UK Employee Engagement

The State of Play - Autumn 2021

VRAMP

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1. Introduction

> " *Has the ethos of employee engagement reached beyond the big brands?*
>
> *How valued is the function of internal comms and employee engagement?*
>
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In decades to come 2020 will be seen as the year of the global pandemic. But it was also the year that changed how organisations function and how many of their leaders think. Internal communications and employee engagement has never played a more important role than it did during the pandemic. Suddenly, the messages about safety and wellbeing had a new level of importance, as did the need to communicate effectively with everyone.

Post pandemic, we were keen to explore the evolution of employee communication and engagement. How far have we come? Has the ethos of employee engagement reached beyond the big brands? How valued is the function of internal comms and employee engagement? How far do we still need to go?

To help us reach these conclusions we interviewed over 200 internal communication and employee engagement professionals to get their view on the state of play in UK employee engagement. The results paint a very unfinished picture for employee engagement.

Read on to see where employee engagement has reached on its evolution, how your organisation compares and what you can do to improve the engagement of your employees.

2. The journey so far for employee engagement

Forty years ago "employee engagement" wasn't even a term. Organisations may have talked about "employee satisfaction" but the concept of truly engaging with employees was alien. But our working lives changed and this forced businesses to think differently.

In the 60s many people had a job for life and they saw that as a real privilege. But competition, a shift from a manufacturing economy to one that was more serviced focused and various economic downturns all led to a much more fluid working life. People shifted from job to job, whether through redundancy or to progress their career. Job security was no longer a driver of loyalty. Instead, people craved flexibility and progression. This opportunity-driven attitude to work made businesses switch on to the concept of employee satisfaction.

By the 1990s employees were now in power. They chose when to start and leave employment and for every employee that left, the employer had to spend money to recruit their replacement. The expense made businesses readdress their relationship with employees. They started to recognise the value of retaining their staff and reports started to emerge about the direct link between employee attitudes and business performance.

By the late 90s some organisations were starting to implement loyalty and engagement strategies. By the 2000s it was more common to see standalone employee engagement and internal communication functions within larger organisations. This was made significantly easier by a raft of technological advances in the same decade which enabled communicators to add software onto their toolbelt.

In 2011 the Government emphasised the financial benefit of employee engagement when it launched the 'Engage for Success' movement. This was a very public drive to encourage a much wider community to take employee engagement seriously.

By 2020 the benefits of employee engagement were clear for everyone to see with many large organisations putting forward strong case studies to back up this theory. The global pandemic brought internal communication and employee engagement to the limelight but this time the focus wasn't on the financial impact, but the health and wellbeing of employees.

This is an enormous evolution in 50 years but how much further do we need to go?

Employee engagement timeline

1970s — Employee satisfaction started to be considered

1990s — The importance of employee loyalty increased

2000s — Employee engagement started to become a business function

2010s — Technology facilitated a greater scope for employee engagement

2020s — Every business needed an employee comms & engagement business function

3. Who are the leaders of the pack?

3.1 Does organisational size make a difference?

When employee engagement was starting to be considered as a business function 30 years ago, the evolution of employee engagement was always going to be one that starts with the big brand names. They typically have a lot of employees, budgets to match and are very visible in the public eye. Any improvements they make to employee engagement will not just benefit their productivity but also their brand reputation. That's why we saw UK brands such as Virgin and John Lewis lead the way. Looking at today, has employee engagement trickled down into the lesser known companies and if it has, to what extent?
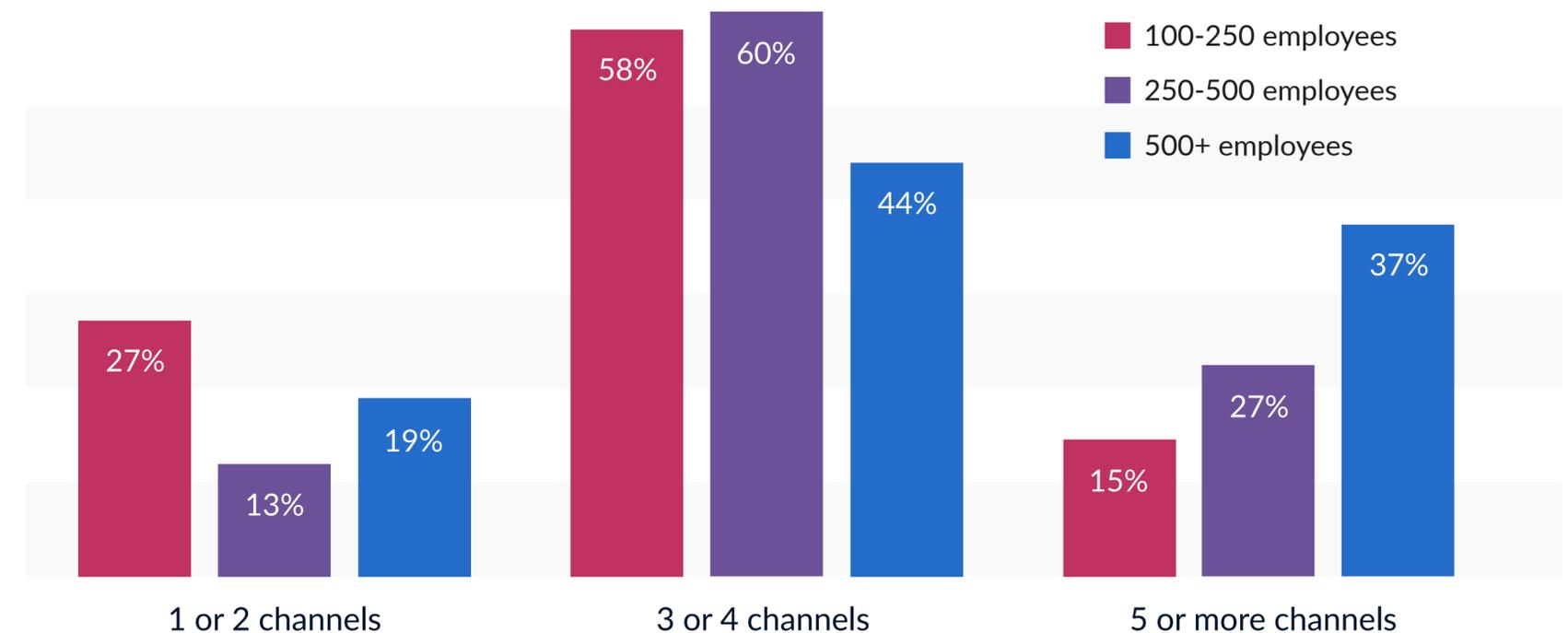
Analysing the VRAMP employee engagement survey results by employee size, we can see how extensive employee engagement has become.

Number of channels used

First, we looked at how many channels each organisation uses to communicate with their employees. There are some differences between the size of organisation and the number of channels they use but the majority use 3-4 channels to communicate with their employees. These channels vary and often include email, team meetings, intranet, employee engagement apps and survey tools.

Larger organisations typically use the most channels, with 81% of respondents in large organisations stating that they use at least 3 channels and 37% of those use 5 or more channels. A significantly higher percentage than their smaller counterparts with just 15% of organisations with 100-250 employees utilising 5 or more channels to communicate.

Chart 1: Number of channels used vs size of organisation

Legend:
- 100-250 employees
- 250-500 employees
- 500+ employees

1 or 2 channels: 27%, 13%, 19%
3 or 4 channels: 58%, 60%, 44%
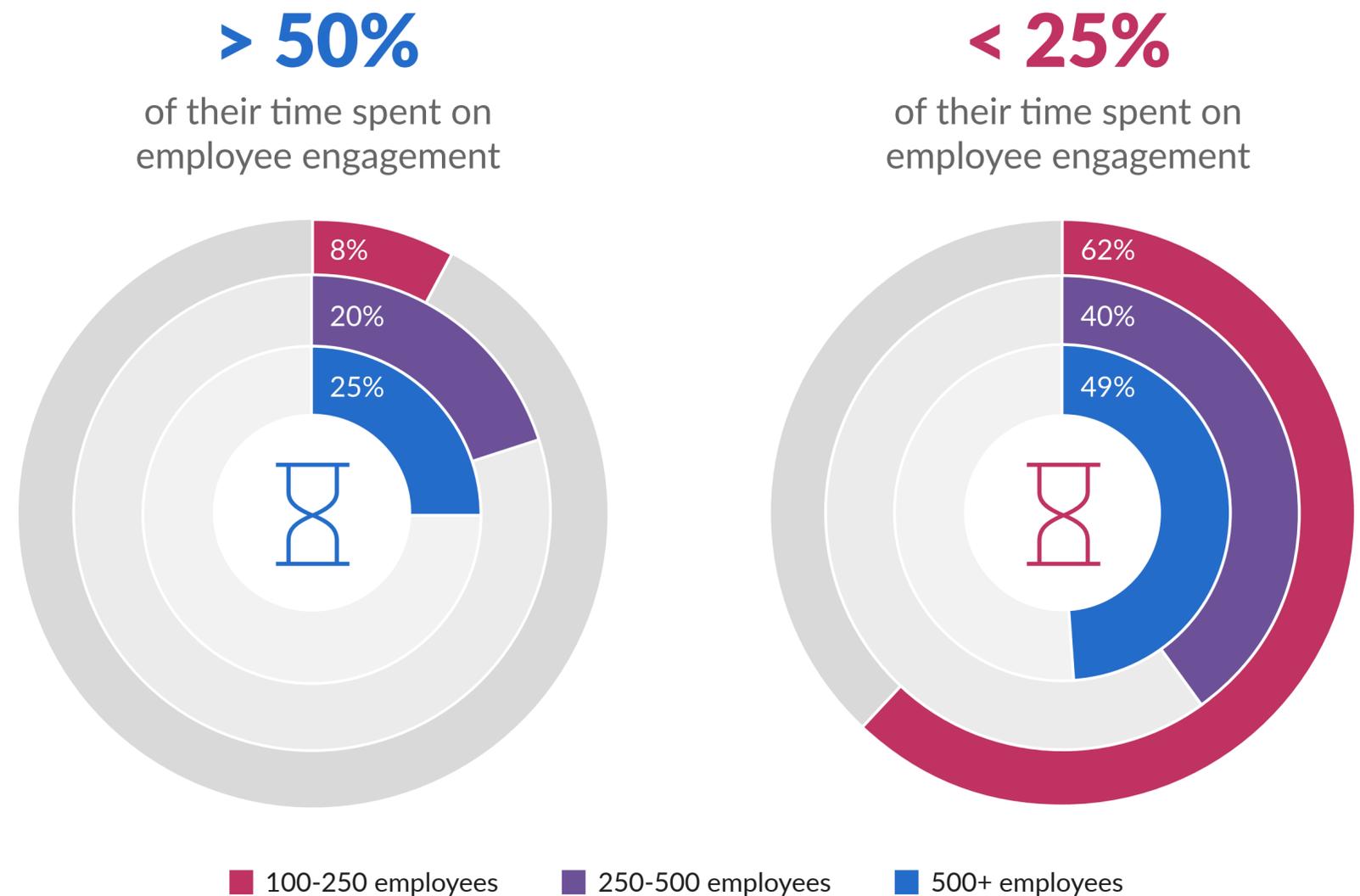5 or more channels: 15%, 27%, 37%

Time focused on internal comms and employee engagement

Larger organisations have more ways to communicate with their employees, but do those responsible for this function also spend more time doing so?

