

HOW TO USE THE 2023 GLOBAL CULTURE REPORT

As executive teams endeavor to rebuild workplace cultures after two years of physical distance and face an intense and more global labor market, a little extra insight into what matters most to employees today can be extremely beneficial. We hope you will find the direction you need in this report. To help you get the most out of it, here are a few suggestions.

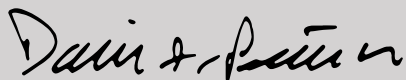
First, note the larger themes and insights. These three are especially rich and consequential:

- A clear line connects the Great Resignation to employees' desire for fulfilling work
- Employees want to contribute to a vibrant community in which they feel they belong
- To be truly integrated, recognition must be an early and frequent part of the employee experience

Next, focus on the themes that can impact your HR and culture strategies for 2023, and then see where those strategies naturally connect to your organization's upcoming business plans. Integrating and aligning rather than adding initiatives is often the most effective approach.

And finally, use these insights to help you tap into the strengths of your culture, so your best people feel a greater sense of connection and belonging, and your next employees are easier to attract and more inspired to contribute great work.

The role of HR is changing in important ways. HR leaders are now the architects of the employee experience and community. We wholeheartedly support you in your stewardship as you move beyond engagement to help people find fulfillment. Let's make the evolving workplace a place where everyone can thrive.



Dave Petersen
President & CEO
O.C. Tanner

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In many ways and for many reasons, people are more separated now than they have been in the past. Philosophically, politically, financially, physically, there is no shortage of divisions and space. However, at least at work, our research finds employees would prefer the opposite. Regardless of their place on the org chart, people have begun to seek more opportunities to connect with each other, and they are looking to their employers for help. Among the most common sentiments is a longing for community—the feeling of belonging to a group with a purpose that invites and inspires the person to contribute meaningful work. And when they feel this, it satisfies another deep need: fulfillment.

Community and fulfillment are two of the biggest themes we examined this year—a year in which organizations are at a crossroads, caught between recovering from recent crises and preparing for an economic forecast that could be damaging to their cultures. Part of the challenge is determining where to invest effort and resources because while most workplace culture scores have improved, the Great Resignation persists.

Based on our studies, we believe that for organizations to create community and provide an environment where fulfillment is possible, they'll have to make progress on multiple paths. So we'll explore the most promising ways forward in this report. Some may feel familiar, such as a focus on integrated recognition, while others, like employee fulfillment, are new to the scene but quickly catching the attention of the most committed organizations. Regardless, everything we share this year is the natural culmination of everything we've learned since our first report five years ago. Each report builds on the last. And as surely as workplace cultures are evolving, we're confident our understanding of them keeps pace.

On that point, this year the O.C. Tanner Institute collected and analyzed the perspectives of over 36,000 employees, leaders, HR practitioners, and business executives from 20 countries around the world. You can see our methodology on page 167. The results demonstrate that employees crave community, leaders require urgent attention, personal fulfillment is a new benchmark, generalists provide exactly what organizations need now (if allowed), and symbols can increase the power of recognition dramatically.

We're excited to unpack it all and hope our findings help you build the culture and community that will ensure your people thrive at work.

No matter how independent or introverted, humans are inherently social animals.

We all find emotional and psychological strength in each other. And whether an employee is a leader or individual contributor, specialist or generalist, 10-year veteran or week-1 recruit, the near constant change and uncertainty of the last year have eroded feelings of connection in the workplace. Fortunately, the cure is also becoming more apparent. Organizations can create the stability, identity, and belonging we all crave by providing a stronger sense of community. This, like any noble endeavor, is easier said than done. Bridging gaps, repairing holes, and laying new groundwork will require deliberate planning and action.

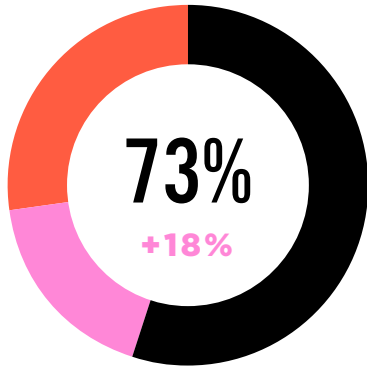
“Alone, we can do so little. Together, we can do so much.”

—HELEN KELLER, DISABILITY RIGHTS ADVOCATE AND AUTHOR

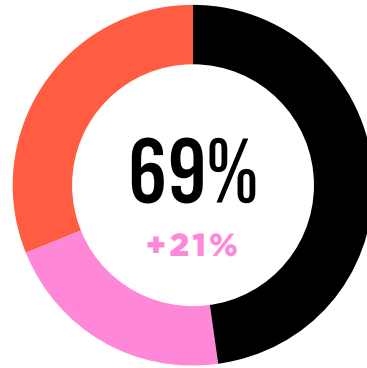
Let’s take a quick look at how culture has changed over the past year and how organizations can work through the changes to build a stronger community.

CHANGES IN TALENT MAGNET™ AREAS

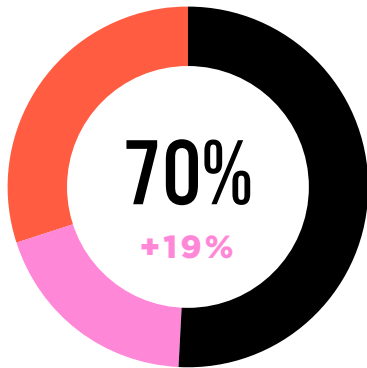
Each year we measure changes in the six core elements of workplace culture that together determine employee decisions to join, engage with, and remain at any place of work. We call them Talent Magnets because of their power to attract and connect people to their teams and organizations:



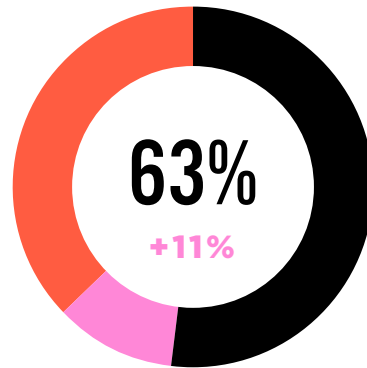
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF PURPOSE



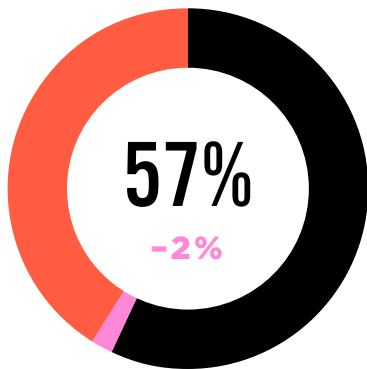
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF OPPORTUNITY



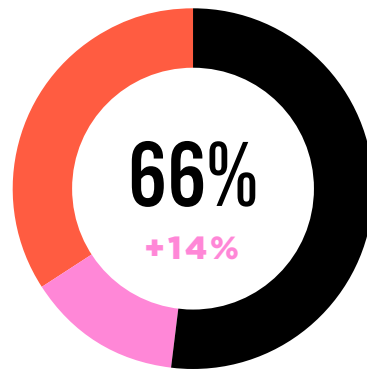
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF SUCCESS



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF APPRECIATION



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF WELLBEING



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF LEADERSHIP

Figure 1. ALMOST ALL TALENT MAGNET SCORES ROSE YEAR OVER YEAR
Current state of six essential elements that define thriving cultures.

YEAR-OVER-YEAR CHANGE

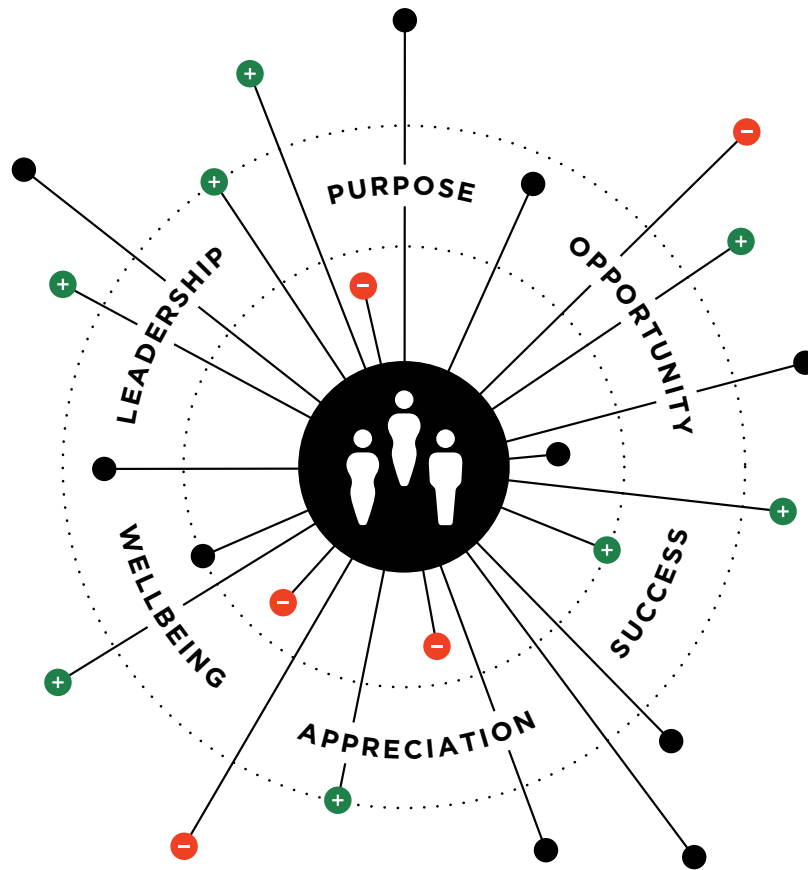


Figure 2. THE TALENT MAGNETS
Six essential elements that define thriving cultures.

1. Purpose

An organization's reason for being besides profits. It's the difference it makes in the world, why the company exists. Employees need to feel connected to the purpose and understand how their job contributes to it. Once they do, their work takes on meaning. Organizations should clearly articulate the connection between work and purpose.

2. Opportunity

The chance to develop new skills, contribute to meaningful work, feel challenged, have a voice, and grow. Opportunity is more than the lure of promotions and pay increases. It's about preparing and empowering employees to make decisions, inviting them to the table, and offering them projects that will expand their skills and relationships.

3. Success

The thrill of accomplishment, innovation, breaking barriers, playing on a winning team, and experiencing victories. Employees must find success at the individual, team, and organizational levels, and it should be nurtured and publicly celebrated.

4. Appreciation

Feeling valued for one's contributions and being recognized for one's worth. Appreciation is essential to employees—people need to know their leaders and peers notice and are grateful for their efforts and contributions. Appreciation is most effective when it's delivered in timely, personal, and meaningful ways.

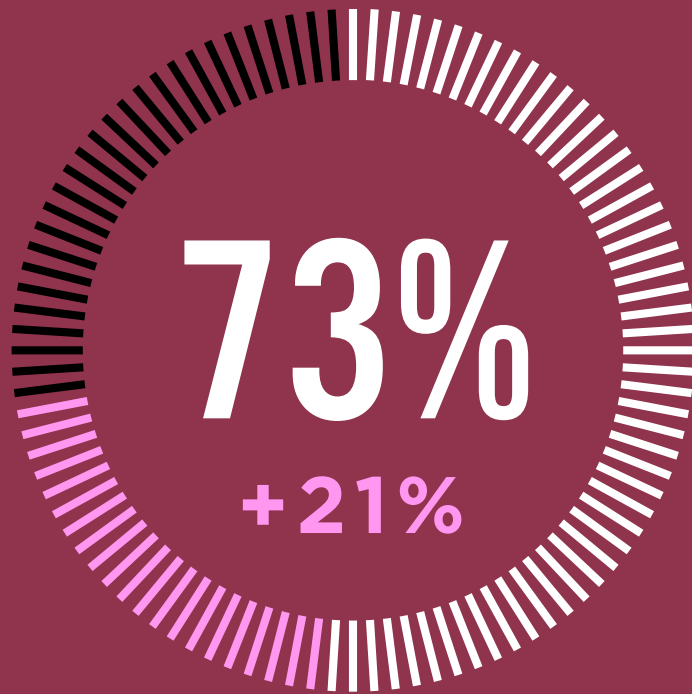
5. Wellbeing

Caring about the employee as a whole—their physical, emotional, social, and financial health. Wellbeing ensures employees can be their strongest, most capable, most authentic selves at work. A comprehensive approach to wellbeing requires leaders to create an environment of inclusivity, work-life integration, and connection.

6. Leadership

The mentoring, coaching, inspiring, and facilitating that allow individuals, teams, and, ultimately, organizations to succeed. Great leaders co-create a shared purpose for their teams and empower their employees to do great work. As the most influential of the six Talent Magnets, leadership cultivates the other five.

Scores have increased across the board from last year, with the exception of wellbeing (which makes sense given the amount of burnout left over from the pandemic and as life and business ramp back up again). The improvements are largely the result of efforts organizations made to step up their cultures in the wake of the Great Resignation, plus employees feeling more positive as the effects and difficulties of the pandemic wane.



**THE AVERAGE ENGAGEMENT
SCORE IS UP 21 PERCENTAGE
POINTS FROM LAST YEAR**

CHALLENGES ORGANIZATIONS WILL FACE

As the pandemic becomes endemic and the workplace continues to evolve, our research identifies six new challenges. Carefully considering each test and task will help create the environment and experiences necessary to attract, retain, and inspire employees.

1. The uncertain domain of the post-pandemic workplace

The rules and ways of working in the past no longer apply, and the model of the workplace itself is still evolving. In this time of transition, organizations need employees with the right range of skills, talents, and experience to manage the uncertainty and ambiguity.

2. Strengthening the workplace community

A sense of community holds workplaces together. How can organizations maintain and strengthen their communities, especially as employees remain physically apart and organizations struggle to keep employees connected?

3. People want more out of work

The usual perks and salary increases are no longer enough to attract new talent or retain existing employees. As people have re-evaluated their priorities during the pandemic, money and titles have lost some luster. What can organizations do to help their employees find balance, purpose, and, ultimately, fulfillment in their lives?

4. Leader burnout and identity conflicts

Leaders carry heavy workloads, and the pandemic only added burdens and stress to their role. In addition to the traditional tasks of managing teams and assignments, leaders now manage employee emotional health and wellbeing, pandemic-related changes, employee retention during the Great Resignation, and inspiring great work and building workplace culture. At the same time, leaders aren't receiving the support and appreciation required to handle these additional responsibilities.

5. Countering past employee experiences

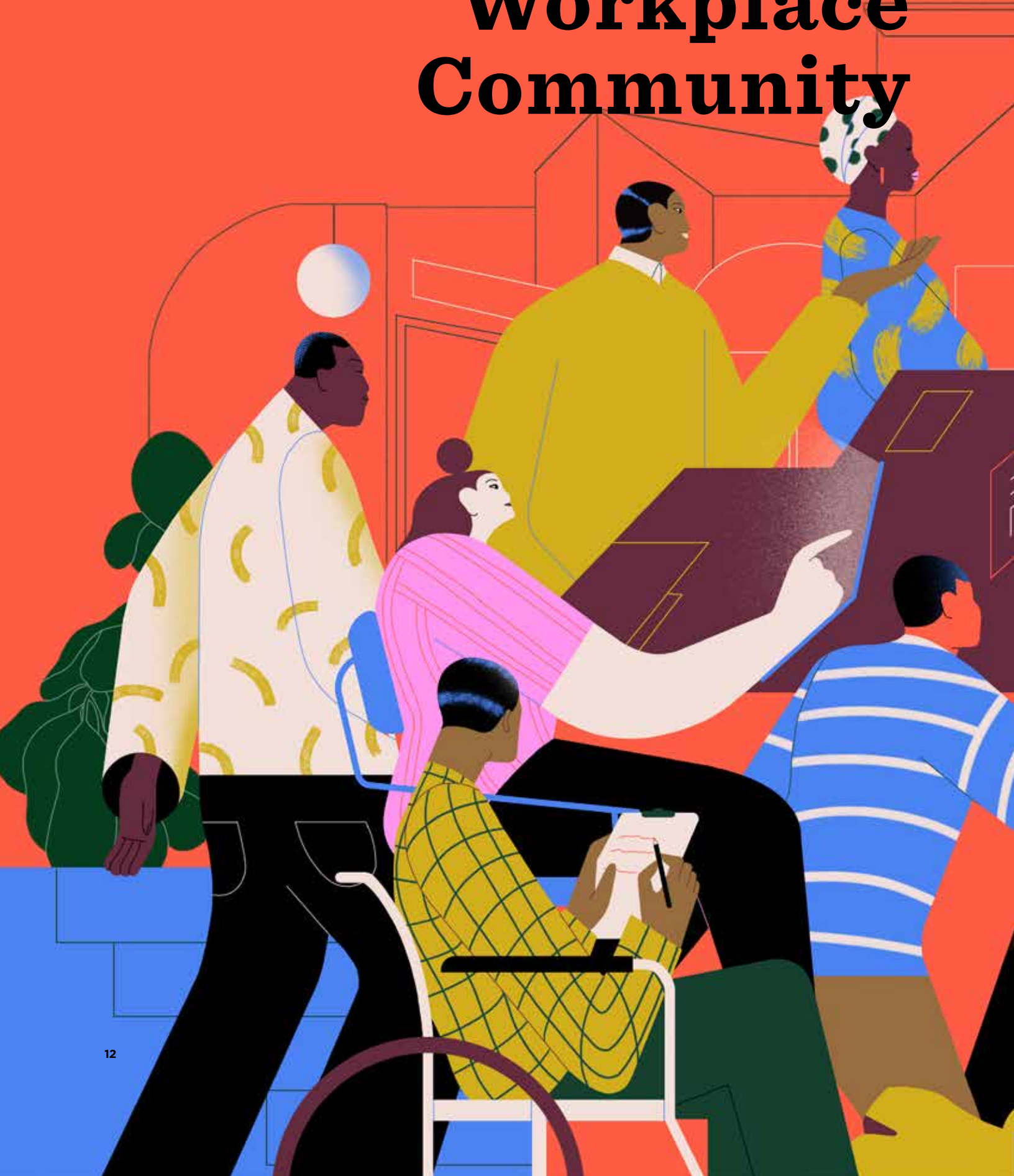
Employees' experiences in prior jobs—good or bad—influence their perceptions of the Talent Magnets and culture in their current jobs. And how organizations handled the challenges of the past two years has changed employee expectations moving forward. Fortunately, organizations can counteract, meet, or exceed these expectations with strong workplace cultures that practice modern leadership.

6. Organizational connection is still fractured

Symbolism, like that found in symbolic awards and recognition, strengthens an employee's connection to their organization's culture, history, and community. The trick is integrating it across the range of employee experiences. How thoroughly and frequently organizations do this determines the impact.

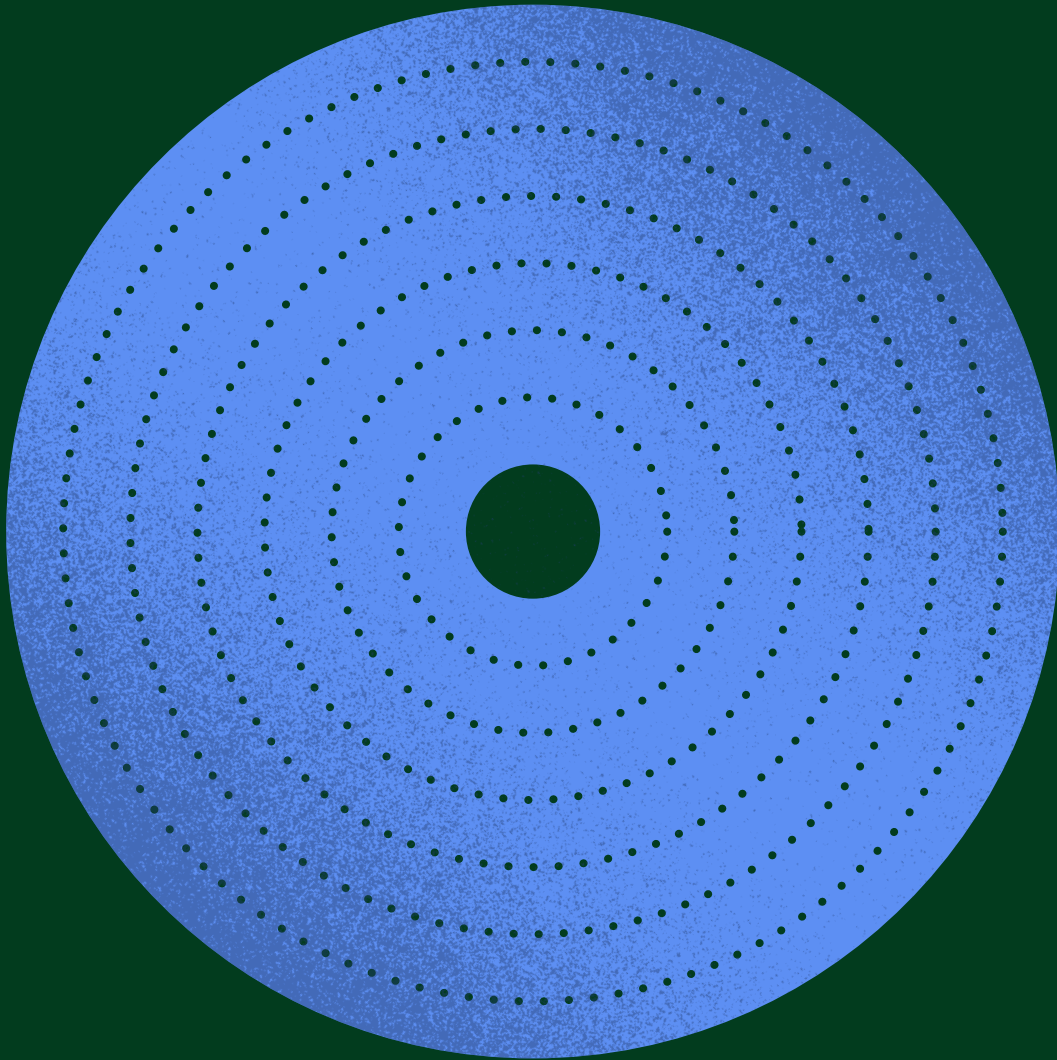
As you dive into our 2023 Global Culture Report, please remember these are not good challenges to solve alone. You'll need to work closely with leaders and other employees—new and tenured, onsite and remote—to build the connections, community, and culture required to succeed. The upside is you'll also be better prepared for whatever challenges come next.

Workplace Community



**Thriving workplace cultures depend on a strong community.
And a strong community requires connection and purpose.**





785%

**IMPROVED ODDS THAT EMPLOYEES WILL
FEEL THEY BELONG WHEN THEY HAVE A
STRONG WORKPLACE COMMUNITY**

The equation for a community is simple. Take a group of people and give them something in common. However, the formula becomes much more interesting and powerful when you factor in a compelling purpose—a meaningful goal to work toward together—and when everyone in the group feels they belong there. By any measure, the workplace is a natural community. And the strength of it determines how well organizations can attract, engage, and retain top talent. The good news is that most employees do not aspire to jump from one workplace to another. On the contrary, they prefer their community be a place where they can stay and grow. The Great Resignation may have met its match.

INTRODUCTION

Organizations with thriving cultures are far more resilient in challenging and uncertain times. But what is it about these cultures that gives them their strength? What holds them together?

In a word, community.

Community makes us feel like we're part of something, whether it's a neighborhood, church, school, sport, or just a mutual interest.

In the workplace, a potent sense of community exists when employees feel they belong in the organization and contribute to shared goals in meaningful ways. This is important because being part of a community means employees care about one another, and they work and grow together. The innovation and productivity of a true community is greater than the sum of its parts. And a healthy workplace community works together to make better decisions and is more committed to its success.

Leadership expert Dede Henley captures the benefits of a strong community as “high trust, effective communication, equality, respect for differences, and high levels of cooperation. It's not without conflict, but members of the community have the perseverance to see conflict through to a healthy outcome. The larger focus of the community is on a vision of the future that can be created together, and the actions needed today to get to that future.”¹

While workplace culture is the social operating system that influences the way people work and interact (usually demonstrated through norms, expectations, language, and rules of engagement), community is what unifies the group, bringing and holding employees together to work toward common goals. It's the sense of understanding, unity, trust, and belonging that everyone in the group feels.

This sense of belonging is central to community. And employees crave belonging at work—more than an increase in pay, better benefits, or even work-life balance. McKinsey & Associates has found the top reasons people quit their jobs are, first, not feeling valued (54%), and second, not feeling a sense of belonging at work (51%).² Now, after more than two years of isolation, social distancing, and strenuous uncertainty, employees crave a sense of belonging and meaningful connection. We want to be part of something bigger. We want to feel we matter. In fact, employees say the biggest incentive to work in the office is interaction with their work friends (42%).³

Simply put, we want to be part of the community.

“Workplaces are communities, built around the relationships we have with our peers. When these relationships are strong, they can be a source of energy, learning, and support.”

—HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW

THE WORKPLACE IS A COMMUNITY WHERE EMPLOYEES SHOULD FEEL THEY BELONG

Over three fourths of employees (76%) consider their workplace a community and nearly as many (72%) say it's important for them to feel like part of a community at work.

Our research finds organizations with a strong workplace community share the following eight elements:

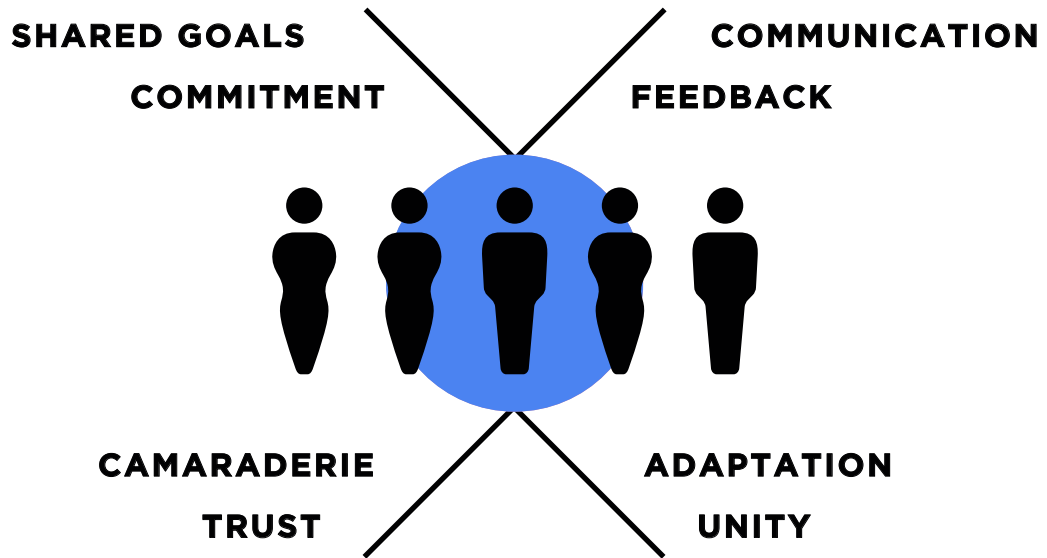


Figure 3. COMMUNITY INDEX
The essential elements of a workplace community.

