

**King County Engagement Survey Action Planning**

**Discussion Guide and Tool Kit**

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**Background**

King County Executive Dow Constantine came into office with a goal of making King County the best run government in the country. He believed strongly that the key to achieving that goal was introducing new operating systems, like Lean, focused on performance excellence, and creating an environment where employees can do their best work. So, in 2015 he launched a new emphasis on employee engagement and soon after wrapped it into a comprehensive people strategy, Investing in You, that prioritizes actions in six goal areas:

* Creating a workplace that embraces your talents and passion for public service
* Providing competitive pay and benefits
* Promoting racial diversity and cultural responsiveness
* Caring about your health and safety, both in and outside of work
* Offering equitable development and advancement opportunities.

All of this guides us toward our True North:

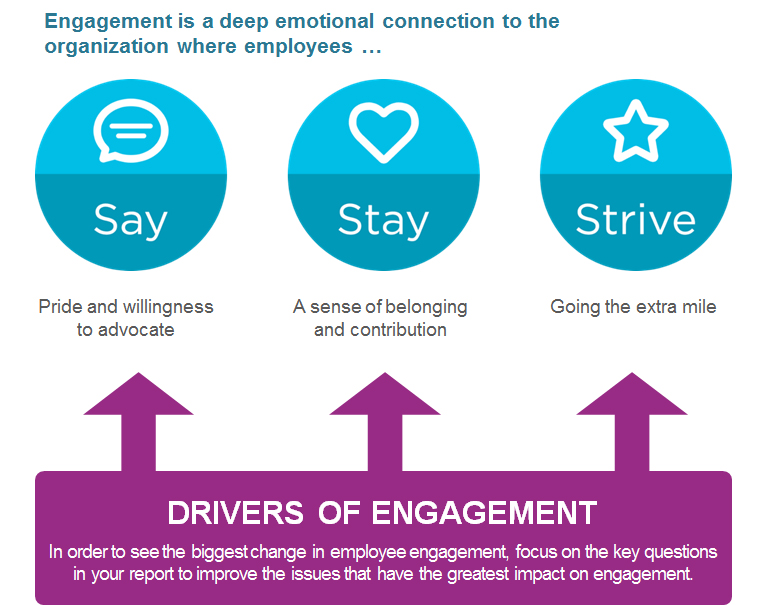
Making King County a welcoming community where every person can thrive.

Why engagement

Research shows a strong relationship between organizational excellence and employee engagement. With a highly engaged workforce, performance goes up and operational costs go down. The data below is from Gallup and shows the difference between outcomes at organizations with a highly engaged workforce vs. not.

How We Measure Engagement

Our framework for measuring how engaged people are is Say, Stay, Strive. These are associated with behaviors that produce the positive outcomes revealed in the research. We also looks at what influences people in feeling this way. We call these engagement drivers. They are different for each person, but when we look in aggregate, we can see where there is commonality and as an organization we can be intentional about providing that.



Framework: how engaged people are

Engagement drivers: what influences engagement

Why action planning

The **purpose** of Action Planning is to address the feedback from the survey and construct a timeline to convert actionable information into positive change.

The **importance** of action planning is that employees will judge the value of the survey based on the actions taken from the survey.

The **reason** why Action Planning is critical? Our research indicates that employees who witness positive change from the survey results are twice as likely to be highly engaged versus those who do not. Moreover, leaders at best-practice organizations focus on engagement year-round by role modeling their language and behavior on a daily basis.

**Process Summary**

This tool kit is designed to guide leaders through the discussion and action planning processes that follow King County’s Employee Engagement Survey. The desired outcome is leader facilitation and active engagement of employees using lean and equity and social justice practices to ensure that all voices are heard, teams are strengthened as well as the health of the organization and the culture of King County.

**Employee Engagement Action Planning Steps**

**Timeline and Expectations**

The following reflects timing for action steps in the employee engagement action plan process. Each step is an opportunity to include employees and make the survey experience relevant. It is not the survey that matters. It is what we do after.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Steps** | **Person Responsible** | **People to Include** | **Mode** | **Timing** |
| Share Survey Results With Team | Leader | All team members | Email or in person | Within one week of results being made available to leaders. |
| Facilitate Team Discussion About Survey Results | Leader | All team members | In person | Within two weeks of receiving survey report. |
| Facilitate Action Plan Workshop:  Pick 1 Thing  Do 2 Things About It | Leader | All team members | In Person | Before the end of July. |
| Enter Action Plan In Tracker | Leader | All team members | Online | Before the end of August. (It will be available end of June) |
| Progress Check-Ins Throughout the Year | Leader and employees | Leader and employees | In person, email, newsletter, tier board, action plan tracker or other methods | Ongoing. At least quarterly. |
| Communicate 3 times | Leader | Leader to employees | Email or in person | 1. June – Aug: What is our action plan 2. Sept – Nov: Progress 3. Dec – Feb: Wrap up |

**Share Survey Results with Team**

The survey is produced from the employee data received. Links will be sent to each team lead. The link will take you to results specific to your team. If you have more teams reporting up through your team, those results will also be available. You are responsible for facilitating action planning with only your immediate team.

