2023-2024

Voice of the Workforce

Keys to Better Employee Experience

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Employee experience (EX) is a top priority for 91 percent of HR leaders.[1]

Why? They want to improve retention rates, reduce employee stress, boost culture, advance recruiting and counteract work environments that hinder collaboration.

But knowing what it takes to achieve better EX – and realizing when you've done it – can be challenging. Especially because EX strategies need to be ongoing to impact other areas of the organization, like retention, recruitment and culture. So we decided to go straight to the source: **surveying more than 1,100 full-time employees** to discover what drives better experiences.

We found **seven keys** for unlocking better experiences:

1. Paying Competitive Wages
2. Eliminating Payroll Errors
3. Empowering Employees
4. Providing Frictionless Benefits
5. Fostering Positive Culture
6. Offering Flexibility
7. Supporting Development

Key: Paying Competitive Wages Attracts Top Talent

It's no surprise: money talks. Salary is the biggest motivator for accepting a new job – just as it has been for the past three years we've conducted the Voice of the Workforce survey.

Compensation, however, has become even more important due to inflation and uncertainty within the economy.

In fact, 55 percent of employees admit to living paycheck-to-paycheck and 85 percent say inflation has impacted their spending habits – causing the majority of employees to save less and 45 percent to actually dip into their savings.

Despite this, only 29 percent of employees are worried about getting laid off over the next 12 months – signaling confidence in their roles within their organizations. Although there's a sense of job security, 35 percent don't feel like their employer offers a competitive salary.

So how can employers do better? In addition to increasing salaries, they can focus on providing better benefits. Seventy-seven percent of employees consider benefits part of their total compensation. What's more, those same employees say total compensation is a significant factor when making a decision to accept a job offer or stay with their current employer.

How has inflation impacted your financial habits?

I'm saving less
54%

I've dipped into my savings
45%

I've dipped into my retirement
41%

I'm spending less discretionary income
21%

What are the biggest factors that motivate you to accept a job offer?

Salary
68%

Health insurance
52%

Location, that it's close to home
49%

Work/life balance
49%

Location, flexiblity for remote and hybrid work
44%

Retirement plan
41%

Interest in my work and the position
41%

Flexible benefits
37%

Company values and culture
31%

Professional development opportunities
29%

Workplace diversity
16%

Key: Eliminating Payroll Errors
Boosts Retention

Total compensation is significant for both recruitment and retention – meaning that money talks long after an employee accepts a new position.

As such, it's not a surprise that employees consider payroll one of the most important parts of their HR experience – with more than half saying that payroll mistakes could lead them to browse the job boards.

The good news? Seventy-five percent of employees say their employer doesn't make frequent payroll errors.

Although that's the majority, it also means a quarter of employers need to clean up their payroll processes or risk unnecessary turnover.

In addition to error-free payroll, employers can differentiate themselves with how they pay their employees. For instance, half of employees would like their employers to offer on-demand pay, which gives them access to their wages as they earn them.

Something else employees want? Empowerment.
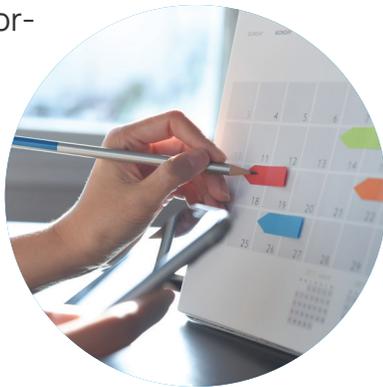
Which negative HR experiences would prompt you to look for a new job?

Experience	Percentage
Payroll mistakes	55%
Poor culture	49%
Poor benefits enrollment	45%
Scheduling mistakes	36%
Lack of responsiveness	34%
Limited development opportunities	32%
Poor onboarding	28%
Lack of DEI&B	18%

Key: Empowering Employees
Improves Productivity

Employees want to be in control of their own experiences – with 71 percent desiring self-service capabilities for HR, benefits and payroll tasks – including the ability to independently access their pay stubs. This proves that empowerment is an important key that not only improves EX, but also boosts productivity for HR departments.

In fact, if employees were given access to an HR chatbot or virtual assistant, 54 percent would use the technology to learn about their benefits and 53 percent would use it to get paid time off (PTO) information.

This type of functionality gives HR teams back time to be strategic, especially because nearly half of HR leaders say they spend four or more hours a day answering repetitive questions (like "what's my PTO balance?") – that's at least half their day![1]

Although an HR chatbot can help employees get on-demand information about their benefits, something else that needs to be improved is the election process.