Chart 2 highlights that they do. But it is still only a quarter of those within organisations with 500 or more employees who spend more than 50% of their working life on the function of internal communications and employee engagement. Those with less employees (100-250) are gifted with far less time. In fact, a huge proportion (62%) of the smaller organisations spend less than 25% of their time working on internal comms and employee engagement. Delving into this deeper, nearly a third (31%) spend less than 10% of their working time on the function.

With such low numbers across the board, it suggests that very few organisations have a standalone internal comms and employee engagement function. Instead, the function of employee comms and engagement is just one facet of a wider job role.

Chart 2: Time spent on employee engagement vs size of organisation

> 50%
of their time spent on employee engagement

8%

20%

25%

< 25%
of their time spent on employee engagement

62%

40%

49%

■ 100-250 employees   ■ 250-500 employees   ■ 500+ employees

Number of people focused on internal comms and employee engagement

Given communication and engagement professionals get to spend so little time focused on this function, we next explored what support they have from colleagues.

As you would expect, larger organisations have a lot more people involved; 65% with 500 or more employees said there are at least 5 people responsible for internal comms and employee engagement.

Those within smaller organisations are clearly carrying out employee communication as part of a wider role with many sharing the duties with colleagues.

Interestingly, it is the mid-sized organisations who have the least support with 47% just having one other colleague who supports them and 7% doing it by themselves. As with all their peers, their time is also stretched with nearly three quarters (73%) spending less than half of their time focused on employee comms and engagement.

To summarise the above, those who work within small to mid sized organisations are juggling many plates. While their peers in larger organisations appear to have a little more time and support.

Chart 3: No. in team vs size of organisation

8%
7%
7%
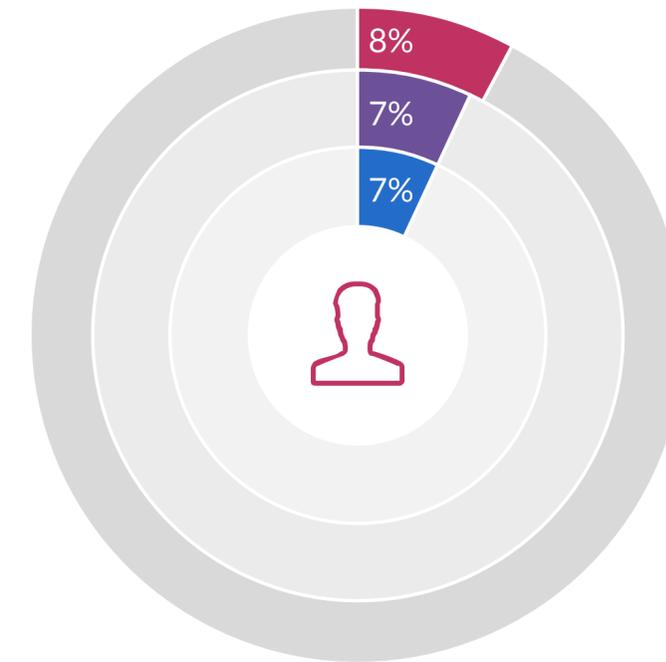
Organisations with
1 person
responsible for internal comms and employee engagement

46%
27%
65%
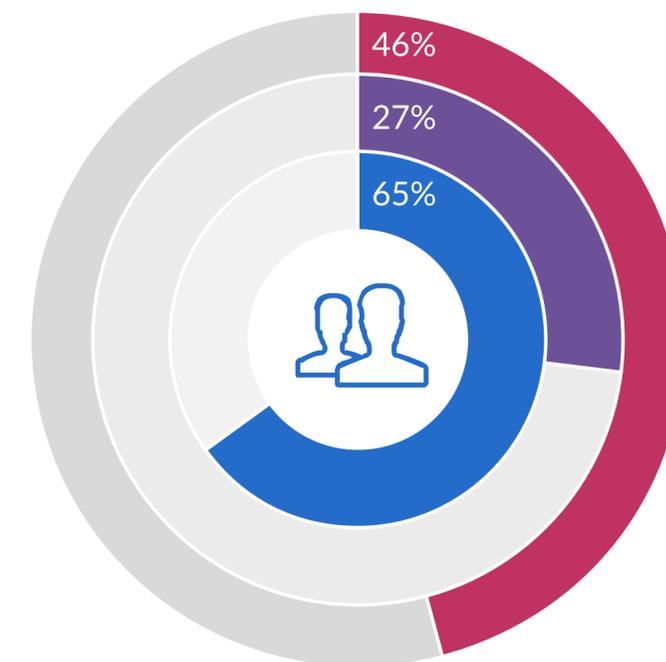
Organisations with
5+ people
responsible for internal comms and employee engagement

■ 100-250 employees   ■ 250-500 employees   ■ 500+ employees

Effectiveness of internal comms efforts

Larger organisations have more communication channels in use and spend more time focused on internal comms and employee engagement, but do they do it better? We considered a number of different ways to establish how good an organisation is at internal communications – the employee net promoter score, results of employee satisfaction surveys, staff turnover rates, absenteeism figures – but none of these would give an accurate understanding. There are too many variables that would make it impossible to directly compare.

Instead, our approach was to establish whether those surveyed knew how effective their internal communication tactics are. If they don't know, employee engagement clearly isn't a KPI their organisation considers to be important. We asked the survey participants whether they measure the effectiveness of the employee communications they send. For example, views, clicks, likes or comments.

Shockingly, an average of 48% of UK organisations do not monitor the effectiveness of their communications. That's nearly half of businesses that are blind to how well their communications resonate. Large organisations show the best performance, but even then they only rank eleven percentage points higher than the average.

Chart 4: Percentage of organisations that measure the effectiveness of their internal communications

Yes
52%

All survey participants

No
48%

Yes
63%

500+ employees

No
37%
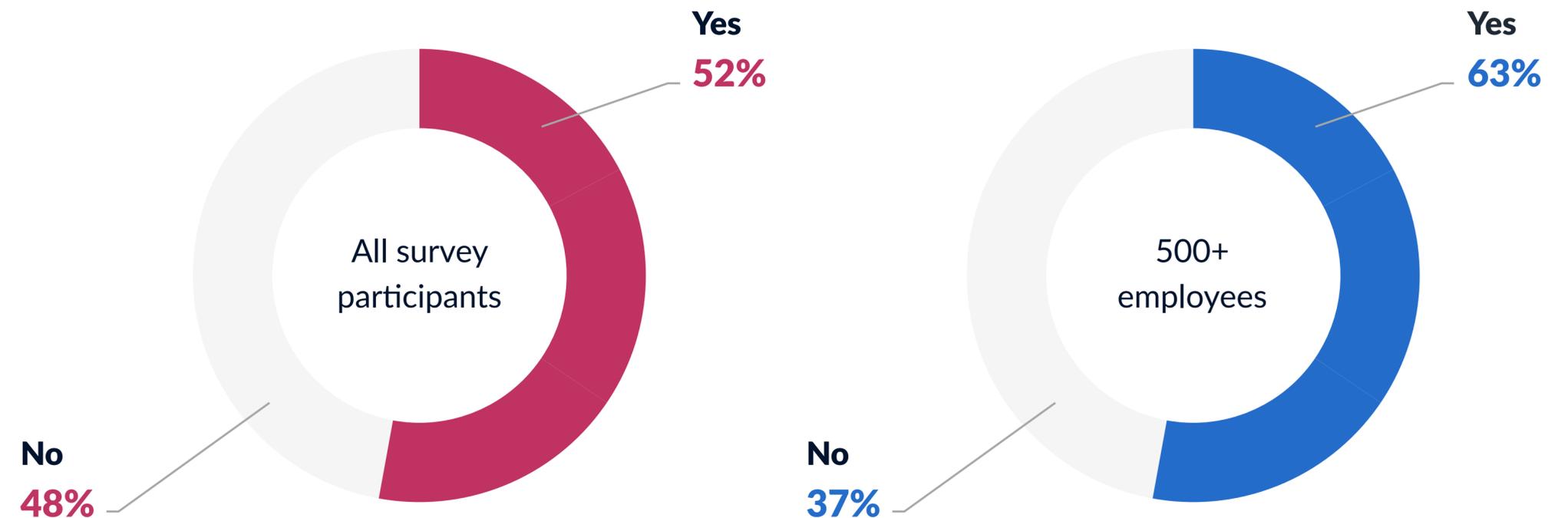
Use of employee surveys

One potential explanation for this low percentage could be that organisations are instead carrying out regular employee surveys to gain feedback on what their employees want to hear.

But the survey found that a fifth (19%) of businesses rarely carry out employee engagement or staff satisfaction surveys. For those that do, chart 5 shows that those with 500 or more employees do so a little more frequently than their smaller counterparts, but this is only a marginal difference.

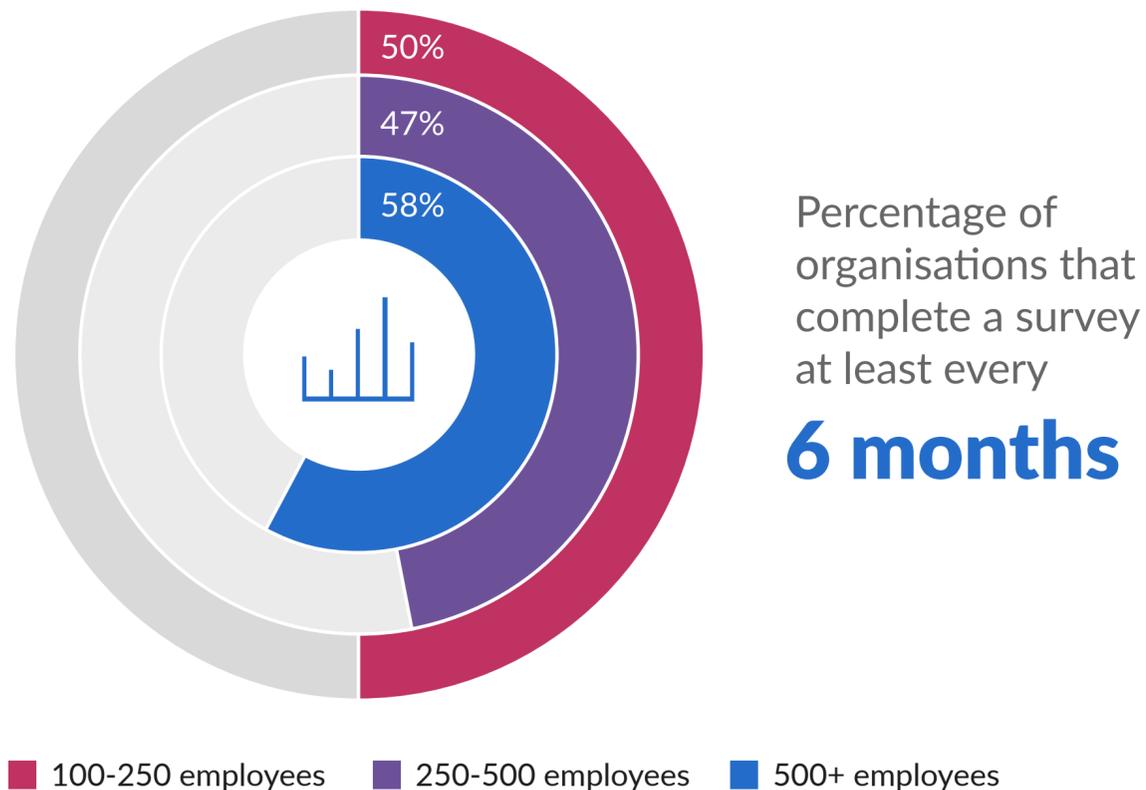**Chart 5: % of organisations that send employee surveys at least every 6 months**

