

Drivers for low-skilled employees to participate in the data-gathering process

An exploring research after the reasons for low-skilled employees whether or not to participate in employee surveys

Rutger Johannink
University of Twente
P.O. Box 217, 7500 AE Enschede
The Netherlands

Abstract

Scientific research shows that there are some strategies and drivers that influence employees' willingness to participate in surveys. However, this research is mostly outdated or aimed on high-skilled employees. This research focuses on the drivers for low-skilled employees' willingness to participate in generating data, and ways how this willingness can be improved. 63 Semi-structured interviews within a cleaning company are used to obtain valuable information about drivers for employees whether or not to participate in surveys. It is suggested that these drivers can be divided into six major groups, based on participation and the nature of the driver. This results into positive, negative and neutral drivers to participate, and positive, negative and neutral drivers to not participate. When dividing employees based on their drivers into the six same groups, different ways to improve response rate can be distinguished. Employees that do not participate with positive and neutral drivers can possibly be acquired by implementing survey strategies, however, employees that do not participate with negative drivers cannot, or to a less extend be obtained by such survey strategies. So, for improving the response rate of surveys, it is not only important to implement survey strategies, but also to obtaining the trust of the employees.

Supervisors

Dr. S.R.H. Van den Heuvel
Dr. ir. J. De Leede

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

Within HR Analytics, which can be defined as the ‘systematic identification and quantification of human drivers for organizational performance’ (ReedBusinessEvents, 2010), an example of available HR data consists of employee attitude surveys (Cascio and Boudreau, 2011). However, this group of data is often not honest, accurate or even useful (Impactachievementgroup, nd). Impact achievement group (nd) stated that 48% of their respondents felt that employee surveys did not provide an honest and accurate assessment, in comparison with 31% who did feel that their employee survey provided an honest and accurate view. Besides that, 58% of their respondents stated that employee survey data is not, or only slightly useful for managers to know what to change in order to influence future survey results (Impactachievementgroup, nd). So, where Cascio and Boudreau (2011) stated that employee attitudes, which includes satisfaction, commitment and engagement, can improve organizational and business unit performance, it is difficult to measure these attitudes in such a way that they provide useful insights. When organizations cannot interpret employee surveys in such a way, that they can use them to improve employee attitudes, they lack a chance to reduce employee turnover and absence, and therefore to reduce costs and improve organizational performance (Cascio and Boudreau, 2011).

Impact achievement group (nd) stated that most people who respond to an employee survey fall into two groups, very displeased and very satisfied, where displeased employees are more likely to respond than satisfied employees. This may result in a distorted view, and could be a cause of the inaccurate perception of HR managers (Impactachievementgroup, nd). It is of great importance to get high quality data, coming from a reliable source, because “garbage in leads to garbage out” (iNostix, 2015). There are some ways to improve employee surveys and overcome these distorted outcomes, and a lot of them are described in literature. Examples are (monetary) incentives that stimulate employees to respond to a survey (Rose et al., 2007; Edwards et al., 2002; Olsen et al., 2012), pre-contacts that already inform employees that there is a survey upcoming (Cook et al., 2002; Edwards et al., 2002) and follow-up notifications which remind employees to participate in the survey (Sheehan, 2001). However, the majority of these researches are done regarding high-skilled employees (Thompson and Surface, 2008; Sheehan, 2001), are done some time ago (Fox et al., 1988; Hackler and Bourgette, 1973) or are meta-analyses based on findings of researches that are done a long time ago (Cook et al., 2002;

Church, 1993). The findings may therefore differ from nowadays' findings. This could be the case because of new developments in work design, developments in technology and differences in employees' interests.

Although there are a lot of studies about ways to improve the response rate of surveys, it does not make clear why employees participate in such surveys, and why they do not. This research tries to find out which drivers influence employees in their decision to participate in an employee survey. By detecting and describing these drivers, other ways that improve the response rate of surveys could be distinguished. The focus of this research is on low-skilled employees, which are defined as "employees that fulfill jobs that require no more than a high school education and no more than one year of work experience" (Maxwell, 2006, p3). Maxwell (2006) mentioned that low-skilled jobs are something completely different as non-skilled jobs, given the fact that you can improve your skills. These low-skilled workers could have other reasons to participate (or not) in generating data than employees who perform high skilled jobs, and there could be other procedures and interventions that stimulate them to participate. This research wants to find out the different drivers that influence the way in which these low-skilled employees are willing to participate in generating data, and even more important, why they are not. This can help to improve employee attitude surveys which are designed for similar groups of employees. The main question is therefore:

Which drivers influence low-skilled employees' willingness to participate actively in generating data, and how can this willingness be improved?

The theory part is divided in three main parts. First there is a small introduction regarding employee surveys. Afterwards there are some strategies provided, which could increase the willingness of a population to participate in a survey. Finally, there are also given some reasons for employees to not participate in employee surveys. The methodology part describes both the sampling, data collection and the data analysis. In the following results part, the major findings of the study are showed. In the Discussion and Conclusion part, the findings are critically interpreted and recommendations for further research are given.

Chapter 2 – Theoretical framework

Employee surveys already exist since the mid-thirties of the previous century, when a company president with a “people-oriented” style, asked his assistant to ‘figure out what was going on out there’ (Smith, 2003). Since that time, employee surveys have changed in many ways, but they all have a common objective, namely “providing managers at all levels with a picture of an organizations from which informed decisions can be made and competent interventions can be mounted” (Smith, 2003, p5). Employee surveys can roughly be divided into three groups; 1) employee satisfaction surveys, 2) organization culture surveys and 3) employee engagement surveys (Rogel, nd). These surveys can be organized and submitted in various ways, for example by electronic device (e-mail or online survey) or by mail (Croteau, Dyer and Miguel, 2010). According to Thompson and Surface (2007), there is an increase in popularity of employee attitude surveys, but a decrease in the response rate of those surveys. This could indicate that employees are less willing to participate in generating data.

