for signs of survey fatigue in your organization, including low response rates and incomplete surveys. Ask other groups about their survey plans and response rates.
4. **What else is going on in the company?**
   Is there a new product launch in Marketing? Is Finance implementing a new accounting program? It's critical to understand how busy and distracted employees are. If everyone is working at a feverish pace, sending a long survey to all employees may not give you the response level you need. Instead, select a sample and work hard to encourage those employees to participate.

Write clear, effective survey questions

Now that you know who will receive the survey, the next step to effective employee communication surveys is asking the right questions. And while questions seem simple on the surface, there's much more to writing good questions than meets the eye. All too often employee surveys try to gather too much information from too few questions. As a result, questions are unclear, employees are confused and the data is unreliable.

When writing survey questions, remember to:

- ✓ Be simple
- ✓ Know precisely what you're asking
- ✓ Include only one concept
- ✓ Avoid jargon or obscure language
- ✓ Stay neutral
- ✓ Use a consistent scale, such as the Likert scale

4 types of survey questions

What did you do? *(Experiential)* Questions that ask about an employee's experience. Opinion or belief does not play a role in answering these questions. Example: "I attended the Town Hall meeting last month."

What do you think or believe? *(Attitudinal)* Used when trying to gauge feelings, opinions and beliefs. Example: "The benefits newsletter helps me learn about my health care plan choices."

What do you know? *(Knowledge testing)* Used when trying to gauge awareness or knowledge of an issue. Can be self-assessment or actual knowledge-testing questions. Example: "I understand how to choose the health care plan that's right for me."

Who are you? *(Demographic)* Allows you to cross-reference an employee's location, tenure, job category or other characteristics against his/her responses, and compare with results from other demographic groups. Example: "In which region do you work? (Northeast, Midwest, Southeast, etc.)"

Measure effectiveness with surveys (continued)

Solutions to common problems

When writing survey questions, here's what **not** to do:

Problem: demographics overload
Demographics questions are useful for determining whether groups have similar or different feedback. But when your organization is very complex, you may try to squeeze in too many variables.
Advice: Less is more, especially when it comes to demographic questions.

Problem: two-in-one questions
It's a classic mistake, and it happens far too often: two questions in one. For example: "Was the message clear and compelling? Is your manager honest and trustworthy?" The results are inherently flawed.
Advice: Split these questions for more valid responses.

Problem: vague questions
Every survey has at least one question that's open to interpretation. For example: Did you enjoy the Town Hall meeting? Employees might respond favorably because the content was compelling or because they got to nap in the auditorium for an hour.
Advice: You can learn more by making the question concrete. For example: "Was the Town Hall meeting a good use of your time?"

Problem: questions with a biased rating scale
Rating scales ("agree," "strongly agree," etc.) need to be balanced. One survey we reviewed used a five-point scale, but the options were weighed towards the positive: Strongly Agree/Somewhat Agree/Agree/Somewhat Disagree/Disagree.
Advice: Ensure your rating scale is balanced with an equal number of positive and negative responses.

Explore issues with focus groups

Do you need to know more about employees' perceptions about communication? Or have you conducted an employee survey that yielded findings you would like to explore further?

Although surveys can yield interesting data, if you need to gain deep insights into employee needs and preferences, consider focus groups. This qualitative form of research brings a small group of employees together in a guided discussion about a particular program or issue.

Conducting focus groups is complicated, but if you understand the essentials, you can easily manage the process.

