

workhuman\*

# Sparking Engagement

4 WAYS YOU CAN MOTIVATE YOUR WORKFORCE





How we work, where we work, and the overall expectation of the workplace have fundamentally changed over the last few years. We've seen record levels of voluntary turnover, waves of economic uncertainty yielding mass layoffs, and heightened stress and burnout.

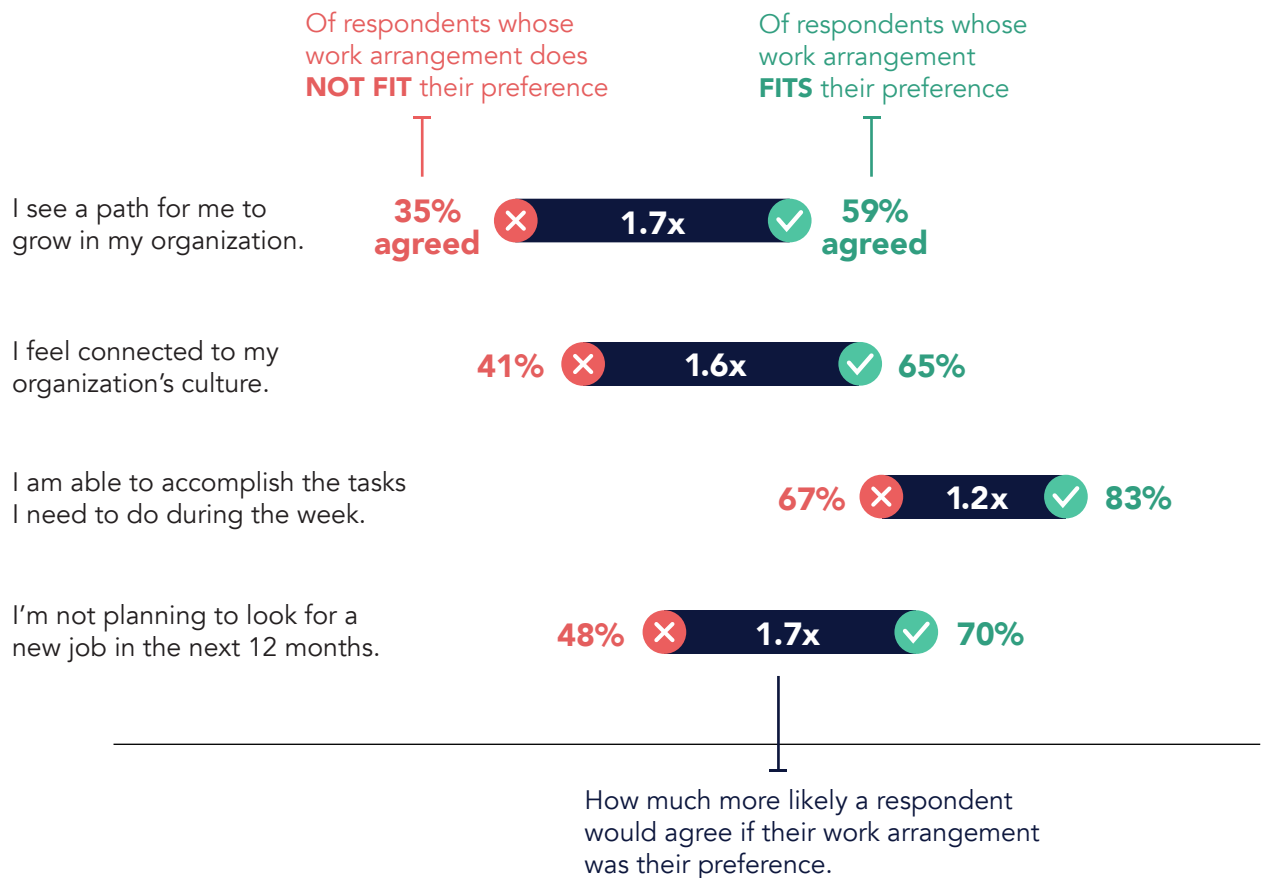
For an organization staring down these macro-trends and dizzying changes, there is one constant: You need to find ways to engage with your employees.

In our latest Workhuman® iQ survey, we sought to understand how all these factors are influencing the employee experience. What we found was clear. People want to feel like they matter, and appreciating their efforts, supporting them when needed, and celebrating them whenever possible is a foolproof recipe for a more engaged, productive, and connected workplace.

# Flexibility in working environments

In our Workhuman iQ survey, we found where employees work matters. But more specifically, understanding where they want to work matters even more. It turns out it can affect the entirety of the employee experience.

**When work arrangement meets employee preference, it's a boon to development, connection, sense of accomplishment, and retention.**



Of those who reported their work arrangement was their preference, 83% said they are able to accomplish the tasks they need to during the week, and 74% felt a sense of connection with colleagues. Employees working in their preferred arrangement were also 1.6x more likely to feel highly engaged compared to their colleagues not working in their preferred working arrangement.

