

2025 Workplace Trends:

Building a People-First Culture



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In 2025,
The future of work is
undeniably **human.**

Introduction

03



This report highlights **data collected from 350 professionals globally** that tells us a story of how we can cultivate a community culture at work.

The importance of human connection

The future of work is undeniably human. As technology continues to automate more and more tasks, the importance of human connection, empathy, and creativity becomes even more critical. **By developing leaders who inspire and empower their teams, fostering a culture of genuine human connection, and creating a sense of purpose, organizations can cultivate more collaborative, productive, and fulfilling work environments.**

Organizations are recognizing that their workforce is composed of individuals with unique needs, backgrounds, and abilities. Many

of their most significant growth challenges stem from “people problems.” Our research reveals that employee retention remains one of the most frequently cited areas for improvement, backed by reports of low morale, limited engagement, and weak communication and collaboration within surveyed organizations. Taking a human-centric approach to addressing these people-related issues can drive lasting culture shifts that improve retention and overall performance.

84%

of companies believe they are taking adequate steps to address the wellness and mental health of employees

Many organizations are catching on and making strides in building cultures that address humanity in the workplace. In fact, 84% of companies believe they are taking adequate steps to address the wellness and mental health of employees, a jump from 77% in last year's study. **However, we uncovered significant disparities between the strategic, high-level perspectives of executives and that of the individual contributors with boots on the ground involved in day-to-day operations. This disconnect, if ignored, could become a major setback for growing organizations.**

In years past, our research has uncovered that company culture plays a critical role in not only the efficiency and success of the company as a whole, but also the productivity and growth of each individual in that company. This year our workplace trends report highlights data collected from 350 professionals globally that tells us a story of how we can cultivate a community culture at work that prioritizes inclusivity, promotes employee well-being, and drives better outcomes for the company as a whole.





State of the workplace

State of the workplace

Employee development is a pressing concern for **46%** of professionals surveyed—as are challenges with low engagement and morale for **37%**. Leadership development also presents notable challenges for over one-third of organizations.

Only 24% of organizations have high levels of job satisfaction, according to those surveyed. However, those with the highest job satisfaction are nearly **7x** more likely than others to report significant increases in revenue last year.

Which of the following are significant challenges to your organization's success?

46%

Professional development

37%

Low morale/engagement

36%

Leadership development

32%

Poor communication/collaboration

22%

Inclusion/belonging

21%

Lack of employee accountability

17%

Psychological safety

15%

None of thee above

HR perspective

Human Resources (HR) professionals are uniquely positioned to identify critical factors impacting business success. **HR professionals surveyed were significantly more likely to cite professional development, inclusion and belonging, employee accountability, and psychological safety as top challenges** impeding their organization's success.

THE DISCONNECT EFFECT

While **executives and senior leadership** feel employees need to improve their breadth and depth of professional skills, **managers and individual contributors** say morale and engagement are bigger problems. Both perspectives likely hold elements of truth, revealing a common “disconnect effect” between leadership and other organizational levels.

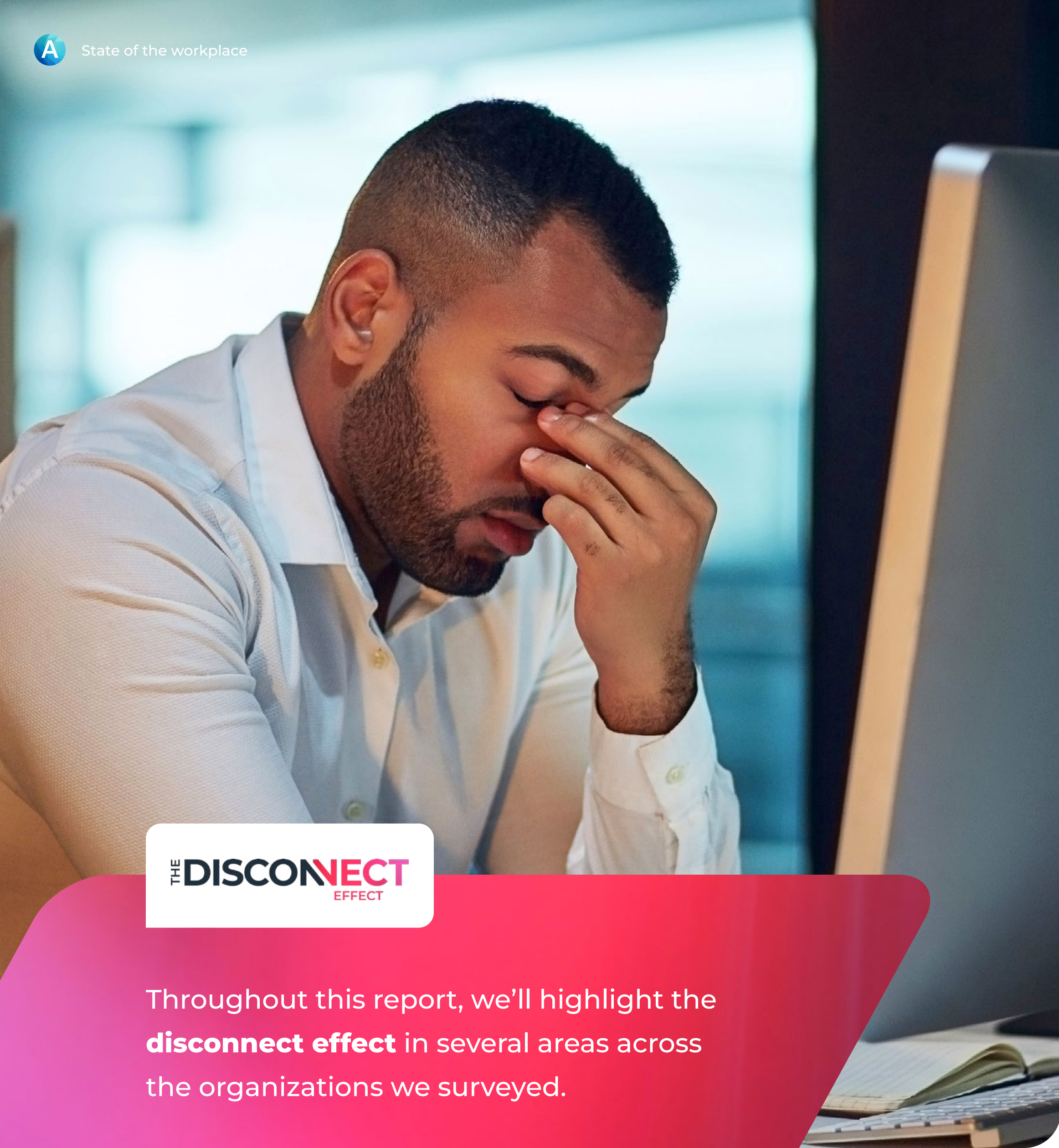
Executives often focus on strategic goals and see employee professional development as a path to improving performance and achieving long-term objectives. From their vantage point, professional skills could directly impact innovation, competitiveness, and the ability to meet evolving business demands.

On the other hand, **managers and individual contributors are closer to daily**

operations and may feel that morale and engagement are more immediate, pressing issues. They experience firsthand how low morale or disengagement can lower productivity, reduce collaboration, and increase turnover, which affects performance in the short term and complicates skill development efforts.

There’s also a significant difference in how executives and non-executives view the effects of poor communication and collaboration. This could suggest that senior leadership’s strategic vision may not fully align with the operational challenges faced by frontline employees. This disconnect is problematic because it often leads to misaligned priorities, ineffective solutions, and lost opportunities for improvement.





Throughout this report, we'll highlight the **disconnect effect** in several areas across the organizations we surveyed.

The disconnect effect

Which of the following are significant challenges to your organization's success?

Significant challenges	Executive	VP/Director	Manager	Non-supervisor
Professional development	45%	63%	42%	28%
Low morale/engagement	37%	31%	42%	41%
Leadership development	35%	49%	25%	30%
Inclusion/belonging	35%	21%	22%	11%
Poor communication/collaboration	28%	29%	34%	35%
Lack of employee accountability	27%	26%	20%	10%
Psychological safety	23%	21%	14%	11%
None of the above	12%	9%	13%	28%

Employee retention is still a significant concern



Half of the professionals surveyed feel employee retention is a serious issue at their company. In fact, this issue has been identified as **the leading concern for two consecutive years**.

Low morale, poor engagement, ineffective communication, and lack of teamwork can lead to high employee turnover and hinder the achievement of organizational goals. When these problems exist, employees are likely to look for new jobs. Creating a workplace culture that fosters growth, support, and inclusivity can enhance employee satisfaction and loyalty, reducing turnover.

These priorities underscore that organizations appear focused on stabilizing and empowering their current workforce to create a strong foundation for future growth, viewing people-driven improvements as the cornerstone for success.