Decide if focus groups are right

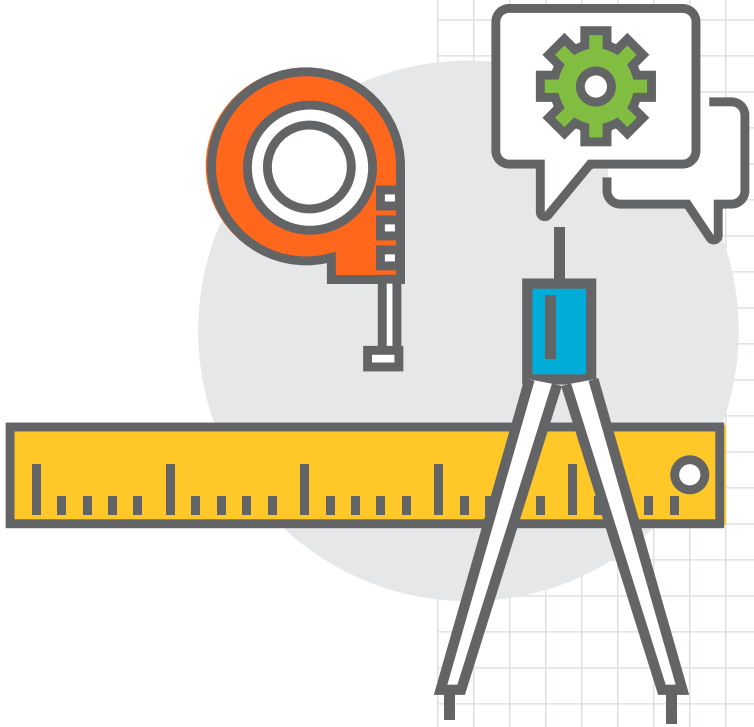
Why seek employee feedback? The answer is simple: The more you know, the more you can create solutions that meet employees' needs. Focus groups are invaluable for a variety of topics, from benefits to performance management, from corporate strategy to safety programs, from how leaders inspire to how managers provide direction.

Focus groups are an effective form of research when you need to know:

- ✓ What's behind the numbers from an employee survey (for example, "75% of managers don't provide employees with feedback about their jobs")
- ✓ What ideas employees might have for solving a problem or making a program successful

Remember interviews!

One-on-one interviews are another form of qualitative research to consider. We often use interviews when we need to explore a topic quickly, need input from senior leaders or have a sensitive topic to discuss.



Explore issues with focus groups (continued)

- ✓ When you've been successful at building knowledge—and when you still have work to do
- ✓ How employees really feel about an important topic, such as strategy, mission, values or a change initiative
- ✓ Why employees made a decision or took an action, such as moving to a different benefits plan

Determine objectives

Objectives are the best way to frame your research. They provide a clear focus and help you decide how and what to measure. Start by considering the **purpose** of the focus group—the answer to the big question: Why are we doing this research?

For example, you might be conducting research to:

- Understand the effectiveness of your communication program
- Assess how well employees understand the company's new mission
- Gauge the effectiveness of your intranet
- Determine how well managers are communicating

With the bigger picture in mind, you can create objectives that address: What are you specifically trying to learn? Your objectives will guide your entire research effort and the decisions you make along the way.

Focus groups allow thorough exploration of an issue

They are great for:

- Testing a concept
- Clarifying survey results
- Generating ideas
- Assessing levels of knowledge
- Getting a fresh perspective
- Following up on a launch of a program to see how well it was understood
- Interpreting facts

Create a discussion guide

A **discussion guide** is the term used to describe the document—part script, part outline—that the focus group moderator uses to lead the session. It is used only by the moderator and not shared with participants.

Why do you need a discussion guide?

Beginners and experienced moderators should always work from a discussion guide. A well-designed guide will help the moderator:

- ✓ Maintain confidence in front of a group
- ✓ Stay on track
- ✓ Cover the bases
- ✓ Be consistent

Creating a discussion guide is a five-step process:

1. **Draft questions**
   a. Review the objectives—your questions need to align with what you are trying to achieve.
   b. Create sections for your guide to group your questions with ease. (Hint: Use your objectives for guidance.)
   c. Brainstorm a list of questions that will lead the conversation among participants. If you're stuck, imagine yourself as a participant in the focus group: will responses align with your objectives?
   d. Organize your list of questions, delete repetitive ones and highlight prompting questions (follow-up or supporting questions).

Focus groups uncover *why*

A consumer products company conducted an annual communication survey. One finding was that managers at headquarters met with employees less often than managers at manufacturing facilities. Why was this the case? What was going on with those headquarters managers? Focus groups helped get to the bottom of the issue.

