



Case Study: Unilever Pulse Check

In 2004, Unilever unveiled a new 5-year corporate strategy. Called 'Vitality', the new strategy had far-reaching implications for the organisation and their world-famous brands. Unilever's Corporate Communications department wanted to measure and monitor perceptions of the new brand and strategy over time. They also wanted to improve internal communications, by identifying best practice, highlighting areas for improvement and introducing metrics to the development of their communications planning. Unilever asked Pulse Check to devise and manage a series of quarterly pulse surveys. These surveys allow them to gauge employee attitudes to the new corporate strategy and provide feedback to help them improve internal communications.

The Challenge

Unilever asked Pulse Check to meet several key objectives:

1. Measure the extent to which employees were aligned with the business's key strategic initiatives as they were rolled out
2. Gauge the attitudes of employees in a multitude of divisions, business groups and geographical locations to the variety of communication channels which played a part in communicating the new strategy
3. Design survey interfaces that would engage respondents in order to maximise responses
4. Deliver results and analysis rapidly to an Executive group which needed to feedback to the business
5. Repeat the survey on a quarterly basis to measure changes in attitudes over time and provide trend analysis

The right questions for the right people

Pulse Check worked with Unilever's Global Corporate Communication department to develop the right questions for the target audience. 33 questions were developed; however, with respondents in a wide variety of business groups, it was necessary to also create 11 survey sub-sets containing questions unique to particular business groups. When a user signed in to the survey, their business group then dictated which set of questions they were asked.

Languages

Unilever is a multinational business and despite its main business language being English it was necessary to develop content in other key languages. Currently respondents can answer the Unilever Pulse Check in Chinese, Spanish and Portuguese as well as English.



Research tied to business needs

The Unilever Pulse is designed to identify how employees feel about a range of issues, including the corporate re-branding. The content was divided into five areas:

1. Strategy
2. Performance
3. You and Unilever
4. Leadership
5. Communication

Questions were scored on a 1-5 (strongly disagree – strongly agree) Likert scale

As well as closed ended questions, Pulse Check used free text questions to gather qualitative data; ensuring that Unilever could identify specific or recurring issues but also, providing an opportunity for employees voices to be heard in a time of major change. Free text responses - like all other questions – could then be filtered by sign-in fields to make management and analysis as efficient as possible.

Instant results from real-time reports

The results of the Unilever Pulse Check were made available to administrators in real-time through a password protected online reports module. This provided key decision makers with instant access to the data.

The reports, which could be filtered by all relevant sign-in fields, were broken up into 5 main areas:

Total response rates and percentages

Per question, across survey sets and survey set combinations (common questions).

Average response and standard deviation

The mean response for each question, survey set or survey set combination.

Sample Size

Total response broken down by all relevant sign in fields

Tracking

Track mean responses for common questions and those specific to each survey set.

Additional analysis

As well as online reports, Pulse Check provided the Corporate Communications team both with offline analysis and reporting tools which allowed them to configure reports and export charts and raw data to Word, Excel and PowerPoint; and with statistical analysis of the data in order to identify key relationships and drivers.



Key Results

- The data provided the Corporate Communications department with a clearer picture of how employees want internal communications to work. This allowed them to reallocate resources accordingly and dedicate more support to certain areas.
- The company now has a firm measurement scale in place allowing them to see how well the new strategy is being absorbed and developed by staff around the world over the next 5 years.
- Unilever staff reported that they liked the Pulse Check format for its ease of use and welcomed the opportunity to air their views to senior management.