

2021 Global Culture Report

A year of crisis, opportunity, and compelling data.



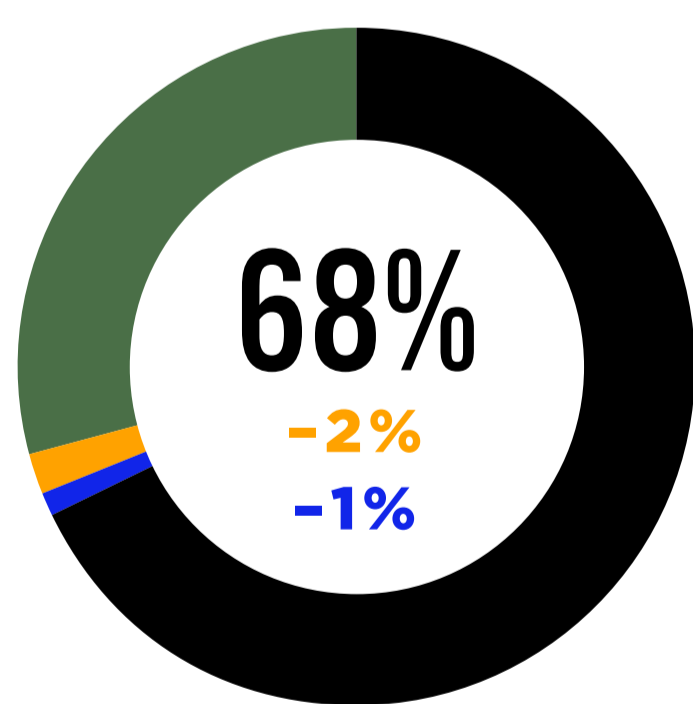
The world has never seen workplace cultures change faster than they did in 2020. The how, where, and when of work is now completely different for 4 out of every 10 employees. And that’s just the beginning.

This year’s report looks at the impact that crises, technology, recognition, inclusion, leadership, and a new generation of workers will have on cultures. Scroll down for highlights, or click into the details.

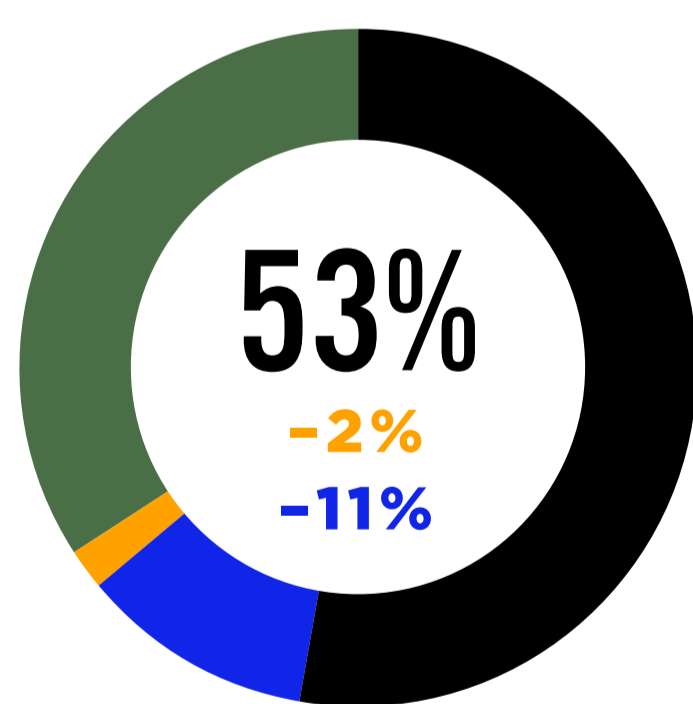
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The Six Talent Magnets: Core elements of culture that attract and connect people to teams and organizations.

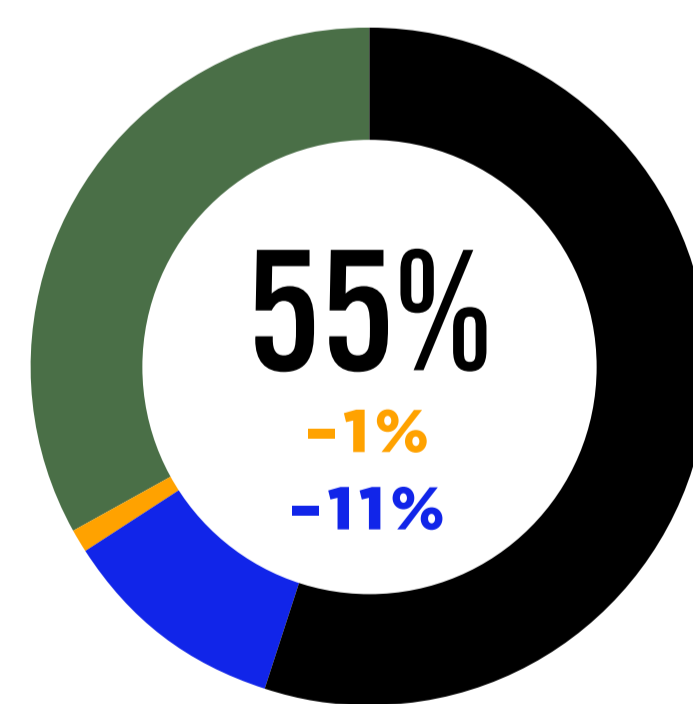
EACH MAGNET SHOWS A **CLEAR CHANGE OVER THE LAST YEAR**, AS WELL AS THE **IMPACT OF COVID-19**.