There are different strategies that organizations can adapt to improve the willingness of employees to participate in surveys. Edwards et al. (2002) provided some different types of strategies, to increase the willingness of a population, to participate in surveys. These strategies are incentives, length, appearance, delivery, and contact.

The first type of strategy, as stated by Edwards et al. (2002) is *incentives*. They found out that surveys with monetary incentives have a significant higher response rate, than those without incentives. Besides that, incentives that were provided together with the questionnaire had a bigger impact than incentive on return. Surveys with non-monetary incentives still got a significant higher response rate than surveys with no incentives, however, the increase was less in comparison with the previous two strategies. Rose et al. (2007) did research on the effect of monetary incentives on response rates of employee surveys. They found out that the response rate of employees who got an one-dollar bill attached with their survey, participated about 12% more often (43.5% in comparison with 31.7%) than employees who did not got some monetary reward. Other researchers, like Hackler and Bourgette (1973) and Church (1993) are less positive about the effect of incentives on response rate. Church (1993) stated that only incentives which were included with the initial questionnaire had a significant effect on the respond rate. This applies to both monetary and non-monetary incentives. Olsen et al. (2012) conducted research about the effect of scratch lottery ticket incentive. They found out that this scratch lottery ticket incentives has a positive effect on response rate, representativeness and

item-response. The increase of response rate by implementing certain incentives, was not really due to the appealing effect of getting rewarded for participating in an employee survey, but moreover to prevent the feeling that you got rewarded for something you didn't do (Hackler and Bourgette, 1973; Olsen et al., 2012). This explains the higher response rates for incentives included in the initial questionnaire, than incentives on return (Edwards et al., 2002; Church, 1993; Armstrong, 1975).

The second type of survey strategy to increase response rate, is *length* (Edwards et al., 2002). Edwards et al. (2002) found out that shorter questionnaires have a significant higher response rate than longer ones. Jepson (2004) stated that survey length has only a negative influence on response rate when it is beyond 1000 words. Other researchers like Church (1993) and Sheehan (2001) did not find this significant relationship between survey length and response rate. Heberlein and Baumgartner (1978) even found a positive relation between survey length in pages and response rate. They stated that additional questions could as well increase as decrease the response rate, based on the subject of the additional question (Heberlein and Baumgartner, 1978)

Another way to increase the willingness of employees to participate in surveys, could be by *appearance* (Edwards et al., 2002). Even though, color of ink, colored questionnaires and folded or booked surveys, had some positive influence on the response rates, these impacts were none of all significant (Edwards et al., 2002). Fox et al. (1988) found such a significant relation between color of the questionnaire; green questionnaires had a significant higher response rate than white questionnaires. Other findings of Edwards et al. (2002) were that brown envelopes had some significant higher response rates than white ones, and that a more personalized survey had a significant higher response rate than less personalized surveys.

Different *delivery* strategies had also slight influence on response rate (Edwards et al., 2002). This type of strategy is in this research focused on the difference between web-based surveys and surveys on paper. Croteau et al (2010) conducted research to find out the differences between these two types of surveys. They asked employees of an international agency to fill out both surveys. Half of the participants got an electronic survey first, and a survey on paper afterwards, and the other half got those surveys the other way around. They found out that employees who filled-in both surveys described the electronic survey as marginally easier to use, and somewhat more enjoyable, however, the paper survey had an higher response rate. Data quality appeared to be the same across both types of surveys. Saunders (2012) described an even further distinction within electronic surveys between web-link based and surveys send by e-mail. He found out that surveys by web-link had an higher

response rate (49,1% compared to 33,5%), but also a lower quality due to an higher number of partial responses and abandonments.

Another type of strategy to improve employee willingness to participate in surveys is *contact* (Edwards et al., 2002). Cook et al. (2002) stated that most important factors for increasing the willingness for employees to participate in web-based employee surveys are personalized contacts, number of contacts and pre-contacts. Edwards et al. (2002) found out that pre-contact results in significantly higher response rates. Follow up contact also significant increases the return rate. Sheehan (2001) found a significant positive relation between follow up contact and response rate, but no significant relation between pre-notification and response rate.

Beside the strategies of organizations to increase the willingness of employees to participate in generating data, there are also some personal reasons which could influence the willingness of employees to participate in generating data. These motivations and de-motivations are not often discussed in a lot of scientific articles, but are found by a lot of practitioners (Gorsht, 2013; Wijnandts, 2016). Given examples of de-motivations are 1) *They feel that if they have nothing good to say, best not say anything*, 2) *They feel their input won't make a difference*, and 3) *They are too busy to find the time* (Gorsht, 2013). Other de-motivations could be that employees 4) *Have the feeling that the survey is not anonymous and they are being afraid of the consequences of (critical) feedback* (Wijnandts, 2016), and that they 5) *were not aware the survey was being conducted*.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

3.1 Structure

To find answers regarding the research question, data is collected with a qualitative approach. Interviews are taken with both employees who did fill out an employee survey, and those who did not. In order to get a lot of different opinions, and to take as less time of the respondents as possible, short semi-structured interviews are carried out. “Semi-structured interviews involve a series of open-ended questions based on the topic areas the researcher wants to cover. The open-ended nature of the question defines the topic under investigation but provides opportunities for both interviewer and interviewee to discuss some topics in more detail” (Mathers, Fox and Hunn, 2002, p. 2) . These semi-structured interviews are taken by phone call. **Appendix 1** contains the interview questions, and **Appendix 2** contains the different scenarios that were drafted beforehand.