What HR tasks would you be most likely to use an HR chatbot or virtual assistant for?

To learn about my benefits
54%

To get PTO information
53%

To ask about company policies/locate documents
35%

For guidance through the onboarding process
27%

To ask about my goals/company goals
25%

To ask about organization charts
22%

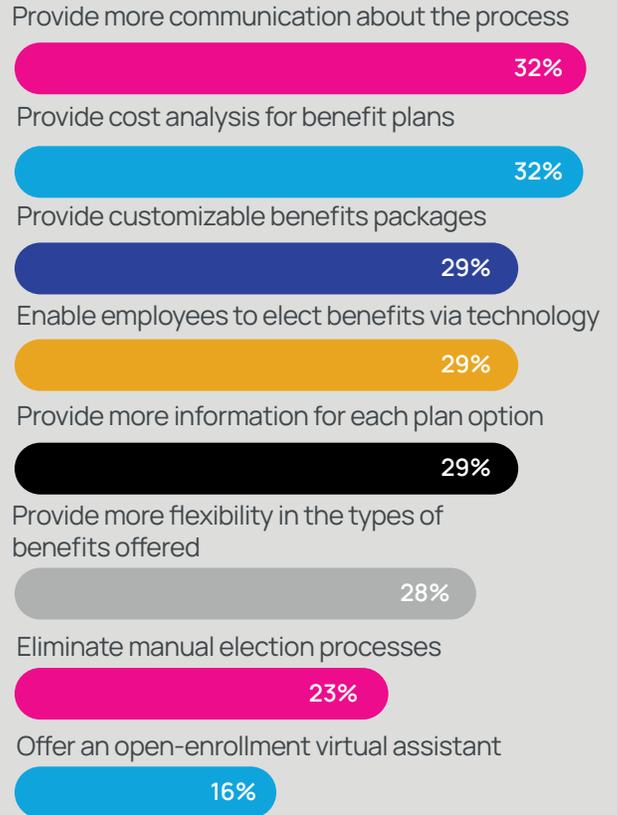# Key: Providing Frictionless Benefits Reduces Stress

Employees want access to technology that makes it easier to elect their benefits – this is likely because 47 percent consider the benefit election process stressful.

So how can employers make improvements? Most employees' want more communication about the election process and a cost analysis of benefit plans.
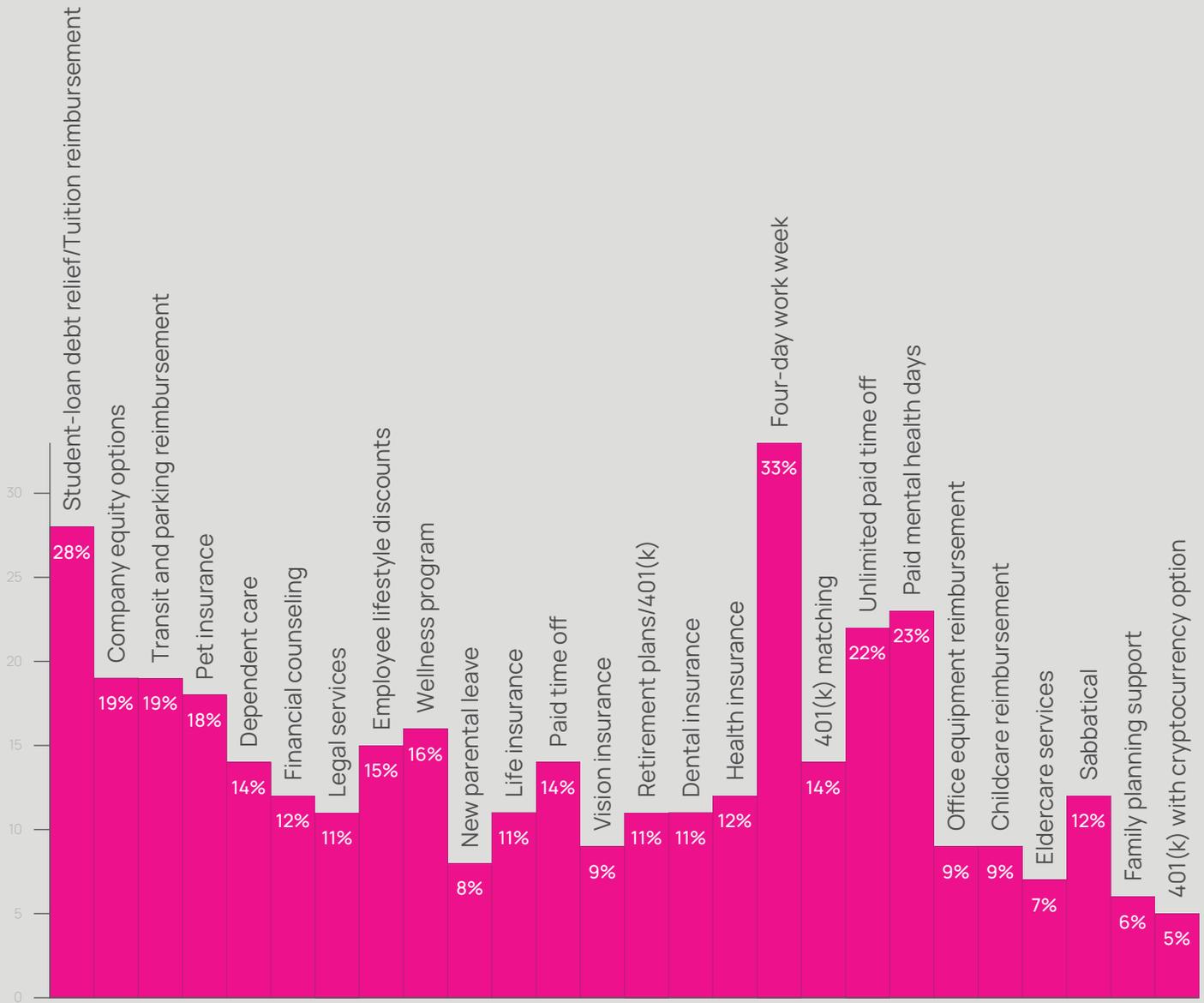
In summary – better technology and more information would reduce friction and go a long way toward improving experiences.

