

workhuman®

Thriving in the Next Evolution of Work

3 PILLARS OF A HUMAN WORKPLACE





Before 2020, only 6% of the employed workforce in the United States worked from home most of the time. Almost 75% of workers **never** worked from home. Before 2020, a child home from school meant a sick day for working parents.

Before 2020, workers had little input over where they worked, how they worked, or the conditions in which they worked. But all of that has changed.

The last few years have ushered more change into the workplace than we have seen in decades. How are employees faring with those changes? Are organizations working to lift employees up the best they can?

To answer those questions, we turn to the latest Workhuman® iQ report, “The Evolution of Work: The Value of an Employee-First Culture.” This report surveyed more than 4,100 full-time employees in the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, and Ireland to understand where employees are today.

With the changes that have occurred over the last few years, new challenges have arisen. For one, a dispersed workforce can make it difficult for organizations to create a cohesive culture. Employees may find it more difficult to connect with colleagues or the organization. And all of this is against the backdrop of growing economic uncertainty causing employers to pull back on the initiatives that employees need to thrive.

So, what can leaders do to ensure their organization and employees thrive today while also preparing for the uncertainty of tomorrow?

We call it the human workplace.



What is the human workplace?

“The Evolution of Work” report found the employee experience is at its best when it is tailored to the needs of the individual employee. Considering the unique needs and desires of each employee can seem daunting for even the most resource-rich organization. So, the question becomes: How can organizations create such an experience effectively and at scale?

Our research found there are three initiatives that are common among employees regardless of age, industry, race and ethnicity, and country: employee recognition, check-ins, and life events. Each of these aspects contributes to creating a positive workplace culture. Together, they are transformative.

Let's look at each aspect of the human workplace.

1. Employee recognition

The first element of a human workplace is a formal recognition program. Of employees surveyed, 55% report working at an organization that has one, and they and the company benefit from it.

Employees who partake in recognition programs are more likely to feel connected to their organization (+22.3 percentage points), their colleagues (+15.9 percentage points), 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.

Employees who partake in recognition programs are:

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

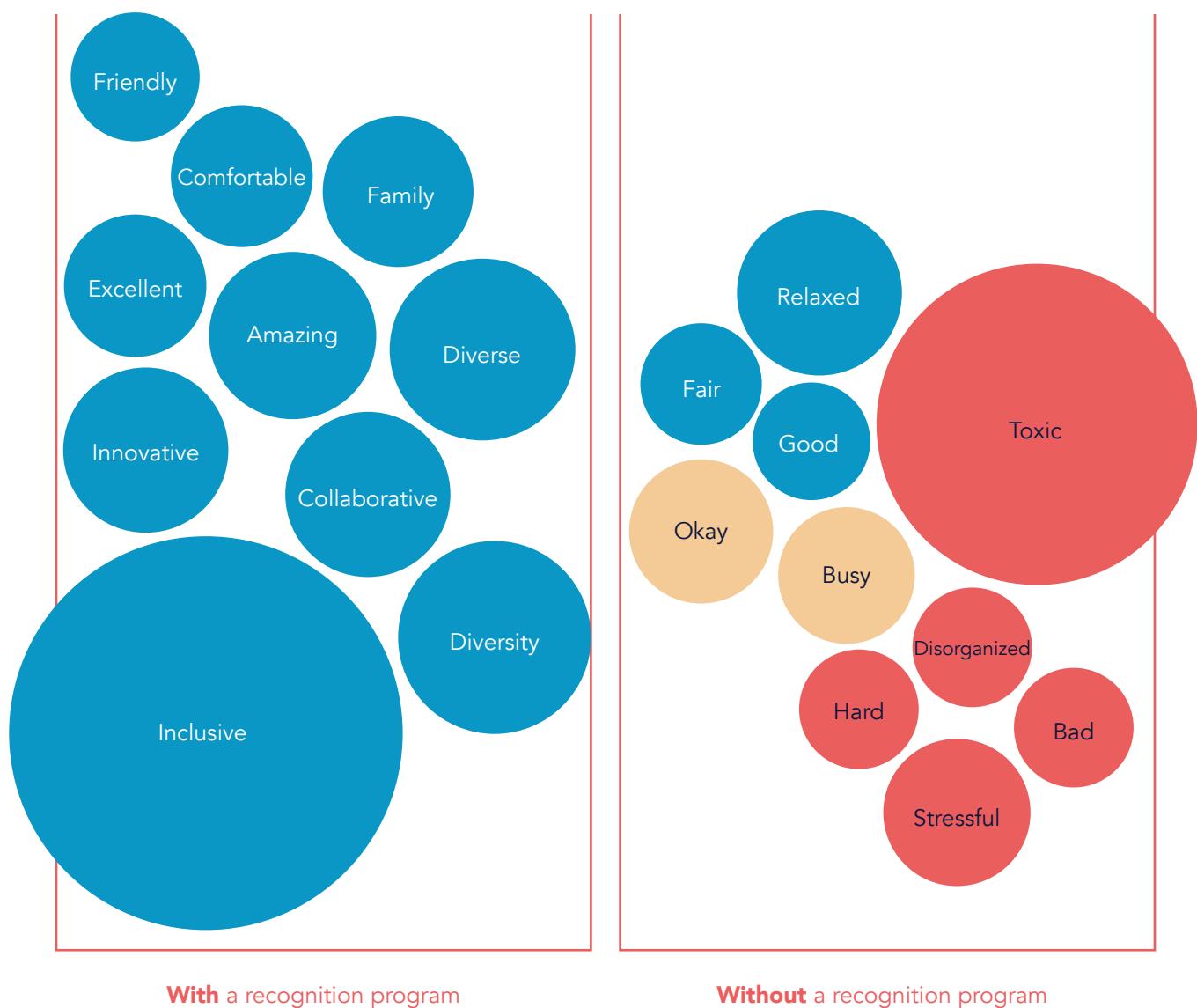
1.3x more likely to feel **connected to their colleagues**