50%
47%
58%

Percentage of organisations that complete a survey at least every

6 months

- 100-250 employees
- 250-500 employees
- 500+ employees

Chart 6: % that are satisfied with the way survey data is utilised

	100-250 employees	250-500 employees	500+ employees
It varies	4%	13%	5%
Dissatisfied	23%	20%	18%
Moderately satisfied	46%	40%	46%
Completely satisfied	27%	27%	31%

- It varies
- Dissatisfied
- Moderately satisfied
- Completely satisfied
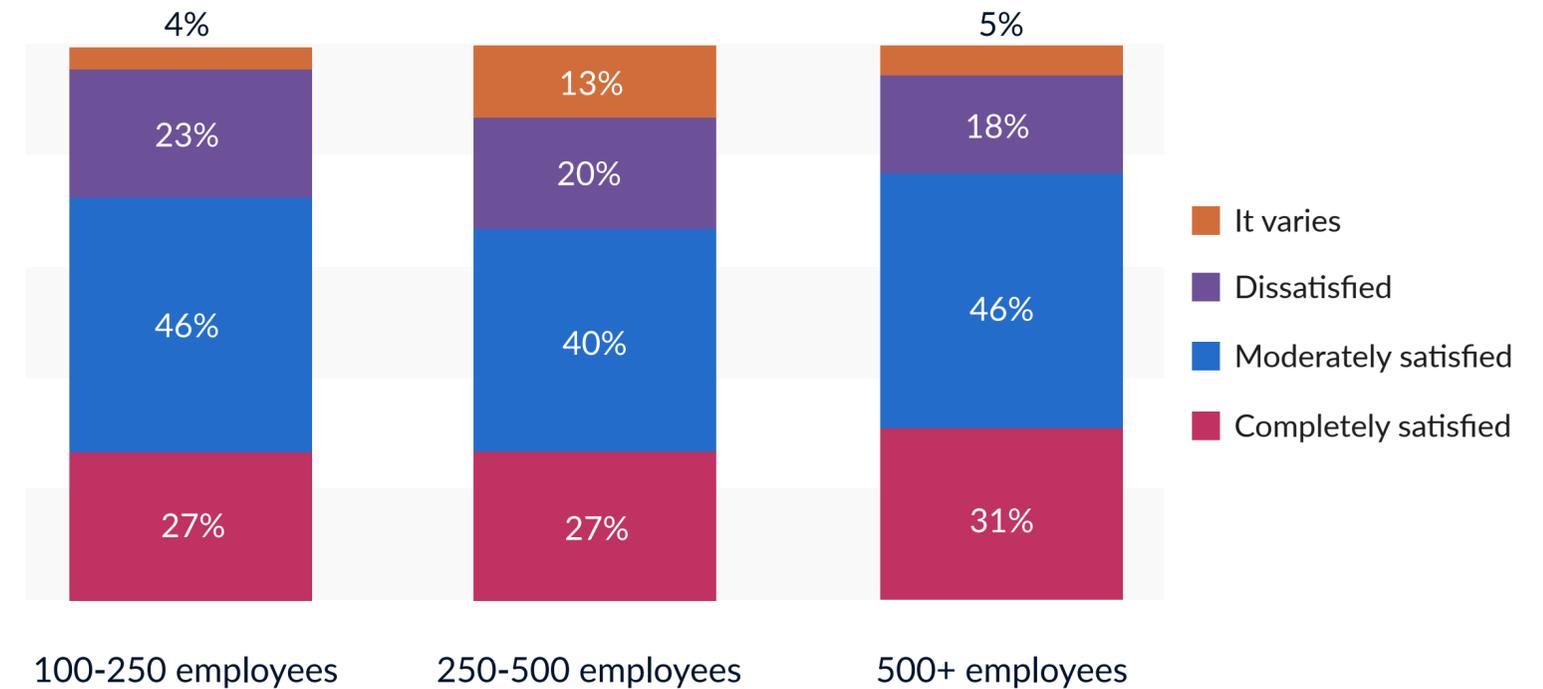
How survey results are utilised

The next important consideration is what businesses do with the survey results. A survey is only useful if the results are utilised effectively. Worryingly, chart 6 shows that an average of only 28% are completely satisfied with how the results from their surveys are utilised. An average of 20% go as far as to say much of their survey data goes unused. While there is a greater proportion of 500+ organisations that are satisfied, or at least state that some parts of the employee surveys are used, this isn't much higher than their smaller counterparts.

Data utilisation vs survey frequency

With so much dissatisfaction with the way employee survey results are used, we dived deeper, focusing just on those who carry out employee surveys at least once every 6 months.
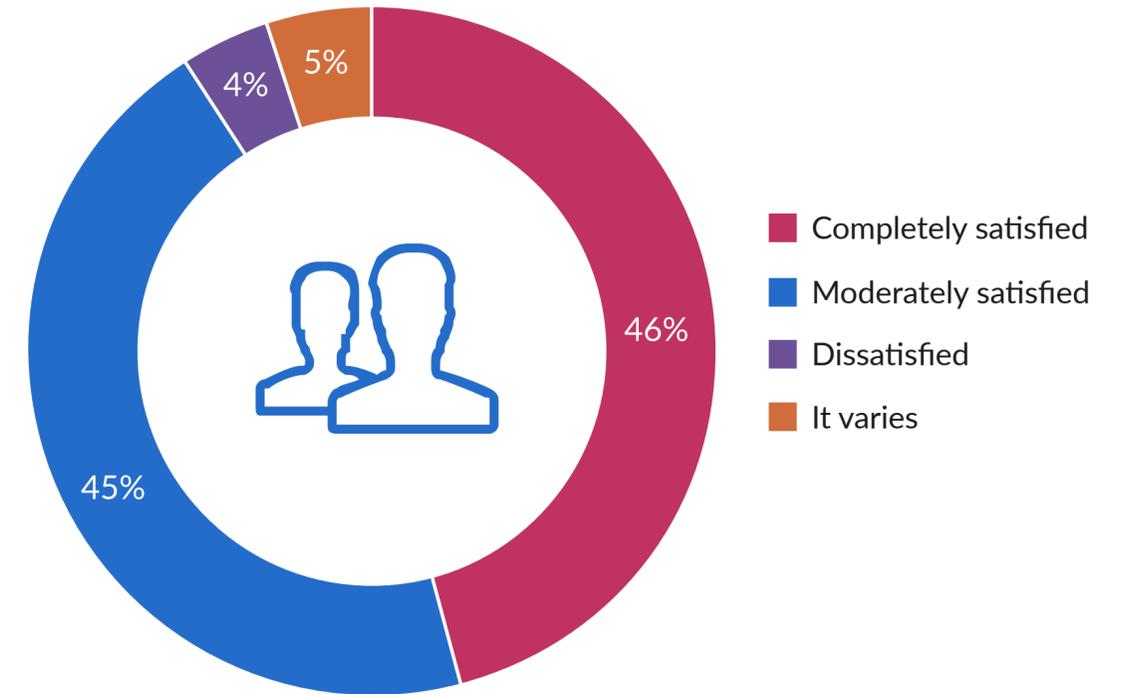
Reassuringly, chart 7 shows that those who use employee surveys more frequently are happier with how those results are used to inform future strategies. That said, less than half are completely satisfied so there is still a great deal of scope to improve the effectiveness of surveys.

Chart 7: % satisfied with data usage when surveys are completed at least every 6 months

Satisfaction levels for those who frequently carry out employee surveys

5%
4%
46%
45%

- Completely satisfied
- Moderately satisfied
- Dissatisfied
- It varies

3.1 Summary

Positively, employee engagement is now a widespread concept. Even those with 100 employees are instigating employee engagement strategies in some form. Organisations with 500 or more employees are more advanced with their strategies but as many of the statistics show, the difference is only marginal. It is very clear that there is still huge room for improvement; in the way we structure the function of employee engagement within our organisations and the way in which we communicate and engage with employees.

" There is still huge room for improvement; in the way we structure the function of employee engagement within our organisations and the way in which we communicate and engage with employees. "
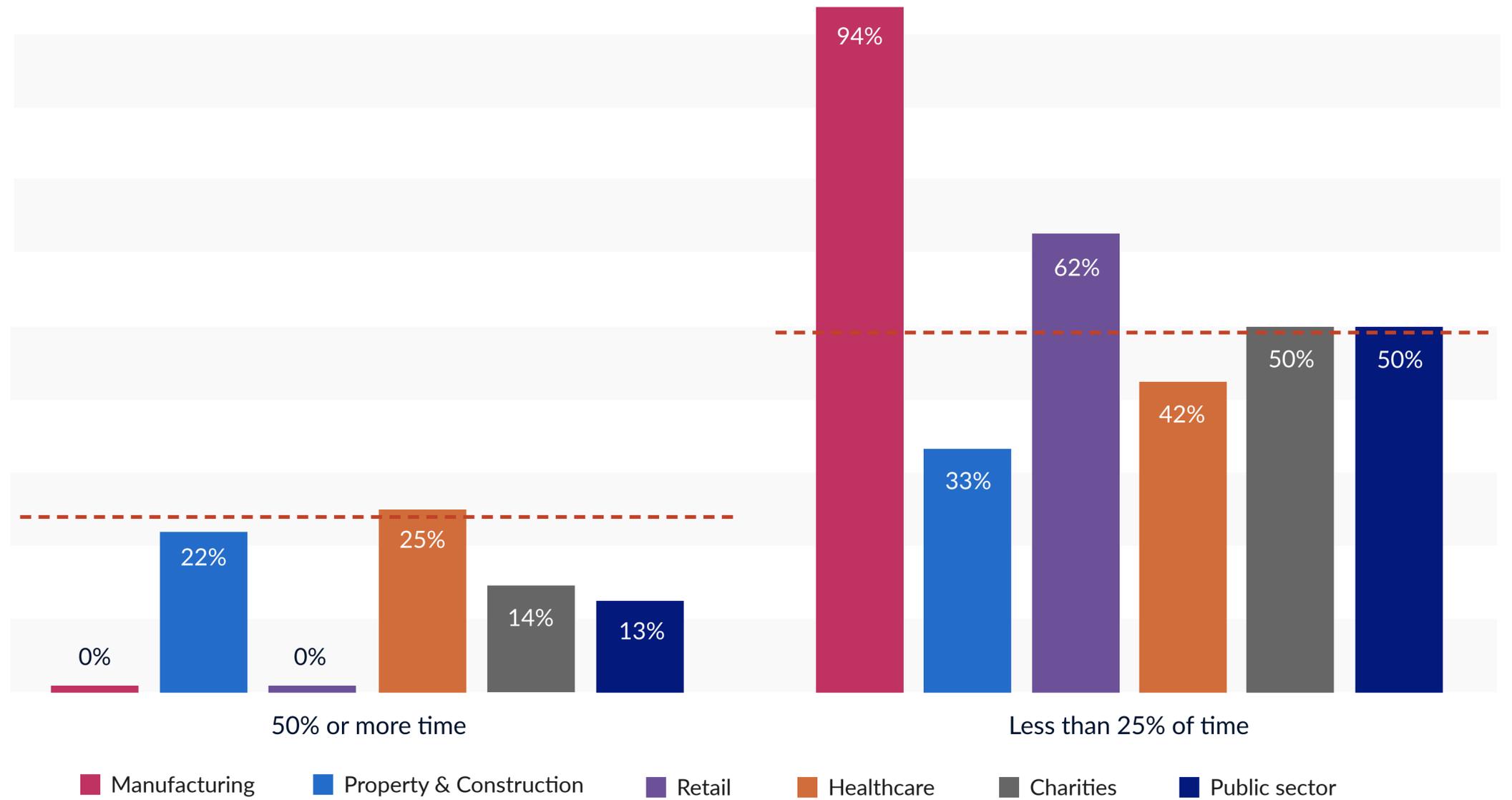
We know that employee engagement has now reached the smaller organisations, in some degree at least, but are there any specific sectors that shine bright in their approach to employee engagement?

