



Name of your organization: Cengage Group

How do you use the People Insights Platform today?

Cengage Group has used the Perceptyx People Insights Platform for our annual engagement survey for over four years. In the fall of 2023, we migrated our onboarding and exit surveys to the Platform. For onboarding, we use three different versions of the survey (14 days, 60 days, and 180 days of tenure) to collect longitudinal data over the course of employees' first six-months of onboarding.

Our human resource business partners (HRBPs) have full access to all three dashboards and part of their workflow is to regularly review and report findings to the business leaders they support. In the future, we plan to create integrated dashboards that follow the employee lifecycle by linking insights from onboarding to engagement to exit. Additionally, we plan to incorporate our exit interview process into the People Insights Platform in the second half of 2024. This will enable us to better link qualitative and quantitative insights related to employee turnover.

Finally, we recently implemented the Ask self-service platform and are already using it to collect data related to internal training and development programs such as our "New People Leader Academy". Later this year we'll use the platform to conduct a six-month follow-up pulse engagement survey.

Please share your EX Impact story. Detail your challenge, solution, and impact.

Challenge

Before September 2019, Cengage Group had limited capabilities to conduct efficient and effective company-wide employee surveying. As a result, we relied on one-off engagement surveys coupled with anecdotal accounts from managers and business leaders. This lack of consistent and reliable data left us with an incomplete picture and limited our ability to positively impact workplace culture.

In response to this challenge, Cengage Group leadership sought to engage and invest in employee listening to empower data-based HR decision-making. Initially, we set a goal to collect data that would enable us to identify areas of organizational strength and weakness, thereby informing action planning to improve the overall employee experience and make us a better company.

Solution

In September 2019, we embarked on a partnership with Perceptyx and launched a company-wide employee engagement survey. The priorities we set then remain the same today: Invite all global, regular employees with at least one month of tenure to participate, translate the survey into Spanish, Portuguese, and Simplified Chinese, deliver dashboards to all managers with at least 4 or more respondents, and only ask about topics we intend to take action against should scores reveal they need attention or improvement.



In terms of survey design, we utilized questions from the Perceptyx employee experience library. Using these items, we focused our efforts on establishing baseline scores regarding important topics such as clarity of direction, continuous improvement, manager relationship, teamwork, employee empowerment, recognition and reward, growth and development, and pride in company. We also included three custom items that were specific to our company's guidance around regularly scheduled one-on-one meetings between managers and direct reports.

Once we launched the survey, we kept it open for two full weeks to allow employees plenty of time to participate at their convenience. To encourage participation, we partnered with our internal communications team to create a multi-modal communications strategy that consisted of a launch email from our CEO, templated launch emails and occasional reminders sent by business unit leaders, and reminders/mentions included in our bi-weekly managers-only memo and our weekly all-employee memo. These efforts paid off as we reached an astounding 88% completion rate, well above the Perceptyx average of 77%.

Scores from this survey revealed important findings that could be categorized into three general themes: employees wanted more support in their growth and development efforts, they wanted to see the company make further investments in DEIB to ensure Cengage was an inclusive workplace, and finally, employees HIGHLY valued regular connections with their managers.

To demonstrate to employees our commitment to this new survey program to improve employee experience, we knew we needed to make concrete improvements. We chose three large, top-down initiatives:

1. Created the Professional Development Framework, which consists of actionable support designed to enable every employee to pursue their professional development.
2. Built out a centralized approach to inclusion and diversity through the creation of Employee Resource Groups to support underrepresented employee populations.
3. Further formalized the recommendation that managers hold 1:1 meetings with each direct report at least every other week for 30 minutes.

These three company-wide efforts were in addition to the actions taken at the "grassroots" manager-driven level, as all managers were responsible for creation action plans using Perceptyx's 1-2-3 action planning method. This combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches ensured that employees were aware of and experienced the workplace improvements we worked so hard to create.

Since late 2019, we have run three additional engagement surveys: in early 2021, 2022, and 2023. While our general approach has remained the same (global roll-out, language translations, manager dashboards, etc.) we have added, removed, or edited survey items each year in response to, or anticipation of, changing HR and business priorities.

For example, in the March 2021 survey we expanded our focus on collecting employee perceptions of DEIB:

- My manager treats all colleagues fairly, regardless of their backgrounds.
- People on my team trust and respect each other.



- It is safe for me to speak up and express my views/opinions, without fear of negative consequences (i.e., retaliation).
- I can be my authentic self at work, without fear of negative consequences (i.e., bullying, retaliation).

