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Creating Organizational Trust Through Anonymous Feedback

The #1 concern voiced by employees at every organization regarding feedback is "are my responses anonymous, and can I really trust the organization with my honest feedback." The Gartner 2019 Modern Employee Experience Employee Survey shows that only 21% of employees feel comfortable being entirely truthful about the details of what they want/need from their work experience. So how do you build trust so you can get the candid feedback you need to identify organizational roadblocks.

THE PROBLEM

Unfortunately, it seems like almost every individual has had a personal experience in which providing feedback has had negative repercussions for them or a coworker. These typically seem to play out between a boss and a direct report. Because employees are not on a level playing field with their boss, they feel at risk in providing candid feedback.

Effectively processing feedback is a learned skill and the ability to receive feedback is also a skill not all individuals possess.

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Managers and leaders need to be educated on how to give and receive feedback properly. Negative feedback instinctively puts individuals on the defensive. There is a natural tendency to want to fight back or prove the negative feedback is invalid. Leaders that do not have a growth mindset that allows them to look at feedback objectively quickly communicate through their actions that it is not safe to offer their opinions.

From an employee's perspective providing feedback is a risk/reward calculation. If they feel there is a greater risk their feedback will result in negative repercussions than result-

ing in positive outcomes, they will not provide feedback. Afterall, they could be placing their job on the line and remaining silent or only saying what they think you want to hear is a much safer play.

This environment is the most damaging to an organization. If you have inadvertently created this environment, you are only hearing what they think you want to hear, and the lack of new ideas and candid feedback are crippling your growth. The most painful however are the long- term repercussions of a toxic environment, as people leave the organization with leaders not knowing "why", as exit feedback is also guarded.

• Research by Gallup stated 75% of people leave an organization because of a bad boss, and the next reason for leaving is a bad team. Identifying issues within your organization is critical.

The goal is to create an environment of mutual trust and respect where people within theorganization feel safe and choose to communicate their candid feedback directly.

Google spent 2 years and millions of dollars to identify the traits of highly effective teams andthe results of their findings were that the most effective teams possessed high levels of psychological safety. In other words, people within those teams felt comfortable to voice theiropinions without fear of retribution.

We have also heard that "If they are going to say something, they should be willing to own it." We don't disagree, but with all the various personality types, leadership styles and cultures that exist it is always best to begin with anonymity as it facilitates and builds trust through anonymous conversations. Through these conversations a more open and trusted relationship is created. Once people see (thorough leaders' behaviors/

company actions) it is safe to provide feedback, they will open up and provide more and more insights.

In a perfect world we would all provide candid feedback to individuals while coming from a place of love and concern, and they would receive feedback with an open heart, not get defensive, and consider how they can improve. While this is the destination, we are all striving for, the path is built incrementally step by step as you increase the level of organizational trust.

Organizational trust is earned by consistently connecting what you say, to what you do.
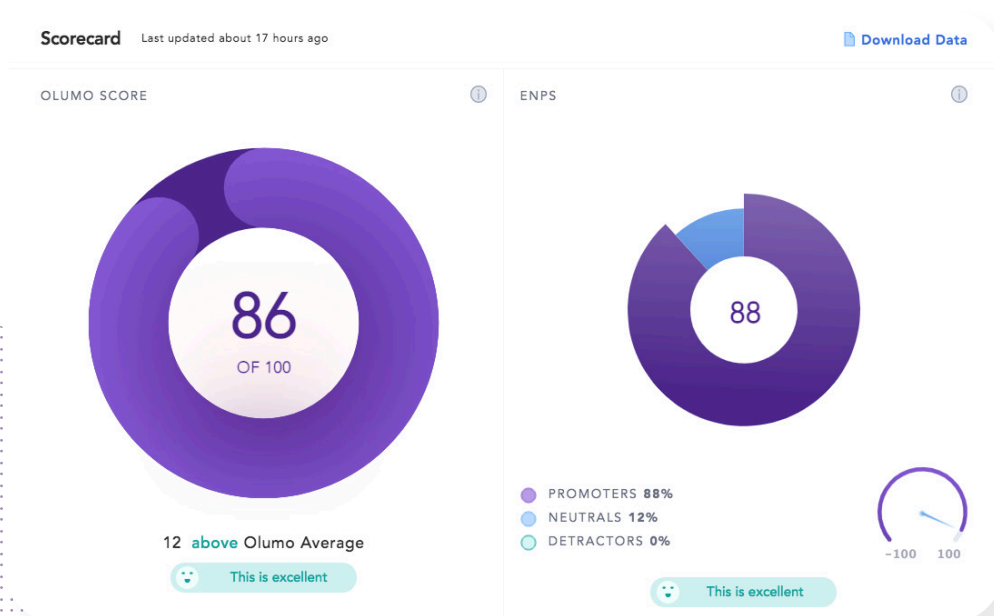
Beneifts of Anonymity

