

Design an Employee-Centric Workplace

15 Strategies to Inspire
Engagement and Boost Retention





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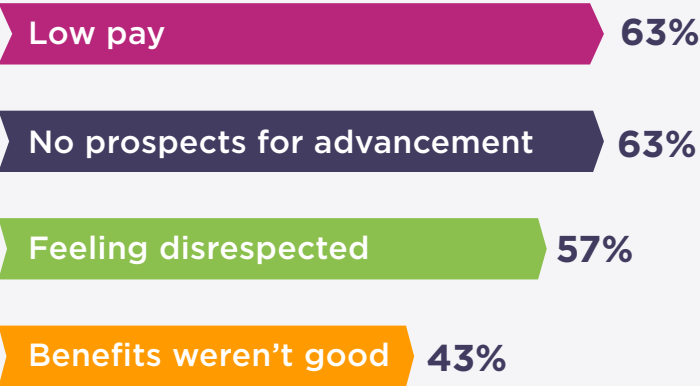



The Evolution of Employee-Employer Relationships

In the past, most organizations were constructed on a basic premise where staff received a living wage and some standard benefits in exchange for an eight-hour (or so) workday where they performed tasks as directed by managers and leaders. As new generations have joined the workforce, that model has evolved with **companies being expected to improve their support of individual employees and workforce communities.**

Now, in the wake of the pandemic and the Great Resignation, many businesses are reckoning with a true revolution in employee-employer relations. Numerous studies have been conducted to understand why people are leaving and what they are looking for in their next endeavor.

According to [Pew Research](#) workers who quit a job in 2021 pointed to:





A survey by [Revelio Labs](#) found that a toxic culture is **10.4X more powerful** than compensation in predicting a company's attrition rate.

While money matters, it's clear that corporations need to do more than simply increase salaries to keep staff. The workplaces that thrive in the future will prioritize employees and empower them to succeed as whole people.



The Employee-Centric Workplace

As executives react to the changing demands of the global workforce, they are being called to rethink long-standing policies to design an environment that serves the staff population. Leaders must create an ecosystem where everyone embraces practices that promote a positive, worker-focused climate.

According to [LinkedIn](#), the top five drivers of a great culture include:

- 1 Opportunities to learn and grow
- 2 Belonging
- 3 Organizational values
- 4 Support for wellbeing
- 5 Collaboration

When any or all of these factors are lacking, it will be increasingly difficult to attract and retain talent. The most effective enterprises will **look to the professionals in Human Resources (HR), Organizational Development (OD) and Learning & Development (L&D)**, to lead the way by creating and guiding meaningful programs that:

- ✓ Infuse purpose in work
- ✓ Cultivate belonging
- ✓ Provide holistic benefits
- ✓ Honor voice and contributions
- ✓ Boost opportunities for growth

Investing time, energy and resources into these areas will enable HR, OD and L&D professionals to support the organization's evolution to becoming an employer of choice. **In the next five chapters, we will describe each of these considerations and provide three strategies – one to apply with executives, one with managers and one with individual contributors – to cultivate an employee-centric ecosystem.**



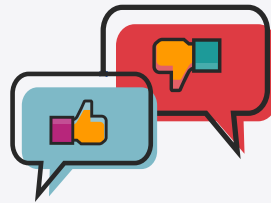
Infuse Purpose in Work

There must be more to a purpose statement than simply making money – at least if employers want to attract personnel. While financial outcomes are important, companies will find that without a strong set of values and a motivating vision, it will be challenging to hire and retain team members.

Purpose can be defined as the reason why a business exists.



90% of executives recognize the importance of having an aspirational reason for being, which inspires and provides a call to action as well as benefits to society ([EY/Harvard Business Review Analytic Services](#)).



While **85%** of executives and upper management said that they are living their purpose at work, **only 15%** of frontline managers and employees agreed ([McKinsey](#)).



Employees who say their jobs are highly meaningful are **69% less likely** to quit in the next six months ([BetterUp Labs](#)).

When coworkers align to the organization's ethos, they are in sync on goals and more likely to make decisions that maintain the forward momentum of the business. It can also influence the bottom line, **as consumers are 4x more likely to buy from a purpose-driven brand** ([Zeno](#)).

