

HOLY *#@\$!!** SHIFT



LEAD WITH HEART

TO ENGAGE AND RETAIN EMPLOYEES
DURING THE GREAT RESIGNATION

THE
GROSSMAN
GROUP

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Call it "*The Great Resignation*," "*Tsunami Turnover*," or "*The Big Quit*." By any name, it describes the unprecedented shift companies are experiencing due to a staggering transformation of the American workforce—and one of the biggest concerns facing employers today.

As recent data shows from multiple studies, as well as our experience with clients, the trend of quitting is like nothing we've seen before in business—it's a true "Glitch in the Matrix." Yet, this massive shift in the workforce cannot be pinpointed on any one industry, role, or simply called a pay issue. It's a workplace-wide issue, and the balance of power is clearly shifting from senior leadership to employees.

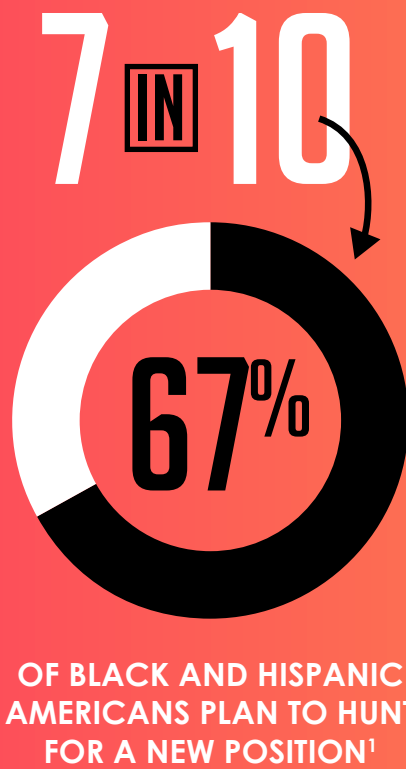
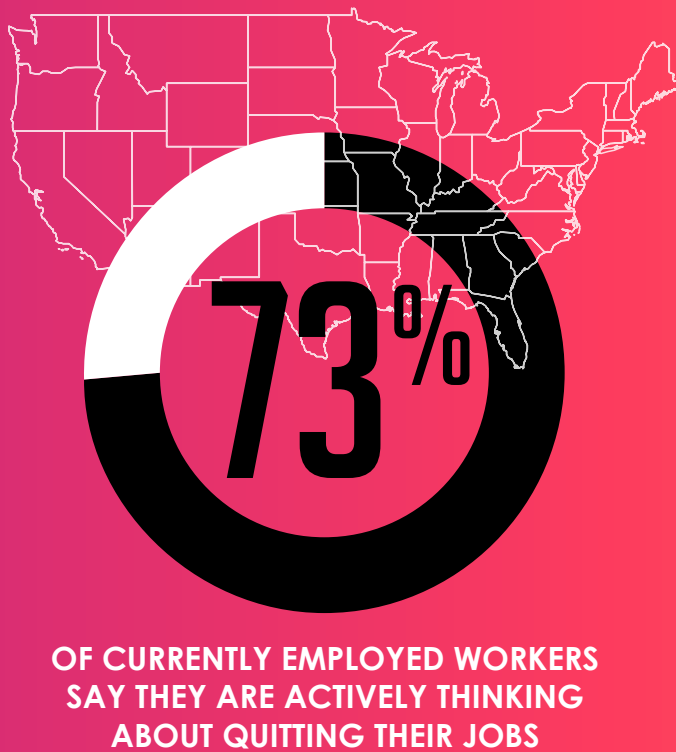
Experts point to a wide range of reasons driving people to leave their jobs across all industries, including a push for higher pay, better working conditions, and greater flexibility in balancing the growing demands of work, some of which were only exacerbated by the "year that changed everything." As the global pandemic continues to permeate our lives, employees' expectations of their leaders and organizations have changed dramatically.

Employees are focusing on what's most important to them, reexamining how work fits into their larger lives and reevaluating what brings them professional and personal fulfillment. This situation leaves employers with a pressing question: How do we slow or halt turnover for the workers who remain, preventing our most valuable resource from walking out the door?

At The Grossman Group, we believe in the concept of "Heart First" leadership—championing authenticity, empathy and humanity to build stronger, trusting relationships, which improve engagement, retention, and business results. Before we dive into practical strategies and tips for you to lead with heart to engage and retain employees during this unprecedented shift, let's take a look at our new workplace reality.



THE GREAT RESIGNATION
IS UPON US.....



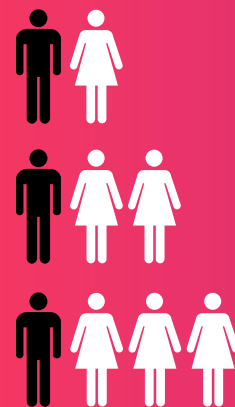
Over 47 million Americans quit their jobs in 2021, according to reports by the U.S. Department of Labor. In December alone, 4.3 million Americans voluntarily left their jobs while employers advertised 10.9 million job openings, translating to 1.6 available jobs for each unemployed person. On top of these

record-breaking numbers, what adds to that concern is that many of those employees who haven't already left are thinking about it. Joblist's Q3 2021 *U.S. Job Market Report* found that nearly three-quarters (73%) of currently employed workers say they are actively thinking about quitting their jobs, indicating

"The Great Resignation" trend may be here to stay. Industries with the highest levels of workers voluntarily leaving their jobs in December 2021 were accommodation and food services (6.1%), retail (4.9%), trade, transportation and utilities (3.8%) and professional and business services (3.7%).