When organizations score high on the Community Index, they experience great outcomes. Strong workplace communities have:

957% higher odds employees will be Promoters on eNPS

100% higher odds of aspirational levels of great work

62% increase in employee estimated tenure (+4.4 years)

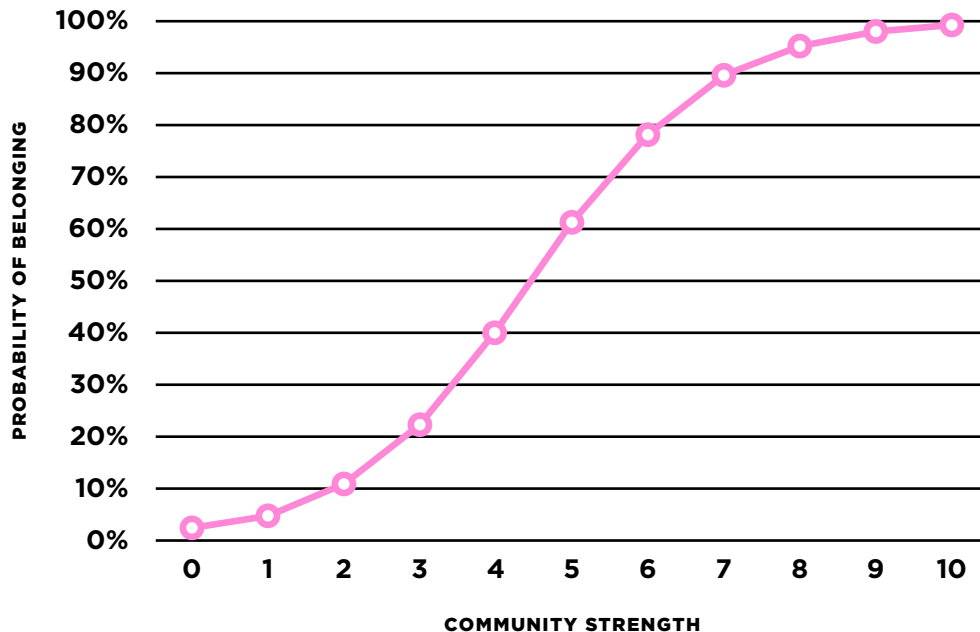
58% lower probability of employees actively looking for new job

785% higher odds employees feel like they belong

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Healthy communities do more than just help employees feel happy. They can help employees feel they belong. Our research finds the stronger the workplace community, the more likely employees are to feel a sense of belonging.

Impact of Community on Belonging



Consequently, this sense of belonging leads to better retention, higher engagement, less burnout, and more great work:

+43% Retention

+84% Estimated tenure

+41% Employee Net Promoter Score (eNPS)

+20% Great work

+40% Satisfaction with employee experience

+40% Job satisfaction

-38% Burnout

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If organizations want their employees to feel they belong at work, if they want employees to stay, do great work, and not burn out, then having and sustaining a strong workplace community must be a priority.

“People will typically be more enthusiastic where they feel a sense of belonging and see themselves as part of a community than they will in a workplace in which each person is left to [their] own devices.”

—ALFIE KOHN, AUTHOR

COMMUNITY AND CULTURE ARE COACTIVE

A thriving culture has a positive influence on workplace community. And a strong community helps strengthen workplace culture.

Looking at the six Talent Magnets (elements of strong workplace cultures that attract, engage, and retain talent), each of them has a positive impact on community, particularly appreciation and leadership. Companies with thriving cultures—those that excel in every Talent Magnet—also have stronger communities.

**A thriving culture improves
the odds that an organization
will have strong community by**

12x

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TALENT MAGNET	IMPACT ON SENSE OF COMMUNITY
Purpose	+12%
Opportunity	+8%
Success	+11%
Appreciation	+14%
Wellbeing	+10%
Leadership	-66%

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Likewise, organizations with strong communities are much more likely to have thriving cultures and high Talent Magnet scores.

A strong community improves the odds that an organization will have a thriving culture by

13x

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TALENT MAGNET	ODDS WITH A STRONG WORKPLACE COMMUNITY
Purpose	+28%
Opportunity	+30%
Success	+34%
Appreciation	+30%
Wellbeing	+29%
Leadership	+43%

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Organizations that have both a strong community and a thriving culture have a 99% probability of employees feeling like they belong at the organization. This combination also has a tremendous impact on burnout, tenure, inclusion, and great work.

OUTCOME	IMPACT OF A THRIVING CULTURE AND STRONG WORKPLACE COMMUNITY
Burnout	-66%
Estimated tenure	+63%
Job satisfaction	+28%
Satisfaction with employee experience	+30%
Odds of perceived inclusion	+456%
Odds of being a Promoter on eNPS	+1,228%
Odds of employee sense of belonging	+2,270%
Odds of aspirational levels of great work	+2,374%

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WORKPLACE COMMUNITY HELPS HYBRID AND REMOTE WORKERS STAY CONNECTED

As organizations adjust to new models of work and navigate continued workplace changes, having a strong workplace community is more important than ever. With the increase in remote and hybrid work, workplace communities will either become stronger or more fragmented, but they won't remain static. Organizations have a clear opportunity.

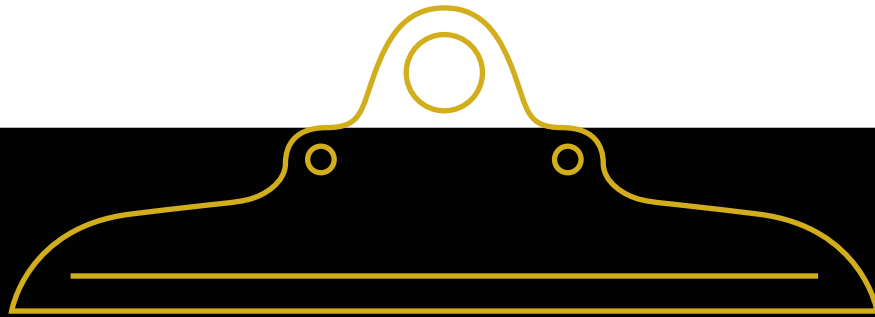
More than half of hybrid and remote employees (59%) said their organization's culture has improved since going hybrid or remote. However, less than half (48%) say it's easier to create a sense of community in their new work environment.

One solution for building community is more integrated recognition. In specific terms, this is recognition that happens frequently and is built into the daily employee experience. It's also personalized, given for a variety of reasons, and meaningful to the employee.

Integrated recognition increases the odds of a sense of community for hybrid and remote workers by 341% and 660%, respectively.

What does this look like? It's more than simply having technology in place to keep employees connected. Barely half (55%) of employees think the virtual apps and communication tools they use for work strengthen workplace community. These technologies should facilitate rather than hinder communication, make it easier to share ideas, provide better access to workplace events, and foster—not impede—connections with colleagues and leaders.

Likewise, consider offering virtual training that matches the quality and breadth of topics employees have access to in person. Or have a weekly team video call—cameras on—to celebrate successes and share challenges, with peers giving guidance and advice. Events could offer remote employees the chance to interact with others in real time through contests, Q&A sessions, sharing opportunities, and chat tools—well beyond just watching a video stream. Any technology that allows people to share ideas, build on each other's contributions, and celebrate successes will strengthen a workplace community.



When technology connects employees effectively, it creates a strong community for hybrid and remote workers:

WHEN VIRTUAL APPS...	ODDS OF A STRONG COMMUNITY
Foster collaboration	+70%
Increase frequency of communication	+39%
Make it easier to share ideas	+20%
Make it easier to track work progress	+24%
Make it easier to connect with leaders	+48%
Make it easier to connect with mentors	+106%
Provide greater access to workplace events	+80%

And when organizations establish a strong community for their hybrid and remote workers, they create both a better work experience for those employees and positive business outcomes:

OUTCOME	HYBRID	REMOTE
Employee feels they belong	+5,021%	+1,106%
Aspirational levels of engagement	+599%	+590%
Aspirational levels of great work	+341%	+229%
Engagement	+27%	+32%
Great work	+20%	+24%
Estimated tenure	+33%	+58%
Burnout	-28%	-24%

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CASE STUDY—BUILDING COMMUNITY WITH MORE THAN TECHNOLOGY

Tech Mahindra, an IT company with over 140,000 employees around the world, strengthens its workplace community through integrated recognition and by including housekeeping staff, customers, and families in company celebrations. The company communicates to all employees with a daily email newsletter and checks in often on the wellbeing of associates. Additionally, it drives positive change by rallying employees to improve their neighborhoods and cities. All these efforts connect to Tech Mahindra's purpose and culture, and they strengthen belonging and community for employees.⁴

RECOMMENDATIONS

To inspire strong workplace communities, organizations should focus on integrated recognition, modern leadership, and acting on employee feedback.

1 Ensure recognition is an integrated part of culture

Nearly three fourths (74%) of employees say recognition is a crucial part of workplace community. To be integrated, recognition must be an everyday part of the culture, given and seen throughout the organization often. It must also come from peers as well as leaders and acknowledge both the large and small efforts of employees in personalized ways.

When recognition happens regularly in teams, the odds of having a strong community increase 508%. When it's integrated into the organizational culture, the odds increase 387%, and the strength of that community increases 19%.

Strong communities with integrated recognition see:

+1,281% odds employees will feel they belong

+1,706% odds employees will be Promoters on eNPS

+514% odds employees will do great work

+72% in employee estimated tenure

+52% in employee satisfaction with workplace culture

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2 Practice modern leadership

Modern leaders build relationships through understanding, championing, and advocating team members. They naturally improve the culture of their organizations and increase the odds of having a strong workplace community by 269%.

Train and encourage your leaders to use modern leadership skills. Help them communicate purpose, actively guide growth and development, and truly know the individuals on their teams.

A woman with her hair in a bun, wearing a white patterned top and a black skirt, is clapping and smiling in a meeting room. Other people are visible in the background, also clapping. The room has large windows and indoor plants.

CASE STUDY—BUILDING COMMUNITY WITH INTEGRATED RECOGNITION

As a community bank in the Pacific Northwest, Heritage Bank understands the importance of having a strong workplace community for its employees. It regularly uses eCards, awards, milestone and anniversary celebrations, and retirement gifts to connect employees and highlight the great work they do.

The bank's recognition program, "Celebrate Great," enables real-time recognition in personal ways, and the program's Wall of Fame ensures everyone can see the great work happening throughout the organization. Executives also frequently promote recognition and share stories of success in town hall meetings. Plus, monthly emails and new-hire training ensure recognition is a part of the culture from day one.

This level of integrated recognition has led to over 91% of employees feeling accepted by immediate co-workers and has built both culture and community at the bank.⁵

Effect of modern leadership practices on employees' sense of community:

MY LEADER...	ODDS OF A STRONG COMMUNITY
Connects the purpose of my work with what I value	+194%
Is a strong advocate for my development	+104%
Clearly communicates what success looks like	+133%
Introduces me to potential mentors	+122%
Champions my decisions	+78%
Works to understand what I do	+63%

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A man in a wheelchair is seated at a desk in an office, looking towards a computer monitor. He is wearing a light-colored, long-sleeved shirt. His hands are raised in a gesture, as if speaking or explaining something. The background is a blurred office environment with other desks and equipment. The overall lighting is warm and slightly dim, creating a professional yet intimate atmosphere.

CASE STUDY—IMPROVING COMMUNITY WITH COMMUNICATION

At telecommunications giant Verizon, leadership communication is a crucial part of creating a sense of belonging. When the company shifted to remote work during the pandemic, managers met virtually with their teams often, and executives scheduled video calls with new and junior employees to get to know them personally.

Leaders also held online events, such as fireside chats and virtual volunteer days, and included interns, too. By connecting with employees and making it easier for them to connect with each other, Verizon leaders helped preserve their community even when everyone was apart.⁶



CASE STUDY—NURTURING COMMUNITY WITH FEEDBACK

Credit Acceptance Corporation, an auto finance company, trains its leaders to listen to employees and respond to them using a consistent process that starts with organizing all feedback and comments into themes. Then, for each theme, leaders reply in one of three ways:

- Take action. Specify the action, the date it will be completed, and follow up on the results.
- State their position. If they can't or won't address the feedback, explain why.
- Ask for help. If they don't understand the feedback, ask for more information from employees. Be honest about needing more time to understand an issue.

This transparent approach to employee feedback is one reason Credit Acceptance Corporation is among the FORTUNE 100 Best Companies to Work For[®] 2022. And it helps sustain a workplace community where employees can thrive.⁷

3 Seek and respond to employee feedback

Soliciting feedback from employees is critical to giving them a voice and creating a vibrant community. But it's only half the equation. Leaders still need to actively listen and appropriately address the input. When they do, the odds of having a strong workplace community improve by a phenomenal 6,313%.

Gather employee feedback through annual surveys, pulse surveys, focus groups, email, social media tools, and other communication channels. Let employees know you hear them by responding to their questions, concerns, and ideas. Clearly communicate what changes you've made or are going to make. And then get their feedback again. This cycle of regular feedback, listening, and action will strengthen employee trust and community.

When leaders actively seek and respond to employee feedback, outcomes include:

+290% odds employees feel they belong

+159% odds employees do great work

+102% odds employees are Promoters on eNPS

-66% odds of burnout

-54% odds employees are looking for new jobs

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WORKPLACE COMMUNITY—KEY TAKEAWAYS

The workplace is a community.

Strong workplace communities create a high sense of belonging and connection.

Community strengthens connections for hybrid and remote workers.

Integrated recognition, modern leadership, and responding to employee feedback improve community.

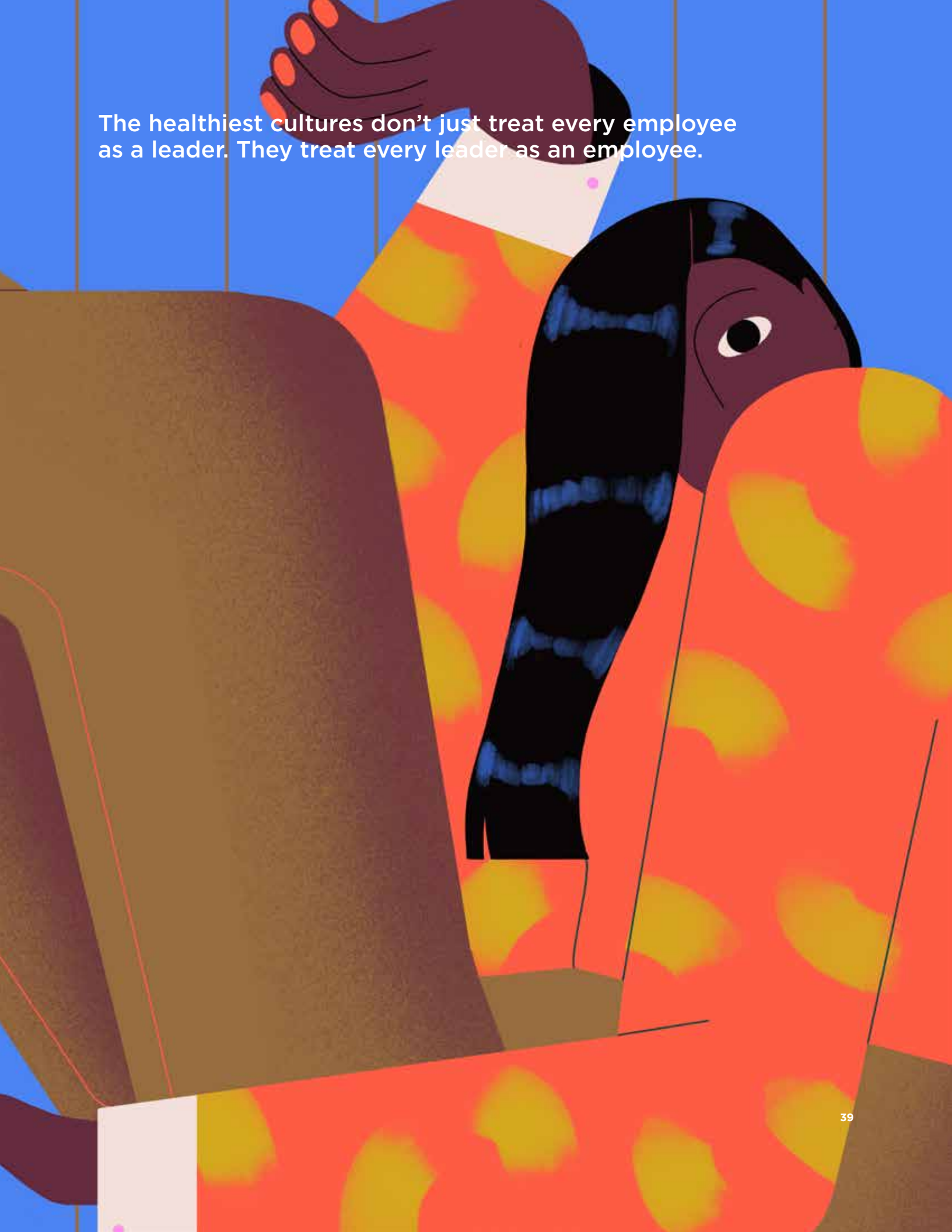
Workplace Community Sources

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2. "'Great Attrition' or 'Great Attraction'? The choice is yours," Aaron De Smet, Bonnie Dowling, Marino Mugayar-Baldocchi, and Bill Schaninger, McKinsey Quarterly, September 8, 2021.
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4. O.C. Tanner Client Story
5. O.C. Tanner Client Story
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7. "Employee Listening Strategies: Authentic Follow-up," Claire Hastwell, Great Place to Work, February 13, 2020.

Leadership at Risk



The healthiest cultures don't just treat every employee as a leader. They treat every leader as an employee.



10X

**INCREASED ODDS THAT AN ORGANIZATION'S
CULTURE WILL THRIVE WHEN LEADERS FEEL
CONNECTED TO THEIR TEAMS**

Leaders are employees, too. This truth may sound obvious, but it is overlooked enough that mid-level managers are now in a state of severe distress. The various reasons include less recognition and multiplying responsibilities, but ultimately, at present, leaders' work experiences are nowhere near as positive as those of their individually contributing colleagues. So what is the remedy? It starts with organizations adopting a more holistic view of employees and then prioritizing inclusive change management, leader appreciation, and appropriate support. Those that do will significantly reduce burnout and improve their chances of surviving the Great Resignation with happier, more productive people in every position.

INTRODUCTION

During the pandemic, people relied on their elected and other government leaders to guide them through health and safety measures. Likewise, organizations looked to their leaders to help employees navigate crisis, uncertainty, and change.

We expect a lot from our superiors. But we rarely question their wellbeing. We seldom ask how they're holding up, or what toll the series of simultaneous challenges have taken on them.

Gartner finds only 14% of companies deliberately attempt to ease their leaders' burdens.¹ While most organizations are focused on the employee experience and engaging and retaining employees, they appear to have overlooked the majority of their managers, a crucial portion of their employee populations.

Additionally, leaders have taken on much more work over the last two years. Responsibilities now transcend managing employees' job performance and hitting KPIs to include handling employee wellbeing and inclusion, managing remote and hybrid teams, and hiring and retaining employees in the Great Resignation.

A current breakdown of the tasks expected of leaders:

- **Administrative—planning and budgeting, timecard approvals, etc.**
- **Operational—managing projects, attending meetings, hitting deadlines, etc.**
- **Management—performance reviews, one-to-one meetings, hiring, etc.**
- **Leadership—coaching and mentoring, developing, connecting, building culture, wellbeing, retention, etc.**
- **Strategic—innovating, planning, etc.**

Gallup reports that in this new era of work, “the staggeringly high quit rate means many managers are doing more with less, and less, and less. It takes a toll.”² Leaders are burning out as organizations give them more to do without the necessary support or resources to do it.

The fundamental reality is leaders are employees, too. Organizations may mistakenly assume managers have endless capacity to take on personnel and company demands. Or that because they’re paid more, they should be able to weather the storms and burdens that come with the job. But leaders are not immune to stress and fatigue. Like anyone, they need reinforcement, appreciation, and balance. Without these things, no amount of pay will decrease burnout; in fact, the higher salaries and pressure that come with leadership positions can make it worse.

Leaders are vital to the organizational community. They build and shape culture, and they create a sense of belonging, connection, and purpose for their people. Unfortunately, the recognition they receive is not proportional.

It’s time to step up and help them thrive. Because when leaders don’t thrive, their employees, teams, and organizations won’t either.

“Leadership is an active role; ‘lead’ is a verb. But the leader who tries to do it all is headed for burnout, and in a powerful hurry.”

—BILL OWENS, FORMER GOVERNOR OF COLORADO

“The largest part of my job has become logistic, trying to cater to everyone’s needs...It hasn’t been easy. That’s where a lot of my stress comes from. It’s not even [stress] from performing [the work of] my job, it’s just hearing about people’s events that are going on in their life or their family’s lives and then trying to accommodate those schedules so that we can all still stay on track.”

—LEADER FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT

LEADERS ARE STRETCHED THIN AND FACE NEW CHALLENGES IN THEIR ROLES

With numerous new responsibilities and expectations placed on them, many leaders are succumbing to stress and burnout. According to our data, leaders are 43% more likely to say work is interfering with their ability to be happy in other areas of their lives.

And burnout among mid-level managers, in particular, is getting worse. Gallup reports that while stress, anxiety, and diagnosed depression declined in 2021 for individual contributors and high-level leaders, it increased for managers.³

It's a trend employees can confirm. Nearly three fourths (70%) of individual contributors in our surveys report their managers are possibly or definitely stressed.

Just under two thirds (61%) of leaders report having more general responsibilities at work since before the pandemic, versus only one third (34%) of individual contributors who say the same. The largest increases appear in the areas of assigning work, scheduling employees, adapting to changing policies (presumably due to the pandemic), and hiring and training new employees.

Percentage of leaders who report spending more time on specific tasks:

LEADERS	ASSIGNING WORK	SCHEDULING EMPLOYEES	ADAPTING TO CHANGING POLICIES
Entry-level	67%	66%	65%
Mid-level	66%	67%	65%
Senior-level	74%	76%	73%

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This increase in responsibilities negatively impacts leader wellbeing and engagement, as well as overall culture. The odds of high anxiety increase 21% among leaders with increased task responsibilities, which increases the odds of burnout 520% and hurts the odds of engagement by 51%.

More anxiety also increases the odds that leaders will feel their jobs compromise their ability to be happy (246%) and that their organization only cares about the bottom line (132%). When leaders have these perceptions, employees on their teams feel it, too.

TRAINING NEW EMPLOYEES	HIRING NEW EMPLOYEES	PARTICIPATING IN MANAGEMENT MEETINGS	MENTORING
44%	38%	33%	32%
53%	49%	35%	32%
65%	61%	47%	45%

LEADERS ALSO SUFFER FROM CONFLICTING RESPONSIBILITIES

At work, leaders play two roles: one is that of a manager, accountable for employees; the other is the role of an employee, accountable to the organization. These distinct but overlapping roles can present conflicts and challenges in how they carry out their responsibilities.

Leaders may feel torn at times between a loyalty to their organization and a commitment to their people—not to mention their own needs as employees. The increase in leaders' new and different job expectations complicates these competing identities and exacerbates the conflict.

In their persona responsible to the organization, leaders are:

109% more likely to agree working for the organization is like playing for a winning team

88% more likely to fully support the organization's values

107% more likely to feel highly motivated to contribute to the success of the organization

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Leaders feel responsible for the impact of the organization's choices and changes on employees, yet they aren't always involved in the conversations or decisions precipitating those changes. Furthermore, organizations often treat leaders as messengers—the middlepeople who must enact changes—without giving them support, resources, or rationale.

Percentage of leaders who agree with specific statements:

LEADERS	"MY ORGANIZATION ONLY CARES ABOUT HOW I DEAL WITH MY EMPLOYEES' ISSUES, NOT MY OWN."	"SENIOR LEADERS SEE ME AS SOMEONE WHO SOLVES OTHER EMPLOYEES' PROBLEMS."	"MY PERSONAL CONTRIBUTIONS ARE NOT VALUED, ONLY MY TEAMS'."
Entry-level	32%	59%	26%
Mid-level	40%	63%	38%
Senior-level	54%	74%	52%

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On the other side, leaders are expected—and feel obligated—to fulfill the needs of employees. But while 79% of leaders think they have a “good sense” of what their employees want, only 48% of employees agree. Nearly one third (29%) of employees say there is a notable conflict between what their managers want and what their coworkers want, and only a little more than half (54%) believe their managers are “on my side.”

When the needs of employees conflict with the demands of the organization, there’s always a negative impact. And leaders feel it the most. To borrow a metaphor, leaders are the shock absorbers in an organization, dampening forces from both above and below. This conflict takes a large toll on leaders’ wellbeing and the organizational culture.

“THERE IS A CONFLICT BETWEEN WHAT THE COMPANY WANTS AND WHAT THE EMPLOYEES WHO REPORT TO ME WANT.”	“I FEEL PRESSURED TO CHOOSE BETWEEN WHAT MY OWN LEADERS WANT AND WHAT THE EMPLOYEES WHO REPORT TO ME WANT.”	“MY LEADERSHIP DUTIES AT WORK MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR ME TO BUILD CONNECTIONS WITH THE EMPLOYEES WHO REPORT TO ME.”
35%	33%	27%
43%	42%	41%
55%	53%	58%

Impact of role conflict:

	WELLBEING	APPRECIATION	EXCLUSION	BURNOUT	THRIVING CULTURE
Individual contributors	-59%	-37%	+68%	+151%	-46%
Leaders	-65%	-41%	+125%	+222%	-56%

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“Leadership has a harder job to do than just choose sides. It must bring sides together.”

—REV. JESSE JACKSON, POLITICAL ACTIVIST

ROLE CONFLICTS AND TASK BURDENS MAKE MODERN LEADERSHIP MORE CHALLENGING

Leaders’ increased responsibilities and conflicting roles compromise their ability to practice modern leadership skills.

To clarify, modern leaders are collaborative and focused on coaching, developing, and empowering people to do great work, rather than gatekeeping, commanding, and evaluating. These types of leaders connect employees to purpose, accomplishment, and one another in ways that build thriving teams.

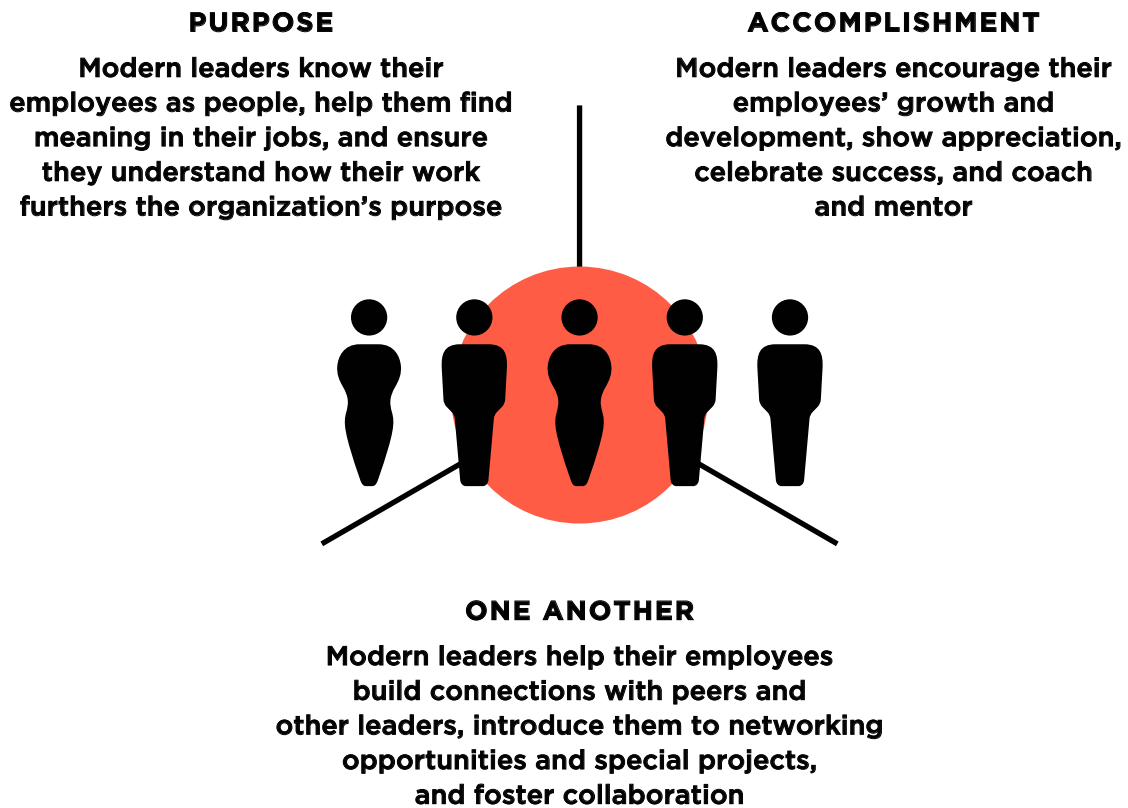


Figure 4. MODERN LEADERSHIP INDEX
 The three key connections leaders create for employees.