Explore issues with focus groups (continued)

2. **Add interaction** to make the session livelier and more fun. Use an exercise or game to explore a topic in more depth or simply raise the energy level.

3. **Add an introduction** to set the tone and manage expectations for the session. And a **conclusion** to thank participants for their ideas and let them know how their feedback will be used.

4. **Structure the session**

   a. Start with simpler topics that are easier for participants to discuss—questions that are safe, simple, positive or neutral. Then work up to the hard stuff: emotional, personal, more complex or negative questions.

   b. Determine timing for each section of the session. For a 90-minute focus group, plan for approximately 60 to 70 minutes of content, since it's not unusual to run over.

   c. Add instructions if you have a number of moderators or even if you are the only one. It's always good practice to include reminders, such as: "distribute surveys and pens" or "collect participants' ideas and post on board."

5. **Test and refine the guide** before you start any focus group. Run through your questions with a trusted colleague or team and ask yourself:
   - ✓ How will this question help us reach our objectives?
   - ✓ What will we learn?
   - ✓ Are we willing to take action based on what we learn?

Arrange for recording or note taking

With all of the responsibilities of a moderator, it's difficult to remember every nuance of a focus group. That's where audio recording comes in.

If you are unable to record the session, ask a colleague to take notes so you can focus completely on what each person is saying. Whether you record or take notes, you'll have the data you need to add colorful quotes to your report.

Moderate a focus group

Preparation and concentration are essential in keeping your focus group purposeful, on track and professional. One of the most critical success factors in any focus group is how well the **moderator,** the person who leads a focus group, manages the discussion so everyone participates and the research objectives are met.

The moderator's job is to manage the experience. Here's how:

Your focus group challenge					
Put people at ease	**Set expectations**	**Engage participants**	**Keep the session on track**	**Use active listening skills**	**Practice before the session**
Tips for success					
• Welcome participants with a handshake • Offer them food or a beverage • Invite them to ask questions • Thank them for coming	• Review ground rules before you start • Post the agenda • Explain the reason for the session • Ensure confidentiality • Reassure participants that their opinion counts and that there are no wrong answers	• Call on participants by name • Ask follow-up questions • Invite others to comment or share a relevant story • Record answers on a flip chart or shared screen to prompt others' thoughts	• Regularly refer to the discussion guide or presentation • Allow tangents and detours, but bring the discussion back to the main topic • Diplomatically interrupt those who speak too long • Ease tension with a joke and redirect the conversation	• Maintain eye contact • Listen to what participants are saying • Ask follow-up questions to get in-depth information • Give everyone a chance to talk	• Get comfortable with the discussion guide • Practice asking questions out loud • Arrive a few minutes early to relax and reflect upon your role • Brainstorm potential issues in advance and how you might address them

Engage your participants

Most employees already spend too much time in boring meetings. So the last thing they want to do is sit through a static focus group, listening to their colleagues answer a series of dull questions.

To increase participation in your focus group, try the following exercises:

Voting

How it works: Ask participants to demonstrate their preferences by a show of hands or voting with stickers.

Word association or sentence completion

How it works: Ask employees to finish a sentence or freely associate about a topic. For example, you may say, "When I think of the word 'wellness' I think of _____" and then discuss why your participants answered the way they did.

Scenarios

How it works: Present a semi-fictional situation and ask participants how they would handle it. After a few participants offer recommendations, ask them to explain why.

Storytelling

How it works: Ask participants to talk about a past experience, good or bad, or give a personal example. Storytelling helps you understand how employees feel or what they believe.

For more ways to liven up your focus group, refer to Chapter 7 of *How to conduct employee focus groups*.

Watch the time

While an exercise can be terrific for getting to the heart of issues, it can also be time consuming. A complex exercise can take 20 minutes or more. Since most focus groups are only scheduled to last one hour, the value of the exercise should be weighed against the time it will take.

Conduct virtual focus groups

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 (web-based) focus groups. Using audio and web-based conferencing software (such as WebEx or Skype for Business), you can quickly include the perspectives of global and remote employees that you might typically overlook for in-person sessions.