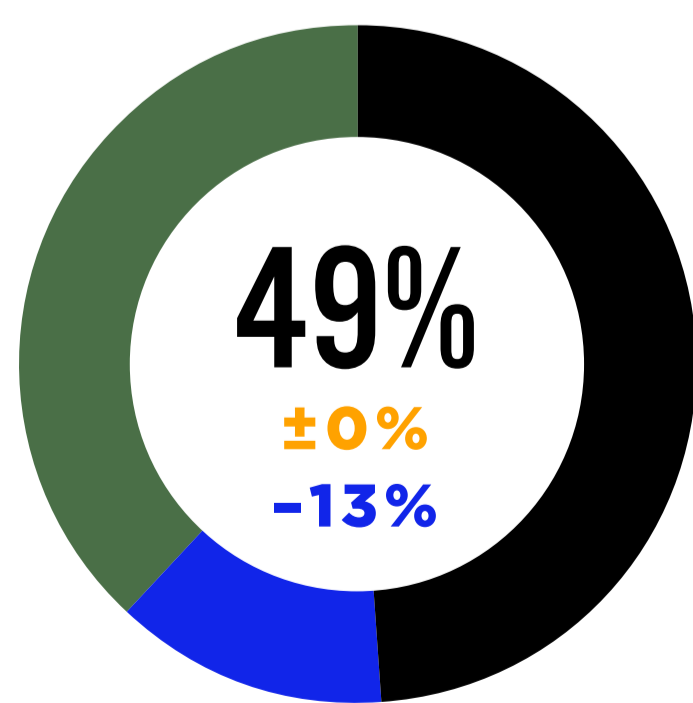
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF PURPOSE



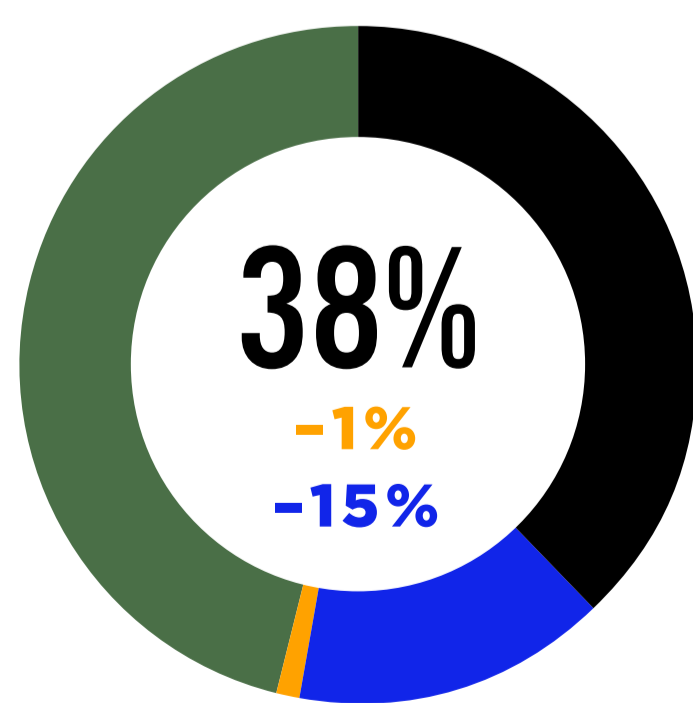
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF OPPORTUNITY



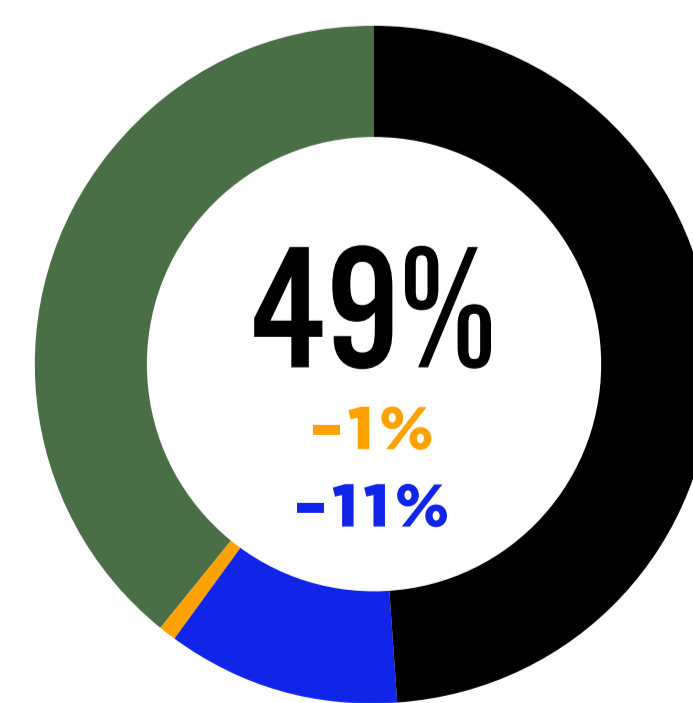
EMPLOYEE SENSE OF SUCCESS



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF APPRECIATION



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF WELLBEING



EMPLOYEE SENSE OF LEADERSHIP

[READ THE INTRO](#)



Crisis

In 2020, organizations faced a virus with no cure, a reckoning of racial justice, and an unprecedented opportunity.

So far, 2020 has delivered a series of cascading crises to our health, economic, and social systems that have exposed organizational strengths and weaknesses and even changed how organizations do business. However, those with thriving work cultures are weathering the storm much better.

	IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THRIVING CULTURES	IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON NON-THRIVING CULTURES
Engagement	- 1%	- 52%
Retention	- 3%	- 53%
eNPS®	- 5%	- 63%

Organizations that increased their transparency with employees since March have experienced:

85%

INCREASE IN EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Likewise, organizations without a formal recognition program have seen:

20%

HIGHER INTENTION-TO-LEAVE SCORES

152%

INCREASE IN EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION TO DO MORE

49%

DECREASE IN ENGAGEMENT

241%

INCREASE IN THE EMPLOYEE NET PROMOTER SCORE®

2x

GREATER FEAR OF COVID-19 AMONG EMPLOYEES



There's always an opportunity with crisis. Just as it forces an individual to look inside himself, it forces a company to reexamine its policies and practices.

