



# **The State of Workplace Connection Report**

Examining the role of connection in driving  
employee happiness and retention.





## Executive summary.

Employees and organizations, alike, have experienced major changes since the beginning of 2020. Workers are asking themselves important questions about their career choices, their work-life balance, and what a reimagined work experience could look like. And innovative organizations are pushing their own assumptions about the workplace and evaluating how they can better serve the needs of their people.

The role of connection in this reimagined workplace—one where people feel deeply fulfilled in their work and organization—has been widely discussed amid the Great Resignation.<sup>1</sup> But there is limited research on employee connectedness. Most of it has focused on employee engagement or communication as a stand-in for that sense of connection. This has been a missed opportunity because connection is core to our happiness as human beings; it isn't a periphery factor, it's essential.

This report explores connection in the workplace today: What connection means for the employee experience and how organizations can ensure people experience community and feel appreciated at work.

Blueboard teamed up with research company, The Starr Conspiracy, to survey human resources leaders and practitioners on the front lines of improving employee connection. We also wanted to hear directly from employees to understand their feelings and views on connection at work.

<sup>1</sup><https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2021/10/great-resignation-accelerating/620382/>

Figure 1:

Overview: The Blueboard Connected Workplace Survey

We surveyed nearly 400 HR professionals and over 500 individual employees to understand their views on workplace connection.

For this research, we defined a connected workplace as one where employees feel:

- 1. Connected to the company's mission, values, and leadership vision.
- 2. Connected to their coworkers and managers through authentic relationships.
- 3. Connected to their work—that they have a positive impact on the company's goals.
- 4. Connected to their personal aspirations—that they're making positive impact overall.

Our survey focused on exploring these areas of connection, as well as the impacts of the pandemic, the prioritization of HR initiatives, and the role of recognition in improving employee connection.

We first wanted to understand what organizations are already doing to foster connection. To do this, we explored which people-focused initiatives organizations plan to prioritize in the coming year. As of the survey period (November to December 2021), HR leaders and professionals already had a clear set of priorities in place (figure 1).

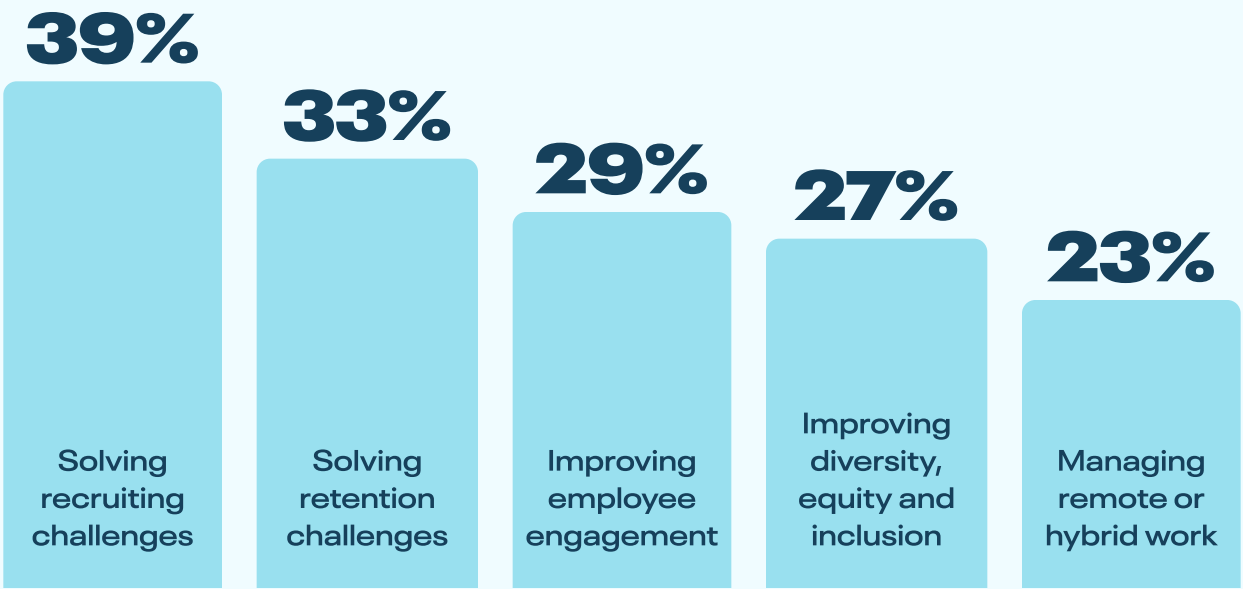
Of the top five priorities identified by organizations, our research shows that employee connection is key to driving critical outcomes in retention, engagement, and managing remote or hybrid work environments.