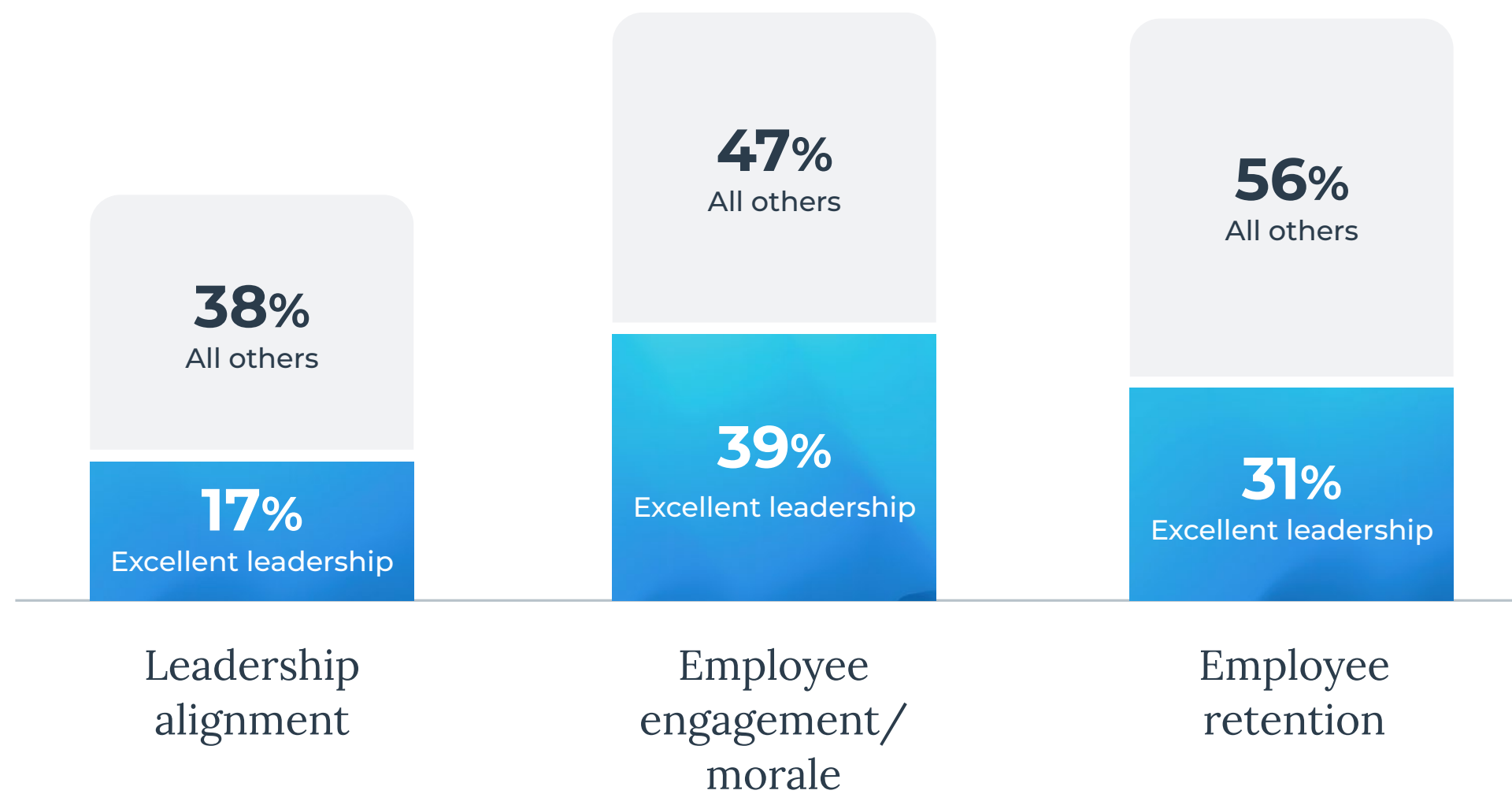
Which of the following areas needs to be improved to achieve your company's primary objectives?



Leadership excellence

Employee training and development and employee engagement and morale also top the list of areas needing improvement for the second year.

Which of the following areas needs to be improved to achieve your company's primary objectives? (Segmented by Leadership Excellence)



About one quarter (24%) of professionals surveyed report having excellent leaders company-wide.

Our data suggests that having excellent leaders can significantly reduce the need for improvements in employee retention, engagement, and leadership alignment.



Trends

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TREND / 01

Human-centric understanding



About one-third of professionals surveyed only discuss overall job performance with their managers annually. Career development opportunities are most often discussed on a bi-annual schedule.

Only about one-quarter of those surveyed have ongoing discussions with their leadership about collaboration, personal development, and well-being. **Yet, these human-centric conversations are critical to uncovering what drives each individual and can enable leaders to truly support and understand their employees to help them succeed.**

How often are the following aspects of performance discussed with your manager/leader?

Aspects of performance	Annually	Bi-annually	Quarterly	Ongoing	Never
Overall job performance	35%	27%	22%	12%	4%
Career development opportunities	20%	29%	27%	11%	13%
Compensation and benefits	41%	19%	19%	9%	12%
Collaboration with others	17%	18%	25%	27%	13%
Personal development/well-being	21%	20%	23%	25%	11%

My company is taking adequate steps to address the well-being and mental health of employees.



THE DISCONNECT EFFECT

There is a 29% percent gap between how executives and non-supervisory employees perceive well-being and mental health at their organizations.

84% of professionals surveyed believe their company is taking adequate steps to address the wellness and mental health of employees, up from 77% in last year's study. However, when we look closer at executives' perceptions compared to those in non-supervisory roles, there is a wide gap. Those in senior leadership roles are significantly more likely to feel their company is addressing the well-being and mental health of employees than managers and non-supervisory employees.

Going deeper than labels

Which tools or methods has your company used to understand and engage with employees?

57%

One-on-one discussions to assess individual strengths, challenges, and career goals

53%

Informal conversations and relationship-building efforts to understand employees on a personal level

44%

360-degree feedback for a holistic view of employee performance and peer relationships

38%

Personality assessments (e.g., Myers-Briggs, Enneagram) to understand how employees collaborate and fit within teams

5%

None of the above

Over half of organizations use one-on-one discussions to assess individual strengths, challenges, and career goals, and just over half say they have informal conversations and relationship-building efforts to understand employees on a personal level.





A comprehensive look at employee development

Relying solely on one-on-one discussions to evaluate an employee's strengths, challenges, and career goals is a significant missed opportunity. While these conversations are valuable, they only offer a limited perspective. Evaluating someone without considering the dynamics of the larger organizational ecosystem, how they contribute to their

team's success, how they handle challenges, and where they would like to improve fails to capture the complete picture of their impact. By gaining a more holistic perspective, leaders can better accommodate individual needs and more successfully invest in their employees' well-being in the workplace.

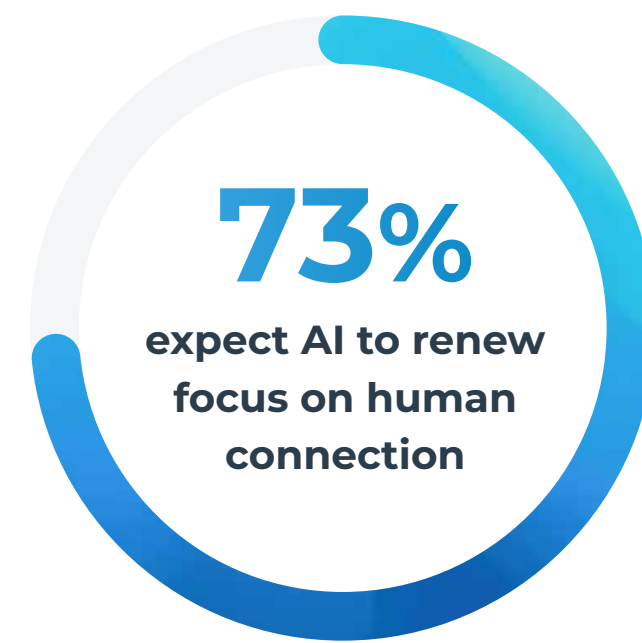


Less than half (44%) establish a holistic view of employee performance and peer relationships via 360-degree feedback.



TREND / 02

Using AI to make room for more humanity at work



Nearly three-quarters (73%) of respondents agree that the use of AI will free up time to focus on human connection at work in the next two years. HR professionals are significantly more optimistic about this, with 85% agreeing with this sentiment compared to 54% of non-HR professionals.

THE DISCONNECT
EFFECT

Executives and senior leaders feel more strongly than those in less senior roles that AI will free up time to focus on human connection at work in the coming two years.

Nine out of ten (90%) of those in executive, VP, or director roles feel this way compared to **76%** of managers and just **32%** of non-supervisory employees.

- **Why the disparity?** Senior employees may have more experience with delegating tasks and managing workloads, making them more confident in their ability to leverage AI to free up time for human connection. They may also have a broader, more strategic view of organizational goals, enabling them to see opportunities where AI can be used to drive better outcomes.

While junior employees might worry about job security due to the growing use of AI, companies should focus on training and developing their current staff to take on tasks that need a human touch. Instead of replacing people with AI, organizations can automate routine work to allow employees to focus on more complex and personalized tasks.

More AI, more humanity?



Overall, the most common uses of AI at work are in predictive analytics, automating administrative tasks, feedback analysis, and responding to inquiries. We still see about one in five professionals not applying AI for any of these use cases.

This presents an opportunity for organizations to align their use of technology with a people-centered approach. Rather than viewing AI as a replacement for human interaction or decision-making, organizations can embrace it as a tool that supports collaboration, empowers individuals, and enhances a people-centered approach essential for lasting success.

Less admin, more human understanding

In what ways do you currently use AI at work?



44% of those using AI for administrative tasks strongly agree that their company is taking adequate steps to address the well-being and mental health of its employees, compared to just 26% of those not using AI for admin-related tasks.

AI-powered administrative tasks may correlate with higher perceived employee well-being due to reduced workload, improved work-life balance, enhanced job satisfaction, and more personalized support.

A human approach to AI adoption

AI makes room for more humanity in leadership.
Those using AI for leadership decision support are significantly more likely to have leaders who:

Promote open communication

63% vs 41%

Respect individual work styles and preferences

51% vs 38%

Encourage collaboration

61% vs 48%



HR roles are using AI more than non-HR roles across all of the above applications—and by a wide margin.

The most common uses of AI for those in HR roles are automation of administrative tasks, predictive analytics, and feedback analysis. About one-third of HR professionals are using AI to respond to inquiries, for the personalization of employee development and training, and for employee self-service like HR portals, benefits, and payroll.

In what ways do you currently use AI at work?



● HR ● Non-HR



Record levels of disengagement



This data point highlights just how prevalent the employee disengagement issue has become.

TREND / 03

The Great Re-Engagement

The once-buzzed-about “quiet quitting” phenomenon has evolved into a more widespread issue: record levels of disengagement. This has a direct impact on productivity, morale, and the overall health of organizations. The fact that 45% of professionals report employee engagement and

morale as an area needing improvement highlights just how prevalent this issue has become. Employees are not just passively showing up; many are actively disengaged, which can ripple across teams, hindering collaboration, innovation, and overall performance.