Invite your team members to a discussion about the survey results. Schedule this in advance and give them the data in advance so they have time to process and reflect.

Sample invitation email:

Many of you participated in the recent employee engagement survey. What we do with the results, and how we apply the findings is up to us. I would like to schedule time to share and talk about the findings.

Please join me in this discussion. As a later date we will follow up with an action planning work session. This discussion will be to understand our results.

**Survey Report Discussion Sample Agenda**

Recommended room set up: white board or flip charts, copy of report for everyone or report on a screen

10 mins **Leader introduction to the discussion**

Why this matters

What you would like to see out of the time (example: shared understanding, idea of next steps)

Agenda overview

Norms (optional)

15 mins **Get everyone into the space**

Go around the room and have a short ice breaker

Sample: What is engagement to you? Why does it matter to us?

30-60 mins **Share high level findings**

Ask questions and allow for discussion

Sample questions:

* What are our strengths?
* Do results on any items surprise you?
* What are we doing that makes this a strong or weak result?
* Do the key drivers represent what is most important to us?
* What was behind our biggest increases?
* What was behind our biggest decreases?

10 min **Next Steps**

Consider what these mean to us and what we want to do with the information. We will be scheduling the Action Plan Work Session soon. The purpose of this session will be to determine what we want to do and how throughout the rest of the year. We will focus on strengths and areas of opportunity.

10-15 min **Closing Thoughts**

Go around the room and check in with everyone (examples)

* + - What matters to you in the findings?
    - One word to describe where you are at

**Leading and Facilitating the Survey Report Discussion**

Guide the process and the creation of space for the necessary conversations to occur. When a leader facilitates, they assume the role of process guide and step away from participating.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Do** | **Don’t** |
| * **Say thank you a million times for speaking the truth (no matter how bad it is)** * **Focus on 1 or 2 issues for the coming year** * **Actively Listen** * **Ask Questions** * **Encourage the group, instead of an individual, to settle on the action plan focus** | * **Ask who said what** * **Ask who participated** * **Force people to speak up** * **Get defensive** * **Speak into silence. Let people thing and process.** * **Jump to solutions,  take action before really understanding the reports & engaging staff in making meaning of the data** |

The Role of the Leader: Leading and Facilitating

Presentation of the survey results provides an opportunity for sense making and share understanding. Facilitation is a skillful process that takes practice. As a leader, remind yourself to step back so others can step up. Speak less and seek the observations and insights of others in the room.

The role of the team: Inform and Activate

Team members have the responsibility to make sense of and apply the survey results to creating an action plan.

**Core Practices of a Skilled Facilitator**

**Stay Neutral** – Focus on the process role of facilitation. Avoid the temptation of offering opinions. Use questions and suggestions to offer ideas that spring to mind – do not improve opinions on the group. Obtain valid information. Have self-awareness.

**Listen Actively and paraphrase** – Use attentive body language. Always make eye contact with the person speaking. Prompt quiet members to participate. Summarize key ideas by paraphrasing for understanding and to let others know they’ve been heard. Allow space for quiet.

**Summarize periodically and synthesize ideas** – listen attentively to everything that is said to include what is unspoken. Offer concise and timely summaries. Summarize when you want to revive a discussion that has ground to a halt. End with a summary as a wrap up. In addition to recording that is said, have the group comment and build on each other’s thoughts. Build consensus and commitment.

**Manage Digression** – actively listen to make sure digression from the topic is actually happening before trying to redirect. Create group norms around this at the beginning of the meeting. Create a parking lot (holding tank) and post prior to the meeting. Bring digression to the attention of the person or group by asking – I’m noticing that we are starting to move to another topic. Does this need to go on the parking lot at this time?

**Manage conflict** – always be in the neutral process role. Avoid entering into conflict with group members. Stay calm, speak slowly, maintain neutral body language. If possible, reframe a polarizing conflict as an issue or a need. Then, use a systematic problem solving approach that gets people working together. Provide structure and be assertive. Ask for concerns and facilitate the group to focus on the facts.