—JUDY SMITH, CEO, SMITH & COMPANY, CRISIS MANAGEMENT FIRM

CRISIS TAKEAWAY

Organizations have a unique opportunity to treat the crises of 2020 as pivotal moments, make positive changes, and invest in the lives of their employees and communities. Even small improvements can strengthen work cultures. And stronger cultures will be more resilient and adaptable to future adversity.

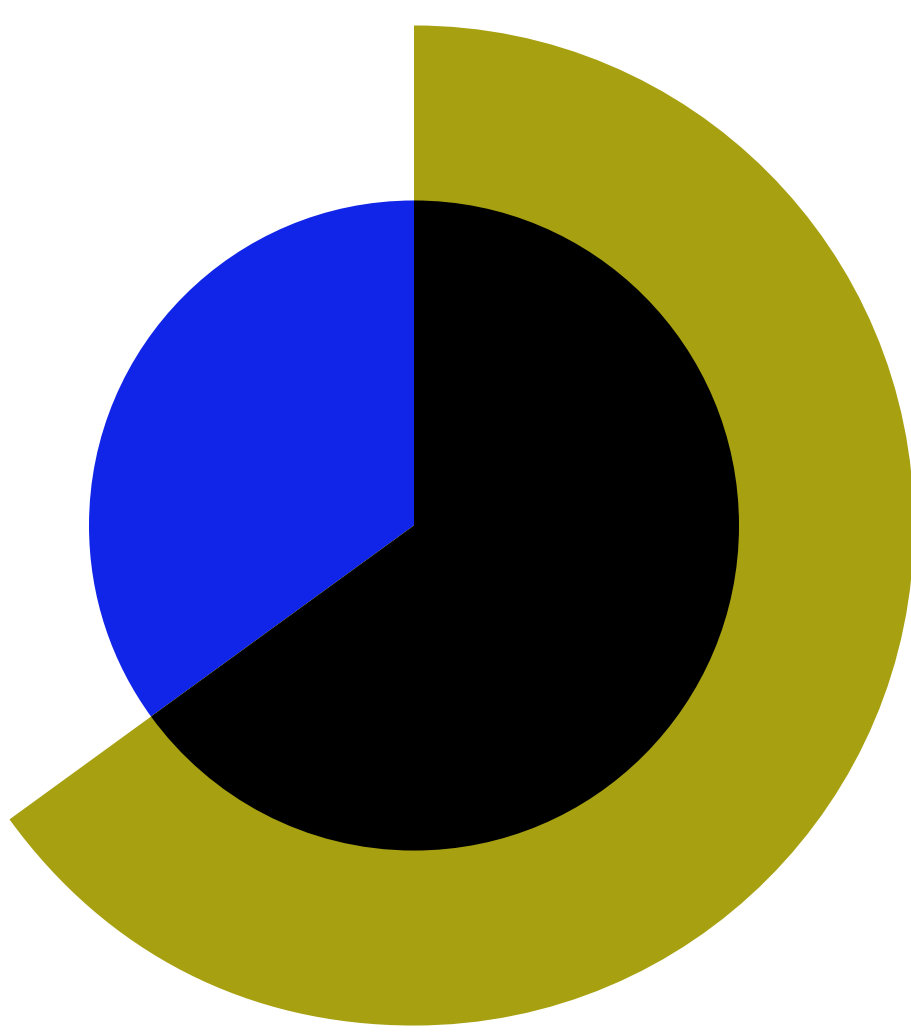
[READ CRISIS CHAPTER](#)



Technology

New technology is far more successful when it's introduced and integrated in ways that strengthen culture.

Most organizations assume employees are afraid of artificial intelligence and other advanced technologies. Our research shows any fear is more nuanced and centers on how the organization implements new technology. It also indicates organizations do best when they weigh the impact technology will have on the employee experience and work culture.



65%

OF EMPLOYEES ARE HOPEFUL ABOUT NEW TECHNOLOGY AT THEIR ORGANIZATION



32%

OF ORGANIZATIONS ARE CULTURALLY READY TO ADOPT NEW TECHNOLOGY

When organizations align technology implementation to their culture, the results are dramatic:

644%

HIGHER LIKELIHOOD THE EMPLOYEE FEELS SUCCESSFUL

424%

HIGHER LIKELIHOOD THE EMPLOYEE IS ENGAGED

296%

HIGHER LIKELIHOOD REVENUE INCREASES



Delivering a winning employee experience means leveraging technology to provide employees an experience at work that is comparable to their experience as consumers.

—JUDY SMITH, CEO, SMITH & COMPANY, CRISIS MANAGEMENT FIRM

TECHNOLOGY TAKEAWAY

Organizations that thoughtfully integrate technology achieve an ecosystem where different tools interact seamlessly and support a thriving culture full of great employee experiences.

[READ TECHNOLOGY CHAPTER](#)