Here are 5 tips for effective virtual focus groups:

1. **Choose the right topic.** Emotionally charged issues (such as HR or attitudes about manager communication) are best reserved for in-person focus groups, where the facilitator can more easily establish an atmosphere of trust.
2. **Invite more people.** Studies show that people are more likely to miss a conference call than a face-to-face meeting. As a result, you need to invite more employees to participate in a virtual focus group than you would for an in-person session, to ensure an adequate sample size.
3. **Make it interactive.** Don't forget to use the great features that are part of most web-conferencing software: visuals/slides, real-time polls and live chats. They will help you hold the attention of participants and encourage discussion.
4. **Create a level playing field.** Resist the temptation to have some employees join a face-to-face focus group via conference call. This approach creates a negative experience for those on the phone since it's difficult to participate fully.
5. **Be a strong facilitator.** Virtual focus groups are a challenge to conduct because the facilitator can't pick up on non-verbal cues and judge reactions. Use participants' names to encourage everyone to take part and don't jump in immediately if you have a few seconds of silence.

Learn more

Want to learn more about employee focus groups and how to conduct them? We wrote the book, *How to conduct employee focus groups*.

Ensuring equal contribution

When you can't see your participants, it's hard to tell if you're hearing from everyone. Use a roll call to get answers to vital questions: call on every participant individually and ask each for his/her perspective.

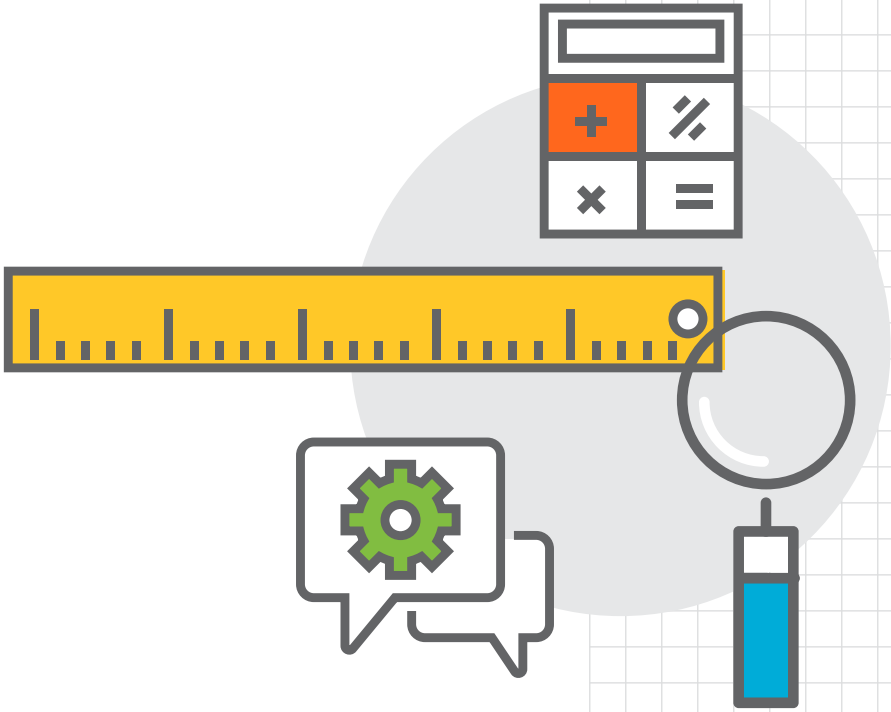
Analyze e-metrics

Do you want to know how many employees read your e-newsletter or visit your intranet home page? Although surveys yield interesting behavior data, it's self-reported information. When you need statistical information about actual usage, consider e-metrics.

Many intranets, email and e-newsletter platforms collect e-metrics that you can use to track audience reach, participation and behaviors. For example, use e-newsletter clicks to determine which articles draw employees' interest and when readership is at its highest. Or track most frequently searched keywords on your intranet to gain insight into employees' hot topics.

What are e-metrics?

Quantifiable measures used to track usage, such as email opens, e-newsletter clicks and visitors to your intranet.



The basics of e-metrics

When you need to measure how many employees open your e-newsletter or use your intranet, the choices can seem confusing. How do you differentiate between clicks and opens? What does "unique visit" mean? What are traffic sources?

