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Welcome to the UBA Partner Firm exclusive monthly newsletter, delivering insights into timely human resources and employee benefits topics.

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Employee Benefits | What Employee Benefit Surveys May Be Missing

Your latest benefits survey looks encouraging. Employees say they are satisfied with the package, and few ask for major changes. Does that mean your benefits are meeting their needs?

The results are useful, but they may leave important questions unanswered. An employee can appreciate having coverage, yet struggle to find a provider, understand a bill, or use a service. As employers review feedback during open enrollment, the goal should be to understand the experience behind the rating.

Separate Satisfaction from Understanding

MetLife research released in September 2025 found that only 57% of employees fully understood what their benefits covered. A positive view of a benefits package does not tell an employer whether employees know how to use it.

The 2026 MetLife study showed improved understanding of more common benefits like dental insurance (78%), but there is still a need for more education on important benefits like disability and critical illness.

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Instead of relying on one broad satisfaction question, ask about specific experiences. Could employees find the information they needed? Did they know who to contact for help? Was there a benefit they wanted to use but could not access? Include a "have not used" response so lack of experience is not mistaken for satisfaction.

Look Beyond the Average

An overall score can conceal different experiences across the workforce. Employees working overnight may have fewer opportunities to attend benefits sessions. New hires may still be learning the basics, while employees managing ongoing health needs may encounter barriers others never see.

Where participation and group size permit, review responses by work location, schedule or tenure. Protect anonymity and avoid reporting small groups or comments that could identify individuals. Check who responded, too. A strong score offers an incomplete picture if substantial portions of the workforce are missing.

Compare Feedback with Everyday Questions

Pair survey results with recurring questions to HR and aggregate information from benefits administrators. Repeated requests for help finding in-network care, accessing an account or resolving billing confusion can point to problems that a satisfaction survey misses.

Use utilization data carefully. Low use may reflect limited need, lack of awareness, or difficulty accessing a service. However, it doesn't show which is the root cause. Ask about barriers without requesting diagnoses or individual claim details, and work with providers to protect sensitive information.

Turn a Finding into a Specific Improvement

Choose one issue to investigate and address. If employees struggle to locate covered providers, test the directory instructions and the process for getting help. Then ask whether the change made that task easier.

A benefits survey should help employers decide what to examine next. Its greatest value comes from connecting employee feedback to the practical experience of getting support.

Workplace Culture | When Employees Stop Speaking Up

A team meeting ends without questions. A new process draws no objections. The employee suggestion channel is quiet. Leaders may read these moments as agreement, but silence alone offers little information about how employees feel.

Some employees have nothing to add. Others may be unsure whether their concerns are welcome or worth raising.

Make Room for Specific Concerns

"Any feedback?" can be difficult to answer in front of a manager and colleagues. A more focused question gives employees a practical starting point: Which step is causing delays? What information is missing? What would make this deadline more realistic?

Offer more than one way to respond, including individual conversations and an anonymous channel where feasible. Explain who can access submissions and how they will be handled. Avoid describing a process as anonymous if identifying information is collected.

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Pay Attention to the First Response

A manager's reaction can shape whether an employee raises the next concern.

Start by acknowledging the issue and asking for an example. Managers can say, "Help me understand where this is getting difficult." They can then clarify what they know, what needs investigation, and when they will follow up. Listening doesn't require agreeing with every suggestion.

Show What Happened Next

Effective employee voice requires complementary channels and leadership support. Two-way communication also depends on listening and acting on feedback.

Give employees a clear update after they raise an issue. Explain what will change, what is still being reviewed, and what can't change right now. If a request is not feasible, explain why rather than leaving employees to guess whether anyone considered it.

Make Speaking Up Part of Daily Work

Build a few simple practices into existing routines:

- Ask about obstacles during regular check-ins.
- Invite input before a decision is final when employees can still influence it.
- Revisit unresolved concerns and report progress.

Employee voice grows through ordinary interactions with leaders. People need opportunities to contribute and evidence that their contributions receive a fair, thoughtful response.

Dear HR Manager | Survey Results Are Positive, but Turnover Is Rising

Our employee surveys generally show high satisfaction, but we are losing people we wanted to keep. Leadership is questioning whether the surveys are useful. How can we better understand what is happening?

-- Looking Beyond the Scores

Dear Looking Beyond the Scores,

The surveys may be useful while still leaving gaps. Employees can like their colleagues and work environment yet leave for better pay, advancement, or a role that fits their needs. Gallup research identified pay or benefits and growth opportunities as leading reasons employees were seeking other jobs. A satisfaction score can't explain every departure.

Start by checking timing and participation. How long ago was the survey conducted, and what changed afterward? Were departing employees represented in the responses? Review whether the questions addressed workload, manager support, and career opportunities, rather than only general satisfaction.

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Next, examine voluntary turnover by role, tenure, and department, using groups large enough to protect privacy. Look for patterns worth investigating, such as departures during the first year or within a particular job family. Patterns are a starting point for questions, not proof of a cause.

Compare those findings with exit feedback, then speak with employees who are still there. Combine surveys with one-on-one conversations and other listening channels. Ask what makes employees want to stay, what makes their work harder and what opportunities they would like to see. Explain how feedback will be used and respect requests for confidentiality. Don't ask managers to identify who submitted critical survey responses.

Choose a specific response based on what you learn. If employees describe unclear advancement requirements, clarify the process and prepare managers to discuss development. Track whether the experience improves through follow-up conversations, relevant survey questions, and turnover trends over time.

Positive survey results deserve attention, but so do departures. Using both helps you understand where the employee experience is working and where further investigation is needed.

– HR Manager

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