3.2 Population and Sample

The research is conducted within a service company in the Netherlands. Within the organization, a big employee satisfaction survey was implemented. The population that is investigated consists of 9284 low-skilled employees, and this group of direct employees had a response rate of 23%. In comparison, supervisors had a response rate of 67% and indirect staff reached even 77% response rate. The company made use of various survey strategies. They first send an announcement from the direction, and also made announcements by Facebook and their internal channels. Besides that, they put up posters and informed supervisors on their annual management days. After conducting the employee survey, both by electronic device and mail, they send two reminder mails, from which one also was send per mail. Employees could also win tourist-vouchers by participating in the survey.

Out of the original population of 9284, 390 employees were called on their home phone. These 390 telephone numbers were chosen randomly and in 141 cases, the telephone was answered. In 63 cases the right person could be obtained and he/she was willing to answer to the questions. The sample group consists therefore of 63 ‘low-skilled employees’. Two sample criteria were set, which include to get at least a sample of 25 low-skilled employees who did not participate in the employee satisfaction survey and 25 low-skilled employees who did participate in the employee satisfaction survey. When one of these criteria was not met, purposive sampling could be applied. Purposive or criterion based sampling is often conducted to enhance understandings of selected individuals or groups’ experiences (Devers & Frankel,

2000), and could be based on socio-demographic characteristics, or like this case, may relate to specific experiences or behaviors (Ritchie, Jane, Nicholls and Ormston, 2013). However, both criteria were almost met at the same time, so purposive sampling was not necessary. A part of the sample group consists of employees whose first language is not Dutch nor English. The flexibility of the semi-structured interview method ensured that through the careful use of words, valid and reliable data could be obtained from this special group (Bariball and While, 1994). Interviews are directly taken with the ‘low-skilled employees’, because “other people, like supervisors or colleagues do not have full access to the thoughts and activities of an individual and the subject, in most cases, knows more about himself than peers, supervisors etc.”(Dul et al, 2011, p. 723).

3.3 Interview design

The interviewee is first introduced with the research and told that participation is voluntary and completely anonymous. After that, the interviewee is asked if he/she did respond to the previous-mentioned employee survey. After this structured introduction, the interview becomes a bit more unstructured. The interviewee is asked why he/she did or did not respond to the employee survey, and for respondents that did not participated in the employee survey are asked an extra question regarding what should change in order to participate in a future survey. In the end, the interviewee is asked some questions regarding gender, country of birth and tenure in years. The interviews are transcribed to make it possible to analyze the data. This transcription is done by using a tick box during the telephonic interviews, as provided in **Appendix 3**, and typing out the interview directly afterwards.

3.4 Data Analysis

This research follows the guidelines for qualitative data analysis, as proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994). They stated that after collecting the qualitative data, the amount of data has to be reduced and organized. In the current research this is done by coding the transcripts of the interviews in Atlas.ti.

First, the data is coded by using a priori codes based on the explorative literature review and in collaboration with the company. These codes are also used by creating the tick box. For drivers to not participate in the survey, these a priori codes are 1) I have nothing to say, 2) whether or not participating does not change anything, 3) too busy/not enough time, 4) Afraid for the consequences, 5) Did not knew there was a survey, 6) Did not knew the deadline/missed the deadline, and 7) filling in the survey was too hard. For drivers to participate the a priori

codes were; 1) to give my opinion, 2) because it is valuable for the company, 3) my supervisor told me to, and 4) incentives. There were also some a priori codes for things that should change in order to participate in a following survey, these codes were 1) better information, 2) being able to participate during working hours, and 3) better compensation.

Afterwards, the remaining data which could not be placed within the a priori codes, is used to come up with a new set of codes. These emergent codes are the ideas, actions, concepts, relationships and meanings that come up in the data and differ from the a priori codes. In this research, two sets of emergent codes occurred. First, there was an amount of particular drivers that were mentioned by the respondents and were not part of the a priori codes. Besides that, it seemed that the different drivers could be divided into six groups, based on participation (yes/no) and type of driver (positive/negative/neutral). All the available data was therefore two times coded, both for the specific drivers and the overall groups of drivers.

The different interviewees are also coded based on the preliminary questions, namely 1) did/did not respond in the employee survey, 2) gender, 3) country of birth, and 4) Tenure in years. This could help to give more detailed findings.

Chapter 4 – Results

By transcribing and coding the 64 interviews, a lot of usable data was derived. Out of this data, it occurs that employees who participate in generating data could be placed in roughly 6 groups. These groups have negative, neutral or positive drivers to participate or not participate in surveys. First, the different drivers are described and discussed. An overview of drivers to not participate in surveys is given in **Table 1** on page 15, and an overview of drivers to participate in surveys is given in **Table 2** on page 18. Afterwards, different profiles are made of the previous mentioned 6 groups, and suggestions are given how to improve the willingness of employees to participate in generating data.

Positive drivers can be seen as drivers that origin from a feeling of satisfaction. This satisfaction can be about the company in general, about supervisors, or about previous surveys. Negative drivers are somewhat opposed to positive drivers, and origin from a feeling of dissatisfaction. Examples of this dissatisfaction can be a lack of trust in the company, in higher management or in the survey itself. Neutral drivers do not origin from a feeling of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Neutral drivers are often personal reasons, and are less dependent on the company or the survey. Of course it is possible that employees with neutral drivers are satisfied or dissatisfied about the company, its managers or the survey, but this has not influenced their drivers whether or not to participate in an employee survey.

