2021 Pulse of Talent

What employees want and need in the new world of work
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The new rules of talent management

Crisis and disruption teach us valuable lessons and influence what we prioritize in a constantly changing world.

With the ongoing global health pandemic, we’ve learned that rapid digital transformation is possible. We’ve learned that some work can be done at home (with pets, kids, and spouses making star cameos in video calls) without hurting productivity. And we’ve learned that talent remains one of the most sustainable competitive advantages for companies amidst unprecedented change.

Harvard Business Review notes that over the last decade, the competition for talent has followed the fluctuations of the economic cycle. Given the pandemic-driven downturn and surge in unemployment, it would be easy to conclude that the labor market has turned in favor of employers. But the situation is far more complex, with the World Economic Forum pointing out that hiring recovery is playing out very differently across countries and industries.

Ceridian’s 2021 Pulse of Talent survey, conducted in partnership with Nielsen, found almost seven in ten (67%) of the workforce is open to new opportunities. This means a majority of workers in the countries we surveyed are looking for a new job (37%), or would consider a new role if approached (30%).

It’s a crucial time to focus on talent to drive value and innovation. For employers to retain their top talent and also seize the opportunity to attract new stars, it comes down to understanding what today’s employees want and need. This means providing an employee experience that respects individual differences and desires, from skills and capabilities to their personal lives and other factors.

The pandemic has created an opportunity for HR leaders to take a fresh look at hiring and retention. The time is now for employers to build upon the trust they’ve created with their people through the pandemic. Reshaping the employee experience through the lens of closely connecting the right people with the right opportunities, building critical skills, and addressing holistic, human needs will create a foundation for long-term success. In this report, we explore six actions for employers to take to attract and retain employees in the new workplace reality.

Methodology

Nielsen conducted the 2021 Pulse of Talent research study via an online questionnaire, from Aug. 4 to 27, 2020 among 5,010 respondents, aged 18+ across Canada, the U.S., UK, Australia, and New Zealand who are members of Nielsen’s online panel. Results were weighted by respondents’ demographics based on census data to align with the proportions of the population. (NB: Due to rounding, percentages may not appear to add to 100%).

To understand how employee sentiment has changed beyond the moment-in-time, we also compared select findings from the 2018 Pulse of Talent survey with this year’s findings. These comparisons are between 1,466 (in 2020) and 2,001 (in 2018) full-time employees in North America (survey was only conducted in this region in 2018), who were asked about their relationship with their current employer, and their career plans. Data were weighted by age, gender, and region based on census data to align with the proportions in the population.
Continue building trust and meeting employee safety needs

How employees feel about their employers’ pandemic response reveals aspects of the employee experience that HR leaders need to prioritize going forward. Overall, employees said they’re satisfied with how their employer responded to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, some areas linked to the broader employee experience beyond the crisis need attention, like culture, productivity, and mental health support.

Employees’ overall positive sentiment implies a sense of confidence and trust in their employers. In fact, 85% of employees who felt positive about their employer’s response also feel positive about the future health and success of their company. That’s in contrast to employees who felt more negative about their employer’s COVID-19 response — only 34% of that group feel positive about their company’s future.

That’s good news for the long-term. Why? According to McKinsey, there’s a natural human tendency during times of uncertainty to respond with greater affiliation towards individuals and situations that feel safe and familiar. In that vein, 75% of employees felt their companies took steps to keep them safe — a workforce strategy employers should continue to prioritize as work continues to change and evolve.

Also notable, the survey found that 66% of employees overall said they take job security into account when considering a job opportunity more now than they did before the pandemic.

“If we think about security less in terms of working in a particular industry, or in the same job for your whole career, and more in terms of having relevant skills and the certainty of new opportunities, employers can capitalize on this,” says Ceridian CHRO Susan Tohyama. “Can we as employers invest long-term in the technology, infrastructure, and programs to provide that promise of security while continuously growing our people and attracting new talent?”

