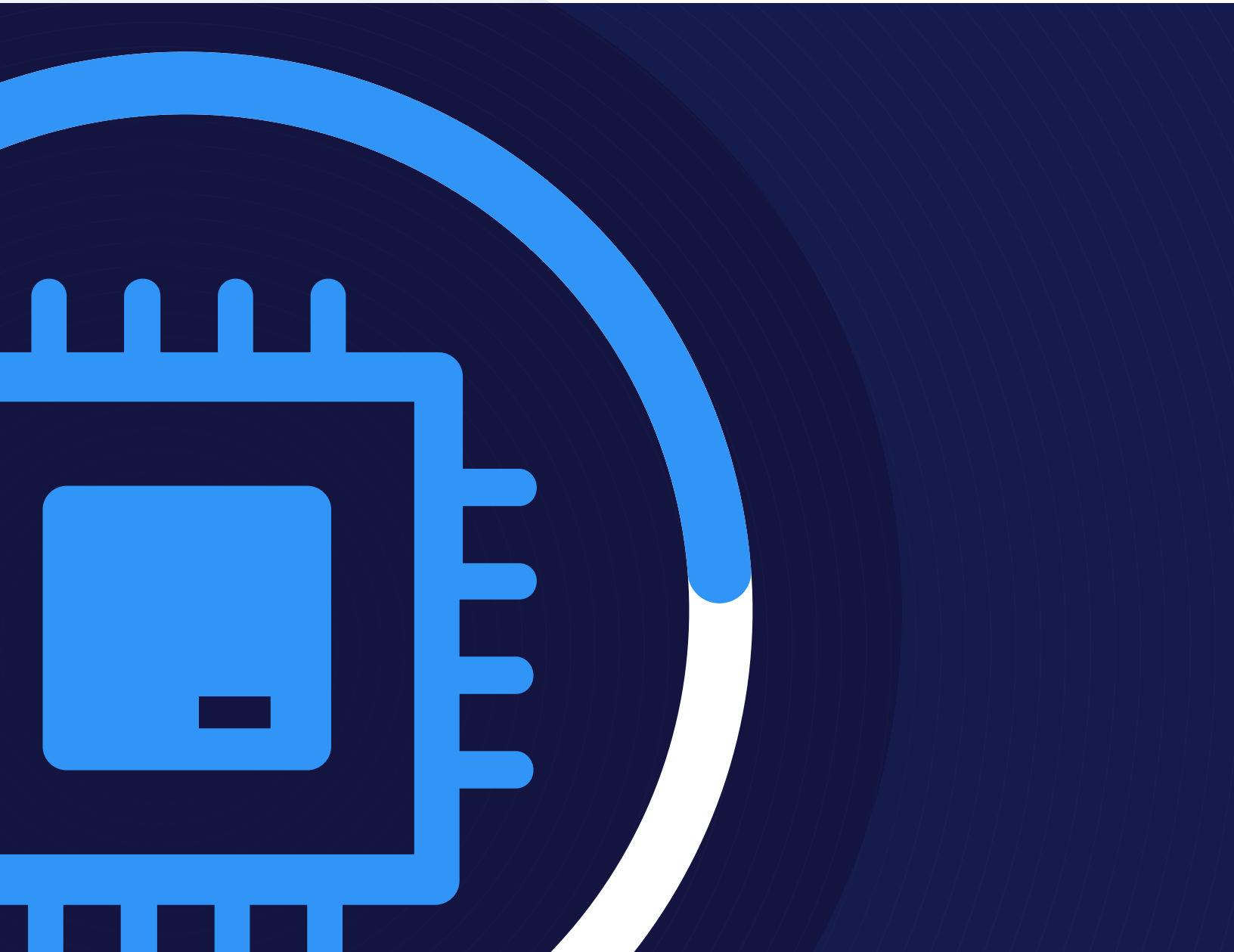
nexthink

Sentiment and Technology Management for IT Leaders



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01. Introduction

In today's rapidly digitalizing landscape, IT leaders face increasing pressure to deliver state-of-the-art digital services while maintaining budgetary constraints. Indeed, these services need to be cost-efficient, all while boosting both employee satisfaction and productivity. Achieving this balance requires a deep understanding, clear visibility, and actionable insights into the digital experience—an area that often remains opaque due to fragmented data sources and lack of integration.