Employee connection is key to driving critical outcomes in retention, engagement, and managing remote or hybrid work environments.

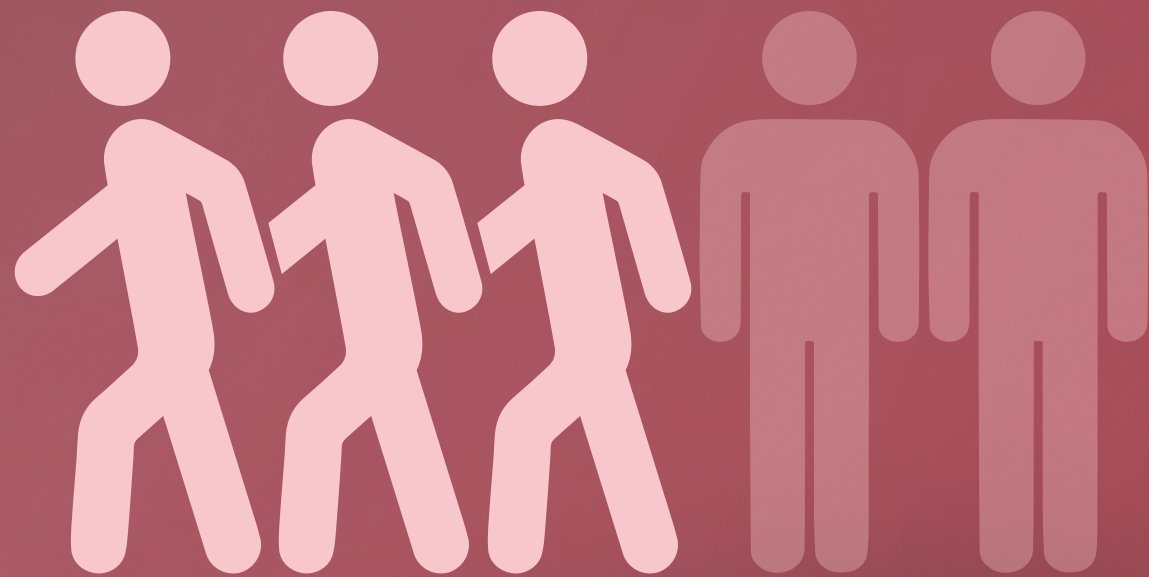
Beyond these priorities, this report explores what it really means to have a connected workplace—to define it so organizations can improve it.

Top priority HR and talent initiatives:

Percent of respondents that ranked each a "very high priority"







Nearly 3 in 5 employees surveyed said they would consider leaving their job if they didn't feel connected at work.

### Summary of our survey findings:

- **People want to feel connected at work.** HR leaders, professionals, and the general employee population place high importance on connection in the workplace. 85% of HR professionals strongly agree that it's important for employees to feel connected at work and 77% of employees agree that they want to work at an organization where they feel connected to the purpose and the people.
- **Employees and organizations agree: Connectedness drives retention.** Nearly 3 in 5 employees surveyed said they would consider leaving their job if they didn't feel connected at work. Our survey also found 95% of HR leaders and professionals report that employee connection is critical to employee retention, their response to the pandemic, and overall organizational success.
- **Organizations still have significant work to do to address connection challenges.** In spite of its importance, only 31% of organizations say they've addressed connection challenges. Employees report connection gaps, too. Just 38% say their company is effective at enabling them to build authentic relationships with coworkers and managers, for example.
- **Companies are addressing connection challenges through events, recognition, and technology.** HR professionals are working to close the employee connection gap using a multifaceted approach, reflecting the realities of today. Events, recognition, and communication and collaboration software are the top 3 ways that organizations are addressing connection challenges.
- **Organizations that use employee recognition as a tool for improving connection at work report better results across all measures of connection.** Almost 3 in 4 HR professionals see employee recognition as an important tool they'll use to drive connection at work moving forward. Those companies that already use recognition to create employee connection are nearly twice (2x) as likely to report that they've adequately addressed employee connection challenges than the average organization.



**This report is broken into three sections, designed to help organizational leaders take a deeper look at the role of employee connection in the workplace:**

- 1.** Section one focuses on the overall state of employee connection in the workplace.
- 2.** Section two covers the shift in employee expectations for a connected workplace.
- 3.** The final section covers employee recognition and how organizations can drive a connected workplace going forward.





A smiling woman with curly hair, wearing a blue top, stands in an office environment with large windows. She is surrounded by colleagues, including a man on the left and another person on the right. The scene is overlaid with a blue tint.