The 20% of our survey sample that indicated that their work arrangement is *not* their preference scored lower on literally every single positive workplace outcome we studied, most notably, lower connection, productivity, and hope for career growth.

Then there's this: Across all ways of working, employees who had a say in their work arrangement had lower stress levels. There is no greater villain to engagement than stress. And flexible work arrangements can counteract it.

A common thread in our report and even this white paper is one-size-fits-all solutions don't have a place in the evolution of work. If you want to improve employee wellbeing, engagement, and productivity, you need a custom, employee-first approach. That includes where employees are working.

Tactically, it could mean a flexible work arrangement is a solution for some employees while flexible work hours are a solution for others. In either case, it requires asking the employee what will work best for them.

# Employee wellbeing

There are myriad factors that influence an employee's wellbeing at work. Are they working in their preferred work arrangement? Are they looking for a new job? Do they fear they might lose their current one? Are they a caretaker? A caretaker looking for a new job?

The answers to those questions and more allow us to make educated guesses about how that employee is doing. But to properly prioritize wellbeing means looking beyond the average employee experience to the unique employee experience.

And right now, wellbeing needs to be at the top of the priority list. In our Workhuman iQ survey, more than half of workers report functioning on autopilot, and more than 70% of workers report feeling mentally exhausted and drained at the end of the day.

Employees and the business suffer when employee wellbeing is not an organizational priority.





The costs of neglecting wellbeing at work are significant for employees and employers alike, so **making smarter investments in wellbeing is more important than ever.**

**\$20M**

of **opportunity loss** for every 10,000 workers due to low wellbeing and its drain on performance

**\$322B**

cost globally in **turnover and lost productivity** when low wellbeing shows up as employee burnout

## Psychological safety

One of the primary measures of wellbeing in the workplace is psychological safety. It serves as a composition of the employee experience. In a psychologically safe work environment, employees feel confident being themselves. They speak up at meetings, they take initiative on projects, and they're less likely to feel stressed.

The good news for employers is that they can influence nearly every one of the top factors associated with high psychological safety, from creating flexibility in work arrangements and creating an inclusive workplace to a formal recognition program and regular check-ins.

## Frequent check-ins

Another great way to fine-tune the employee experience is with regular check-ins. It's a scheduled opportunity to gauge how employees are doing and how managers and the organization could be supporting them. In this survey, 49% of the sample say they check in with their manager at least weekly. Of those respondents checking in at least weekly, 43% report being highly engaged, compared to only 29% for those not checking in at least weekly.

With consistent check-ins, managers can problem-solve and offer support in the moment, which leads to a more trusting relationship and a stronger feeling of psychological safety.

# Opportunities for connection

In our latest Workhuman iQ survey, “The Evolution of Work,” we made our deepest foray into some of the intricacies and intersections of the employee experience.

The findings were clear: People are more connected to their colleagues than the company they work for. For anyone who just gulped, this isn’t a bad thing. Your company culture is not some amorphous entity people can cling to. Your company culture is *defined* by people. And our research gives a peek into what you can do to nurture your company culture.

Employees are more connected to each other than their organization’s culture.

**56%**

“I feel connected to my **organization’s culture.**”

**67%**

“I feel a sense of connection with **my colleagues.**”

On a practical level, you can make sure that teammates have the tools and avenues to talk with each other in whatever way works for them. And do so from the jump. Onboarding new employees in an environment teeming with connection is much easier than one in which meeting co-workers and peers is challenging or laborious.

One of the most impactful ways you can build connection in the workplace is through community. Employee resource groups (ERGs) are voluntary, employee-led groups that build community and a sense of belonging in an organization. They're also company-sponsored and became a key initiative for many organizations looking to make improvements in their diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts.

Based on our survey, those who participate in an ERG report several positive outcomes. In addition to higher psychological safety, our data shows **employees involved in ERGs are also:**