Sometimes, certain drivers exist on both sides of the model, as showed in **figure 1**, so for both employees who participate as for employees who do not participate. These drivers can be seen as a continuum. A continuum can be defined as *“the set of real numbers including both the rationals and the irrationals; broadly : a compact set which cannot be separated into two sets neither of which contains a limit point of the other”*. In this research, this includes mainly negative drivers on the one side, and positive drivers on the other side, or neutral drivers on both sides. **Figure 2** shows the two continuums which are found, in which bold lines are drivers found by the interviews, and dotted lines are somehow hypothesized. All other drivers had no real opposite driver, which could not be separated into two sets, or this opposite driver seemed somehow not logical.

		Participation	
		No	Yes
Type of drivers	Negative		
	Neutral		
	Positive		

Figure 1: Different groups of drivers based on type and participation

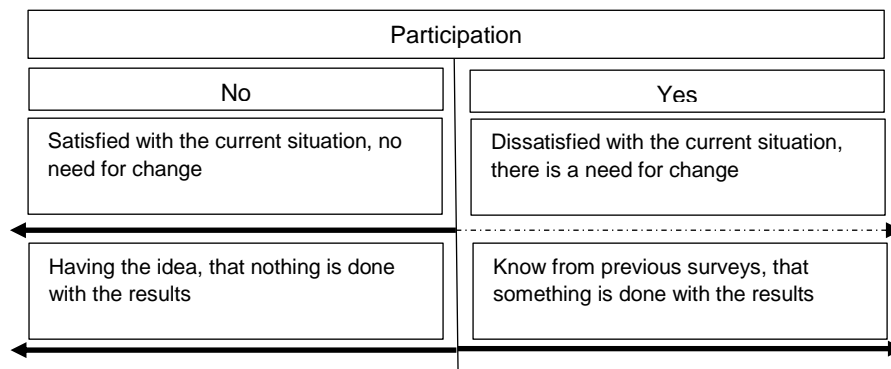


Figure 2: Two continuums, in which the above one is partly hypothesized, and the beneath one is found.

4.1 Drivers for not participating in an employee survey

4.1.1 Positive drivers

A positive driver that can be distinguished out of the interviews is that employees are *'satisfied with the current situation, and that there is therefore no need for change'*. Multiple employees mentioned that they are happy with their current situation and that they could not give areas of improvement.

"... I am satisfied with the way things work out at this company, so for me there doesn't has to be things changed. I have therefore a feeling that filling in such a survey is of little use, because I have no need for change."

That there were no further 'positive drivers' does not mean that everyone who had a positive view about the company came up with this reason. Employees who are satisfied with the company, and to a lesser employees who are dissatisfied with the company, have often neutral drivers to not participate in employee surveys.

4.1.2 Negative drivers

The most-mentioned negative driver that employees gave was *'Having the idea, that nothing is done with the results'*. In almost half of the cases, when employees had negative drivers to not participate in an employee survey, this driver was given as most important reason. This reason was often given by employees with more years of working experience, which makes sense, because how can employees with no work experience know that nothing is done with the results.

"I have participated in more studies of this kind, and my opinion is that there is never a lot which is done with the results. You point out all kinds of recommendations, but actually nothing changes."

Besides that, it was mentioned by both employees who worked a long time at the investigated company, and those who just came over from other companies.

"...I have the feeling with this company; you can come up with recommendations and remarks as much as you want, but actually nothing happens. There is very poor listening to the workplace."

"... at my previous workplace, I also had such surveys, and in my opinion nothing is done with the results. Therefore, it makes no sense for me to participate in such a questionnaire."

Another negative driver that was given contains that employees *‘did not participate as a statement’*. A single employee told that she and her complete group (about 40 persons) did not participate in the employee survey because they had already expressed their discontent to both the direct supervisor as the higher management, but they had the feeling that nothing has improved over time.

“I have not participated, purely out of protest. Together with our entire group (about 40 people) we have often expressed our dissatisfaction towards our immediate supervisor but also towards the higher supervisors, but we have the feeling that nothing is done with it. There are problems been, where also the FNV has been involved with. However, nothing is done with it, and now we have massively not completed the survey (along with our superior), but the higher supervisor shrugs and just does not care.”

A somewhat similar negative driver, as mentioned by an employee, consists of *‘having a discontent towards higher management’*. Just like the previous driver, employees do not participate in the survey, but in this case, the cause is more of a general feeling of mistrust and displeasure. This driver was mentioned by an employee who participated herself, but she stated that other colleagues of her thought that way.

“... but I know that there prevails an enormous mistrust and displeasure amongst employees. This is enhanced by a bad intercourse between higher managers and the workforce.”

Beside these negative trust-based drivers, there are also some negative drivers which are influenced by the way of conducting the survey. A negative driver that was mentioned by an employee is related to the amount of surveys that were asked for. She stated that there were *‘too many surveys’*.

“I would keep these types of surveys not as often, because then employees will lose perspective. Maybe a two-year investigation, or at least regular surveys, so you know in advance what is expected of you. Now, before you complete the first survey and getting informed by the results, you already have to fill in another survey.”

This employee also mentioned the driver of *‘having the idea, that nothing is done with the results’*, and it can be suggested that having the feeling of *‘too many surveys’*, is an implication of *‘having the idea that nothing is done with the results’*.

Also the last negative driver could be traced back toward the *‘trust issue’* in the company as a whole. This last negative driver was mentioned by an employee who first wanted to participate in the survey, but was hold back by her *‘doubts about anonymity’*.

“The most important reason that I did not participate is that I have my doubts about the anonymity. I have participated in such surveys before, and in a later stadium, I was confronted with my results. I already filled-in some questions of the survey, because I have surely some recommendations. But in the end I think; they will confront me with the results.”