But what about the actual benefits employers are offering? We've already identified how important health insurance is (for both recruitment and retention), but we also wanted to know about the benefits employees wish their employer offered (but doesn't). The top answer is something that isn't easy to come by for most of the workforce: a four-day work week.

What could your employer do differently to improve the open enrollment experience?

Provide more communication about the process
32%

Provide cost analysis for benefit plans
32%

Provide customizable benefits packages
29%

Enable employees to elect benefits via technology
29%

Provide more information for each plan option
29%

Provide more flexibility in the types of benefits offered
28%

Eliminate manual election processes
23%

Offer an open-enrollment virtual assistant
16%

What benefits do you wish your employer offered, but doesn't?

Bar chart data:

- Student-loan debt relief/Tuition reimbursement: 28%
- Company equity options: 19%
- Transit and parking reimbursement: 19%
- Pet insurance: 18%
- Dependent care: 14%
- Financial counseling: 12%
- Legal services: 11%
- Employee lifestyle discounts: 15%
- Wellness program: 16%
- New parental leave: 8%
- Life insurance: 11%
- Paid time off: 14%
- Vision insurance: 9%
- Retirement plans/401(k): 11%
- Dental insurance: 11%
- Health insurance: 12%
- Four-day work week: 33%
- 401(k) matching: 14%
- Unlimited paid time off: 22%
- Paid mental health days: 23%
- Office equipment reimbursement: 9%
- Childcare reimbursement: 9%
- Eldercare services: 7%
- Sabbatical: 12%
- Family planning support: 6%
- 401(k) with cryptocurrency option: 5%

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Key: Fostering Positive Culture Improves Morale

Fifty-eight percent of employees plan to explore new job opportunities in the next 12 months, which is 11 percent more than 2022. So what's keeping 42 percent of the workforce from doing the same thing? They like the work they do and the company they work for.

This reinforces the notion that providing employees with a sense of purpose and a positive culture can improve morale and keep them happy in their roles. Of course, compensating them fairly for the work they do makes a difference too.

When considering culture, it's imperative to keep diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging (DEI&B) in mind.

This includes fostering a positive work environment for everyone, including those with disabilities.

Forty percent of our respondents identify as neurodiverse – which can include the autism spectrum, ADHD, sensory processing disorders, Tourette's syndrome and more. While 82 percent of these employees say their organization accommodates their neurodiversity, the 18 percent that don't feel adequately supported would like their employer to create more awareness throughout the organization and provide more resources.

What's keeping you at your current employer?