Looking ahead

What employers do above and beyond their pandemic response will help bolster long-term retention and build on the trust they’ve created during the pandemic. That trust has many dimensions, such as empowering employees to do their jobs, creating a sense of growth, security, and equity, maintaining not just physical but emotional and mental well-being, and providing transparent leadership.

“As employers...create meaningful and trusting relationships with employees, they see an increase in business performance,” Accenture states in a recent large-scale research study of senior executives and workers.

With regards to their employer’s response to COVID-19, percentage of respondents who strongly or somewhat agree with the following statements (base: employed workers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>U.S.</th>
<th>Canada</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>Australia</th>
<th>New Zealand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My employer took precautions to ensure employee safety</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am satisfied with my employer’s response</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My manager has been supportive</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My employer provided clear and timely communications during the crisis</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My employer did everything they could to keep me employed</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My employer put supports in place to help employees with their mental health</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel connected to company culture</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel more productive</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A steadfast sense of purpose is also a critical guidepost around which everyone can rally. Deloitte, in *The heart of resilient leadership: Responding to COVID-19*, notes that purpose-driven organizations tend to thrive during challenging times. ¹

For leaders, purpose can inform decisive action; for employees, seeing leaders make decisions in line with company values reinforces trust and keeps culture strong. According to the survey, however, some employees are seeing a disconnect between company values and how leadership acts upon them. Seventy percent of employees overall said their company has clear values, but only 55% said they feel their senior leadership practice the values that are promoted. ²

Also of note is the sentiment from the subset of employees who are considering a move because they don’t have faith in the longevity of their company (see page 9). The top reason why they doubt their company’s longevity, cited by 33% of that group, is, “I don’t have confidence in the capabilities of the leadership team.”

**Looking ahead**

This should be a wake-up call for leaders. Not prioritizing culture, connection, and purpose could have a long-term and more negative impact on culture-building through the next phases of the pandemic and recovery.

“Some organizations have traded their long-term sustainability for short-term outcomes. When a crisis such as COVID-19 strikes, if you have a strong culture and a shared sense of purpose that your leaders role model every day, you can weather the storm better than most,” says Alain Beijani, CEO of Dutch-based Majid Al Futtaim (MAF) in a recent McKinsey report. ³

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**Lead with purpose to reinforce culture**

Over the last several months, perhaps the strongest leadership has come from those leaders who have demonstrated essential elements of crisis response: empathy, compassion, vulnerability, and transparency.

**Does your company have clear values?**
(base: employed workers)

- **70%** of employees said their company has clear values

**Results by region**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>U.S.</th>
<th>CA</th>
<th>UK</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Do you feel your senior leadership and executives practice the values that are promoted?**
(base: employed workers)

- **55%** said they feel their senior leadership practice the values that are promoted

**Results by region**

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<th>U.S.</th>
<th>CA</th>
<th>UK</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tailor the work experience to address holistic human needs

A comparison of the 2018 data with 2020 findings reveals that today’s North American full-time employees feel less positive about various aspects of the employee experience.

In particular, employees in 2020 are less happy with their work-life balance, benefits, and perks. In the chart to the right, we also show the overall (all regions) response for 2020, which similarly indicates room for improvement.

Ceridian’s Tohyama suggests that benefits strategies and total rewards programs need rethinking to reflect the way we live and work today.

“Employees today are likely thinking about their benefits all the time,” she says. “Or they want more balance in their lives, so which holistic rewards can facilitate that? We’re quickly filling our days with video calls, which can be taxing from a work-life balance and productivity perspective,” she adds, referencing that only 55% of employees said they felt more productive as a result of their employer’s pandemic response (see page 4).

In line with this, new research from Accenture found that the C-suite is now rethinking its responsibility to workers. According to the report, prior to the pandemic, 35% of CXOs embraced the responsibility to support people’s holistic needs. In six months, this has escalated to represent 50% of CXOs.