Increase in difficulty of practicing modern leadership principles since early 2020:

LEADERS	PROVIDING FREEDOM TO INNOVATE	MENTORING	CONNECTING EMPLOYEES TO OTHER MENTORS
Entry-level*	+48%	+71%	+67%
Mid-level*	+37%	+32%	+49%
Senior-level	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline

**Compared to senior-level leaders. For these numbers, senior-level leaders were the referent group against which entry- and mid-level leaders were compared.*

Modern leadership can be difficult, even in the best environments. Our research finds only 17% of leaders are modern leaders.

And since the beginning of the pandemic, entry-level and mid-level leaders have struggled more than senior-level leaders to practice modern leadership.

Why is this the case when the research shows senior leaders have more role conflicts and increased burdens than entry- and mid-level leaders? The simple answer is less support and appreciation. Mid- and entry-level leaders are 33% and 47% less likely to feel appreciated, respectively, compared to senior leaders. They also don't have as much access to resources and support as senior leaders do.

TEAM COMMUNICATION	HELPING EMPLOYEES UNDERSTAND AND NAVIGATE THE WORKPLACE	ENACTING MODERN LEADERSHIP OVERALL
+64%	+70%	+33%
+23%	+42%	+27%
Baseline	Baseline	Baseline

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With support, resources, and appreciation, senior-level leaders can manage role conflicts and take on additional responsibilities while still practicing modern leadership skills. But because entry-level leaders do not have the same support and appreciation, they are more easily consumed by their role conflicts and increased tasks.

Interestingly, leaders often say they don't need recognition. A full third (37%) of them claim their salary makes recognition unnecessary. (Only 23% of individual contributors feel this way.) But that number paints an incomplete, inaccurate picture because, as we've already called out, leaders are employees, too. They need to feel valued, appreciated, and supported like everyone else. A compelling counterfinding: Appreciation reduces leaders' anxiety by 67% and stress by 52%.

Organizations frequently forget or ignore the needs of leaders. However, in the new era of work, it's imperative they rally to help the people who are piloting them into the future.

“While compensation is very important, intrinsic motivation and public recognition can be more important: knowing my work impacts the organization, feeling that I’m significant, that people care for me and consider me as part of the larger organization ecosystem. Recognition is something everyone wants.”

**—MILIND APTE, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF
HUMAN RESOURCES, CEAT**

RECOMMENDATIONS

To meet the challenges of increasing responsibilities and conflicting roles, organizations must support and appreciate their leaders better than they have.

1 Reduce stress and anxiety for all leaders

While organizations may not be able to remove the new tasks required of their leaders, they can provide more support and better leadership strategies. Modern leadership benefits everyone, and leaders need to experience it as much as any employee. When this happens, the odds of several positive outcomes increase:

ODDS	PURPOSE	OPPORTUNITY	SUCCESS	APPRECIATION	WELLBEING
With modern leadership	+174%	+271%	+283%	+121%	+16%
Without modern leadership	-64%	-73%	-74%	-55%	-14%

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Build connections for all levels of leaders and help them feel a sense of belonging—that they’re an important part of their work community and not merely a mediator for employees. When leaders feel inclusion, the odds of anxiety fall 25%. And when they have a strong connection to their teams, their sense of wellbeing, as well as their perceptions of the culture improve substantially:

- **Anxiety (-67%)**
- **Stress (-35%)**
- **Engagement (+718%)**
- **Purpose (+562%)**
- **Opportunity (+637%)**
- **Success (+748%)**
- **Appreciation (+631%)**
- **Wellbeing (+243%)**
- **Thriving Culture (+1,691%)**

Include leaders in your employee experience strategy. Don't forget about their experiences when you think about all employees. And remember to include leaders at all levels, not just those in senior leadership positions.

A man and a woman in business attire are looking at a tablet together. The man is on the left, wearing a light-colored shirt and a tie, and the woman is on the right, wearing a light-colored blouse. They are both looking at the tablet with interest. The background is a warm, orange-toned wall.

CASE STUDY—COMMITTING TO THE MIDDLE

While most companies spend resources on senior-leader development and support, Standard Chartered, a retail bank in the UK with 750 branches in over 50 countries, decided to focus on middle managers as key figures in its growth. The bank wanted to create a sense of managerial community.

So, it built an accreditation process that focused on developing leadership skills such as building trust, aligning teams, and making bold decisions. The executive team strengthened the sense of community by taking the challenges these mid-level leaders faced and making them a priority for the entire company. It also implemented a new coaching platform to build a deep coaching culture, vital for modern leadership. All of these efforts have boosted leaders' skills, confidence, and sense of connection and community at work.⁴

2 Separate recognition from compensation

Leaders need to feel valued and appreciated—even if they say they don't.

Increasing pay or providing bonuses and incentives does not convey appreciation like true recognition does. Likewise, compensation doesn't prevent or lessen burnout. Plus, a lack of appreciation can make burnout worse. Case in point: A reduction in giving and receiving recognition increases the odds of burnout by 45% and 48%, respectively.⁵

Genuine recognition includes things like a deliberate thank-you, spontaneous praise, or a more formal award. It's given in a personal and sincere way for both effort and achievement. And it communicates to leaders that they and their work are seen.

Recognition also ensures leaders feel connected in ways compensation and incentives can't duplicate. While compensation and incentives often create competition among leaders, appreciation connects and strengthens the relationships leaders have with their teams, their own leaders, and the organization.

And, as we discussed in last year's report, these strong connections help people—including leaders—thrive. For example, those who feel a strong connection to their leader, team(s), and organization are dramatically more likely to be satisfied with the employee experience (+71x) and the organization's culture (+37x), and much less likely to experience burnout (-96x).⁶

Make sure your recognition efforts are not associated with compensation. Provide opportunities and tools to recognize leaders in ways that have nothing to do with their paychecks. And communicate appreciation and the value they provide outside of salary discussions.

3 Recognize and appreciate leaders often

In most employee recognition strategies, leaders play the role of recognition givers, but as emphasized previously, they must be the recipients, as well. In our research, 65% of leaders admit receiving more recognition from the people who report to them would improve their experience at work.

Encourage employees to recognize their leaders and leaders to recognize their peers. Provide the tools, training, and reminders to help ensure recognition flows in all directions.

Managers need appreciation for everyday effort, formal recognition for accomplishments, and celebrations for career anniversaries, which means employees have plenty of opportunities. When leaders work in organizations with a culture of integrated recognition, their odds of anxiety fall 38% and their odds of practicing modern leadership increase 248%.

Impact of satisfied psychological needs on cultural outcomes:

	RECOGNITION IS A PART OF EVERYDAY CULTURE	ORGANIZATION IMPLEMENTS NEW RECOGNITION TECHNOLOGIES	REGULAR OBSERVATION OF COWORKERS RECEIVING RECOGNITION	PEER-TO-PEER RECOGNITION IS COMMON	LEADERS UNDERSTAND HOW I WANT TO BE RECOGNIZED
Odds of increase in modern leadership	+185%	+199%	+146%	+103%	+170%

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4 Consult with leaders on change management plans

Organizations often roll out new initiatives or programs without involving leaders, which can put them in potentially frustrating positions. It's much better to have a robust change management plan for new programs that not only includes leaders in communicating the changes, but also consults with them before making any final decisions. When leaders play an active part in determining changes, they're much more likely to understand and back them.

Also, be conscious of how a change may impact leaders' responsibilities. Will it add to their workload? Is a new tool or technology part of their existing workflow? Does it improve their employee experience? Will they need additional training?

Communicate what they should expect and how it will affect them. Give them resources to manage the change. And check in with them regularly. Modern leaders will step up and guide their teams, but providing them with information, support, and appreciation will help them do it more effectively and minimize their stress, anxiety, and burnout.

CASE STUDY—CREATING RECOGNITION CHAMPIONS

BDO, a Canadian accounting and professional services firm, needed its 700+ partners (leaders of the firm) and their employees to feel more valued. And knowing the partners would be essential to the success of any new recognition initiative, the firm approached them first at its annual partners meeting.

There, the partners learned about the new vision and values and had the chance to contribute to the change-management plan. Following that, BDO held a live webcast for all partners, directors, senior managers, and other leaders so they could experience a new online recognition program before rolling it out to the entire company.

Providing context and inviting leader participation paid off. The first year after launch, scores for “I received appropriate recognition beyond pay and benefits for my contributions and our accomplishments” in the national office went up by 19%, while manager engagement for all regions overall improved by 10%.⁷

LEADERSHIP AT RISK—KEY TAKEAWAYS

Leaders are stressed and burned out due to expanding responsibilities and expectations.

Every leader also fills the role of an employee, which creates feelings of conflict.

Leaders need support and appreciation as much as any individual contributor.

Organizations should consult leaders early in their change management planning.

Leadership at Risk Sources

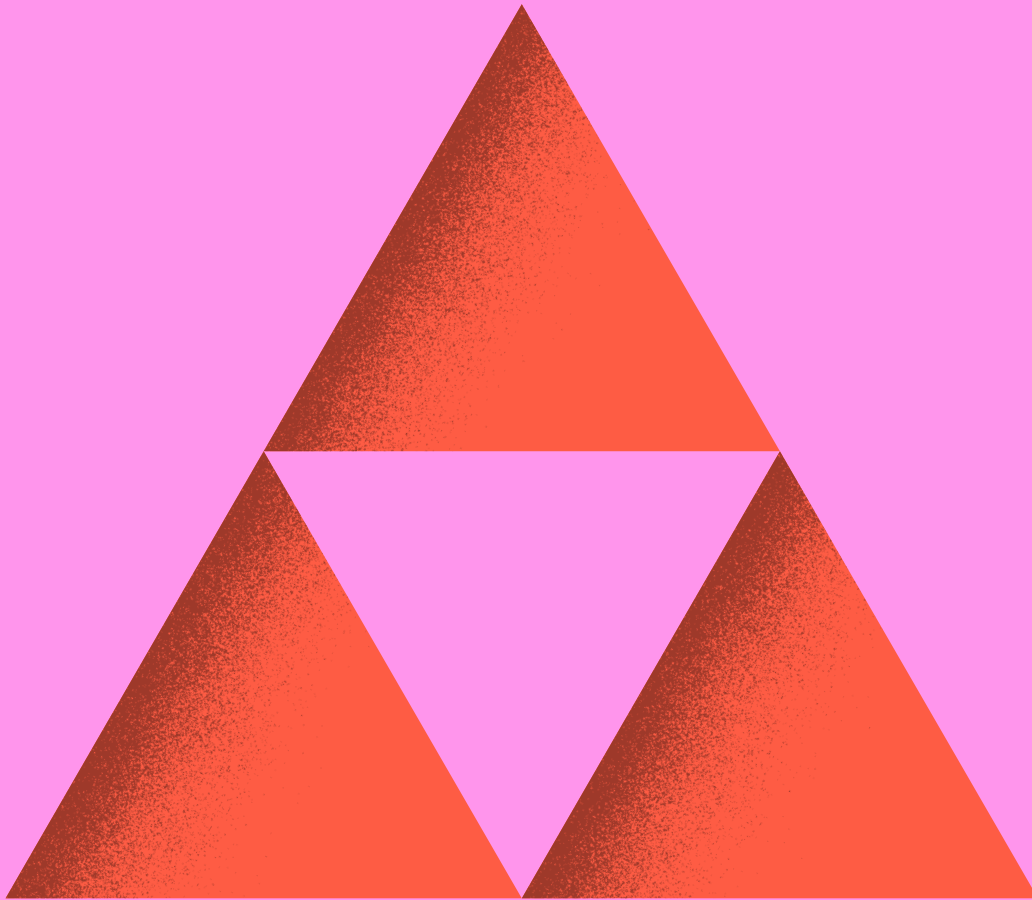
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2. "What Leaders Should Focus on in 2022," Jennifer Robison, Gallup, January 20, 2022.
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7. O.C. Tanner Client Story

Finding Fulfillment



When work empowers employees' personal goals, productivity and retention are just two of the rewards.





+3 years

**HIGHLY FULFILLED EMPLOYEES PLAN TO STAY
THREE YEARS LONGER AT THEIR ORGANIZATIONS
THAN UNFULFILLED EMPLOYEES**

In all our research this year, more than anything else we measured, personal fulfillment had the most decisive impact on an employee's choice to stay in their job, do great work, and define their organization as a great place to work. To understand fulfillment, the most useful tool may be a basic mirror. Don't each of us want to feel valued, have a purpose, do meaningful work, master new skills, balance our lives, and belong to our workplace community? The data certainly agree. And are we not more fulfilled when our organization's culture and employee experiences facilitate those needs? Rhetorical questions aside, cultures that focus on fulfillment invariably see retention, engagement, and great work rise.

INTRODUCTION

Organizations have struggled to keep and attract workers during the Great Resignation, in part because salary increases and enhanced benefits have lost the power to entice workers the way they once did. The pandemic gave many people the time, space, and perspective to re-evaluate their careers, and they're now seeking more than the usual perks to do their jobs. For them, the exchange with their employer feels empty. They want greater meaning from their work. They're looking for fulfillment.

According to McKinsey & Company, the pandemic has led two thirds of employees to reflect on their purpose in life and re-examine the work they do.¹ PwC found that fulfillment at work is just as important as higher pay when people considered a job change. In fact, 83% of employees said “finding meaning in day-to-day work” was a top priority for them,² and 69% of employees would change employers for better job fulfillment.³ One out of three employees would even take a job with lower pay if it was more fulfilling.⁴

Let's take a moment to clearly define fulfillment. For the purposes of this report, it's a feeling of contentment or completeness that comes from the accomplishment of our most important goals or the attainment of our highest personal aspirations. Fulfillment occurs when we identify strongly with a purpose and connect to others in meaningful ways.

So why aren't employees fulfilled in their current jobs? Three big reasons: Not enough challenge or growth, not feeling appreciated or connected, and a lack of ownership or impact. A deficiency in any of these can prevent people from experiencing fulfillment at work.

In our 2022 Global Culture Report, we learned how autonomy, mastery, and connection are vital to creating peak employee experiences. When organizations meet these three psychological needs, employees feel an increased sense of ownership, belonging, and usefulness, which leads to higher levels of engagement and great work. Conversely, when these three needs go unmet, feelings of conflict, isolation, and failure all increase.

This year, our research uncovers just how important it is for people to experience autonomy, mastery, and connection in order to be fulfilled at work—and how organizations can actively meet these psychological needs for employees. Autonomy is more than getting to choose which days each week to come into the office. Mastery goes beyond moving up a career ladder of promotions. And connection requires deeper communication than talking to your team on Zoom. To help employees find fulfillment in their work, organizations need to consider employees more holistically. They need to embrace employees' passions inside and outside the workplace, create environments where employees can be their whole selves, and enable them to succeed in all aspects of their lives.

“When pursuing an employee experience that engages workers, companies too often make the mistake of looking at only one-size-fits-all solutions. They vow to provide more flexibility, opportunities, and an inclusive culture. While these factors matter, they don’t cover what is often the most important one that’s missing: a personal sense of fulfillment.”

**—AARON HURST, AUTHOR, AND KATHRIN BELLIVEAU,
CHIEF PURPOSE OFFICER, HASBRO**

FULFILLMENT LEADS TO HIGHER RETENTION

Bad news first: Nearly one third of employees are unfulfilled in their jobs. And unfulfilled employees are less likely to promote their organizations or help their organizations succeed, and more likely to leave.

Lack of fulfillment significantly affects employee behaviors and perceptions:

OUTCOME	ODDS
Actively looking for another job outside the organization	+399%
Will leave the organization in one year or less	+340%
Feel high satisfaction with their job	-75%
Promote the organization to others as a great place to work	-71%
Willing to put in a great deal of effort to help organization succeed	-47%

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The remaining two thirds of employees do find some fulfillment at work, and nearly half of them report their jobs give them a high sense of fulfillment. This translates into better odds for above-average job satisfaction (+526%), promoting the organization to others (+297%), high satisfaction with the employee experience (+578%), and wanting to stay with the organization for another year (+90%). Meanwhile, the odds of burnout significantly decrease (-66%).

Highly fulfilled employees also plan to stay at their organizations three years longer than unfulfilled employees.

THE FOUR FACTORS OF FULFILLMENT

Our research identifies four main levers that influence employee fulfillment:

- 1. Balance.** How we actually spend our time compared to how we want to spend our time, and the impact of those activities on other aspects of our lives. It requires having the time and autonomy to accomplish the things at work and in our personal lives that matter most to us.
- 2. Community, connection, and belonging.** How we interact with the individuals and groups around us. A feeling of acceptance.
- 3. Growth.** A progression, enhancement, increase, or improvement in one or more areas of our life. The sense of mastery, developing and applying skills to contribute to a project or goal.
- 4. Purpose.** The reason for the actions we do and choices we make. The importance of our activities and why they matter.

It's important to note that all these levers incorporate and build on the psychological needs of autonomy, mastery, and connection (detailed in last year's report) that create peak experiences. Those peak experiences dramatically improve feelings of overall fulfillment in the context of our everyday employee experiences.

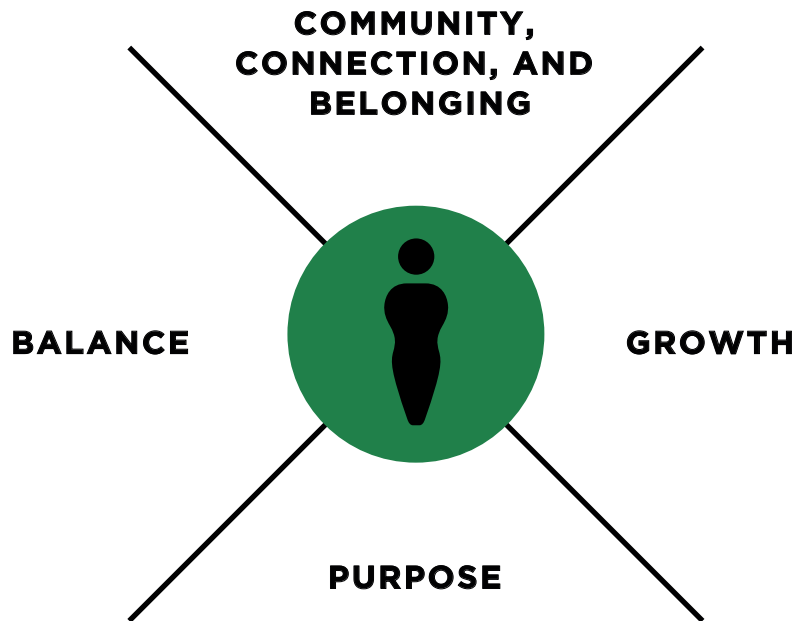


Figure 5. EMPLOYEE FULFILLMENT
The four factors of fulfillment incorporate and build upon the the three inherent psychological needs of autonomy, mastery, and connection that result in meaningful and memorable peak experiences.

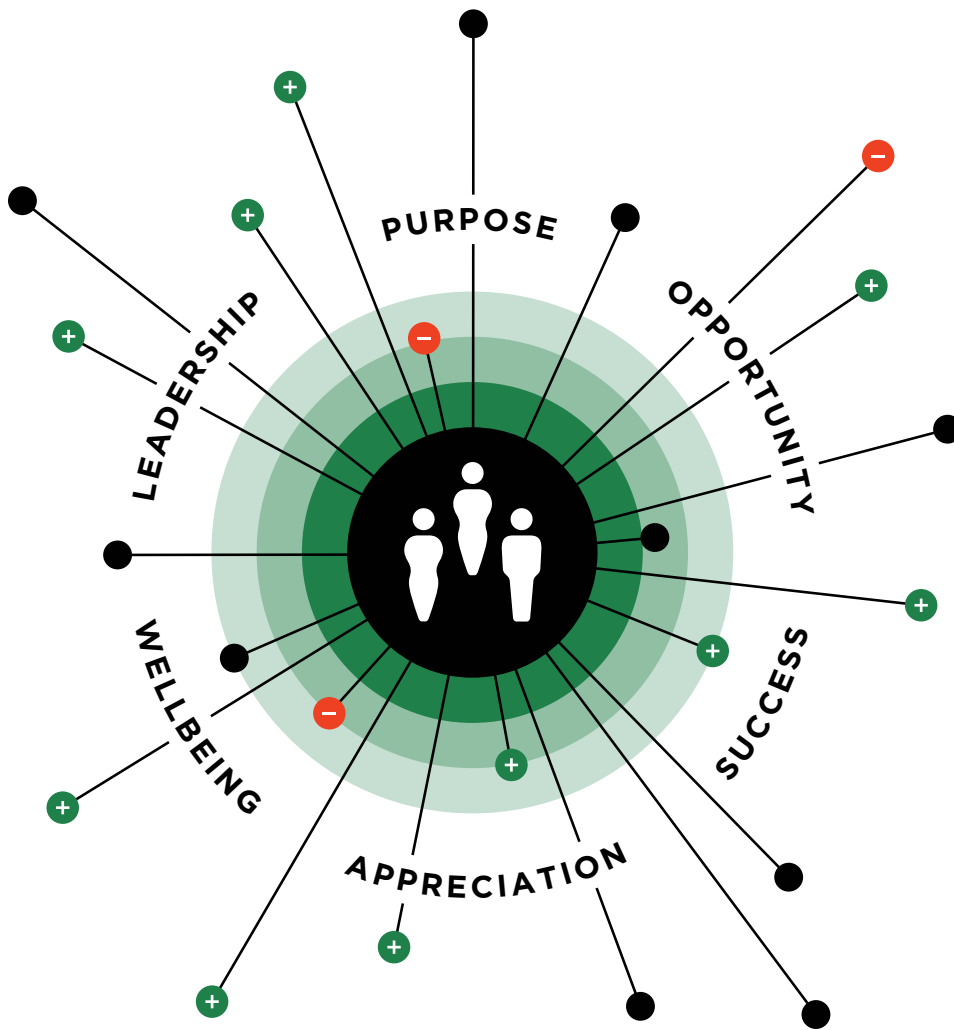
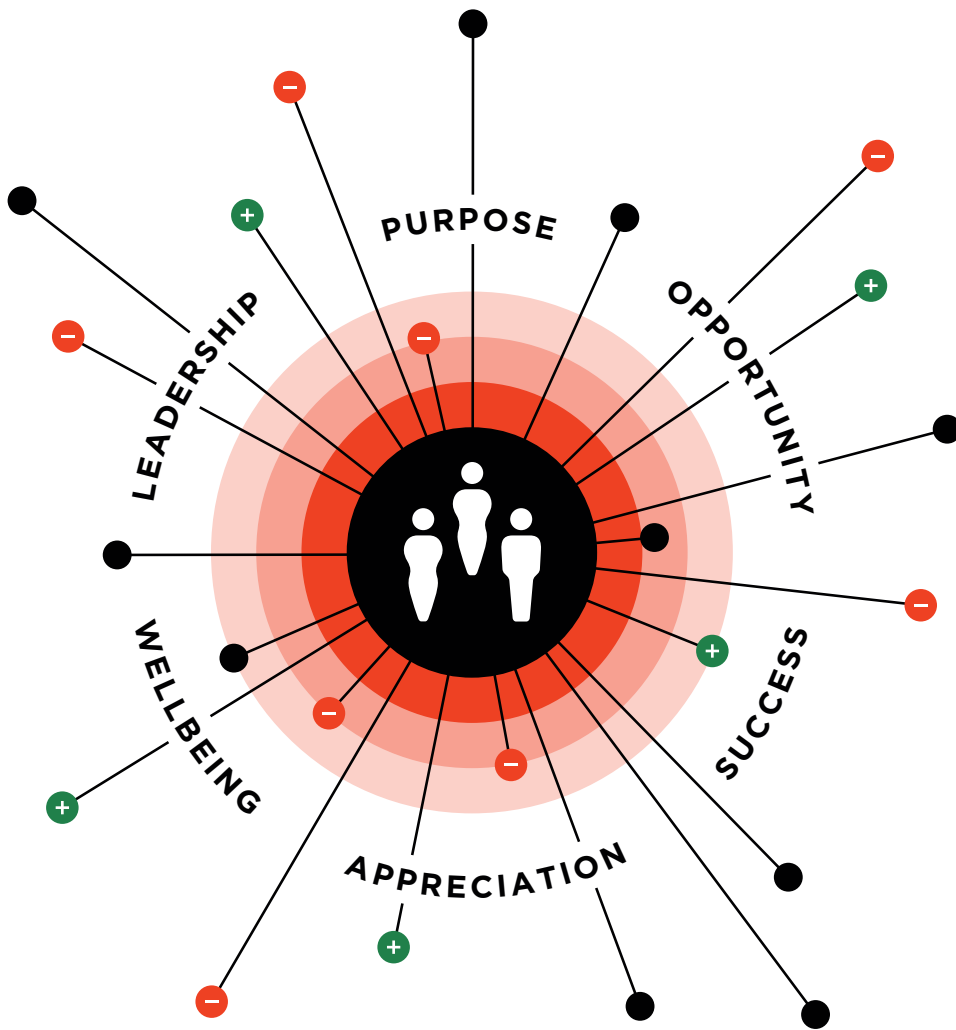


Figure 6. EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCES
Peak and valley experiences have a dramatic effect on



When employees reach a high level in each of these areas, the odds of fulfillment are far better:

FACTOR	INCREASED ODDS OF FULFILLMENT
Balance	+774%
Community, connection, and belonging	+489%
Growth	+325%
Purpose	+583%

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Yet success in these four areas is a struggle. Less than one third of employees feel they have a firm grip on any them. To help employees find fulfillment, organizations need to rethink how they support their people in each area.

For example, balance is not simply dividing time equally between work and personal activities. It's often a sliding scale that changes based on the needs of the employee, sometimes daily. When organizations create a culture where employees feel supported and empowered to balance their work and personal needs because they have some control and autonomy over their time at work, they're more likely to feel a greater sense of fulfillment in their jobs.

Similarly, to build a sense of connection and belonging at work, leaders must go beyond typical teambuilding activities to nurture a sense of inclusion and create a strong, supportive community within the organization's larger culture—connecting employees regularly to purpose, accomplishment, and one another.

Organizations should also provide paths for employees to grow, even if pay increases and promotions are unavailable. Mentorship, tuition reimbursement, and special project assignments can all help employees master skills and feel that they're making progress.

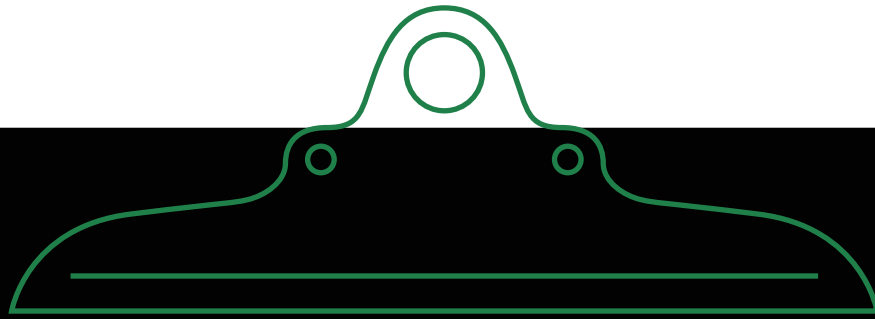
And finally, people can greatly expand the meaning they take from their work by connecting to the organization's purpose. This requires leaders who consistently communicate it and help employees see how their work makes it possible.

21x

When employees rate all four areas high, there is a 21x increase in the likelihood of fulfillment

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One final insight that underscores the importance of employee recognition: The feeling of appreciation is a fundamental need that enhances all four fulfillment factors.