Statistics listed previously in this report have shown that larger organisations are marginally more advanced with their employee engagement strategies. The comparisons in this section therefore use the averages of the large organisations as a best performing benchmark.

Time invested in internal comms and employee engagement

First we looked at the basics – the time focused on employee engagement and the number of people that get involved. The red dotted line is the benchmark from the best performers (those with 500+ employees).

Chart 8: Time spent on employee engagement per sector

50% or more time

Less than 25% of time

Manufacturing: 0%, 94%
Property & Construction: 22%, 33%
Retail: 0%, 62%
Healthcare: 25%, 42%
Charities: 14%, 50%
Public sector: 13%, 50%

■ Manufacturing   ■ Property & Construction   ■ Retail   ■ Healthcare   ■ Charities   ■ Public sector
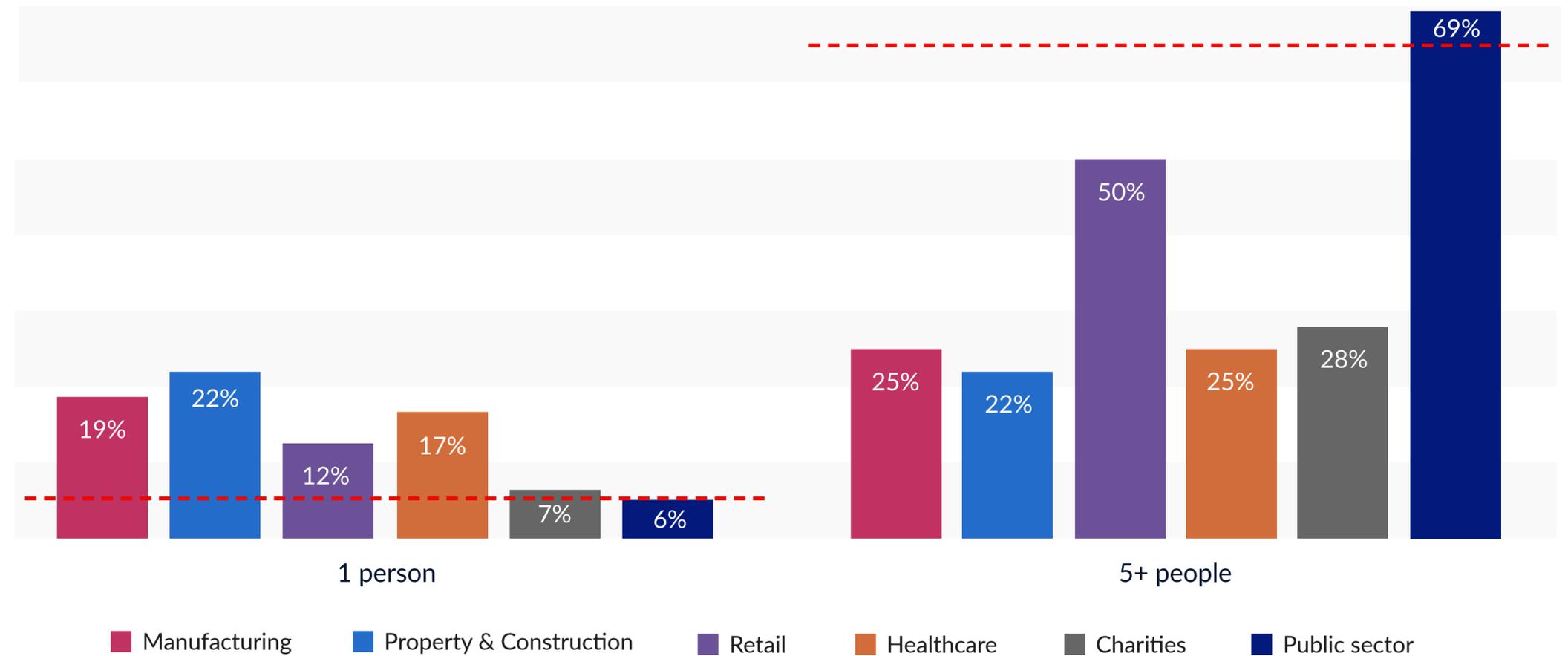
Comparing both chart 8 and chart 9, the most notable point is within the manufacturing sector. On average those within this sector spend considerably less time focused on employee engagement than any of the other sectors. But that isn't because there are more people carrying out this function. In fact, 19% only have one person focused on employee engagement. Initial indications would therefore suggest that manufacturing is a sector not yet invested in employee engagement.

In contrast, purely based on the time committed to employee engagement; healthcare and property maintenance & construction organisations are investing well.

Retail and public sector organisations don't see their individuals spending significant time on the function of employee engagement, but they do have people working in teams suggesting they too are more advanced in the implementation of employee engagement strategies.

Chart 9: Number of people responsible for employee engagement per sector

	1 person	5+ people
Manufacturing	19%	25%
Property & Construction	22%	22%
Retail	12%	50%
Healthcare	17%	25%
Charities	7%	28%
Public sector	6%	69%

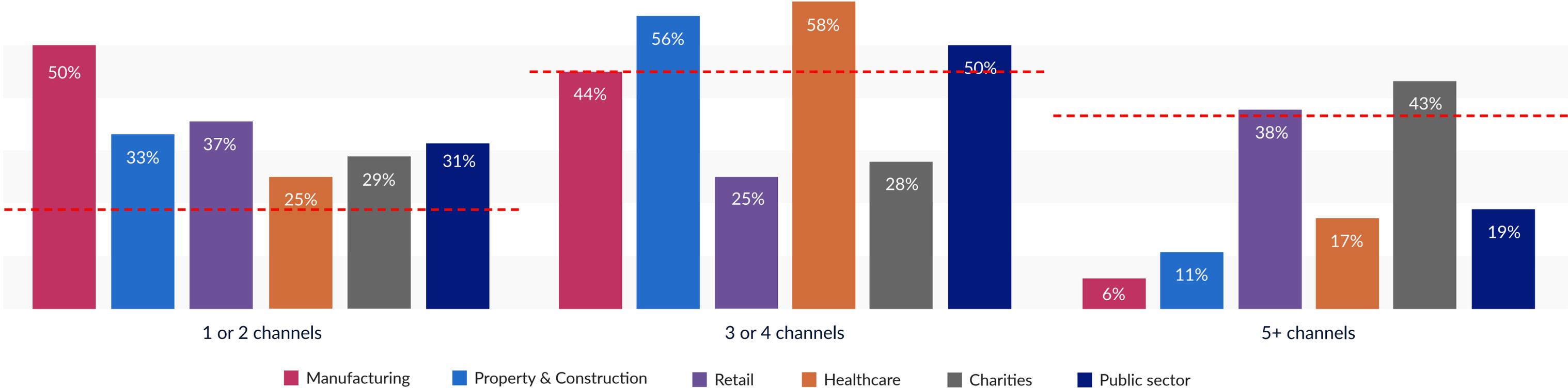# Number of channels used to engage with employees

A brief look at the number of channels each sector uses shows that the charity and retail sectors utilise the most with the majority of survey respondents advising that they use 5 or more channels.

This further emphasises that the retail sector is more established with the way they manage employee engagement.

While charities are not blessed with as much time and colleague support, the statistics suggest they are working towards a similar position to the retail sector.

Manufacturing use the least with 50% only having 1 or 2 channels which is representative to the time limitations they experience.

Chart 10: Number of channels used per sector

Legend: Manufacturing, Property & Construction, Retail, Healthcare, Charities, Public sector

1 or 2 channels: Manufacturing 50%, Property & Construction 33%, Retail 37%, Healthcare 25%, Charities 29%, Public sector 31%

3 or 4 channels: Manufacturing 44%, Property & Construction 56%, Retail 25%, Healthcare 58%, Charities 28%, Public sector 50%

5+ channels: Manufacturing 6%, Property & Construction 11%, Retail 38%, Healthcare 17%, Charities 43%, Public sector 19%

Effectiveness of internal comms efforts

Drilling into the nitty gritty of how well each sector has implemented their engagement strategy, the data follows a similar theme. Chart 11 shows that the retail and charity sector are the clear leaders when it comes to measuring their efforts, while the manufacturing sector remains at the bottom of the pack.

The healthcare sector also show positive signs, having scored highly with the time they are committing to employee engagement, they also measure the success of a large proportion of their internal communications.