The work I do
31%

The company
24%

My compensation
20%

My experience
10%

My colleagues
7%

My boss
5%

If you identify as neurodiverse, what could your company do to better accommodate you?

Better awareness of neurodiversity
58%

Provide more resources
52%

Provide support groups
26%

Offer remote work
21%

Other
7%

Data from all of our respondents, however, shows that 89 percent consider their employer inclusive of all races, religions, genders and disabilities.

When employees don't feel like their employer is inclusive, they are most likely to act by raising their concerns to leadership. But what employers should be aware of is that 20 percent of employees will not even apply to an organization that they don't consider inclusive, and 14 percent will quit – proving that poor culture can not only plummet EX, but also hinder an organization's ability to employ.

Another thing that can hinder an employer's ability to recruit and retain? Location of work and overall workload. In fact, our next key highlights the benefits of remaining flexible.

If you felt a company was not inclusive, what action would you most likely take?

Raise concerns to leadership

26%

Nothing

25%

Not apply to being with

20%

Start an employee resource group

15%

Quit for another company that better aligns with my core values

14%

Key: Offering Flexibility Supports Productivity

Work environments look much different than they did before the pandemic, and although just 19 percent of our respondents work from home, only 37 percent work at an office – proving that workplace flexibility is common for most of the workforce.
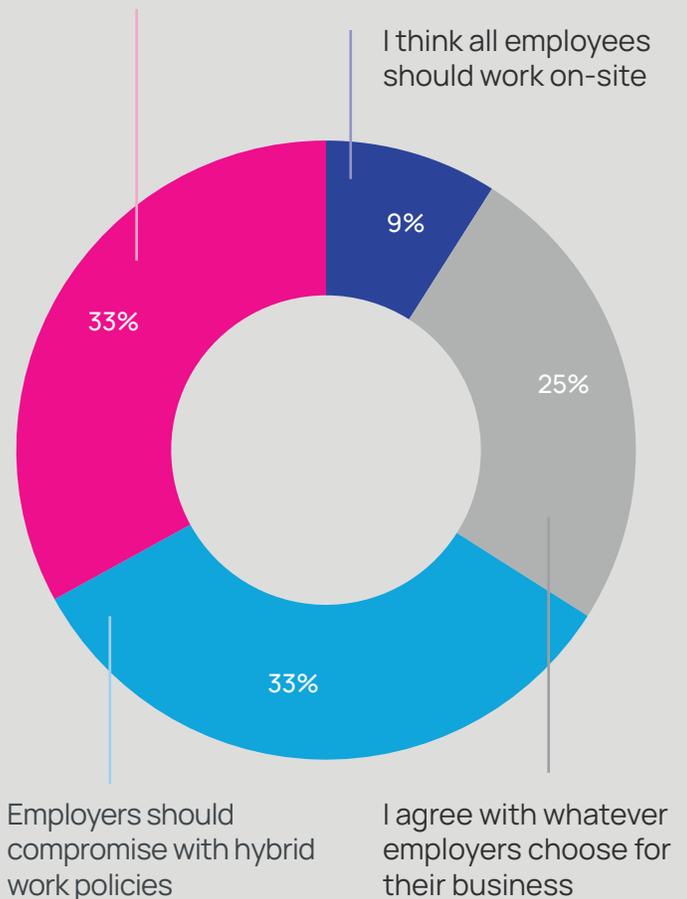
Despite this flexibility, some employers are still enforcing return-to-office mandates – something that only a quarter of employees agree with.

But does remote work hinder things like engagement and productivity? The answer is complex (see chart on the next page), but most employees agree that remote work doesn't make them less engaged – and definitely not less productive.
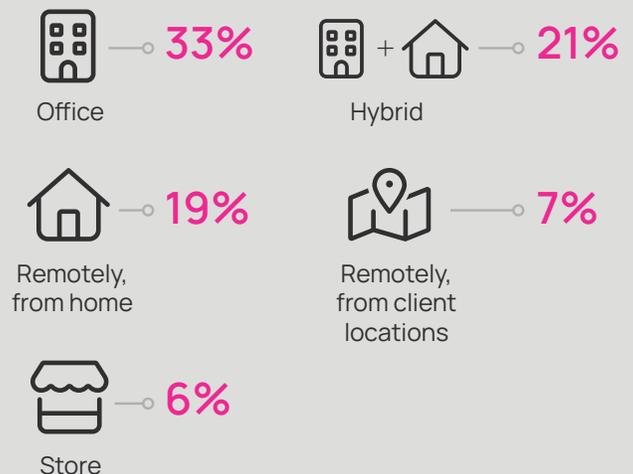
We also asked employees how they approach going above and beyond at work – exactly half of them say they "sometimes" do more than what is asked of them, while 39 percent say they frequently do more in hopes of getting recognition, including a promotion. On the flip side, 6 percent usually don't do more than what is asked of them and 8 percent only do so when incentivized. So, we decided to get to the bottom of just how much time employees spend "working" during their scheduled hours and found that 72 percent are productive more than half of the time.