**Increased likelihood of high fulfillment
when integrated recognition is added:**

**Balance +
integrated
recognition**

+133x

**Growth +
integrated
recognition**

+87x

**Community,
connection,
and belonging +
integrated
recognition**

+78x

**Purpose +
integrated
recognition**

+115x

“What is the recipe for successful achievement? To my mind there are just four essential ingredients: Choose a career you love, give it the best there is in you, seize your opportunities, and be a member of the team.”

—BENJAMIN F. FAIRLESS, PRESIDENT, CHAIRMAN & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, U.S. STEEL

RECOMMENDATIONS

Improving the areas of balance, community, growth, and purpose will give employees a greater sense of fulfillment.

1 Support and encourage balance

For employees to find balance in their lives, leaders and the organization must give people a say in how they work, as well as what work they do.

Establish policies, practices, and expectations that support balance. Ensure employees have opportunities to take time away from work without feeling any pressure, guilt, or obligation to work during their time off. If possible, provide flexibility in where and when employees do their work. Ensure senior leaders communicate the importance of balance and make it a normal, natural part of the culture.

A photograph of a man and a young child sitting at a desk, looking at a laptop screen. The man is on the right, wearing a striped shirt, and the child is on the left, wearing a light-colored shirt. The scene is dimly lit with a warm, yellowish glow. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

CASE STUDY—BETTER LIVING THROUGH FLEXIBILITY

Dow, the materials science company, knows that where work gets done is secondary to how work gets done. And it gives its people a lot of autonomy.

Through the “Design Your Day” program, employees can co-create their ideal work schedule with leaders according to their roles, responsibilities, and personal preferences. Dow aligns such programs with its DEI efforts to ensure employees feel valued, not just for the work they do, but for who they are. This includes giving more flexibility to employees in all types of life stages and circumstances, including those raising small children.

Alexander Doll, Director of Public Affairs Sustainability in Dubai, says, “Our global focus on ‘bringing your full self to work’ and ‘design your day’ is not just a tick-the-box corporate program. It’s a genuine effort to make our lives easier.”⁵

There’s a substantial difference in the odds of outcomes occurring when balance is excellent versus poor:

OUTCOME	POOR BALANCE	EXCELLENT BALANCE
Pride in the organization	-66%	+199%
Desire to work here one year from now	-66%	+204%
Promoter of the organization	-52%	+110%
Job satisfaction	-52%	+106%
Burnout	+89%	-47%

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2 Strengthen community, connection, and belonging

Build a strong sense of community at work and provide ways for employees to connect with each other and with their leaders in meaningful ways.

A good place to start is networking and socialization opportunities during work hours. Highlight a sense of community through shared values, goals, and purpose. Train leaders to get to know employees individually and show appreciation for their unique contributions.

Then go beyond work-related matters. Learn people’s interests and passions outside of work. Give them opportunities and time to pursue these interests, both individually and with others in the organization who share the same passions. Enable them to develop their personal lives and find balance. This encourages employees to bring their whole selves to work because they’re treated as more than cogs in the machine. Employees will feel a sense of belonging and connection for who they are, not just the work they perform.

When feelings of community, connection, and belonging are strong at an organization, the odds that employees will do great work, take pride in the organization, and want to stay are far better:

OUTCOME	WEAK COMMUNITY, CONNECTION & BELONGING	STRONG COMMUNITY, CONNECTION & BELONGING
Pride in the organization	-74%	+318%
Desire to work here one year from now	-72%	+252%
Promoter of the organization	-72%	+258%
Great work	-70%	+236%
High inclusion	-55%	+130%
Burnout	+329%	-77%

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“Purpose is built, not found. Working with a sense of purpose day-in and day-out takes thoughtfulness and practice.”

—SHANNON SCHUYLER, CHIEF PURPOSE OFFICER, PWC



CASE STUDY—RISING ABOVE THE CRISIS

American Airlines is in the business of connecting people. But even as planes sat grounded and people stopped traveling during the pandemic, the company still kept their employees connected, whether they worked at the airport or at home.

American aligned every employee back to its purpose: Caring for people on life's journey. (Even if that journey is during a crisis.) It also used recognition to help employees continue to feel part of the American Airlines family. Even furloughed employees retained access to their recognition tools and learning programs.

Leadership at American communicated frequently and transparently, encouraging everyone who kept their airline going. These efforts to build meaningful connection with each other helped employees feel appreciated, valued, and ultimately more fulfilled. According to Beril McManus, Senior Manager, Recognition, Events, and Engagement, "It's a family here at American. You have each other's back, you're taking care of each other, you're helping people in the good times and the bad."⁶

3 Offer opportunities for growth and development

Growth is not limited to pay increases and promotions. It's critical for leaders to open avenues for skill development, networking with peers and leaders, and consistent opportunities for coaching and mentorship. A few suggestions:

- **Create or improve ways for employees to upskill or reskill**
- **Invite employees to work on special projects**
- **Provide resources and training for employees to accomplish personal and professional goals**
- **Recognize employees when they accomplish their goals**
- **Help employees master their jobs and feel like experts**

When companies foster growth well, the odds of several positive outcomes increase and burnout decreases:

OUTCOME	LOW SENSE OF GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT	HIGH SENSE OF GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT
Pride in the organization	-73%	+289%
Desire to work here one year from now	-68%	+210%
Promoter of the organization	-55%	+121%
High sense of opportunity	-67%	+203%
Success	-69%	+219%
Burnout	+212%	-68%

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4 Provide purpose and meaning

Your organization may have a clear purpose, but do your employees know it? And do they identify with it?

If necessary, refine your purpose and communicate it often. Connect employee and business goals to it, and use public and private recognition to showcase how employees contribute to it.

Equally important, encourage leaders to learn what employees need to extract meaning from their jobs. Help employees define and accomplish goals that are personally meaningful to them.

When an employee’s sense of purpose is high, they’re more positive about their jobs and the organization:

OUTCOME	LOW SENSE OF PURPOSE IN WORK	HIGH SENSE OF PURPOSE IN WORK
Pride in the organization	-75%	+306%
Desire to work here one year from now	-72%	+254%
Promoter of the organization	-53%	+114%
Great work	-79%	+373%
Describe work as “part of my identity”	-87%	+504%
Burnout	+208%	-68%

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CASE STUDY—A PRESCRIPTION FOR FULFILLMENT

NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital improves both the lives of its patients and its employees through a culture of respect and the purpose of providing high-quality healthcare.

It connects its people to the culture and purpose through employee recognition, and its recognition program, “Everyday Amazing,” celebrates all the amazing work employees at NYP do. The program includes appreciation stations that hold notecards and treats, and a mobile app that makes it easy to appreciate each other and remember to create powerful moments of respect and care for patients and families. NYP’s purpose and culture has helped make it one of the top hospitals in the country.

“Healthcare is a very rewarding business, but fundamentally it’s a tough business,” says Dr. Laura Forese, Chief Operating Officer and Executive Vice President at NYP. “We can see tremendous amounts of burnout. One of the things that we know will really combat that is when people feel appreciated.” Appreciation and connection to purpose help build fulfillment for NYP employees.⁷

FINDING FULFILLMENT—KEY TAKEAWAYS

Employees are looking for more fulfillment in their lives, especially their jobs.

More than satisfaction or engagement, fulfillment is finding meaning in one's work.

Fulfillment leads to higher employee satisfaction, great work, and retention.

Balance, community, growth, and purpose all contribute to fulfillment.

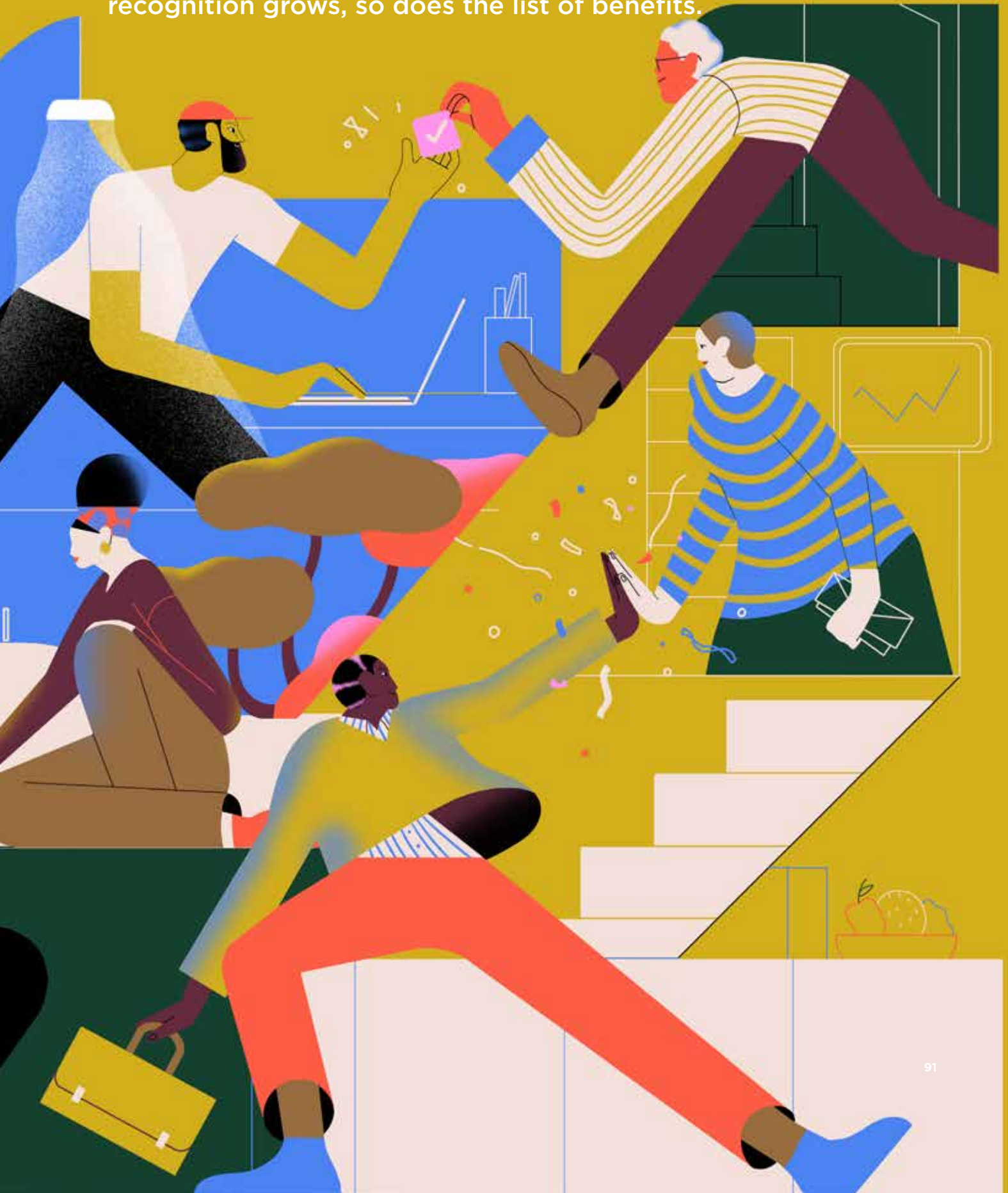
Finding Fulfillment Sources

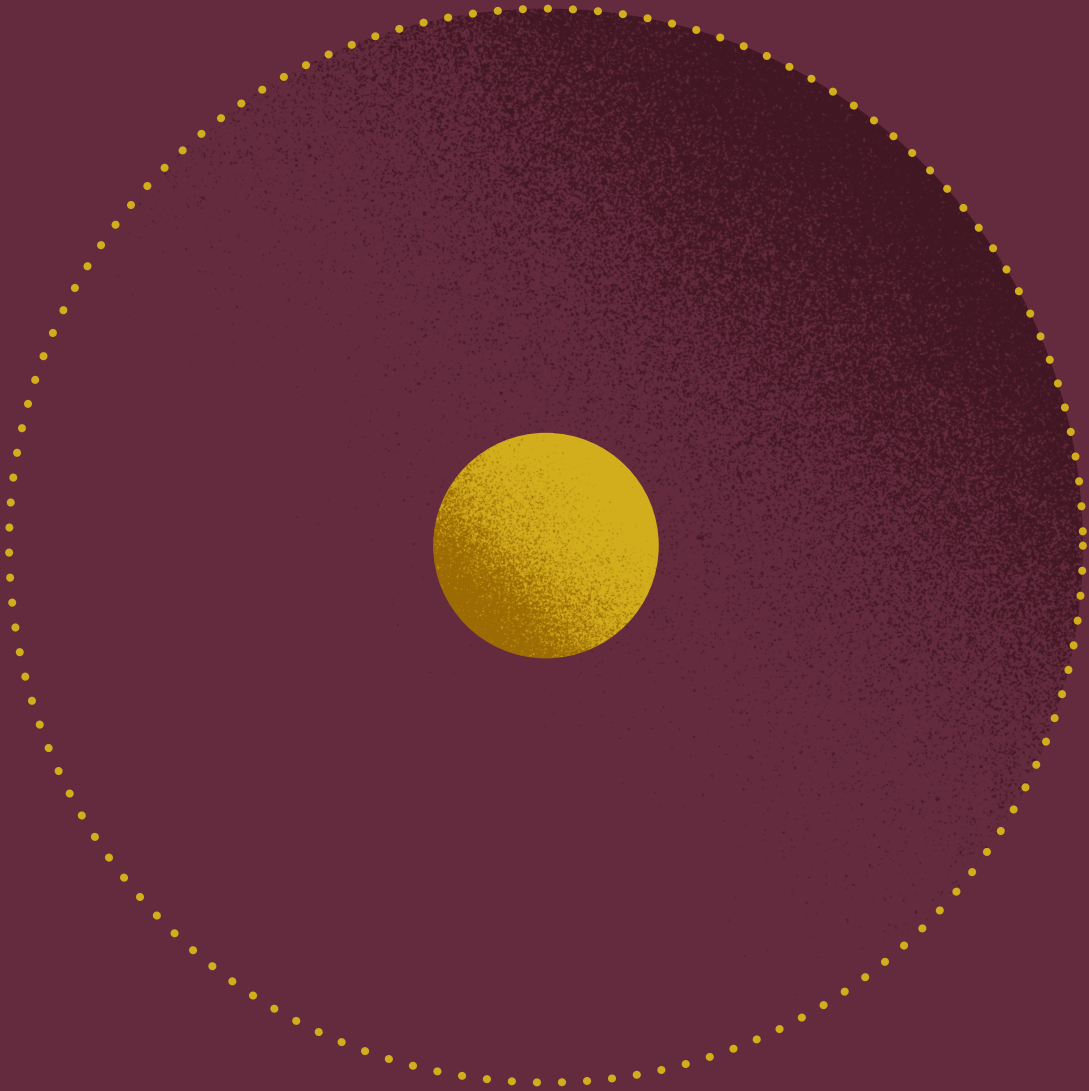
1. “Help Your Employees Find Purpose— Or Watch Them Leave,” Naina Dhingra, Andrew Samo, Bill Schaninger, and Matt Schrimper, McKinsey & Company, April 5, 2021.
2. “Four Ways to Help Your Employees Feel More Fulfilled (and Why You Need To),” Kathy Caprino, Forbes, December 10, 2018.
3. “The Great Resignation Looks Set to Continue—1 in 5 Say They’ll Change Jobs in the Next Year,” Goh Chiew Tong, CNBC, May 24, 2022.
4. “Four Ways to Help Your Employees Feel More Fulfilled (and Why You Need To),” Kathy Caprino, Forbes, December 10, 2018.
5. “Fulfilling the Psychological Needs of Employees in the New Era of Flexible Work,” O.C. Tanner webinar, March 16, 2022.
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7. O.C. Tanner Client Story

Integrated Recognition



As our analysis of early, frequent, and holistic recognition grows, so does the list of benefits.





21%

**OF ORGANIZATIONS SCORE HIGH IN
RECOGNITION INTEGRATION**

It would be difficult to rank the insights in this year's report, but the unambiguous linchpin of this chapter is that recognition leaves a deep impression. Essentially, employees' past experiences with recognition strongly shape their current and future perception of it. And employees who have experienced subpar recognition elsewhere bring a skepticism and jadedness with them. The best solution we found is to make recognition part of employees' very first experiences, continue it throughout their early tenure, and use it in consistent, integrated ways after that. This comprehensive approach not only dilutes the negative effect of any past disappointments, it maximizes the likelihood of high performance in the future.

INTRODUCTION

Done well, employee recognition dramatically helps people feel valued and included in a workplace community. However, when it's generic, impersonal, or rare, it's much less likely to hit the mark.

By "done well," we mean recognition that's highly integrated into an organization's culture. And this involves much more than plugging recognition tools into a company's existing technology. It means ensuring recognition is part of each employee's everyday experience.

Through years of research, the O.C. Tanner Institute has developed eight specific measurements, based on employee perception, to determine the level of recognition integration (RI), as visualized on pages 96 and 97.

When recognition is integrated, it happens frequently for a variety of accomplishments, large and small, and comes from both leaders and peers. It's personalized for the individual, seen across the organization, and the programs and tools to give it are updated often.

Organizations that achieve high RI do an exceptional job of ensuring recognition is embedded into their culture.

Highly integrated recognition has a powerful impact on organizations, increasing the odds of several positive outcomes and decreasing the odds of some negative ones:

- **Great work (+1,181%)**
- **High engagement (+784%)**
- **Thriving culture (+648%)**
- **Employee attrition (-29%)**
- **Employee burnout (-80%)**

Regrettably, only 21% of workplaces worldwide have highly integrated recognition.

We asked ourselves why that number is so low, especially since, for years, more organizations have put more effort and resources into improving recognition. The answer isn't as simple as improving recognition programs or tools. An underlying discovery makes it challenging for any organization to achieve a high RI culture: Memories of recognition experiences from prior workplaces have a profound and enduring influence.

“Part of why it’s so important that we weave recognition and appreciation into the fabric of our culture and elevate the importance of its impact is because now, more than ever, we understand that recognition, just like compensation and benefits, is a fundamental part of the associates’ experience at work.”

**—NICK ROSENTHAL, SENIOR ASSOCIATE IN HR COMPENSATION,
CAPITAL ONE**

Leaders frequently recognize employees

Leaders know the recognition preferences of individuals

Recognition experiences are crafted around the individual

Peer-to-peer recognition is common and frequent



**Recognition is
an everyday part
of the culture**

**Recognition programs
and technology
continually improve**

**The organization
recognizes both large
and small efforts**

**Recognition is
consistently seen throughout
the organization**

PREVIOUS RECOGNITION EXPERIENCES AFFECT EMPLOYEES' PERCEPTION OF RECOGNITION IN THEIR CURRENT JOBS

Past experiences can shape or bias how we perceive current and future ones, even when our situations are different. And this applies to employee recognition as much as any kind of experience.

Studies by MIT show that the human brain encodes prior experiences, using them as signals and potentially biasing our perception in existing, new, or uncertain environments. Our brains subconsciously use these memories to create expectations of how things should be.¹ This explains why past recognition experiences shape our perceptions and expectations of recognition moving forward.

In our research, employees reported having, on average, four non-monetary and three monetary recognition experiences each year, with 71% saying “not feeling valued” was a significant part of why they left their previous jobs. Only 11% of employees previously worked for a company that scored high in RI.

The data suggest these deficient recognition experiences don't fade away easily. People who had poor recognition experiences with previous employers have much better odds of reporting several shortcomings in their present environments:

- **Recognition is inauthentic (+355%)**
- **Leader is not genuine when giving recognition (+283%)**
- **Would prefer not to receive recognition (+427%)**

Combatting employees' previously poor experiences (due to recognition that was infrequent, impersonal, or flawed in any number of ways) is now one more reason organizations need cultures with highly integrated recognition.

It's also important to note that while cultures with low RI will negatively affect employee perception of recognition in their future jobs, the opposite also appears true. Employees who've worked in cultures with average or high RI are more positive about their current organizations.

Influence of prior RI on current organization's culture:

OUTCOME	LOW PRIOR RI	AVG PRIOR RI	HIGH PRIOR RI
Thriving culture	-37%	+11%	+29%
Engagement	-41%	+13%	+47%
Great work	-27%	+19%	+71%
Inclusion	-49%	+17%	+21%
Current RI	-51%	No effect	+86%
Burnout	+27%	No effect	-21%

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This means organizations need to be prepared for employees who come from cultures with high RI if they hope to match or exceed expectations.

Our research shows employees who experienced high RI in their previous jobs but low (or even average) RI in their current job are more likely to feel recognition at their organization is inauthentic and meaningless.

Odds of perceptions based on level of RI at employees' previous and current organizations:

PERCEPTION	HIGH PREVIOUS RI, LOW CURRENT RI	HIGH PREVIOUS RI, AVG CURRENT RI	HIGH PREVIOUS RI, HIGH CURRENT RI
Recognition is inauthentic	+727%	+118%	-68%
Recognition from leader is not genuine	+813%	+127%	-71%
Recognition is meaningless	+538%	+91%	-89%
Do not want to receive recognition	+612%	No effect	-87%

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This is also true for several cultural perceptions. Employees who experienced high RI in their previous jobs but low RI at their current jobs are typically more pessimistic about aspects of their organization's culture.

Odds of perceptions based on level of RI at employees' previous and current organizations:

PERCEPTION	HIGH PREVIOUS RI, LOW CURRENT RI	HIGH PREVIOUS RI, AVG CURRENT RI	HIGH PREVIOUS RI, HIGH CURRENT RI
Thriving culture	-57%	+45%	+418%
Engagement	-52%	+97%	+327%
Great work	-34%	+31%	+582%
Inclusion	-59%	+51%	+126%
Current RI	-87%	+78%	+1,033%
Burnout	+67%	-12%	-74%

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The bottom line: Past recognition experiences, whether positive or negative, amplify the effect of current ones. Again, organizations must highly integrate recognition into their cultures to offset or match the past experiences of their employees.

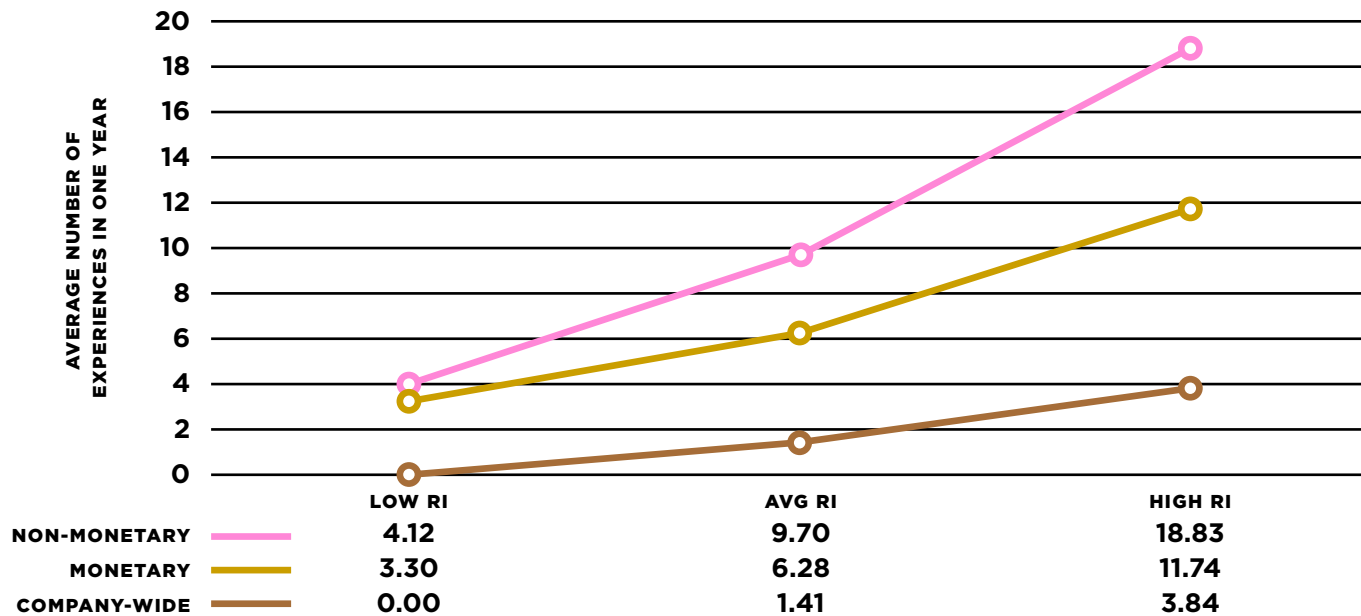
“I guess because recognition was so important to my leaders and team at my last job, everything here falls flat. It isn’t that it is done differently, I understand that every company is different. It is just that they could do a better job here, and they don’t. They choose not to.”

—EMPLOYEE FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT

HIGH RECOGNITION INTEGRATION REQUIRES GREAT FREQUENCY

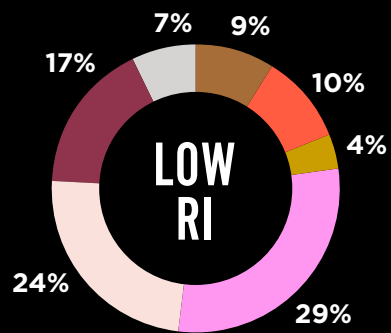
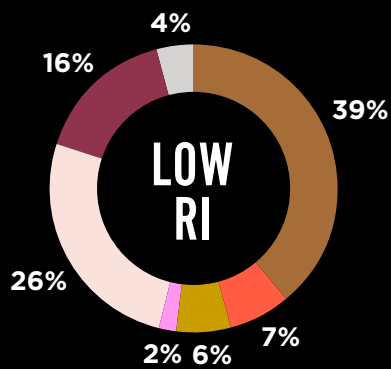
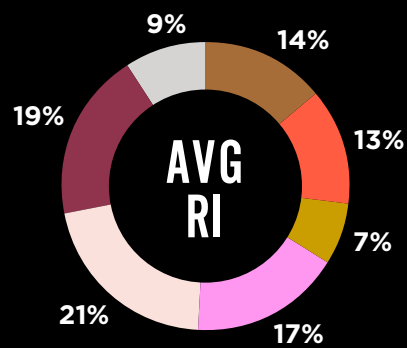
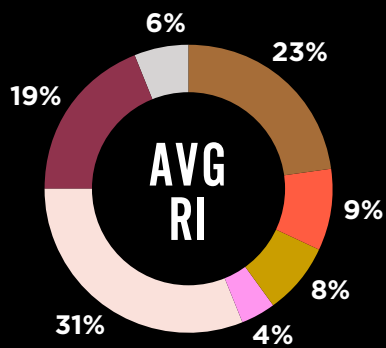
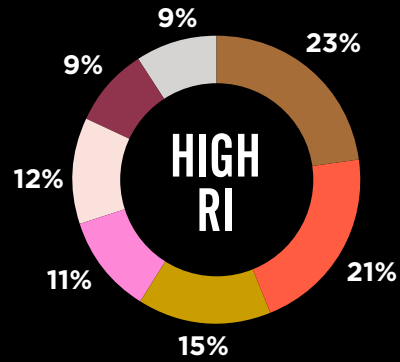
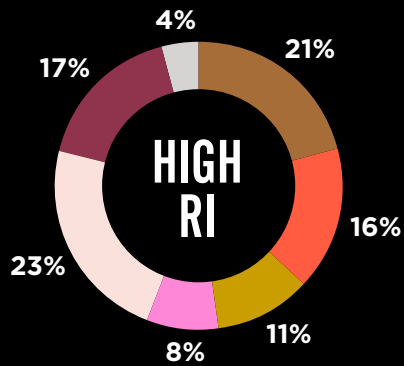
How often does recognition occur in cultures with high RI?
The benchmark is now at least every other week.

Recognition integration increases as the frequency of recognition increases:



More frequent recognition contributes to high RI by increasing the amount of recognition given, as well as expanding the number of people giving recognition and the reasons for recognition.

Organizations with low RI show fewer sources (typically leaders and current team members giving recognition), while those with high RI have more (leaders, current and previous team members, and department peers giving recognition). Expanding the eligible sources of recognition improves frequency and ultimately RI.



