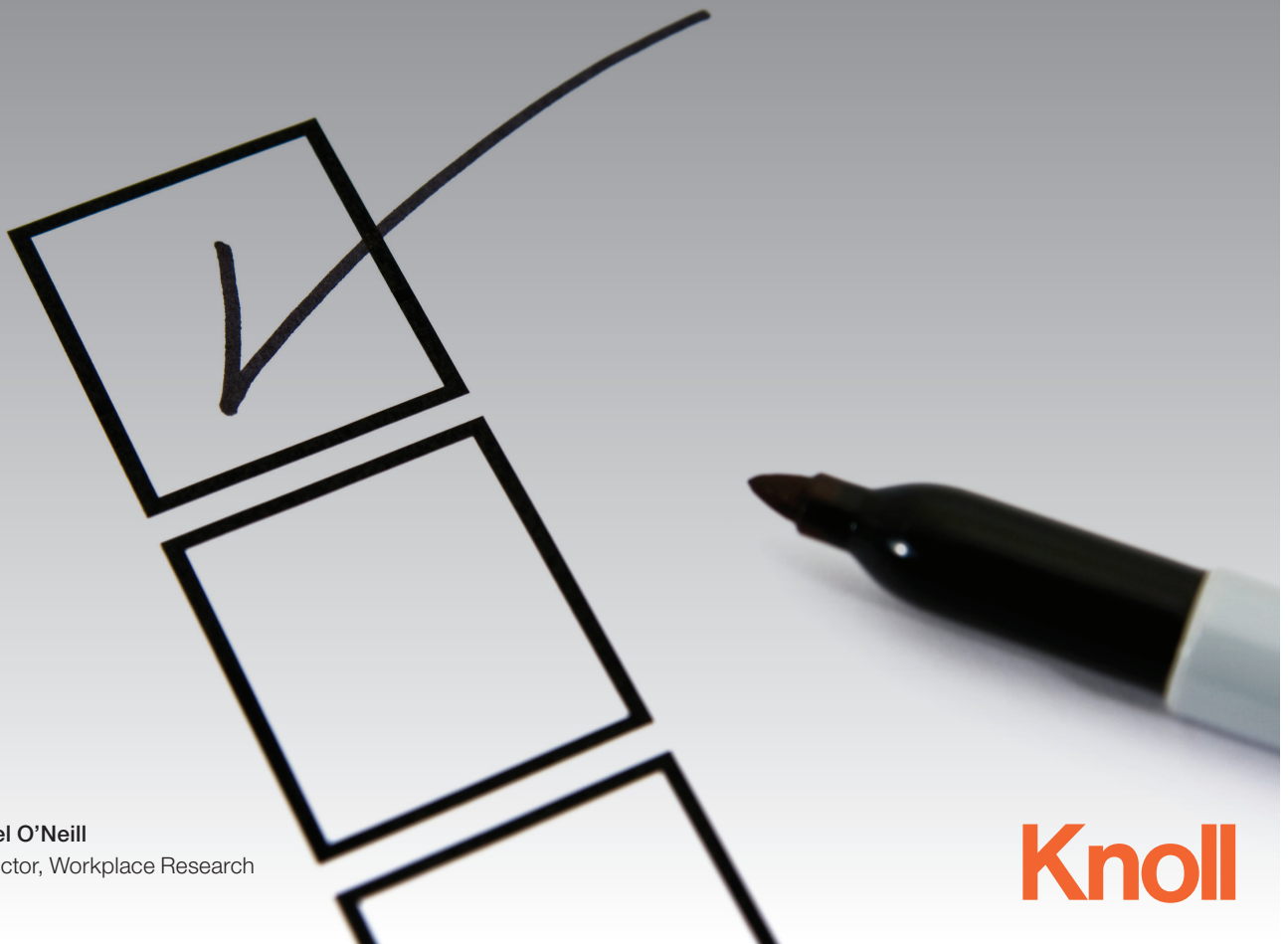Managing Workplace Change

Three Keys to Successful Change Readiness Surveys

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Three Keys to Successful Change Readiness Surveys

Successfully managing workplace change is critical to project success

There's no question about it. **Workplaces are changing—because the nature of work and the role of the workplace in business strategy are changing. Organizations of all sizes, across all sectors, are re-planning and re-configuring their workplaces to better attune them to the work processes and workstyles at hand.**

If your organization is planning such a change, you are not alone. Knoll has worked with many organizations through the process of implementing workplace changes—some simple, some quite complex.