How do you feel about return-to-office mandates?

Employers who supported work from home during the pandemic should continue to do so

I think all employees should work on-site

9%

25%

33%

33%

Employers should compromise with hybrid work policies

I agree with whatever employers choose for their business

What type of environment do you work in?

33%
Office

21%
Hybrid

19%
Remotely, from home
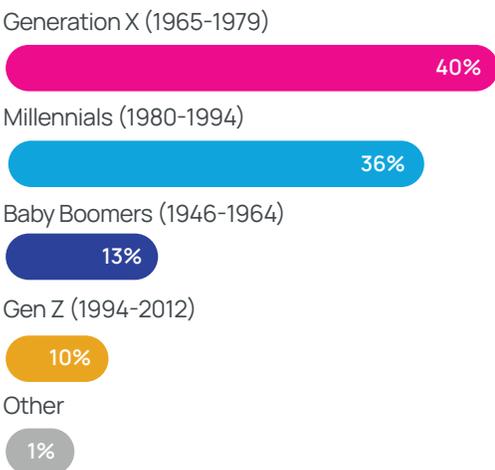

7%
Remotely, from client locations

6%
Store

It's important to note that despite most employees saying they are productive for most of their schedule, workload is a huge stressor – in fact, it's by far the biggest stressor employees are facing (see chart on the next page). And when employees are stressed, their work may suffer – especially when it comes to productivity.

Something else that can make a difference when it comes to productivity is the stage of career that the employee is in.

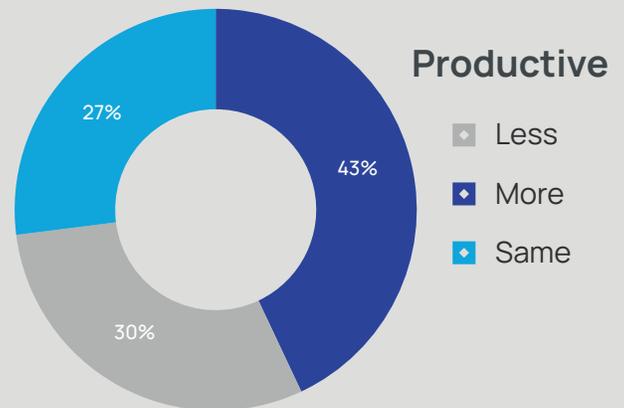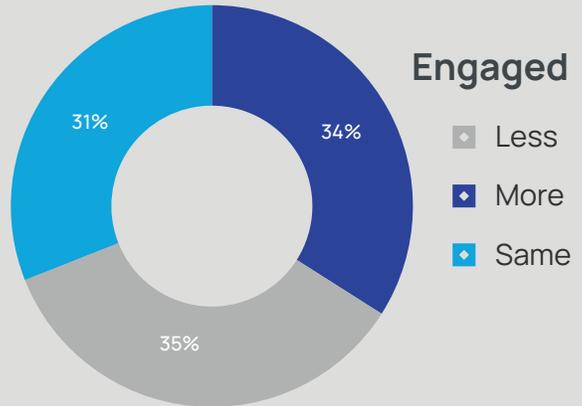For reference, this is the generation breakdown of our respondents:

Generation Breakdown

Generation X (1965-1979)

40%

Millennials (1980-1994)

36%

Baby Boomers (1946-1964)

