

5 Listening Channels That Can Yield Insight-Rich Employee Data

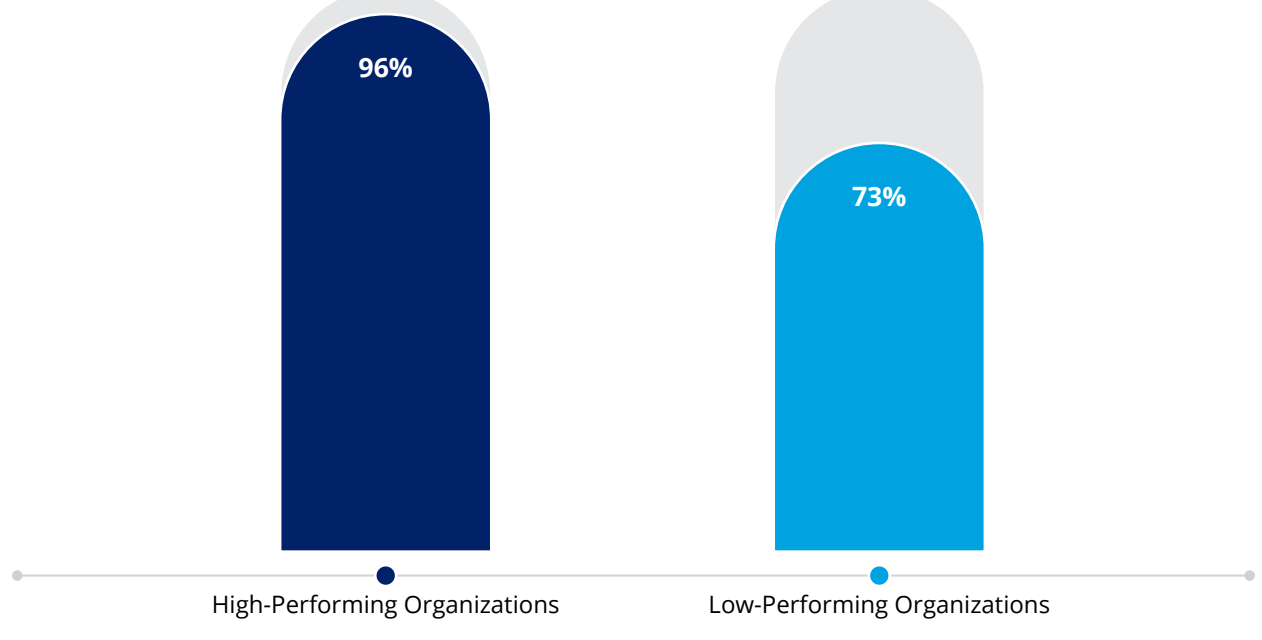
To gain a full and nuanced understanding of their employees, companies need listening channels that utilize a comprehensive set of quantitative and qualitative data within their people analytics (PA) engines. The wider and deeper these listening channels, the greater the potential yield and quality of the insights produced.

Bersin's High-Impact People Analytics research reveals that companies with high-performing PA capabilities collect data from multiple channels—leveraging more than twice as many as lower-performing organizations.¹ Companies can create more expansive and holistic listening architectures by effectively applying the following five listening channels.

1. A Comprehensive Survey Mix

Employee surveys are often a fruitful source of people data, providing a direct line of sight into the performance and the psyche of the workforce. These surveys can reveal obstacles to employee engagement and performance, quantify essential employee metrics, and enable companies to evaluate the effects of strategic and cultural change initiatives on employee sentiment. As the following figure illustrates, both high- and low-performing organizations use surveys extensively in order to gain people insights.

Percentage of Organizations Using Surveys as a Listening Channel: High-Performing versus Low-Performing Organizations



Companies can include short, frequent pulse surveys to help better understand employee satisfaction. Mood surveys and kiosk surveys—usually containing just one question—can be rolled out on a daily or weekly basis to analyze engagement and performance in the moment. Further, culture change surveys and exit surveys can be conducted to create a more comprehensive and effective survey mix.