How much is employee disengagement costing your organization?

• Use this calculator to find out.

[Calculate cost](#)

How to kickstart re-engagement in 2025

In order to combat these record-low levels of disengagement, in 2025, organizations must place a dedicated focus on re-engaging employees.

When employees lack a clear connection between their daily work and the broader goals of the organization, they are less likely to feel motivated or accountable for their impact. Boosting engagement requires developing a shared sense of purpose, responsibility, and excitement for helping the organization as a whole achieve its objectives.

Only 18% of professionals surveyed rate employee accountability as “excellent” in their organizations, underscoring the gap in how employees understand their roles and contributions.

How would you rate the overall employee accountability at your organization?



Helping employees clearly see the connection between their daily work and the organization’s broader goals is crucial for fostering accountability and combating disengagement. By creating a shared sense of purpose and responsibility, leaders can inspire greater motivation and ownership, driving both individual and organizational success.



Are you familiar with these terms describing disengaged worker habits?

Quiet vacationing

Pretending to be working while actually on vacation or engaged in other personal activities.

Coffee badging

Showing up to the office just long enough to swipe your badge and grab a coffee, then going back home to continue working remotely.

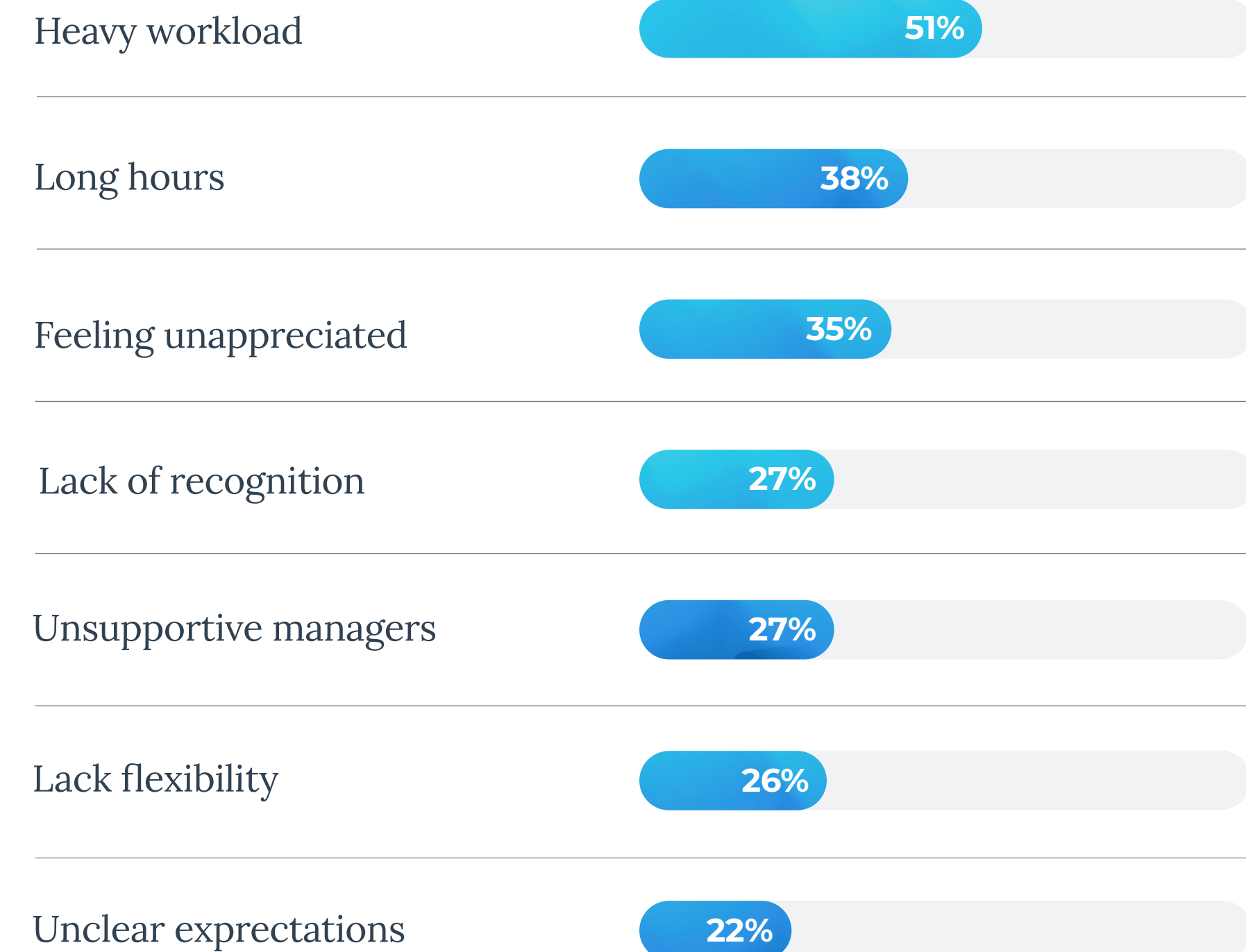
Fake keyboarding

Simulating work activity by pretending to use a computer when not actually engaged in any productive tasks.



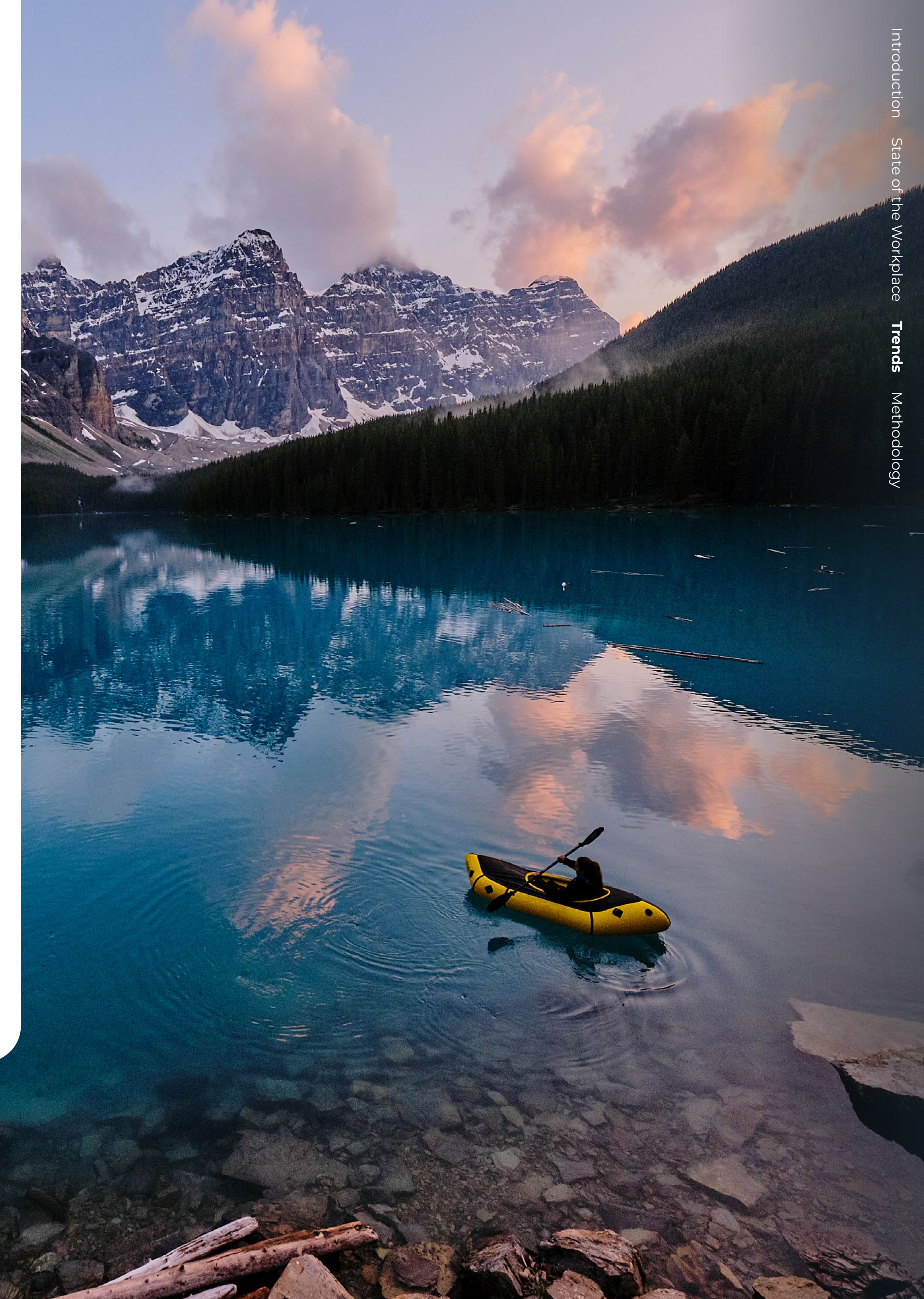
Are stress and burnout culprits in the “quiet quitting” epidemic? Over half of the professionals surveyed report that a heavy workload contributes to feeling stressed and burnt out at work. Other contributing factors include long hours and feeling unappreciated.

What factors contribute to you feeling stressed or burnt out at work?



Improving engagement

About half of the professionals surveyed reported that their company supports their work-life balance. Employee-driven initiatives like employee committees and professional development programs were reported by 41% and 39% of companies, respectively.



Which of the following strategies does your company exercise to improve employee engagement?

51%

Work-life balance support (e.g., flexible leave policies, work-from-anywhere options)

41%

Employee-driven initiatives and feedback loops (e.g., employee committees, suggestion programs)

37%

Team-building and collaboration activities (e.g., team outings, retreats, cross-departmental projects)

37%

Transparent communication of company goals and progress

35%

Rewards or bonuses for meeting goals

39%

Professional development programs

31%

Regular access to leadership (e.g., open-door policy, town halls)

27%

Opportunities for innovation and creativity (e.g., hackathons, innovation labs)

THE DISCONNECT EFFECT

Only 9% of individual contributors and 20% of managers report their company provides opportunities for innovation and creativity, compared to **34% of VPs and directors and 47% of executives.**

Executives are significantly more likely than non-supervisory employees to report that their organization is providing team-building and collaboration activities **(48% vs 24%)**, employee-driven initiatives and feedback loops **(55% vs 25%)**, and professional development programs **(53% vs 19%)**.