Chart 11: % that measure effectiveness of internal comms per sector

| Manufacturing | Property & Construction | Retail |
| Healthcare | Charities | Public sector |
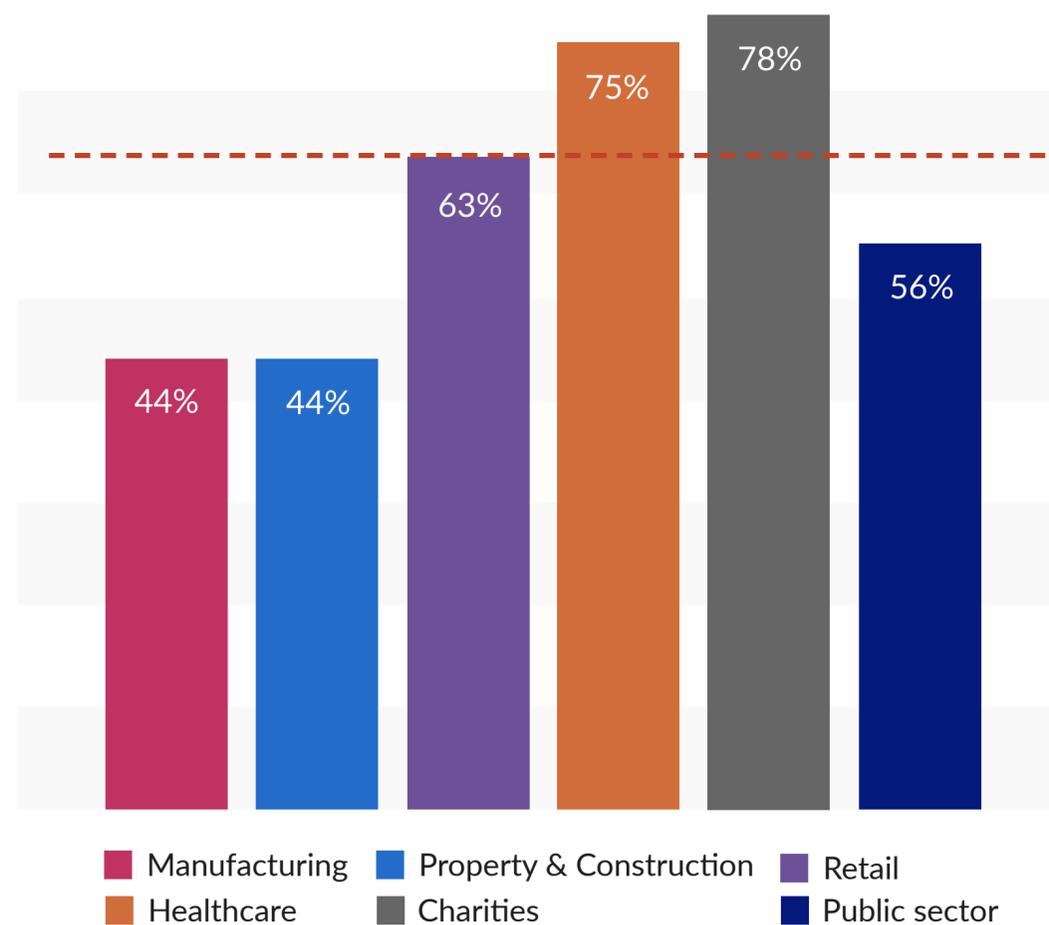
Chart 12: % that survey 6 monthly or more per sector

| Manufacturing | Property & Construction | Retail |
| Healthcare | Charities | Public sector |
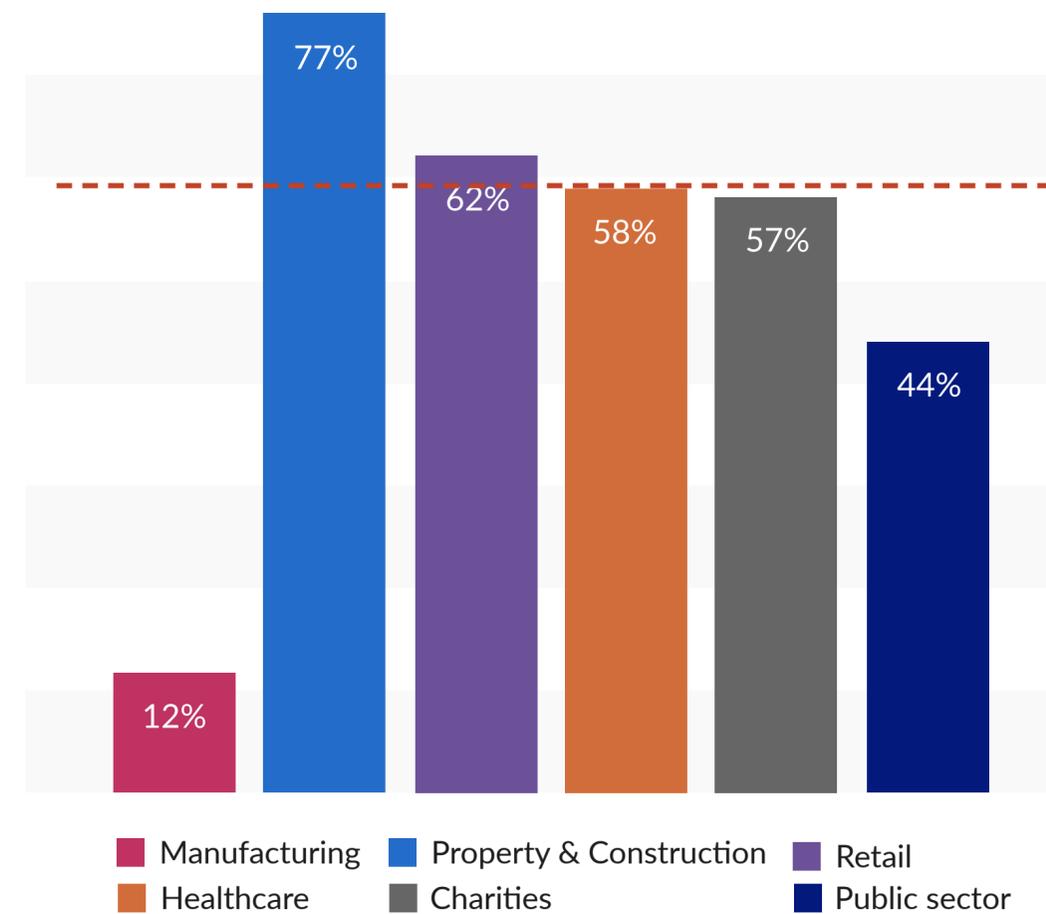
Use of employee surveys

Looking at their performance with employee surveys chart 12 confirms that the sectors continue to follow the same trends. The retail and healthcare sectors both meet the benchmark with charities just on the cusp of the benchmark. Menawhile, the manufacturing sector sits much further behind.

How survey results are utilised

Of course the evaluation of how effective organisations are at employee surveys can only be concluded when we know how well they utilise the results of the survey. Chart 13 shows this against the benchmark of those that are completely satisfied.

Chart 13: Percentage of organisations that are satisfied with survey data utilisation by sector
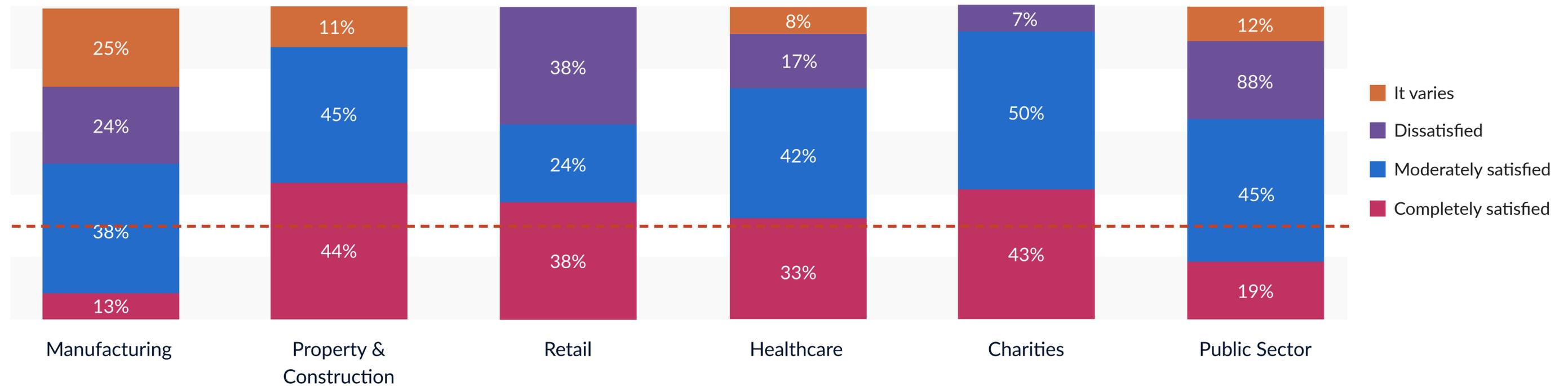
While the retail sector carry out a lot of surveys they fluctuate with how effectively they then use the results.

Healthcare do better but it is property services and construction businesses that sit at the top of the podium for the way in which they use the results of their surveys. Given their higher score in employee surveys it suggests that they heavily rely upon employee surveys to engage with their staff.

Once again, charities do well in this result, showing an above average satisfaction rate with the way their survey results are used.

The public sector carry out a lot of regular surveys but feel that there is a lot of improvement that can be made with how the data is used.

Observing the low satisfaction levels within the manufacturing sector suggests that their processes are not yet advanced enough to warrant regular surveys.
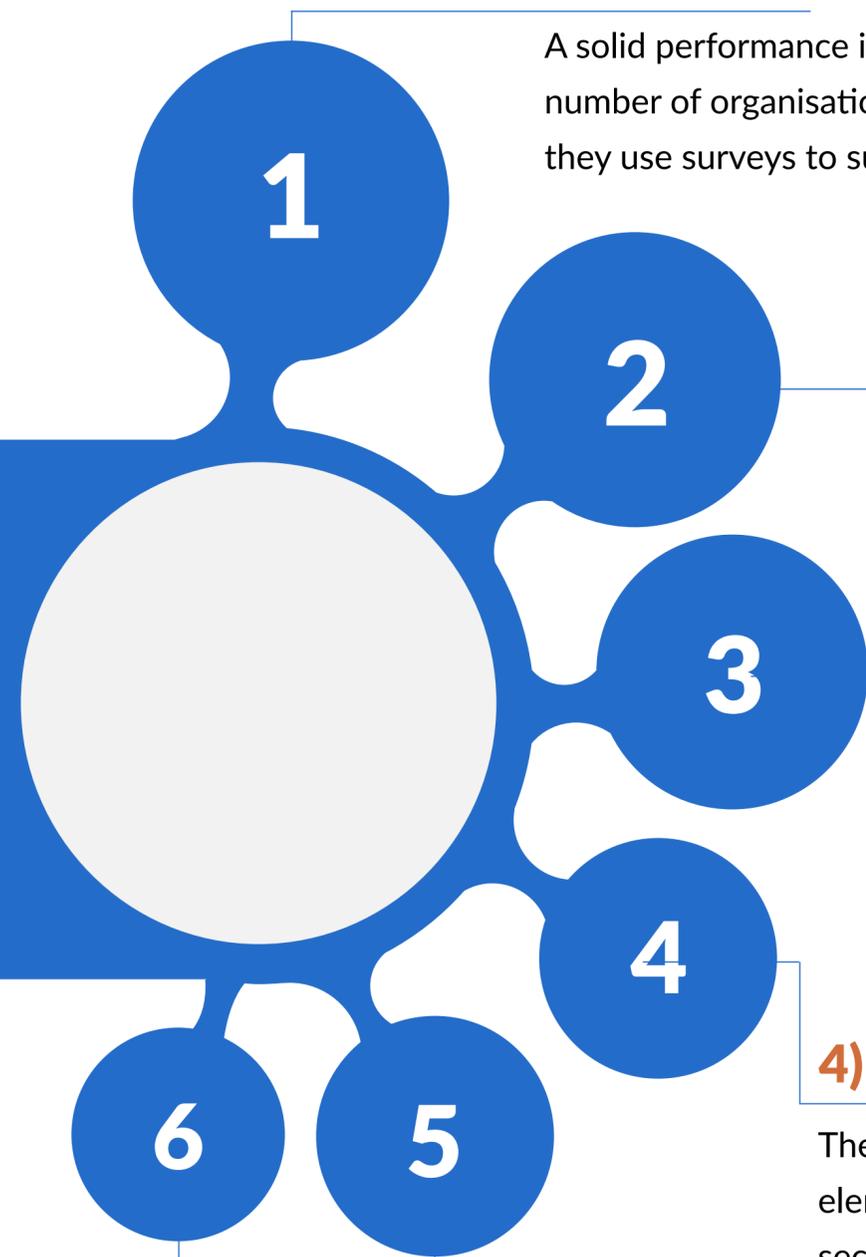
1) Charities

A solid performance in comparison to the other sectors. Time is spent focused on employee engagement with a good number of organisations understanding how well their communications resonate. One area for improvement is how they use surveys to support their engagement strategy.