In conclusion, negative drivers to not participate in generating data are in general based on feelings of mistrust and discontent.

4.1.3 Neutral drivers

Beside the positive and negative drivers, there are also a lot of drivers to participate in surveys who are more or less neutral, or can, due to context, both be positive and negative.

The first two neutral drivers were often mentioned together. Those include ‘*I didn’t had time to participate*’ and ‘*I didn’t had the willingness to participate*’. In short, respondents had no time and were not in the mood to participate.

“... I have purely not participated because I had no time and no wish for it.”

“ I could have participated, but currently I am very busy with my personal life.”

Beside these employees who choose not to participate, there were also some respondents who stated that they firstly wanted to participate, but they simply forgot to complete the questionnaire and/or send the survey. An often mentioned neutral driver is therefore ‘*I forgot to participate*’.

“... I am busy for a long period per day, and the survey is a bit forgotten. Because I am busy I have first filled in a part of the questionnaire, and afterwards I have forgotten to complete it”

“ I have completed the survey, but afterwards I forgot to send it in. And because the deadline is already passed, I haven’t send it in afterwards.”

Where the first three neutral drivers were quite general, the next neutral drivers are more specific. The fourth neutral driver to not participate in surveys is ‘*due to a changing work environment*’. In the sector of the investigated company, it is common that different locations get a tender again every four years. Some respondents gave this as a reason to not participate in the survey, because they will work for another company in the coming four years. Also, one person stated that she was going to retire soon, and with that reason she did not participate in the survey.

“I am satisfied with this company, but I heard a short time ago that our object will be taken over by another company. For that reason, I have not participated in this research, because I do not work for this company anymore in five months.”

“I currently only work a few hours per week. Besides that, I am 65 and I will stop with working in a few months. For me, it makes no sense to participate in this survey. I have filled in comparable questionnaires before, but in the current situation I decided to not participate.”

Other employees stated that the questionnaire was ‘*not applicable for me*’. This was mentioned by two employees who worked alone or with two persons at a certain object.

“I work at a small school, and I got a feeling that the questionnaire was more applicable for big objects with lots of employees. I have only one direct colleague, and I also don’t speak much to my supervisor. I have read the questionnaire, but I thought that the questions were not applicable for me.”

The next neutral driver, was often mentioned in combination with the negative driver ‘*having the idea, that nothing is done with the results*’, and contains ‘*when I have any problems, I prefer directly talking with my supervisor.*’

“When I got some questions or problems, then I report it to my supervisor. I think this works better than by some kind of survey.”

The last neutral driver to not participate in surveys is an example of the difference between low-skilled and high-skilled workers. A respondent stated that ‘*Because of difficulties with reading, it takes a lot of time to complete a survey.*’

“For me a lot of questions are easy to answer, but for some questions I need help from my man. Therefore, it costs lots of time for me to participate in such a survey, and I don’t have that time at the moment.”

Table 1 shows all mentioned drivers to not participate in an employee survey, with the amount of times that this certain driver was mentioned. * means that a driver is mentioned once, ** drivers are mentioned 2 or 3 times, *** drivers are called 4 or 5 times, **** drivers 6 or 7 times and ***** drivers are mentioned more than 7 times. The ‘how to improve’ column gives some improvements as given by the respondents.

Table 1: Drivers to not participate in an employee survey

Type of Driver	Name	Common	How to improve
Positive	Satisfied with the current situation, no need for change	***	-
Negative	Having the idea, that nothing is done with the results	*****	Show that something is done with actual feedback, and not only with quantitative results
	Did not participate as a statement	*	Gain trust of employees by talking with them, and listening to their concerns.
	Too many surveys	*	Less surveys
	Having a discontent towards higher management	*	Gain trust of employees by talking with them
	Doubt about anonymity	*	Stress that anonymity is important, and don't talk directly about the results with employees
Neutral	No time to participate	*****	-
	No willingness to participate	*****	-
	Forgot to participate	*****	-
	Because of a changing work environment	***	-
	Not applicable for me	**	Make the survey more specific to different groups of employees
	When I have problems, I prefer to directly talk with my supervisor	***	-
	Because of difficulties with reading, it takes a lot of time to complete a survey	*	-
	Some questions seemed not necessary for me	*	Specific questionnaires for Big/Middle/Small objects

4.2 Drivers for participating in an employee survey

4.2.1 Positive drivers

The first positive driver to participate in an employee survey contains that someone is the *‘Company thankful for working there’*. This driver was once mentioned by an employee for really specific reasons, however, the general driver could be applicable in various cases.

“After I got rejected to work due to my long cancer, I still wanted to find a job, but no one wanted me as an employee. Then, this company gave me the chance to work for them, and I am still enormous thankful for that. Normally, I do not participate in every survey, but for this company, I filled it in”

Another positive driver was also mentioned once by a respondent, who told that he *‘Knew from prior surveys, that something is done with the results’*.

“I participated, because I know from prior researches, that it really makes a difference if you fill in such surveys.”

4.2.2 Negative drivers

The only negative, but common driver that was given for participating in surveys is that employees wants to *‘Give their critics about certain things within the company’*.

“... because I have critics about my supervisor which I cannot say to her directly. Then this survey is a possibility to give my opinion.”

4.2.3 Neutral drivers

The majority of drivers to participate in surveys were neutral. The first and most-mentioned reason for participating in an employee survey was that it is *‘Valuable for the company to know how employees think about it’*.