Part I

**The current state of  
employee connection  
in the workplace.**



## The current state of employee connection in the workplace.

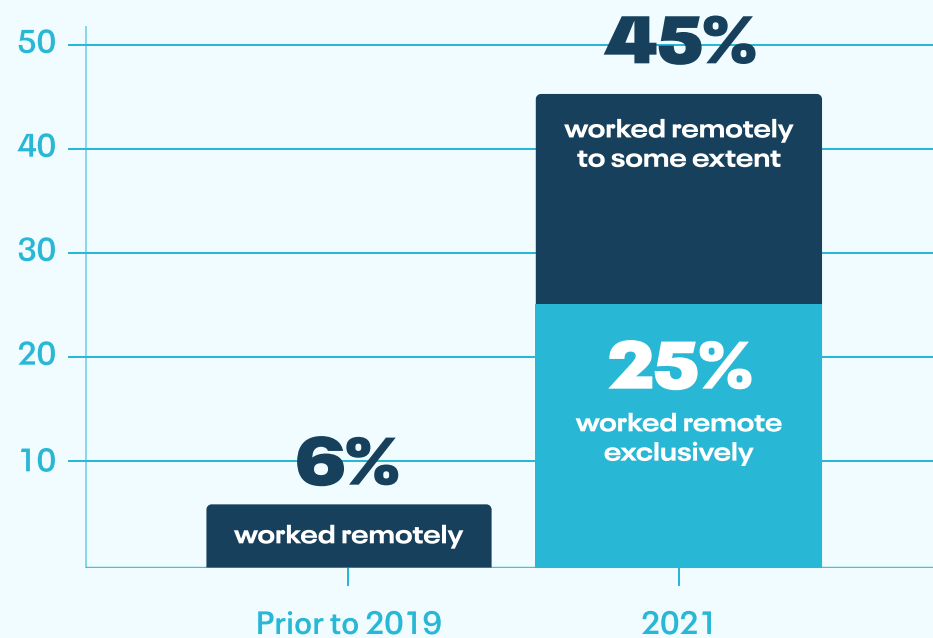
The global pandemic caused a paradigm shift in the way we work and the way we connect at work. Prior to 2019, just 6% of full-time employees in the U.S. worked from home, while the vast majority had never done so at all.<sup>2</sup> Two years into COVID-19, a staggering 45% work remotely to some extent, with 25% working exclusively remotely.<sup>3</sup>

And employees aren't just shifting their work location, they're leaving jobs at an unprecedented rate.<sup>4</sup> In November 2021, more than 4.5 million workers in the U.S. quit their jobs, up from 3.3 million one year prior.

Remote and hybrid work, coupled with this "Great Resignation", represents an abrupt and lasting change to how people do business and interact with others. It also provides organizations with a new set of challenges: How do you facilitate connection in the workplace, for example, with dispersed employees and higher-than-usual turnover?

**How do you facilitate connection in the workplace with dispersed employees and higher-than-usual turnover?**

We all have some sense that connection at work is important. But the idea of "connection" can seem intangible, immeasurable. To begin to address connection challenges, we first need to understand the state of employee connection in the workplace right now—how it's viewed and facilitated.



Prior to 2019, just 6% of full-time employees in the U.S. worked from home. Two years into COVID-19, 45% work remotely to some extent, with 25% working exclusively remotely.

<sup>2</sup>[https://www.ncci.com/securedocuments/qeb/qeb\\_q4\\_2020\\_remotework.html](https://www.ncci.com/securedocuments/qeb/qeb_q4_2020_remotework.html)

<sup>3</sup><https://news.gallup.com/poll/355907/remote-work-persisting-trending-permanent.aspx>

<sup>4</sup><https://www.bls.gov/news.release/jolts.t04.htm>



## Employee connection is valued by employees and HR.

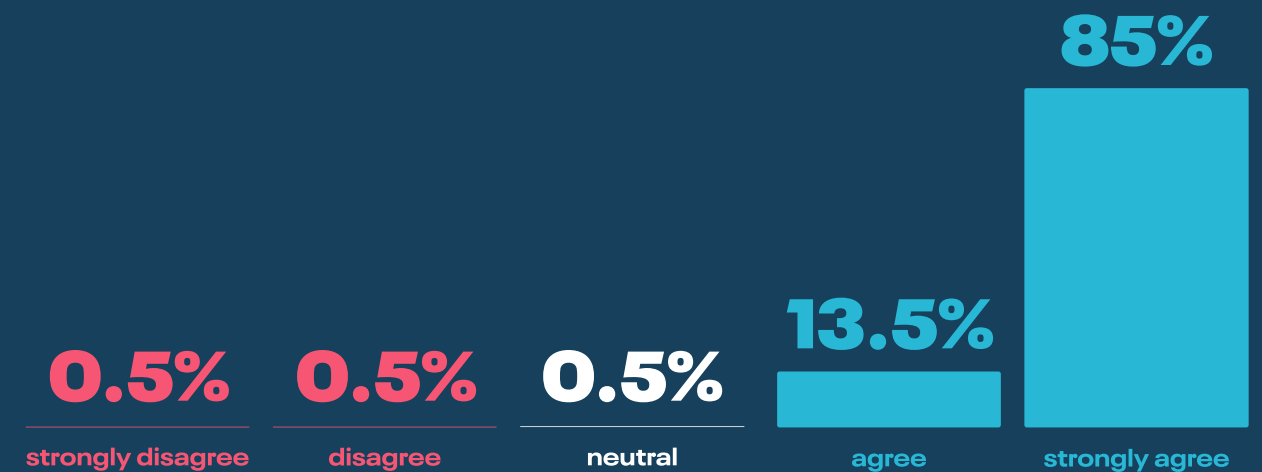
Our data shows that organizational leaders and employees, alike, have a clear view on what employee connection is, as well as its importance. The HR professionals we surveyed not only strongly believe that it's important for employees to feel connected at work (figure 2), they also personally value experiencing connection at a higher rate than the general population (figure 3).