In this paper, we offer three simple steps to fully using the power of the online survey as part of a successful workplace change management process.

A survey to take the "pulse of the organization" is central to managing workplace change

An initial step in the change management process is a "change readiness" survey, which is designed to provide insights on how employees are dealing with the upcoming change as well as communication preferences.

This paper shares some of our insights specific to the survey process and offers guidelines for a successful survey experience.

Online surveys have evolved from their origins as a simple method of collecting data, to a means of initiating a real dialogue on important topics. Whether intended or not, a change readiness survey, and the process used to manage it, communicates a message influencing employee expectations about the future. Thus, the opportunity exists to use the survey as a strategic part of the change management process, to educate, inform and even to engage employees in a dialogue about the workplace.

Many organizations conduct change readiness surveys with employees who will be affected by major changes to the workplace strategy and planning models. Such a tool can provide insights into how well employees understand the reasons for the change, their hopes for the success of the new space, and their preferred communication methods and media. People may have different perspectives on change depending upon their demographic characteristics.

Thus, it is important to have participants identify their:

‣ Job type
‣ Department
‣ Generational affiliation

For "job type" categories, use general descriptions such as:

‣ Executive
‣ Manager
‣ Professional/technical
‣ Administrative

For "generational affiliation," use:

‣ Baby Boomer (born 1946 – 1964)
‣ Generation X (born 1965 – 1978)
‣ Generation Y (born 1979 – 1997)

The data can be then analyzed to understand the perspectives of specific constituents. This information can be used to refine the central message and to craft targeted messaging and media throughout the course of the project.

Such a survey should not exceed 15 questions, close with a request for open-ended comments about the move, and take no more than 10 to 12 minutes for a busy employee to complete. A key benefit of such a survey is it provides people with a simple, confidential way to share their perspectives and concerns (Figure 1).

Figure 1. A pre-move "change readiness" survey quickly and inexpensively captures the pulse of the organization.

Use these sample questions as a foundation for an effective change readiness survey. We suggest you use a response scale in which 1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree.

Include three demographics questions pertaining to departmental membership, job type, and generational affiliation. Survey results can be filtered according to different combinations of these demographic factors.

1. I am personally comfortable with the upcoming change to our workplace.

2. I have the skills and knowledge necessary to manage this change successfully.

3. I am clear on the business reasons for the change to the facility and workspace.

4. I am confident that my new primary workspace (personal office) will serve my work needs.

5. I am confident that the new meeting spaces will serve our needs.

6. Overall, I feel that the new facility will help us all get our work done more effectively.

7. Select your three preferred methods that management could use to share information with employees about the move.

   ‣ Paper memo
   ‣ Regular emails
   ‣ Regular voice mail messages
   ‣ Text messages I can sign up for
   ‣ Company Facebook page
   ‣ Twitter updates
   ‣ Face to face updates from my supervisor
   ‣ Postings in public spaces (café, meeting spaces)
   ‣ Town hall type meetings for departments

8. What two things could management do to make this workplace change more successful?

The 3 Keys To Successful Surveys

A three step communication program throughout the survey process will lead to a positive experience for employees and ensure higher participation rates:

1. Build support for the upcoming survey through effective pre-communication

Pre-survey communication is an important means of enhancing the perceived importance of the survey, and thus, increasing employee participation. Ideally the communication should come directly from a senior executive sponsor of the workplace change. The content of the communication should provide some context, the business reasons for the change, benefits to employees, and a request for participation in the survey (Figure 2).

If you have an electronic monthly or regular newsletter, this is a good place to feature this executive communication. Even if done exclusively through an email message, notifying your respondent group of a forthcoming survey, the executive sponsor, and its purpose will increase the response rate.

2. Reinforce the message when distributing the survey

When you dispatch a link to an online survey via email, take advantage of this additional chance to communicate your message and build support (Figure 3).

Much of the benefits and "big picture" information you will want to communicate should be in the email body so that you can keep your survey as clean and visually light as possible. If you have sent out pre-survey communications, reference it in the email body for continuity.

After a survey has been submitted by a respondent, create a "thank-you" landing page message to confirm that the survey data has been captured or to convey other information related to the survey process or project.