- PEER—CURRENT TEAM
- PEER—PREVIOUS TEAM
- PEER—DEPARTMENT
- PEER—NON-DEPARTMENT
- LEADER
- SENIOR LEADER
- ORGANIZATION

- HELPED COWORKER/LEADER
- GAVE EXTRA EFFORT
- SMALL IMPACT ON CUSTOMER
- SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON PROJECT
- SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON TEAM/DEPARTMENT
- SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON ORGANIZATION
- SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON CUSTOMER

Organizations with low RI also show disproportionately segmented reasons for recognition, which can significantly impact teams and projects. By contrast, organizations with high RI have more reasons, such as giving extra effort, helping coworkers, delighting customers, improving projects, etc. Providing more reasons and ways to recognize inspires more recognition and increases RI. And as the frequency of recognition increases, it helps ensure employees receive recognition for a wider variety of accomplishments.

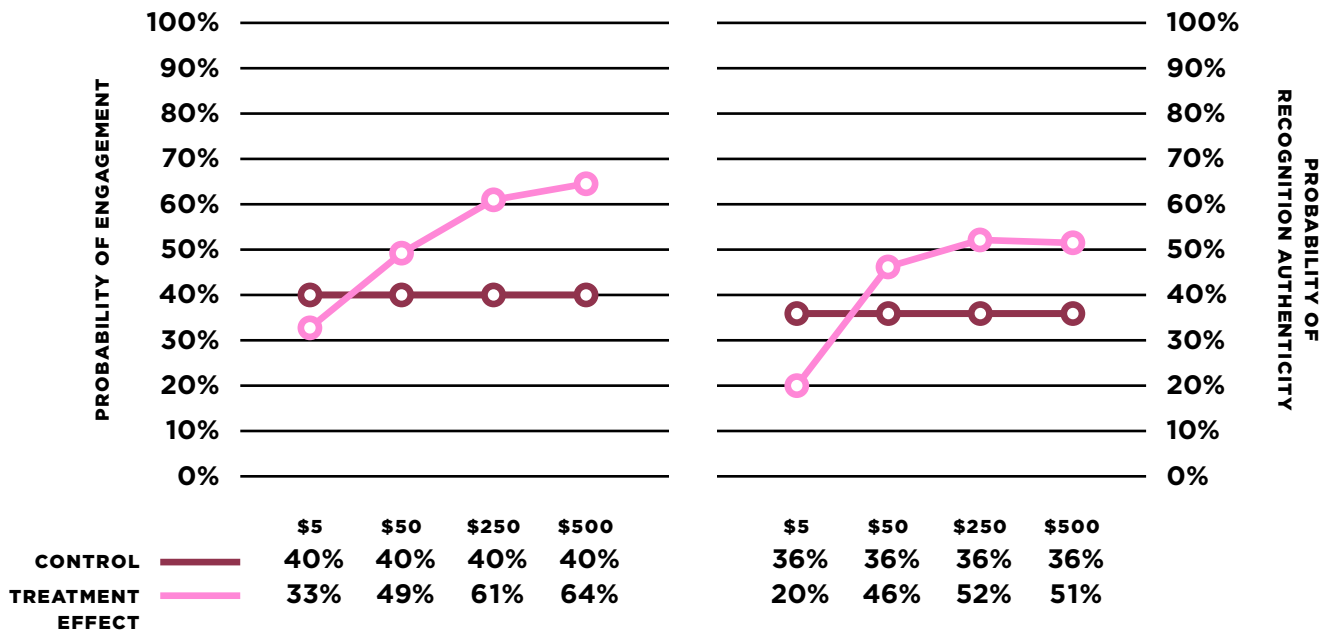
SMALL, FREQUENT RECOGNITION MOMENTS ARE MORE BENEFICIAL THAN BIG, RARE EVENTS

Many organizations save their employee recognition for a once-a-year event, like Employee Appreciation Day. And when it comes to budgeting, some spend too little, often on small, generic trinkets, while others spend extravagantly—but no more effectively—on cash, gift cards, or awards.

Research on gift-giving shows expensive, infrequent gifts do not have the long-term impact one might expect. Smaller gestures given more often, over time, are much more meaningful and valued—especially if they’re personalized.² The same proves true with recognition.

Frequent, tailored recognition experiences spread throughout the year have a larger, more lasting impact on RI and workplace culture than singular company-wide, all-employee events, no matter how much organizations spend.

We conducted an experiment on company-wide recognition to determine thresholds of effectiveness. The findings were insightful. First, we discovered that giving a company-wide award with a value of \$5 actually decreased the probability of engagement and perception of recognition authenticity. An incremental improvement appeared when companies offered awards worth \$50, \$250, and \$500 (although the improvement is smaller at \$500). We included awards worth \$25 in our pilot study, but their impact was not substantively different from that of \$5 awards.

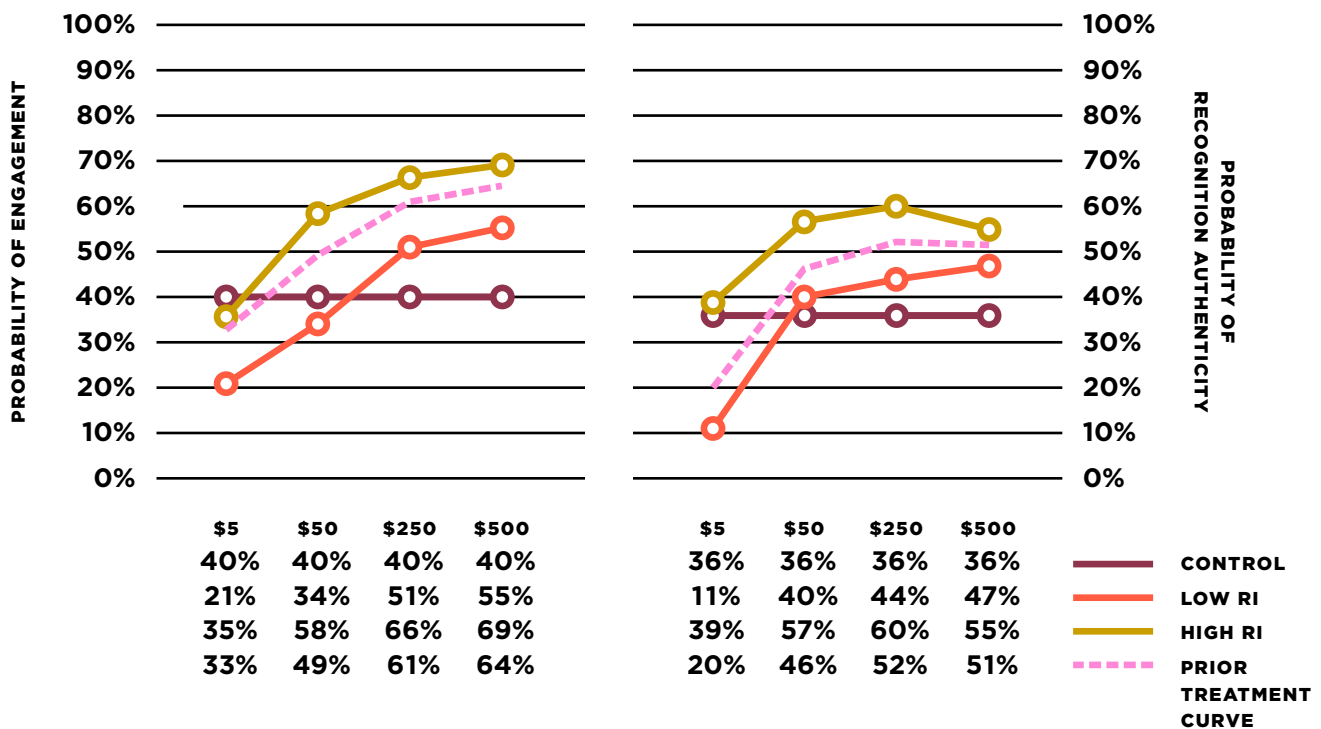


Because organizations with high RI give recognition frequently, they already achieve increased engagement and recognition authenticity without needing to spend larger amounts on company-wide recognition.

A \$5 award only marginally decreases the likelihood of engagement in cultures with high RI, but the negative impact of a \$5 award is amplified in cultures with low RI. We found \$50, \$250, and \$500 awards substantially increase the probability of engagement in high-RI cultures. In low-RI cultures, a \$50 award performs worse than the control group, while \$250 and \$500 awards lead to smaller increases in engagement.

We see similar results with recognition authenticity. Lower amounts of company-wide giving decrease the likelihood that recognition will be perceived as authentic in low-RI environments. And the higher amounts of \$250 and \$500 do not considerably improve it.

There are several important insights here. First, because organizations with strong RI have invested in holistic, meaningful, and frequent recognition experiences, they can invest fewer dollars, per experience, in company-wide recognition and still see a positive effect on outcomes.



Second, small-dollar awards are insufficient and even counter-productive for company-wide recognition in any culture. (Such budgets would be better spent empowering employees to give recognition to one another for everyday efforts and achievements.) Awards worth between \$50 and \$250 are more effective.

Third, for organizations with larger budgets (perhaps \$500 per employee for a single event), the data indicate that splitting it into two or more recognition moments can have a greater impact than giving it all at once.

To sum it up, establishing and maintaining high RI requires more frequent giving from more sources for more reasons. And organizations can make intentional, straightforward adjustments to their recognition solutions that allow more frequent, meaningful, holistic recognition and ensure all employees feel valued and appreciated—no matter what the employees’ prior recognition experiences.

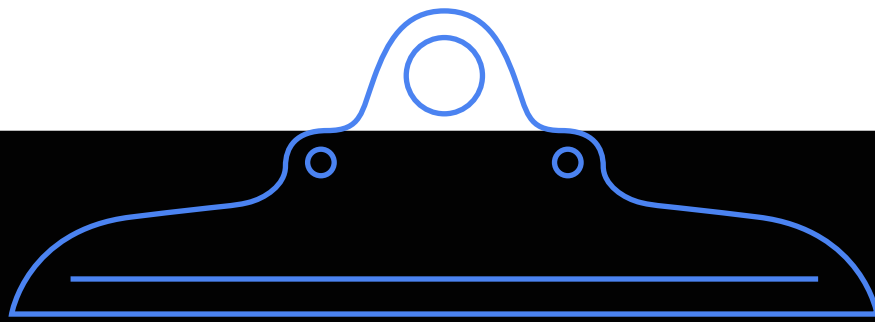
RECOMMENDATIONS

Organizations that want a culture with integrated recognition and more positive experiences for their people should build the following into their employee recognition strategies.

1 Onboarding experiences that are rich in recognition

Since employees bring their past recognition experiences to your organization, onboarding is a perfect opportunity for you to show appreciation from day one. Unfortunately, less than half (43%) of employees reported an onboarding experience that was more than just a day of orientation and a folder of benefits.

Instead of handing out a water bottle or t-shirt and zipping through the company history, consider creating a curated, integrated-recognition experience for new employees. According to our research, there's a baseline of onboarding experiences organizations with high RI provide.



Foundational onboarding experiences:

- **Note from leader**
 - **Card signed by peers**
 - **Custom or personalized symbolic award to commemorate employee joining the company**
 - **Assorted company swag**
-

Ideal onboarding experiences to maximize impact:

- **Foundational onboarding experiences**
 - **Time to socialize with other new hires**
 - **Food catered by the organization**
 - **Time to thank others for their help and support during the onboarding process**
-

Only 33% of employees report receiving a foundational onboarding experience, and even fewer (19%) have experienced the ideal. Providing opportunities to recognize and be recognized during the onboarding process has both immediate and long-term impacts on employee perception of culture and inclusion. Onboarding is the perfect time to connect and introduce people to a culture with high RI in positive and memorable ways. It's also a great chance to neutralize their previously poor recognition experiences as they start at your organization and show them what true RI looks like.

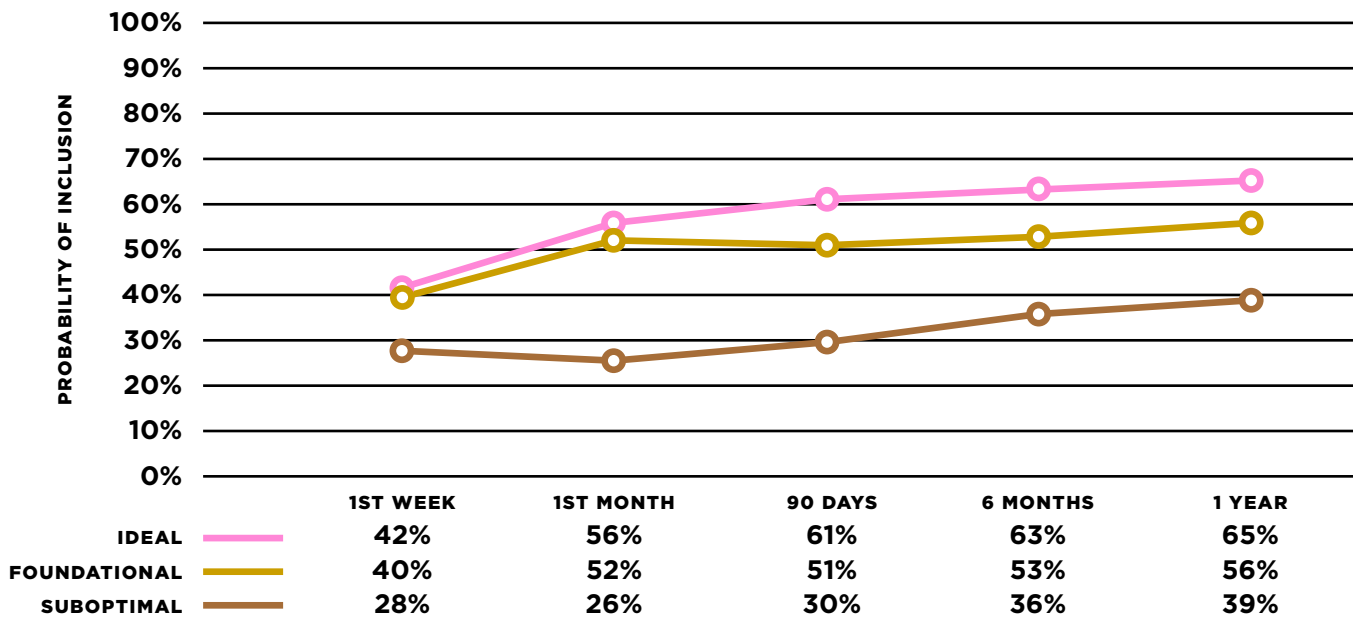
Incorporating recognition from the beginning of an employee's career with your organization helps ensure they feel a sense of community and belonging to a thriving culture immediately:

OUTCOME	SUBOPTIMAL ONBOARDING EXPERIENCE	FOUNDATIONAL ONBOARDING EXPERIENCE	IDEAL ONBOARDING EXPERIENCE
Thriving culture	No effect	+47%	+91%
Engagement	+13%	+71%	+135%
Great work	No effect	+68%	+114%
Inclusion	-9%	+44%	+89%
Current RI	-24%	+51%	+184%
Burnout	No effect	-13%	-19%

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Our latest data show a traditional onboarding experience is suboptimal and ineffective. The ideal onboarding experience with integrated opportunities to recognize and be recognized creates an immediate and sustainable impact and helps offset employees' previously poor recognition experiences.

Sustainable impact of onboarding experiences on feelings of inclusion:





CASE STUDY—A POWERFUL FIRST IMPRESSION

CIBC, a leading North American financial institution with 45,000 employees, partners with O.C. Tanner to integrate recognition into every phase of its employee lifecycle, starting with onboarding.

On each new hire's first day, the bank welcomes them with a custom CIBC backpack, branded pin, and points from its "MomentMakers" recognition program. This kit also includes a note to connect the employee to the bank's purpose and an invitation to give feedback to make the company better. This early set of experiences not only introduces people to their recognition tools, but helps them feel connected to their leader, teams, and the organization from the very beginning.³

2 More holistic recognition

To ensure recognition is thoroughly integrated, organizations must provide a variety of ways, reasons, and people to give it.

The people should include both leaders and peers across the organization. Reasons can range from everyday effort to above-and-beyond work to major achievements to career milestones. (There should never be a shortage of meaningful objectives worth appreciating.) And when it comes to ways, organizations should give employees a wide selection of methods and tools for recognizing, as well as access and authority to them.

The following are the fundamental recognition tools most organizations need to move from low RI to average RI:

- **Personalized messages of appreciation**
- **Verbal recognition as part of a meeting or gathering of colleagues**
- **Online formal recognition platform**

For an organization to move from average RI to high RI, its employee recognition programs should incorporate the following:

- **Micro-monetary recognition, such as monetary eCards**
- **Symbolic awards, particularly for prestigious accomplishments**
- **Celebrations that include others being recognized**
- **Time for employees to socialize after recognition moments**
- **Recognition from customers**
- **Recognition tools and solutions embedded within an existing technology ecosystem**

The more ways an organization gives its people to recognize each other, the more frequently recognition will happen. And the more frequently it happens, the more it becomes an integrated and natural part of the employee experience.

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a patterned dress, is smiling and looking down at a smartphone she is holding in her hands. The background is a blurred indoor setting. The entire image has a blue color overlay.

CASE STUDY—THE HEALTHY OUTCOMES OF HOLISTIC RECOGNITION

Norton Healthcare’s recognition program, “N Recognition of You,” is a centralized solution that allows all 14,000 employees to give and receive recognition for the spectrum of contributions at work—from onboarding to retirement and from small wins to major achievements.

Norton’s approach to recognition includes monetary and non-monetary options, formal and informal recognition, and personalized messages of appreciation and group celebrations. Regardless of an employee’s role or location, they experience recognition as a consistent part of the culture, which has increased engagement scores from the 55th percentile to the 83rd percentile.⁴

3 Targeted recognition training

Not all employees, or even leaders, know how to give recognition as meaningfully as they can. Nor do they completely understand the benefits of it. This means there's a large opportunity to focus resources and training on recognition best practices.

To move from low to average RI, organizations should train senior leaders, frontline leaders, and all team members about the role of recognition, including:

- **Why recognition matters**
- **How to personalize recognition in a meaningful way**
- **Why recognition is important for both large and small accomplishments**
- **Why recognition should be a priority**
- **How to give recognition purposefully**

To move from average to high RI, organizations should emphasize how to give holistic, personalized recognition, focusing on the impact of recognition and providing guidance for creating meaningful recognition moments for all employees.

These two targeted strategies, along with proper recognition tools, increase the odds of achieving an average RI by 745% and a high RI by 869%. The best employee recognition programs have resources and training embedded in their tools to ensure leaders and employees create positive recognition experiences in real time.

INTEGRATED RECOGNITION—KEY TAKEAWAYS

An employee's previous recognition experiences influence current perceptions of recognition.

Curated, personalized onboarding experiences can help reverse poor perceptions.

Ensure recognition is given frequently and for a wide variety of reasons.

Target recognition training for maximum impact.

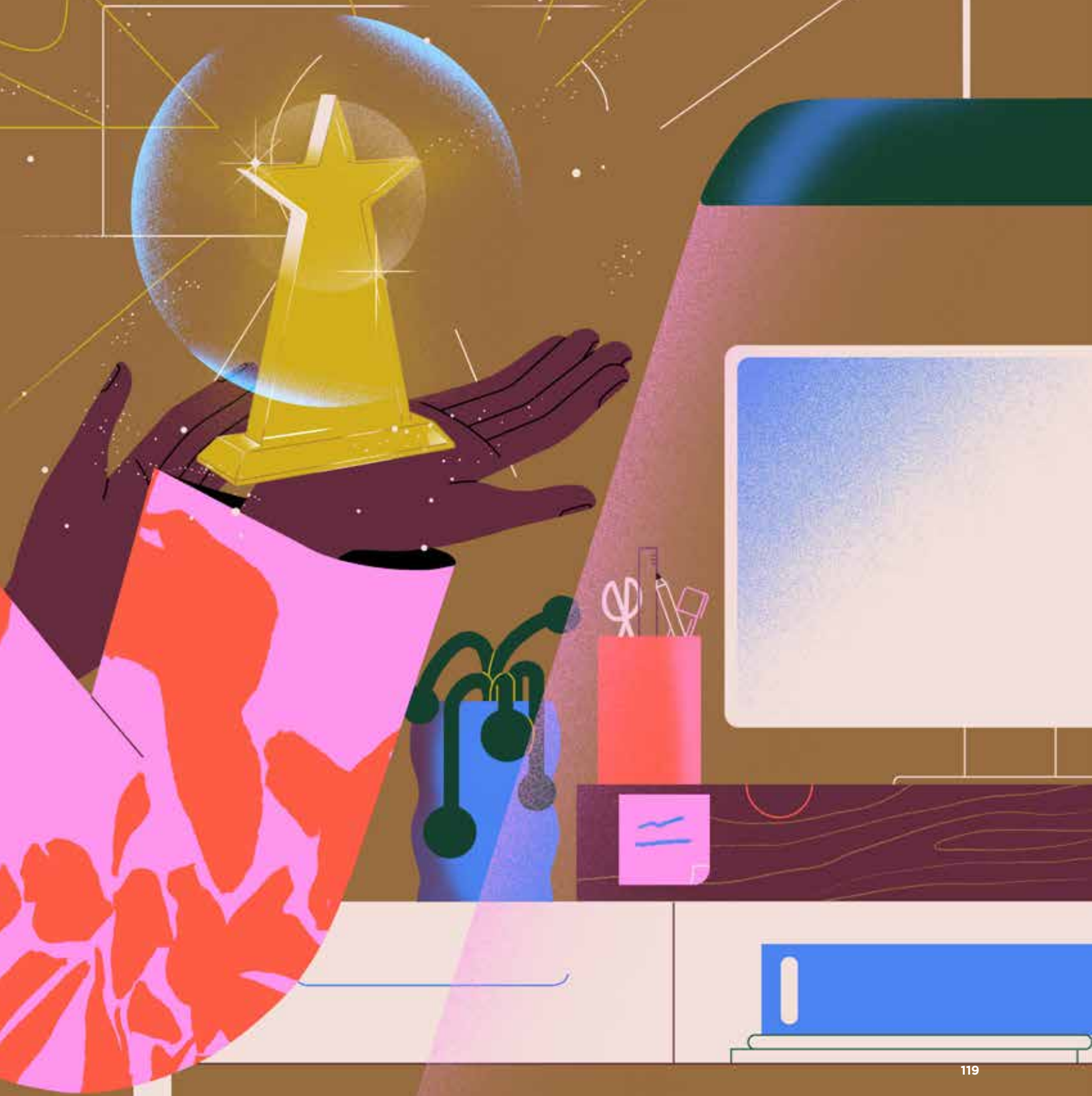
Integrated Recognition Sources

1. "How expectation influences perception," Anne Trafton, MIT News Office, July 15, 2019.
2. "The science behind giving good gifts," Tiffanie Wen, BBC Worklife, December 9, 2019.
3. O.C. Tanner Client Story
4. O.C. Tanner Client Story

Harnessing Symbols



The impact of symbolic awards on employee recognition is quantifiably real.



3x

**EMPLOYEES ARE THREE TIMES MORE LIKELY
TO REMEMBER A RECOGNITION EXPERIENCE WHEN
IT INCLUDES A SYMBOLIC AWARD**

The exciting establishment of causal links in workplace culture continues. Last year, it was the link between employee recognition and feelings of connection. This year, it is the causal relationship between symbolic recognition and organizational impact. When employees receive awards with relevant symbolic meaning, it directly amplifies the effect of recognition. To be clear, this difference is not limited to service anniversaries. Symbolism effectively improves the outcomes of performance recognition, initiatives, and company-wide celebrations, too, because it enables employees to become a part of the organization's ongoing story and success, rather than merely contribute to it from the margins.

INTRODUCTION

Whether it's as small and simple as a letter of the alphabet or as large and complex as the Statue of Liberty, a symbol carries meaning. But to be understood and appreciated, symbols require some cultural context—the critical background knowledge—that can come from an institution, a religion, an ethnic group, or even the organization where we work.

At work, symbols that take the form of recognition or an award are extremely valuable for numerous reasons: they communicate a company's values and purpose, reflect the significance of employee contributions, and build a sense of community by increasing our emotional connections to each other.

Indeed, symbolic awards are much more than career souvenirs. Academic studies have concluded that a symbolic award can improve individual performance by as much as 12%.¹ Even without a tangible component, an analysis of Wikipedia volunteers discovered a symbolic virtual award led to increased retention.² And research on public sector employees by the organizational psychologist and author Adam Grant found symbolic notes of appreciation helped people feel more valued and supported, with positive effects on wellbeing, belonging, and absenteeism.³

So how do you assess the potential impact of symbolic awards in an organization? How can you ensure they're as meaningful as possible? And why are symbolic awards so potent within the spectrum of employee recognition in the first place? You've come to the right chapter. Let's go.

“Gold medals aren’t really made of gold. They’re made of sweat, determination, and a hard-to-find alloy called guts.”

—DAN GABLE, OLYMPIC GOLD MEDALIST

SYMBOLIC AWARDS IMPROVE THE RECALL AND IMPACT OF RECOGNITION

As humans, we’ve created and used symbols throughout our entire history, in part because they have the ability to plant themselves in our memory. This helps explain why symbolic awards can be such a powerful part of recognition experiences. Employees who receive recognition with a symbolic award are three times more likely to remember the occasion and 358% more likely to provide substantial details about the recognition event.

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a black and white striped shirt, is smiling broadly and clapping her hands. In the background, other people are visible, some also smiling. The entire image has a purple tint.

CASE STUDY—THE BROAD SCOPE OF SYMBOLIC AWARDS

The quality and type of symbolic awards matter, as does the experience of receiving them. Contrast the symbolic award experiences of two focus group participants:

One HR manager completed a tobacco cessation program and received a symbolic award at a big banquet. The award was “fancy, engrained in marble, special, and shimmers and shines.” She displayed it in her office, and eight years later, she still remembered holding the award at the banquet.

vs.

An “employee of the month” received the honor with their picture on the wall, cash, and a generic certificate. They could not remember when they received it and did not know they had won the award until they read about it in the company newsletter.

We asked employees to reflect on their most recent achievement, scoring the sentiment and magnitude of their recognition experience narrative to see if awards created a difference based on the type of award given. We looked at both sentiment polarity (how positive or negative employee emotions were, scored from -100 to +100) and magnitude (how much emotion was in the description, scored 0+).

The analysis found thoughtful and high-quality symbolic awards that aligned with a cultural element produced the most positive average sentiment and substantial average magnitude. Generic awards—like impersonal certificates, nondescript plaques, or plain trophies—had neutral sentiment and low magnitude. In other words, they didn’t mean as much and had little impact on how the employee remembered their achievement.