¹Bankrate Job Seeker Survey, July 28-30, 2021

WOMEN

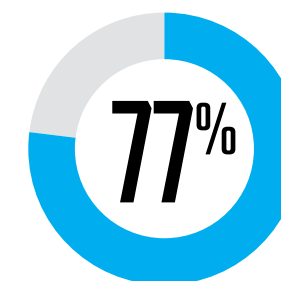


ARE LEAVING THE
WORKFORCE IN
**GREATER
NUMBERS**
THAN MEN...

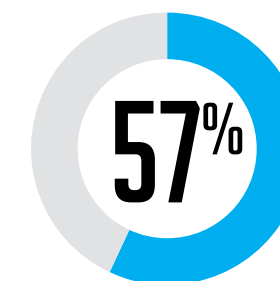
In September 2021, 309,000 women aged 20 and over left the labor force entirely, the biggest monthly decline in a year. We have seen significant decreases in labor force participation for women with a decrease from 57.8% in February 2020 to 55.9% in September 2021. While some of these changes may relate to women's jobs being concentrated in hard-hit industries such as restaurants, retail and hospitality, increased demands of the pandemic also seem to be a factor.

Research points to women voluntarily leaving careers or pausing employment at a time when they or their children risk exposure to COVID-19; school and daycare plans can change due to the virus, and work arrangements can lack critical parental leave or schedule flexibility.

A Deloitte study on global gender equality found women are more stressed and discouraged since the pandemic began as they take on an increasing amount of responsibility at home and in their careers:



say their job workload
has increased as a
result of the pandemic



say they plan to
leave their current
job within two years



Here's another question for us to consider: Has the pandemic created two classes of employees—those who can work from home and those who can't?

SEPARATE & UNEQUAL?

For those who have had an option to work from home, video calls quickly became the norm, and for many, so did keeping the kids occupied and helping with homework in between calls. This new arrangement offered opportunities and challenges they never anticipated.

While the “Grand Work from Home Experiment” started to prove viable for many, it also raised a divide with those who couldn't work from home—the people who drive trucks, take care of the sick at hospitals, stock shelves, and work in labs, manufacturing plants and distribution centers, to name a few. They saw others who have the “luxury” of working from home and watched how their company and other companies handled the pandemic and treated employees, including themselves.

One of the things that often came up in our work with clients was that the pandemic was driving a wedge between those who could work from home and those who couldn't. In some cases, each group thought the grass was greener on the other side. Those who could work from home thought those working on-site didn't appreciate how hard it is to have boundaries when you're working from home (the never-ending work day) or how difficult it is to work with the kids around all day.

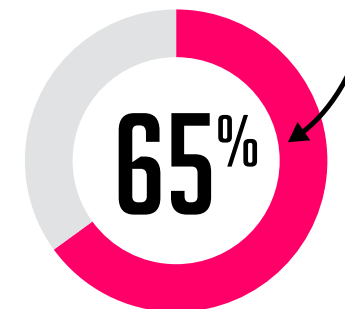
Those in the workplace thought the work from home folks had it easy. They didn't have to be out potentially exposing themselves to the virus; they didn't have to commute; it was easier for them to create and stay within “bubbles,” which allowed them greater opportunities to see friends and family, etc. If you wanted to travel to another state and needed to quarantine when you got home, that was a lot easier to do if you rarely left the house anyway. All this accentuated the divide and tensions between those who could work from home and those who couldn't.



AS ONE ECONOMIST PUT IT....

“It’s like the whole country is in some kind of union renegotiation.”

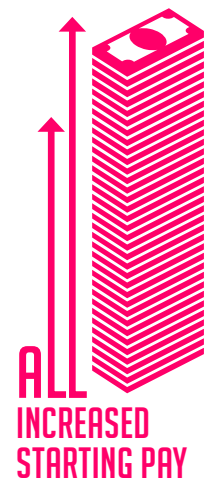
Opinion polls indicate that the public is increasingly supportive of unions, with the latest Gallup approval numbers showing



From the Great Resignation to Striketober, employees are making their voices heard and demanding change. And companies are beginning to respond:



Walmart *



In a related development, October 2021 earned the moniker “Striketober,” with labor strikes happening everywhere from cereal makers and agricultural equipment manufacturers to healthcare providers.

While a strike of 60,000 behind-the-scenes film and TV workers was averted with moments to spare, Netflix employees staged a walkout over concern about Dave Chappelle’s transphobic jokes and employees’ desire to see the company invest in more LGBTQ+ content. Although unions have failed to succeed in organizing workers at behemoths like Starbucks and Amazon, they may be picking up steam.