- Anonymous feedback allows respondents to answer freely without fear of reprisals, retribution, or embarrassment.

- Anonymous feedback work best for topics that are deeply personal to the individual providing the feedback or where they have a perceived risk.

- Anonymous feedback creates a sense of trust and respect because it does not matter where the feedback comes from, what matters is that the company is listening and taking action to grow and improve.

- When people provide anonymous feedback, they are more likely to give real, unbiased feedback and their responses more accurately reflect how they are feeling.

- Response rates for anonymous feedback are better than for non-confidential feedback. This is because people are more likely to trust the stated intentions of anonymous feedback.

- Attaching names to feedback creates an environment where people game the system to boost their personal position or status (make themselves look good).
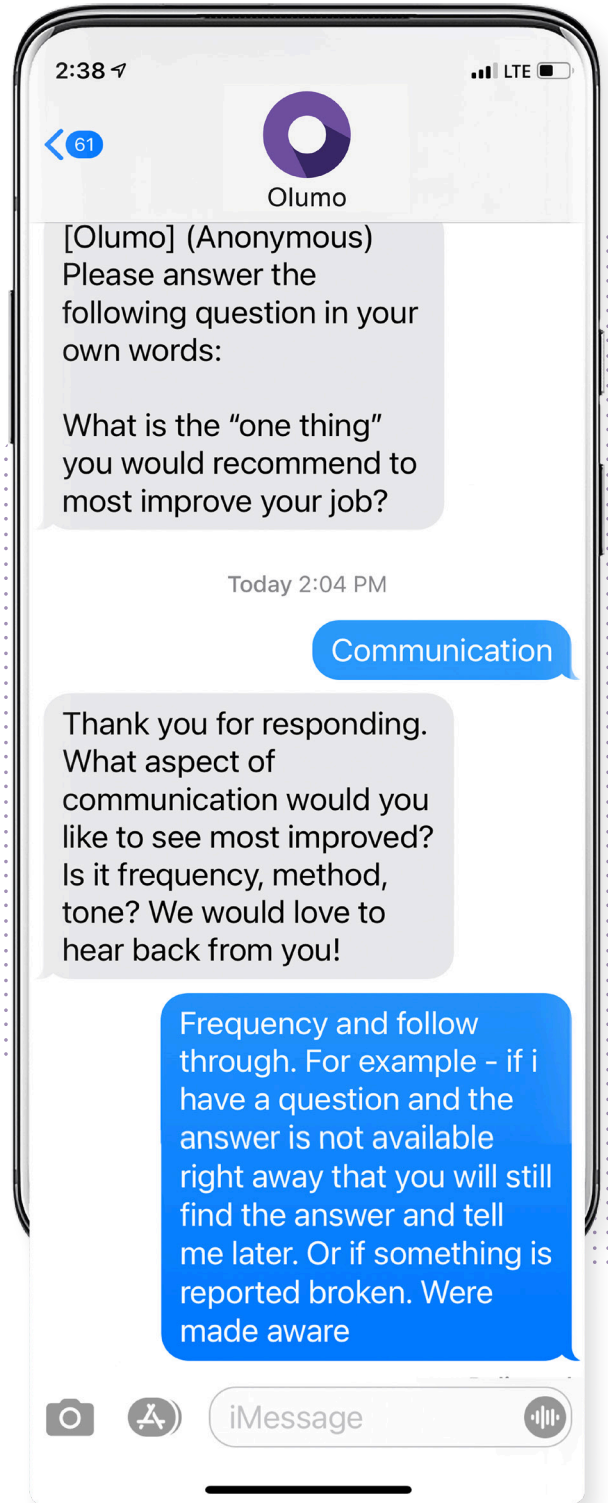
THE SOLUTION