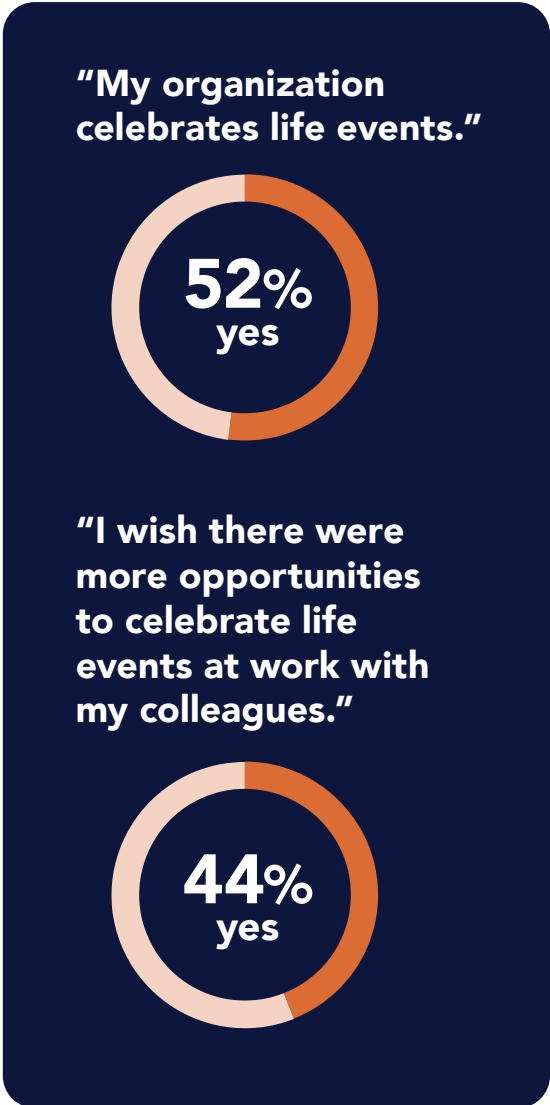
- More likely to be **highly engaged**
- More likely to know their **organization's values**
- More likely to **recommend their organization** to a friend

The connections employees make with managers and peers provide glimpses into who that person *is*. You learn about hobbies, weekend plans, what's new with the kids, and who's watching what TV show. But you also hear about the big moments. In a workplace that puts the employee first, weddings, newborns, new homes, and every other sort of personal achievement aren't hidden or even just passively acknowledged. They're *celebrated*.

And in our survey, employees across the board want more chances to celebrate. If you're an employer looking for ways to improve the workplace experience and promote a higher level of engagement, stock up on the literal and metaphorical party hats.

Employees who work in organizations that have a formal program for celebrating life events have **higher psychological safety** (3.68/5 vs. 3.27/5), they're **more likely to recommend the organization to a friend** (86% vs. 66%), and **more likely to be highly engaged** (43% vs. 28%).

Organizations can play a powerful role in facilitating these celebrations and build connection, community, and a more human workplace in the process.



# A culture of recognition

Whether you want to kick-start or sustain an employee's level of engagement, nothing beats the power of gratitude. Recognizing efforts, contributions, and good teamwork shows employees that you're paying attention and you see all the good they are doing.

Employees who partake in recognition programs are:

**1.5x** more likely to feel **connected to their organization**

**1.3x** more likely to feel **connected to their colleagues**

**1.2x** more likely to feel like their **workload is manageable**

**1.4x** more likely to **recommend their company to a friend**

Recognition has a transformative effect on a company. That transformational effect goes both ways, though. In our research with Gallup, we found that a lack of frequent recognition can have a detrimental effect on engagement, contribute to a feeling of struggling, and even impact an employee's desire to stay at the company.

Employees who **receive recognition only a few times a year or less** from either a manager, supervisor or other leader or peers are:

Leader	Peer	
<b>5x</b>	<b>3x</b>	as likely to be <b>actively disengaged</b>
<b>74%</b>	<b>39%</b>	more likely to say they <b>do not plan to be at their organization in one year</b>
<b>27%</b>	<b>24%</b>	more likely to be <b>struggling</b>

Source: Unleashing the Human Element at Work: Transforming Workplaces Through Recognition



There are times when recognition can feel more like art than science. However, there is a template to follow. According to our research with Gallup, recognition is most effective when it's fulfilling, authentic, equitable, personalized, and embedded in the culture.

Employees who **feel fulfilled by recognition** are:\*

**4x** as likely to be engaged

**Less than 1/2** as likely to be looking or passively watching for job opportunities

**44%** more likely to be "thriving" in their life overall

Employees who **do not feel fulfilled by recognition** are:\*\*

**8x** as likely to be actively disengaged

**4x** as likely to be actively looking for another job

**62%** more likely to be "struggling" in their life overall

\*Employees who strongly agree they receive the right amount of recognition for the work they do.

\*\*Employees who disagree that they receive the right amount of recognition for the work they do.

Source: [Unleashing the Human Element at Work: Transforming Workplaces Through Recognition](#)

From a macro perspective, recognition also shapes how employees view the organization and their experience. We'll pose this question: Which group of adjectives would you rather be used to describe your organization?

## How employees describe their company culture with and without a recognition program



**With** a recognition program



**Without** a recognition program

## Conclusion

Employee engagement doesn't happen by accident. It is the by-product of an organizational focus on supporting employees, prioritizing their wellbeing, facilitating connections throughout the workplace, and cultivating a culture of recognition.

For the first time in decades, wide swaths of the workforce are demanding more of their employers. More equity, more empathy, more humanity. The employers leaning into the tenants of a more human workplace are creating the right conditions for employees to thrive.

Learn more about what is shaping the employee experience and what your organization can do to support it by checking out the [full report](#).

Discover the [Workhuman Cloud](#)<sup>®</sup>.

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