“I have participated because, when I got the survey per post, I thought; let’s fill it in, then it has some value for this company. I have participated because it could be valuable for the company, that’s my only reason”

Another common reason to participate in a survey is to *‘Give my opinion about the company’*. There is a difference made between the reasons ‘give my opinion’ and ‘give critics’. Where ‘give critics’ seems to be always negative, ‘give my opinion’ could be negative, as well positive or neutral.

“... I think it is important to be able to give my opinion, and that something can be done with it.”

Four other employees stated that they thought it was *'Normal to fill-in such a survey'*. They stated that when the company asked them to fill in such a questionnaire, it was for them enough to participate. Also, two of them stated that they were somehow disappointed in the employees who did not participate in the survey.

"I think it is normal that everyone participates in such surveys. We are all part of the same, and together we can give our opinion"

Another neutral driver that was mentioned is *'Not participating does not change anything'*. More respondents answered that however they thought about the research on itself, not participating was simply not really an option.

"When nobody participates, nothing happens. So I think it cannot hurt to participate in this research."

Another driver that was mentioned is that there is *'Always space for improvements'*. This reason was given by someone who did not work for a long time at the company, but because of her previous work experience, she stated that in every company there is space for certain improvements.

"I participated because I think that there is space for improvement within every company."

Another reason to participate is that the *'Supervisor told us to'*. When asked for, a lot of employees admitted that a supervisor could influence them to participate in a survey. However, when asking for drivers to participate, only two respondents mentioned this influence of a supervisor.

"... During our employee-feedback it more or less is told me that this company values it when we participate in those surveys. That has certainly influenced me to participate in this survey."

Finally, there are also employees who stated that they had *'No particular reasons'* to participate. They often just fill in the questionnaire without reasoning.

"I have no reasons to participate. I got a mail about the survey and I responded to it. I just got the mail, answered the questions and send it in."

Table 2 shows all mentioned drivers to participate in the employee survey, with the amount of times that this certain driver was mentioned. * means that a driver is mentioned once, ** drivers are mentioned 2 or 3 times, *** drivers are called 4 or 5 times, **** drivers 6 or 7 times and ***** drivers are mentioned more than 7 times.

Table 2: Drivers to participate in an employee survey

Type of Driver	Name	Common
Positive	Company thankful for working there	*
	Known from previous surveys, that something is done with the results	*
Negative	Give my critics about certain things within the company	***
Neutral	Valuable for the company to know how employees think about it	****
	Normal to fill-in such a survey	***
	Give my opinion about the company	****
	Not participating does not change anything	**
	Always space for improvements	**
	Supervisor told us to	**
	No particular reasons	*

4.3 Different groups of employees

Combinations of the different drivers that were mentioned before lead ultimately into six groups of employees, who have their own profile and common drivers. Dividing these six groups can help to improve the participation of respondents by targeted improvements. Because every employee has its own reasons whether or not to participate in a survey, it is almost impossible to meet everyone's needs, but by implementing different improvements based on different groups it can be possible to improve the overall response rate. **Figure 3** shows the different groups of employees, the distribution of the sample, and some key characteristics.

		Participation	
		No (29)	Yes (34)
Type of drivers	Negative (14)	9 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Disappointed in the company, and does therefore not participate in the survey. - Valuable group of employees, because they can stress points of improvement - Trust has to be won back 	5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do participate because of specific critics - When improving these critics, these employees are likely to not participate in future surveys, however, because they know that something is done with the results, they may participate
	Neutral (39)	15 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do not participate because of personal reasons - Next time can be different, depending on the personal situation - Response rate can be improved by using survey strategies 	24 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have no positive or negative drivers to participate, and have often no real drivers at all - Do participate because they think it is normal, or because they want to give their opinion about the company
	Positive (10)	5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are satisfied, but no participation because they are afraid of changes - Response rate can partially be improved by implementation of survey strategies, but company has also stress the value of participation for the company 	5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Employees who are satisfied with the company - Are likely to participate in further surveys as well

Figure 3: Different groups of employees based on type of drivers and participation

4.3.1 Employees with positive drivers to not participate

This first group of employees consists of employees who are satisfied with the company and the way things are currently going. Participating in a survey is for them not necessary because they are afraid that this will lead to changes, or they think that they have nothing to report. The participation of this group can partially be improved by better implementation of survey strategies (Edwards et al., 2002), like incentives, appearance and delivery. However, it is also important to carry out that the company highly values that employees participate in surveys. By doing this, it could be possible to move these employees towards employees who do participate with the positive driver that it is valuable for the company.

4.3.2 Employees with negative drivers to not participate

Employees with negative drivers to not participate are likely the most difficult group to handle. This group is for certain reasons disappointed in the company, and the only way to let them

participate in a next survey is by winning their trust back. This can partially be done by showing that something is done with the results. Important to stress is that something is done with not only the quantitative results, but more importantly also with the feedback which is given by employees. This group is, however, of great importance for the reliability of the results of a survey. By participation of only employees with positive drivers, the results will show a somehow skewed view. Besides that, employees with negative drivers can address a lot of points for improvement.

4.3.3 Employees with neutral drivers to not participate

The other employees who did not participate in the survey can be seen as employees with neutral drivers. These employees did not participate because of no reasons or some soft reasons like no time or no willingness. A lot of these employees stated that they may participate in the next survey, but that it depends on that current situation. These are the employees who can be urged to participate by using different survey strategies.

4.3.4 Employees with positive drivers to participate

Employees with positive drivers to participate in the survey are often the ones that will also participate in future surveys. They participated because they thought it was important for the company, or to give their opinion about the company. They were often pleased about the way the research was conducted and could not give suggestions to improve the questionnaire.

