

# Executive Summary

The diverging experiences pushing workforces apart and how to connect them



For more than 15 years, we've studied the employee experience to understand the factors that contribute to employees feeling safe, valued, and productive at work.

To do this, we use recognition as our lens. But not just recognition as a concept, recognition as a strategic practice – one that is embedded across an organization. At Workhuman®, we call this “recognition done right.” In such circumstances, recognition positively influences almost every area of an organization and its people. It amplifies employee engagement, performance, innovation, and adaptability. But it's not the only facet of work that has wide-reaching benefits.

This year, our research zeroes in on how emerging priorities – like AI integration, skill development, ongoing feedback, and

frequent check-ins – intersect with the power of recognition. With the rapid evolution in workplace technology and expectations, recognition remains a foundational element that strengthens these areas. Ensuring alignment across all levels of an organization is vital to prevent differing perceptions that can disrupt cohesion, trust, and collective progress.

Unfortunately, in this report, we find that there currently is not alignment across all levels of an organization on key workplace elements. Worse, some of these elements like upskilling and check-ins are outright deteriorating as organizations stare down massive changes to industries and how work gets done.

This report uncovers where companies are behind and what they can do to catch up.

# The workforce perception gap

Your day at work is affected by how you get along with the people you work with and for, whether you feel comfortable at work and appreciated for the work you do, and whether you feel like you're building to something. They're invisible benefits that shape your day-to-day reality and, in theory, these benefits can be enjoyed by everyone in an organization at no cost. But they're not.

This year's Workhuman® iQ survey reveals that no one is more likely to be connected to their colleagues and organization, feel valued, have more autonomy and flexibility in their work arrangement, have high levels of psychological safety, have a positive

relationship with their manager, and see a path for growth in their organization than senior leaders.

We are not saying every senior leader has it easy. They don't. What we're saying (and the data is showing) is that senior leaders enjoy invisible benefits like psychological safety, financial security, connection to colleagues, and flexible work arrangements more than anyone else. In some cases, by a substantial margin.

A human workplace starts by, at the very least, narrowing those margins.

## Compared to individual contributors, senior leaders are more likely to:



# Upskill or stand still

Nearly every day there's a new headline suggesting how AI will alter the workplace forever. While the specific outcomes are unclear, the message is crystal clear. The impact will be huge, and organizations need to get ready. Rolling out AI in the workplace is the most significant shift in skills development since the industrial era, and it's poised to alter how work gets done no matter what job you do.

Organizations can only be as prepared as their employees are. And as we find in the 2024 Workhuman iQ survey, right now, that awareness is not being built at the speed

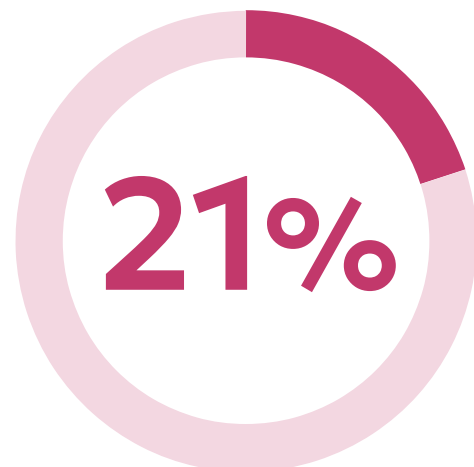
such a cataclysmic shift demands. Overall, 63% of respondents are not at all or only somewhat familiar with the use of AI in the workplace.

AI is stealing the headlines, but our research finds a deeper issue: A concerning lack of upskilling opportunities for employees across the board. Regular upskilling of hard and soft skills will be imperative for organizations to remain competitive. Our research explores where organizations are now and where they need to go.

## Which employees can see a path to growth?



of those who have **learned a new skill in the last six months**



of those who have **never learned a new skill**

# The lost art of the 1:1 check-in

Check-ins between managers and employees are critical to the employee experience. But, as our research finds, they're lacking in both quantity and quality. This year, the Workhuman iQ survey finds the rate of weekly 1:1 check-ins is less than half of what it was in 2023: Only 21% of respondents say they meet at least weekly with their manager vs. 49% last year. To make matters worse, more workers find check-ins to be "sometimes," "rarely," or "never" time well spent rather than "always" or "often."

Employees who don't have a consistent, effective check-in tend to feel disconnected and unsupported – unfortunately, this is a trend reflected in this year's data. In fact, those who never meet 1:1 are more than 3x more likely to be highly disengaged.

In this year's research, we dig into the wide-ranging impact check-ins have on the rest of the employee experience and how managers and leaders at your organization can facilitate more effective feedback that builds a culture of appreciation.

Those who **meet at least weekly** are:

**3x** more likely to feel their **check-ins are time well spent**

**1.5x** more likely to be **highly engaged**

**2x** more likely to receive **support and guidance for growth and development**

Those who **never have 1:1s** are:

**2.5x** more likely to **feel drained or exhausted** at the end of the workday

**4.2x** more likely to have **not learned a skill** recently or ever

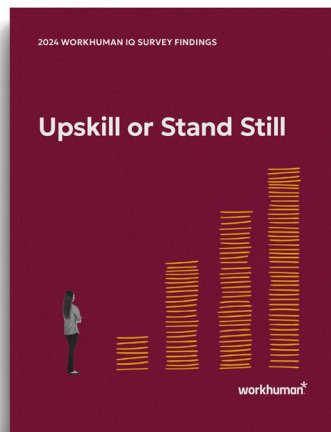
**1.4x** more likely to **feel lonely** during the day



# Final thoughts

This year's Workhuman iQ survey tackles emerging priorities – AI integration, skills development, ongoing feedback, and frequent check-ins – head on, charting a path for leaders to thrive over the long term.

So, dive in, reflect, take notes – and join us in the movement to make work human. Read [Upskill or Stand Still](#), [The Lost Art of the 1:1 Check-in](#), and [Senior Leaders vs. Employees: Two Worlds, One Workplace](#).



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