How to Propel Purpose



WITH EXECUTIVES: Explore the Vision from Many Perspectives

From [our research at Emergenetics®](#), we know people prefer to think and behave in different ways, which means individuals will likely have varying desires when it comes to finding significance. Using the Emergenetics Thinking Attributes to consider purpose encourages a comprehensive view. To establish or strengthen your rationale for being in business, partner with leadership to answer the following:

- ▶ Why does the organization exist?
- ▶ What does it deliver?
- ▶ Who does it serve?
- ▶ What does the future look like because of the company's efforts?

Because every person will have a preference for at least one Thinking Attribute, the questions create a link between their various interests and the work being done. The exploration also promotes clarity around what the corporation can do today to build a better tomorrow, which may serve as a rallying cry for staff.





WITH MANAGERS: Emphasize Impact

As employees seek meaning in their jobs, it's essential that supervisors help direct reports recognize their influence and exercise reasonable autonomy. Coach people leaders on how to **make connections between team projects** and the efforts of each member of their department **to the goals and vision** of the corporation.

Additionally, partner with managers to **empower their personnel with greater independence**. Some training options to build this skill may include collaborative goal setting, delegation and expanding coaching capabilities. By giving staff latitude in contributing to business outcomes, it will enhance their relationship with the company and help them see the significance of their work.



WITH EMPLOYEES: Introduce Job Crafting

Through [job crafting](#), personnel have an opportunity to proactively make shifts to their roles with the aim to amplify person-job fit. Job crafting can be accomplished through:

- ▶ **Task crafting** – to adjust job responsibilities to align with their passions and the demands of the business.
- ▶ **Relationship crafting** – to reshape their interactions and strengthen bonds with staff they may not see often.
- ▶ **Cognitive crafting** – to change mindsets about the tasks employees engage in to find more meaning in their day-to-day.

HR, OD and L&D teams can motivate staff to consider the needs of the business, identify individual interests and strengths as well as build plans to adjust their work through the power of perception, connection and responsibility.

A GENERATIONAL LOOK AT PURPOSE

While younger generations may get a lot of attention for their desire for meaning with [75% of Gen Z believing that jobs should have a reason beyond simply making money](#), they aren't the only ones. 69% of older generations agree with that statement as well.

The bottom line: A sense of purpose can engage anyone.

Cultivate Belonging

Employees continue to call for more diversity and inclusivity, and attentive organizations will answer by creating spaces where people from all backgrounds are and feel valued. In psychologically safe spaces, staff can be themselves as well as share their opinions and issues without fear, which enhances the workplace experience for all.

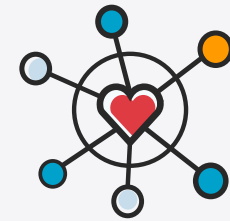
According to the Cambridge Dictionary, **belonging** is defined as having a good relationship with the other members of a group because they welcome you and accept you.



Highly inclusive leaders see **90%** higher team innovation, **50%** higher team performance and **140%** higher team engagement ([BetterUp](#)).



Belonging is the **#1 driver of engagement** ([Qualtrics](#)).



Personnel with a strong sense of connection report a **56% higher level** of overall job performance ([BetterUp](#)).

These statistics are not the only advantages that come with inclusivity. In an environment where diverse opinions are shared, **the byproducts can be seen in more effective decision-making and reduced risks.**

How to Build a Sense of Community



FOR EXECUTIVES: Align on Norms

Norms help members of a community understand the rules of engagement. Without a common set of values and expectations, companies may end up with a host of sub-cultures. Help leadership define norms by exploring foundational elements that can unify your workforce. Some considerations include:

- ▶ Do we have core values that guide our company and culture?
- ▶ Do existing values, as they are defined today, align with the company's purpose and vision?
- ▶ Do all staff members have clarity on what the values look like in action?
- ▶ How do the values factor into decision-making at all levels?
- ▶ What does the employee experience feel like today and does it align with the enterprise's stated principles?
- ▶ How will we create accountability related to our values?

Pro tip: Provide data from staff surveys, focus groups or other channels to inform the discussion.





FOR MANAGERS: Magnify Empathy

One of the best ways to help employees feel welcomed and understood is to invest in programs that expand the emotional intelligence (EQ) of managers. When supervisors flex their empathy skills, they make an effort to understand the perspectives of their direct reports and are mindful of their thoughts and feelings. **Validating the different experiences of staff** can be a powerful step in bolstering belonging.