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

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

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.



2. Check-ins

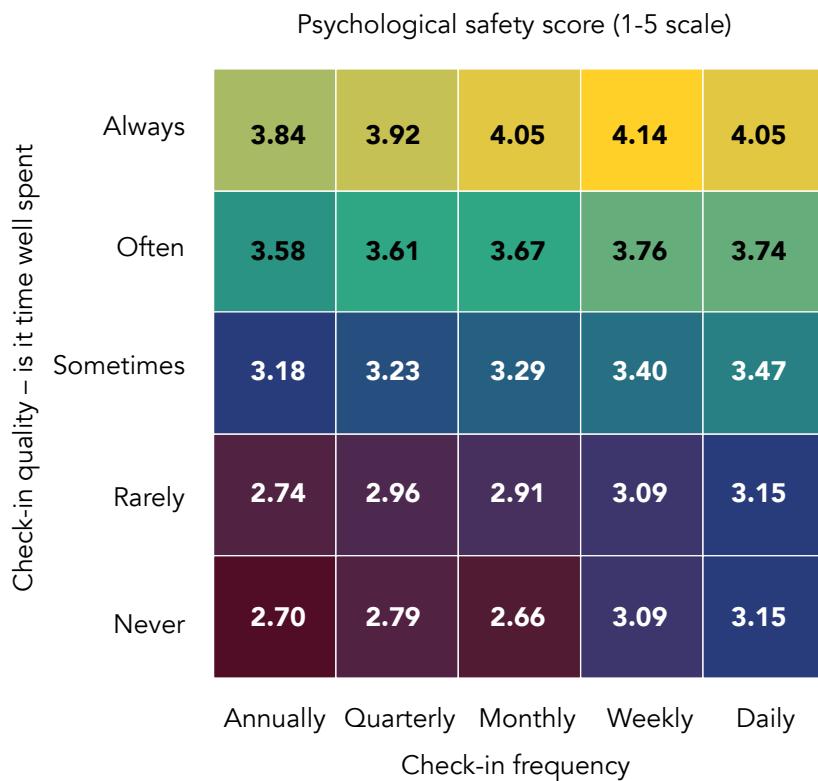
The best way to meet employees where they are is to talk to them. This is especially important for managers as the employee-manager relationship is one of the most pivotal at work. When these relationships are at their best, managers and employees can have consistent conversations about what is challenging, motivating, and stressing employees.

Again, frequency matters. The more frequently employees check in with their managers, the more psychologically safe they feel.

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” sometimes, rarely, or never. It is a missed opportunity, but a correctable problem. And it makes a big difference. Employees who feel their check-in with their manager was time well spent are less likely to fear losing their job.