### HR professionals are thinking deeply about connection.

While a strong majority (77%) of employees across job descriptions value connection at work, HR professionals report that they value experiencing connection at an even higher rate (98%). Many shared that they're thinking about connection often—especially in this continued state of uncertainty—because supporting employee wellbeing is a part of their role.

One respondent wrote, "[During the pandemic] we increased our efforts to facilitate employee connections and monitor employee wellbeing as many of our employees live alone or away from loved ones, which increases our responsibility for their mental and emotional wellbeing."

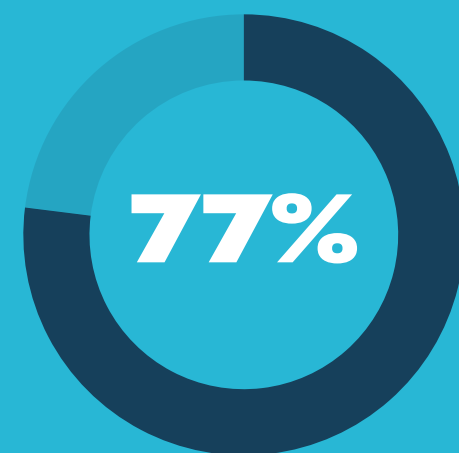
Figure 2:



**85% of HR professionals strongly agree that it's important for employees to feel connected at work.**

Source: 2021 Blueboard Connected Workplace Survey, p=384

Figure 3:



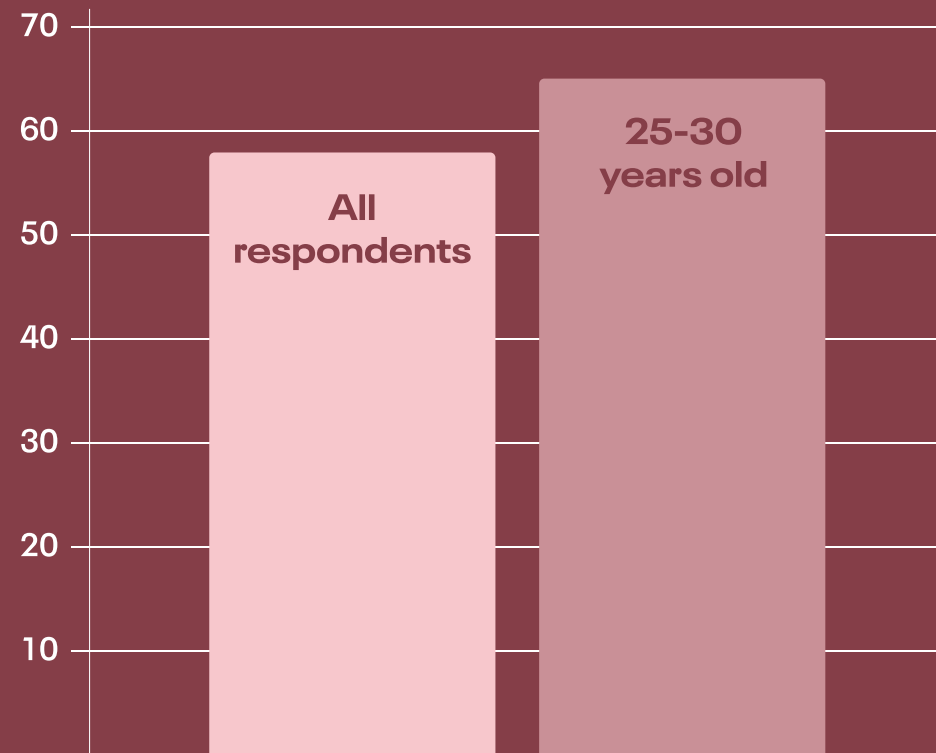
**77% of employees report that they want to work at an organization where they feel connected to the purpose and the people.**



**98% of HR professionals report that they personally value experiencing connection at work.**

Source: 2021 Blueboard Connected Workplace Survey, p=506, 384

Figure 4:



**58% of employees report they would consider leaving their current job if they didn't feel connected at work. This number jumps to 65% for employees 25-30 years old.**

## Retention challenges and the promise of employee connection.

The data shows people want to work for companies where they feel connected (figure 3). Which begs the question: Does connection impact employee turnover? The answer: Absolutely.