Recognition

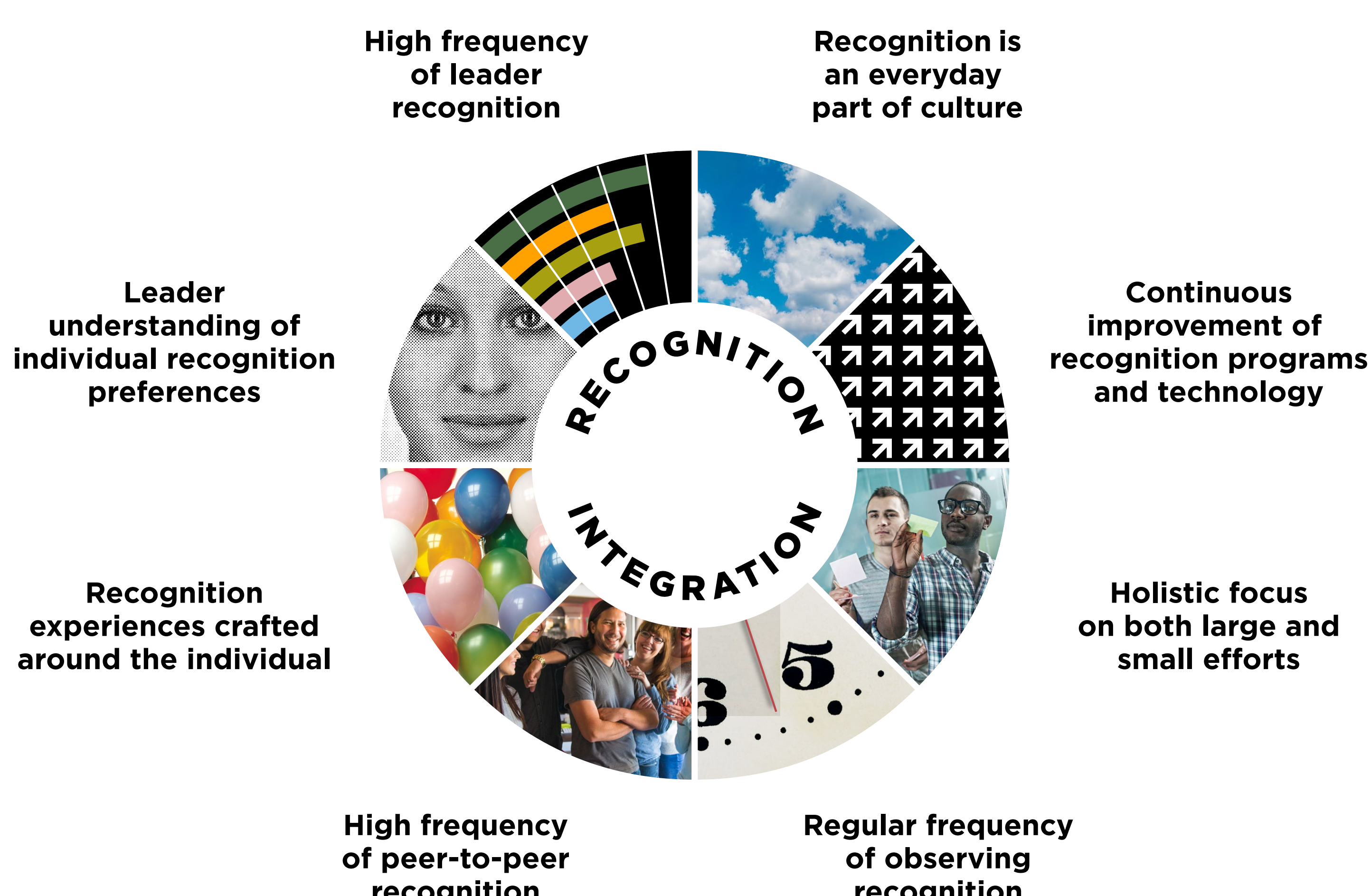
The future of recognition is a blend of advanced technology and old-school humanity.



At its best, recognition is a blend of meaningful, personal experiences and the technology to make them frequent and easy.

When organizations use programs and tools that elevate the role of recognition and enable authentic connection, cultural and business success follows. Embedding recognition into work culture allows it to become the natural response to great work across the organization.

How do we measure embeddedness?



Companies with integrated recognition are:

4x

MORE LIKELY TO HAVE HIGHLY ENGAGED EMPLOYEES

2x

MORE LIKELY TO HAVE INCREASED REVENUE OVER THE PAST YEAR

73%

LESS LIKELY TO HAVE LAYOFFS OVER THE PAST YEAR

44%

LESS LIKELY TO HAVE EMPLOYEES SUFFERING FROM BURNOUT



There is now the expectation that we appreciate great work. Appreciation has become a part of who we are. People use that word and talk about it. It's part of the heartbeat of our organization, and it provides all of us hope when we see the good things people are doing across the organization.

—KAREN ACKERMANN, VP OF HR, CENTRA HEALTH

RECOGNITION TAKEAWAY

Recognition should be personalized, integrated into the employee's daily workflow, and visibly connected to what matters to your organization. Moreover, when these best practices are embedded in work culture, businesses—and their people—thrive.