NEW REALITY



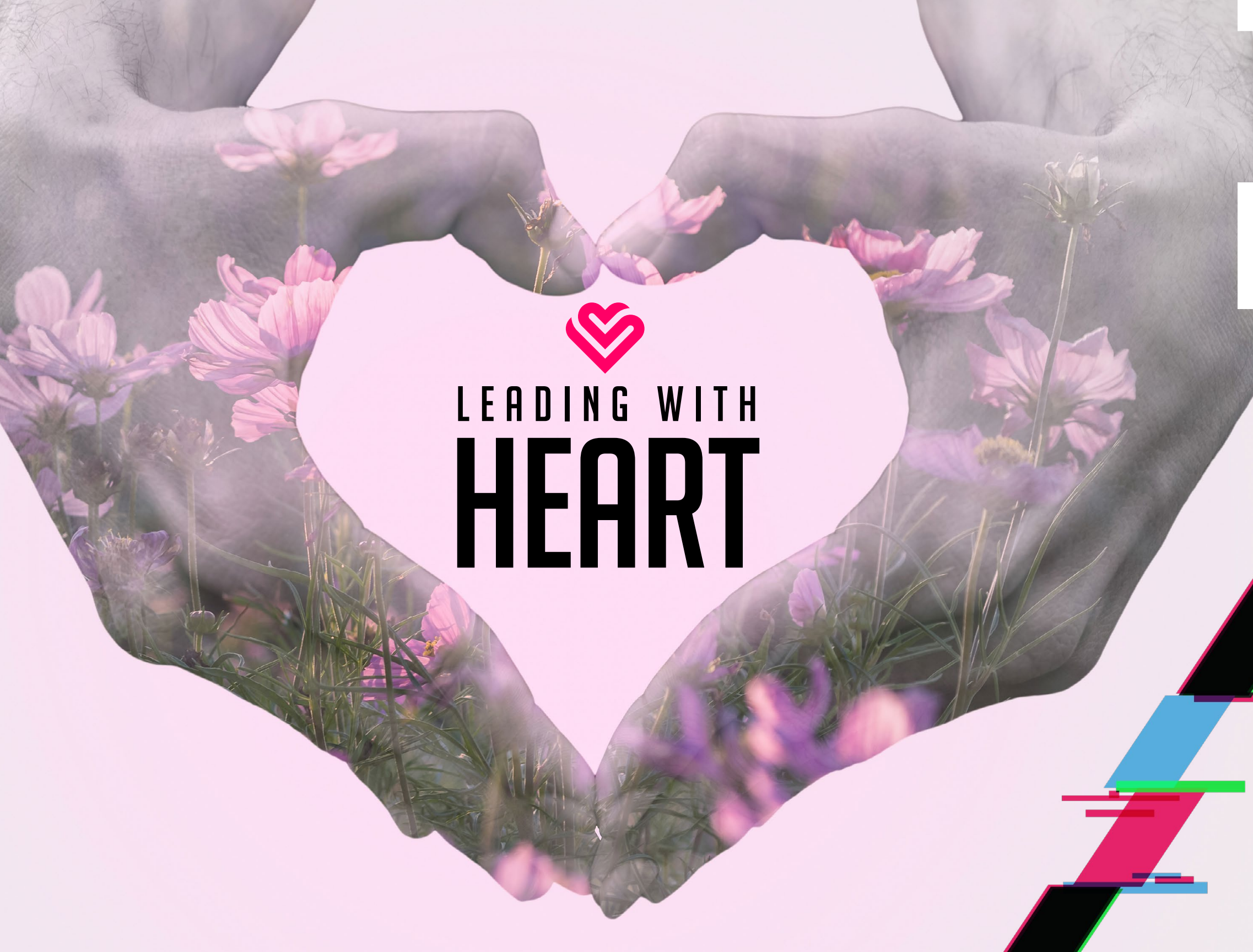
REALITY CHECK

Some call it the *New Normal*; others call it the *New Better*—with a wholly redefined employee experience. At The Grossman Group, we like to call it the ***New Reality***. The fact is, workers everywhere have more leverage than ever before—and that likely isn't changing anytime soon.

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT, EVOLVED

Part of what has changed is that we need to think differently about employee engagement in the new reality. Engagement is an emotional connection employees have with their work.

That emotional connection brings all kinds of benefits. It helps employees feel more excited to come to work because they are connected to their colleagues and leaders and feel they are doing work that's meaningful and interesting. It also often results in something extra—extra time, extra energy, extra brainpower. Employees go above and beyond with discretionary effort because they're motivated to do so.



LEADING WITH HEART



So how can leaders drive engagement and retain employees amid one of the greatest workforce shifts in U.S. history?

By leading with heart...

Leading with heart is about championing authenticity, empathy and humanity to build stronger, trusting relationships, which improve engagement, retention, and business results. It's about being a human as we lead. When you lead with heart, you help people be their best selves, bring a greater sense of purpose and meaning to every member of your team, and inspire them to achieve so much more for themselves and your organization.

HEART FIRST LEADERSHIP

Throughout the pandemic, we've learned how powerful it can be when leaders make personal connections with their people. Here are some tips to get started:

1 LISTEN AND RESPOND.

Take the time to understand what's on your team's minds. What questions and concerns do they have? What do they need to make their work experience better? Ask for their feedback—and show them you're listening by acting on what you hear. You won't be able to fix every problem but do what you can and explain why when you can't, providing the context they need to understand the situation.

2 BE WILLING TO BE VULNERABLE.

Share your own story and life experiences, your challenges and the things that matter most to you. Doing so will make your team members more likely to share their stories and journeys—what has made them who they are and what their hopes and dreams are for the future. It will also open the door for them to be more comfortable sharing work-related feedback that you can act upon. And it will make you more relatable and help you build trusting, meaningful connections with your team.

3 SHARE WHAT YOU KNOW WHEN YOU KNOW IT.

Easier said than done, I know. And sometimes, you're bound by the confidentiality of the information you have. But often, you can share information about what's going on or what the vision is for the future. You can provide context for company decisions and help your team members see what it means for them. If you don't know the answer to a question a member of your team asks, find the answer and tell them. Candor builds credibility and trust.