Retention is a major focus for companies right now—and for the foreseeable future. A third ( $\frac{1}{3}$ ) of the organizations surveyed reported that solving retention challenges is second only to solving recruiting challenges as their top people priority (figure 1).

Companies understand that retaining their current people is critical to their success in 2022 and beyond. But how do you create a workplace employees don't want to leave? Our research indicates organizations have an opportunity to invest in connection to drive retention.

Connection plays a critical role in how satisfied employees feel at work and how likely they are to stay at their current organization. Overall, 58% of employees say that they would consider leaving their current job if they didn't feel connected at work. That number jumps up to 65% for younger Millennials, aged 25 to 30 (figure 4).

### Younger workers want flexibility and value authenticity.

As the data shows, connection at work seems to be even more important to younger workers. This makes sense when you look at their context and priorities.

Millennials and Gen Z are digital natives. That means they're more likely to seamlessly transition into remote-first workplaces—but they're also well aware that technology can make it hard to unplug from work. Which explains why younger employees might feel more connected to workplaces that prioritize work-life balance and flexibility.<sup>5</sup>

Younger employees also have strong feelings about the kind of work they're doing. Gen Z employees expect organizations to back up their mission and vision with action, while 93% say that a company's impact on society influences their decision to work there.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup><https://www.blueboard.com/blog/genz-millennials-workplace>

<sup>6</sup><https://blog.ttisi.com/the-new-world-of-work-gen-z-in-the-workplace>



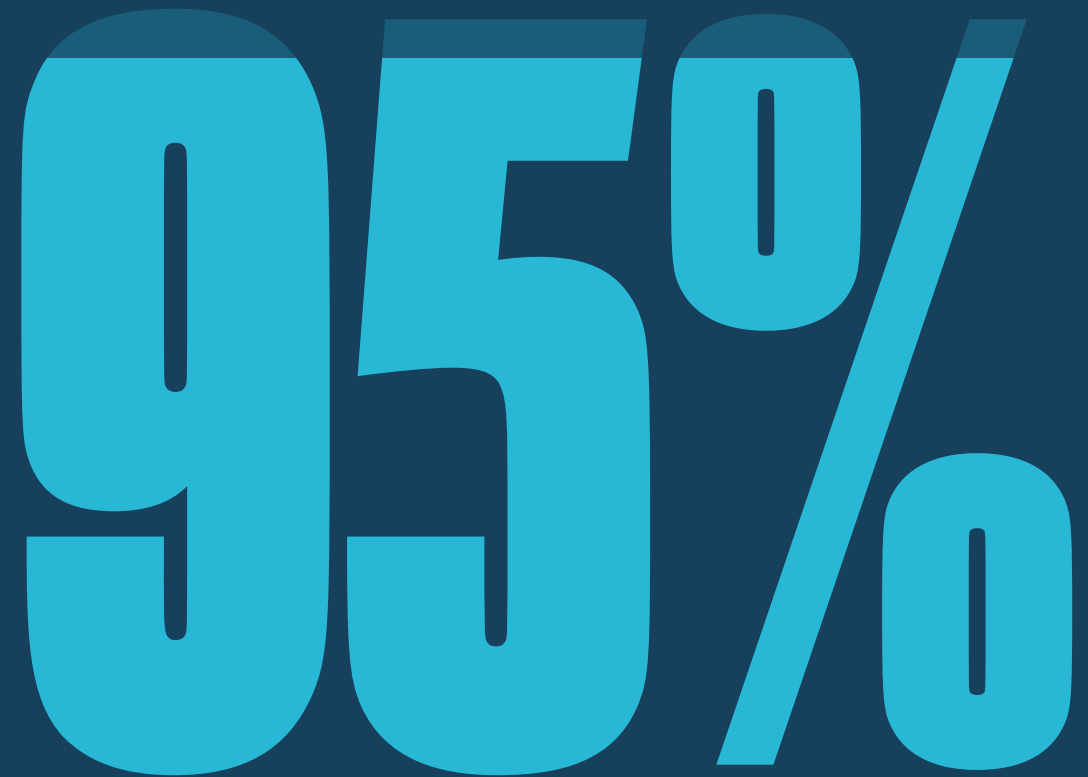
If a lack of connection contributes to employees leaving your organization, it follows that boosting your efforts to help people connect will also boost retention rates. HR professionals seem to agree, with a vast majority reporting that investing in a connected workplace will drive lower turnover for top talent (figure 5).