13%
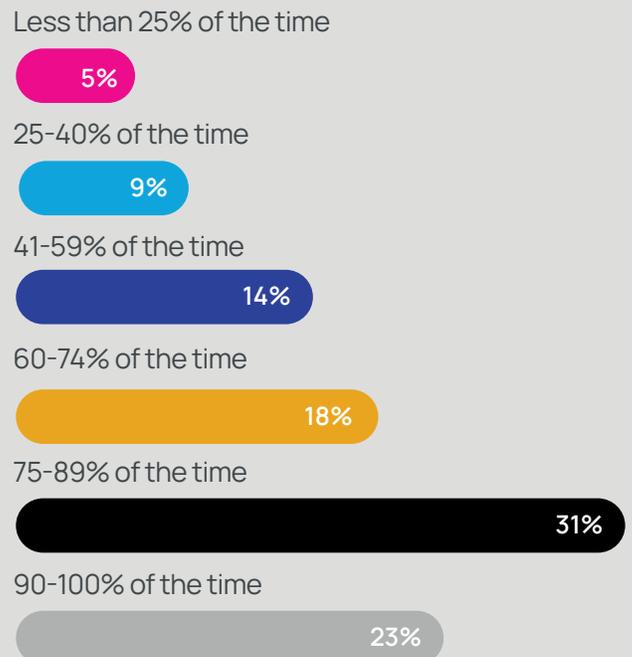
Gen Z (1994-2012)

10%

Other

1%

We wanted to know which generation was perceived as the least likely to go above and beyond at work and the respondents overwhelmingly said Gen Z. While this generation is still at the start of their career with the most room to grow, the data shows they have built a reputation amongst their older colleagues of not going the extra mile when at work.

But how can employers improve productivity for not only Gen Z, but all generations? **Keeping their workforce engaged may be the answer.**

Do you think employees are more or less engaged/productive when they work remotely?

Engaged

31%
34%
35%

- Less
- More
- Same

Productive

27%
43%
30%

- Less
- More
- Same

Of the hours you are scheduled to work, what percentage is spent being productive?

Less than 25% of the time

5%

25-40% of the time

9%

41-59% of the time

14%

60-74% of the time

18%

75-89% of the time

31%

90-100% of the time

23%

What is your biggest stressor as an employee?

Workload — 26%

Meeting my goals — 11%

Being "always on" outside of work hours — 10%

Staying motivated at work — 10%

Staying engaged at work — 4%

Improving my skillset — 4%

Connecting with my colleagues — 3%

Time management — 6%

Potential recession's impact on employment — 4%

My compensation — 10%

My benefits — 3%

Restructuring/my position being eliminated — 3%

My manager — 5%
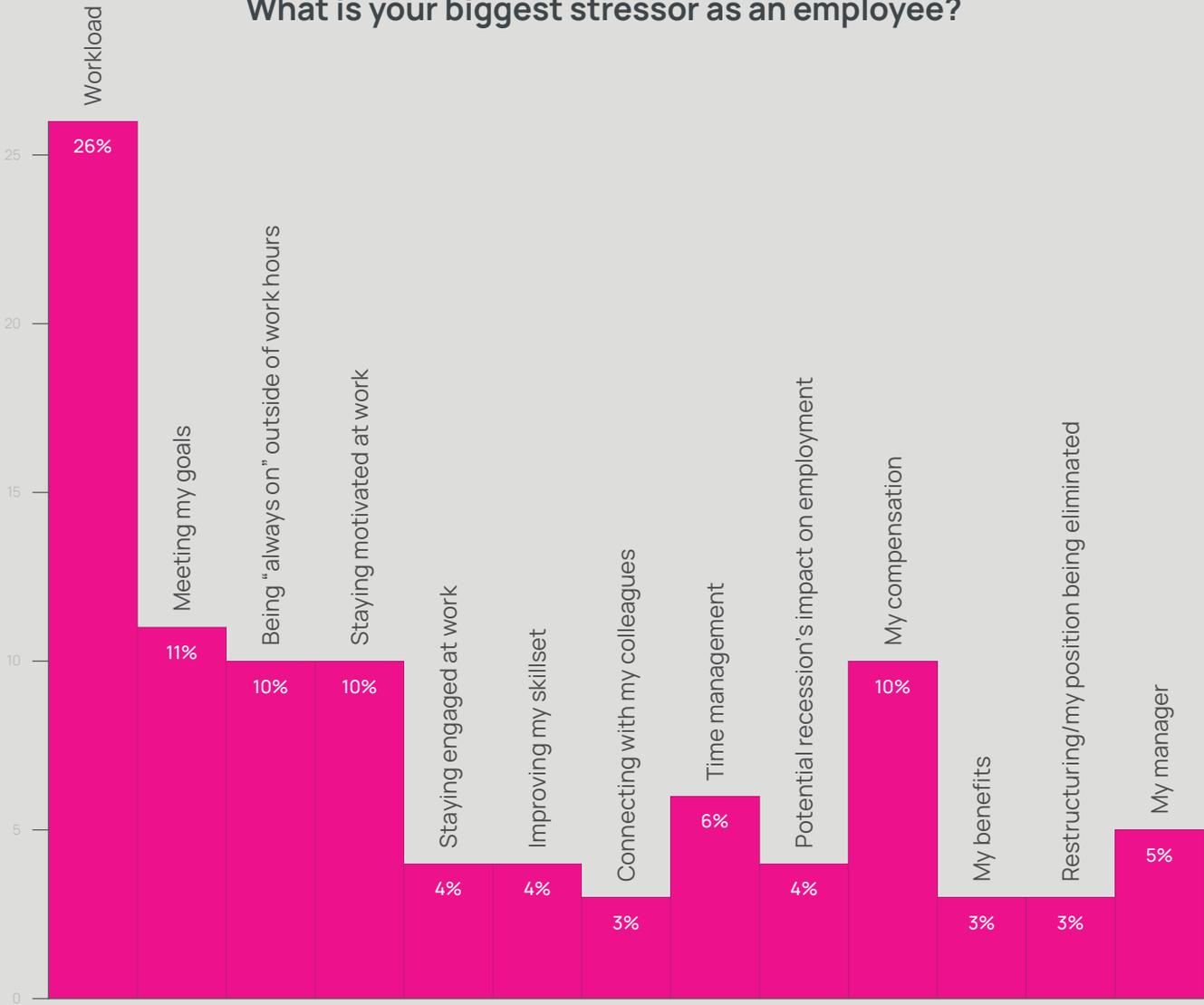
Which generation do you think is least likely to go above and beyond at work?