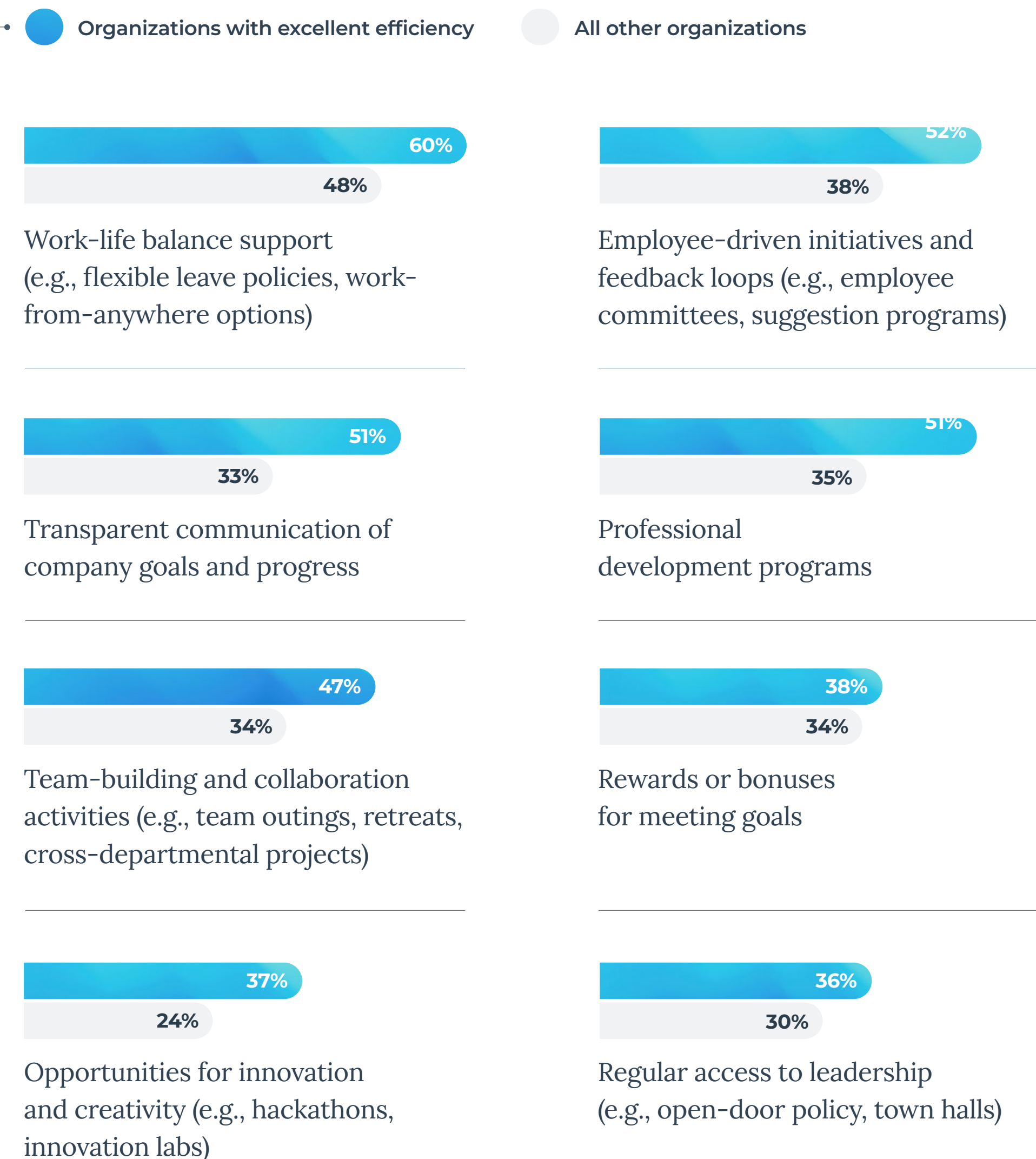


The most efficient companies are **significantly more likely** than others to offer work-life balance support, employee-driven initiatives, transparent communication of company standings, professional development programs, team-building activities, and opportunities for innovation.

Work-life balance and effective feedback loops can significantly improve employee engagement. **When leadership clearly recognizes that employees are people who matter as much as they do, with goals, challenges, and responsibilities outside of work, it demonstrates respect and can actually inspire employees to contribute more.**



Which of the following strategies does your company exercise to improve employee engagement?





TREND / 04

Closing the people gap

Organizations are recognizing the need to balance both hard and soft skills to build a well-rounded workforce. In fact, **82% of those surveyed agree that their company actively supports and invests in the development of soft skills, such as communication and collaboration.** By cultivating a workforce equipped with both hard and soft skills, companies can build high-performing teams, foster a positive workplace culture, and ultimately drive business growth.

Technical skills are the most commonly trained and developed among organizations surveyed, however soft skills like communication, collaboration, and teamwork are also prioritized by a significant majority of organizations. A combined focus on these and other soft skills like problem-solving, conflict resolution, and emotional intelligence demonstrates that organizations recognize the need for adaptable and collaborative environments to drive success.

Training and development at work



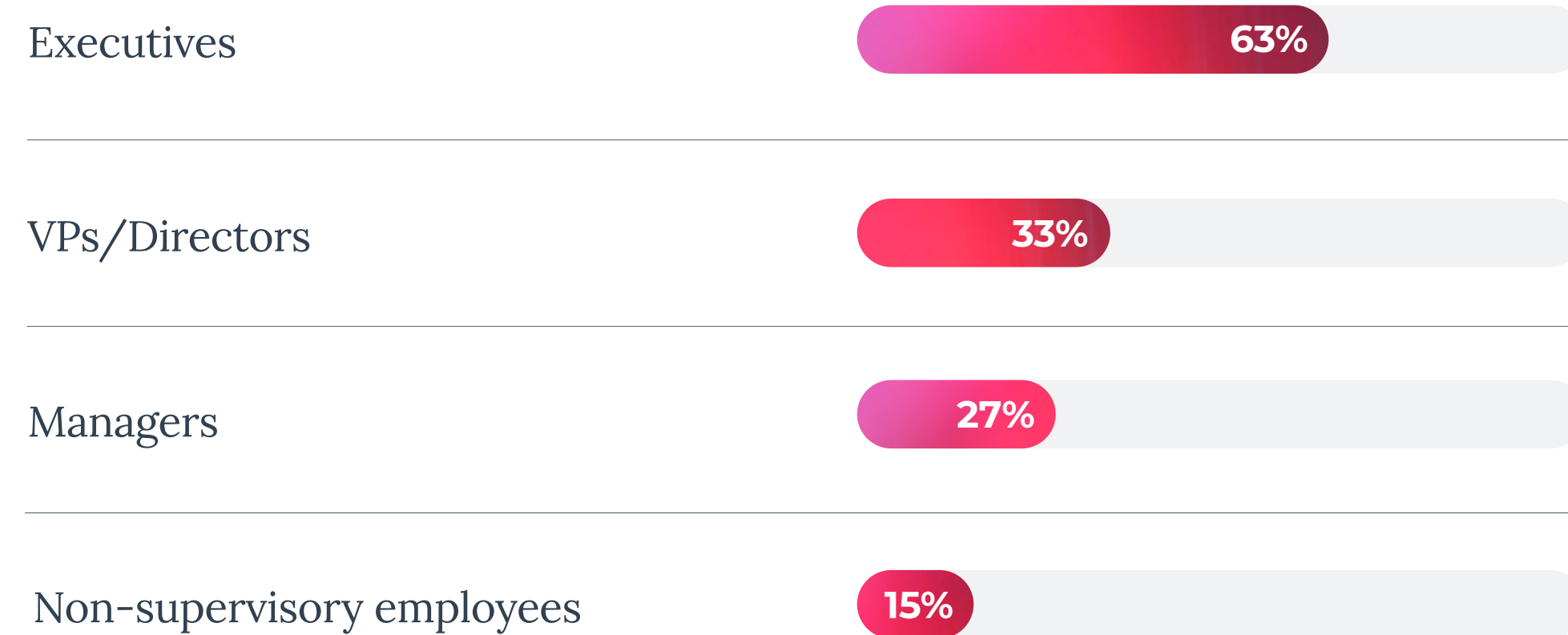
Reflecting on how our work impacts others

Which of the following does your company provide training and development for?



Overall, just one-third (33%) of those surveyed say they are regularly encouraged to reflect on how their work impacts the rest of the team. However, **the most efficient teams are nearly 3x more likely to be regularly encouraged to reflect on how their work affects the overall team's success**, with 63% reporting this practice compared to just 23% of other teams.

Percent of those who strongly agree with the following statement: “In my organization, we are regularly encouraged to reflect on how our work impacts the overall team.”



There is a drastic difference in the opinions of those in executive leadership compared to those in management and non-supervisory positions about the encouragement of self-reflection at their organization.