IT leaders lack visibility and insights on the quality of digital services delivered to the employees, need ways to understand what to prioritize to improve them, and require tools to track the evolution over time. Traditional approaches include relying on ITSM-based KPIs and surveys, but these are far from showing the full picture. Indeed, the scope of such KPIs only relies on what employees raise as tickets, it focuses on problems (and not on what is going well) and does not offer a good understanding of employee sentiment toward IT (CSAT on ticket closure is extremely limited). This lack of clarity hinders IT leaders from making informed decisions that reflect positively on subsequent business outcomes.

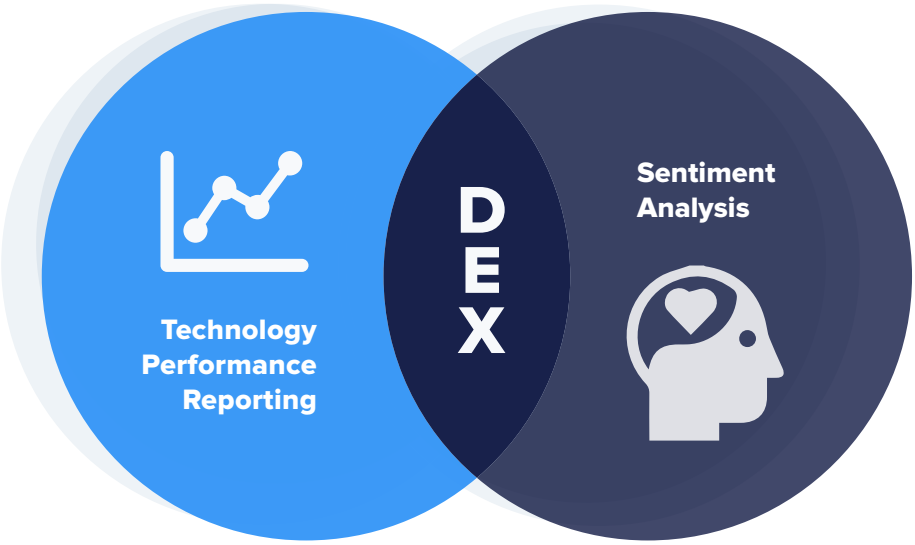
02.
The Dual-Faceted Solution

Our solution offers the following approach:

- **Technology Performance Reporting:** Through our holistic data collection capability (collector, vendor backend integration, etc.), we capture data related to endpoints, applications, and collaboration solutions to understand the health and performance of IT tools and solutions. A resultant score derived from these metrics reflects the frequency and nature of technological issues impacting employee productivity. It serves as an organizational pulse, signaling broad technological health issues impacting employees.

- **Sentiment Analysis:** Using a targeted survey, we gather employee sentiments about their IT interactions. A simple yet effective two-question survey aids in determining overall IT satisfaction and identifying specific areas of concern. This data is used to compute a score to quickly analyze the situation and report on it. Leveraging recent AI advancements, open-text response analysis is part of the roadmap to tap into more profound and actionable insights.

Finally, we combine these two scores into a singular, concise KPI: The Digital Experience (DEX) score. This KPI unlocks holistic tracking and reporting of the situation, as well as generating insights about the distribution of the level of Digital Experience inside your organization. It allows our customers to reflect their digital workplace's subjective (sentiment) and objective (technology performance) facets in a unified way.



03.
Technical Deep Dive

Technology Performance Reporting

Our patent-pending solution delivers a unique approach to quantify the impact of Technology on employee experience. It breaks down the employee's journey into small moments over time. For each moment, we can quantify the experience level for every user by analyzing technology performance metrics. Then, we compute a score based on the number of moments over time where IT was in the way of the employee's productivity. This allows you to understand if issues happen in your environment and how often they occur.