Call to Action

- Ask fewer questions, and make them broader and more open-ended to give employees the latitude to decide which issues are important for leaders to know.
- Design a survey program that tracks the employee life cycle from candidates to alumni to gain insights into more aspects of employee experience.
- Leverage technology to conduct surveys efficiently and receive survey data and insights faster.
- Don't overdo it—survey fatigue can make employees less willing to participate in future surveys, especially if results are not acted upon.

2. Internal Social Media Platforms

More and more employees are using internal social media platforms as part of their daily work. Their interactions on these platforms constitute a valuable—and typically untapped—listening channel. The following figure illustrates how this channel has been used more frequently by high-performing organizations.

Percentage of Organizations Mining Internal Social Platforms as a Listening Channel: High-Performing versus Low-Performing Organizations



Companies can leverage automated text analysis techniques such as natural language processing to extract meaning from the large amounts of unstructured data that internal social media often yields. Similarly, social network analysis can offer insights into the strengths of employee networks and interactions and help leaders understand the most effective methods of sharing information.

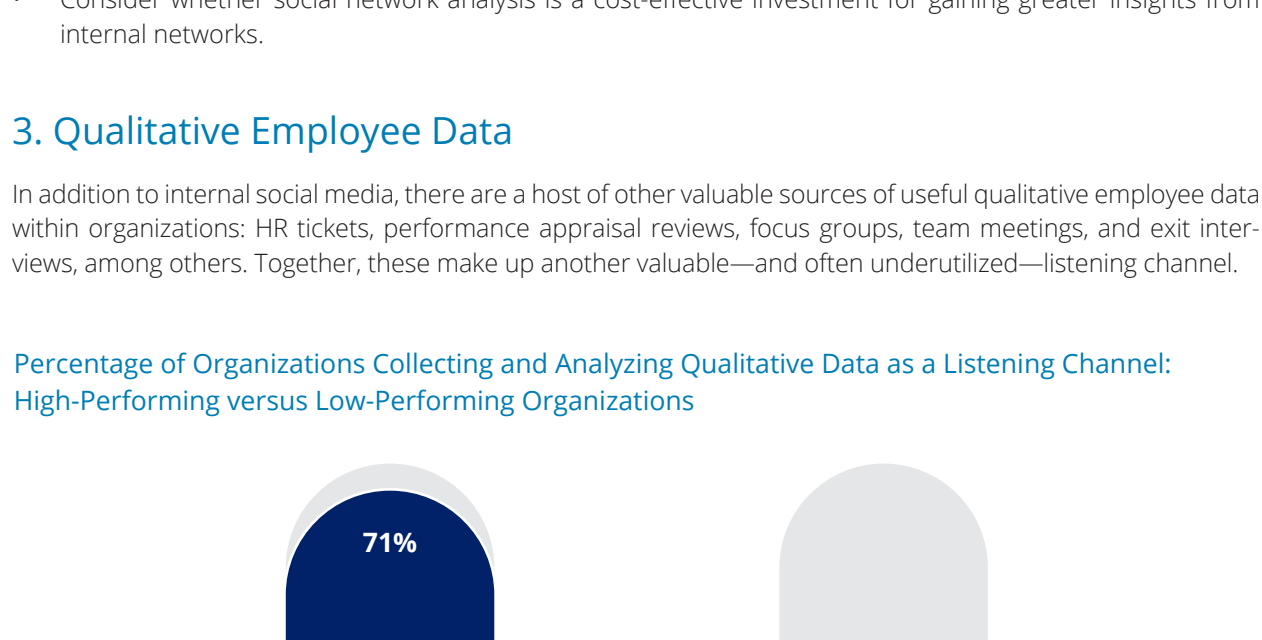
Call to Action

- Identify the internal social platforms employees use—and whether certain ones are used more than others—and tap them for data.
- Use automated text analysis tools to efficiently examine the unstructured data culled from internal social platforms.
- Consider whether social network analysis is a cost-effective investment for gaining greater insights from internal networks.

3. Qualitative Employee Data

In addition to internal social media, there are a host of other valuable sources of useful qualitative employee data within organizations: HR tickets, performance appraisal reviews, focus groups, team meetings, and exit interviews, among others. Together, these make up another valuable—and often underutilized—listening channel.