In March 2022 we dug further into DEIB, communication effectiveness, career management, and compensation philosophy:

- My manager models inclusive behaviors.
- My manager encourages and/or supports my participation in optional social or cultural programming that interests me.
- There is effective communication between departments.
- I receive sufficient communication about what is happening at the company.
- Company-wide communications are effective/useful.
- Cengage Group provides the resources I need to effectively manage my career.
- I can achieve my career goals at Cengage Group.
- I understand how my pay is determined.
- There is a clear link between my performance and compensation.

And most recently, in January 2023 we increased our focus on transparency, health and wellbeing/benefits, and feedback about our remote-first work policy:

- My team practices open, honest, and direct communication.
- Cengage Group cares about my health and wellbeing.
- I am satisfied with the benefits provided at Cengage Group (i.e., medical/dental/vision/life insurance, disability benefits, retirement savings, etc.; affordability and comprehensiveness).
- I believe my team's norms in our new working model (i.e., Virtual, OfficeFlex, Onsite) provide me with the ability to manage my work and personal needs.

Impact

Today, it has been more than four years since our first survey and we can demonstrate that, year-over-year, our continued efforts in these areas have made Cengage an even better place to work.

From 2019 to 2023:

- Engagement Index scores increased from 79 to 85% (Perceptyx benchmark = 77%)
- Manager Relationship scores increased from 86 to 93% (Perceptyx benchmark = 82%)
- Perceptions of the quality of Manager 1:1s increased from 69% to 86% (custom items with no Perceptyx benchmark)
- Growth & Development scores increased from 61 to 73% (Perceptyx benchmark = 65%)
- DEIB Index scores increased from 77 to 88% (Perceptyx benchmark = 75%)

Data collected in our 2021 survey revealed a consistent, statistically significant positive relationship between engagement scores and each of our manager 1:1 items, indicating that our highly engaged employees have 1:1s that are effective at addressing professional development, performance feedback, and health and wellbeing.

We also learned that, compared to our highly engaged employees, our least engaged employees were almost four times more likely to report having infrequent planned 1:1s with their manager, with infrequent being defined as two or fewer times per year. Our formalized recommendation for at least bi-weekly manager-employee 1:1s was based on the data showing that 80% of highly engaged employees had either weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly 1:1s with their manager.

We've maintained a strong focus on manager-employee 1:1s that occur frequently and consist of high-quality discussion. Employees frequently point to this as something that contributes profoundly to their experience here.

Please see the attached supporting documentation for further evidence of the positive impact of Perceptyx's People Insight Platform on employee engagement here at Cengage.

In summary, XYZ we evolved from a company with limited employee engagement capabilities to a people-first organization equipped and empowered with data-driven insights that enable us to positively transform our workplace culture.

Which business outcome measures did your organization use to determine the impact on employees?

- Increased participation rates (surveys and listening events)
- Improved pride in the company, improved morale and sentiment
- Improved intent to stay with the company, decreased employee turnover
- Improved sense of personal accomplishment, and discretionary effort
- Increased willingness to recommend the company's products and services

Do you have any additional KPIs/Metrics to demonstrate your impact on EX?

- We consistently have high engagement survey completion rates, regardless of survey length (see slide 2). We also have high completion rates on our onboarding surveys (60%, 53%, and 59%) as well as on our exit survey (70%) (slide 6).
- After analyzing 2019 survey data we learned that highly engaged employees have frequent and effective 1:1s with their managers, and our least engaged employees were 4x more likely to have infrequent 1:1s (see slide 4). This led us to create a formal recommendation that 1:1s should occur at least every 2 weeks, and we subsequently saw increases in the 1:1 and manager relationship categories in our following engagement surveys up to 11 percentage points (slide 3)!
- We formalized our DEIB role in December 2020, and then saw an increase of 6 percentage points in our DEIB category in the following engagement survey which took place approximately two months later. We now consistently see high DEIB scores year over year (slide 3).
- As a result of our increased investment in DEIB efforts we also earned perfect scores of 100 on the Corporate Equality Index in 2021 & 2022.
- Recently, our focus has been on increasing impact in growth and development. We rolled out a new professional development framework in 2022 and have seen a cumulative 10 percentage

point increase in that category (slide 3). Knowing growth and development is still our main category of low scoring drivers (slide 5), we're focused on continuing growth and development programs, especially through our employee resource groups and for our managers.

- We also have learned that two of the highest engagement drivers from our 6-month onboarding survey are also two of the main focus areas from our exit survey (slide 6). These two items are 28 percentage points and 20 percentage points respectively below favorability on the exit survey compared to the six-month onboarding survey.
- From 2019 through 2023, our lowest voluntary turnover rate was 8.4% (2023), down from 11.5% in 2019. Voluntary turnover hasn't exceeded 12.9% during these years.