

workhuman*

3 Ways to Build an Inclusive Culture

WHY BELONGING MATTERS AT WORK





We spend one-third of our lives working, so it should be no surprise Ernst & Young found that one in three people (34%) feel their greatest sense of belonging at work. That's more than at their church or in their neighborhood, and second only to their sense of belonging at home (62%).

Our fundamental need to belong is motivated by our intrinsic desire to create and nurture positive, long-lasting interpersonal relationships with other human beings. According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, that means before we try to build self-esteem or self-actualization, we seek to be included – often with our colleagues.



A new view on employee wellness

Organizational psychologists tell us that most of our interactions at work involve exchanges of social capital and social support, which form our feelings of belonging. To create and sustain inclusion at work, we must continually connect with coworkers in a holistic and positive way.

Companies that operate in this way build up the reserves of goodwill required for productivity and to maintain employee wellbeing and psychological safety when work demands and stress levels rise. The heart of this is driving a culture of positivity, recognition, and support that embraces the whole employee and holistically enriches wellbeing.

Workhuman® and Gallup research revealed:

- Employees who strongly agree that recognition is an important part of their culture are up to 91% more likely to be thriving.
- Employees who strongly agree that they get the right amount of recognition for the work they do are up to 84% more likely to be thriving.
- When employees give recognition at work at least a few times a month, they are as much as 2x as likely to be thriving.



The impact of belonging and social support

What are the actual benefits of feeling like you are included, are accepted, and belong at work?

Higher engagement: According to Gallup, U.S. employees who are not engaged or are actively disengaged account for nearly \$2 trillion in lost productivity. Coworker social support is a job resource that has been shown to significantly impact engagement.

Happier, more productive employees: Employees who feel they belong as part of a group and are working toward shared goals report increased motivation, positivity, and overall productivity. According to Deloitte, “Belonging can lead to a 56% increase in job performance, a 50% reduction in turnover risk, a 167% increase in employer net promoter score, 2x more employee raises, 18x more employee promotions, and a 75% decrease in sick days.”

Our customers that invest 10% more per employee in a recognition program show an average high productivity of \$3,900 per employee. For a 15,000-person organization, this equates to an annual benefit of \$58 million compared to industry peers.

Source: “3 Key Data Points – The Immediate and Long-Term ROI of Social Recognition,” Workhuman, 2022

Higher levels of learning and performance: A culture of psychological safety and inclusion leads to better learning and performance outcomes.

Reduced stress and better health: When belonging has been established, it contributes to improvements in physical health. Likewise, those who are deprived of it may experience illness effects and a weakened immune system. Social support can also buffer against the impact of burnout.

Increased resilience and trust: A consistent flow of relational exchanges raises levels of commitment, concern for the reputation of oneself and others, and trust and resilience.

Reduced attrition: Reward and perceived social support are direct contributors to affective commitment (and thereby intent to stay). Our research with Gallup validates that employees who lack a strong sense of belonging are up to 12x as likely to be disengaged and 5x as likely to be looking for another job.

A Workhuman® iQ study with a large global client in the healthcare manufacturing and distribution industry found that celebrating personal milestones enhanced interpersonal connection across the organization. Employees who received recognition for a life event versus those who did not were 2x more likely to recognize others (35% vs. 15%), and 1.5x more likely to be recognized (77% vs. 50%).



I think the great thing about our recognition program is how we're able to come together through that social forum and celebrate each other's success.

MARA NOTARFONZO

Vice President, Total Rewards

CAA Club Group

Source: [CAA Club Group testimonial video](#), Workhuman, 2023

3 ways to create a culture of belonging



How can you move from theory to practice in your organization and increase employees' access to feelings of belonging? Create a companywide, employee-led initiative to share and broadcast life events and milestones.

Here are three ways to make it powerful:

1. Create opportunities for social exchange.

Celebrating life events such as an educational achievement, new child, new union, new home, gender affirmation, sporting triumph, or other significant goal attainment gives your employees the opportunity to connect and reinforce their relationships.

2. Leverage the power of stories.

Bolster the power of authentic connections by allowing employees to tell text and visual stories about their experiences inside and outside of work and invite coworkers into their shared emotional space.



3. Make work a safe place to bring the whole self.

Sharing life events can help create a safe place at work. Plus, making this platform available to all ensures that employees have equal and fair access to celebrations.

Employee resource groups (ERGs) play a role here. When employees can talk about a life event within an ERG they belong to, it fast-forwards those bonds because of the sheer power of connecting with other humans who have similar experiences, backgrounds, or life circumstances. And, Workhuman research has found that when ERGs are successful, those who participate are more engaged in the organization's culture and have greater psychological safety.

Employees who are empowered and encouraged to come together to celebrate, congratulate, and show support will naturally activate social exchange and create the foundation for belonging at your organization.

To learn more, get in touch with us directly or visit workhuman.com.

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