**Connection plays a critical role in how satisfied employees feel at work and how likely they are to stay at their current organization.**

A great place to start your own investment in connection is to ask key questions to help you understand your most pressing connection gaps. Consider surveying your employees to get their feedback:

- 1. Do your people feel connected to your company's purpose, mission, vision, and values?** Do employees know what each of these are? Do they understand them? Do they feel aligned? If you see a gap here, you'll want to consider ways to bring your purpose to life.
- 2. Do your people feel connected to their coworkers and managers through authentic relationships?** Do your people feel a true connection with colleagues? Or is there a superficial or impersonal quality to these relationships? If so, you'll want to think about ways you can develop connection among individuals.
- 3. Do your people feel their work has a positive impact on the company's goals?** Do employees feel a connection to your company's high-level objectives? Can they see how they're contributing to the larger effort? Ensure that these contributions are made clear through regular conversations and recognition.
- 4. Do your people feel their work has a positive impact on the world around them?** Do your people feel that their work connects to their personal purpose? That it aligns with their individual goals? Consider ways that you can help people grow into a position where they can have their desired impact.

Figure 5:



**95% of HR professionals agree that investing in employee connection at work helps drive employee retention.**

Figure 6:



51%

51% of HR professionals report that the pandemic had an overall negative effect on employee connection in the workplace.



84%

84% agree that hybrid or remote work requires us to change how we facilitate employee connection.

Source: 2021 Blueboard Connected Workplace Survey, p=384

## The impact of hybrid work on employee connection.

Creating workplace connection can be difficult in “ordinary” times, let alone during the extraordinary times we’re in now. With so many changes to the way people work—and where they work—the need for connection is more acute than ever. But organizations are having to reimagine what connection looks like as conditions change.

Rod Lacey, VP of People at Talkdesk, told us, *“We had to reinvent what employee connection is since the beginning of the pandemic. I haven’t met half the team I recruited in the past year and a half in-person.”* Lacey highlights one of the challenges of transitioning to hybrid work: How do you create and maintain a sense of connection with people you’ve never met?

Our data reflects this idea of reinvention. While a slight majority (51%) of HR professionals report that the pandemic has had an overall negative effect on employee connection, a large majority (84%) acknowledge that hybrid and remote work requires organizations to change how they facilitate employee connection going forward (figure 6).

From navigating siloed work environments, to maintaining morale when employees are isolated, to ensuring the productivity of decentralized workers, this new way of work requires new ways of connecting.

Here’s a real-world example: Financial management software company, Workday, has always focused on helping employees form connections through a variety of shared experiences during and after work.<sup>7</sup> In pre-pandemic times, this might have looked like volunteer opportunities or sports teams. These shared experiences resulted in better employee performance and higher levels of engagement and retention.

During the pandemic, Workday focused on boosting connection using technology to recreate the in-office experience for remote employees. The result is that remote employees at Workday feel even more engaged at work than their in-person counterparts.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup><https://www.forbes.com/sites/jimpurcell/2021/12/07/workdays-intentional-culture-achieves-business-returns/?sh=26bf78296ac0>

<sup>8</sup>[https://forms.workday.com/en-us/ebooks/heartbeat-report-employee-experience/form.html?step=step1\\_default](https://forms.workday.com/en-us/ebooks/heartbeat-report-employee-experience/form.html?step=step1_default)

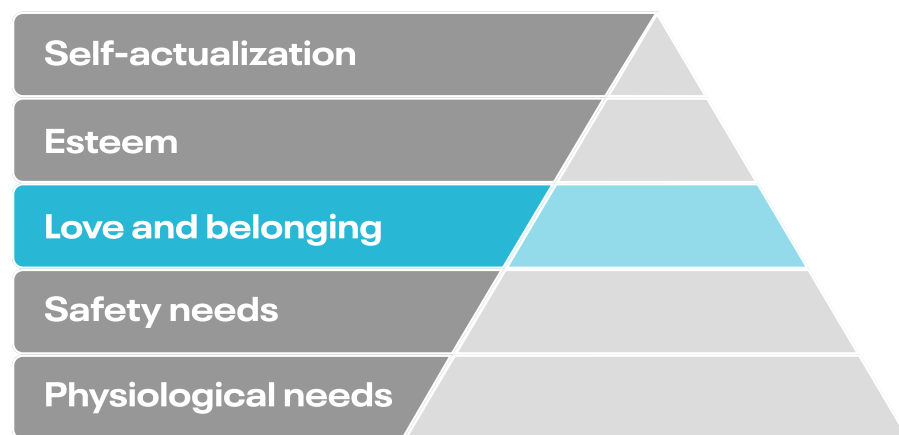


## Workplace connection is critical to organizational success.

This complete sense of connection is critical to employees' ability to stay resilient in the face of challenges—and therefore, to your organization's success. The psychology of social connection explains why this is the case. Scientific studies in the field strongly suggest that social connection—a person's sense of belonging to a group or community—is an essential human need.<sup>9</sup>