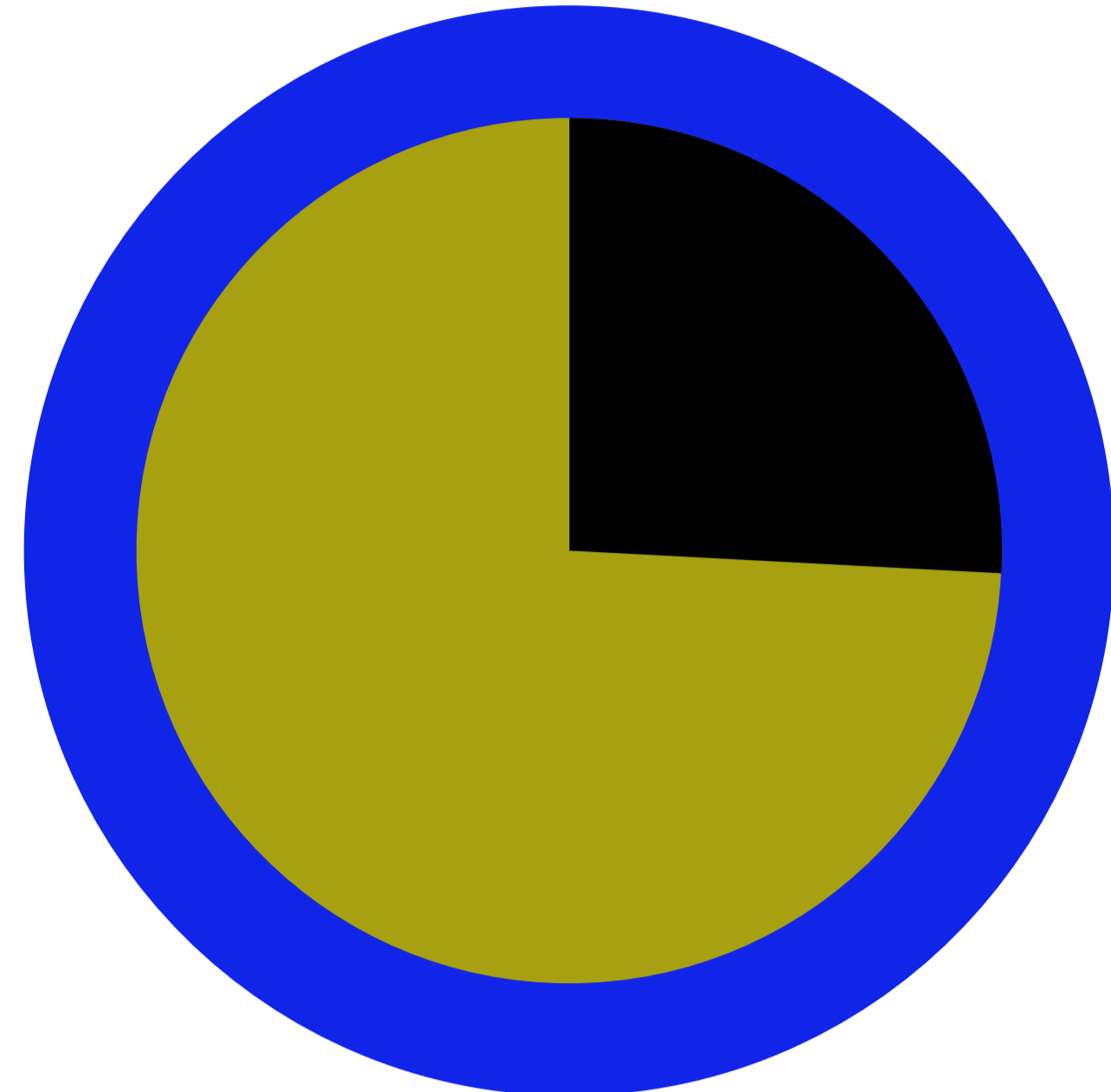
[READ RECOGNITION CHAPTER](#)



Inclusion

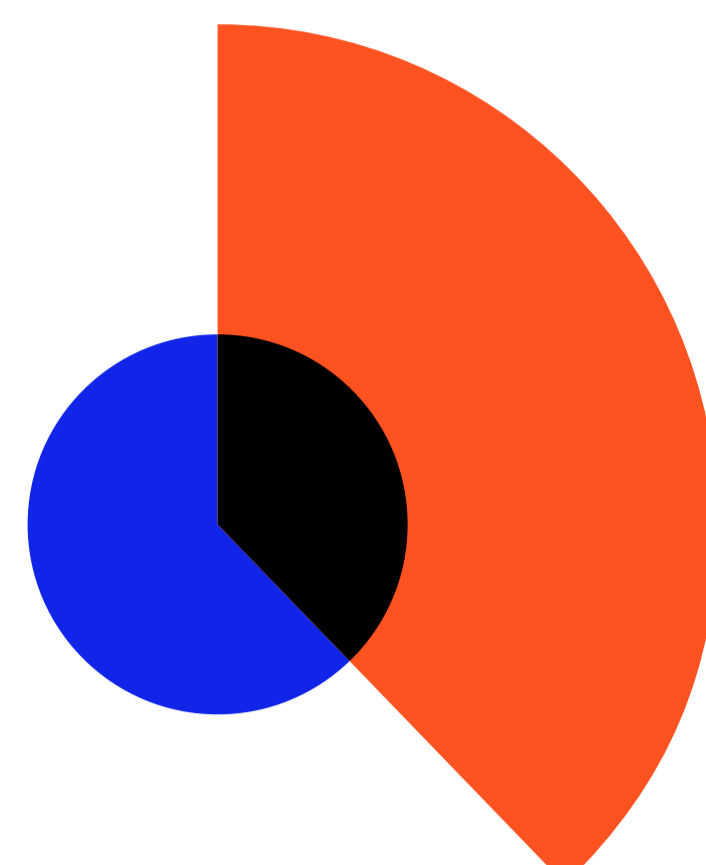
The key to a more inclusive organization starts with redefining inclusion.

Diversity and inclusion efforts can no longer be limited to risk-mitigation tactics. Instead, organizations need cultures that embrace each individual and celebrate the intersections of their unique attributes. The ingredient most often missing: the daily interactions employees experience.