4.3.5 Employees with negative drivers to participate

The group of employees with negative drivers to participate in the survey can be seen as those who only participated because of specific critics. It is therefore hard to suggest what will happen when there is something done with these critics. Likely, they experience that it can really make a difference to participate and give their feedback, and they will therefore participate in future surveys. But they can also not participate in future surveys, because their main reason to participate disappeared. When nothing is done with the results, they most likely refuse to participate in future surveys, because *'nothing is done with the results'*, and it will be very hard to get them participating in upcoming surveys.

4.3.6 Employees with neutral drivers to participate

The remainder and biggest group of employees that participate in a survey can be seen as employees with neutral drivers to participate. It is, however, not stated that they will give

neutral feedback. They can as well give positive or negative feedback about the company. They are called neutral because they have no particular positive or negative drivers to participate in the survey. They filled in the questionnaire because they think that it is normal to fill-in such a survey, or because they will give their opinion, which could be positive as well negative. They ultimately can also have no particular reasons to participate, but they just did. A big part of this group will participate in future surveys, but they have to be effectively addressed with different survey strategies.

Chapter 5 – Discussion

The purpose of this research was to address the different drivers that influence low-skilled employees' willingness to participate in generating data, and to find out how this willingness can be improved. To investigate this research goal, participating in generating data has been conceptualized as participating in employee surveys. When looking at the literature, most of it describes and measures improvements of response rate by using different survey strategies (Edwards et al, 2002). This explorative research found out that there are three types of drivers for both participating and not participating in employee surveys, namely negative, neutral and positive drivers. However these drivers are sometimes discussed by practitioners (Gorsht, 2013; Wijnandts, 2016), there is not much empirical evidence to be found in literature.

Surprisingly, the different survey strategies as described in the theory, namely incentives, pre- and post-contact, appearance and length were almost never mentioned by the respondents as drivers to participate in the employee survey. So, where prior research found that survey strategies like incentives and pre- and post-contact increase the response rate (Edwards et al., 2002; Rose et al., 2007), employees don't feel them as drivers to participate. They can, for that reason, be seen as some kind of hygiene factors, which only affect employees' willingness to participate when they are not executed.

Because it is found in this research that different survey strategies may only increase the response rate for employees with positive and especially neutral drivers, it could be valuable to investigate further on how to improve the willingness of employees with negative drivers. Suggested is to firstly do research after the impact of trust on the response rate of surveys. It seems that low-skilled employees have often a kind of mistrust in higher management, which may highly affect the willingness to participate in generating data. However, it could be extremely difficult to operationalize such a research, because you have to convince a lot of employees who did not participate to a survey in the first place, to fill in your questionnaire.

This leads to the first limitation of this research, namely that the response rate of the respondents of this research contradicts with the overall response rate of the employee survey, as performed by the investigated company. As stated before, the company had a response rate of 23% for direct, low-skilled workers. However, this research, which made use of the same population, had a sample in which 54% stated that they filled-in the survey. This difference in response rates may have numerous reasons, for example that employees who are not interested in participating in an employee survey, are also not willing to answer to a telephonic interview.

In this particular, explorative research, this limitation may not be as dangerous though, because both sample-criteria were met. However, when conducting a quantitative analysis, overcoming this limitation may be of serious concern.

It is difficult to make a comparison between high- and low-skilled employees. Because the theory on high-skilled employees, as well improving response rate in general, is mainly about which survey strategies work, it is difficult to state which drivers are particular for low-skilled employees and which drivers apply also on high-skilled employees. *‘Because of difficulties with reading, it takes a lot of time to complete a survey’* can be seen as a typical driver for low-skilled employees, but this driver was only mentioned once, and seems therefore also not really common for this type of employees. Further research on the drivers to participate in surveys for high-skilled employees could enable comparing between low- and high-skilled employees.

The main contribution of this research is that it gives a conceptual framework for low-skilled employees’ drivers to participate in surveys. The use of these six types of drivers result in six different groups of employees, namely employees who did not participate with positive, negative or neutral drivers, and employees who did participate with positive, negative and neutral drivers. This framework has to be further tested with preferably a pre- and a post-test in which ultimately the effect of different survey-strategies can be tested on the different groups.

Chapter 6 – Conclusion

To give answer to the research question, we first have to look which drivers influence low-skilled employees’ willingness to participate actively in generating data. Out of the telephonic interviews it seemed that low-skilled employees’ have positive, negative and neutral drivers to participate in generating data. The most common drivers for low-skilled employees to participate in surveys were to *give their opinion about the company, because it is valuable for the company to know how employees think about it, and because it is normal to fill-in such a survey.*

To answer the second part of the research question, how can this willingness be improved, we have to look to the reasons why employees did not participate in the survey, and find overlapping ways to improve overall participation. Drivers for not participating in surveys

could also be divided into negative, positive and neutral drivers. The most common drivers to not participate were *no time to participate*, *no willingness to participate*, and *having the idea that nothing is done with the results*. The first two of these drivers can partially be tackled by different survey strategies, however *having the idea that nothing is done with the results* is more of a trust-based driver, and cannot be dealt with by improving the survey strategies. To improve the response rate of employees who did not participate because of this driver, the company has to win the trust of their employees, which can in this case especially be done by showing that something is done with the results.

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Appendix 1

Introduction

Dear Sir / Madam,

Asito has recently conducted an Employee Survey. My research, conducted by the University of Twente, tries to find the reasons for employees to (not) fill in such a survey. The next interview consists of 5 or 6 questions, and should therefore not take longer than 5 minutes. The answers that You provide, will be processed anonymously, in order to guarantee that it cannot be traced back. If You allow me, I would like to record this interview, assuring the completeness of the transcribed answers. I hope You want to participate in this short interview.