Solutions like Emergenetics can support managers as they develop EQ. Gaining insights into the ways that people prefer to think and behave, supervisors grow capacity in understanding and valuing diverse viewpoints. They also **discover strategies to respect and manage to the specific needs** of each person, thus creating a more compassionate, validating environment.



FOR EMPLOYEES: Celebrate Cognitive Diversity

An important aspect of inclusion is consideration and appreciation for **cognitive diversity**. Staff will feel a stronger sense of belonging when they know they can express different worldviews, beliefs and ways of thinking, while **trusting they will be heard and their ideas considered**. These practices also enhance psychological safety when coworkers recognize that they won't face retribution for challenging the status quo.

Train all contributors across the corporation to embrace diversity of thought and unique styles of working. Instruments like the **Emergenetics Profile and our accompanying workshops can provide a shortcut**, empowering individuals to communicate and collaborate with colleagues in a way that honors their Thinking and Behavioral preferences. The programs also demonstrate the positive impact of cognitive diversity, which encourages employees to be more welcoming of those who approach things differently.

A GENERATIONAL LOOK AT BELONGING

[An EY survey](#) of three generations found that 56% of respondents feel the greatest sense of belonging when they are trusted and respected. Specifically, 63% of baby boomers feel this way, compared with Gen Xers at 56% and millennials at 53%.

The bottom line: Appreciating the inherent strengths of each person builds community.

Provide Holistic Benefits

While a comprehensive view of wellness is not entirely new, it has gotten more attention since the pandemic. Individuals' attitudes are shifting, and they are increasingly seeking positions that allow them to integrate work and life on their terms.

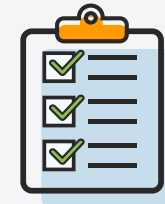
Compensation is very important, yet a sole focus on money will not be enough to entice commitment in the long run. A more holistic approach considers all aspects of an individual's wellbeing – physical, mental, emotional, social and financial.



68% of employers say they have enhanced their wellbeing value proposition, yet only **51% of employees agree** ([Buck](#)).



87% of personnel expect their employers to support them in achieving work-life balance ([Glassdoor](#)).



60% of workers are interested in having a wider mix of voluntary benefits ([MetLife](#)).

The trend toward comprehensive compensation has direct connection to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Before a person can truly realize their potential in their roles, **it's imperative that their basic requirements such as physical, psychological and financial needs are fulfilled, and companies are taking notice.**

How to Bolster Benefits



WITH EXECUTIVES: Conduct a Universal Review

Work with leadership to understand the current state of the business's offerings. Bucket the programs into the following wellness categories (*some may exist in more than one group*):

- ▶ **Financial** – e.g., salary, education reimbursement, retirement funding, legal services or career development assistance, etc.
- ▶ **Physical** – e.g., inclusive medical insurance, fitness memberships, healthy snacks, transportation incentives, etc.
- ▶ **Mental** – e.g., mindfulness programs, employee assistance, recognition initiatives, yoga memberships, massage therapy, etc.
- ▶ **Social** – e.g., team building events, training courses, community involvement, volunteering, etc.
- ▶ **Emotional** – e.g., self-awareness assessments, stress management courses, EQ trainings, etc.

The categorization will make it easier to identify underrepresented areas. There may also be activities that certain departments engage in which could be expanded enterprise wide. Identifying the gaps allows the HR and leadership teams to (re)construct compensation packages to support the whole person.





WITH MANAGERS: Invest in Positive Psychology

Supervisors can have a significant impact on their people's engagement and wellbeing. When they have the tools to support their staff's strengths, employees tend to feel happier, less stressed and more confident. The focus on **utilizing strengths is critical to [positive psychology](#)**.

Emergenetics can be a powerful ally in promoting this mindset amongst people leaders. Through our trainings and our scientifically valid, proprietary assessment, managers understand the natural tendencies of each of their team members. Our [supplemental resources](#) and templates provide specific strategies to **empower supervisors to manage individuals in a way that can energize and engage** them, contributing to their overall wellbeing.



WITH EMPLOYEES: Encourage Voice and Choice

To create a truly worker-focused benefits program, ask staff to share their needs. Use surveys to encourage individuals to **rank their priorities or solicit feedback** on benefit updates that are being considered.

