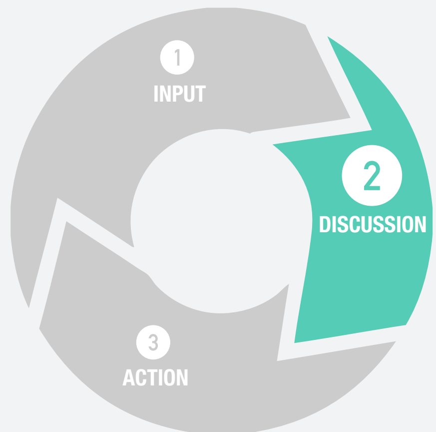
A Quick Guide to

Employee Engagement Cycle: Discussion

Employee engagement is an ongoing process that consists of three stages: input, discussion, and action.

Once you have gathered input, make sure to recognize and celebrate strengths first. This will allow your team to continue to be successful in areas that are creating engagement! The goal of discussion is to answer the following questions rather than problem-solve:

- Which issues are the most important to address, given our goals and priorities?
- Which issues will get in our way if we don't address them?
- Which issues are not a high priority, even if they could use improvement?



Employee Engagement Cycle

In practice, the input and discussion phases might not be so distinct - especially if formal engagement survey data is unavailable. In those cases, input and discussion may happen at the same time.

How do I discuss the input?

Effective discussion involves making sense of the input by placing it within the context of the team/department, prioritizing the issues that affect your group's goals, and a deeper understanding of those issues to create an action plan to address them.

1. **Begin with gathering the input.**

   Input examples: employee engagement survey reports, notes or summaries of conversations, feedback, etc.

2. **Consider the context of when the input was gathered and identify what influenced the responses**.

   It is important to consider changes over the last year as well as what events and context were occurring when the input was gathered. Inviting your employees to discuss the context for their input can help clarify and create a deeper understanding of the issues.

   While external factors can influence employee engagement, be sure not to discount feedback solely based on the impact of these external factors. Faculty and staff can help you find ways of taking action locally to address the important issues.

Employee Engagement Cycle: Discussion (Cont.)

3. Determine which issues need to be addressed to advance your team/department's goals and priorities.

Choose 1-3 areas that are most critical for advancing goals and priorities. Discuss how these fit within the bigger picture, why the team should be prioritizing these issues, and how addressing these issues will contribute to the overall success in achieving goals.*

> * See the *Defining a Clear Purpose for Team Success quick guide* for steps on making these connections.

4. Seek a deeper understanding of the specific underlying issues.

Ask yourself. Each of the engagement drivers has a list of self-reflection questions* that will help you dig deeper.

Ask your team. Each of the engagement drivers has a list of discussion questions* that you can ask your team/department to help make sense of their feedback and clarify the issues. Make sure to ask these questions and give everyone time to reflect. These discussion questions can be used as part of meetings or 1:1 conversations.

> * See the *Employee Engagement Self-Reflection Questions and Employee Engagement Discussion Questions* quick guides for a full list of questions by driver.

How do I facilitate a discussion?

There are several ways to go about facilitating an employee engagement feedback discussion, it can be formal or informal, and with or without help from a third party. When thinking about options that will work for your team/department, consider your own emotions** and possible defensiveness as well as the ways to create trust** to ensure comfort with having difficult conversations.

Ideas for structuring discussions:

- Informal discussion in 1:1 check-ins or group discussions (e.g., faculty or staff meeting).
- Formal discussion with or without the supervisor. Consult with your local HR team for possible options.
- If you have tried to have open and honest conversations about the feedback but it doesn't help, or you feel defensive and cannot put those feelings aside for a conversation, or if you think employees may not feel comfortable sharing feedback specifically about a particular topic, consider bringing in an external consultant.

> ** See the *Managing Emotions and Building Trust* quick guides of the *Managing Conflict* module for tips and techniques.

Employee Engagement Cycle: Discussion (Cont.)

Tips for leading a successful group discussion

AVOID PROBLEM-SOLVING

It's important to avoid problem-solving during a discussion as it may hinder idea creation. This provides an opportunity to share ideas, and confirm major strengths and opportunities for the team.

CREATE THE RIGHT CLIMATE AND TONE

Leaders can facilitate a positive feedback discussion by establishing realistic expectations for participating in the session. In addition, it's important to:

- Recognize the risk that members of your group/team take by speaking out and sharing feedback verbally.
- As the leader, you set the tone by clearly stating that you are not interested in who answered positively or negatively.

* See the *Quick Guide to Establishing Norms and Expectations for steps on creating the right climate.*

ESTABLISH DISCUSSION AGENDA

- Focus on the main input themes to avoid overwhelming people with information. In all communications, give a balanced picture to establish credibility and remember the strengths of your team.
- Try not to appear defensive during the session, rationalize negative feedback results, or shift responsibility.
- As you lead the session, summarize your understanding of the feedback and reflect back the team's input. Highlight priority issues and next steps to ensure everyone knows what they can expect next.

As you lead the discussion, watch out for:

- Silence, this could mean the group is confused or disagrees with something you say. Take time to pause and clarify.
- Because your goal is to hear ideas to develop a deeper understanding, beware of making premature commitments and/or defer proposed solutions.
- Be careful not to use the words "need" or "should" as they may be too solution-focused for the purpose of the discussion.