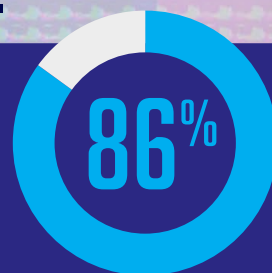
4 RECOGNIZE YOUR TEAM MEMBERS

for their hard work and accomplishments in ways that matter to them as individuals. Sure, you should take advantage of your corporate recognition programs and the points and perks they offer. But that's not enough. Make a goal to send three hand-written thank you notes a week to different members of your team. Call out specifically what they did as an individual to earn your thanks. To the degree that you have leeway to purchase modest thank you gifts, pick something that matches the interests of the individual, whether that is a gift certificate for dinner or tickets to a ball game. Show them that you care enough to know what's important to them.

5 BUILD REGULAR RECOGNITION INTO YOUR TEAM MEETINGS.

Set aside a few minutes at the start or end of every team meeting for a shout out to a team member. You can do it yourself or set it up where team members recognize a peer for something they did. By making it a regular part of your team meetings, you'll create a culture of gratitude and recognition.

HEART FIRST
LEADERSHIP IS GOOD
FOR BUSINESS



of employees felt they were better able to navigate the demands of their work and life when their leaders were more empathetic¹

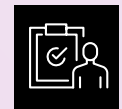
¹Catalyst research study: "The Power of Empathy in Times of Crisis and Beyond", Sept 2021

CORE COMPONENTS THAT LEAD TO EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

As you lead with heart and work to build more engagement within your own workforce, consider these three core components as we define engagement today:

FIRST

People’s well-being is not only considered, but understood and respected. The 2021 Gallup *State of the Global Workplace Report* makes a case for leaders to be concerned about employees’ non-work-related life experiences. Pointing to the mental, emotional, social, financial and caregiving challenges that many of us experienced during COVID-19, Gallup noted the potential for employee burnout and identified five elements of overall well-being:



CAREER
you like
what you do
every day



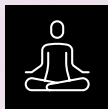
COMMUNITY
you like
where
you live



SOCIAL
you have
meaningful
relationships
in your life



FINANCIAL
you manage
your money
well



PHYSICAL
you have the
energy to get
things done

Whether you define well-being that way or not, its importance is top-of-mind for a majority of employees today and worthy of serious consideration to driving engagement.

SECOND

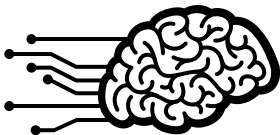
Employees feel listened to and heard. We’ve heard a lot about this important component, but its importance can’t be understated. Often, leaders think they are hearing employees, yet aren’t doing the consistent work to actually hear them—regular touchpoints, moments to connect one-on-one, and consistent communication channels that are easy to access and navigate, allowing for questions to be raised and addressed.

Leaders should be sure they are regularly evaluating their communication efforts to ensure they are working effectively for employees, rather than simply assuming that employees are actually feeling heard.

THIRD

Solutions are individualized. This means offering enough flexibility and personalization to meet varying employee needs.

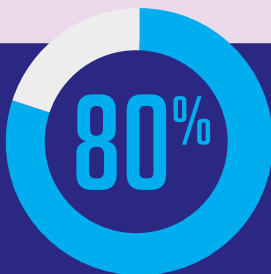
One of the dilemmas facing leaders today is how best to follow HR policies and guidelines, and at the same time, respect an employee’s desire for individualized solutions.



WHICH LEADS US TO A QUESTION ALL LEADERS SHOULD ASK:

As we evolve the employee experience, is **this** the right direction for an organization’s culture and much-needed to retain employees today?

HEART FIRST
LEADERSHIP IS GOOD
FOR BUSINESS



of U.S. workers agree empathetic leadership decreases employee turnover¹

¹EY Consulting survey, Oct. 2021

STRIKING A BALANCE

The goal is to find the right balance between company goals and employee preferences. So how are companies doing that? They...

FOCUS

on the employee experience with an emphasis on workplace policies and practices that support individuals in their work, which include aspects of culture and leadership



PRIORITIZE

leader effectiveness, helping leaders shift how they think about leading teams in this new reality, and assist them with resources to have “Heart First” conversations



ENSURE

the Communications team is focused on the highest and best use of their skills and abilities, and are positioned as advocates for employees and leadership



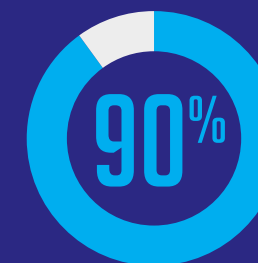
LET'S DIVE INTO EACH OF THESE...



EMPHASIZE WORKPLACE POLICIES THAT SUPPORT EMPLOYEES

- 1 Proactively managing work-related stress to avoid burnout
- 2 Compensation and benefit changes, expanding benefits such as paid parental leave, PTO carryover, and more
- 3 Remote work options
- 4 Flexibility with work and life events (*job flexibility might include job sharing, more flexible hours, 4-day work weeks*)
- 5 Perks that are individualized
- 6 Safe spaces for important discussions where common ground can be discovered
- 7 Work on interesting projects
- 8 Focus on financial wellness
- 9 Frequent recognition and appreciation
- 10 Programmatics such as blocking Monday mornings and Friday afternoons for work

HEART FIRST LEADERSHIP IS GOOD FOR BUSINESS



of U.S. workers believe empathetic leadership leads to higher job satisfaction. When employee experience is prioritized, job satisfaction improves.¹

The demands and challenges of the pandemic have led people to reexamine their lives and priorities and one topic in particular comes up often: **BURNOUT**. Burnout results “from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed,” according to the World Health Organization, which now classifies burnout as an occupational phenomenon and not a medical condition. Burnout is characterized by:

- Feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion
- Increased mental distance from one’s job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one’s job
- Reduced professional efficacy



of U.S. workers surveyed were feeling burned out and 67% believe the feeling has worsened throughout the pandemic.²