Post-pandemic, 50% of CXOs embrace the responsibility to support employees holistic needs (up from 35% pre-crisis)

ACCENTURE

Now, employers need to broaden employee experience strategies to take personal situations and alternative working models into account. Leveraging technology and people data – like employee listening and feedback platforms, advanced analytics, and intelligence tools – can help address employee needs in a targeted, tailored, and dynamic way.

Looking ahead

The notion of continuous listening is business critical going forward, according to analyst Josh Bersin. Intelligent tools like check-in platforms and engagement and pulse surveys are helpful for managers and HR leaders to better understand and respond to employees, and establish feedback loops. Centralized hubs can be used to communicate new information and updated policies with the broader workforce, as well as collect feedback.

Spend on benefits is the second largest employee cost to U.S. organizations after payroll. It can be challenging to maximize investment on both the employer and employee sides. Fortunately, AI is advancing in a way that helps HR managers select the best plans for their organization and informs employees about available benefits.

In the area of benefits administration, predictive analytics can help HR managers make sense of spending data collected, and adjust plans in anticipation of further disruptions. They can also guide employees in calling out potential savings, maximizing flexible spending accounts and tax breaks, and adhering to deadlines.

Speaking of spending, employees globally were already concerned about financial matters, which was affecting their work even before the pandemic hit. Lack of financial wellness and employer flexibility can yield lost productivity, higher absenteeism, and higher employee turnover.

Those challenges are only compounded by the rising tide of financial stress workers are experiencing as a result of the global health crisis. Not to mention, many employees in a cash flow crunch often turn to payday loans and credit cards to bridge the gap in the absence of a better solution.

Employee financial well-being should be a core area of focus for companies going forward, and in fact, employers are already recognizing they have more responsibility in helping improve employee financial wellness post-pandemic. As part of a larger financial wellness strategy, on-demand pay solutions can help employees better accommodate unexpected expenses by giving them access to their earned wages as soon as they’ve finished working, rather than waiting until the standard payday. Investing in solutions like on-demand pay is also a critical opportunity to bolster employee engagement, retention, and employer brand.

“Future experiences and decision-making should be driven by supporting your people in meaningful, personalized ways,” says Tohyama.

Percentage of employees who somewhat or strongly agreed with the statements below

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>2020 overall (FTE/PTE)</th>
<th>2020 (FTE, NA)</th>
<th>2018 (FTE, NA)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am happy with my company’s vacation policy</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am happy with the benefits my company offers</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My company respects its employees’ work-life balance</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am happy with the level of workplace flexibility</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My company organizes social events for employees</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My company offers great perks</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Comparison of 2018 to 2020 data reflects full-time employees in North America only.
Redefine flexibility to match the flow of life

Many headlines have proclaimed that post-pandemic, many employees will continue working from home indefinitely, with some people of the mindset that it will allow companies to provide “long-overdue work flexibility.”

Indeed, the ability to work from home has largely been considered as a perk synonymous with flexibility. But after several months of remote working in crisis mode and with rapidly changing conditions, the idea of flexibility needs a new definition that extends beyond simply working from home.

In fact, the survey shows that 59% of the workforce overall would still join a company that didn’t have a WFH policy, either because they work in an industry where it’s generally not possible (31%) or because it’s not important to them (28%). Separately, 62% of respondents indicated that their current workplace setting is on-site at a physical location.

The potential for remote work is highly dependent on several factors, including the industry, the type of job itself, and the nature of its tasks. The survey findings are in line with regional labor market data trends.

For example, a recent study on the economic impact of COVID-19 concluded that 60% of U.S. workers can’t work remotely, because their jobs require some sort of on-site physical presence. That same study cited United Kingdom Office for National Statistics surveys, which found that while 27% of the UK workforce said they’ve previously worked from home, only 5% mainly do.

“Focusing only on remote working as the standard for flexibility potentially disenfranchises a critical segment of the workforce.”

LAUREN MASON, PRINCIPAL, MERCER

Would you join a company that did not have a work-from-home policy/the flexibility for you to work remotely?