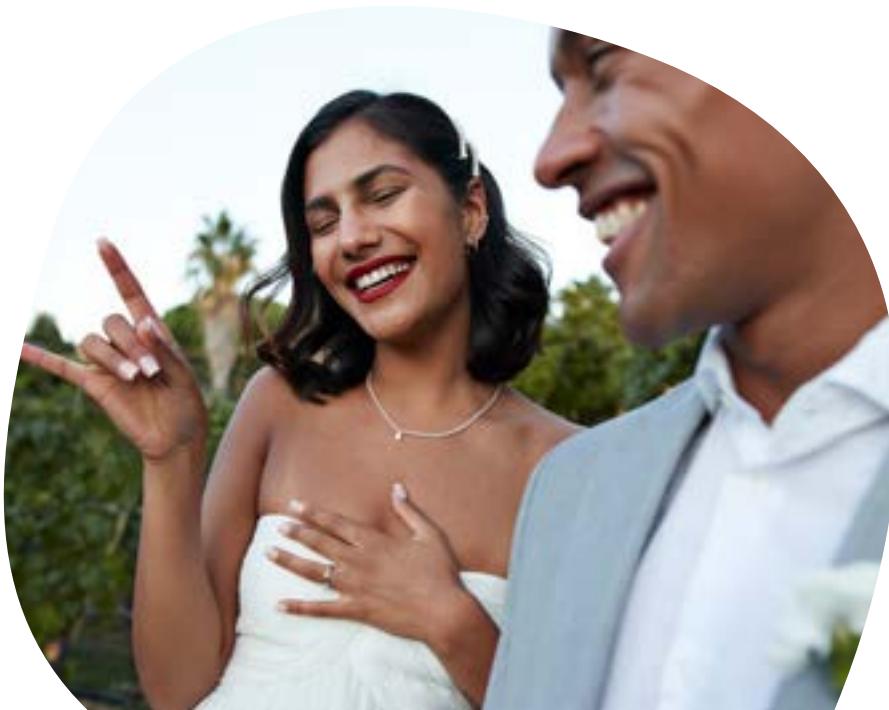
Open communication strengthens every relationship, including those at work. A regular check-in is one of the best ways to know how employees are doing and how managers and the organization could be supporting them.

3. Life events

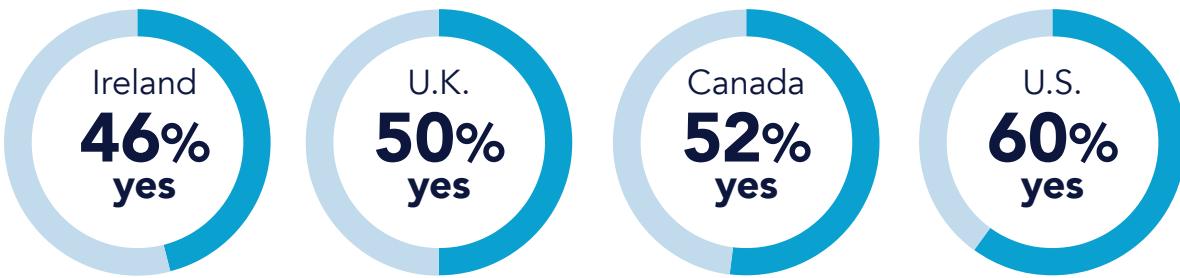
People are so much more than “employees.” They move, get married, have kids, run 5Ks, and adopt pets. They cannot leave their lives at the door just like they cannot leave who they are at the door.

The most human thing a company can do is acknowledge and celebrate these moments.

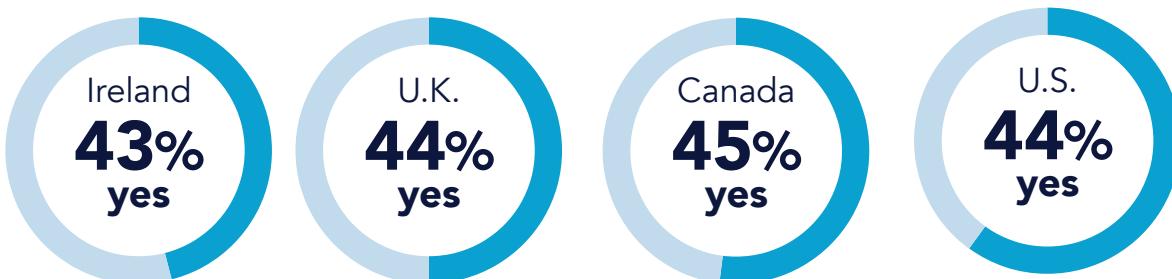
Celebrating life events at work is most common for employees working in the United States, but regardless of country and cultural differences, employees across the board want more opportunities to celebrate personal milestones. In fact, of those who do not have a formal program for recognizing life events, 38% still report celebrating with co-workers.



"My organization celebrates life events."



"I wish there were more opportunities to celebrate life events at work with my colleagues."



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, reap the benefits of a more connected and more human workplace.

Conclusion

Over the last few years, a common refrain has been that “employees now have the power.” That is not exactly right.

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.

Employers answering that bell and building a human workplace through employee recognition, life events, and frequent check-ins are leading the way in 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.