¹EY Consulting survey, Oct. 2021

²Indeed.com Employee Burnout Report, March 2021

WORKPLACE POLICIES THAT WORK FOR FRONT-LINE WORKERS

As we reevaluate workplace policies, we must ask ourselves: *Are we doing enough for workers who—in many cases—don't have the option of doing their job from home?*

As organizations find the right balance between company goals and employee preferences, here are a few examples of what's working to retain front-line employees:



PAY & BENEFITS

- Upping compensation, including increasing hourly wages and spot bonuses
- Expanding and strengthening offerings by improving existing benefits, and adding new benefits such as paid parental leave, PTO carryover, and more
- Offering flexibility in work such as job sharing, more flexible hours, 4-day work weeks, even where it's especially tough (like on the manufacturing floor)



WORK STRUCTURE & ENVIRONMENT

- Treading carefully with vaccine mandates, offering incentives and using influence to try and increase vaccine rates without alienating those employees who don't want to get vaccinated
- Gestures of appreciation such as surprise food trucks in the parking lot...or executives greeting employees at a shift change holding up big "thank you" signs



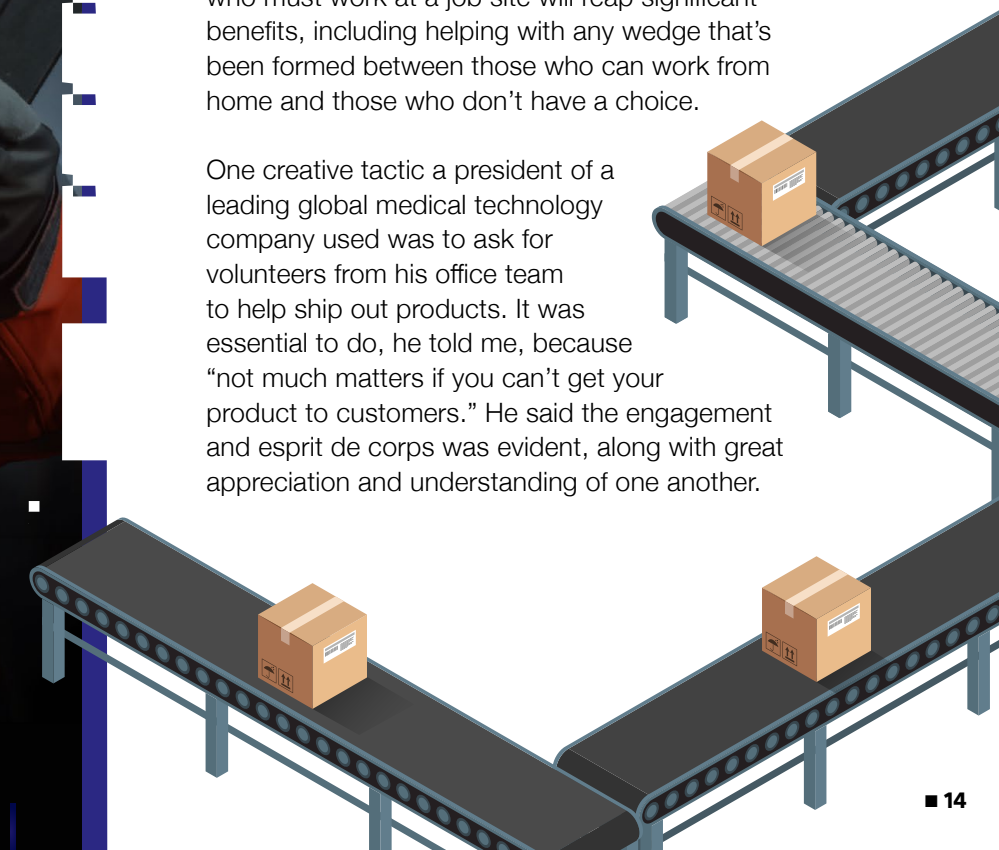
LISTENING & APPRECIATION

- Training leaders and managers so they're prepared to lead in new ways that the times and employees demand; to have more helpful, productive conversations and regular listening to understand employee sentiment and needs
- Campaigns to better connect employees to the organization's mission and strategy, and how their work contributes to something larger than themselves
- Ample scheduled time when leaders engage with employees, discuss issues at the team level and listen to better understand experiences and feelings

II ROLL UP YOUR SLEEVES AND ENGAGE

Shoring up the employee experience for those who must work at a job site will reap significant benefits, including helping with any wedge that's been formed between those who can work from home and those who don't have a choice.

One creative tactic a president of a leading global medical technology company used was to ask for volunteers from his office team to help ship out products. It was essential to do, he told me, because "not much matters if you can't get your product to customers." He said the engagement and esprit de corps was evident, along with great appreciation and understanding of one another.



MAKE MANAGER EFFECTIVENESS A PRIORITY

As the main facilitator of employee conversations, companies should make leader effectiveness a priority, helping leaders shift how they think about leading teams with a “Heart First” approach.



UNFORTUNATELY, MANY LEADERS ARE WHOLLY UNPREPARED TO LEAD IN THIS NEW WAY.

This isn't something that comes naturally to many leaders, but it can be taught and practiced until it's a muscle leaders have developed. When done well, we've seen it lead to remarkable leaps in employee engagement. These leadership challenges are part of the reason why there was such urgency in getting employees back to the office as quickly as possible. Leading in-person is familiar territory for many leaders, and they have habits and rituals that serve them well; plus, there's a belief among many senior leaders that work is best done when you can see one another.