Having a connected workplace means employees feel aligned to your organization's mission, values, and vision. That they're able to build authentic relationships with coworkers and managers. That they feel connected to your organization's objectives, and their work is connected to their personal purpose.

### Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Employees who don't feel connected are more likely to leave an organization. And hiring replacement talent can be lengthy and expensive. Research from Gallup puts the replacement cost at 6 to 9 months of an employee's annual salary.<sup>10</sup>

This explains why a strong majority (85%) of HR professionals report that employee connection is a critical part of their overall success as an organization (figure 7).

Given the current state of employee connection and its importance to organizational success, we're left with the question: How can organizations improve workplace connection? The answer: By diagnosing and addressing some of the most severe gaps separating employee expectations from reality.

Figure 7:

85%

**85% of HR professionals agree that employee connection is a critical part of their overall success as an organization.**

<sup>9</sup><https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0146167211405994>

<sup>10</sup><https://www.gallup.com/workplace/349484/state-of-the-global-workplace.aspx#ite-350777>

A photograph of four diverse women in a meeting. One woman is standing and pointing at a laptop screen, while three others are seated around a table, looking at the screen. The image has a blue tint and a semi-transparent dark blue overlay at the bottom.

Part II

**Key gaps: Employee connection expectations push employers.**



Figure 8:



Source: 2021 Blueboard Connected Workplace Survey, p=384

## Key gaps: Employee connection expectations push employers.

As we saw in the previous section, today's workforce wants—and expects—to feel connected and valued at work. And people are quitting to find a workplace that meets these expectations. This massive labor movement is pushing companies to rise to the challenge and prioritize connection.

But while HR professionals acknowledge the importance of employee connection to their success as an organization, a large majority of those same respondents also say they haven't yet addressed connection challenges (figure 8).

For many employees, the pandemic exacerbated existing feelings of disconnection. People continue to be separated from their communities, coworkers, and the things that make their lives fulfilling. At the same time, this crisis has triggered a shift in employee priorities toward balance, flexibility, and purpose.

This means organizations need to address disconnection on multiple fronts: connection to purpose, connection to people, connection to an employee's personal aspirations. Some of the most pressing issues companies need to address (sooner rather than later) are:

- Many employees don't feel seen or appreciated at work.
- Many employees struggle to connect with their coworkers around personal and social interests in our new hybrid work world.
- Many employees can't see how their work is connected to the company's goals.
- Many employees can't see how their work is connected to their own goals.

Almost 60% of the employees we surveyed were neutral or disagreed that their organization was effective at helping employees feel appreciated (figure 9).

Figure 9:

60%

Almost 60% of employees are neutral or disagree with the statement, "Today, my organization is effective at helping employees feel seen and appreciated at work."

Source: 2021 Blueboard Connected Workplace Survey, p=506

This feeling of being unseen can be even more pronounced for remote employees. Research shows 59% of people felt unappreciated by their employer while working remotely.<sup>11</sup> Some of the key reasons cited by that research include:

- Lack of support (46%)
- Being overworked (45%)
- Lack of recognition (44%)
- Infrequent contact (31%)
- Being micromanaged (30%)

One HR leader we spoke to piled onto this challenge, explaining: “One of the main reasons for low scores on an engagement survey has to do with making sure the right people are recognized for good work. Not having their work seen is a big challenge.”

Of course, the connection gap isn’t just about appreciation. According to our research, employees generally do not agree that their organizations are effective at many of the fundamentals of creating a connected workplace.

In particular, employees do not agree that their organization is effective at helping them connect to the mission, values, and leadership vision. And even fewer agree that their organization helps them build authentic relationships (figure 10).

This suggests a more fundamental problem: Organizations are having a difficult time nurturing employee connection in general.