The objective of gathering feedback is to drive your business results. Your ability to take the right actions is predicated on the right information. Olumo helps organizations to gather deep insights from your people surrounding their overall workplace experience. As you listen and learn from their experience you will quickly identify what's working and what's not throughout the organization. Afterall, you can't fix what you don't understand and solving problems is easy when you have the data and insights you need to understand them at the root cause.

The good news is that your people want you to succeed and to make improvements just like you do. They want a better experience, they want to solve problems, and if you engage them in the process, they are more than willing to help.

As organizations launch the Olumo platform we guide them through a series of actions that are designed to build trust and create engagement. Those include immediately sharing (pre-approved) positive and critical feedback openly with the organization. This demonstrates that the organization is serious about accepting feedback and reinforces Olumo is a safe place to share feedback and actions speak louder than words.

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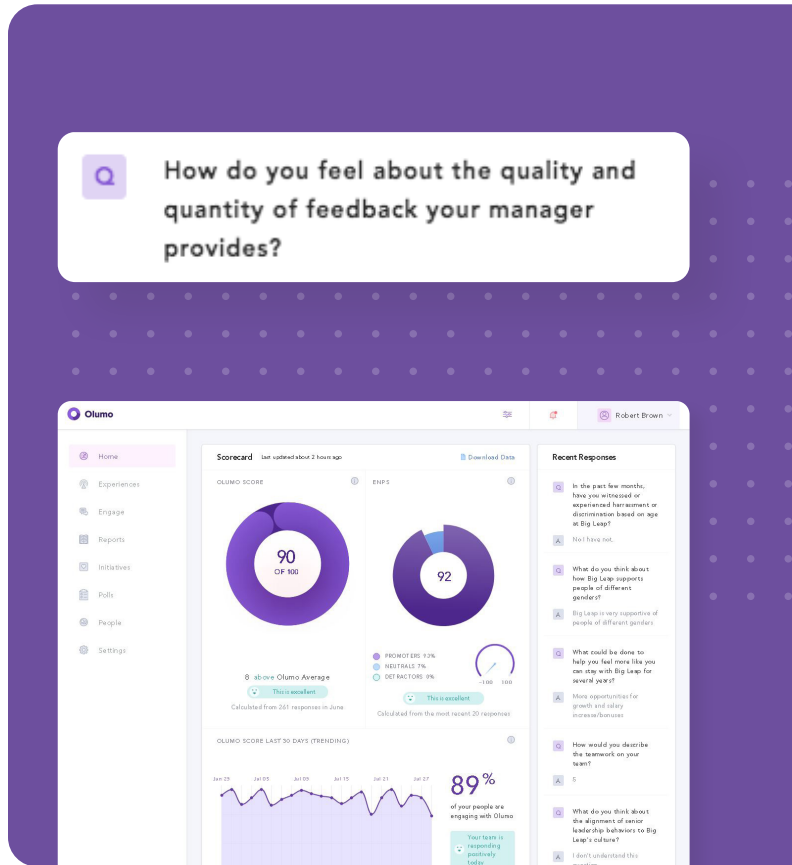
People don't get tired of providing feedback, they get tired of the lack of action based on their feedback. The faster you connect their feedback to action the better.