THE DISCONNECT EFFECT

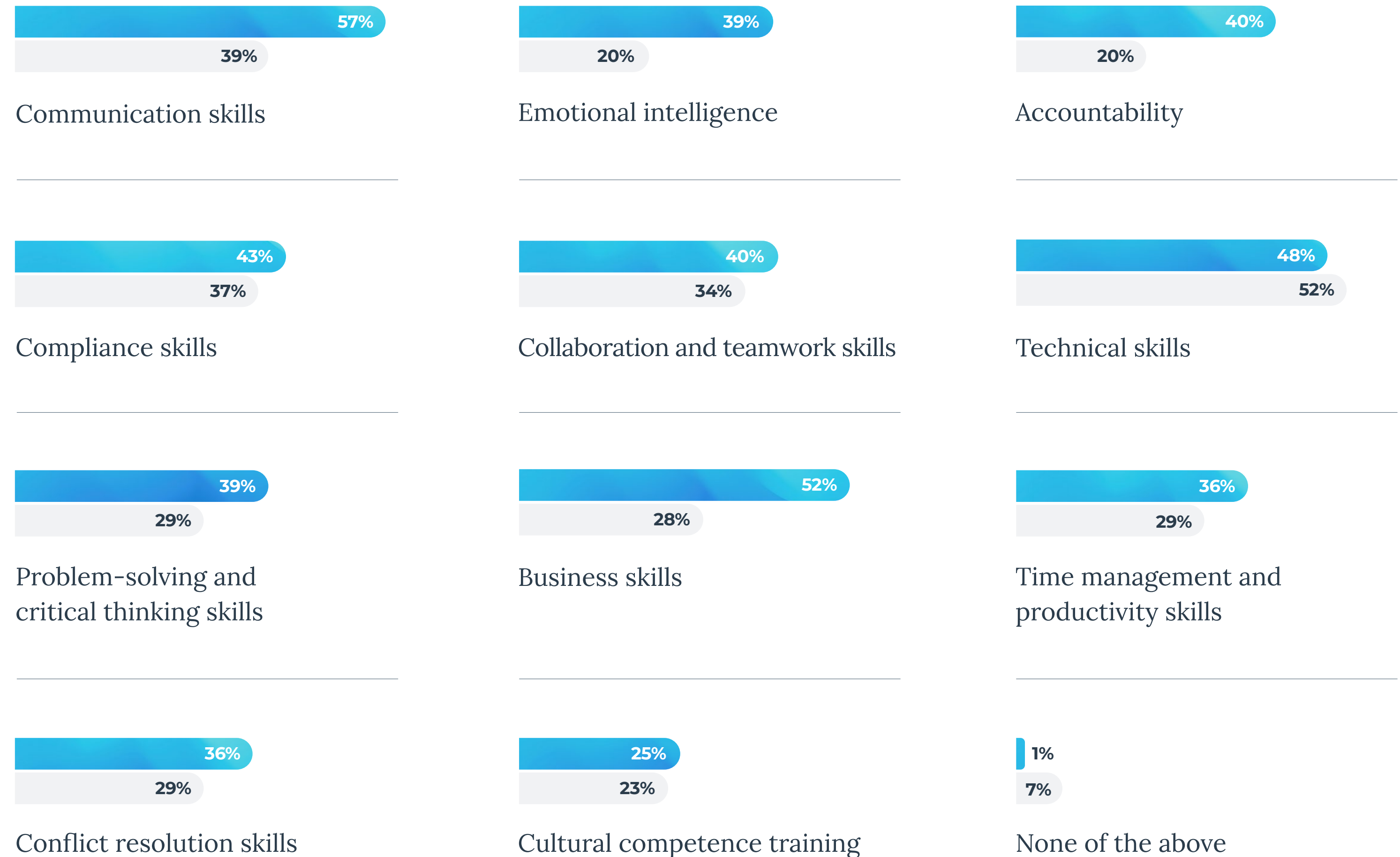
Having non-supervisory employees reflect on how their work impacts the overall organization fosters a sense of ownership and accountability, helping them see the broader purpose behind their tasks. This connection to the bigger picture not only enhances engagement and motivation but also encourages a collaborative mindset, where individuals are more likely to align their efforts with the success of the entire organization. Encouraging this helps create a culture where every employee feels valued and invested in the organization's goals.

Soft skills and revenue growth

Organizations that experienced the largest revenue growth in the past year tend to invest more in training employees on soft skills like communication and emotional intelligence compared to organizations that saw less significant revenue increases. This group is also **2x more likely** to be investing in the development of accountable people in their workforce.

● Organizations that had significant revenue increases ● All other organizations

Which of the following does your company provide training and development for?



Developing accountable employees makes an impact

33% vs 17%

Percent of those reporting excellence in efficiency

37% vs 21%

Percent of those reporting excellence in innovation

Organizations with the highest revenue growth are twice as likely to conduct accountability training compared to others. For those organizations conducting accountability training and development, we see **greater efficiency** and **more innovation** than those that do not provide this type of training.

Accountability training also fosters a more inclusive and supportive work environment. Employees in these organizations offering accountability training are **2x more likely** to feel that their opinions and input are recognized and considered by leadership (48% vs 24% strongly agree) and believe their company is taking adequate steps to support their well-being and mental health (45% vs 28% strongly agree).

Finally, professionals from companies that develop accountability in their employees are less likely to report feelings of being underappreciated, unrecognized, having unclear expectations, and having unsupportive managers as factors resulting in stress or burnout at work.



What factors contribute to you feeling stressed or burnt out at work?





This data highlights a critical shift: HR is no longer just a support function focused on compliance or employee relations. Instead, HR is increasingly being viewed as part of the leadership team, a strategic partner responsible for shaping the human experience within the organization.

TREND / 05

Transformation of the HR function

The responsibility for shaping company culture overwhelmingly falls on **executive leadership and HR**, with 35% of professionals identifying leadership and 28% citing HR as the primary parties involved in the execution of culture initiatives.

What party is responsible for executing company culture initiatives at your organization?

35%

Executive leadership

28%

Human resources

18%

A cross-functional team

10%

Team/department managers

9%

Culture is not explicitly managed

92%

of HR professionals feel that HR has a strong influence on company-wide strategic decisions at their company

Human Resource teams are experiencing a sort of rebrand, with new identities to include terms like “People,” “Culture,” and “Experience.” They are becoming key players in setting the cultural tone for the entire organization.

This transformation positions HR as a “CEO whisperer,” directly influencing leadership decisions that affect

employee well-being, engagement, and overall company culture. By collaborating with leadership, HR is transitioning from a reactive, primarily administrative role to a more strategic, proactive one that gives them a seat at the table to help drive business success, employee engagement, and overall organizational performance.

Give HR a seat at the table for better business outcomes.

92% of HR professionals feel that HR has a strong influence on company-wide strategic decisions at their company. **Organizations that give HR the most influence on company-wide strategic decisions have better rates of job satisfaction, efficiency, innovation, training, leadership, and accountability.**



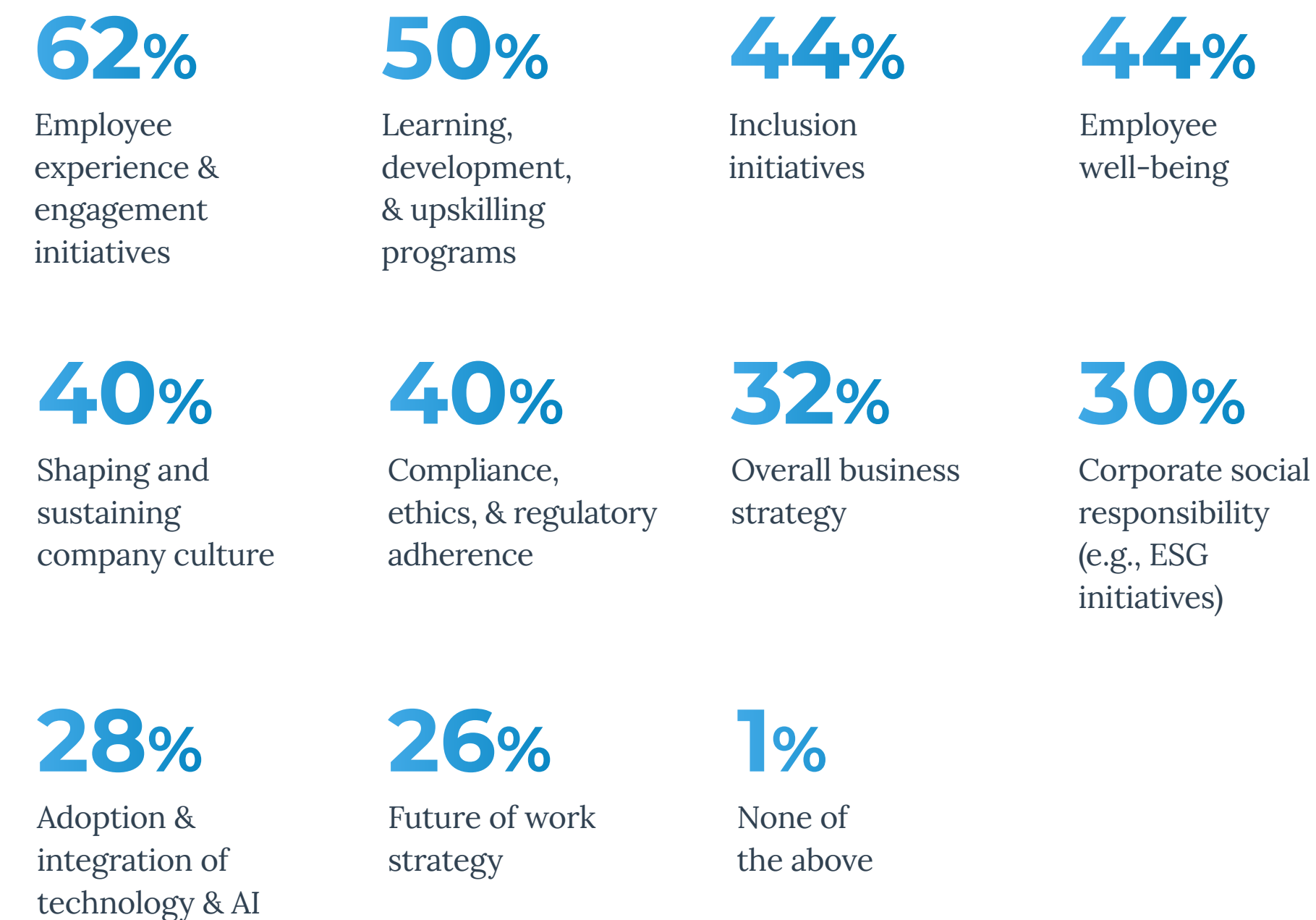
HR's involvement in driving employee experience



HR departments are doubling down on strategic initiatives, aligning their efforts closely with business objectives. They are becoming data-driven, leveraging analytics to inform decision-making and measure the impact of HR programs. In fact, **93% of HR professionals recognize the importance of leveraging data to inform decision-making and/or measure the impact of HR programs.**

Efficient HR teams are data-driven

Which of the following does HR have involvement in at your company?