However, there are ways to accomplish this in a virtual world, too. In fact, the best leaders can and do lead with heart across all kinds of settings. One of our global clients talks about it this way—the key to shifting ways of working is by shifting the ways leaders lead. They go hand-in-hand because the leader still “makes the weather.”

In today's challenging work culture, setting the right tone as a leader will go a long way toward engaging your team.



TRAINING CURRICULUM THOUGHT STARTERS

So what might a training curriculum focus on?

- **Business case** for the importance of communications
- **The role of the leader**—they make the weather
- **Communications philosophy**—how might the leader articulate their commitment to effective communications
- **Understanding employee audience** and mindset
- **The importance of planning**
- **Having a communications cadence**
- **Creating an emotional connection**
- **Practice with message delivery**—including skills of listening, empathy, bridging
- **Communicating in times of change**
- **Common traps to avoid**



HEART FIRST LEADERSHIP IS GOOD FOR BUSINESS

Leaders who practice empathy have a more engaged and higher performing team, as well as a more profitable business overall.¹



¹Catalyst research study: “The Power of Empathy in Times of Crisis and Beyond”, Sept 2021

ENABLE COMMUNICATIONS TEAMS TO

PRIORITIZE



Ensure the communications team is focused on the highest and best use of their skills and abilities. When the pandemic hit, leadership teams figured out very quickly that the communications team was essential to keeping business continuity and helping employees through the transition.

Yet, for as much as has changed in the last two years, the reality is little has changed. Organizations and employees are still going through tremendous change and the communications team will continue to be essential to leading employees through that change. To that end, they need to be focused and resourced as such. Part of why companies were so successful during the pandemic is because the communication was hugely focused on what was most important to the business and to the culture.

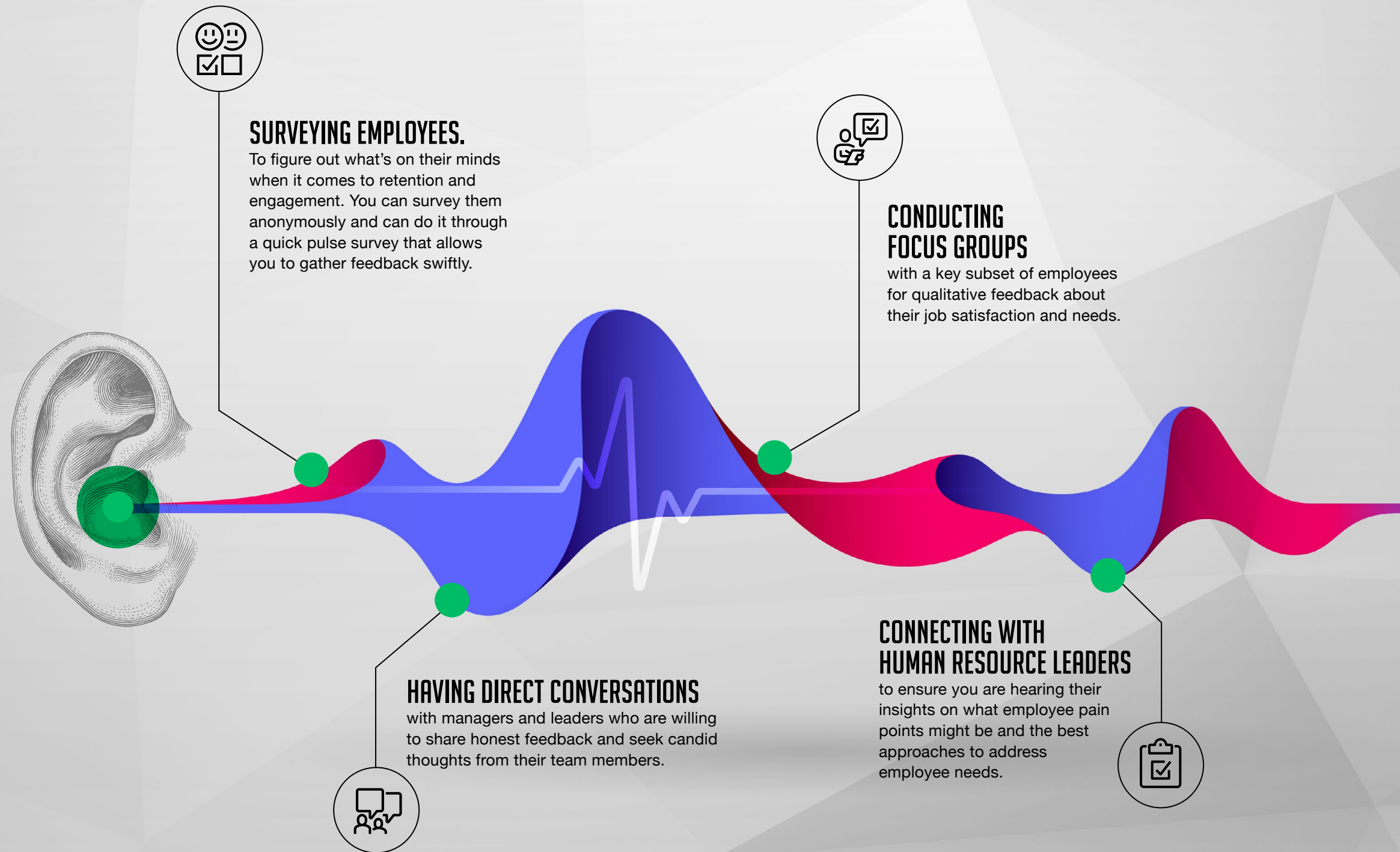


HERE ARE SOME OF THE THINGS LEADING-EDGE COMMUNICATIONS TEAMS ARE DOING TODAY....