Percentage of Organizations Collecting and Analyzing Qualitative Data as a Listening Channel: High-Performing versus Low-Performing Organizations



Qualitative data is quickly becoming a productive tool for analyzing people-related issues. For example, data regarding the individual annual goals of employees can be analyzed using natural language processing to identify individual goals that may have identical goals but belong to separate teams, which can help an organization develop internal networks for collaboration. Data on what employees like and dislike about their jobs—developed during one-on-one interviews and / or town hall meetings—can surface insights that enhance engagement. Additionally, data derived from exit interviews can bolster retention programs.

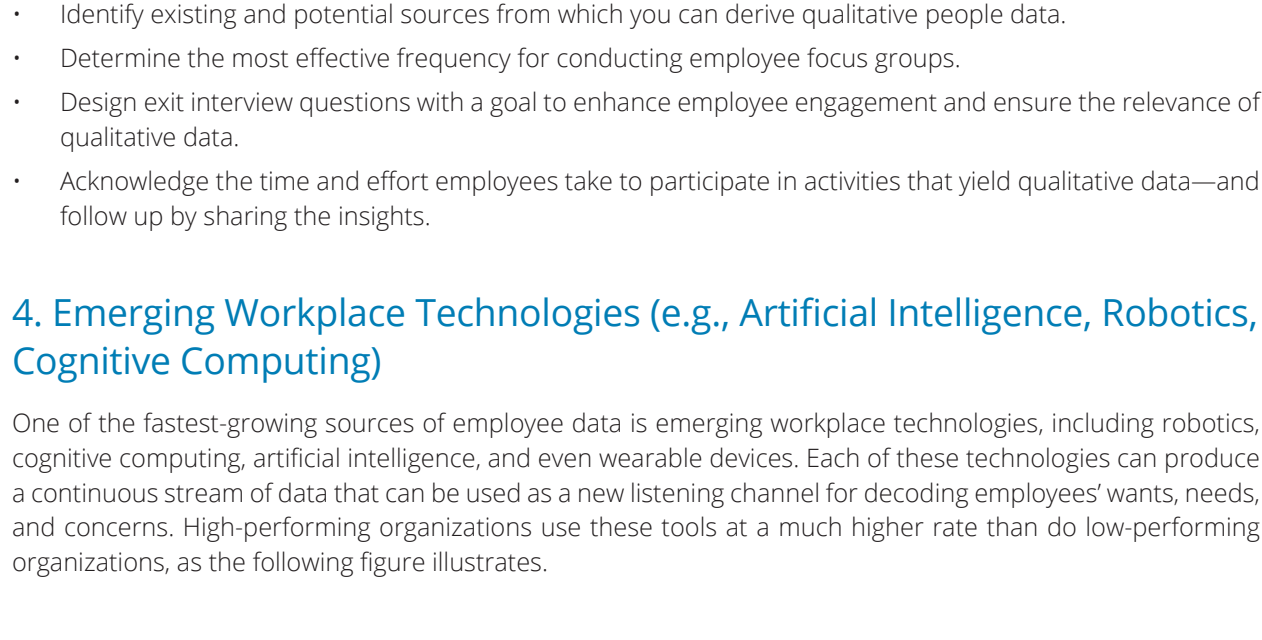
Call to Action

- Identify existing and potential sources from which you can derive qualitative people data.
- Determine the most effective frequency for conducting employee focus groups.
- Design exit interview questions with a goal to enhance employee engagement and ensure the relevance of qualitative data.
- Acknowledge the time and effort employees take to participate in activities that yield qualitative data—and follow up by sharing the insights.

4. Emerging Workplace Technologies (e.g., Artificial Intelligence, Robotics, Cognitive Computing)

One of the fastest-growing sources of employee data is emerging workplace technologies, including robotics, cognitive computing, artificial intelligence, and even wearable devices. Each of these technologies can produce a continuous stream of data that can be used as a new listening channel for decoding employees' wants, needs, and concerns. High-performing organizations use these tools at a much higher rate than do low-performing organizations, as the following figure illustrates.