Here's a guide of common e-metrics terms to help you understand the basics:

E-metrics term	What it means
Total visits	Number of visits to the portal. This metric is typically reviewed during a period of time: "There were 8,000 visits to the portal during the first quarter."
Unique visitors	Number of unduplicated (counted only once) visitors to the portal
New vs. returning user	How many employees visited the portal for the first time (new user) vs. how many have been to the portal before (returning users)
New visits	Estimate of the percentage of first-time visits
Average visit duration	Average duration of a session (how long users stay engaged with your portal)
Traffic sources	How people access your portal (for example, via an email or a bookmark)
Pages per session	Average number of pages viewed during a session; repeated views of a single page are included
Total page views	Total number of pages viewed; repeated views of a single page are counted
Bounce rate	Percentage of single-page visits (visits in which the employee left a page without interacting with the page)
Frequently searched keywords	What employees are typing in the search bar
Session	Period of time an employee is actively engaged with your portal

7 e-metrics worth tracking

Now that you've learned the basics of e-metrics, it's time to collect data about your digital vehicles. But if there's a lot of data, it may be tricky to hone in on the facts that matter.

Here are seven e-metrics worth tracking:

Web metrics

1. Top pages

Want to know what content interests employees? A list of your top pages identifies your most visited pages (those pages have the highest number of page views).

Tracking your top pages month over month provides an overview of popular content. Let's say the page dedicated to your company's big office move consistently had the highest number of page views for six months. That means this is the content employees are most interested in. Can you provide more on the topic?

2. Unique visitors and page views

How many employees visit your portal or home page? The number of unique visitors represents the number of individual employees using your site. Many communicators use both unique visits and page views to measure intranet usage. "On Monday, we had 700 unique visitors, who were responsible for 5,500 page views."

TIP Launching a new portal? It's helpful to track the number of unique visits; your goal is to see the number of unique visits increase each month after launch.

3. Average visit duration

This e-metric (also called "average time spent") helps you understand how much time visitors spend on your portal. In most metrics platforms, like Google Analytics, you can view the average visit duration for each page.

Look for existing data

Take a quick look around and you'll probably uncover e-metrics already being collected. For example, many intranet and portal platforms collect e-metrics. Talk to your IT department about what e-metrics are available.

Analyze e-metrics (continued)

For example, you can track how much time is spent on a Resources page versus the CEO's blog page. You should aim to have:

- ✓ Longer time spent on the CEO's blog page because that means visitors read the content
- ✓ Less time on a Resources page because that means visitors easily find what they're looking for

4. Traffic

Wondering if the weekly news email pushes employees to your portal? Traffic sources determine how employees access your portal, which will help you define which source is the most effective driver to your portal. Here is a list of typical traffic sources:

- ✓ **Direct:** URL or bookmark
- ✓ **Referral:** Through a link on another site
- ✓ **Social:** From a social media platform
- ✓ **Email or campaign:** Email or e-newsletter

Most metrics platforms, including Google Analytics, even provide information about the internet browser and mobile devices used to visit your portal.

TIP Keep metrics in mind during intranet development and ensure its platform offers metrics—or set up Google Analytics for your site.

5. Frequently searched keywords

Knowing what terms employees frequently search on your portal is important for two reasons:

1. Provides insight into what employees can't find on your portal, which can help you improve your portal's navigation.
2. Offers information about employees' hot topics so you can create or increase editorial content about these topics—and possibly promote this content to the home page.

Analyze e-metrics (continued)

Email and e-newsletter metrics

6. Opens

This metric tells you the number of employees that opened your email/e-newsletter and viewed its content.

7. Clicks

The number of clicks determines how many employees clicked at least one link in an email/e-newsletter.

When evaluating the effectiveness of an email or e-newsletter, it's beneficial to:

✓ Review both of these metrics—opens and clicks—together

✓ Know the number of employees on the distribution list

For example, you distribute your e-newsletter to 10,000 employees. While the metrics show that the e-newsletter has 9,000 opens, it only has 1,000 clicks. This means only 10% of your audience is clicking through to view more content.