- According to those surveyed, HR is taking ownership of the employee experience and engagement initiatives **in nearly two-thirds (62%)** of organizations. They are also heavily involved in learning, development, upskilling, inclusion, and employee well-being.

Companies in growth mode are getting HR involved in strategy.

Companies with the most significant increases in revenue last year are more likely to have HR involved in strategic decisions like overall business strategy and adoption and integration of tech.



Which of the following does HR have involvement in at your company?



Expanding HR's reach

HR professionals are looking to expand the scope of their influence across the organization. According to those surveyed, **41% believe they should have more involvement in employee experience and engagement initiatives, while 39% see their role in shaping and sustaining company culture as critical.**

About one-third would also like more involvement in compliance and regulatory adherence, learning and development, and future work strategy initiatives. By giving HR a more strategic role and influence in these areas, organizations can foster a strong company culture, and create environments where employees feel valued, engaged, and empowered to contribute their best.



Which of the following should HR have more involvement in at your company?

41%

Employee experience & engagement initiatives

39%

Shaping and sustaining company

37%

Inclusion initiatives

35%

Compliance, ethics, and regulatory adherence

34%

Learning, development, and upskilling programs

32%

Future of work strategy

29%

Corporate social responsibility (e.g., ESG initiatives, sustainability)

29%

Employee well-being

27%

Overall business strategy

26%

Adoption and integration of technology & AI

3%

None of the above

Inclusion, a core component of culture

- **Over one-third (37%) of HR professionals** want to be more involved in inclusion initiatives. Traditionally, DEI has been widely regarded as its own, isolated initiative, but it is now becoming woven into the fabric of organizational culture and employee experience. As companies increasingly prioritize creating environments where all employees feel valued, inclusion is no longer just a standalone effort, but an integral part of how culture is shaped and sustained.

TREND / 06

Redefining inclusion

Workplaces are embracing a broader definition of inclusion that encompasses individuals with diverse skills, experiences, personalities, and neurodivergent needs. This shift recognizes that inclusion is not just about representation, but about creating an environment where everyone feels valued, respected, and empowered to contribute fully. It's about fostering a sense of belonging for employees from all walks of life, regardless of their background or abilities. It's about creating a culture where new ways of thinking and working are accepted and innovation flourishes.

How does your organization define inclusion?

60%

Welcoming & valuing different skills, experiences & backgrounds

59%

Creating an environment where everyone feels like they belong

57%

Ensuring equal access to opportunities for everyone

43%

Prioritizing diversity in hiring and representation

7%

I'm not sure/
None of the above



Nearly the same percentage (59%) report that their organization focuses on creating an environment where everyone feels they belong.

A broadened perspective

Companies leading in innovation are broadening their approach to inclusion. This approach encourages employees to contribute without fear, and builds a culture of acceptance and welcoming. This allows for greater collaboration among teams of diverse thinkers which ultimately drives innovation.



● Organizations with excellent innovation ● All other organizations

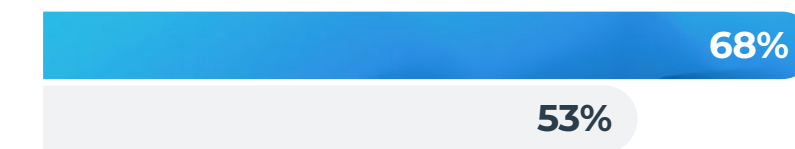
How does your organization define inclusion?



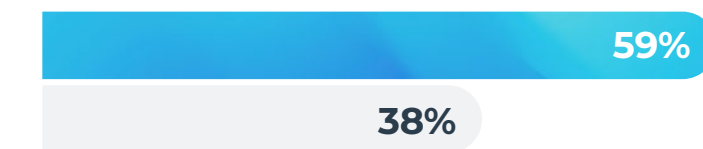
Welcoming and valuing different skills, experiences, and backgrounds



Creating an environment where everyone feels like they belong



Ensuring equal access to opportunities for everyone

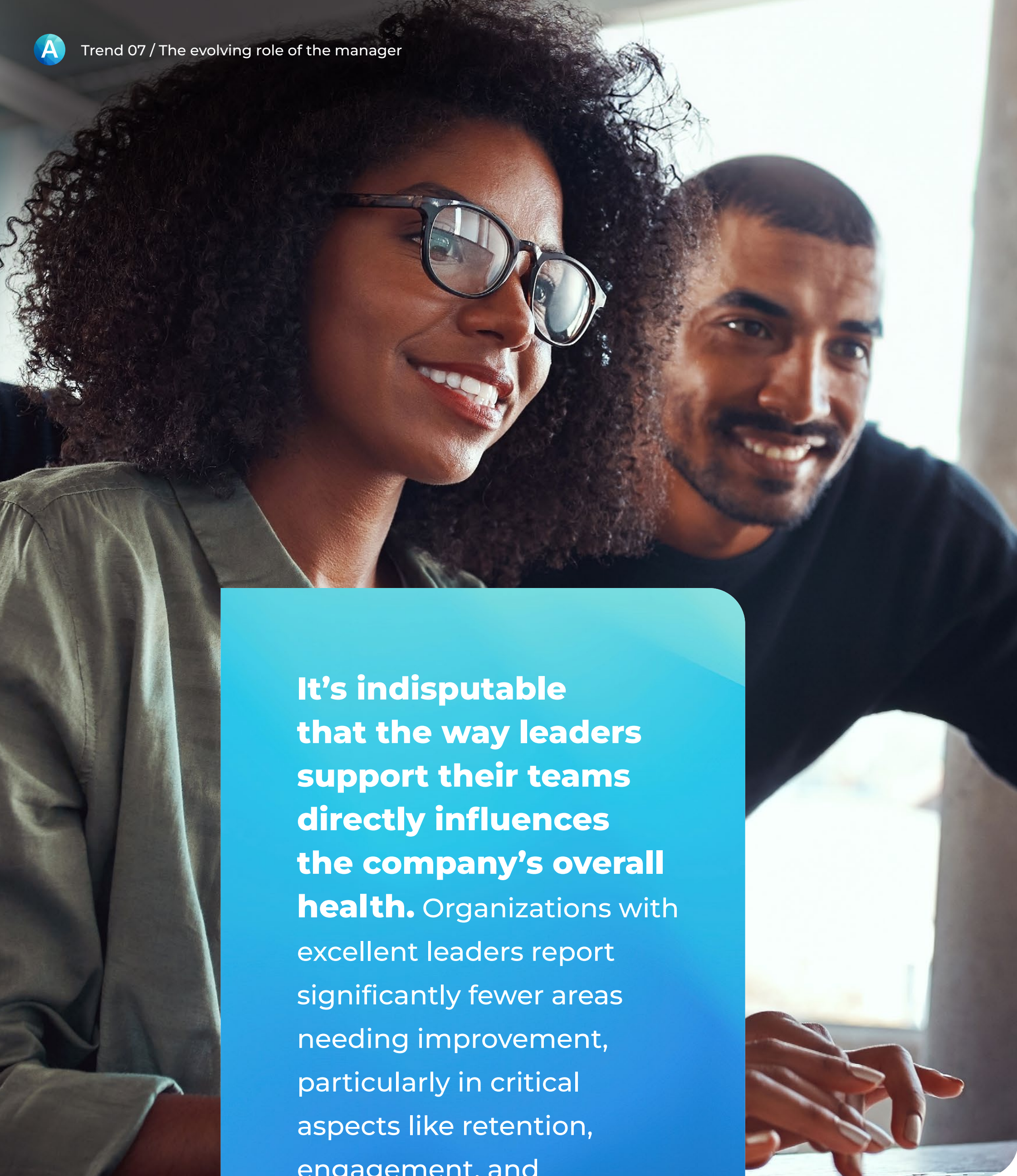


Prioritizing diversity in hiring and representation

0%

9%

I'm not sure/
None of the above



It's indisputable that the way leaders support their teams directly influences the company's overall health. Organizations with excellent leaders report significantly fewer areas needing improvement, particularly in critical aspects like retention, engagement, and leadership alignment.

