

workhuman*

How Does Recognition Reinforce DEI in the Workplace?

FINDINGS FROM A GALLUP-WORKHUMAN STUDY





Recent Gallup and Workhuman® research shows that delivering the right amount of recognition authentically has equitable impacts. Employees who strongly agree that they receive the right amount of recognition for the work they do are four times as likely to perceive their workplace as inclusive and seven times more likely to perceive it as equitable compared to those who don't receive the right amount of recognition.

However, when recognition is not hitting the mark, just nine percent feel their workplace is equitable, and only 16% feel it is inclusive.





Here's the tricky part – there's no "magic number" for how frequently recognition should be given, but doling out haphazard, inauthentic thanks won't yield the culture boost leaders are looking for, especially if they're after an improvement in wellbeing along with stronger diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).

Harnessing the power of strategic and authentic recognition is a simple yet effective way to build a culture that celebrates collective differences and a workplace where people of all backgrounds can thrive.

So, how can employers ensure recognition in their organization is equitable and that their employees feel validated?

Let's find out.

The importance of authentic recognition

Authentic recognition requires getting to know employees on a personal level, understanding their individual interests and passions, then carefully considering what motivates them and what doesn't. The point is to understand who employees are as people — and recognize them as such. That's where the authenticity shines.

When employees strongly agree that the recognition they receive is authentic, they are five times more likely to feel like they belong in their workplace; the pattern is stronger for Black and Hispanic employees than White employees.

75% of Black and Hispanic employees do not strongly agree that the recognition they receive is authentic. By comparison, White employees are 10 percentage points **more likely** to feel the recognition they receive is authentic.

When employees strongly agree the recognition they receive is authentic, they are more likely to strongly agree that ...

	Black employees	Hispanic employees	White employees
I feel like I belong at my organization.	7x as likely	7x as likely	4x as likely
I see a path to grow at my organization.	8x as likely	5x as likely	5x as likely
My organization cares about my wellbeing.	8x as likely	6x as likely	6x as likely

The state of equitable recognition

Many employers pride themselves on fostering diverse, equitable, and inclusive cultures where all employees are respected, valued, and thriving. The question is, do employees feel the same?

There are pockets of successful DEI initiatives and equitable recognition across the board, but for many employees the answer is a simple “no.”

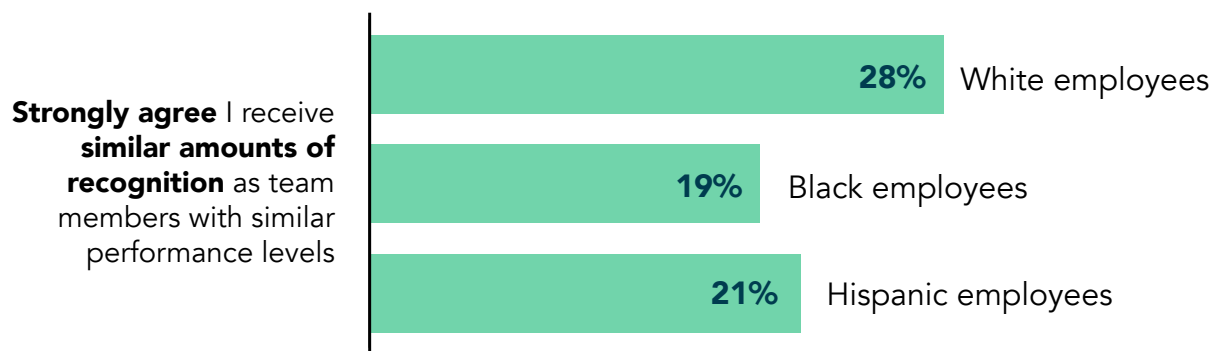
According to [The Gallup Center on Black Voices](#), 29% of U.S. employees strongly agree that their organization is fair to everyone. And many employees aren't feeling empowered enough to speak up when things are awry; as illustrated by the fact that [34% strongly agree](#) their employer would do what is right if they raised a concern about ethics or integrity at work.



The disparity between employee expectations and organizations' responses doesn't stop there.

Past Gallup-Workhuman research shows a significant gap in the ways some employees are feeling valued at work.

28% of White employees strongly agree that they receive equitable recognition, but only 19% of Black employees and 21% of Hispanic employees say the same.



Current economic impact on equitable recognition

A recent Gallup survey found that almost half (49%) of America's working population is actively job searching or watching for new employment opportunities.

While it's critical to build diverse hiring into recruitment practices, it's also important to retain talent. So, how can organizations keep employees – and their inherent unique strengths and experiences – from walking out the door? Our analysis found, once again, that fulfilling recognition is a crucial pillar for DEI.

Employees who strongly agree they receive the right amount of recognition for the work they do are 37% less likely to be looking or watching for jobs, compared to those who do not strongly agree.

The pattern is significant for men and is even more so for women who are 43% less likely to be actively looking or watching for job opportunities when they strongly agree they receive the right amount of recognition for the work they do.

By strategically recognizing employees for who they are and what they do, organizations can prevent employees from heading for the exit, in turn, helping organizations keep the diversity many have labored intensively to build.



Strategies for leaders and employees

Here are steps that companies can take to ensure recognition in their organization is equitable and that everyone – regardless of demographics – feel validated by receiving the right amount of authentic recognition.

Think about recognition as a tool to celebrate people for who they are.

It is important to remember that your employees are not simply the output of their work. They are whole human beings with unique perspectives, interests, lived experiences, and backgrounds, all of which provide richness and depth to your team. Be sure to recognize and celebrate your employees for who they are as well as what they do.

- Spend time talking to your coworkers about their passions outside of work.
- Create a dedicated space or channel where people can recognize each other for non-work-related accomplishments.

Recognize your employees with authenticity and frequency, especially for those who pull extra weight.

Employees care about being recognized for the everyday things they do. And when they are recognized, they are much more likely to see their employer as inclusive and fair.

- Talk to your managers about tracking both big and small successes.
- Get to know your coworkers and recognize them for their unique talents, passions, and perspectives.
- Create easy, energizing forms of recognition that everyone can access.
- Find ways to make recognition tangible, public, and fun – whether it be a shout-out during the weekly team meeting or being recognized at the annual company award ceremony.

Recognition goes farther for some employees than others.

Everyone benefits from recognition. But, if your organization is struggling with retention of women or employees of color, take stock of your recognition practices: Are those employees getting recognized as much as their White, male counterparts? Both burnout

and turnover of traditionally under-supported employee populations can be combated, at least in part, by fulfilling, authentic recognition.

- Encourage managers to be conscious of their biases. Are they giving certain types of employees more praise? Make sure they know to give frequent feedback across racial, gender, or personal characteristics in their teams.
- Use recognition as a tool to enhance employee resource groups (ERGs). The aim of ERGs is to educate and support employees, address inequities in the workplace, and build community and a sense of belonging. In addition to higher psychological safety, recent [Workhuman research](#) found that those who participate in ERGs are more engaged in the organization's culture.
- Kick off meetings with five minutes of shout-outs.
- Audit recognition programs. Is recognition given to diverse groups that receive outsized benefits? Data patterns can be powerful to help reinforce messages to increase the equity of recognition.
- Ask employees in exit interviews how they felt about your organization's recognition efforts, and if that had an impact on their decision to leave.

To learn more about how recognition reinforces DEI, [download our latest free report](#). This report will arm you with the tips and data you need to foster an environment of equity and inclusion and shield a diverse workforce against burnout and turnover.

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