How to analyze e-metrics

There are two things to keep in mind when analyzing e-metrics:

Track often

Paralyzed by fear or perfectionism, many communicators seldom or never analyze e-metrics. And with digital vehicle platforms making it easy to run a report, there is no excuse not to pull e-metrics. Get in the habit of reviewing e-metrics monthly and comparing the data over time; this will help you understand what works and what doesn't.

Keep numbers in context

The best way to analyze e-metrics is to review all of your data together. For example, just viewing the number of unique visits without keeping in mind the total number of employees who have access to the portal does not provide the complete picture.

Use data to make your case

The results are in! Now you need to take a close look at your survey data, focus group themes and web trends, and decide what it all means.

Your short-term purpose, of course, is to understand employees' feedback so you can make immediate improvements. But over the long term, sharing results has even more value for establishing you as a strategic counselor—someone who uses evidence to make the case for recommendations.

In this section, you'll learn how to:

- ✓ Analyze the results
- ✓ Create a report to share with key stakeholders
- ✓ Communicate results—and the actions you plan to take—with employees

Analyze the results

Of all the steps in conducting research, analyzing the results takes the most time. Even though the process requires a time commitment, it's not complicated.

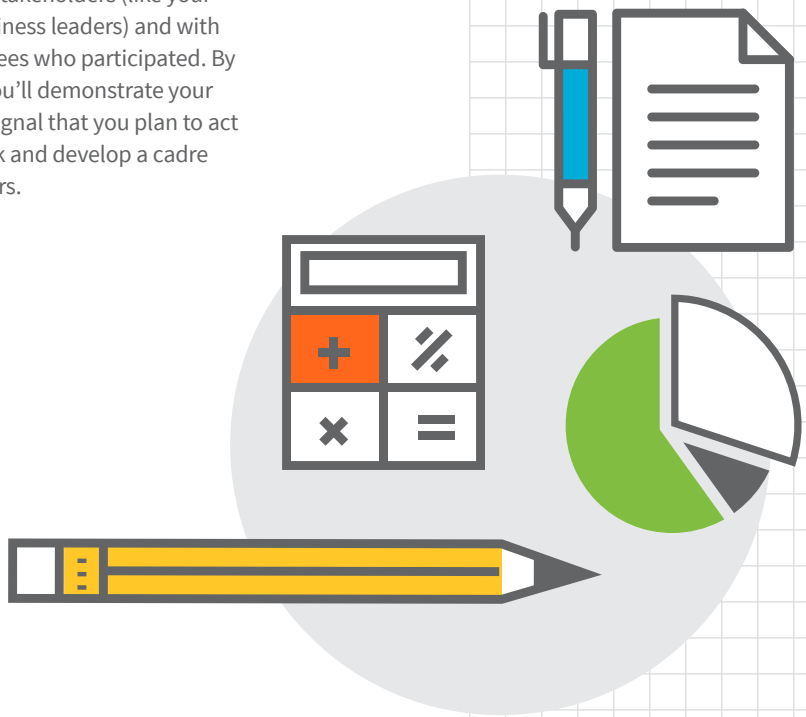
In fact, analyzing results can be expressed in four essential steps:

1. Start by reviewing your objectives—the **purpose of your research.** Remind yourself what you set out to learn and keep that top of mind while you analyze results.

2. Now look at the **raw data** for each question. For surveys, that means crunching numbers. For focus groups, it means pulling together answers (what employees told you) for each of the questions in your discussion guide and documenting any unexpected, out-of-scope learnings.

Why share findings?

Even if your primary research objective is to help improve your communication program, it's still important to share results with influential stakeholders (like your boss or business leaders) and with the employees who participated. By doing so, you'll demonstrate your expertise, signal that you plan to act on feedback and develop a cadre of supporters.



Use data to make your case (continued)

3. Begin to **draw conclusions.** Your target is five to seven key findings. The best way to do so is to collaborate with one or more colleagues. Give each team member a copy of the raw data report to review, then get together in a spacious conference room. Using large Post-it notes, ask each member to record findings, one per Post-it, that seem significant. Group similar themes together and discuss what the results are telling you. Discuss which results meet your expectations and which do not.