KEEP A PULSE

The first step to retaining employees is truly listening.

No one really knows the long-term effects of this great workplace shift just yet, so it's all the more important that companies (and communications teams) have listening systems and measures in place to keep a pulse, stay connected to business needs/strategy, and reinforce that the organization is figuring this out together (versus from the ivory tower). The focus should be on working as a team so everyone sees they can flex and adapt with the times based on their business needs. Some approaches to listening might include:



PRIORITIZE AND ALIGN

Communications teams are updating enterprise-wide messages to ensure the same focus they had when the pandemic started—***on what is most important.***

What that means is now is the time to prioritize ruthlessly. This may be a new approach, but it's critical. We've seen that narrowing the focus of employees to a few priorities allows them to move mountains (or tree stumps). It's important to maintain this level of clarity and enlist the aid of senior leadership to keep messages to three or four (max!) above the daily job information. When you do so, you'll see your organization rise to challenges that may have once seemed insurmountable.

One of the attributes of best-in-class organizations is that message development is strategic, consistent and responsive to audience needs. But the communications team can't do it alone. Communications teams and leaders need to be partners in prioritizing what's most important. By working together to be clear in communications, people will hear, repeat and internalize messages, ultimately helping your company achieve its business outcomes.



CONNECT THE DOTS

To drive engagement, help employees personalize strategy and understand how they fit in. This “fit” is often called line of sight.

Put simply, line of sight means that employees can see the connection between their goals and the organization’s goals. The benefits are many—to ensure that employee’s best efforts are helping achieve the organization’s goals, as well as helping them know that the work they’re doing matters. Employees want to know they’re making a contribution to the larger whole, which drives engagement.

First, employees need a fundamental understanding of what’s important to the organization, including:

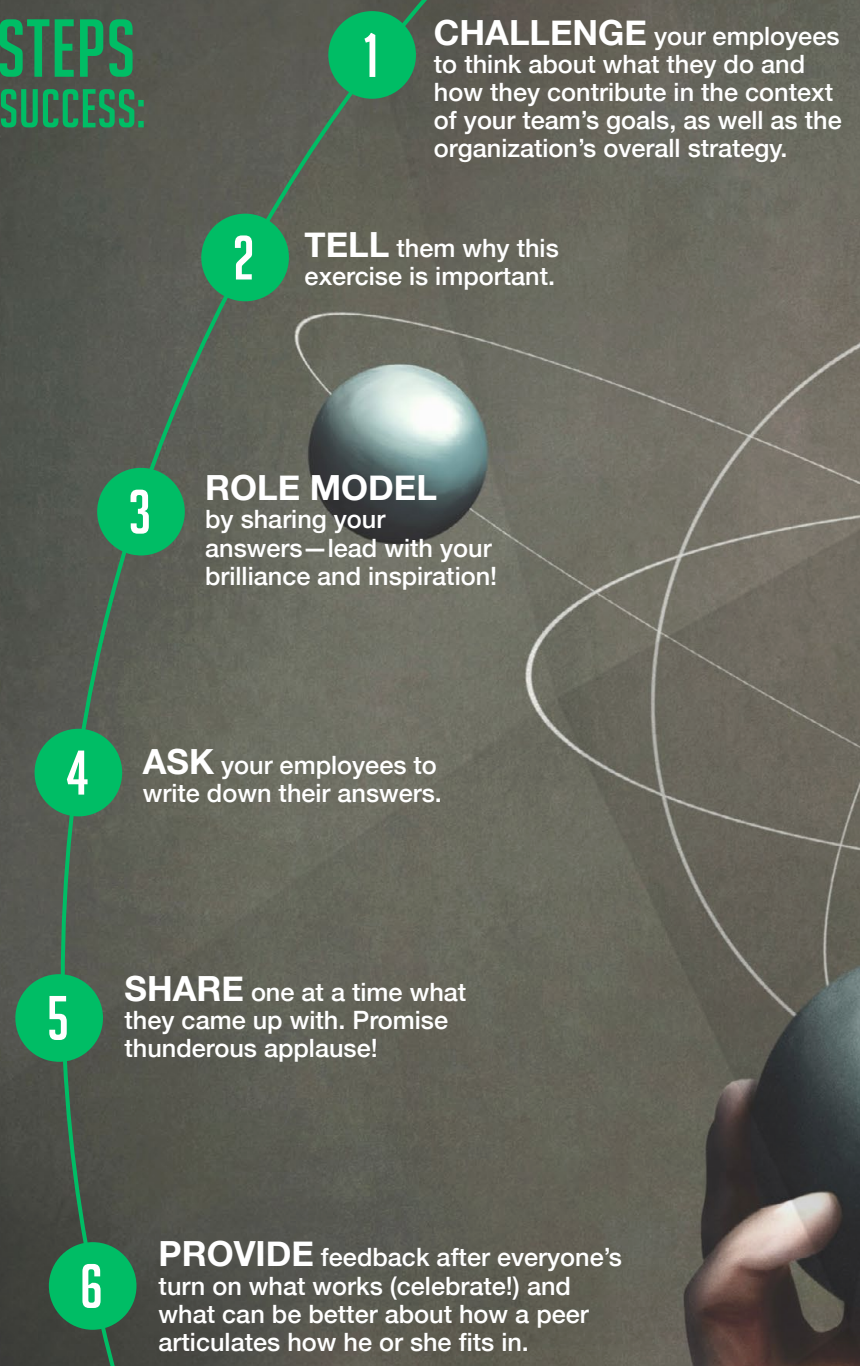
- The organization’s vision and mission
- Its strategy
- The overall goals of the organization
- Most important, the overall goals of their team

We often go back to the story of two brick layers. When asked what they were doing, the first brick layer said: “I’m building a wall.” When the other was asked, he said: “I’m building a castle.” Employees need to know **both** their wall, and their castle:

- What they do (the wall)
- How they contribute (their castle)

How do you think your employees would do at answering those two questions if asked? Try this exercise at your next staff meeting: tell your employees that you want to ensure everyone is understanding the valuable role that they play in contributing to your organization’s success. After all, your team rocks!

