

workhuman*

3 Ways to Support Your Employees During Economic Uncertainty

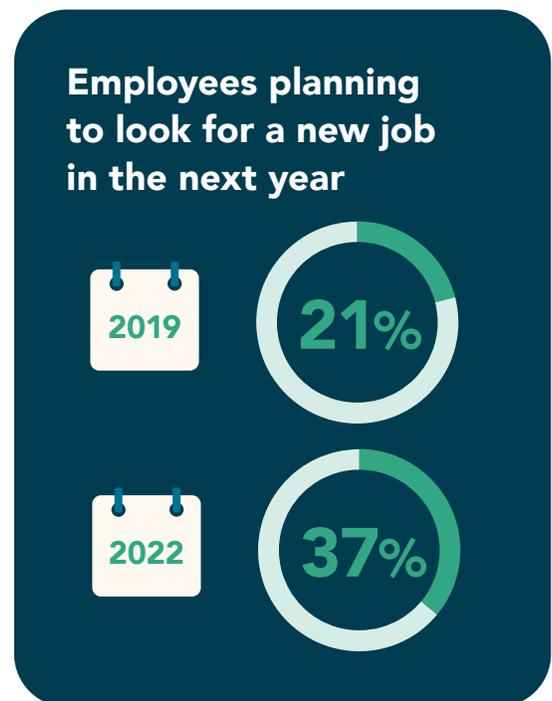


Among the many revelations about the employee experience in the latest Workhuman® iQ [report](#), “The Evolution of Work,” is this: 37% of employees plan to look for a new job in the next year.

Compare this to 2019, when the job-seeking rate in our survey was 21%. It’s a striking jump, but this is a new world of work.

Over the last few years, a clear trend emerged, held on, and sent a message that is still ringing out today: Employees feel underpaid, undervalued, and they’re ready to look for work elsewhere if their current organization doesn’t do anything about it.

But those dissatisfied with their job are only part of the job-seeking group. There are also employees who fear losing their current job.



According to our survey, nearly one in five employees fear they will lose their job in the next 12 months. That rate is higher for employees at the beginning of their career (23%), U.K. workers (23%), LGBTQIA+ employees (23%), employees with frequent caretaking responsibilities (29%), and those who have gone through a merger in the last year (35%).

These employees are *stressed*. And news headlines of layoffs over the last few months have validated and exacerbated that stress.

In circumstances of uncertainty for employees and employers, the best thing an organization can do is support its people.



The system shock of layoffs

Layoffs are an incredibly damaging experience for employees. They're often sudden and jarring, and they're destabilizing to the employees let go and those who remain at the organization. So far in 2023, layoffs have dominated workplace headlines.

When an organization does decide to go through with layoffs, there are choices to be made about how they communicate and conduct the layoffs that leave a lasting impression on all employees, regardless of whether they are leaving the organization.

Recognize the humanity of the moment.

When an employee learns they are laid off, it's a system shock. Their future livelihood is uncertain and an extra element of anxiety creeps in when the world is in its own state of financial uncertainty. Therefore, the conversations surrounding layoffs need to be compassionate and remorseful.

Maintain lines of communication.

Too many stories of layoffs include email and chat message access being cut off abruptly. Hopefully, your employees have formed bonds at work, so cutting off the avenues to say goodbye or share contact information with friends and colleagues only adds to the whiplash of the event. Opening select channels for employees to remain in contact with their communities at work can help ease the harsh transition.



Offer support wherever possible.

One of the first concerns of every employee laid off will be, “Now what?” They likely need to find a job as soon as they can regardless of how good their severance package is. As an organization, you can play an important role in connecting those employees to networks and future employers.

As for the employees who remain at the organization, it’s important that leaders offer time and space for them to process what’s happened. It’s unrealistic to expect business to operate as normal in the wake of such an event. By pushing employees in the immediate aftermath of layoffs, organizations run the risk of souring morale further and increasing the chances for further voluntary turnover.