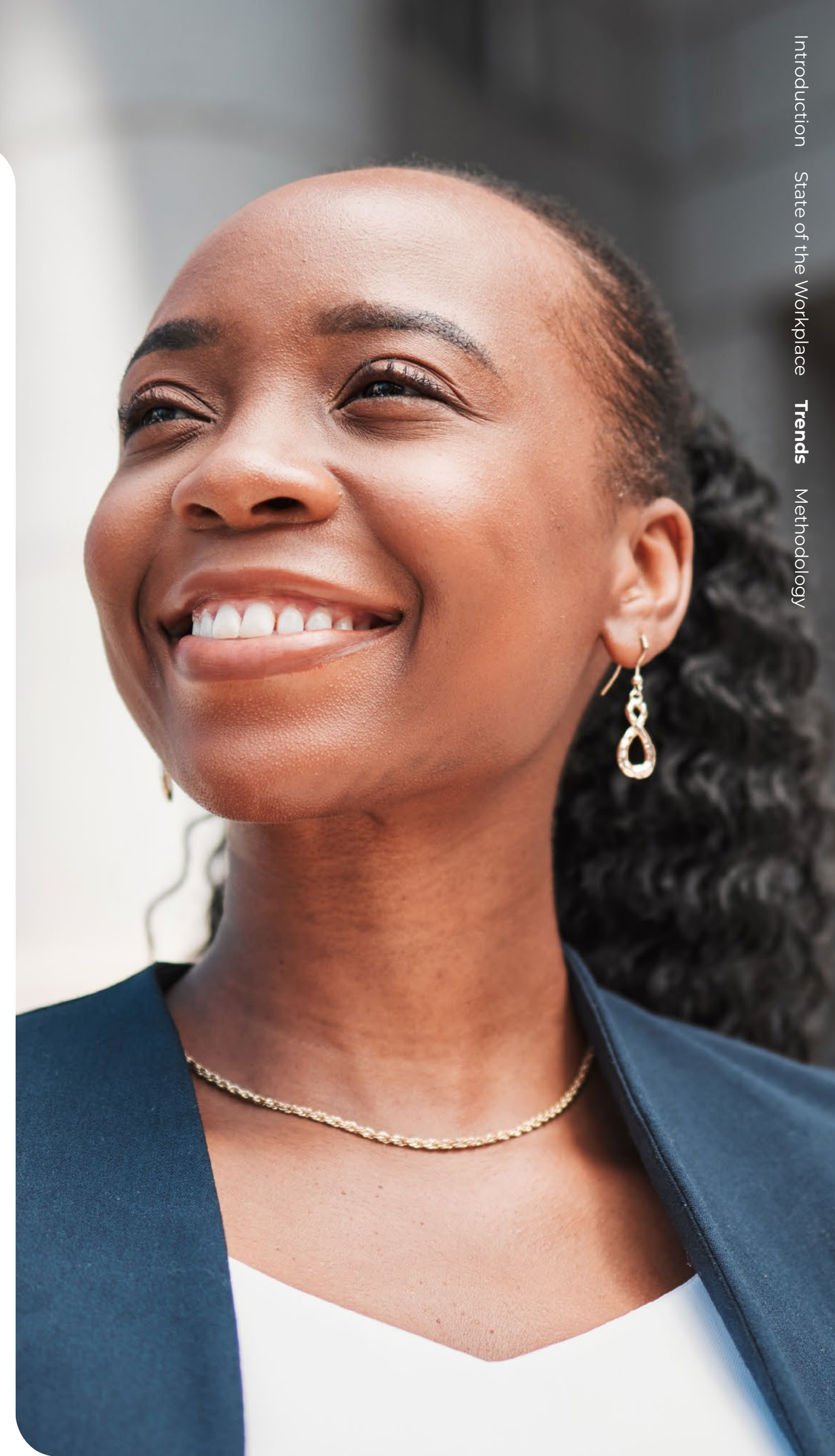
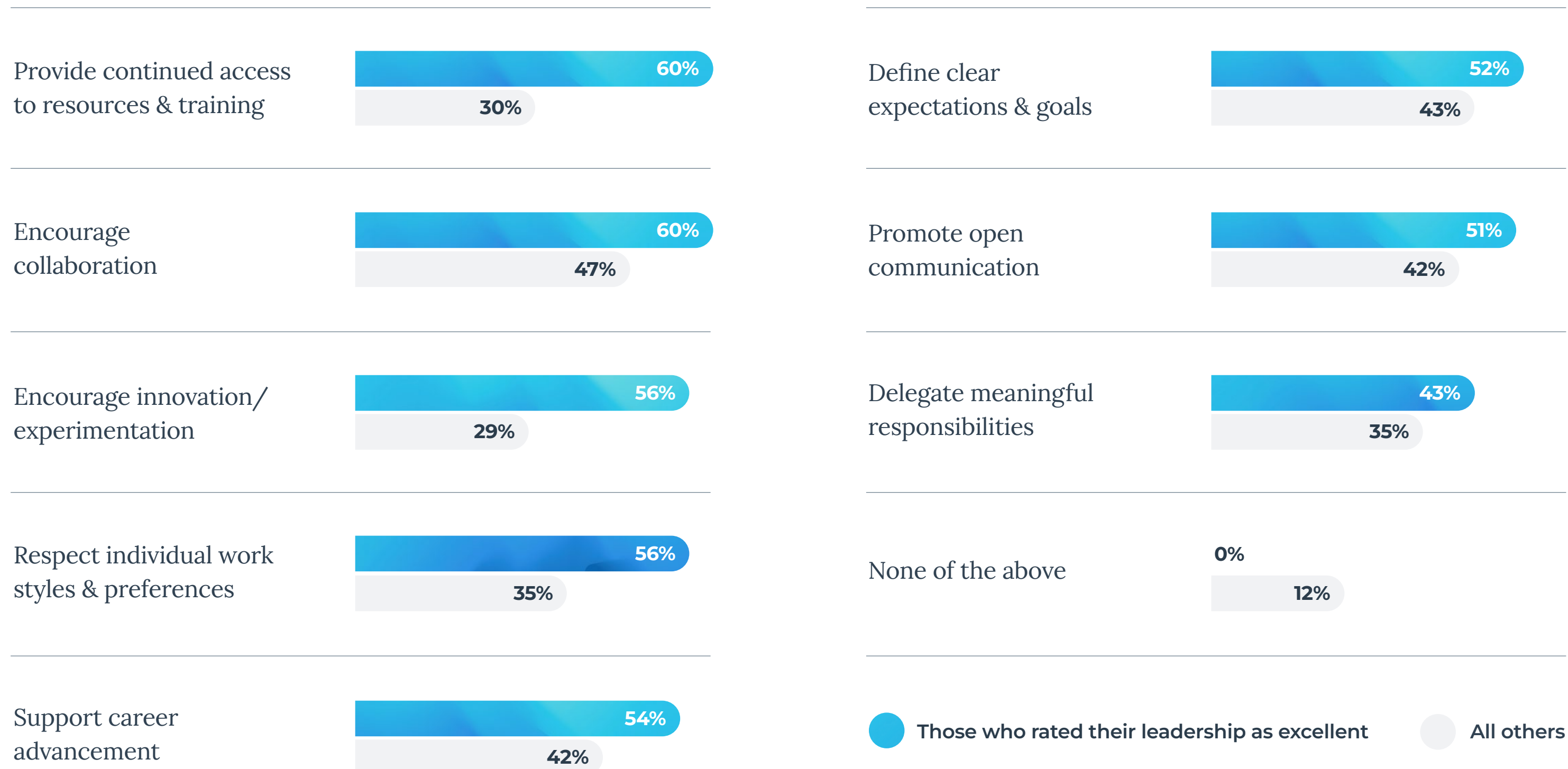
TREND / 07

The evolving role of the manager

A shift in what it means to be an effective leader is emerging. Senior leaders and people managers are becoming less authority figures and more conductors and strategic coaches, equipping their teams with the tools and support they need to thrive. These leaders are focused on empowerment, encouraging autonomy, celebrating individual strengths, and fostering an environment of psychological safety.

Those with best-in-class leadership are also significantly more likely to report that their leaders provide continued access to resources and training, encourage collaboration, and innovation, and respect individual work styles.

In general, which of the following statements are true regarding the leaders in your company?





Managers can make or break a work experience

Only about one-third (35%) of professionals say that their manager strongly supports their growth and autonomy at their organization. Best-in-class leaders, however, are significantly more likely to strongly support growth and autonomy of the individuals they oversee.



70% of organizations with best-in-class leadership strongly agree that management supports growth and autonomy compared to **24%** of those lacking excellence in leadership.

Addressing the disconnect effect

You may have noticed that there is an apparent disconnect effect between how executives and those in senior leadership roles view particular initiatives compared to how the rest of the company perceives them.

Addressing this disconnect is crucial for organizations as they work to enhance their company culture and employee experience to drive better results. **While executives may view their culture initiatives as effective and successful because they are often the ones designing or implementing these programs, employees who are directly impacted by these initiatives might experience the culture differently**, especially if communication, implementation, or follow-through are lacking at lower organizational levels.



THE **DISCONNECT**
EFFECT

Closing this perception gap is crucial and requires consistent communication, regular feedback loops, and a genuine commitment from leadership to understand how culture is experienced at all levels of the organization.



THE **DISCONNECT**
EFFECT

Efficiency excellence

The most efficient companies have leaders who consider opinions and input from their employees. **60%** of those with excellence in efficiency strongly agree with this sentiment compared to **22%** of those with less optimized efficiency.

One clear example of the disconnect effect is in feelings that opinions and input are being recognized and considered by leadership. Non-supervisory employees are **significantly less likely** to feel recognized and heard by leadership, compared to executives, the majority of whom feel that employee input is being recognized at their company.

Percentage of those who strongly agree with the following statement: "I feel that my opinions and input are recognized and considered by leaders in my company."