Second and third-round distributions of your survey, sent to people who have not responded, should have a different message in the subject line and email body. You may want to simply include something like: "This is a friendly reminder that we would still like

Pre-Survey Communication

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To: All Associates
From: The CEO
Subject: Exciting News

Hello everybody. I am excited to announce today that after an extensive year-long
search we have signed a lease to move our offices. It is fitting that as we celebrate
our 75th anniversary, we will do so in a new home. The new location's proximity
to The Museum of Modern Art, where we have over 40 of our designs as part of the
permanent collection, is tremendously appealing. Central to numerous subway lines,
our new home will be easier for both corporate and residential clients to visit and
experience what we do in a dramatic new setting.

We will occupy the second, third and fourth floors of the new building. There will
be an internal staircase connecting all of our floors. From the street, clients and
those passing by will have visibility into our showroom. Our showroom and offices
have dramatic floor to ceiling glass windows affording exciting urban views.

Shortly, we will be asking many of you to participate in an initial needs assessment
survey, and I look forward to your continued involvement as we shape our new home.

This survey explores several topics related to the workspace and upcoming move and
should take no longer than a few minutes of your time to complete.

Your survey will be emailed to you no later than May 30 with the following subject
line: Workplace Survey.

We look forward to hearing from you. I am confident that we will create an office
facility that we will be proud to walk clients through — that will allow each of you
to be as happy and productive as possible.

Thanks again for all that you do to make our company everything we are today and
will be tomorrow.

The CEO
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Figure 2. Pre-survey communication is an important means of building participation in the survey by enhancing its perceived importance to employees.

Online Survey

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To: All Associates
Subject: Online Survey

If you have taken the survey, thank you. You can ignore this message.

If not, please read this message and take this survey.

We want to make your new workspace as effective as possible, and offer an engaging
move experience. While many design decisions have been made, your input through
this survey will help us fine tune the planning concepts and furnishings for the new
space.

To that end, we need you to honestly assess the current workspace and share your
understanding about the new move.

This survey is completely anonymous- your name will never be associated with the
data.

Set aside 10 minutes if uninterrupted time to take the survey. If you stop halfway
through, you will need to restart the survey from the beginning.

To take the survey, click on the link  http://www.survey.com
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Figure 3. When you dispatch a link to an online survey through email, reinforce key project benefits or other elements of the message.

to hear from you. Your voice matters." Each communication activity should build upon the previous message.

3. Post-survey communication can increase future participation

The survey is complete. You've got your data and analyzed the results. An important, yet often overlooked, component of the survey process is validating to participants that their time was, indeed, worthwhile. Like that promised phone call after a first date, it's a nice way to say "hey, the time you took to respond mattered to me."

Validate employees' investment in time by sharing what was learned from the survey (Figure 4). One way to do this is to provide a short, high level summary of the results with key insights and if possible, action steps. The summary can be written and distributed via email, posted online, shared face to face in the form of an "all hands" presentation, or presented by managers at work team meetings, depending on communication preferences and size of the audience. This sends a message to employees that the management team is listening and values the time they took to participate in the survey. The follow-up may also increase the potential "buy-in" for participation in future surveys by employees.

Keeping this three step strategy in mind will contribute to a positive employee experience, ensure higher participation rates, and generate better quality data—for better workplaces.

Post-Survey Communication

To: All Associates
Subject: Office Move – Project Update

A big thank you to everyone for your participation in the recent Workspace Assessment survey. In this survey, we asked you to assess the current workspace and share your thoughts about the upcoming change.

Your voice has been heard – we got 90% participation. We have attached a short summary of the survey results. Here are a couple of quick facts from the survey:

ONE: Our employees evenly represent three generations at work

TWO: The oldest employees (Boomers) are the most satisfied with technology

THREE: Top 3 preferred methods of project communication are emails, Town Hall meetings and face-to-face updates

The insights from this survey are being used by the design team to ensure that the new planning model is aligned with your needs – and at the same time is moving us forward to support the way we need to work in the future, and the story we need to tell clients. Again – thank you for your support. Look for regular updates as we get closer to the move.

Regards,
Your Change Management Team

Figure 4. Reciprocate employees' investment in time by sharing a quick, high level synopsis of the results. Attach a summary report with more detailed information for those who are interested.

References and Additional Reading

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Through research, Knoll explores the connection between workspace design and human behavior, health and performance, and the quality of the user experience. We share and apply what we learn to inform product development and help our customers shape their work environments. To learn more about this topic or other research resources Knoll can provide, visit www.knoll.com/research/index.jsp

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