It is also motivating to give employees flexibility to choose what they want in their benefits packages or perks. Each person in the firm will likely value different things based on their lifestyle, interests and perspectives. Allowing staff to **opt into voluntary benefits or utilize stipends** and funding in a multitude of ways encourages them to curate coverage that suits their personal circumstances.

A GENERATIONAL VIEW ON BENEFITS

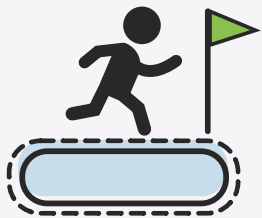
[91% of personnel](#) feel companies should offer personalized benefits packages. It makes sense when considering the different wishes of each generation. Take financial security for example. While [53% of employees](#) identify finances as a concern, Gen Xers are more likely to be more concerned about caregiving costs for children and parents, while millennials are most worried about financial stability.

The bottom line: Providing flexibility and holistic compensation demonstrates that employees are valued as individuals.

Honor Voice and Contributions

When people are prioritized, staff know that their input will be heard and that they will be recognized for the impacts they make. Personnel will feel emboldened to make suggestions, speak up with new ideas and introduce initiatives to take the company to the next level. They will embrace an atmosphere that is inspiring and engaging.

According to [Achievers](#), **employee voice** is defined as giving opportunities to express ideas, concerns and perspectives and having the ability to influence decisions at work through their feedback.



If a person feels their opinions matter, they are **4.6X more likely** to deliver their best work ([Salesforce](#)).



Organizations with formal recognition programs have **31% less** turnover than those without them ([Quantum Workplace](#)).



The most meaningful and memorable recognition comes **most often from a manager** ([Gallup](#)).

Everyone in the workforce will appreciate feeling valued and celebrated. Soliciting greater input not only boosts engagement. It also often **leads to improved outcomes and brilliant, new ideas.**

How to Turn the Volume Up on Voice



WITH EXECUTIVES: Design Multiple Feedback Loops

Partner with leadership to identify platforms and systems to solicit and receive staff contributions. Start by assessing current channels and determine where there is potential to solicit additional ideas, considerations or suggestions for improvement.

Some avenues may include **regular engagement and lifecycle surveys**, 360 reviews for leaders as well as post-mortem meetings to review major changes and discuss ways to improve future endeavors. Additionally, **always-on feedback systems or virtual staff communities** can allow executives to crowdsource new ideas as well as uncover challenges to address.





WITH MANAGERS: Amplify Recognition Programs

There are countless ways to celebrate people. From research, we know that supervisors' comments tend to be the most memorable.

To develop a climate that honors individual and group accomplishments, adapt existing recognition programs in partnership with managers to offer options for them to deliver:

- ▶ Public and private recognition
- ▶ Metric-based (such as achieving a goal) and appreciation-based celebrations (such as anniversaries)
- ▶ Progress acknowledgments in addition to completion
- ▶ Small-scale and large-scale incentives
- ▶ Standardized thank yous and rewards to choose from



WITH EMPLOYEES: Promote Peer-to-Peer Programs

Through peer coaching and recognition, coworkers have more opportunities to raise their voice and receive acknowledgment for their contributions. Create **peer coaching networks** where individuals can share insights, offer feedback and suggest ideas to help others. Better yet – if you can **pair staff according to complementary Emergenetics preferences**, you can boost the networks with the power of cognitive diversity!

In addition, provide avenues for colleagues to **recognize their coworkers' achievements**, big and small. Identify a platform to use – whether that is a simple chat channel or a dedicated software – and create best practices in utilizing the system for celebrations, milestones and more. Consider incorporating prizes to stimulate participation and engagement.

A GENERATIONAL VIEW ON RECOGNITION

In a [survey of millennials and Gen Z workers](#), 79% said that an increase in recognition would make them more loyal, yet 50% feel that management does not recognize strong job performance.

The bottom line: Don't overlook recognition as a simple way to put employees first.

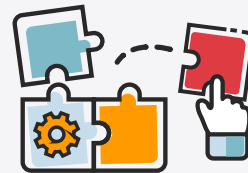
Boost Opportunities for Growth

Traditionally, employee training followed a linear approach, where team members expanded their capacities to advance in their field or up the corporate ladder. Now, technical capabilities have increasingly shorter shelf-lives and orderly career progression is the anomaly rather than the rule. Enterprises looking to stay ahead of the curve must design development programs to be agile and adaptable.