**Ask Questions**

**Facilitating the Action Plan Work Session**

***Pick 1 Thing, Do 2 Things About It***

**Purpose of the Action Planning Work Session**

Create a plan that can be activated, monitored and celebrated that is driven by your team and what they understood about the survey data.

The Action Planning Work Session begins with an invitation to a scheduled work session. You can gauge how much time you and your team will need for this session.

Sample invitation email:

Greetings,

This is an invitation to an Action Planning Work Session to follow our discussion on (DATE) about the employee engagement survey.

As a next step, we will spend time picking 1 thing to focus on in the coming year and deciding what 2 things we can do that will have a positive impact. I have scheduled (TIME) for this Work Session. If we need more time, we can add another date.

Before our work session, please thing about our strengths and opportunities (ATTACH MINUTES FROM DISSSION) and how we might apply these to our action plan.

See you soon.

**Sample Action Plan Work Session Agenda**

5 mins **Leader introduction to the Work Session**

What we do with the survey is up to us.

Desired outcomes (Pick 1 thing, do 2 things about it)

Agenda overview

Norms (optional)

10 mins **Get everyone into the space**

Go around the room and have a short Q&A

Samples:

What is a strength you have?

What is a strength we have?

What is one word to describe a strength of ours?

15 min **Pick 1 Thing**

What bubbles to the top as things we want to focus on? (Write these down)

Vote with sticky dots, thumbs up or thumbs down or some other way your team feels comfortable with

Welcome discussion about differences of opinion and allow people to change their votes

20 min **Do 2 Things About It**

What two things can you do in the coming year to impact the thing you want to change?

Make SMART goals (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timely)

Assign champions for each thing

5 min **Next Steps**

Set expectations for regular check-ins – ask the team how frequently?

5 Min **Closing thoughts**

Go around the room and check-in with everyone (samples):

What do you feel about our Action Plan progress?

What is your commitment to our Action Plan?

How can we celebrate our milestones and accomplishments?

**Communicate 3 Times**

During the course of the action plan, it’s important to check in on progress and celebrate milestones and accomplishments. In the action plan tracker you will be asked to plan three communication to your group and the tracker will remind you a week before these are due.

**Communication Timing and Topic**

Sample Communication: Our 1 Thing and Plan

Dear Team: Thank you coming together to plan what we will focus our engagement efforts on in the coming year. I wanted to recap our decisions and plan.

1 Thing: Getting better at having difficult conversations

Do 2 Things About It:

1. Team attends Crucial Conversations Training
   1. Steve to identify training by August and send link around for everyone to register
2. Based on training, create norms and reward each other for using tactics
   1. Erin to assemble a team to develop reward plan and roll it out after the training.

Checking in regularly:

1. We will check in at our staff meetings in August, November and February about how things are going.
2. I commit to communicating to the whole team about those check ins.

Thanks for your energetic participation and your commitment to this! I look forward to the coming year.

Sample Communication: Progress

Dear Team,

At our last meeting we checked in about our progress on our action plan and made some adjustments.

Despite our best efforts, not all of us can attend the crucial conversations training at the same time, so rather than put it off any longer, we agreed to attend separately when we can and then come back together and process the training as a group. Below is the link with the training dates and registration. Please choose a date before November. We’ll debrief about the training at our December staff meeting.

To support us in this learning, I am going to purchase some Crucial Conversations books and at our next team meeting we’re going to watch a video. That way we can start to get used to the approach.

Thanks to everyone for helping us get unstuck. I feel good about how we’re moving forward.

Sample Communication: Wrap-Up

Dear Team,

The engagement survey is coming up in a few weeks so I wanted to take a moment to reflect on the past year.

I am really pleased with what we were able to accomplish. For a while it felt like we were stalled but you had great ideas for how to get us moving forward again. We all agreed the training was a great use of time, even though it was hard to get away from work. The training debrief revealed a lot of learning and a solid commitment to using what was taught.

Erin and her team crated a really fun reward program – practicing hard behavior change has never felt so good! We’ve all agreed that we have more work to do, but we’ve made a great start. I look forward to continuing the journey with you this year.

**Resources**

Visit the King County employee engagement action planning page for more resources.

<https://www.kingcounty.gov/audience/employees/employee-survey/action-plan.aspx>

* Engagement driver tool kits for action planning ideas
* Stories about action plans in King County
* Online trainings on how to facilitate the conversation
* Who in your department is available for help
* Step-by-step guide on how to read your report