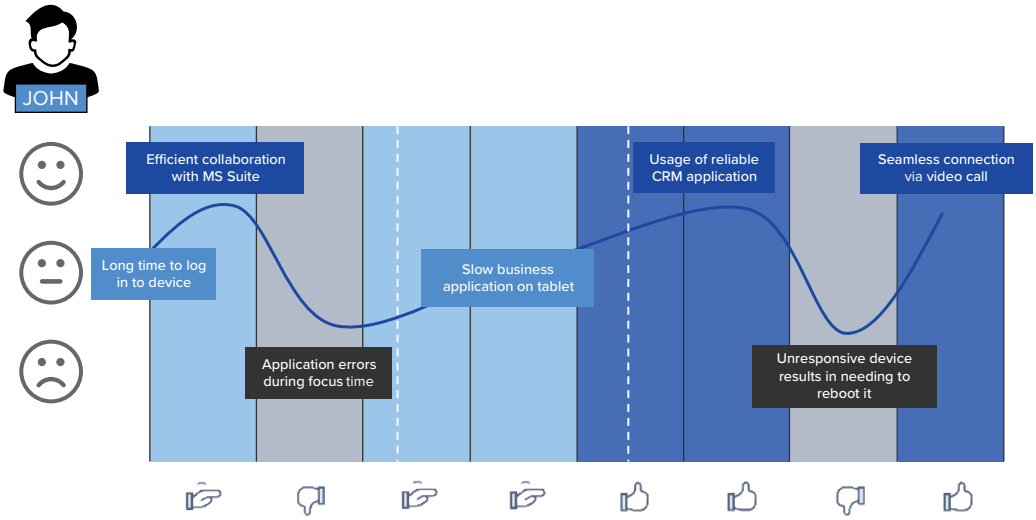


Figure 1
Nexthink's Moments of Experience Approach

Sentiment Survey

We measure sentiment through a simple yet powerful Nexthink Engage campaign that is quick and easy for employees to answer, thereby minimizing distraction and optimizing response rates. The campaign contains only two cards and can be answered in seconds without the need to navigate to another tool or website. It was thoughtfully crafted in close collaboration with our in-house UX Research experts to follow industry best practices. We designed it to prioritize efficiency and effectiveness.

The campaign consists of three key elements: The respondents first rate their satisfaction with IT on a five-point scale, ranging from very satisfied to very dissatisfied. In a simple list with checkboxes, the respondents select the areas where they see opportunities for improvement. In a comment box, respondents leave open-ended feedback.

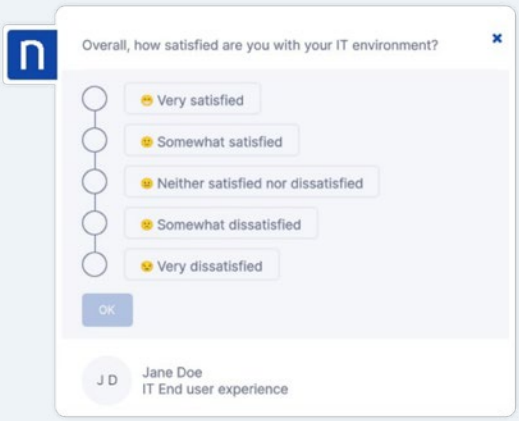


Figure 2
Card 1 of the Sentiment Campaign

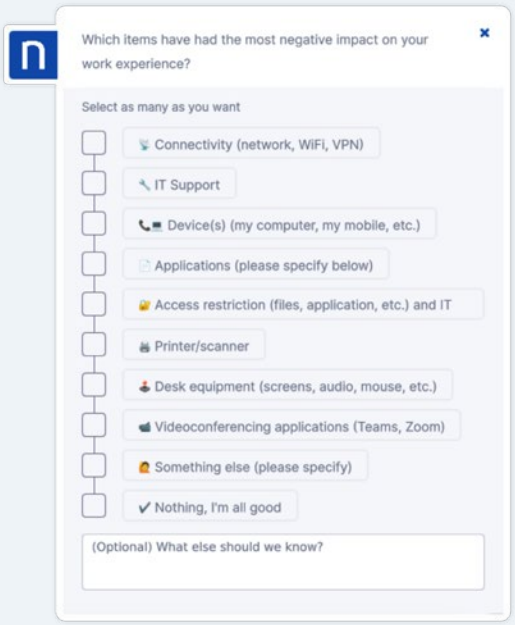


Figure 3
Card 2 of the Sentiment Campaign

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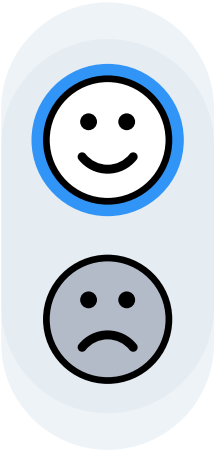
Each element fulfills a specific function to understand and manage the employee experience:

Satisfaction rating

When averaged over a sufficiently large group of randomly selected employees, it captures the satisfaction of your entire workforce and can serve as a central input to your DEX strategy. This gives you a temperature reading of where you stand regarding your employee's digital experience. A new sample of employees is targeted every day to collect sentiment data continuously. Tracking the evolution of satisfaction over time allows you to monitor the impact of changes and events on the employee experience of your workforce.



Read more about how we measure satisfaction:
Why does Nexthink use an opinion scale and not NPS?

Read more about how many employees are enough:
How many people should I send the campaign to and how often?

Areas of dissatisfaction

The proportion of respondents that select each option is a more fine-grained indicator of where IT is hurting employee experience. We suggest regularly revising this list by adding new topics you discover to be potentially problematic and removing the ones that no longer are. By keeping track of potentially problematic topics over time, you can discover trends and measure the progress of your improvement initiatives. This can yield first explanations of changes in the overall satisfaction score. The data can be further analyzed by setting it in relation to overall satisfaction, technical metrics, and open-ended employee feedback.

Comment box

Respondent's open-ended feedback explains why they are (dis)satisfied , making the data actionable. This is the information needed to know what can improve the situation. For example, you may have learned from the first two elements that an individual is dissatisfied and that their connectivity may be the culprit. But it is hard to know under which circumstances the person experiences problems and what to do about it. Comments give you the context you need to improve your experience without needing in-depth technical analysis. At the same time, it gives sufficient hints to investigate if this problem also concerns others. Numbers alone simply don't tell the whole story.

Comments also allow you to discover problems you were not yet aware of and can thereby serve as an early warning signal. Lastly, it can surface issues that cannot be discovered from technical data: Customers have seen comments such as "HDMI port 2 in meeting room 4.12 is broken" that they would not have discovered otherwise.

Recent advances in Artificial Intelligence (notably Large Language Models like ChatGPT) have made it easier than ever to extract insights from large amounts of text, for example, by identifying common themes—that you can then keep close tabs on by adding it to your checklist of areas of dissatisfaction. Again, these data can be a starting point for further investigation by setting it in relation to other Nexthink data.

It is worth noting the high customer interest in this campaign since its launch at the beginning of 2023. Our approach to allow flexibility in tailoring some parts of the survey to each customer's organization guidelines is also highly appreciated.

Normalized Scores

Our customers have relied on Nexthink Digital Experience scoring metrics for years, valuing them as a foundational concept. In fact, some have even embraced it so much that they primarily look at employees through these numerical scores.