(base: all respondents)

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<tr>
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<th>U.S.</th>
<th>CA</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>AU</th>
<th>NZ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results by region

Lauren Mason, principal at Mercer, points out that the pandemic has shown how critical frontline workers are to business continuity, so focusing only on remote working as the standard for flexibility potentially disenfranchises a critical segment of the workforce.

There’s also the proportion of workers who simply can’t, or don’t want to, work from home for the long-term, whether due to distractions at home, not having a productive set-up, or because they prefer in-person collaboration.

True workplace flexibility should provide every employee with the opportunity to work fairly and equitably, says Tohyama, whether they’re on-site, in the office, or working at home. "The more control employees have over their own work-life balance, the more motivated and productive they will be,” she adds.
Looking ahead

Flexibility should be an inclusive value proposition for all employees, regardless of role. This inclusive flexibility requires rethinking how work is structured, how and where it gets done, and who’s doing it. To make these structural changes, companies need solutions that enable smarter working for everyone and provide more intuitive ways of recruiting, managing, and empowering employees.

HCM technology has already been a key enabler for more flexible working. For example, self-service technology for scheduling, staggering shifts, and clocking in via mobile helps employees maintain hygiene while working smarter. AI and predictive intelligence tools and digital onboarding have enabled companies to rapidly assemble and deploy talent to critical business areas.

As part of broader digital transformation, a key way for employers to enable flexibility for the broader workforce is to rethink how they pay their people. Employees today expect a workplace that’s online, on-demand, and self-serve, like every other aspect of their lives, and that increasingly applies to getting paid.

But while work and life are happening at the speed of change, payroll practices are still largely rooted in the past. Many employers still pay employees with fixed cycles and in arrears, and for employees, traditional pay cycles don’t always line up with real-time expenses.

For employers, embracing flexible pay solutions can help better support the fluid and diverse work structures of the future at scale, while also supporting long-term employee financial wellness.

A flexible payroll solution can allow companies to provide more or less frequent payroll cycles, process off-cycle payments, and fulfill on-demand pay requests. With today’s modern technology, it’s possible to provide this flexibility without changing how payroll is funded or processed, and with minimal impact to HR and payroll administrators.

Boston Consulting Group suggests companies ask these key questions to rethink their workforce strategies: Which value-driving skills should be incubated internally? What positions should be open for part-time employment?

Tohyama adds that employers will need to consider new success metrics, for example, related to measuring productivity. They’ll also need to revise traditional job architectures and compensation structures, and broader policies and governance accordingly.

She also notes that leaders should examine all facets of working, whether rethinking core working hours or introducing role-sharing. Facilitating flexibility for all employees, she adds, helps to establish a more equitable and inclusive culture across the organization.

Which of the following best describes your current workplace setting?
(base: employed workers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workplace Setting</th>
<th>U.S.</th>
<th>CA</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>AU</th>
<th>NZ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I work on site at a physical location</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I work remotely/from home</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As required, I work both on-site and from home</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Elevate people with internal growth and new challenges

It’s been well-documented that employees often leave a company in pursuit of new challenges, or are willing to earn less money to do more meaningful work. The pandemic seemingly hasn’t impacted employees’ desire for growth, taking on new challenges, and doing work that matters.

Even employees who are happy at their current companies would consider leaving. When we asked employees how they feel about staying at their current companies, 35% overall said they’re considering making a move. Of that, 27% saying they’re happy but would consider leaving. Another five percent are unhappy and considering making a move, and three percent are unhappy and planning to leave as soon as possible.

When we asked the group that is considering a move for their reasons why, the top two responses were that they like to take on new challenges every few years, or don’t see the right career opportunities at their current company. From an employer perspective, capitalizing on employees’ appetite for growth and new challenges could be a key to grounding flight risk talent.