Percentage of Organizations Tapping Emerging Workplace Technologies as a Listening Channel: High-Performing versus Low-Performing Organizations



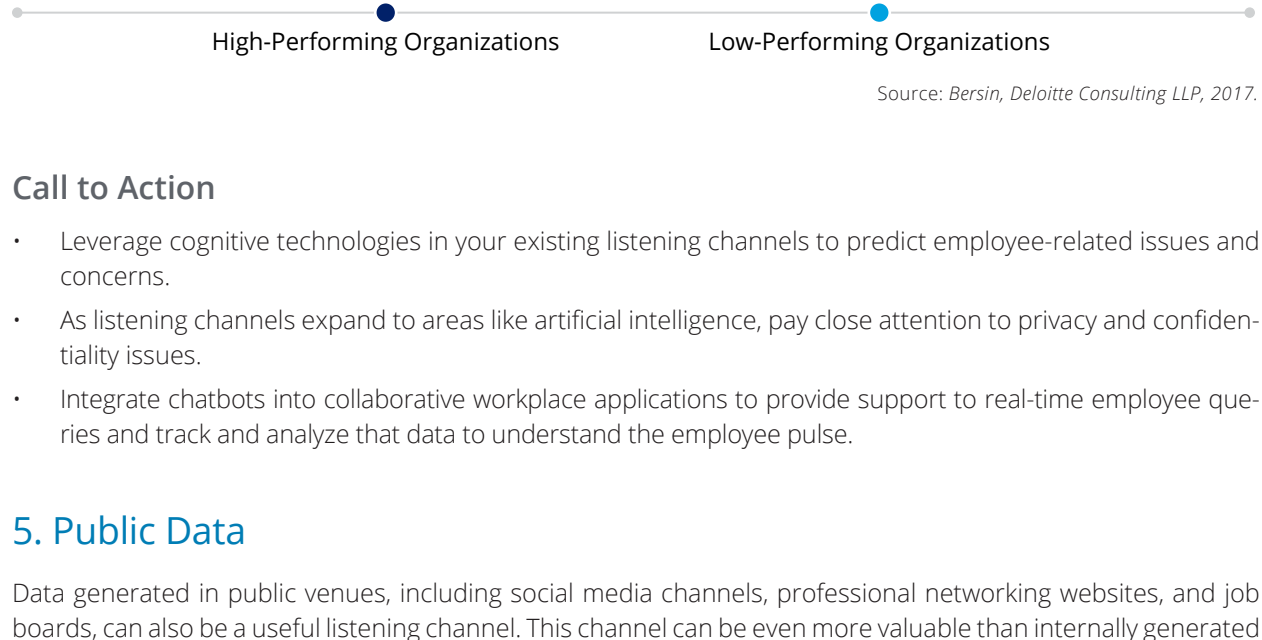
Call to Action

- Leverage cognitive technologies in your existing listening channels to predict employee-related issues and concerns.
- As listening channels expand to areas like artificial intelligence, pay close attention to privacy and confidentiality issues.
- Integrate chatbots into collaborative workplace applications to provide support to real-time employee queries and track and analyze that data to understand the employee pulse.

5. Public Data

Data generated in public venues, including social media channels, professional networking websites, and job boards, can also be a useful listening channel. This channel can be even more valuable than internally generated data—prospective and existing employees may feel safer expressing their true sentiments outside the workplace. The following figure highlights how large numbers of high-performing organizations are using external data to listen to their employees' needs.

Percentage of Organizations Tapping Publicly Available Data Sources as a Listening Channel: High-Performing versus Low-Performing Organizations



Call to Action

- Use publicly available data to stay on top of important trends such as labor market shifts, financial trends, and competitors for talent.
- Integrate publicly available information with your organization's data to create customized benchmarking metrics.
- Refer to career-related social media sites for information around evolving talent trends.

Bersin Recommended Reading

- *Seven Top Findings for Driving High-Impact People Analytics*, in the High-Impact People Analytics series
- *The People Analytics Maturity Model*, in the High-Impact People Analytics series
- *Advancing through the People Analytics Maturity Model*, in the High-Impact People Analytics series
- *Evaluating Employee Engagement Measurement Options*
- *Designing an Employee Engagement Strategy*
- *Nontraditional Data Sources for People Analytics*

¹ Seven Top Findings for Driving High-Impact People Analytics, in the High-Impact People Analytics series, Bersin, Deloitte Consulting LLP / Madhura Chakrabarti, 2017.

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