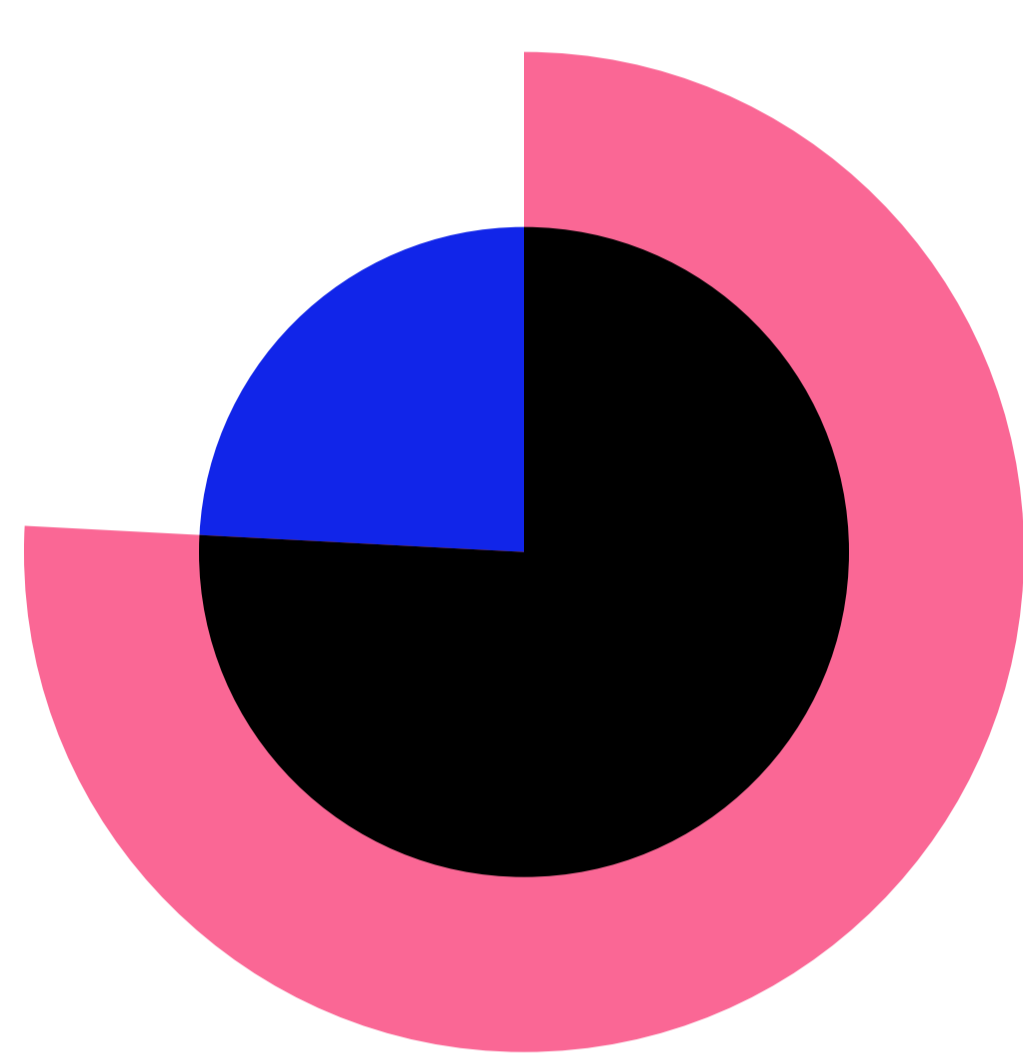
126%

MORE LIKELY TO SUFFER FROM SEVERE BURNOUT



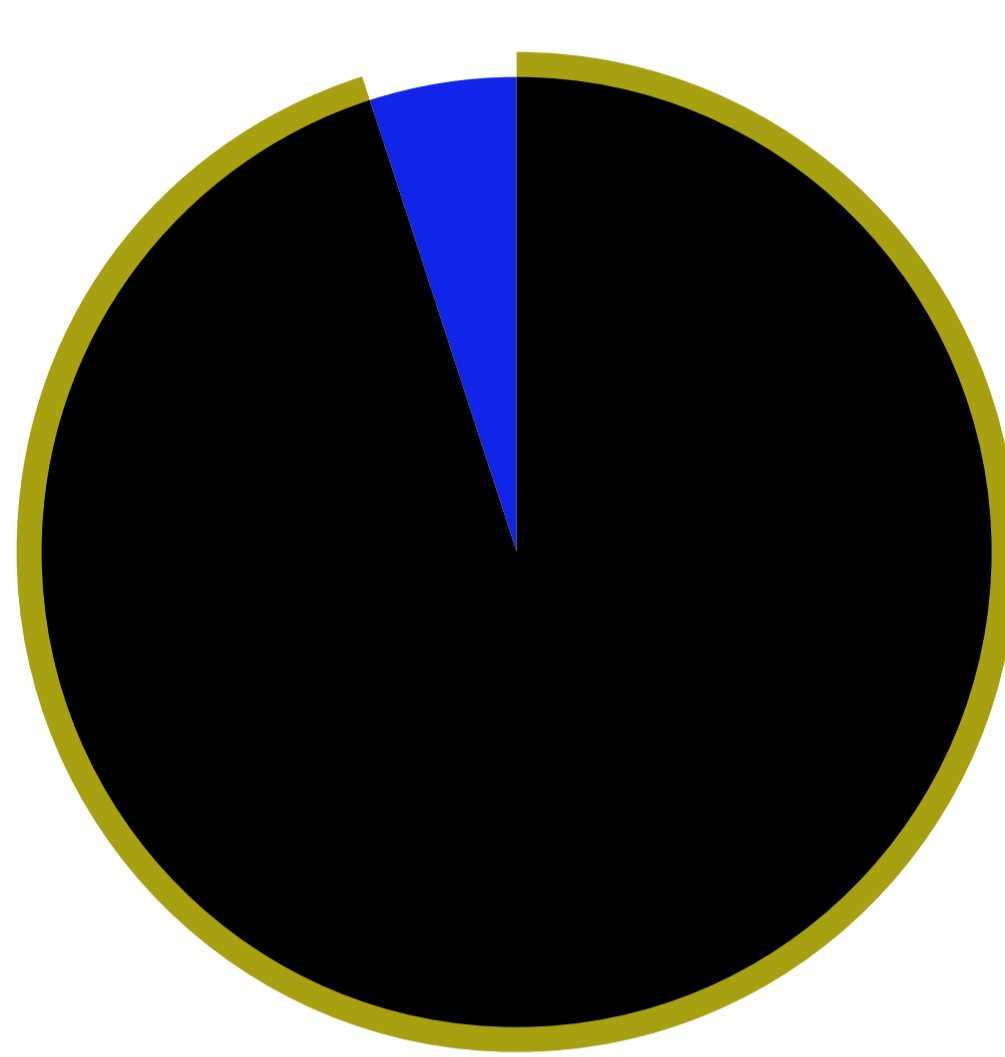
38%

LESS LIKELY TO FEEL A SENSE OF BELONGING



76%

MORE LIKELY TO EXPERIENCE A MICROAGGRESSION FROM A LEADER—AND 144% MORE LIKELY FROM A SENIOR LEADER



95%

MORE LIKELY TO EXPERIENCE A MICROAGGRESSION FROM A PEER

When D&I initiatives are poorly executed, we see:

78%

DECREASE IN ENGAGEMENT

66%

DECREASE IN THE PERCEPTION OF THE EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE

44%

INCREASE IN THE RATE OF MODERATE TO SEVERE BURNOUT

To best address the historical shortcomings of D&I initiatives, reimagine the factors of inclusion and exclusion within the micro- and peak experiences of each employee:



D&I needs to be something that every single employee at the company has a stake in.