Executives

63%

VPs/Directors

29%

Managers

25%

Non-supervisory employees

10%

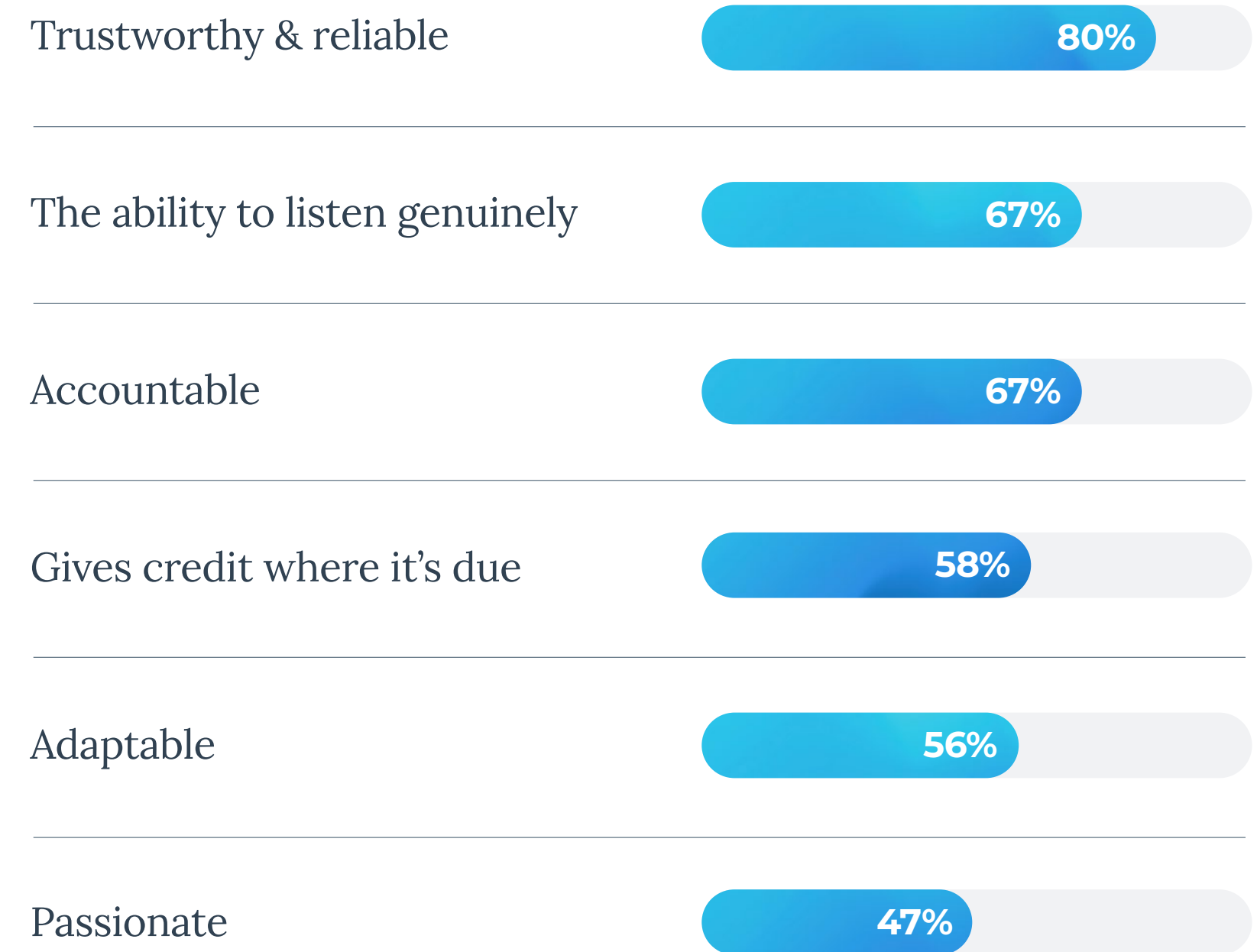
Bringing more humanity to the workplace

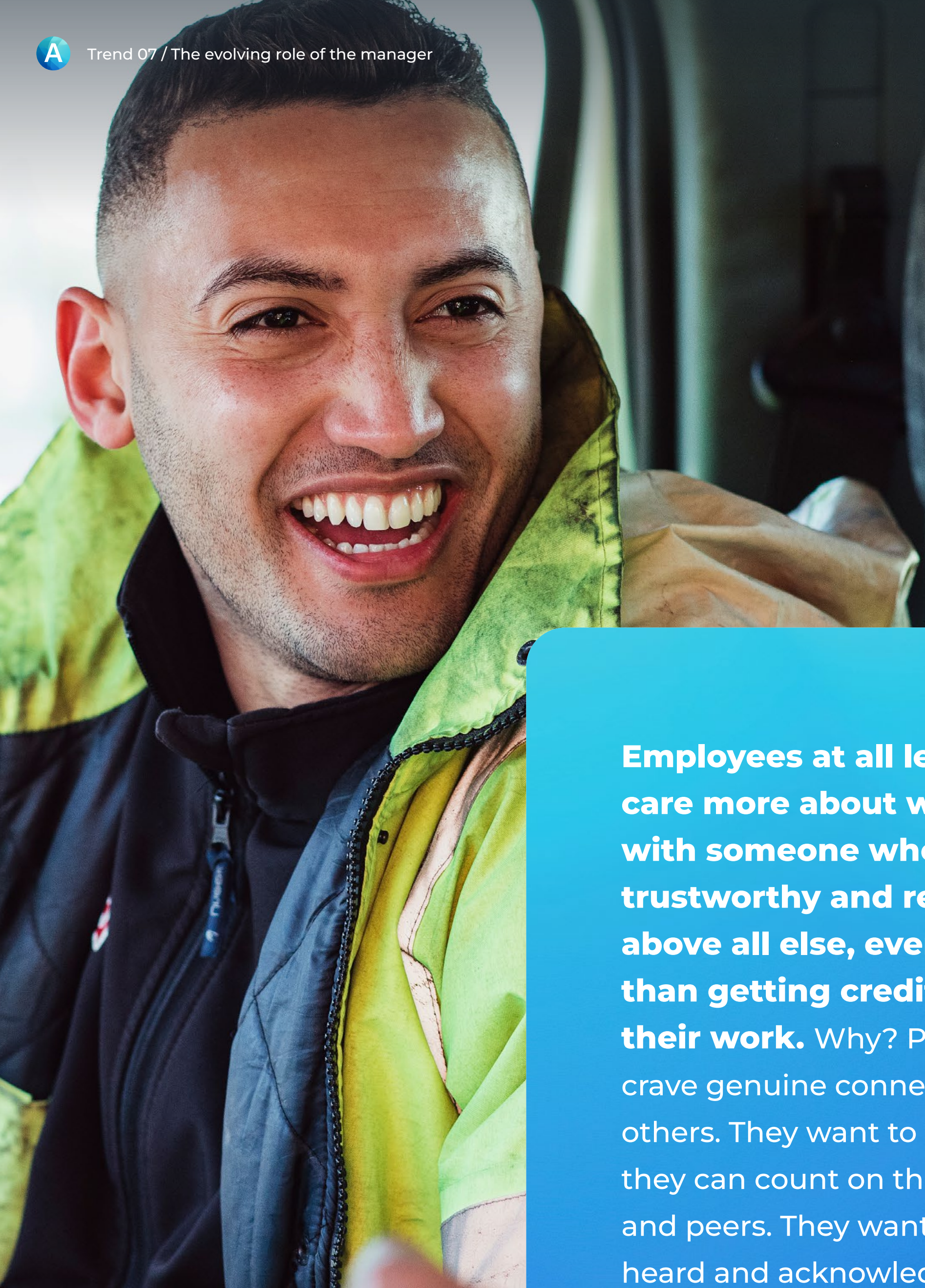


According to 80% of those surveyed, professionals are looking for leaders who exhibit trustworthiness and reliability first and foremost. This is followed by leaders who are accountable and listen genuinely (67%). The high value that professionals place on these traits demonstrates how important they are for driving human connection throughout all workplace initiatives.



What qualities do you look for in a good leader?





Employees crave genuine connections

Employees at all levels care more about working with someone who is trustworthy and reliable above all else, even more than getting credit for their work. Why? People crave genuine connection with others. They want to know that they can count on their leaders and peers. They want to feel heard and acknowledged.

Top qualities that professionals look for in a leader, segmented by job level:

	Executive	VP/Director	Manager	Non-supervisor
Trustworthy and reliable	82%	75%	75%	91%
The ability to listen genuinely	62%	60%	68%	81%
Accountable	68%	62%	66%	76%
Gives credit where it's due	65%	51%	57%	66%
Adaptable	53%	62%	59%	48%
Passionate	58%	60%	36%	35%



Conclusion



More *humanity* at work in 2025 and beyond

The data in this report highlights a significant truth: professionals across all levels deeply value leaders who are trustworthy, reliable, and genuinely listen. These traits reflect the essence of bringing humanity into the workplace, where leaders are seen not just as decision-makers but as people who care about their teams' well-being.

Trust and accountability foster an environment where employees feel safe contributing, sharing ideas, and engaging meaningfully with their work. When employees feel genuinely heard and

acknowledged, they are more likely to connect their efforts to the success of the entire organization.

A people-centered mindset, which encourages everyone across all levels of the organization to see and value others as individuals, not just as roles or functions, is critical in today's workplace. By prioritizing humanity in the workplace, organizations can foster a collaborative culture where employees feel empowered to contribute to the overall success and supported in their personal growth.

Leaders who embody these values inspire engagement and help drive organizational outcomes that go beyond tasks and deliverables—creating a lasting, people-centered impact that leads to tangible business success. When employees feel valued and connected to their work, it not only enhances productivity but also contributes directly to the organization's bottom line, fostering both individual and collective achievements.

Methodology

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Methodology and participants

The Arbinger Institute, in collaboration with Ascend2 Research, conducted a custom online survey to gather insights from 350 professionals across North America, Europe, and the Asia-Pacific region. Participants represented companies of varying industries, with employee counts ranging from 500 to 10,000. The survey respondents

spanned a range of job roles, including non-supervisory positions, ensuring a diverse perspective on organizational practices. Data collection for this survey was completed in September 2024.

About the participants

Region

41% North America

37% Europe

22% Asia Pacific

Human resources

60% Yes

40% No

Primary industry

11% Human Resource Services

13% Healthcare/Mental Health

9% Manufacturing

17% Technology/Software/Information

1% Media

3% Energies and Utilities

3% Hospitality

6% Business Services

7% Transportation/Logistics/Supply Chain

8% Finance

0% Industry Associations

3% Non-Profit

19% Other

Job role

17% C-Level/Executive

7% Vice President/Senior Vice President

25% Director

28% Manager/supervisor

23% Non-supervisory employee

Company size

31% 500-1,000

37% 1,001-5,000

32% 5,001-10,000



Want to bring more humanity to your workplace this year? Arbinger helps organizations foster people-centric cultures that drive results.

[Learn more](#)



Research partners



About the Research Partners

Arbinger Institute

The Arbinger Institute is the premier provider of leadership and professional development solutions that transform business culture for better performance and lasting results. Based on its research-backed process that puts a unique focus on changing mindset to change behavior, Arbinger enables

leaders and teams to uncover new opportunities for professional growth while improving organizational culture and team performance. By helping leaders bring humanity to the workplace, Arbinger improves employee engagement and retention, inspires team collaboration and inclusivity, and drives the bottom line.

Ascend2 RESEARCH-BASED MARKETING

Companies partner with Ascend2 to create original research from survey conceptualization through report and content creation to media outreach. Ascend2 helps companies fuel marketing content, generate leads, and engage prospects to drive demand through the middle of the funnel. For more about Ascend, visit ascend2.com.