2) Healthcare

A very similar position to charities; the results suggest the healthcare sector have less people taking on the role of employee engagement but that is counteracted by spending more time on the function. A close second to charities in the way in which they measure the effectiveness of their communications. Likewise, the way they integrate surveys into their strategy is very similar – they just need to focus on how the results get analysed and used.

3) Retail

The function of employee engagement is widespread with many able to monitor how effective the communications they send are. Many also frequently use employee surveys to gain further insight but for some the results of those surveys are not consistently used in the best way.

4) Property & Construction

There is a clear focus on employee engagement with time being invested however there are elements that are being carried out blind. A greater focus on employee surveys suggests that this sector needs to broaden its employee engagement horizons.

5) Public Sector

While little time is spent per person, the role of employee engagement is widespread throughout each organisation. While there are many people focused on the role approximately half are unaware of how effective their communications are. Surveys are not widely used as a regular method for engaging employees. The satisfaction with how those survey results are used shows a very mixed opinion which is to be expected when surveys are infrequently used.

6) Manufacturing

There is a lot of improvement to be made. Currently time is not focused on employee engagement and as such, those in this sector have little insight and are not able to realise the benefit of employee surveys.

3.2 Summary

Taking all of the sector specific results into consideration we have ranked the sectors in order of how effectively they engage and execute employee engagement.

3.3 Benchmarking your organisation

The data above will help you identify if you are a top performer within your organisational size bracket and sector. But in summary, based on all the survey findings you can consider yourself a front runner in internal comms and employee engagement if you:

Spend more than 50% of your working time focused on employee communication and engagement

Have colleagues who support you with your employee communications and engagement efforts

Use 3 or more communication channels

Measure the success of the internal communications you send

Carry out employee surveys AND are satisfied with how the results of those surveys are used.

But remember, if you cannot tick each of these points, you are far from alone!

The remainder of this report will help you progress your organisation to the next stage of your employee engagement evolution.

4. The current state of play for employee engagement

Summarising the findings above it is clear that employee evolution still has a long way to go. Here's what we know from the VRAMP employee engagement survey:

48%
of UK organisations **do not monitor the effectiveness of their internal comms**

48%
of UK organisations **carry out employee surveys infrequently** (less than a 6 month basis)

36%
of communicators **spend less than 10% of their working time** on employee comms and engagement

72%
of UK organisations **do not feel their survey results are fully utilised**

20%
of UK organisations **rarely carry out employee surveys**

19%
of UK organisations believe most of **their survey results go unused**

48%

48%

72%

36%

20%

19%

Here's what else we know - courtesy of Engage for Success.

Organisations with
top quartile engagement
scores average

**12% higher
customer advocacy**

Businesses with
engagement scores in the
top quartile had

**twice the annual
net profit**

of those in the
bottom quartile

Organisations with high
levels of engagement have

**40% lower staff
turnover rates**

than companies with lower
levels of engagement

Organisations with
engagement in the bottom
quartile average

62% more accidents

than those in the top quartile

Organisations in
the top quartile of
employee engagement scores had

18% higher productivity
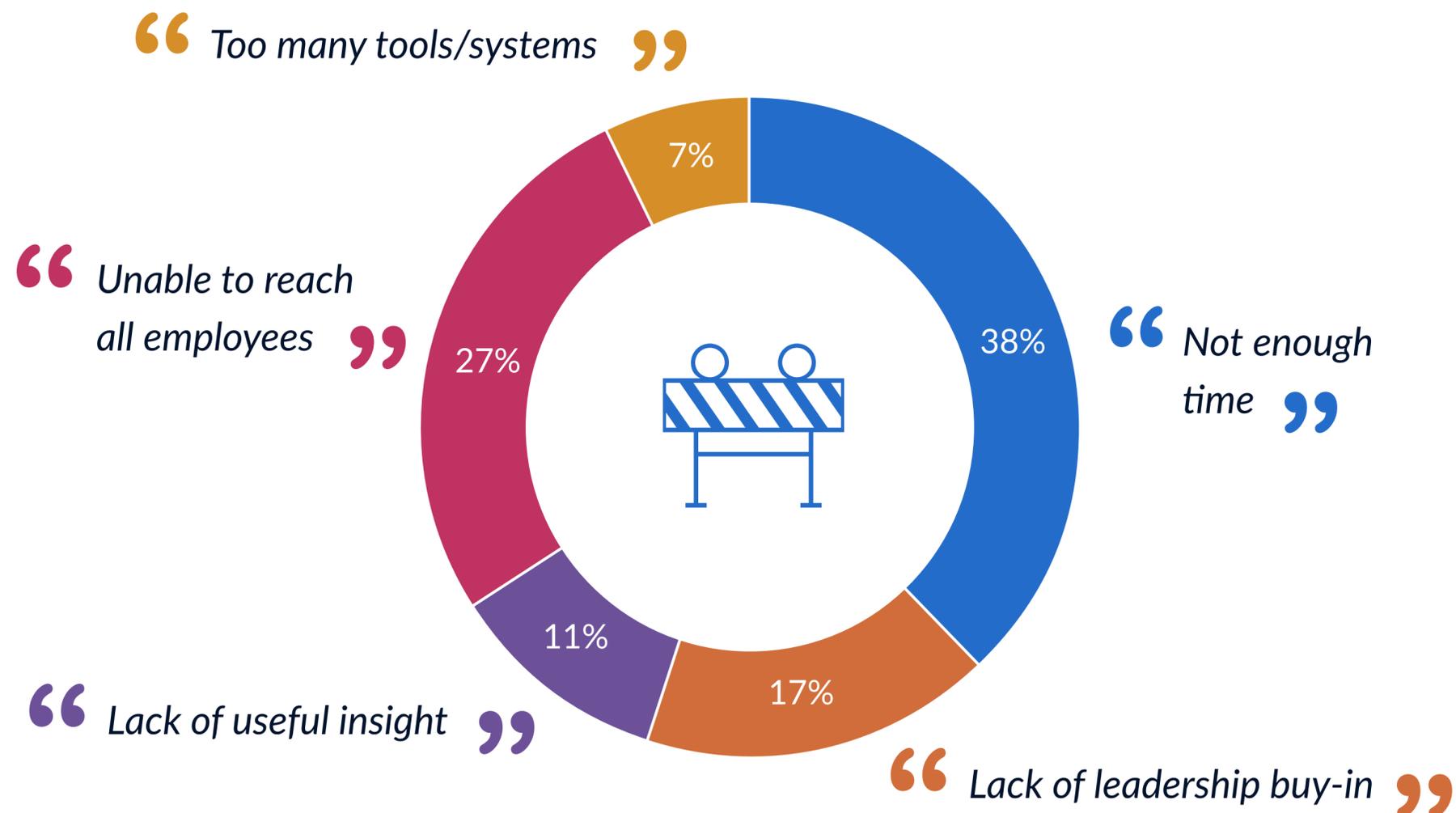
than those in the bottom
quartile

What these statistics tell us is that while employee engagement is predominately at the early stages of its evolution, those who have adopted and instigated a well considered employee engagment strategy are seeing the benefits.

5. The biggest blockers to employee engagement

So far we know that while there is a solid theory advocating the benefit of employee engagement, organisations aren't yet fully committed to putting that theory into practice. Why is this?

To find out, we asked recipients what their greatest challenge is when undertaking employee communications and engagement.

Chart 14: Greatest challenge when undertaking employee comms and engagement

" Too many tools/systems "

" Unable to reach all employees "

7%

38%

27%

" Not enough time "

11%

17%

" Lack of useful insight "

" Lack of leadership buy-in "

Over a third of participants state a lack of time as their number one challenge. While 17% state that their biggest battle is seeking buy-in from their leadership team. These are two very basic needs. Given the amount of evidence that proves the benefit of employee engagement, it is disappointing to note that so many organisations are still stumbling at the first hurdles.

For those who do have buy-in and some time to focus on employee comms and engagement, they are faced with another big challenge – reaching all employees. Over a quarter (27%) say they are struggling to communicate with everyone. Without this ability there is a fundamental flaw in any employee engagement strategy and given the trend for more flexible working hours and more varied shift patterns, it is highly likely that this will become a challenge for more and more organisations.