—BO YOUNG LEE, CHIEF D&I OFFICER, UBER

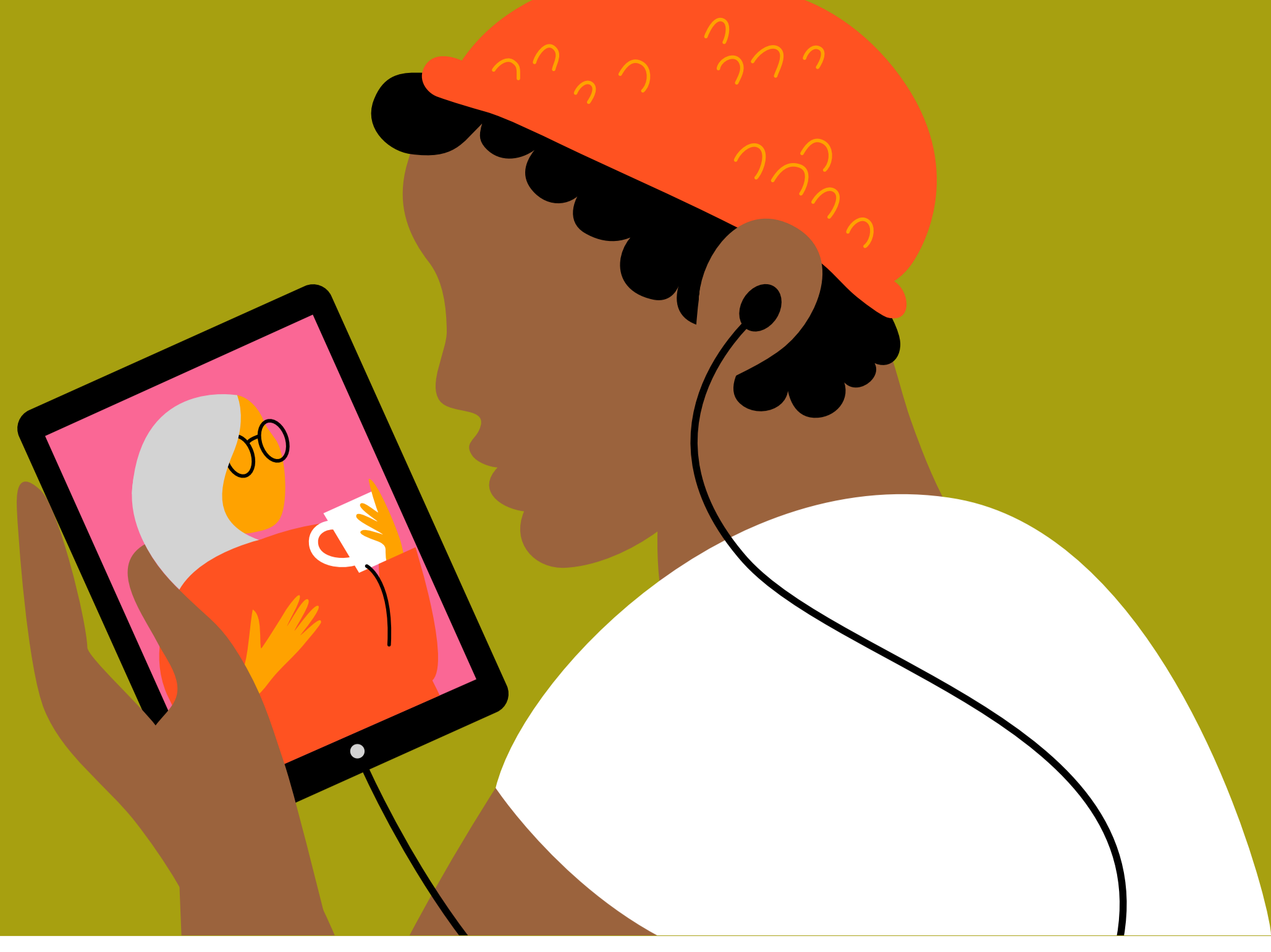
INCLUSION TAKEAWAY

Inclusion celebrates and leverages diversity, allowing organizations to discover new possibilities that only emerge when the perspectives, skills, and talents of unique people are represented, respected, and integrated. Redefining inclusion, and ensuring employees feel it in both their macro- and micro-experiences, makes the elusive dream of an inclusive workplace achievable.

[READ INCLUSION CHAPTER](#)

Generations

Each generation of employees is more alike than different. And they all crave modern leaders and consistent recognition.



Contrary to stereotypes, the four generations in the workplace today are more alike than not. While there are nuances in how to lead each generation (which shouldn't be ignored), all generations want the same things from their work culture: a sense of purpose, connection, and appreciation. By focusing on commonalities rather than differences, organizations can accelerate experiential and cultural outcomes.

When an organization handles recognition, leadership, and culture well, the benefits apply to all generations.

These employees, on average, are:

And the benefits for Gen Z are even greater:

9x

MORE LIKELY TO BE PROMOTERS

13x

MORE LIKELY TO BE PROMOTERS

13x

MORE LIKELY TO BE ENGAGED

15x

MORE LIKELY TO BE ENGAGED

12x

MORE LIKELY TO STAY WITH THE ORGANIZATION

16x

MORE LIKELY TO STAY WITH THE ORGANIZATION

10x

MORE LIKELY TO INNOVATE

11x

MORE LIKELY TO INNOVATE

GENERATIONS	ODDS OF HAVING A BETTER EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE WITH MODERN LEADERSHIP	ODDS OF HAVING A HIGHER eNPS WITH MODERN LEADERSHIP	ODDS OF HAVING BETTER ENGAGEMENT WITH MODERN LEADERSHIP
Gen Z	19X	14X	44X
Millennials	15X	12X	29X
Gen X	16X	14X	41X
Baby Boomers	30X	17X	107X



Gen Zers are enthusiastic, willing to take risks and explore new ideas. They value diversity in experience and encourage the inclusion of everyone from all walks of life, which is highly beneficial to teamwork, especially across different generations.