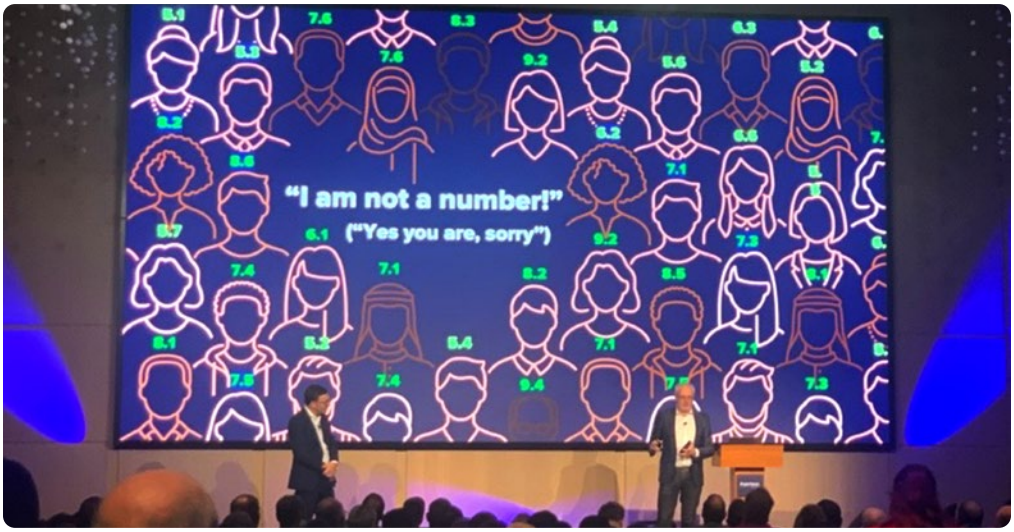


Figure 4
Testimonies During 2023 Experience Everywhere Customer Gathering

Scores, both for technology performance and sentiment, provide a robust method to track, juxtapose, and combine diverse data types. They act as a unifying tool, distilling underlying complexities into standardized and comparable metrics. By doing so, scores enable our clients to make apples-to-apples comparisons from previously incompatible data points. To enhance this comparability, both our Technology and Sentiment scores undergo a standardized normalization process. For instance, any Sentiment or Technology score above the 70 mark indicates a good situation.

Scores for Strategic Triage

With these scores in place, identifying departments that suffer from technological issues and low satisfaction becomes straightforward. Without such scores, this would necessitate navigating through a maze of varied data types—like satisfaction distribution, issue counts, issue frequency, etc. which can be intricate and time-consuming.

This is the reason the design of our interface has been thought to allow easy comparisons of both scores to extract valuable insights, such as being able to see patterns in satisfaction and technology across varying cohorts of employees.

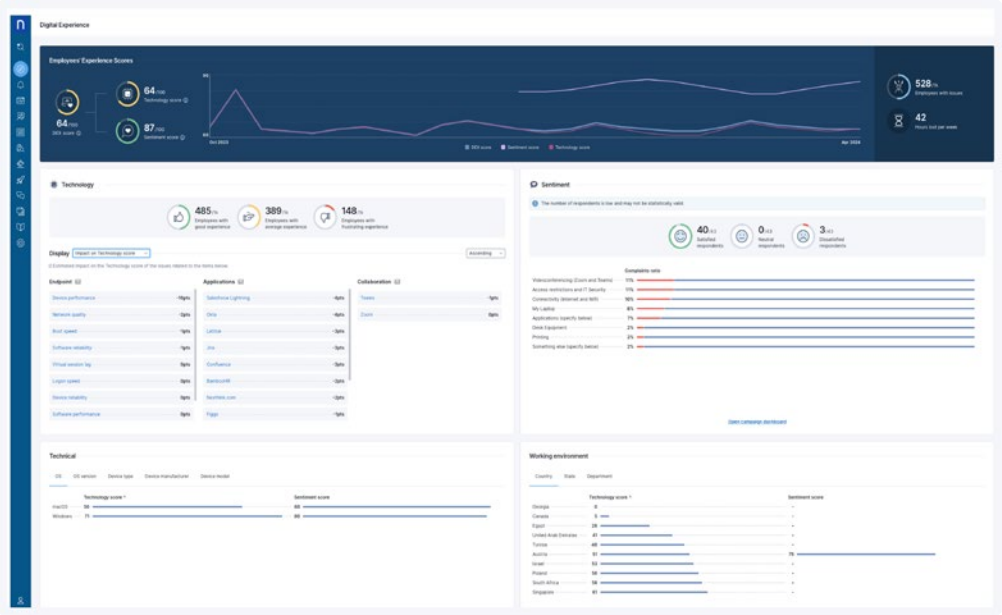


Figure 5
Nexthink's Digital Experience Module

It is also crucial to highlight that scores genuinely shine due to their ability to:

- Monitor values over time, offering insights into trends and allowing decision-makers to strategically adjust to evolving situations or validate the outcomes of previous choices.
- Facilitate consistent comparisons between external and internal groups, pinpointing potential investment areas or highlighting best practices.