INCLUSION	SENTIMENT POLARITY	MAGNITUDE
Custom symbolic award	+43	9.08
Generic award (certificate, plaque, etc.)	-05	1.05
Cash or gift card	+21	6.44
Redeemable points	+23	6.57

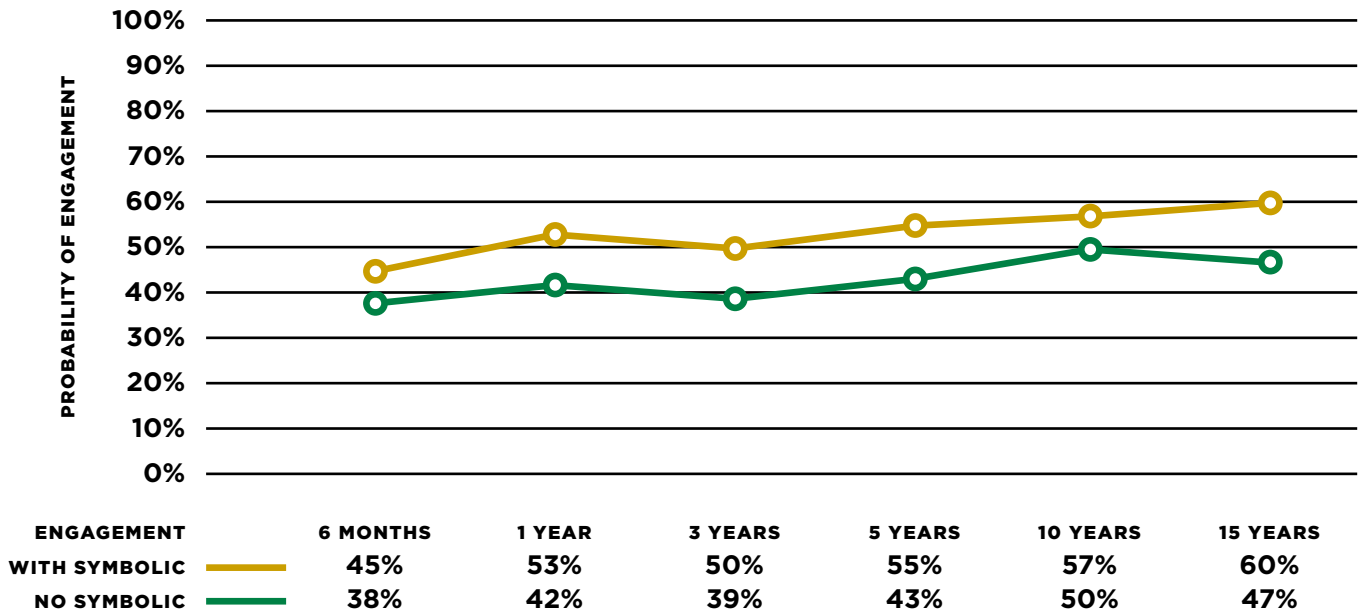
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Likewise, our research found symbolism has the power to build connection. When a career recognition experience includes a symbolic award, it increases the employee’s connection with their team, leader, and the organization. Conversely, when a career recognition experience omits a symbolic award, the probability of connection to each decreases.

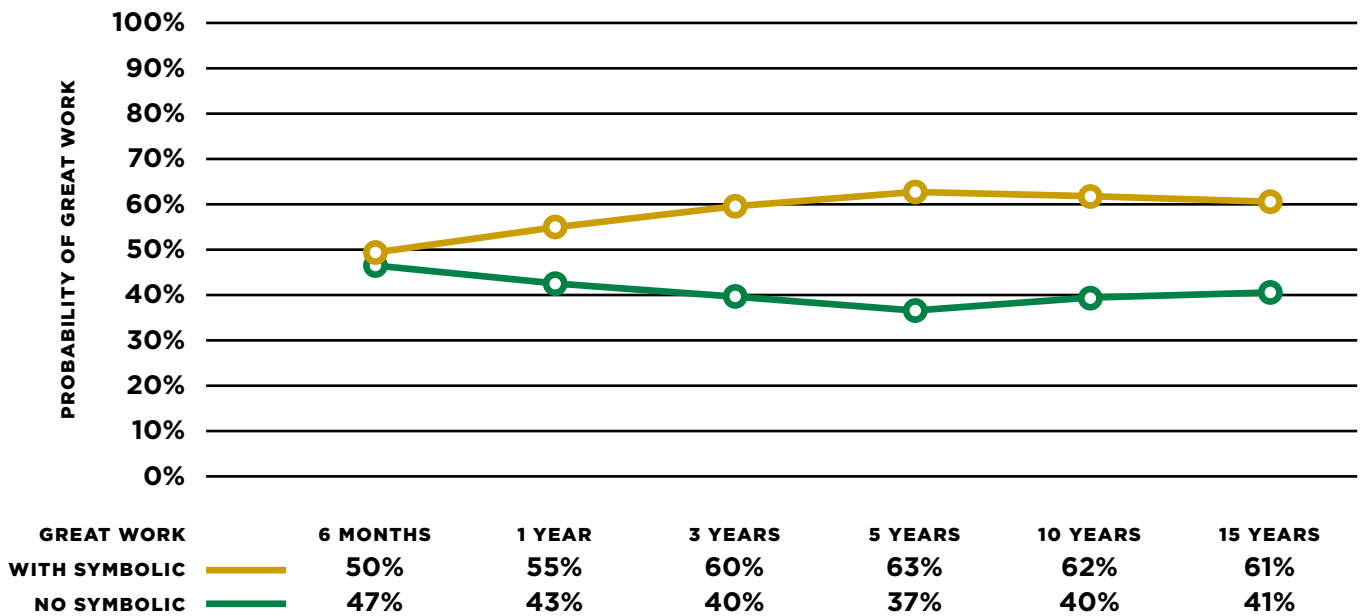
PROBABILITY	INCLUDES SYMBOLIC AWARD	EXCLUDES SYMBOLIC AWARD
Connection with team	+397%	-11%
Connection with leader	+281%	-7%
Connection with organization	+429%	-23%

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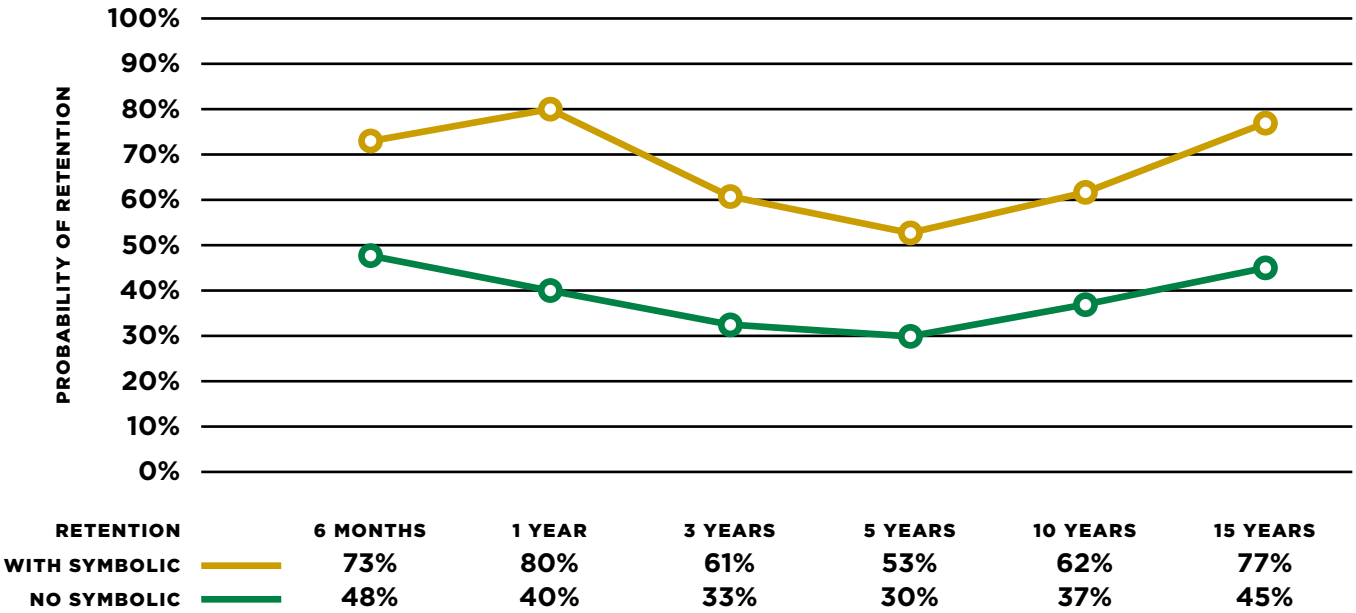
The effect of symbolic awards on engagement, great work, and retention is similar. When recognition experiences include symbolic awards, the odds of employees feeling engaged, doing great work, and staying with the organization improve.



Interestingly, the likelihood of great work (defined as above-and-beyond work or work that makes a difference people love) typically falls with tenure, but when symbolic awards are part of career celebrations, the odds increase.



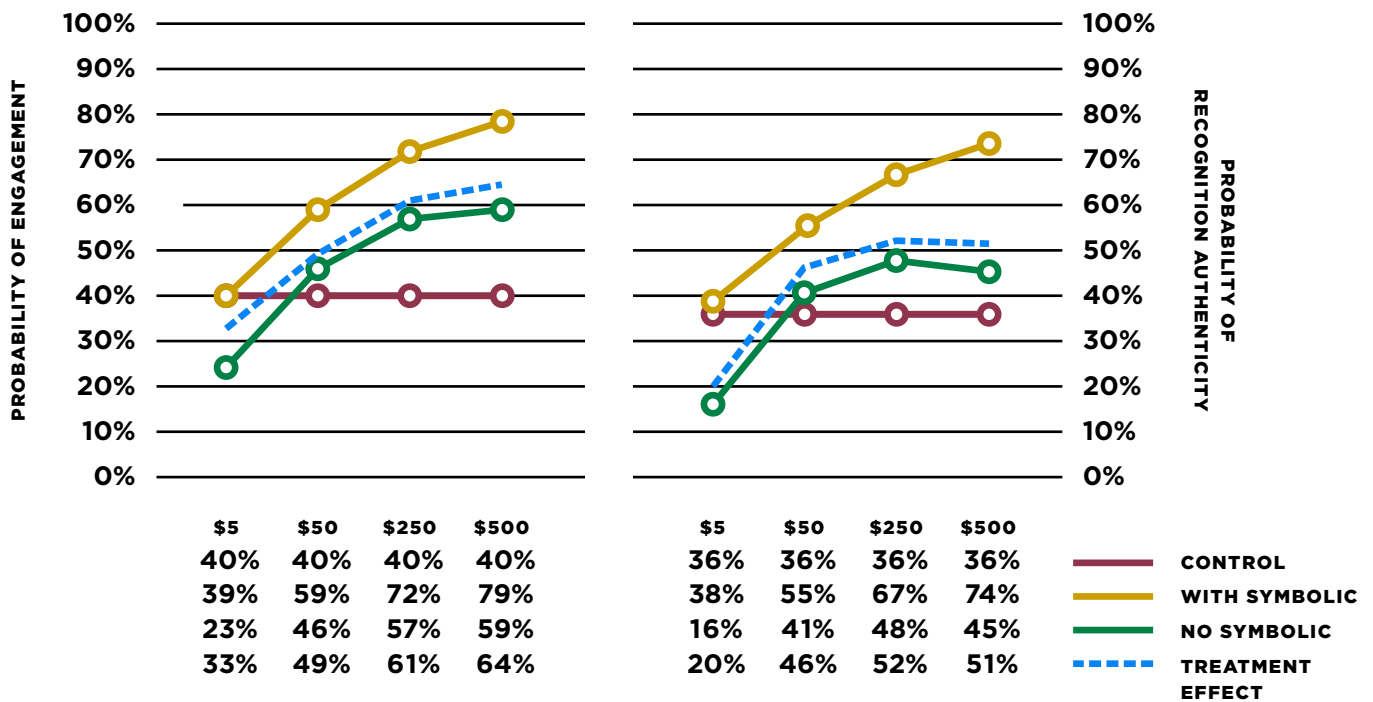
Employees who receive symbolic awards also have a higher overall probability of staying at their organization than those who don't. Note the odds of retention improve within the first year if employees receive symbolic awards.



SYMBOLIC AWARDS IMPACT COMPANY-WIDE RECOGNITION EVENTS

In the previous chapter, we explained our experiment with company-wide gifts to determine what type of recognition was effective and to what extent. We found that a tangible award worth \$5 given to everyone across the organization decreases engagement and recognition authenticity, while awards worth \$50, \$250, and \$500 had a statistically significant positive effect (although the improvement was smaller at \$500). The conclusion: companies should spend at least \$50 per employee on awards for company-wide recognition events.

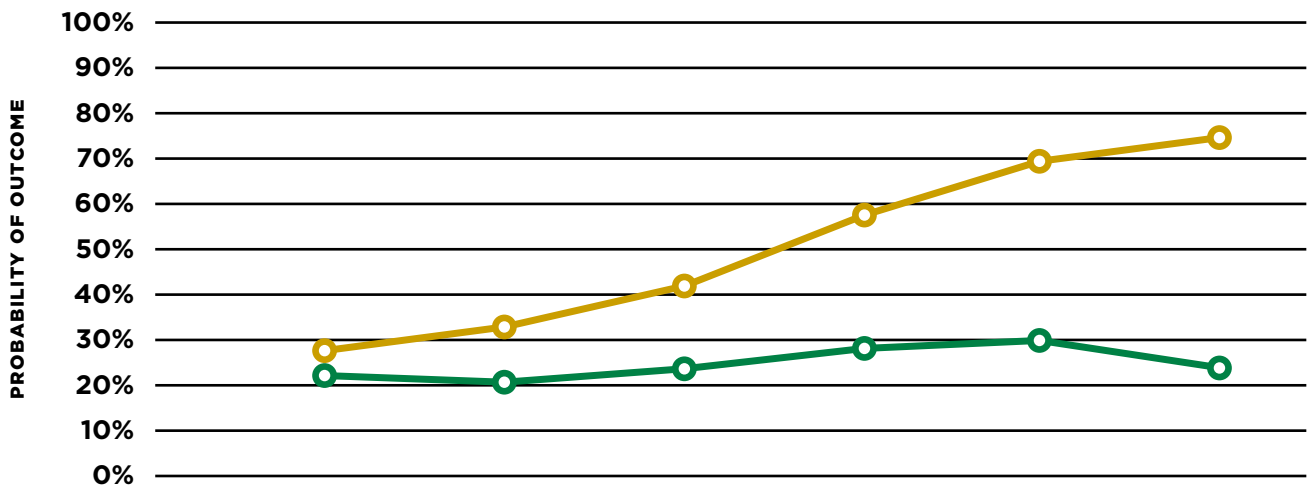
However, when the award includes a symbolic component, we found that a monetary value of \$5 no longer has a statistically significant negative effect, and symbolic awards worth \$250 and \$500 have an even larger positive impact on engagement. In other words, symbolism mitigates the negative impact of a low-cost award and amplifies the effect of higher dollar awards. And it had a similar impact on recognition authenticity as the effect skyrockets when symbolic awards have a value of \$250 and \$500.



Other academic research supports these findings, demonstrating the mere “presence of symbolic meaning adds value to the economic value of the award, which increases the reward’s overall perceived value,” and leads to better organizational outcomes.⁴

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SYMBOLIC AWARDS INCREASES OVER TIME

Our research this year also shows symbolic awards become more meaningful to employees the longer they work for an organization, possibly because they feel more connected to it over time. Furthermore, employees who work in organizations that give symbolic awards find more meaning in them than employees who work in organizations that do not.



MEANINGFULNESS OF SYMBOLICS:	6 MONTHS	1 YEAR	3 YEARS	5 YEARS	10 YEARS	15 YEARS
WITH SYMBOLIC	28%	33%	42%	57%	69%	74%
NO SYMBOLIC	22%	21%	24%	28%	30%	24%

Organizations that build meaning into symbolic awards through impactful recognition experiences can elevate the effectiveness of their entire recognition and reward strategy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To maximize the effectiveness of symbolic awards, organizations should make them part of employees' earliest experiences, ensure they have meaning, and present them thoughtfully.

1 Give symbolic awards early and often

Small investments that start at the beginning of an employee's time with an organization significantly impact engagement, great work, connection, and retention.

Early symbolic awards also help employees connect to the organization's culture and history sooner, enrich the entire employee experience, and lead to a sustained impact on culture and business results.

Our research shows career celebrations with symbolic awards are most effective when they are both early and frequent. Symbolic awards in standard years-of-service recognition (5, 10, 15 years, etc.) have a positive effect on cultural outcomes, but including them during onboarding, in the first 30 days, and at the 1- and 3-year celebrations is even more powerful:

OUTCOME	STANDARD AWARD LEVELS (5Y, 10Y, 15Y, 20Y+)	EARLY TENURE (ONBOARDING, 30 DAYS, 1Y, 3Y) + STANDARD
Thriving culture	+187%	+344%
Inclusion	+213%	+419%
Current recognition integration (RI)	+162%	+227%
Increase in revenue	+78%	+196%
Perceived organizational growth	+94%	+155%

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Symbolic awards are beneficial in all types of employee recognition, so don't hesitate to use them in everyday-effort, above-and-beyond, safety, and top-performer recognition, too.

Because symbolic awards don't need to be expensive to be impactful, organizations should consider using them more often. Making them collectible or creating various levels can also add meaning. And more types of symbolic awards, given more frequently, have the potential to increase in importance and appeal because they become a highly integrated part of the culture.

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a light-colored button-down shirt and dark pants, is looking down at a tablet computer she is holding with both hands. She is standing in front of a textured, light-colored wall. The entire image has a semi-transparent dark red overlay.

CASE STUDY—REINVENTING A HIGH-VALUE RECOGNITION EXPERIENCE

Ritchie Bros., the world's largest auctioneer of heavy equipment, wanted to motivate their salespeople to keep going even when things were tough. So they created a VIP experience to connect employees to their Founder's Award.

Working with O.C. Tanner, the company overhauled the David Ritchie Excellence Award, including what it means to win it. The new experience includes a congratulatory brochure, choice of a high-value gift, a spouse/partner award, and a personalized symbolic award. Winners also attend a memorable trip with company leaders.

As part of the luxury experience, the symbolic award helps employees feel valued, appreciated, and inspired to win again. It's now a tangible reminder to strive for excellence every day.⁵

2 Don't use generic trophies

Symbolic awards remind recipients of an accomplishment or quality that matters. In most cases, they're a tangible representation of a job well done. That meaning is what makes them symbolic—and valuable to the recipient—and it's exactly what a generic, off-the-rack trophy lacks.

Generic trophies, such as non-specific certificates, impersonal plaques, and universal objects, do not have nearly the positive effect on culture or business outcomes that symbolic awards do. Awards that build a connection to the organization substantially increase the likelihood of a thriving culture, feelings of inclusion, and even revenue and business growth.

OUTCOME	GENERIC TROPHY	SYMBOLIC AWARD
Thriving culture	—	+283%
Inclusion	—	+312%
Current RI	+13%	+201%
Increase in revenue	—	+87%
Perceived organizational growth	—	+93%

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The best symbolic awards are thoughtfully created tokens of your organization's history, culture, or achievements. This doesn't mean they need to be pricey or elaborate, but they should communicate a rich story in ways that feel personal.

So, carefully assess the symbolic awards you give employees. Take the time to think about your company's culture, history, stories, and milestones, and then connect your awards to them. Often, those aspects will provide the inspiration for the design and materials, as well as how employees might receive, use, and display their awards. All are important considerations.



CASE STUDY—FINDING MORE MEANING AND VALUE IN MILESTONES

BHP, one of the world's leading mining companies, chose to create thoughtful symbolic awards to honor its 80,000 employees for their years of service. To help with the process of designing and crafting these career milestone experiences, the company partnered with O.C. Tanner.

Each symbolic award accomplishes several culture-building goals, from celebrating the recipient to uniting the organization across various geographies to melding the company's past with its vision for the future.

These symbolic awards connect BHP's employees to purpose, accomplishment, and one another, helping to propel the organization's success with a work culture that thrives.⁶

3 Create a recognition experience to match

No matter how high the cost or quality of a symbolic award, it will never be as impactful if it's not part of a meaningful recognition experience. In other words, presentation counts. The most effective recognition moments are timely, specific, and personalized. They should include the employee's peers and leaders and connect the accomplishment(s) to your organization's purpose.

When employees receive a symbolic award without a recognition experience, our data show it can harm the organization's culture. Conversely, presenting the award as part of a meaningful recognition moment increases the probability of appreciation, belonging, culture, and business outcomes.

OUTCOME	NO EXPERIENCE	RECOGNITION EXPERIENCE
Thriving culture	-6%	+261%
Inclusion	-11%	+288%
Current RI	-14%	+187%
Increase in revenue	—	+63%
Perceived organizational growth	—	+61%

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And when symbolic awards are meaningful, used early, and part of great recognition experiences, the effects on organizational culture and outcomes are enormously positive:

OUTCOME	EARLY	SYMBOLIC	EXPERIENCE	ALL THREE
Thriving culture	+344%	+283%	+261%	+1,766%
Inclusion	+419%	+312%	+288%	+1,247%
Current RI	+227%	+201%	+187%	+914%
Increase in revenue	+196%	+87%	+63%	+294%
Perceived organizational growth	+155%	+93%	+61%	+212%

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HARNESSING SYMBOLS—KEY TAKEAWAYS

Symbolic awards amplify the impact of recognition experiences (and vice versa).

Symbolism can be impactful from the earliest periods of employment at an organization.

A symbolic award is most effective when paired with a meaningful recognition moment.

All types of recognition, not just career milestones, benefit from symbolic awards.

Harnessing Symbols Sources

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5. O.C. Tanner Client Story
6. O.C. Tanner Client Story

Rise of the Generalist



The post-pandemic workplace is fluid, unsure, and ideal for workers with a breadth of knowledge and skills.



20x

**INCREASED ODDS THAT AN ORGANIZATION
WILL THRIVE WHEN GENERALISTS INNOVATE TO
OVERCOME OBSTACLES**

Most organizations need employees with knowledge, skills, and capabilities that span multiple disciplines. These people—widely known as generalists—bring to their work a broad range of experience, training, and thinking that make them well-suited to tackle the challenges of rapidly evolving workplaces. Yet despite the demand for generalists, these employees often feel unsupported in their development, unrecognized for their contributions, and disconnected from their workplace community. Organizations can help generalists by giving them chances to apply their strengths, opportunities to expand their skills, and integrated recognition that deepens their connection to purpose, accomplishment, and one another.

INTRODUCTION

To quote the journalist and author David Epstein, our current work environments are “wicked domains.”

By this he means they contain ambiguous situations without clear or complete guidelines.¹ There may or may not be repetitive patterns to learn from, and feedback can be delayed, inaccurate, or both. Success is difficult and the rules change rapidly. It’s the difference between playing a game of chess and predicting the winner of a Formula One race. The only certain thing in a wicked domain is uncertainty.

Since the pandemic, uncertainty has saturated supply chains, healthcare, and the transportation industry. Workers everywhere have reset their expectations of flexibility, autonomy, and equity. And the Great Resignation has left organizations scrambling and scratching their heads as once loyal employees say goodbye in record numbers.

Fortunately, a wicked domain is some of the most fertile ground for innovation. It forces us to be creative, try new ways of doing things, take risks, embrace the unknown, and look beyond our histories for inspiration. The wicked domain of the current workplace is pushing organizations to change how they retain, attract, engage, grow, and connect employees.

But adapting to workplace changes requires more than adjusting locations or schedules. Organizations now need employees who are comfortable operating in ambiguity. Workers who have knowledge, skills, and capabilities across several different environments. People who have a breadth of experience, diversity in training, and interdisciplinary thinking. Employees known as generalists.

In the past, generalists played a secondary role, filling skills gaps not covered by specialists (employees who focus on a specific area or single skillset for years). An overwhelming majority (87%) of companies report they have skills gaps now or expect to have gaps within the next five years.² And this makes generalists extremely valuable.

To be clear, generalists are not dabblers or jacks of all trades. They bring a unique combination of abilities and expertise that makes them ideally suited to tackle the insecurity of the post-pandemic workplace. They see the bigger picture and connect diverse ideas in their work communities to find new solutions. They are curious, imaginative, and willing to experiment. Because of this, generalists are better equipped to handle the wicked horizon and even lead in these times of change. In fact, Harvard Business Review found over 90% of 17,000 CEOs they studied had general, not specialized, management experience.³

Now's the time for generalists to shine.

“What we used to think of as traditional work—very specific location, very specific ways of working together, very well-defined work metrics—those are changing.”

—JAVIER HERNANDEZ, RESEARCHER, MICROSOFT

GENERALISTS ARE ALREADY ADDING VALUE TO THE ORGANIZATION

In our research, 52% of employees consider themselves to be generalists. Additionally, we found generalists in all functional areas—from sales to supply chain, customer service to manufacturing and HR—and in all levels of the organization.

A few numbers illustrate the abundance and demand:

50% of employees said their organization favors employees with a broad range of skills across multiple disciplines

59% of employees said their organization employs more generalists than specialists

63% of employees said their organization hired more generalists than specialists in the past year

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Generalists deliver on expectations by bringing a variety of specific skills to the workplace that differentiate them from specialists. Furthermore, our research identified seven distinctive attitudinal and behavioral approaches to work that comprise our Generalist Index.



Figure 6. GENERALIST INDEX
 Skills and behaviors that make generalists an invaluable part of a thriving workplace community.

The ever-accelerating pace of change in business means organizations need employees who are comfortable navigating uncertainty and who solve problems creatively. Generalists exemplify both.

Of course, not every generalist excels at every skill or behavior. However, our research shows more than half of them (51%) thrive in ambiguity, roughly two thirds (65%) cope well in highly stressful situations, and nearly three fourths (71%) prefer projects that challenge their skills and thinking.

In terms of creative problem solving, another two thirds (65%) of generalists excel at tasks that require connecting new ideas and working across disciplines, and most (59%) challenge the accepted ways of doing things often.

When generalists are given work and projects that push their thinking, it increases the probability of:

- **Great work by 804%**
- **Engagement by 289%**
- **Inclusion by 300%**

It also dramatically impacts business outcomes. When generalists innovate to overcome obstacles, it increases the odds of:

- **Increased revenue over the past year by 114%**
- **Increased employee desire to be with their company in one year by 539%**
- **An organization that will thrive by 26x**

“A rapidly changing, wicked world demands conceptual reasoning skills that can connect new ideas and work across contexts.”

—DAVID EPSTEIN, AUTHOR AND JOURNALIST

A woman with blonde hair and a man with short brown hair are looking at a tablet together. The woman is on the left, wearing a light-colored top and dark pants. The man is on the right, wearing a denim shirt. They are both smiling and appear to be in a collaborative work environment. The background is slightly blurred, showing what looks like a modern office or meeting space.

CASE STUDY—HIRING FOR CHANGE

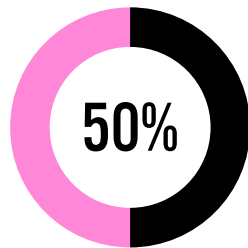
Technology companies often hire IT specialists with specific skills to fit defined roles. But Google hires problem solvers who have a “general cognitive ability” over other candidates with deeper role-related knowledge and skills. Lisa Stern Hayes, a recruiter at Google, explains:

“Think about how quickly Google evolves,” she said. “If you just hire someone to do one specific job, but then our company needs change, we need to be rest assured that the person is going to find something else to do at Google. That comes back to hiring smart generalists.”⁴

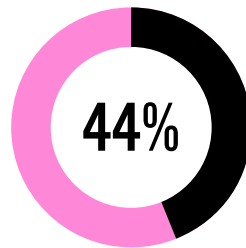
Hiring generalists enables Google to be agile and adaptable in their constantly evolving industry.

DESPITE THE DEMAND FOR GENERALISTS, MOST FEEL UNSUPPORTED AND DISCONNECTED FROM THEIR WORK COMMUNITY

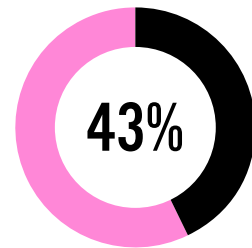
The increase in demand for generalists, combined with challenging work in the wicked workplace, has led to 75% of generalists feeling burned out. Regardless of all the value they bring to the workplace, they aren't always supported or appreciated by their organizations:



Feel their contributions are overlooked



Rate their employee experience positively



Feel unsupported in their work

They're also less likely than specialists to feel positive about the six Talent Magnets (which make an organization's culture attractive to talent):

TALENT MAGNET	GENERALIST	SPECIALIST
Purpose	47%	52%
Opportunity	44%	51%
Success	39%	43%
Appreciation	43%	50%
Leadership	45%	50%
Wellbeing	49%	55%

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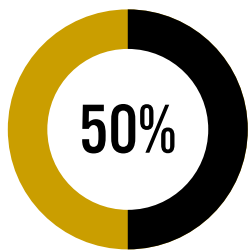
This all leads to the question: Why don't generalists feel more positive and connected to their organizations?

The unfortunate but logical answer is that the value employers place in generalists' skills is not reflected in career development and promotions. Traditional career paths at most workplaces still favor specialists.