Addressing the root causes of the Great Resignation and quiet quitting

There is no great mystery as to what's behind the record number of employees looking for a new job. Employees feel underpaid and undervalued. Solving for the former is a science, a cut-and-dried solution. Solving for the latter is an art. Ensuring employees feel valued for who they are and what they do requires practice, listening, vulnerability, and trust. It needs a human workplace.

Our research in “The Evolution of Work” survey made clear that central to a human workplace is an employee-first approach.

The challenges of the workplace vary by age, race, region, circumstances, stage of career, and that's simply the start.

Meeting employees at all the intersections they represent may seem like a daunting task, but there are proven methods of creating a foundation of humanity. Together, employee recognition, check-ins, and life events transform the employee experience by creating a culture of gratitude. These moments of appreciation connect employees and help them feel valued. And eventually, these moments combine to strengthen a company's culture.

Three pillars of a human workplace

1. Employee recognition

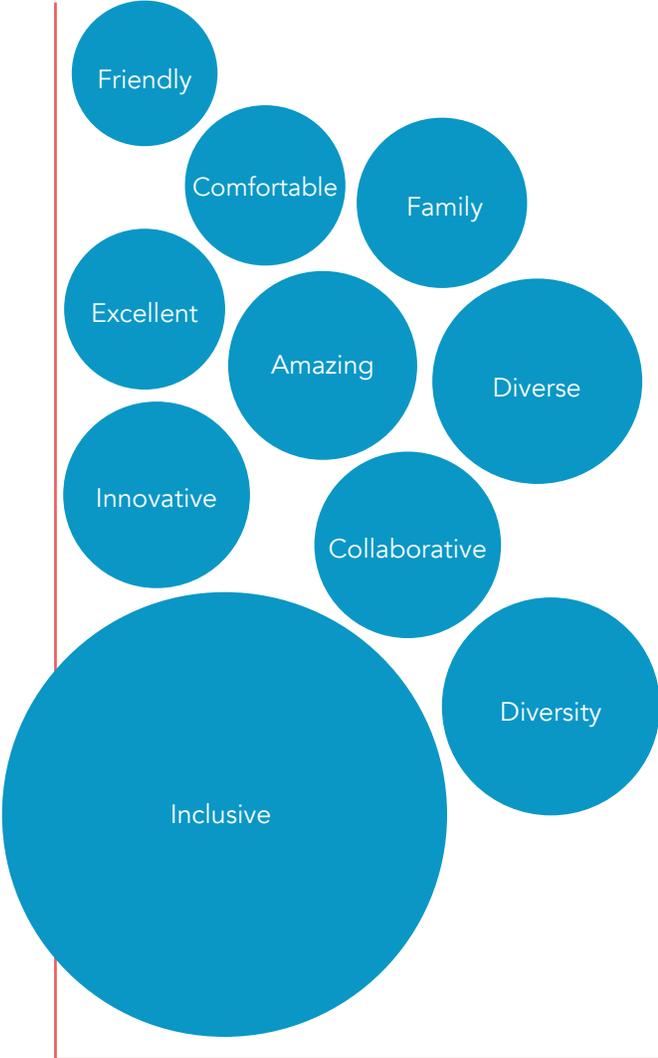
One of the most effective ways to show employees they are valued is to tell them. And while thank you notes are nice, investing in a formal recognition program is the surest way employees *and* employers will reap the benefits.

Employees who partake in recognition programs are more likely to feel connected to their organization (+22.3 percentage points), their colleagues (+15.9), and their work. These employees are also more likely to feel like their workload is manageable (+12.6) and 1.4x more likely to recommend their company to a friend.



Our research also found that the more recently an employee has been recognized for their work, the more psychologically safe they feel. The presence of a recognition program and thus a systematic way of sharing appreciation positively influences how an employee perceives their organization.