- Gen Z — 48%
- Millennials — 19%
- Generation X — 15%
- Baby Boomers — 13%
- Other — 5%

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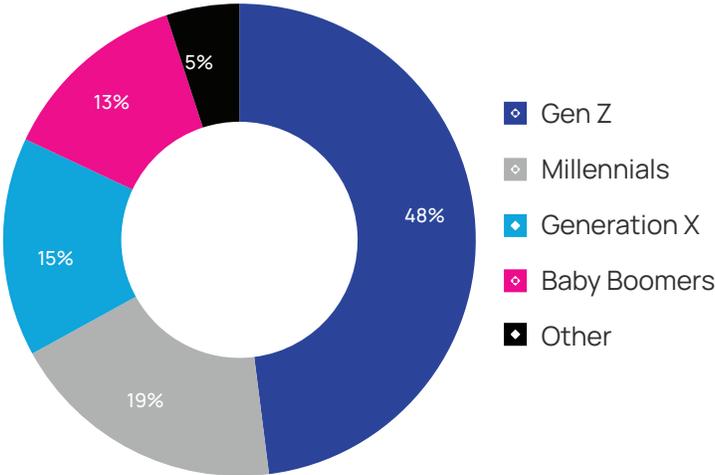
Key: Supporting Development
Enhances Engagement

Employees that are engaged are more likely to be taking an active role within their organization – which can naturally boost productivity and foster better EX.

The good news is that 82 percent of employees say they feel engaged at work – and learning opportunities are what's keeping them engaged.

Professional growth is clearly important. In fact, it's the most important part of EX – proving that something as simple as offering a learning management system (LMS) can help organizations make big strides toward providing better experiences.
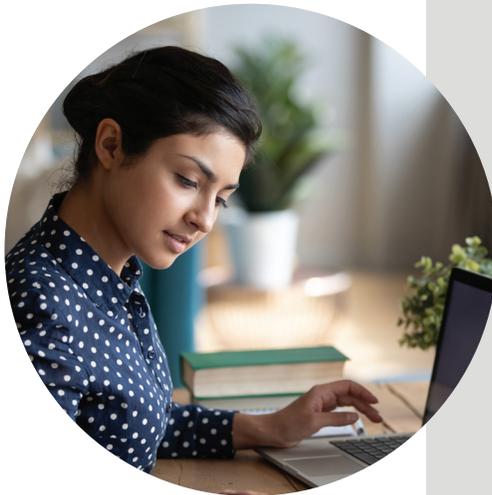
What keeps you engaged at work?