   TIP Look for separate results from individual questions that work together to tell a story. For example, you may have asked a question about how helpful your intranet is for finding information about health care plan choices. Another question may have asked how well employees understand a new plan choice. By comparing the results of both questions, you begin to understand how well communication is working to create understanding about health care.

4. After formulating your key findings, the main conclusions of your survey results, decide on what you will do in response; these actions become your **recommendations.**

Create a report

Based on your analysis, create a report that includes:

- ✓ **Introduction:** States the purpose of the research
- ✓ **Methodology:** Addresses how the research was conducted, including:
  - Timing
  - Research tools—survey, focus group, e-metrics or a combination—and what approach was used in each
- ✓ **Key findings:** Provides a summary of overriding themes
- ✓ **Detailed findings:** Focuses on details, including results for each question and compares results to previous research, if applicable
- ✓ **Recommendations:** Summarizes actions to answer the questions, "What should we do to move forward?" and "What are the next steps we should take?"

Why key findings are so key

Especially when you have a lot of data to get through, it's natural to focus on all the details: How employees answered each question. How the results for one channel compare to those for another. How this year's data compares with the survey you conducted last year.

Details certainly matter. But, except for members of your team and possibly your boss, most people won't sit still for all that granularity. That's why the section known as *key findings*—also known as an executive summary—is so, well, key.

Key findings are like your elevator speech; the pitch you'd give in five minutes or fewer if you had to provide the highlights of what the research revealed and what it means. Once you've immersed yourself in the back of the report (detailed findings), make sure you allow enough time to shape the front. Create a key findings section that is:

- ✓ **Crisp and clear.** Give a succinct summary of major themes and conclusions.
- ✓ **In context.** Compare these survey results with other available information, including e-metrics and previous surveys.
- ✓ **Vivid.** If possible, include snippets of data to bring your narrative to life. For example, you might write "When it comes to understanding what's happening around the company, most employees prefer the intranet home page." Underneath the bullet point, include the data: "87% prefer intranet; 65% newsletter."

Communicate results

After all research is completed, data has been analyzed and reports have been generated, it's time to communicate your results to:

- ✓ **Participants:** Providing follow-up communication is vital to demonstrate that opinions matter, that completing the research was time well spent and that the findings will be put to good use. Participants will leave the research process feeling valued and will be more likely to take part in future research projects.
- ✓ **Other stakeholders:** It is also necessary to share research findings with those who will use the data that is gathered, such as extended members of your team or other teams that will support your changes.

What employees want to know

- **Key facts.** Employees want to see data—positive and negative—to verify that the survey process was objective and unbiased.
- **A quick look.** Respect employees' time by choosing the five to 10 key data points that best represent key findings.
- **Actions.** Make sure you share what will happen and when as a result of the research.
- **What happens next.** Don't stop sharing information. Provide updates, reporting on what is happening in response.

Use data to make your case (continued)

Each stakeholder group uses research data in different ways, and therefore has different information needs. For example, findings relevant to a senior leader aren't necessarily important or helpful to a regional supervisor or research participant. Here's a summary of the types of information that you might share with stakeholders:

Stakeholder	Potential information needs
Senior leaders	**Top-level research findings** Provide a report that includes: • Key findings (those that met assumptions as well as any *surprises*) • Recommended course of action
Regional executives	**Top-level findings and demographics** Provide a report that includes: • Key findings that both met assumptions and didn't • Regional and demographic breakdown • Recommended course of action
Participants	**Confirmation that feedback was received and used** Provide a report (in the form of an email, a newsletter article, a few intranet pages, etc.) that includes: • Key findings (what we heard) • Next steps (what we'll do)

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5 things to know about us

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Experienced. We have decades of experience in communicating change, initiatives, HR programs and policies, and many other topics.

Collaborative. Our favorite way of working is to meet with our clients and put our heads together.

Client-focused. Our mission is to help you solve your problems. To set you up for success. To make sure you get the recognition you deserve. (We think you get the picture.)

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