According to ATD, **learning and development** focuses on empowering employees' growth and developing their knowledge, skills and capabilities to drive better business performance.



50% of employees will need to be reskilled by 2025 ([World Economic Forum](#)).



Opportunities to learn and grow are the **#1 driver** of a great culture ([LinkedIn](#)).



94% of workers would stay at a company longer if it invested in their career development ([LinkedIn](#)).

When employees develop new skills that align to upcoming demands, they are not the only ones who will benefit. **Companies realize gains such as a stronger talent pipeline, innovation as well as expansion of essential functions and emerging areas of opportunity.**

How to Galvanize Growth



WITH EXECUTIVES: Construct an Internal Talent Marketplace

Internal mobility is essential to engage and develop staff. It increases individual skill building and boosts organizational adaptability by matching personnel with exciting projects that will push the business forward. To amplify internal mobility, collaborate with leadership to create an internal talent marketplace.

An internal talent marketplace can be as simple as an intranet or as complex as its own unique system. Through these marketplaces, leaders (and others) **post new roles as well as short-term projects** that employees can apply for. By noting time expectations, executives from different departments can **match team members to temporary gigs** as well as encourage staff to explore projects or job roles that will be needed for the company's long-term success.





WITH MANAGERS:

Personalize the Learning Journey

Individualized development offers two primary benefits. First, it is more engaging for direct reports because the events and programs speak to their passions. Second, with the rapidly evolving business landscape, an adaptable approach will allow individuals, departments and enterprises to be more responsive to change.

To personalize an employee's experience, provide managers with the tools and systems to integrate **regular career conversations** into their meetings with direct reports. Be sure to share insights into the vital **talents required by the business** and provide questions to help them assess the interests and skills their direct reports want to develop. Then, collaborate with supervisors to identify **internal and external training opportunities** to meet these requests.



WITH EMPLOYEES:

Build Power Skills

A focus on reskilling and upskilling supports the long-term growth of the staff and the company. L&D teams can curate assessments to **understand current capability gaps and identify desired talents** to achieve future goals. With this information, L&D professionals can more effectively prioritize training initiatives.

When determining required capacities, **make sure that soft skills are not overlooked**. Talents like empathy, resiliency, change management, communication and collaboration are perpetually relevant and increasingly important as AI takes on standardized and process-oriented tasks. Investing in programming like Emergenetics can build vital interpersonal skills that will be fundamental in the future.

A GENERATIONAL VIEW ON DEVELOPMENT

In a [survey of Baby Boomers, Gen Xers and millennials](#), 70% reported that job-related training and development influenced their decision to stay at their job, and 62% of Gen Z would rather customize their career path than have the organization lay it out for them ([SHRM](#)).

The bottom line: No matter the generation, development can boost connection with the business.

The Workplace of the Future

The fact is leaders do not have to choose between supporting the business or their staff. **When an organization gives priority to creating an employee experience that stimulates a symbiotic relationship – all will benefit!**

Employees are the foundation of every organization. The companies, non-profits, institutions and districts that prioritize investing in their people are those who are best positioned to achieve and exceed their objectives.

Looking for an easy way to get started?

If you need a partner that can help champion culture changes that result in meaningful, tangible improvements, consider Emergenetics and our proprietary assessments, workshops, certifications, digital learning programs, mobile application and more.



Let's design an employee-centric workplace together!

For HR, OD and L&D professionals:

- ▶ Improve soft skills including communication, collaboration, problem solving and more
- ▶ Strengthen training programs by adapting sessions to the ways people inherently prefer to think, behave and learn
- ▶ Create a culture that welcomes diversity of thought and promotes psychological safety

For executives and supervisors:

- ▶ Enhance essential leadership and supervisory skills, including self-awareness, empathy and influence
- ▶ Improve management by utilizing the preferences of staff to increase engagement, motivation and performance
- ▶ Support working environments that promote a sense of belonging and inclusion

For all employees:

- ▶ Reveal how an individual prefers to think and behave to empower everyone to utilize their strengths
- ▶ Develop communication, collaboration and problem-solving skills to cultivate more productive, positive team dynamics
- ▶ Utilize the cognitive diversity of colleagues to aid innovation

To learn more:



Explore [our website](#)



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