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



With a recognition program



Without a recognition program



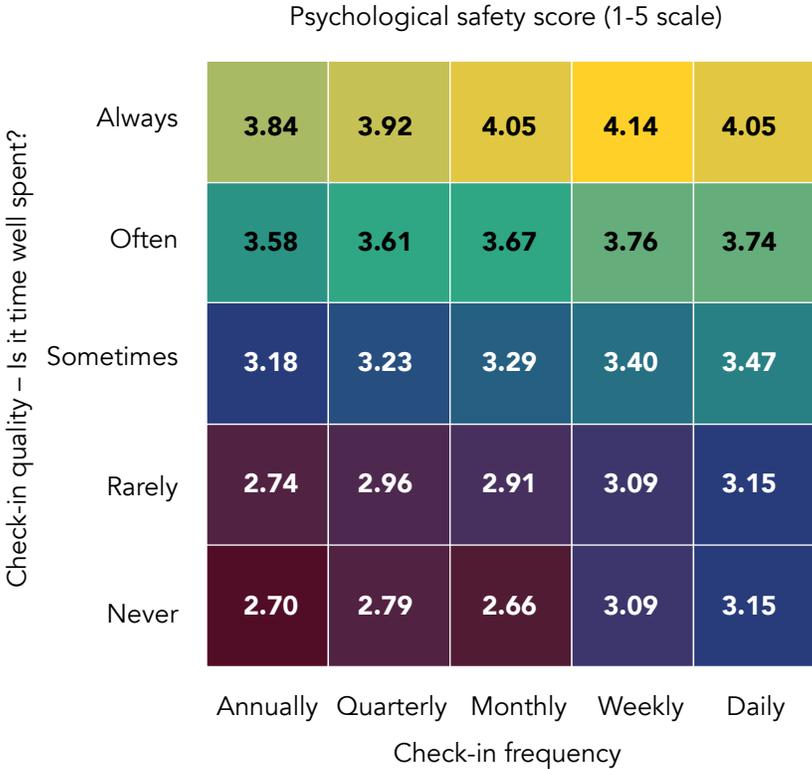
2. Check-ins

The best way to meet employees where they are is to talk to them. This is especially important for managers as the employee-manager relationship is one of the most pivotal at work. And with the backdrop of layoffs and general job insecurity, getting this relationship in a good place becomes even more important.

When these relationships are at their best, managers and employees can have consistent conversations about what is challenging, motivating, and stressing employees. Again, frequency matters. 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.

How frequently employees check in with their managers impacts their psychological safety at work.



But it could be even better. Nearly 40% of those respondents who check in regularly report that time was only “well spent” either sometimes, rarely, or never. It is a missed opportunity, but a correctable problem.

The quality of a check-in makes a big difference to employees facing job insecurity. Employees who feel their check-in with their manager was time well spent are less likely to fear losing their job. A regular check-in is one of the best ways to know how employees are doing and how managers and the organization could be supporting them.



3. Life events

People are so much more than “employees.” They cannot leave their lives at the door just like they cannot leave who they are at the door. The most human thing a company can do, especially in stressful times, is acknowledge and celebrate the moments that make life special.

Our research found that employees across the board want more opportunities to celebrate personal milestones. In fact, of those who do not have a formal program for celebrating life events, 38% still report celebrating with co-workers.

Employers looking for ways to improve the employee experience would be wise to make celebrating life events a habit.

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

Organizations can play a powerful role in facilitating these celebrations and, along with frequent recognition and check-ins, provide stable channels of support for employees working through major transitions.

Conclusion

Over the last few years, a common refrain has been that “employees now have the power,” which is not exactly right. If they did, this white paper would not need to exist.

What the evolution of work has yielded is not employees *in* power but *empowered*. For the first time in decades, wide swaths of the workforce are demanding more of their employers. More equity, more empathy, more humanity.

That call takes on a new level of urgency as major business decisions impact colleagues and peers in an organization. Mass turnover, layoffs, and the ripple effects they create can destabilize a company and its people. By prioritizing a human workplace, organizations can build a support system for all employees and set them up 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](#).

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