But how? Internal mobility was already a growing trend before the global health crisis hit – in Deloitte’s 2019 Global Human Capital Trends report, 76% of C-suite leaders rated it as important, but only six percent believe they’re excellent at enabling internal mobility.

The increased focus on internal mobility comes as companies look for more efficient ways to leverage existing workforce skills and reduce recruiting costs. A Bersin study in partnership with skills education company General Assembly found that internal hiring (with some training) could be six times more cost-effective than hiring from the outside.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Happy but would consider leaving</th>
<th>Unhappy and considering making a move</th>
<th>Unhappy and planning to leave as soon as possible.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>35%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Why are you considering a move?
(Select as many as applicable)

- **30%** Like to take on new challenges every few years
- **28%** Don’t see the right career opportunities here, and feel I’ll have to leave to move up
- **26%** Don’t think company will meet salary expectations
- **18%** Not confident in job security
- **13%** Don’t have faith in company longevity
- **12%** Don’t have faith in industry longevity

Results by region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>U.S.</th>
<th>CA</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>AU</th>
<th>NZ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Like to take on new challenges every few years</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t see the right career opportunities here</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t think company will meet salary expectations</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not confident in job security</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t have faith in company longevity</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t have faith in industry longevity</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Looking ahead

“This turns the traditional concept of career progression and career pathing on its head. We used to think of a career path as linear. People would want to get promoted every couple of years, because promotion equaled more leadership responsibility,” says Ceridian CHRO Susan Tohyama. “But as work has evolved, people are seeking experiences versus titles, and the ability to do something innovative and have more agency over their future opportunities. Looking to the future, it’s not about grooming people to rise to a certain title. The focus will be on skills-based and experience-based talent development.”

By age group, overall percentage who would accept a lateral move or less pay for a growth opportunity

Tohyama points to a future in which we’ll see more project-based work, more job rotations, and an overall rethinking of talent sourcing that is highly focused on skills as organizations institutionalize more agile models of working.

“The next wave of talent management will put a greater focus on exploring and developing talent marketplaces and strategies for rapid talent assembly. This will help connect people with the opportunities they crave, while also helping employers quickly find the skills they need,” she says.

The marketplace model provides the employers with the flexibility and agility to hire, move, and manage talent internally. And the next-gen talent marketplace wouldn’t be limited to matching people with full-time roles, either.

The talent marketplace “is expected to extend to providing employees with access to gig work, mentorships, [job] rotation programs, stretch and volunteering assignments, and innovation and skill-building experiences that align with business needs” to create what Deloitte and MIT Sloan call a “true opportunity marketplace.” It could also eventually expand to include external talent pools of, for example, gig workers, contractors, and other professionals.

“To support this model and enable rapid talent assembly, organizations can leverage HCM tech, including AI, machine learning, and predictive intelligence data,” says futurist, author, and consultant Alexandra Levit. This will help align people resources with crucial roles and better manage the employee experience and internal talent pools. Leaders can also better weave in personalized learning pathways, succession planning, churn risk, and performance evaluation.

Looking to the future, it’s not about developing people to rise to a certain title. The focus will be on skills-based and experience-based talent development.”

SUSAN TOHYAMA, CHRO, CERIDIAN

One-third of respondents overall said they would make a lateral move or accept less pay if it was a growth opportunity

As skills become even more valuable in the current climate, employers can capitalize on employees’ desire for growth and newness as a means to retain talent, by investing in building skills internally and developing a talent pipeline.

For employees, growth doesn’t always have to be linear. In fact, for their next role, one-third of respondents overall said they would make a lateral move or accept less pay if it was a growth opportunity. Younger workers are more likely to make this move, potentially signaling an opportunity to build loyalty with this demographic earlier in their careers.

This is in line with a recent LinkedIn study of 32 million user profiles on internal mobility. It found that employees who made lateral moves have a 62% chance of staying with their current company after three years (compared to those who had only a 45% chance of still being at their company for three years if they were not promoted or did not change jobs internally).
Power a future-ready workforce with continuous learning

The corporate learning model has been in flux for years. Pandemic-related factors are converging with learning shifts that were already underway. Mass closures of schools and offices in response to COVID-19 have led to an uptick and expansion of virtual learning. To adapt for new delivery models and enhance digital learning, tech-supported infrastructure will be a business imperative for the future.