11% of those asked believe a lack of useful insight is their greatest challenge while 7% are overwhelmed by the number of tools and systems they have. While both are very valid challenges and certainly present possible issues, they are potentially easier to overcome. They both relate to the tools used (or lack of tools used). The problem is already diagnosed which makes the resolution to these problems much more clean cut.
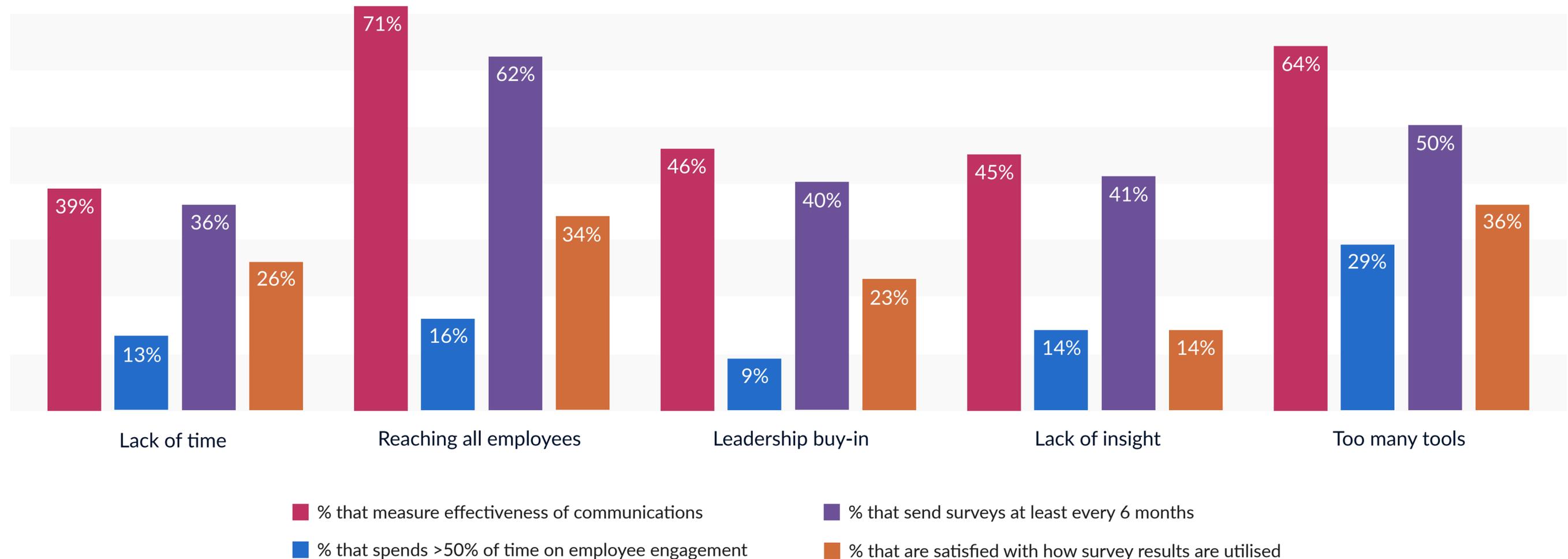
6. The evolution of employee engagement

Do the challenges listed above directly correlate with the stage an organisation is at in the employee engagement evolution?
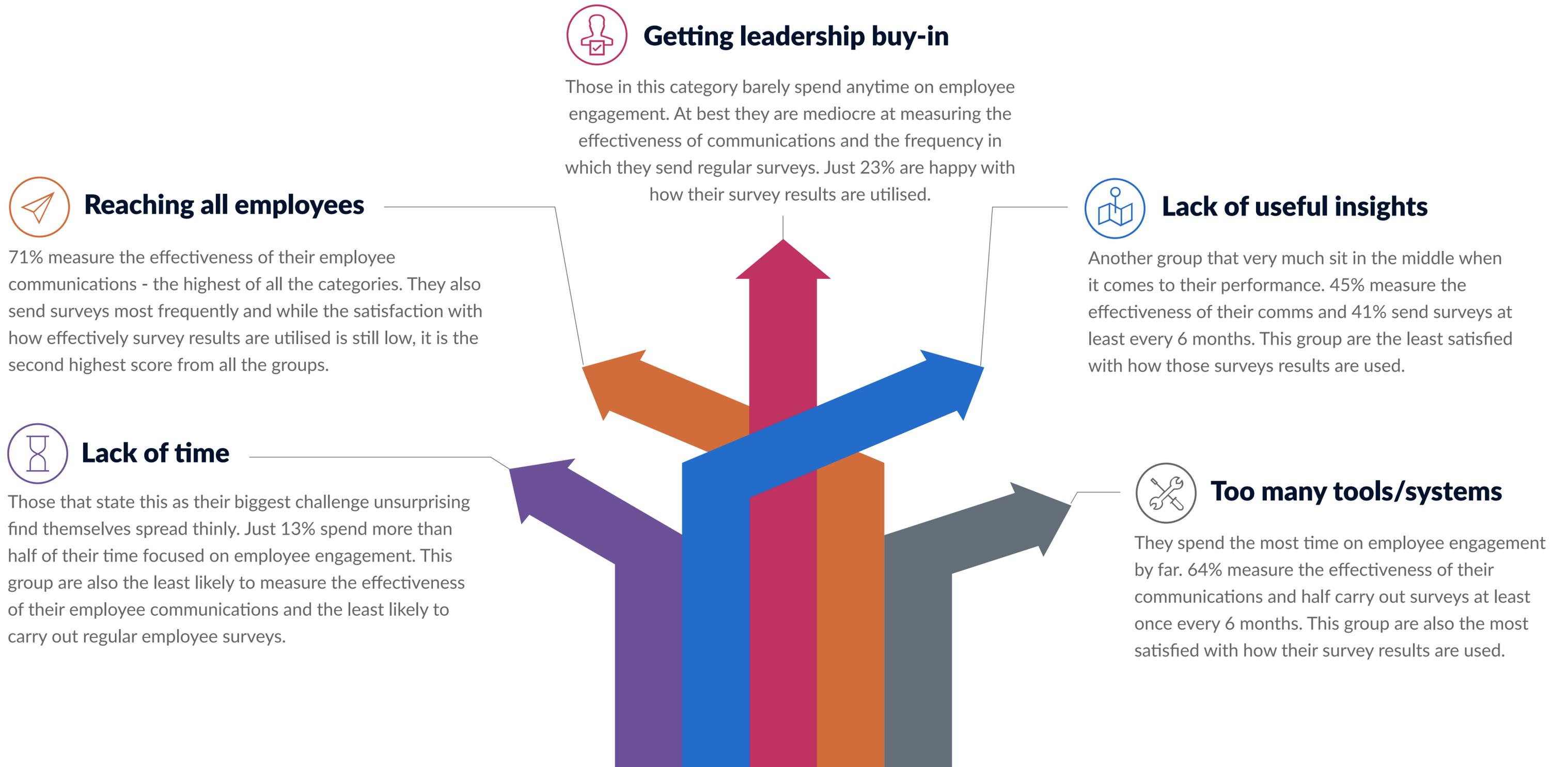
For example, are those witnessing a lack of leadership buy-in much earlier in the employee engagement journey than those who state too many tools as their greatest challenge?

Chart 15 starts to unpack this theory by comparing each of the challenges against the four measures of employee communications and engagement previously highlighted.

Chart 15: Greatest challenge vs stage of employee engagement

	Lack of time	Reaching all employees	Leadership buy-in	Lack of insight	Too many tools
% that measure effectiveness of communications	39%	71%	46%	45%	64%
% that spends >50% of time on employee engagement	13%	16%	9%	14%	29%
% that send surveys at least every 6 months	36%	62%	40%	41%	50%
% that are satisfied with how survey results are utilised	26%	34%	23%	14%	36%

Legend:
- % that measure effectiveness of communications
- % that send surveys at least every 6 months
- % that spends >50% of time on employee engagement
- % that are satisfied with how survey results are utilised

There is a lot to analyse from chart 15. Below is an outline of the knock on effects each challenge has on the delivery of an effective employee engagement strategy. There are some marked differences emerging.

Getting leadership buy-in

Those in this category barely spend anytime on employee engagement. At best they are mediocre at measuring the effectiveness of communications and the frequency in which they send regular surveys. Just 23% are happy with how their survey results are utilised.

Reaching all employees

71% measure the effectiveness of their employee communications - the highest of all the categories. They also send surveys most frequently and while the satisfaction with how effectively survey results are utilised is still low, it is the second highest score from all the groups.

Lack of useful insights

Another group that very much sit in the middle when it comes to their performance. 45% measure the effectiveness of their comms and 41% send surveys at least every 6 months. This group are the least satisfied with how those surveys results are used.

Lack of time

Those that state this as their biggest challenge unsurprising find themselves spread thinly. Just 13% spend more than half of their time focused on employee engagement. This group are also the least likely to measure the effectiveness of their employee communications and the least likely to carry out regular employee surveys.

Too many tools/systems

They spend the most time on employee engagement by far. 64% measure the effectiveness of their communications and half carry out surveys at least once every 6 months. This group are also the most satisfied with how their survey results are used.

6. Summary

The analysis from chart 15 shows that there are clear links between the greatest challenge experienced and the stage that organisation is at on the evolution of their employee engagement strategy.

Those who are fighting against a lack of leadership buy-in and a lack of time overall have the least advanced employee engagement strategies. They are battling against very basic requirements and as such, it will always hamper their efforts.

For those that feel a lack of insight is their greatest challenge they are in somewhat of a catch 22. They are aware that

this is a big problem but do not have any data to evidence it. Whilst only a small proportion spend more than 50% of their time on employee engagement, the survey found that 46% have 5 or more people supporting them. This suggests that this group of people have a very solid understanding of what they need to do, but don't have the tools and analytics they need to fully implement their strategy.

Among those who state an inability to reach all their employees it is clear they too have a firm plan of what needs to be done to engage their employees. They are advanced in terms of what activities they are doing and how they are

measuring them but have the major stumbling block of not yet engaging with everyone in their organisation.
Those who are drowning under the number of tools they use are, in comparison to their peers, in a far more luxurious position. They have time, leadership buy-in, the tools to reach employees and to monitor performance; they just need to consolidate their systems to increase efficiencies.

By analysing the greatest challenges in this way it is clear that the challenges can be directly linked to the evolution of employee engagement.

Each challenge's position on the employee evolution scale:

Creation	Growth	Established
Lack of time Poor leadership buy-in	Lack of insight Inability to reach all employees	Too many tools

6.1 Understanding your position on the employee engagement evolution scale

Below is a checklist of scenarios that are most commonly witnessed at each of the employee evolution stages. The grouping that resonates with you most will dictate where your organisation sits on their employee engagement journey.

Creation	Growth	Established	Mature
✓ Collectively, you and your colleagues spend limited time on employee engagement	✓ You have an employee engagement strategy in some form	✓ You have a defined employee engagement strategy	✓ Your employee engagement strategy has been running for some time
✓ Employee engagement is considered a low priority by your leadership team	✓ Not all your employees know you have an employee engagement strategy	✓ The leadership team believes employee engagement benefits your organisation	✓ All members of staff are aware of your strategy
✓ You do not measure the effectiveness of your employee comms	✓ Other tasks often distract you away from employee engagement	✓ Your employees believe employee engagement is beneficial	✓ Buy-in for the strategy is high
✓ Employee surveys are carried out infrequently	✓ The leadership team often think of employee engagement differently	✓ You communicate directly with the majority of your employees	✓ You and your team work closely in a joined-up approach
✓ The results of those surveys are poorly utilised	✓ Not all your employees are included in employee surveys	✓ You use more than 3 channels to communicate and engage with employees	✓ You measure all your engagement activities
	✓ Capturing feedback from everyone is difficult or very time consuming	✓ Your systems do not integrate	✓ You carry out frequent employee surveys that generate valuable insight
	✓ You do not know how well your communications resonate	✓ Some of your employee engagement team work in silos	✓ You fully utilise your data
		✓ You do not have access to all the data you would like	✓ Everyone in your organisation feels informed
		✓ It can be difficult to identify ways to improve employee engagement	✓ You have seen an improvement in your employee engagement score
			✓ You report on employee engagement as a business KPI

No matter where you feature on the employee engagement evolution scale, there are steps you can take to improve your position.

Maturity

Established

Growth

Creation

From creation to growth

You know the value of employee engagement but now you need to get others in your business to recognise the same. It is time to convert your passion into a business case. Whether that is a business case for you to focus more time on employee engagement or a business case to prove why employee engagement should be a higher priority – this formal, evidenced-based approach will be essential if your employee engagement aspirations are to come to fruition.