KPI Synthesis into the Digital Experience Score

In alignment with Experience Level Agreements (XLAs) leaders in the industry, Nexthink has championed the combination of hard metrics (technology performance data) and soft metrics (user feedback) for proper DEX management since the introduction of the first version of the Digital Experience Score. Our pioneering efforts in introducing this dual-metric KPI have resonated positively within the market, with six years of user feedback attesting to its value.

The sheer volume of underlying data available can often lead to decision paralysis. Merging the Technology score and Sentiment score into a single KPI streamlines the decision-making process by providing IT leaders with a holistic view of both the objective performance of their tools and the subjective satisfaction of their users. This combined metric offers an abstraction layer, which can be valuable for comparing the situation of different populations very quickly, allowing decision-makers to prioritize areas impacting system efficiency and user happiness. The Digital Experience score is **THE KPI out of the box that Nexthink offers to strategically manage your overall digital experience.** Moreover, synthesizing these two scores into one KPI promotes a unified strategy that aligns technological enhancements with user sentiments. When technology performance metrics are viewed in isolation, it often leads organizations to invest heavily in areas that do not necessarily translate to better user experiences (nor necessarily solve poor experience issues). Conversely, by solely focusing on sentiment scores, one might miss underlying technical issues that could silently erode satisfaction levels. The combined KPI acts as a single reference, guiding IT leaders to make investments that genuinely enhance the digital experience, ensuring that technological upgrades resonate with user needs and aspirations. Looking only at the sub-scores (Technology and Sentiment scores) to assess the situation and monitor its evolution makes its reporting more complex.

Having a unifying KPI significantly streamlines stakeholder management, especially when engaging with senior leadership. Senior executives, often juggling many responsibilities, appreciate clarity and brevity in performance metrics. A singular, combined KPI offers a distilled snapshot of the organization's digital health, blending technological efficiency with user sentiment. This not only reduces the cognitive load but also facilitates more informed strategic discussions. In essence, a consolidated KPI fosters clearer communication, aligns stakeholders, and ensures that strategic discussions are both focused and impactful.

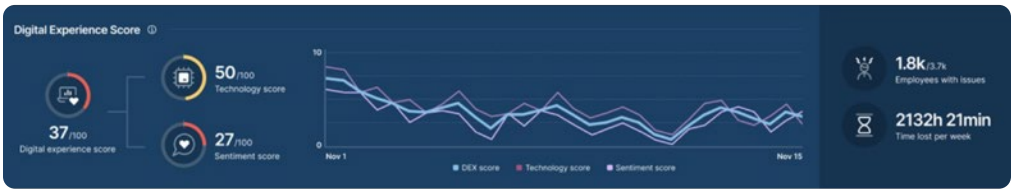
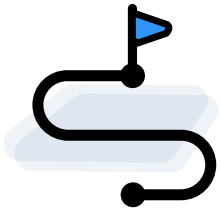


Figure 6
Combining Technology and Sentiment into the Digital Experience Score

04.
Conclusion

In an era where digital experience directly impacts organizational success, IT leaders need tools that offer clarity, actionable insights, and a pulse on employee productivity and satisfaction with IT. The Nexthink solution, refined over half a decade and validated by industry leaders, offers just that.



05.
FAQs

Q. Why doesn't Nexthink rely on NPS to measure employee sentiment?

Nexthink uses a five-point rating scale to gauge satisfaction, in line with best practices applied by industry-leaders like Google and survey experts like Qualtrics and SurveyMonkey, and after extensive review of the available private sector research and scientific literature. Satisfaction can be averaged to yield a single score, which can be used as a KPI like the NPS.

Net promoter score (NPS) is a widely used metric and shares certain characteristics with the Nexthink Sentiment Campaign, notably its ease of use for respondents and the combination of a rating scale and comment box. However, it is less suited to measure employee satisfaction for the following reasons:

NPS does not measure what we are interested in.

The NPS was designed to measure "brand loyalty." That is, predict repeat purchases of fast-moving consumer goods such as toothpaste and breakfast cereal. Human Resources departments, or products catering to this audience, have implemented their own derivative: the employee NPS (e-NPS). E-NPS is supposed to measure "employee loyalty," that is, predict if employees are committed to their jobs, or halfway out the door.