6 STEPS TO SUCCESS:



RECOGNITION THAT MOTIVATES

START BY ASKING:

Whether a pat on the back, spot bonus, or formal award, recognition can be a powerful tool in your communication arsenal. By showing appreciation and communicating a job well done in specific ways, you can enhance team performance and motivate employees to take their work to the next level.

What's a critical behavior you want to see more of? What strategic priority or company value do I want to drive or accelerate?

At the heart of recognition, we want to make employees feel appreciated, and that is often more meaningful when we tie it to the bigger organizational picture. Think about your goals and the company strategic framework to decide if there's a concept you could build your recognition around and simultaneously reinforce a core message.

Is there a specific time of year that team members are called upon to meet heightened demand and could benefit from extra acknowledgment of that hard work?

This would be in addition to a steady drumbeat of recognition throughout the year. No matter what you decide is the best cadence for formal recognition, remember that informal recognition can happen year-round in the form of a written note or personal word of thanks and appreciation expressed during a team huddle. The key is to do it frequently, sincerely, and in as specific a way as possible.

What type of recognition would best resonate with your unique workforce or the individual you are honoring? Is it public acknowledgment? Private? A celebration event? Tangible? Intangible?

In recognition, one size does not fit all. One individual might value a public display of gratitude during a meeting, while others might prefer a simple, private word of appreciation. Be aware of how your employees prefer to be recognized or what's culturally appropriate.

How can I best structure recognition so members of the team are inspired to participate and feel engaged in the process?

Crowdsourcing can certainly be applied to award programs as well. Who better to recognize everyday heroes than those who work side-by-side with them on a daily basis? Consider building excitement and involvement by taking nominations by email or ballot; there also are apps available that allow teams to formally give one another kudos.

3 MUST-HAVES:

Recognition should not only resonate with the recipients, but help others understand expectations and commit to demonstrating similar behaviors. What gets rewarded is what gets done—and always remember these key guidelines:

- ✓ **Make it personal**
- ✓ **Make it meaningful**
- ✓ **Make it specific**



NOW'S OUR TIME!

One of my biggest takeaways beyond leading with heart is this: maybe employees have always had these wants...and some more than others...but they weren't as vocal about their wants as they are today. Like it or not, the pandemic has made them more empowered to force the issue...or leave or try to find a new position or job.

The question for us is—***are we listening?***

Do we know what employees think? Are our leaders prepared to lead in new ways that employees and the times demand? Leaders today need to be less of a boss and more of a colleague, partner and facilitator who lifts others up in bold, personal ways that matter.

**And for those of us
in Communications...
now's our time to shine,
and help leaders during
this defining moment,
as we know we can do!**



TACKLING TODAY'S CHALLENGES

HEAD ON

As you've read through this ebook, you might be asking yourself: *How do I balance addressing my employees' needs while tackling all the other challenges I'm facing today?* We know employee engagement and retention is a pressing concern for leaders across all industries and organizations—but that it's also one of many challenges keeping you up at night these days.

At the surface, these issues don't look that different from challenges you've faced over the last decade or more. However, some things are vastly different for companies now and there are new and complex challenges that have a significant impact on how leaders lead and respond...and they've been greatly exacerbated by the events of the last two years. If this sounds familiar, we can help. Our two-page **Heart First Solutions Guide** provides 40+ solutions that get at big things leaders and communications professionals can do to address challenges in the workplace, including:



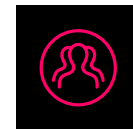
ANXIETY OVER
PANDEMIC-CAUSED
BREAKDOWNS IN
BUSINESS



MANAGING
PEOPLE WHO
AREN'T "PRESENT"
(challenging
traditional
expectations)



MASSIVE
PRICING AND
COST SHIFTS



CIVIC AND
CIVIL TENSION



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David Grossman helps leaders drive productivity and get the results they want through authentic and courageous leadership and communication. He's a sought-after speaker and advisor to Fortune 500 leaders, and a four-time author. His latest award-winning book, **"Heart First: Lasting Leader Lessons from a Year that Changed Everything,"** features interviews with 30+ leaders inside a variety of organizations, each of whom share extraordinarily candid insights and unique leadership lessons. His leader**communicator**™ blog is ranked the #1 blog on communication by Feedspot six years in a row.

David is Founder & CEO of The Grossman Group, an award-winning Chicago-based strategic leadership development and internal communications consultancy. The Grossman Group's clients include AbbVie, Allstate, Form Technologies, Kaiser Permanente, Lockheed Martin, Novartis Gene Therapies, Southern New Hampshire University, and more. David is a Certified Speaking Professional (CSP), an MBTI® Certified Practitioner, a Prosci Certified Change Practitioner and taught graduate-level internal communications at Columbia University in NYC.

David has been featured in:

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

NBC NIGHTLY NEWS

TODAY



Chicago Tribune

FAST COMPANY

Los Angeles Times

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