If your employee engagement strategy isn't developed enough to generate data that evidences the effectiveness of employee engagement go elsewhere for that information. Use stats such as those in this report and case studies from other businesses that have proved how valuable employee engagement is.

The other really important factor for you to remember is to not get too carried away! At this stage it can be easy to do more damage than good. Without the tools and processes in place to ensure the effectiveness of your activities from start to finish you may want to limit what you do. For example, a constant stream of messages sent to all employees no matter how relevant or interesting it is to them will disengage. Likewise, employee surveys that don't use, or communicate, the results effectively will also disengage your employees. Instead, you will see better results with a staged approach in which you bring your employees on the journey with you.

Use our 'Guide to Building the Business Case for Employee Engagement' to help you get to the next step

Download Here

From growth to established

You have overcome some big hurdles to get to this point. Now that you have buy-in you need to ensure you develop your strategy in a controlled manner. You don't want any doubt to seep in so now is the time to evidence everything you do.

If you don't already measure the performance of your communications explore your software options to find an employee communications platform that is right for you. Look for something that goes beyond opens and clicks. These basic statistics don't show you how engaged employees are, they simply demonstrate that the logistics of your campaigns are working.

Also look for something that will help you reach ALL your employees. You can't afford for any employee groups to feel secluded or neglected. Furthermore, if you aren't communicating with everyone, you won't have a true reflection of employee sentiment.

Another factor to consider during your procurement process is your long-term goals. You need to ensure your employee communication software will continue to support you as you develop your strategy. For example, you may not have plans to send frequent employee surveys now, but if you are likely to in the future, ensure you select a solution that can both communicate with and send surveys to your employees. This foresight will help your employee engagement evolution progress much quicker and more smoothly.

> **You may find our employee engagement platform Procurement Checklist useful during this stage**
>
> **Download Here** ⊕

While you set about proving the value of employee engagement you may still find yourself spinning many plates. If time is a challenge consider recruiting some advocates. Find the employees who are as passionate about employee engagement as you are and ask them to
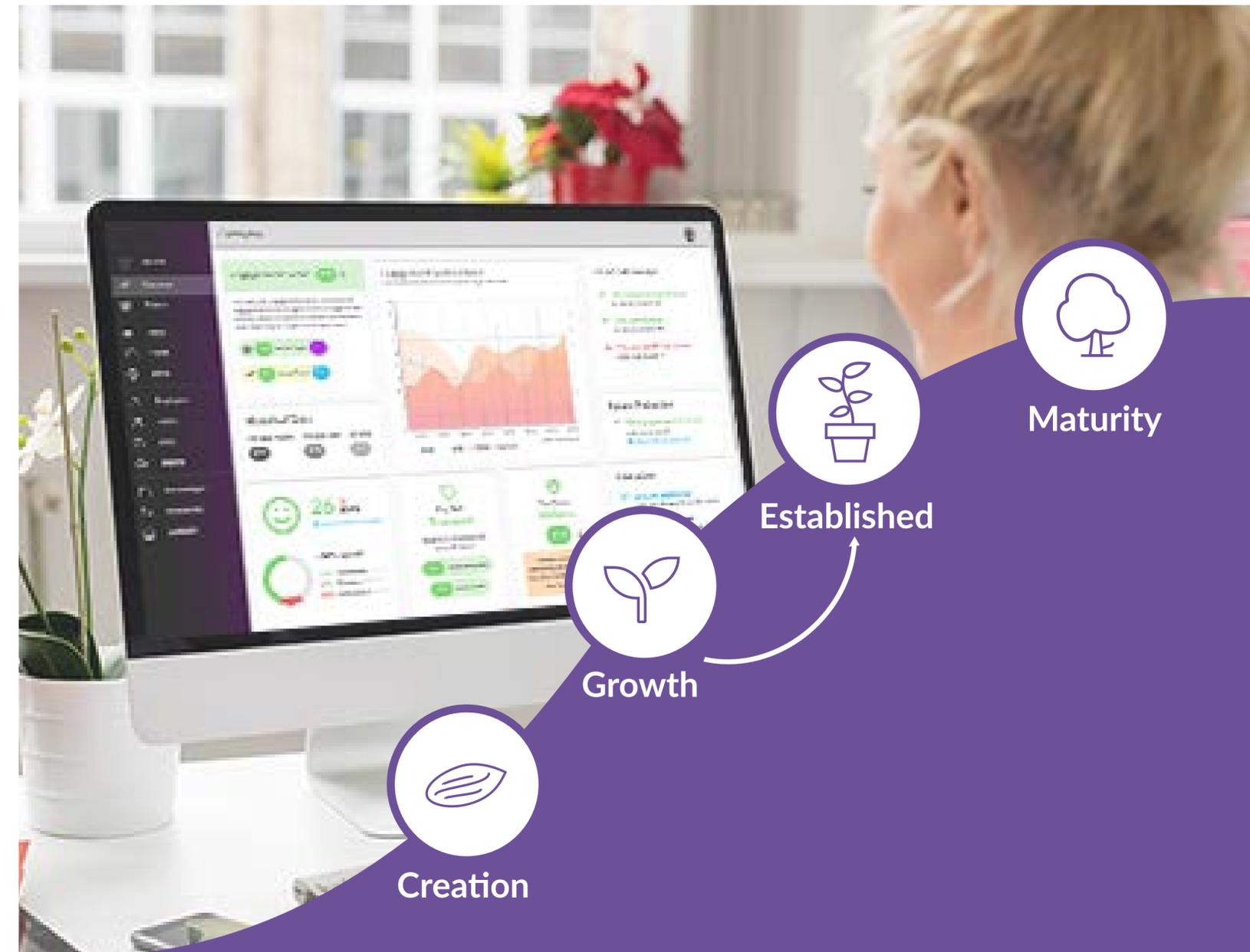
support you with spreading the message.

This stage will be a really exciting period for you. You will finally get to prove that you were right! That employee engagement does pay off. But this will also be a time of change. Ensure you spell out the purpose of the change to your employees every step of the way. You need their buy-in now more than ever.

From established to maturity

The best bit about getting to this stage is that you no longer need to prove yourself to the same extent. Your business now understands and sees the benefit of employee engagement.

But you are now becoming a casualty of your own success. You have people, processes and systems that all help to engage your employees but given the scale of your employee engagement operations, inefficiencies have crept in. Whether that is siloed working, tasks being duplicated, cumbersome work arounds or too many channels and systems to manage effectively. Each of these frustrations will be costing money and disengaging the very people whose job it is to engage employees!

It's time to pause and review what you are trying to achieve. A process that worked two years ago may not be right now. Software that revolutionised your way of working while you were creating your employee engagement strategy may not be fit for purpose now.

> **Read 'The 15 most common problems with employee engagement and how to fix them' to diagnose your biggest barriers**
>
> **Download Here** →

Take a good hard look at what you are doing and what else you want to achieve. Setting aside what you already have, if you had a clean slate, what people, processes and systems do you need to help you get to that point? For example, if you have a team of people working on employee engagement, consider how you can better connect them. A system that is central to everything they do could be the linchpin you need to give everyone the visibility necessary to work more efficiently. Are there more effective ways in which you could measure the success of your employee engagement efforts? Could different data give you a clearer picture of what you need to do to make further improvements? Technology has moved a long way in the last few years so now is the time to review what is on the market. Speak to your peers and find out what works for them.

Any decisions you make need to consider all of those who will be affected. For you to reach this stage you will already be very aware of the impact of change. As you have previously done, communicate, communicate, communicate! Whether with your colleagues who will be using a new system or your employees who will receive information in a different format - everyone must understand the purpose of the change and the impact on them.

Maturity

Established

Growth

Creation

From maturity to continual improvement

You've done well to get to this point but don't rest on your laurels!

The most important factor for you is to continually improve. Your employees and leadership team will want to see the continual effects of your employee engagement strategy. While you need to continue doing what you know works, such as keeping employees needs central to everything you do, you also need to ensure you continually challenge your thinking.

As we outlined at the beginning of this report, employee engagement is a very new business function. As such the meaning of employee engagement and the way we implement

and conduct our strategies will evolve at a far quicker pace than that of a well-established business function. Keeping an ear to the ground on new approaches and software will ensure you maintain a fresh and effective employee engagement strategy.

Of course, it is also important to never stop learning about your employees. To get to this point in your employee engagement journey you will already be aware of how quickly moods and opinions can change. There are so many influencing factors, from a change in line management, to an increased demand for your products or services, to the introduction of a new policy. Once you reach this stage in your employee engagement evolution it

is easy take your foot of the pedal and ease off from these 'getting to know you' exercises. Just ensure you continue with these so you always have a finger on the pulse.

You may find 'The best employee survey questions to ask' useful **Download**

As time passes staff turnover will be inevitable so ensure employee engagement has a strong presence in your onboarding process. Every employee, especially managers, should understand the value of employee engagement. By engraining your purpose, evidence and expectations into each new starter at the beginning of their employment you will find it much easier to maintain a consistent, employee-focused company culture.

Finally, it's time to shout about what you have achieved. As a company you are now an employee-centric organisation that recognises the value of your employees. In the eyes of a possible new recruit that is a real benefit. By highlighting your culture in all your recruitment strategies you will not only boost the number of applicants, but also help to ensure you recruit people who will naturally align to your company values.

7. Conclusion

When you look at the timeline of employee engagement there is no doubt that the theory of employee engagement has progressed a long way. In reality, we have only been discussing employee engagement as a genuine business function for the last 20 years. But the VRAMP employee engagement survey clearly shows that many businesses are struggling to put this theory into practice. Distractions, habits and a lack of progressive thinking is preventing leaders from truly harnessing employee engagement as a tool to improve their business.

Despite the heightened need for internal communications and employee engagement in 2020 throughout the pandemic, employee engagement professionals are still fighting to push employee engagement up the agenda.

It is time to change how we engage

We have to move away from a time when half of UK businesses send out communications without any idea as to how well they are being received by their employees. We cannot have three quarters of all employee engagement professionals feeling that their survey data could be better utilised. This is hugely valuable data that if listened to, could directly improve profitability, staff retention rates and health and safety.

There is no better time to change than now

We have emerged from a pandemic that evidenced the value of employee engagement on a national scale. Today our working patterns are shifting, so too must the way we communicate and engage with our employees.

If you are reading this report, you are likely to be as passionate about the benefits of employee engagement as we are. Let's bring the benefits of employee engagement to life. Together, by 2030 we could see businesses up and down the country with standalone employee engagement teams and departments. These departments will measure and report on their performance in board meetings just as a sales department does now. It is achievable, but we're going to need to work hard over the next decade!

About VRAMP

We are an employee communications platform that breaks down communication barriers by connecting everyone with the information and people they need to work efficiently.

- Send messages, emails, videos, documents and surveys only to those it is relevant for.
- Receive feedback through likes, comments and survey responses.
- Monitor effectiveness of communications and measure employee engagement with detailed analytics.

VRAMP – passionate about improving working lives

VRAMP

Discover how VRAMP can help to improve the working lives of your employees by getting in touch:

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Phone: 01392 984175

www.vramp.io