While loyalty and satisfaction correlate, they are not the same thing. Neither are satisfaction and likelihood to recommend. I can be dissatisfied with my company laptop, but still recommend it because it is so much better than what my previous company provided me with. Inversely, I could be very satisfied with my laptop but not recommend it because I only recommend Apple computers out of principle.

Using NPS to measure satisfaction would be like assessing a person's height by their weight. It is correlated, but imperfectly so. NPS is useful to predict repeat purchases or employee turnover because people are surprisingly bad at predicting their future behavior. The same is not true for satisfaction: People are pretty good at knowing how they feel, so that we can ask them about it directly.

NPS has a different goal.

We aim to measure and improve experience. NPS aims to predict behavior. To oversimplify things, marketing and the business aim to increase revenue by selling more goods and services. HR departments aim to avoid having employees leave their organization, to reduce their spending on finding, recruiting, and training new employees to replace the ones who left. For them, measuring loyalty through NPS makes sense because it does a decent job at predicting future behavior.

End-user computing teams aim to delight employees by providing an IT experience that makes their lives easier and their work more productive. We never want to get close to a situation where an employee considers quitting because of a poor experience using their IT. Hence, what we want to measure is not "loyalty" or behavior but the quality of their experience or "satisfaction"—the pinnacle of which is the delight IT teams aim to provide.

Q. How many responses do I need?

As a starting point, we often recommend surveying each employee once per year and spreading the available number of responses out over the year.

Counterintuitively, it does not matter how many people you want to extrapolate your learnings to. What matters is how large the sample of employees is that you poll at a given point in time (Source). This is due to what is known as the law of large numbers in probability theory, a branch of mathematics important for survey science. Even polls that predict high-stakes outcomes, like the presidential elections in the United States of America, a country with more than 160 million registered voters, rarely use more than 1,000–2,000 samples (Source).

The goal is for each individual data point to be a random sample with sufficient responses to reflect the true satisfaction of the population within an acceptable margin of error. A standard acceptable margin of error across industries and scientific disciplines is 5%. This accuracy can be achieved with only 400 responses for large populations with over 10,000 employees (less for smaller organizations). Note, however, that this number is per smallest unit of analysis. That means that if you desire accuracy within 5% per country, you need 400 responses per country. 1,000 responses get your margin of error down to 3%.

Q. How often should I send the campaign?

Targeting each employee more than once per year is possible but not needed in large organizations. Spreading the available responses over the year achieves a sufficient sample size at each point in time to reflect the true satisfaction of the employee population within an acceptable margin of error. Any less, and employees may not feel heard. Anymore, and you lose leeway to run campaigns on other topics before becoming a nuisance. Employees will appreciate it if they see you investigate topics they flagged previously.

As mentioned above, it is not necessary to poll the entire employee base to get an accurate reading of their experience. Instead of running a yearly survey amongst the entire workforce, it is much more useful to sample the experiences continuously throughout the year. More frequent data allows you to react more quickly and see the impact of changes more quickly. More and more human resources departments, enabled by modern survey distribution methods, are therefore pivoting to so-called "pulse" surveys sent throughout the year.

Q. How much is too much?

Survey fatigue is a real and constant concern. Notification fatigue is just the same. However, it is impossible to give sound advice on how many Engage campaigns employees can appreciate before it becomes a nuisance. The main factor is the relevance of the campaign. Remember the last flight you booked? Every single e-mail about rental cars and hotels you received after the booking was likely one too many. However, when you are unsure you will make an important meeting at your destination because your flight is delayed, you would probably appreciate frequent updates about what is going on, so you can arrange for alternatives if needed. Same company, same person, but different use case and hence different effect. The same holds true for Engage campaigns. Even surveys are received very differently, depending on how much the employee cares about its topic.

From this follow several recommendations to make surveys more relevant for your audience. First, tailor the targeting of your campaigns to reach (only) the right people at the right time—something Nexthink is extraordinarily good at. Second, close the loop with the employee. Share your conclusions and plans for action with the employees so they know the work they put into their feedback is being read and acted upon. When you act, emphasize how employee feedback informed your decisions.

Learn More about Nexthink AI-powered DEX.