Learning opportunities
44%

Team meetings
40%

Ability to monitor and manage performance
40%

Mentor/mentee relationship
26%

Ability to tie my goals to the company's goals
25%

Wellness offerings
24%

Company intranet/internal social network
23%

Employee resource groups or committees
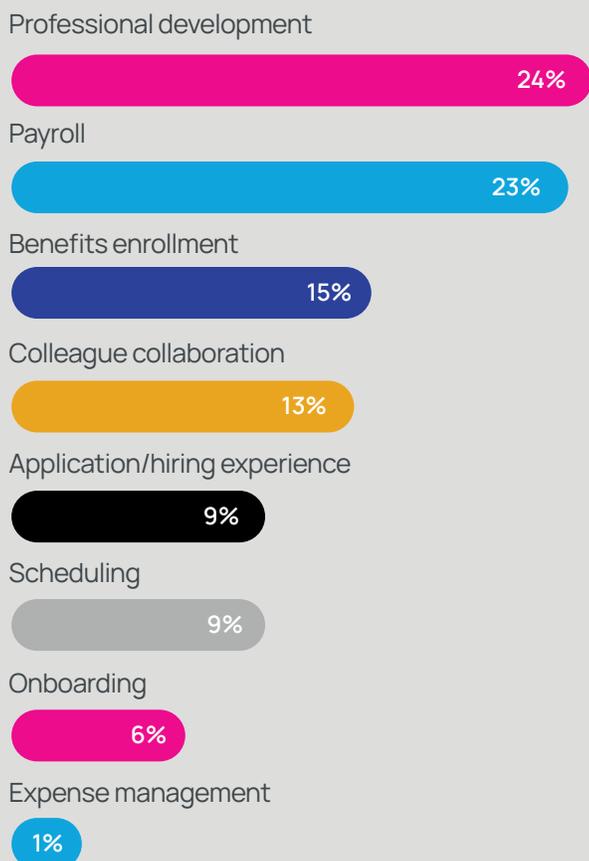**21%**

Employee surveys
14%

Charitable giving and donation opportunities
11%

It's important to note, however, that 77 percent of employees say their organization is adequately supporting their professional development. But those who think their employer could do better would like funding for continuing education opportunities, followed by career pathing to help them progress in their roles.

Which part of the employee experience is most important to you?

Professional development
24%

Payroll
23%

Benefits enrollment
15%

Colleague collaboration
13%

Application/hiring experience
9%

Scheduling
9%

Onboarding
6%

Expense management
1%

If your employer doesn't adequately support your professional development, what could they do to improve?

Funding for continued education
37%

Career pathing
37%

Group, in-person trainings
31%

Learning management system
29%

Mentorship opportunities
27%

One-on-one meetings
26%

Group, virtual meetings
22%

Collaboration through professional communities
21%

Team meetings
20%

Industry conferences
17%

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Better EX = Better CX

When putting together a plan to improve EX, it's important to remember that resources used to support new technology and initiatives actually have an impact on every part of the business – both internally and externally.

In fact, 90 percent of employees say the experience they have as an employee directly impacts the experience they provide customers. This means that doing things like paying employees competitively, ensuring payroll accuracy, supporting professional development and empowering your workforce with self-service tools is likely to not only boost retention and recruitment, but also your business's bottom line.

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Methodology

The Voice of the Workforce report from isolved analyzes the responses of 1,103 full-time employees based in the United States. Seniority level for respondents ranges from entry level to C-Suite. For any questions about the survey or our findings, please contact Allie Howen at ahowen@isolvedhcm.com. The survey was conducted online in Q3 of 2023, with the demographics broken down as follows:*

Industry

Agriculture	2%
Assisted living	1%
Business and professional services	8%
Construction and engineering	8%
Education	13%
Financial	7%
Travel and hospitality	3%
Legal	2%
Manufacturing	8%
Medical and health	15%
Government	5%
Nonprofit organization	3%
Real estate and property management	2%
Retail	7%
Transportation	3%
Utilities	1%
Wholesale and distribution	2%
Other	10%

Seniority

Entry level/associate	44%
Manager	36%
Director	11%
Vice President	3%
C-Suite	6%

Company Size

1-5	9%
6-25	10%
26-50	9%
51-200	18%
201-500	13%
501-1,500	14%
1501 or above	28%

About isolved

isolved is the most-trusted HCM technology leader, providing the best combination of software and services to meet the needs of today's People Heroes – HR, payroll, and benefits professionals. From talent acquisition to workforce management to talent management, our solutions are delivered directly or through our HRO partner network to more than 6 million employees and 168,000 employers across all 50 states – who use them every day to increase productivity, accelerate decision-making and ensure performance, while reducing risk. isolved People Cloud, our intelligently connected platform, automates the entire employee experience by design, so that organizations can engage, empower, and energize their talent while freeing their People Heroes to exceed their goals and grow their careers..

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