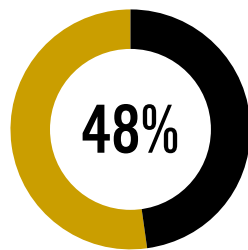
More than half (56%) of generalists believe there is no clear career path for them, with 35% feeling excluded from promotions. Nearly half (48%) say specialists move up the career ladder faster. Some generalists feel it's easier to see the goals and accomplishments of specialists, because their roles are more defined and specific.

Generalists may need new titles or even permission to define their roles more broadly, and this can be difficult for organizations to accept. To properly clarify the role of generalists requires a more holistic re-evaluation of talent acquisition, career development, and even norms of working.

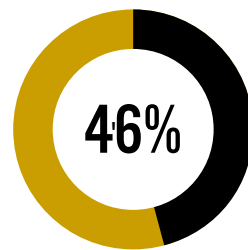
Furthermore, many generalists don't feel appreciated for their work and often have poor recognition experiences at their organizations. Recognition is not part of their everyday employee experience or given in meaningful ways.



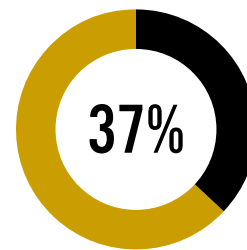
Recognition is a part of everyday culture



Recognition is rarely received from peers



Recognition is an empty gesture



Recognition received in an uncomfortable way

It's worth noting that when employees don't feel connected to their workplace communities, the likelihood of several important outcomes decreases:

- **Great work falls 91%**
- **Sense of belonging drops 88%**
- **Desire to stay with the company for another year falls 82%**

Organizations that fail to support, appreciate, and connect generalists risk losing talent with skills and perspectives that are more valuable than ever.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Companies can help their generalist employees thrive by providing opportunities for growth, chances to use their strengths, and integrated recognition.

1 Provide opportunities for generalists to grow

Generalists want to develop their skills and advance in their careers as far and as fast as other employees.

Set goals for generalists and highlight their achievements. Give them modern leaders who will mentor and connect them to opportunities such as special projects that allow them to use their range of skills.

The following chart details the increased probability of four positive outcomes when organizations and leaders take such actions:

	GREAT WORK	ENGAGEMENT	INCLUSION
Leaders clearly communicate what success looks like	+171%	+235%	+242%
Leaders are strong advocates for development	+183%	+242%	+260%
Organization provides career advancement opportunities for everyone	+198%	+399%	+350%
Leaders give opportunities to work on special projects	+132%	+113%	+111%

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A photograph of a man with a shaved head, smiling broadly, wearing a white button-down shirt and a black lanyard. He is sitting in an audience, with his hands clasped in front of him. The background is blurred, showing other people in the audience. The entire image has a warm, orange-red color cast.

CASE STUDY—DIVERSIFYING EARLY PAYS BIG DIVIDENDS

Hyde Park Angels, a leading early-stage investment company, takes a 70/30 approach to working and learning in its intern and fellowship programs. That means 70% of participants' time is spent on projects, while 30% is spent in informational meetings, educational workshops, reading books, and assisting in a wide variety of other areas.

With these opportunities for learning and development beyond a specific skill set, the company has experienced greater performance, engagement, and innovation.⁵



CASE STUDY—CHANGING THE GAME

Gunpei Yokoi, inventor of the Nintendo Game Boy, wasn't a strong electrical engineer with up-to-the-minute technology skills.

Instead, he worked as a machine maintenance worker at the company (which made playing cards at the time) and used his diverse strengths to combine various technologies in new ways.

His creativity, lateral thinking, and broader knowledge of technology led him to devise the Game Boy, which quickly became an international success.⁶

2 Connect generalists to their strengths

Generalists, like all employees, thrive when they have a chance to do what they do best. When leaders understand the unique talents and experience their generalist employees bring to work, they can help them capitalize on those skills, find more success, and build stronger connections.

Start by asking generalist employees what their strengths are and give them projects that allow them to use those skills. Connect them with other departments or peers who can leverage their strengths. When generalists have projects that challenge them, connect new ideas, and work across disciplines, their probability of producing great work increases 322%. They're also 98% more likely to feel connected to teams, 102% more likely to feel connected to leaders, and 110% more likely to feel connected to their organization.

However, for generalists to maximize their strengths, organizations must embrace a holistic and adaptable approach to overall business success. Leaders must be willing to empower generalists to take uncertain paths to deliver results and, at times, be willing to let a generalist thrive in another team or department for the sake of their personal fulfillment and the company's greater interest.

“Study the science of art. Study the art of science. Develop your senses—especially learn how to see. Realize that everything connects to everything else.”

—LEONARDO DA VINCI, INVENTOR AND ARTIST

3 Prioritize employee recognition

Recognition has a powerful impact on generalists, even more than for specialists. But recognition must be personalized and frequent to be effective.

Ensure recognition is built into the everyday employee experience. Praise people when they connect ideas, resources, and each other across your organization. Provide a variety of tools and training for employees to give recognition often and make it personal.

Recognition should come from leaders, peers, and even colleagues in other departments. It should apply to a variety of accomplishments. And when it's integrated—meaning it's personalized, frequent, and part of the everyday culture—the data show a magnified impact on the great work, engagement, inclusion, and burnout of generalists:

OUTCOME	EVERYDAY CULTURE OF RECOGNITION	PERSONALIZED RECOGNITION	FREQUENT RECOGNITION (EVERY 30 DAYS)	INTEGRATED RECOGNITION (EVERYDAY, PERSONALIZED, AND FREQUENT)
Great work	+121%	+136%	+53%	+277%
Engagement	+152%	+131%	+81%	+392%
Inclusion	+141%	+137%	+69%	+384%
Burnout	-24%	-25%	-19%	-37%

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Integrated recognition also increases the odds of a positive employee experience and a thriving workplace culture by 391% and 646%, respectively.



CASE STUDY—WHERE THE RECOGNITION MEETS THE ROAD

CEAT, one of India's leading tire manufacturers with global sales, uses recognition and rewards to create better employee experiences and achieve its vision and purpose.

The company's recognition program, "CHAMP," includes eCards, spot awards, and quarterly awards for performance. And it encourages innovation and teamwork across functions, ultimately helping all employees—especially generalists—do their best work. "In all of the company's performance, financial metrics, and efficiency parameters, you can see the reflection of CHAMP," says Dilip Modak, Senior Vice President of Manufacturing.⁷

RISE OF THE GENERALIST—KEY TAKEAWAYS

The post-pandemic workplace is an evolving, uncertain environment that needs employees with interdisciplinary training and experience.

Generalists have the broad range of skills and perspectives to innovate and lead in the constantly changing workplace.

Despite their valued skills, most generalists feel unsupported and disconnected at work.

Generalists require growth opportunities and integrated recognition to help them thrive.

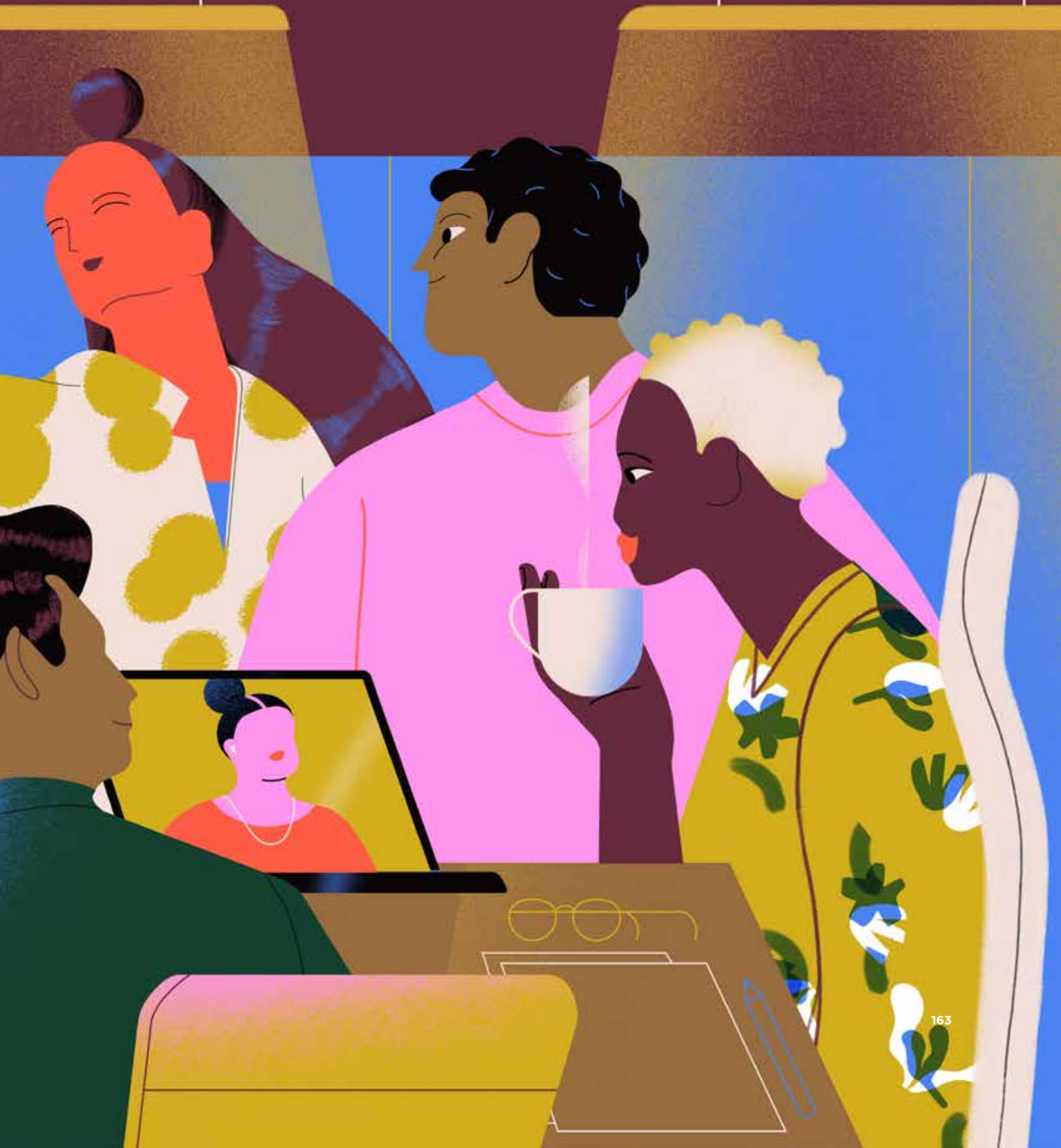
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Conclusion



Strengthening culture and community may be a marathon, but now is not the time to slow down.



CONCLUSION

The most difficult periods of the pandemic are likely behind us, and many organizations and HR leaders have reasons to feel proud. They orchestrated a huge pivot to remote and hybrid work, social distancing, and enhanced health and safety procedures. They also retooled recruiting and retention, managed a rapidly evolving workplace, advised and consoled fearful employees, and worked tirelessly to maintain connection and culture when the horizon was cloudy at best.

As always, most of the major changes in the workplace landed on the shoulders of HR. And just as predictably, HR professionals did everything they could to put their employees first.

But even if the worst is over, there's still plenty of work ahead.

We hope the insights from this year's Global Culture Report will fuel the momentum for stronger connection, belonging, and community in the future. As we interpret our research and draw conclusions, a few points stand out:

1. Leaders need support

We've consistently seen over the past few years how modern leaders develop teams and contribute to cultures that thrive. They weather the storms and nurture employees who are more inspired, engaged, and productive. Organizations with modern leaders will find it easier to achieve and sustain strong work communities. However, as this year's study demonstrates, managers of all levels need support, connection, and appreciation to deliver modern leadership.

2. Work is evolving (even faster)

Ever since the Industrial Revolution ended nearly 200 years ago, numerous work standards have come and gone. Annual performance reviews, the 9-to-5 workday, and traditional leadership practices are all quickly becoming history, too. Advancing technologies have radically changed how and where work is done and show no sign of slowing. Organizations that cling to outdated work principles and models will continue to fall behind because success now depends on flexibility, employee autonomy, recognition, connection, and meaningful work.

3. The importance of belonging, acceptance, and inclusion

Employees all want to belong in their workplace communities. But helping people feel they are in the right place and truly necessary to their team is even more challenging in segmented environments where employees work virtually or in different offices. Inclusion and connection strategies must be thoughtful and purposeful. Generalists, for example, who've previously questioned their roles and worth, can find more belonging and acceptance if organizations give them the opportunities and support to shine.

4. Never underestimate appreciation

Personal compromises and complacency are waning as fulfillment is quickly becoming the new standard for employees. A large part of fulfillment is the belief that what you do serves a bigger, valuable purpose. Another is that you make a difference. And nothing establishes and reinforces those convictions better than the genuine appreciation found in well-executed employee recognition. Organizations should use and improve the recognition tools and programs they already have, start recognizing employees sooner (specifically, on day one), and create workplace cultures of appreciation by thoroughly integrating recognition. Symbolic awards that connect employees to their work and culture can also have a large, lasting impact.

So much of the change we see happening around the world is positive and exciting. And one of the most encouraging things we witnessed during the last year is the strength of HR professionals—both the depth of their resilience and their readiness to adapt.

We wish you every success as you equip yourselves with insights, find leaders to join you on your journey, and create a vibrant employee community and a workplace culture that thrives.

METHODOLOGY

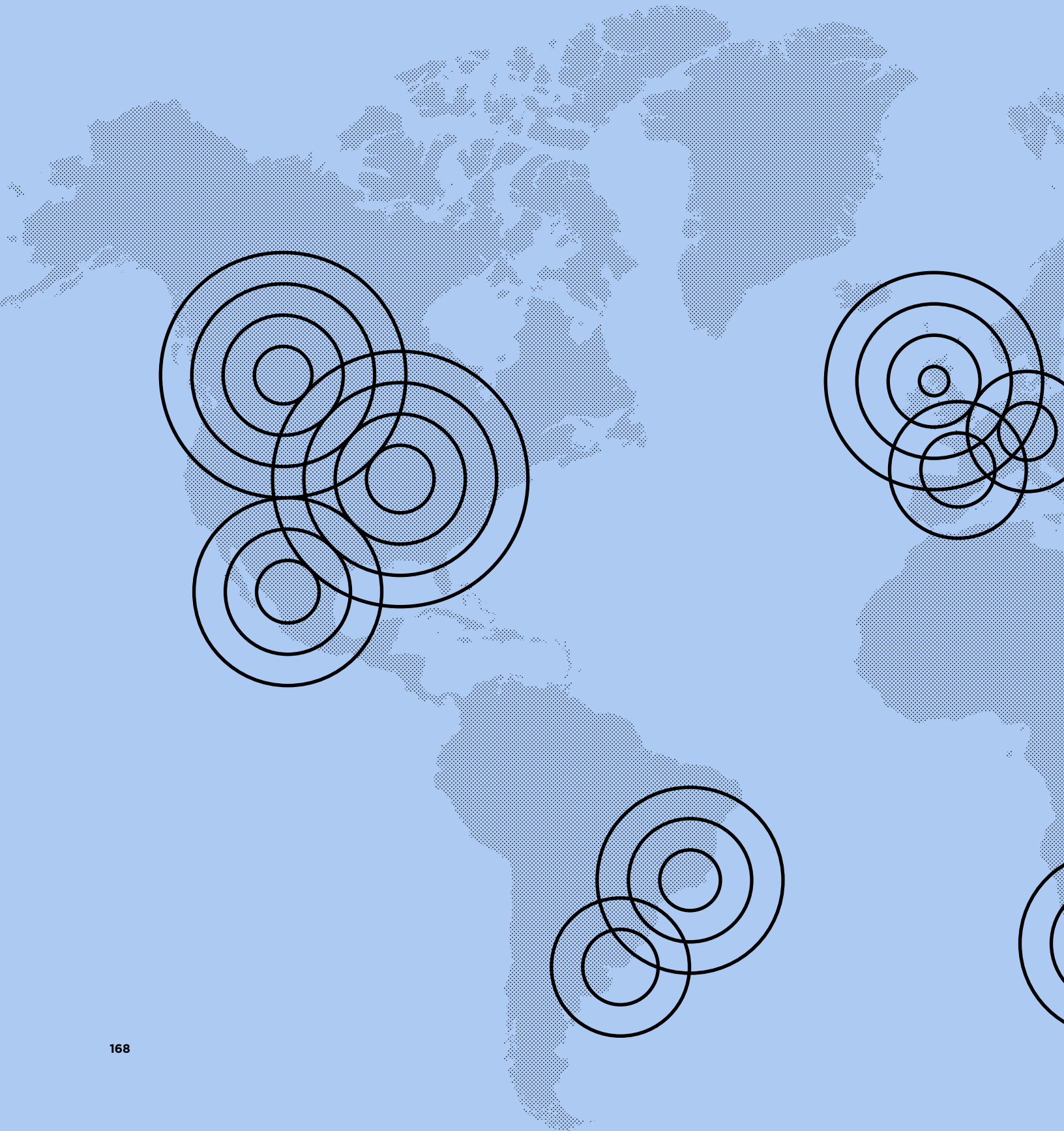
The O.C. Tanner Institute uses multiple research methods to support the Global Culture Report, including interviews, focus groups, cross-sectional surveys, and a longitudinal survey.

Qualitative findings came from 10 focus groups and 81 interviews among employees and leaders of larger organizations. The groups and interviews were held throughout 2021 and 2022, each representing various types of employers, including both private and public entities.

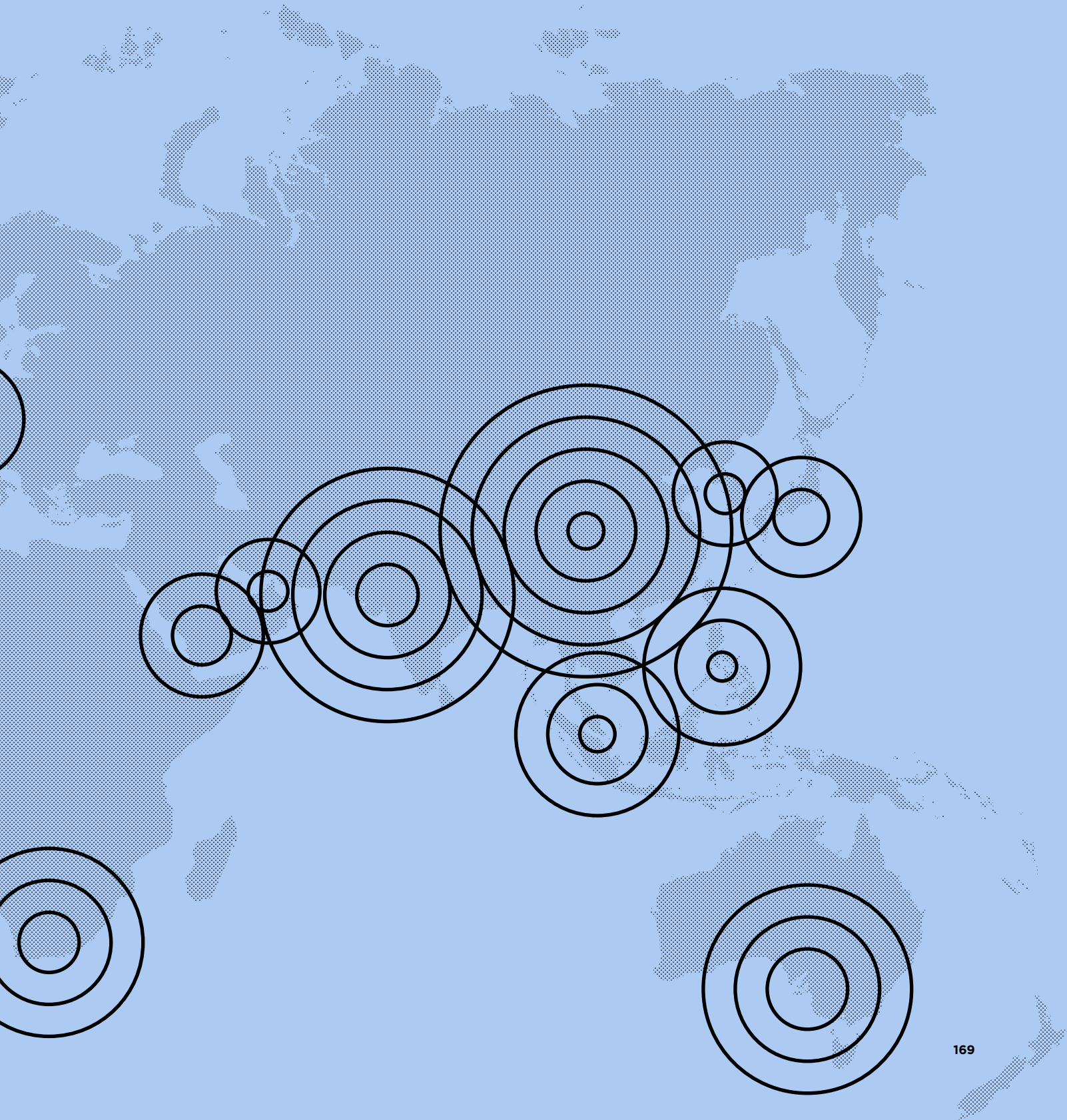
Quantitative findings came from online survey interviews administered to employees across Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The total sample size was 36,441 workers at companies with 500+ employees. The O.C. Tanner Institute collected and analyzed all survey data. This sample is sufficient to generate meaningful conclusions about the cultures of organizations in the included countries. However, because the study does not include population data, results are subject to statistical errors customarily associated with sample-based information.

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from the O.C. Tanner Institute.

Global Appendix



Talent Magnet index scores and workplace culture outcomes across the world.



SCORECARD

Average scores in five key areas organizations should focus on in the next year

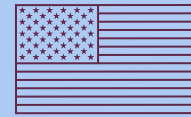
73 COMMUNITY

75 FULFILLMENT

54 GENERALIST

58 ATTRITION LIKELIHOOD

43 eNPS



70%

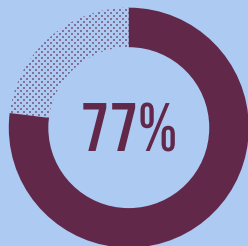
of employees in the United States regularly produce great work

76%

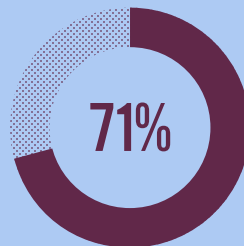
of employees in the United States are engaged

USA

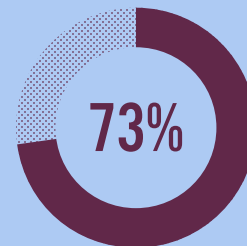
The six Talent Magnets continue to provide a clear window into the state of workplace cultures around the world. Below are the scores specific to the United States:



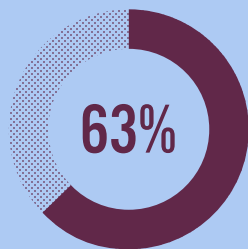
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF PURPOSE



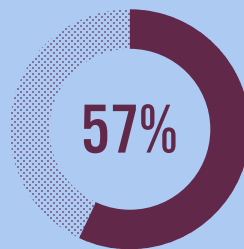
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF OPPORTUNITY



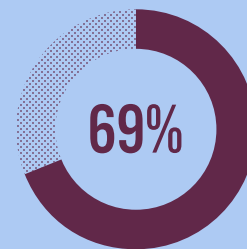
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF SUCCESS



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF APPRECIATION



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF WELLBEING



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF LEADERSHIP

SCORECARD

Average scores in five key areas organizations should focus on in the next year

73 COMMUNITY

75 FULFILLMENT

47 GENERALIST

61 ATTRITION LIKELIHOOD

41 eNPS



71%

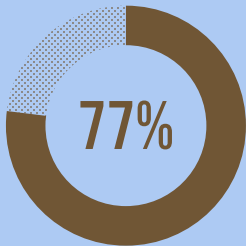
of employees in Canada regularly produce great work

76%

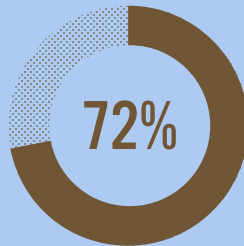
of employees in Canada are engaged

The six Talent Magnets continue to provide a clear window into the state of workplace cultures around the world. Below are the scores specific to Canada:

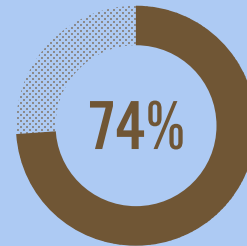
CAN



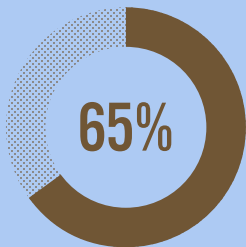
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF PURPOSE



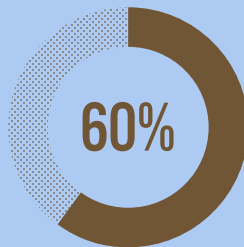
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF OPPORTUNITY



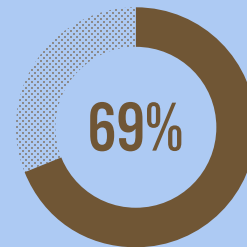
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF SUCCESS



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF APPRECIATION



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF WELLBEING



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF LEADERSHIP

SCORECARD

Average scores in five key areas organizations should focus on in the next year

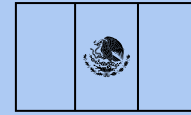
70 COMMUNITY

78 FULFILLMENT

46 GENERALIST

58 ATTRITION LIKELIHOOD

24 eNPS



72%

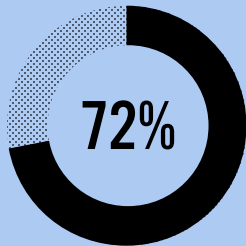
of employees in Mexico regularly produce great work

76%

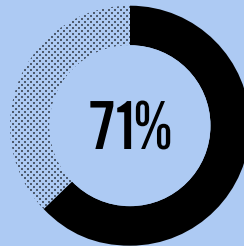
of employees in Mexico are engaged

MEX

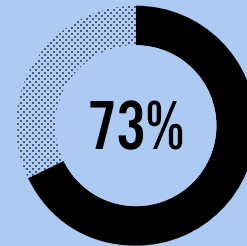
The six Talent Magnets continue to provide a clear window into the state of workplace cultures around the world. Below are the scores specific to Mexico:



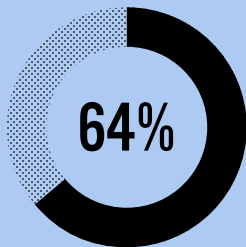
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF PURPOSE



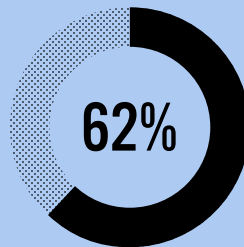
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF OPPORTUNITY



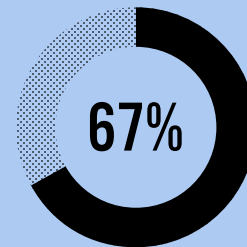
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF SUCCESS



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF APPRECIATION



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF WELLBEING



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF LEADERSHIP

SCORECARD

Average scores in five key areas organizations should focus on in the next year

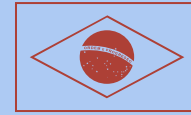
73 COMMUNITY

77 FULFILLMENT

46 GENERALIST

55 ATTRITION LIKELIHOOD

37 eNPS



73%

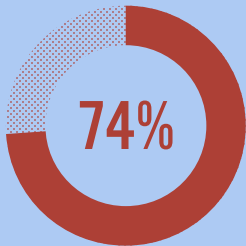
of employees in Brazil regularly produce great work

76%

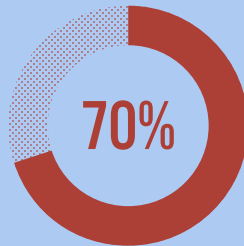
of employees in Brazil are engaged

The six Talent Magnets continue to provide a clear window into the state of workplace cultures around the world. Below are the scores specific to Brazil:

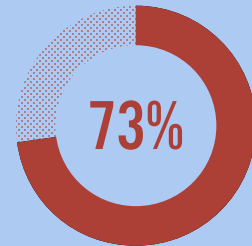
BRA



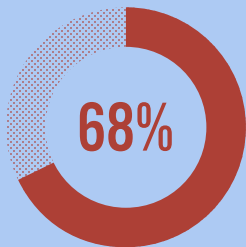
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF PURPOSE



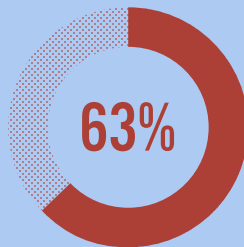
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF OPPORTUNITY



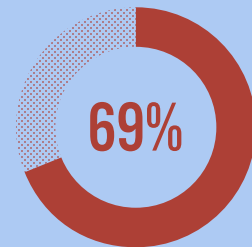
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF SUCCESS



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF APPRECIATION



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF WELLBEING



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF LEADERSHIP

SCORECARD

Average scores in five key areas organizations should focus on in the next year

63 COMMUNITY

72 FULFILLMENT

47 GENERALIST

54 ATTRITION LIKELIHOOD

44 eNPS

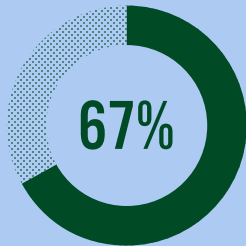


66%
of employees in Argentina regularly produce great work

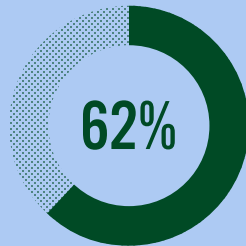
67%
of employees in Argentina are engaged

ARG

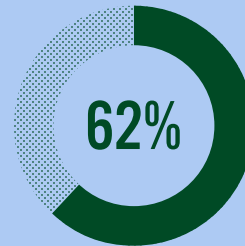
The six Talent Magnets continue to provide a clear window into the state of workplace cultures around the world. Below are the scores specific to Argentina:



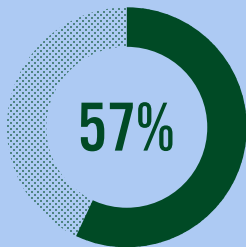
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF PURPOSE



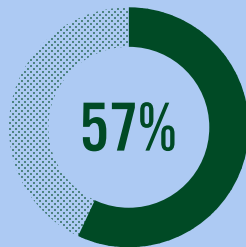
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF OPPORTUNITY



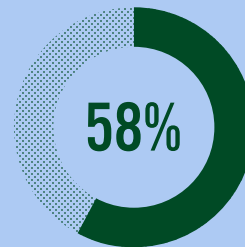
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF SUCCESS



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF APPRECIATION



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF WELLBEING



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF LEADERSHIP

SCORECARD

Average scores in five key areas organizations should focus on in the next year

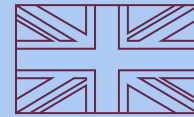
63 COMMUNITY

65 FULFILLMENT

57 GENERALIST

51 ATTRITION LIKELIHOOD

38 eNPS



63%

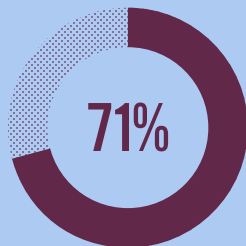
of employees in the United Kingdom regularly produce great work

70%

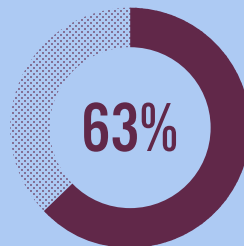
of employees in the United Kingdom are engaged

The six Talent Magnets continue to provide a clear window into the state of workplace cultures around the world. Below are the scores specific to the United Kingdom:

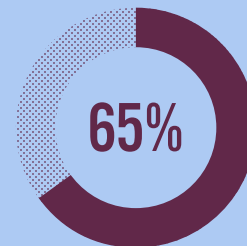
GBR



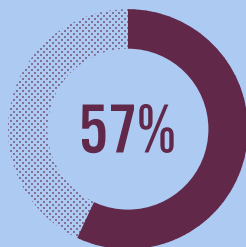
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF PURPOSE



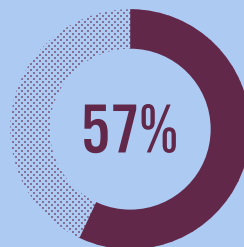
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF OPPORTUNITY



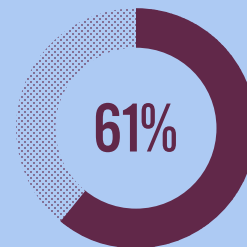
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF SUCCESS



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF APPRECIATION



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF WELLBEING



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF LEADERSHIP

FRANCE

SCORECARD

Average scores in five key areas organizations should focus on in the next year

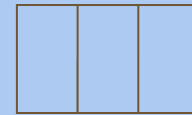
59 COMMUNITY

64 FULFILLMENT

37 GENERALIST

49 ATTRITION LIKELIHOOD

11 eNPS



59%

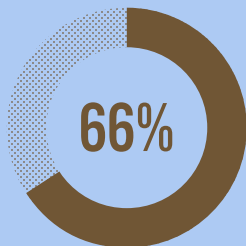
of employees in France regularly produce great work

65%

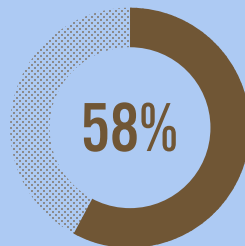
of employees in France are engaged

FRA

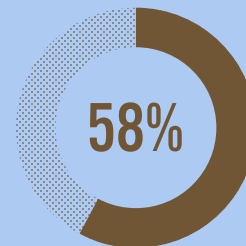
The six Talent Magnets continue to provide a clear window into the state of workplace cultures around the world. Below are the scores specific to France:



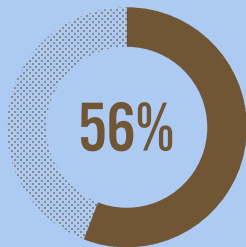
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF PURPOSE



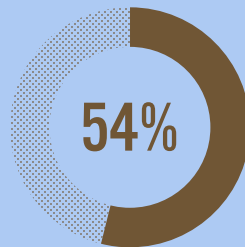
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF OPPORTUNITY



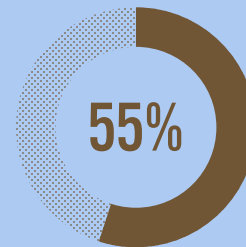
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF SUCCESS



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF APPRECIATION



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF WELLBEING



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF LEADERSHIP

SCORECARD

Average scores in five key areas organizations should focus on in the next year

63 COMMUNITY

69 FULFILLMENT

51 GENERALIST

50 ATTRITION LIKELIHOOD

07 eNPS



61%

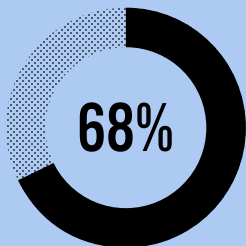
of employees in Germany regularly produce great work

68%

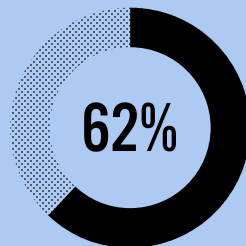
of employees in Germany are engaged

The six Talent Magnets continue to provide a clear window into the state of workplace cultures around the world. Below are the scores specific to Germany:

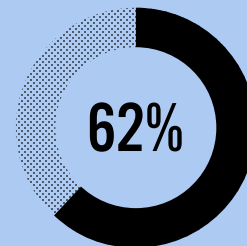
DEU



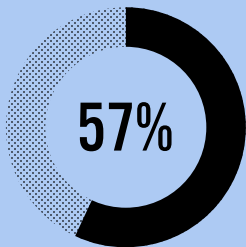
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF PURPOSE



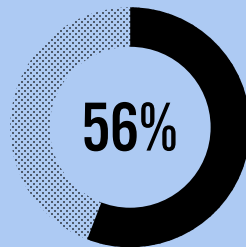
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF OPPORTUNITY



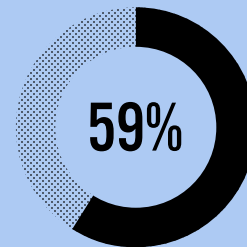
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF SUCCESS



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF APPRECIATION



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF WELLBEING



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF LEADERSHIP

SCORECARD

Average scores in five key areas organizations should focus on in the next year

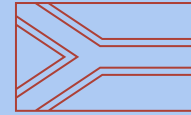
70 COMMUNITY

71 FULFILLMENT

54 GENERALIST

55 ATTRITION LIKELIHOOD

32 eNPS



75%

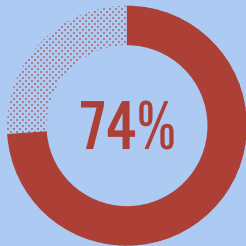
of employees in South Africa regularly produce great work

76%

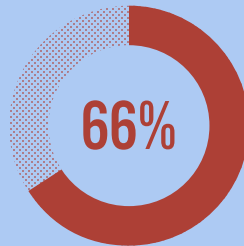
of employees in South Africa are engaged

ZAF

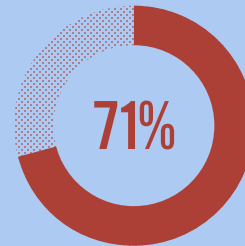
The six Talent Magnets continue to provide a clear window into the state of workplace cultures around the world. Below are the scores specific to South Africa:



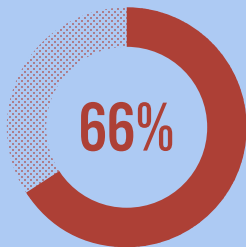
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF PURPOSE



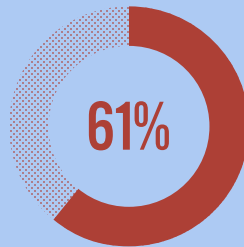
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF OPPORTUNITY



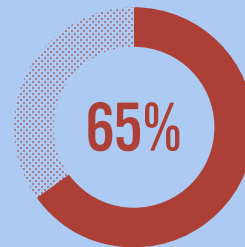
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF SUCCESS



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF APPRECIATION



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF WELLBEING



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF LEADERSHIP

SCORECARD

Average scores in five key areas organizations should focus on in the next year

77 COMMUNITY

80 FULFILLMENT

34 GENERALIST

66 ATTRITION LIKELIHOOD

44 eNPS



76%

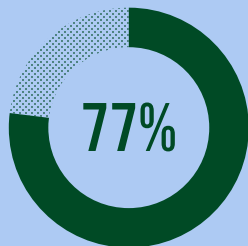
of employees in Saudi Arabia regularly produce great work

78%

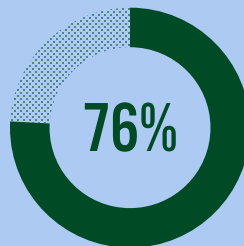
of employees in Saudi Arabia are engaged

The six Talent Magnets continue to provide a clear window into the state of workplace cultures around the world. Below are the scores specific to Saudi Arabia:

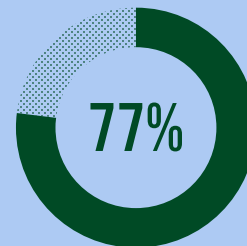
SAU



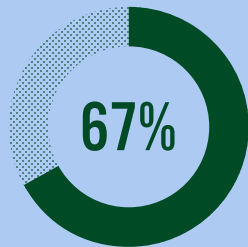
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF PURPOSE



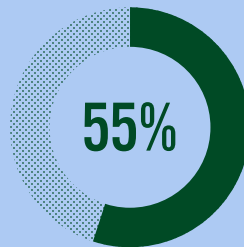
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF OPPORTUNITY



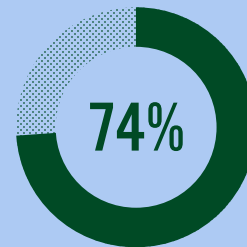
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF SUCCESS



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF APPRECIATION



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF WELLBEING



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF LEADERSHIP

SCORECARD

Average scores in five key areas organizations should focus on in the next year

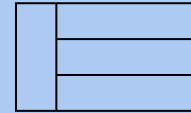
73 COMMUNITY

75 FULFILLMENT

49 GENERALIST

63 ATTRITION LIKELIHOOD

38 eNPS



74%

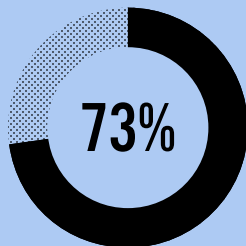
of employees in the UAE regularly produce great work

75%

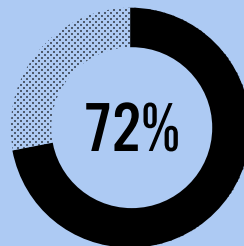
of employees in the UAE are engaged

ARE

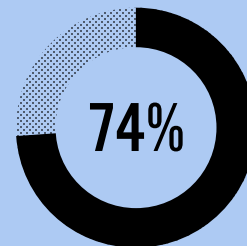
The six Talent Magnets continue to provide a clear window into the state of workplace cultures around the world. Below are the scores specific to the United Arab Emirates:



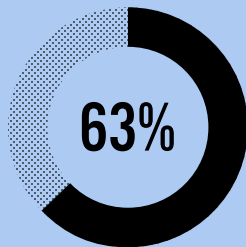
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF PURPOSE



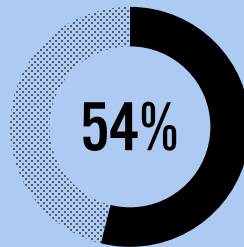
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF OPPORTUNITY



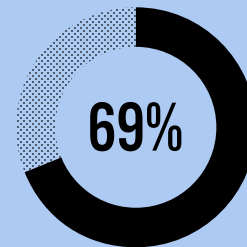
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF SUCCESS



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF APPRECIATION



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF WELLBEING



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF LEADERSHIP

INDIA

SCORECARD

Average scores in five key areas organizations should focus on in the next year

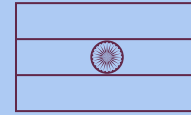
83 COMMUNITY

84 FULFILLMENT

52 GENERALIST

72 ATTRITION LIKELIHOOD

61 eNPS



81%

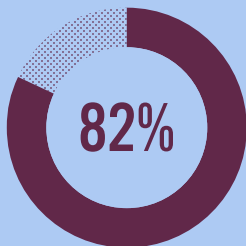
of employees in India regularly produce great work

83%

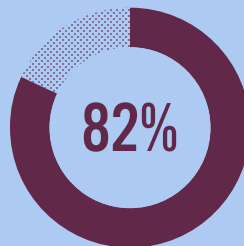
of employees in India are engaged

The six Talent Magnets continue to provide a clear window into the state of workplace cultures around the world. Below are the scores specific to India:

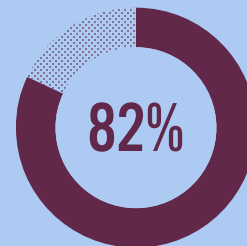
IND



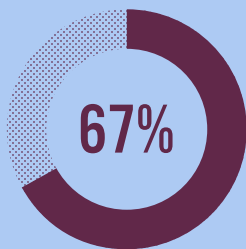
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF PURPOSE



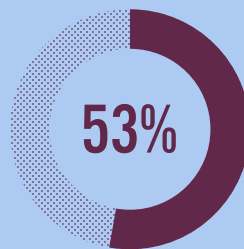
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF OPPORTUNITY



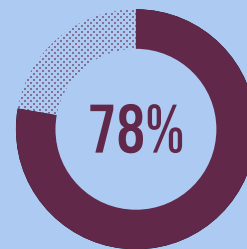
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF SUCCESS



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF APPRECIATION



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF WELLBEING



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF LEADERSHIP

SCORECARD

Average scores in five key areas organizations should focus on in the next year

77 COMMUNITY

80 FULFILLMENT

64 GENERALIST

65 ATTRITION LIKELIHOOD

09 eNPS



76%

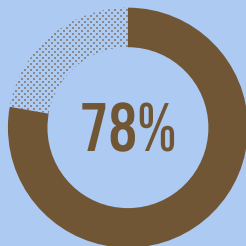
of employees in China regularly produce great work

77%

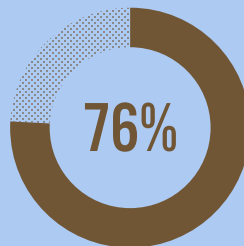
of employees in China are engaged

CHN

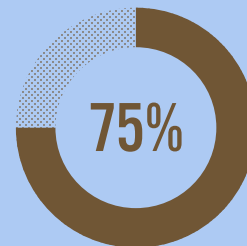
The six Talent Magnets continue to provide a clear window into the state of workplace cultures around the world. Below are the scores specific to China:



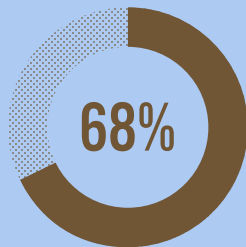
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF PURPOSE



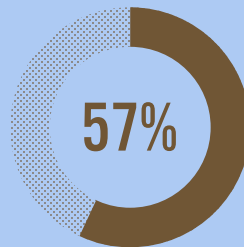
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF OPPORTUNITY



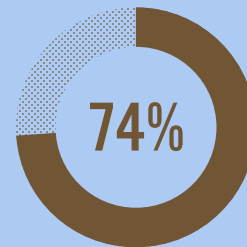
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF SUCCESS



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF APPRECIATION



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF WELLBEING



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF LEADERSHIP

SCORECARD

Average scores in five key areas organizations should focus on in the next year

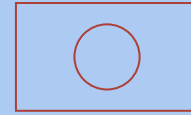
54 COMMUNITY

59 FULFILLMENT

56 GENERALIST

54 ATTRITION LIKELIHOOD

03 eNPS



57%

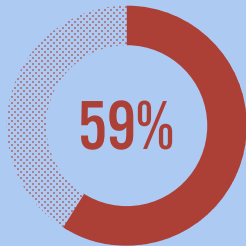
of employees in Japan regularly produce great work

55%

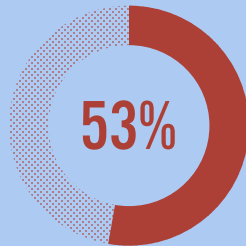
of employees in Japan are engaged

The six Talent Magnets continue to provide a clear window into the state of workplace cultures around the world. Below are the scores specific to Japan:

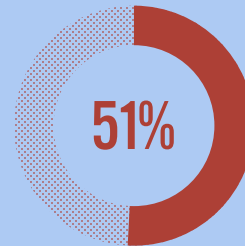
JPN



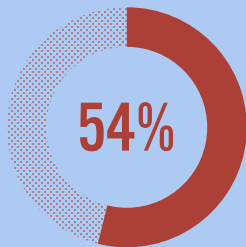
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF PURPOSE



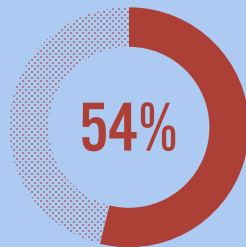
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF OPPORTUNITY



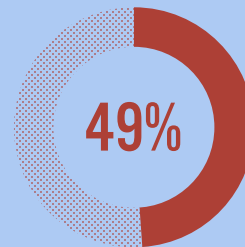
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF SUCCESS



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF APPRECIATION



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF WELLBEING



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF LEADERSHIP

SCORECARD

Average scores in five key areas organizations should focus on in the next year

61 COMMUNITY

67 FULFILLMENT

49 GENERALIST

56 ATTRITION LIKELIHOOD

25 eNPS



62%

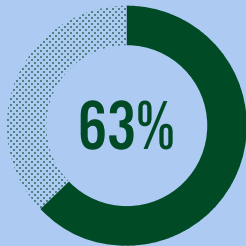
of employees in South Korea regularly produce great work

62%

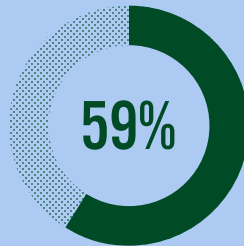
of employees in South Korea are engaged

KOR

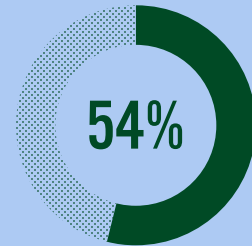
The six Talent Magnets continue to provide a clear window into the state of workplace cultures around the world. Below are the scores specific to South Korea:



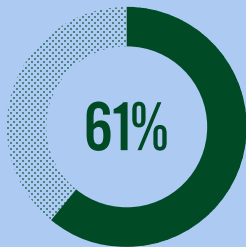
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF PURPOSE



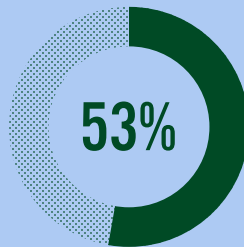
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF OPPORTUNITY



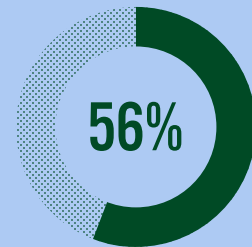
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF SUCCESS



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF APPRECIATION



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF WELLBEING



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF LEADERSHIP

SCORECARD

Average scores in five key areas organizations should focus on in the next year

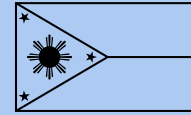
79 COMMUNITY

80 FULFILLMENT

59 GENERALIST

55 ATTRITION LIKELIHOOD

39 eNPS



77%

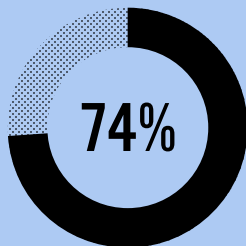
of employees in the Philippines regularly produce great work

81%

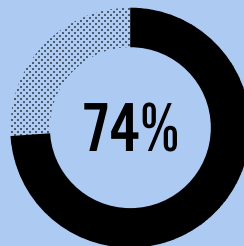
of employees in the Philippines are engaged

The six Talent Magnets continue to provide a clear window into the state of workplace cultures around the world. Below are the scores specific to the Philippines:

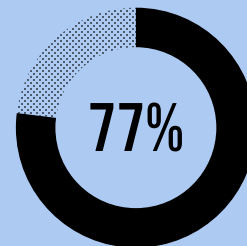
PHL



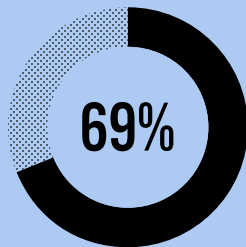
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF PURPOSE



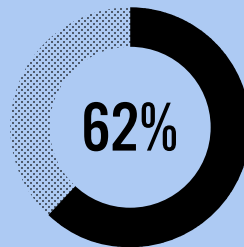
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF OPPORTUNITY



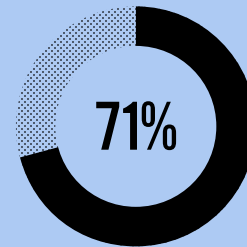
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF SUCCESS



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF APPRECIATION



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF WELLBEING



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF LEADERSHIP

SCORECARD

Average scores in five key areas organizations should focus on in the next year

67 COMMUNITY

68 FULFILLMENT

58 GENERALIST

56 ATTRITION LIKELIHOOD

31 eNPS



69%

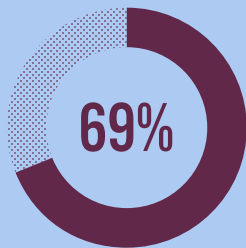
of employees in Singapore regularly produce great work

69%

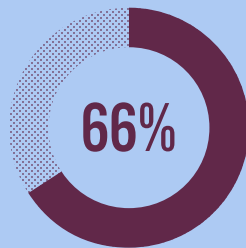
of employees in Singapore are engaged

SGP

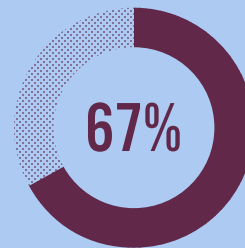
The six Talent Magnets continue to provide a clear window into the state of workplace cultures around the world. Below are the scores specific to Singapore:



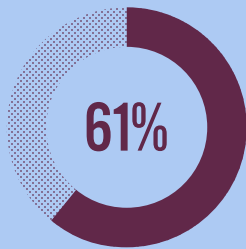
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF PURPOSE



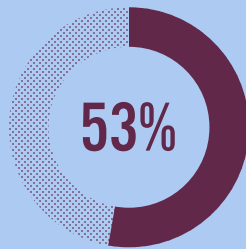
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF OPPORTUNITY



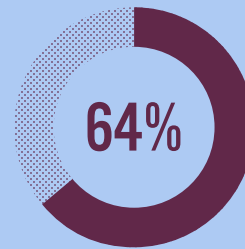
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF SUCCESS



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF APPRECIATION



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF WELLBEING



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF LEADERSHIP

AUSTRALIA

SCORECARD

Average scores in five key areas organizations should focus on in the next year

65 COMMUNITY

66 FULFILLMENT

58 GENERALIST

51 ATTRITION LIKELIHOOD

23 eNPS



68%

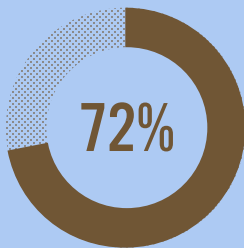
of employees in Australia regularly produce great work

71%

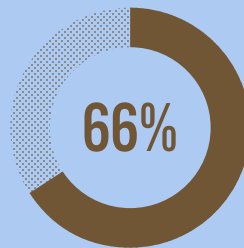
of employees in Australia are engaged

The six Talent Magnets continue to provide a clear window into the state of workplace cultures around the world. Below are the scores specific to Australia:

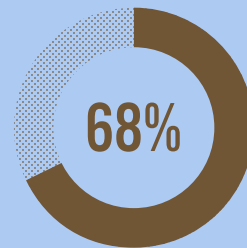
AUS



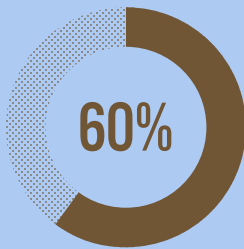
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF PURPOSE



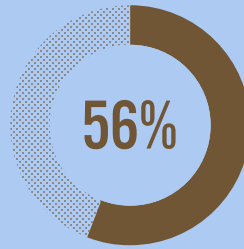
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF OPPORTUNITY



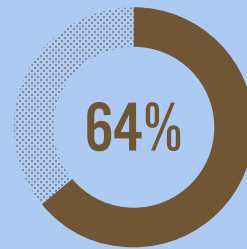
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF SUCCESS



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF APPRECIATION



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF WELLBEING



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF LEADERSHIP

**REGIONAL
OVERVIEW****NORTH
AMERICA****Community****72****Fulfillment****76****Generalist****49****Attrition Likelihood****59****eNPS****36****Great Work****71****Engagement****76****Purpose****75****Opportunity****71****Success****73****Appreciation****64****Wellbeing****60****Leadership****68**

UNITED KINGDOM & EUROPE	IMEA (INDIA, MIDDLE EAST, AFRICA)	APAC (ASIA PACIFIC)
63	76	68
67	78	72
49	47	59
49	64	57
19	45	30
61	76	69
67	78	70
68	77	69
61	74	66
62	76	66
58	66	62
56	56	55
58	71	64

The O.C. Tanner Institute is a widely respected research and education team focused on delivering valuable insights that help people thrive at work. Our award-winning and peer-reviewed research on corporate culture, employee recognition, leadership, and wellbeing opens hearts and minds, inspires change, and empowers organizations everywhere to intentionally create healthy, productive workplace cultures by design. Such cultures drive innovation, engage talent, and deliver on corporate goals.

O.C. Tanner is the global leader in software and services that improve workplace culture through a wide variety of meaningful employee experiences. Our Culture Cloud™ is a suite of apps and integrations for recognition, team initiatives, wellbeing, and leadership that help shape thriving cultures everywhere. We proudly connect people to purpose, accomplishment, and one another at thousands of the world's most respected companies.

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