Does your current employer offer learning opportunities? (base: FT/PT workers)

60% Yes
29% No
11% Don’t know

Results by region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>CA</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>AU</th>
<th>NZ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the survey, 77% of employees overall said it’s important that their employer provides learning opportunities, but 40% said they either aren’t getting them (29%) or don’t know if their employer provides them (11%).

When we asked employees what their primary source of learning would be to further their skills over the next five years, the top two answers were that they’d take advantage of programs offered by their employers, or independently pursue learning.

How important is it to you that your employer provides learning opportunities? (base: FT/PT workers)

77% said it’s important that their employer provides learning opportunities

Results by region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Neither important nor unimportant</th>
<th>Not important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AU</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZ</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When it comes to your learning/professional development, what do you see as the primary source to further your skills over the next five years? (base: FT/PT workers)

- Programs offered by employer: U.S. 31%, CA 33%, UK 38%, AU 34%, NZ 33%
- Independently pursuing learning: U.S. 33%, CA 34%, UK 31%, AU 33%, NZ 38%
- Professional associations: U.S. 16%, CA 14%, UK 15%, AU 17%, NZ 14%
- Formal education: U.S. 15%, CA 13%, UK 12%, AU 13%, NZ 12%
- Trade school: U.S. 5%, CA 6%, UK 4%, AU 3%, NZ 3%
Our findings signal an opportunity for employers to not only capitalize on the appetite for learning, but also the means through which employees plan to pursue it.

“As an employer, you can take that 34% of employees who want independent pursuit of learning, and bring them into the fold with your learning offering,” says Tohyama.

**Looking ahead**

To meet employee needs and bolster their own talent marketplaces, companies can build out more fulsome learning and micro-credentialing offerings. Leveraging analytics to understand the impact of learning on business performance will help to better align learning strategies with company goals.

In the longer-term, extended enterprise learning could play a key role in equipping the increasingly fluid workforce with desired skillsets, either as an alternative to, or in partnership with, traditional academic institutions. The benefits to companies are three-fold: build the talent pipeline, bolster the employer brand, and potentially generate additional revenue.

The agenda for learning should also include other areas of training, company-wide. Building digital acumen, equipping employees with the metaskill of learning how to learn, and developing soft or “power” skills will allow organizations to better thrive and succeed as jobs inevitably continue to change. As well, the pandemic has uncovered opportunities to develop new capabilities for leaders in particular – things like crisis response, leading through uncertainty, and cultivating trust, according to a recent Harvard Business Publishing Corporate Learning report.

“The employer must now take responsibility for becoming a different type of educator,” says futurist and author Levit. “Corporate learning organizations that base their strategies on modern employee traits and capabilities as well as real-time business requirements – and power their initiatives with intelligent HCM technology – are more likely to be successful today and during future disruptions.”

**HR’s critical role in enabling the future fluid workforce**

Unlocking potential and investing in people will help drive organizational growth. The survey findings suggest that employers prioritize the following actions:

- Build long-term trust by continuing to prioritize employee health and safety while investing in the broader employee experience
- Strengthen culture by listening closely to employees and reinforcing purpose
- Address employees’ individual needs and provide technology that enables autonomy and smarter work
- Broaden the definition of workplace flexibility to be truly inclusive for all employees, in all roles
- Elevate and retain top talent with internal growth opportunities and new challenges
- Double down on learning infrastructure and make learning part of everyday work

HR leaders will be vital to both the growth of the business and growth of talent, which will require a new kind of oversight and more thoughtful approach to managing this new reality. Technology will provide the infrastructure to help redesign HR to deepen human connections, create meaningful moments, and deliver what employees truly want out of work.
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