—DANNY BROOKS, CEO AND CO-FOUNDER, VHR, A GLOBAL TECHNICAL RECRUITMENT ORGANIZATION

GENERATIONS TAKEAWAY

Over the next decade, organizations that prioritize culture, modern leadership, and regular recognition will improve engagement among Gen Z employees and uplift other generations at the same time.

[READ GENERATIONS CHAPTER](#)



Leadership

Organizations that treat every employee as a leader create the best leaders—and the best cultures.

Modern leaders are mentors and advocates, focused on connecting employees to purpose, accomplishment, and one another.

When this happens, employees are more likely to be and stay engaged. Over the next decade, successful organizations will take an inclusive approach to leadership development that makes it available to everyone and sets the expectation that each employee—regardless of whether they manage people—is a leader.

Organizations led by modern leaders see:

20x

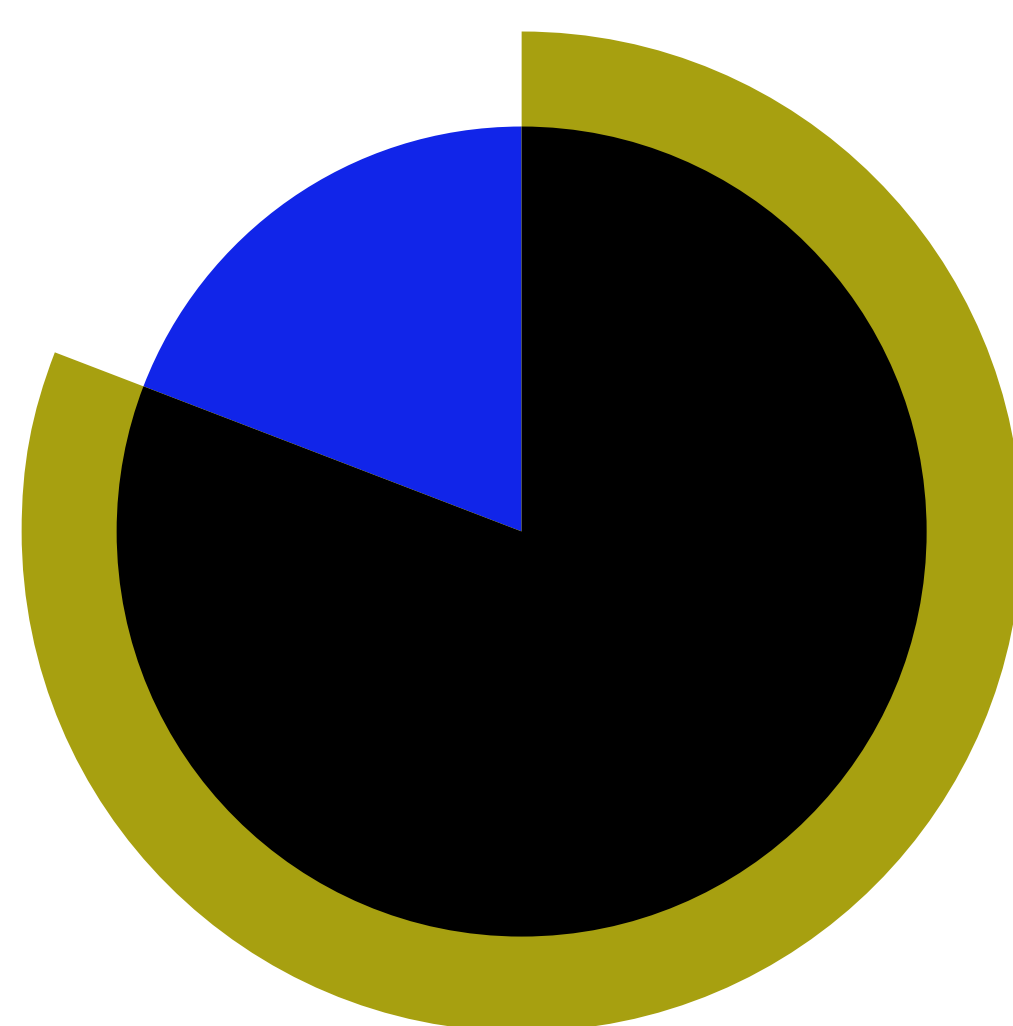
GREATER ENGAGEMENT

11x

MORE INCLUSION

7x

INCREASE IN eNPS



81%

OF MODERN LEADERS WORK IN ORGANIZATIONS WHERE ALL EMPLOYEES VIEW THEMSELVES AS LEADERS

OUTCOME	PERCENT INCREASE IN THE ODDS OF AN ABOVE-AVERAGE SCORE
Opportunity	+ 924%
Success	+ 630%
Engagement	+ 671%
Modern Leadership	+ 1002%
Inclusion	+ 620%



Everyone is a leader because everyone influences someone.

—JOHN C. MAXWELL, AUTHOR AND LEADERSHIP COACH

LEADERSHIP TAKEAWAY

Organizations have the greatest chance of achieving a modern leadership model when they

1. Create leadership development opportunities throughout the employee experience, and
2. Develop cultures that treat all employees as leaders.

[READ LEADERSHIP CHAPTER](#)



Leveraging these insights to improve your culture takes a deliberate approach. Fortunately, we have one. It's called Culture By Design. And we're happy to share it.

[LEARN MORE](#)