Main Questions

4. Did you participate in the Employee Survey? **Yes/No**

5. Why did/didn't you respond to the Employee Survey?

To what extent does your supervisors influence this decision?

To what extent does the way in which the Employee survey is conducted, influence this decision?

6. (If Applicable) What should be changed for you in order to participate in the Employee Survey?

7. What is Your gender? **Male/Female**

8. What is Your country of Birth?

1. For how long do You work at Asito(This may include different functions), and for how long do You already work in cleaning?

Appendix 2

Introduction	>Good morning/ Afternoon		
	>My name is Rutger Johannink from the University of Twente. Together with [Company], I conduct a research after the reasons for employees to participate in Employee Surveys.		
	>Is it true that you, or someone in your family, works for [Company]?	< No → > May I thank you for your time and I would wish you a very nice day.	< Yes, but she is not at home → > Do you know a moment on which I could call back?. [Al dan niet tijd opschrijven] Thank you, and have a nice day.
	> Could I speak that someone for a little while?	< [New person on the line] → Start from the beginning	
	> Could I ask You a few questions for not more than five minutes? Answering these questions is completely voluntary	< I do not have so much time → > You are free to stop whenever you want, you may also skip questions when you do not want to answer them	
	>Are you aware of the employee survey that is conducted by [Company] the last month?	< I thought this Survey was anonymously → > That's right. Therefore, I will only propose questions about your reasons to fill in this Survey. I will not ask questions about your answers or the content of the research. The given answers on the questionnaire are for both [Company] and me anonymous.	< Which survey? → > [Company] has in early June, together with the research company Integron, sent an survey to all its employees. The letter you received was therefore from Integron. Maybe you remember it now.
	>I think it is important to note that the answers you give are processed anonymously and it is not possible to link them to You.	< Processed? → > The answers that you give will be transcribed verbatim, but it is not possible to see who has given these answers.	
	>Before we go to the main questions, do you have any questions for me?	< Can [Company] look at the answers which I have given? → > No. [Company] will not see the answers, and [Company] does not know which employees I have spoken to. [Company] only gets an overview of the different reasons for employees to (not) participate in the employee survey, and the conclusions drawn by me.	
Questions	> I will start now with the questions. Giving answers to them is completely voluntary.		
	> Did you participate in the Employee Survey?		

	<p>> How did you participate, by e-mail or by mail?</p> <p>> Did you fill-in the questionnaire completely?</p>		
	<p>> What are the reasons for You to (not) participate in the Employee Survey?</p>		
	<p>> To what extent does your supervisors influence this decision?</p>		
	<p>> To what extent does the way in which the Employee survey is conducted, influence this decision?</p>		
	<p>> (If applicable) What should be changed for you in order to participate in the Employee Survey?</p>		
	<p>> (Indien nodig) May I ask you if you are a man or a woman?</p>	<p><Why do you want to know → > For my study, it is good to know if you are male or female, because this may influence the results.</p>	
	<p>> May I ask you what your country of birth is?</p>	<p><Why do you want to know → > For my study, it is good to know in which country you are born, because this may influence the results.</p>	
	<p>> For how long do you work at [Company]?</p>	<p><Why do you want to know → > For my study, it is good to know for how long you work at [Company], because this may have an influence on the results.</p>	
	<p>> For how long do you already work in cleaning?</p>	<p><Why do you want to know → > For my study, it is good to know your total tenure years, because this may have an influence on the results.</p>	
Conclusion	<p>> May I thank You for your time and willingness to answer my questions. Do you have any further questions?</p>		
	<p>> Have a nice day</p>		

Scenarios	< I cannot hear you	[Repeat question slowly] > Can you hear me now?	<No → > What could I do to make myself understandably?	< What did You say? → [Talk louder] > Do I have to talk somewhat louder?	
	< I don't understand you	What do'nt You understand?	< Why you are calling? → > I'm investigating employees reasons to participate or not in an employee survey. Since [Company] has recently conducted an employee survey, I Call randomly some employees of [Company].	< Who you are → > I'm a student of the University of Twente. For my thesis, I have to t interview a number of people who are asked to fill-in an employee survey.	< I don't Understand what you are saying → Should I switch back to Dutch again? Otherwise I will talk as slowly and understandable as possible. When you again don't understand what I'm saying, just interrupt.
	< How do you get my number/data?	> I've got a list of phone numbers for this study. Furthermore, I have no information from you, and after completion of this study, the numbers will be destroyed.			

Appendix 3

Meegedaan

Ja

☐

Nee

☐

Hoe?

Post

☐

Digitaal

☐

Volledig?

Ja

☐

Nee

☐

Waarom heeft U meegedaan?

Stem laten horen

☐

Waardevol voor het bedrijf

☐

Druk van Leidinggevende

☐

VVV-bon

☐

Waarom heeft U niet meegedaan?

Ik heb niets te melden

☐

wel/niet meedoen maakt geen verschil

☐

Te druk/Weinig Tijd

☐

Bang voor de consequenties
deadline

☐

Niet op de hoogte v/d enquête

☐

Niet op de hoogte v/d

☐

Te moeilijk

☐

Besproken met Leidinggevende

Ja

☐

Nee

☐

_ Invloed gehad

Ja

☐

Nee

☐

Wat zou er moeten veranderen?

Beter informeren

☐

Tijd inruimen tijdens werk

☐

Betere compensatie

☐

Man	<input type="checkbox"/>	Vrouw	<input type="checkbox"/>	Jaren werkzaam Asito	<input type="checkbox"/>	Schoonmaak	<input type="checkbox"/>
Geboorteland	<input type="text"/>						