L Listen

E Engage

A Action

P Progress
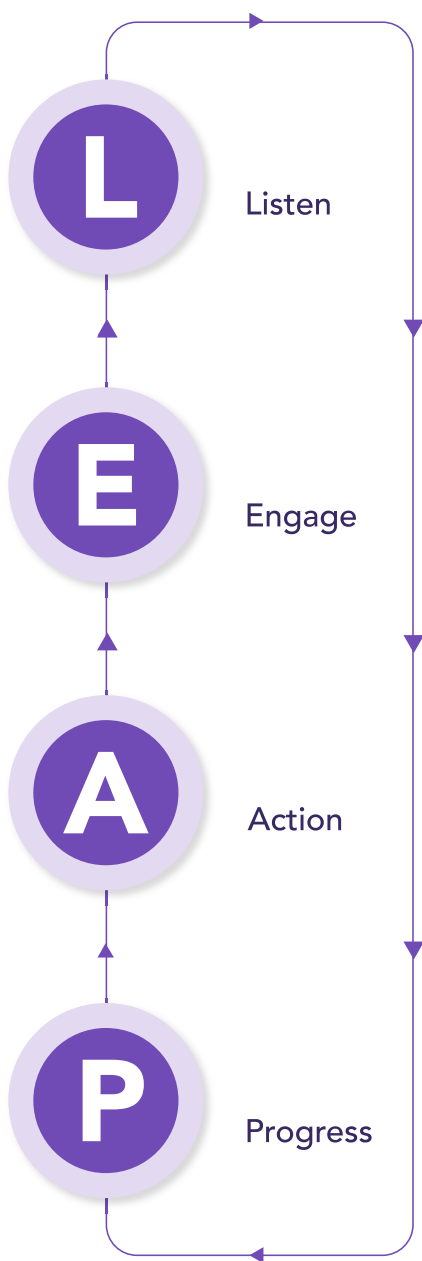
In addition, we immediately look for a quick action (change) organization can make based on feedback received. It can be a simple as an improvement to a process, or an update to a policy or procedure. The goal is to attach people's feedback to a visible action as quickly as possible. By doing so you can demonstrate the value of their feedback to them and reinforce your commitment to listening and taking action.

Research from O.C. Tanner showed that taking action based on feedback within 30 days has the greatest effect.

An **804%** probability of feeling like the organization is great at listening.

A **306%** probability that employees will trust the organization to do what is right, even if it causes problems in the short term.

A **203%** increase in the probability that the employe will feel like their ideas are taken seriously by the organization.

Olumo works with your organization to drive consistent action our **LEAP** process as we help you to **L**isten to your people, **E**ngage in constant communication, take intentional **A**ction based on the feedback, and to measure the **P**rogress of your actions over time.

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CONCLUSION

Creating a systematic process to complete the feedback loop is key to an organization's success. You can't fix what you don't understand and it's what you don't know that's impeding your success.

Anonymous feedback is the key to gathering personal and insightful data from your people and by translating feedback to action organizations can achieve their business results.

Interesting Olumo Side Note: When we were developing the Olumo platform we tested the platform with anonymous and named feedback. What we found was that named feedback had significantly lower engagement rates (people were not as comfortable responding). We also found that named feedback was more positive, but it was a false sense of reality. People were more positive because they were saying what they thought the organization wanted to hear.   With named feedback they were less likely to communicate candid feedback as they feared how the organization would react. We also found with named feedback that there was a small subset of individuals that used the system to game the system to boost their own personal status.   They shared a lot of feedback to impress or to be seen. It became clear that

anonymous feedback provides the deepest level of understanding and insights. When we combined anonymous feedback with our conversational approach to listening, the actionable insights began to flow.

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ABOUT OLUMO

Olumo delivers tactical insights to organizations surrounding their most important asset—their people. Olumo systematically engages with organizations to deliver timely and critical human analytics and strategic insights to create The Human Experience At Work. Olumo drives business results through their proprietary L.E.A.P. process as Olumo helps organizations to Listen, Engage, take Action, and measure Progress. Olumo helps organizations become employers of choice as they become Human Experience certified and qualify for the Top Human Experience At Work Awards.

Learn more at: *www.Olumo.com*

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