#### **Help your people connect to your mission, vision, and values.**

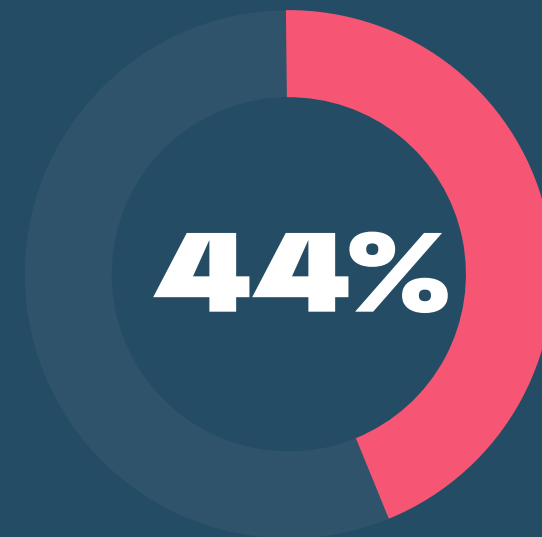
Employees feel more connected at work when they understand how their professional and personal goals—and their efforts in the workplace—align with their organization’s mission, vision, and values.

To help people make these connections, emphasize mission, vision, and values early in the recruitment and onboarding process. If employees learn about what matters to your organization from the start, they’ll be more likely to feel aligned.

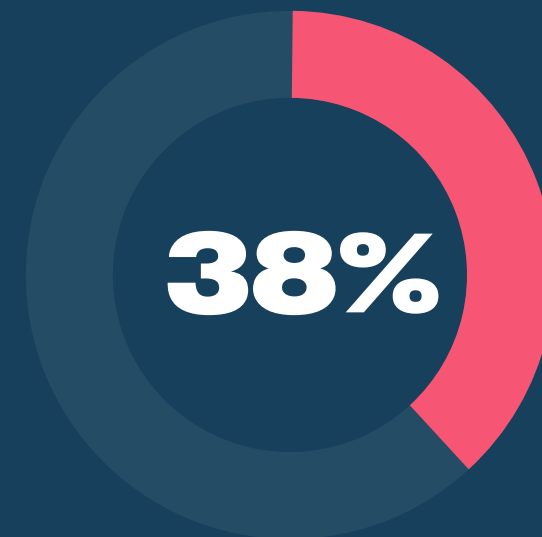
You should also encourage leaders and managers to act as role models by communicating and demonstrating your company’s mission, vision, and values. Find ways to bring these into recurring meetings and shared spaces, and explore ways to [recognize and reward people who live your company values](#).

<sup>11</sup><https://promoleaf.com/blog/is-engagement-enough-managing-remote-work-and-the-new-normal>

Figure 10:



**Just 44% of employees agree that their organization is effective at helping them connect to the mission, values, and leadership vision.**



**Just 38% of employees agree that their organization is effective at helping them build authentic relationships with coworkers and managers.**



## Top ways organizations are working to improve employee connection.

1. Hybrid in-person and online events

2. Formal employee appreciation and recognition

3. Adding tech for better remote communication and collaboration

4. Manager and leadership training

5. Expanding employee learning and development opportunities

### How to help people form authentic relationships at work.

After almost two years in a pandemic, one thing is clear: virtual happy hours are no longer cutting it. People leaders need to change how they think about remote connection and the activities that bring people together. They need to think outside the box to help people form authentic relationships with one another.

An important part of forming relationships in the workplace is bonding over shared experiences. Events and gatherings will continue to be a part of creating these shared experiences but it's important to stretch beyond virtual happy hours. Give people a monthly budget to have lunch together, host a weekly yoga session, sponsor a group cooking class—create unique spaces for people to connect virtually or in-person. You can find more [innovative ideas here](#).

Another effective technique is to create moments for people to acknowledge and appreciate each other. Peer-to-peer appreciation can come to life through public shoutouts on Slack or at your company all-hands meetings. Or through a [personalized note or email](#). A culture of public praise encourages people to truly see each other and recognize their teammates' unique strengths.

While many organizations understand the importance of a connected workplace, they aren't delivering that experience. At least, not yet.

There is good news, though. Organizations we surveyed are starting to prioritize initiatives to reduce connection gaps in the workplace.

What are they prioritizing? They are getting employees together for formal and informal gatherings. They are figuring out new ways to appreciate and recognize employees. The addition of technology for better remote communication and collaboration plays a significant role as well in closing these connection gaps (figure 11).

Employee recognition—the second most popular way organizations are working to improve employee connection—shows promise as a way to improve overall connection. In the final section of this report, we explore the link between employee recognition and a connected workplace.





Part III

**The role of recognition  
in building a connected  
workplace.**



## The role of recognition in building a connected workplace.

Many HR leaders will tell you that employee appreciation and recognition are linked to an employee's feelings of connectedness. But it can be difficult to articulate that link. It's often a sense or a feeling.

With this new data, we can clearly see that organizations that use recognition as a tool for connection are much more effective at creating connection across every measure in our survey. This data allows us to dive deeper into why and how recognition creates connection:

- To company mission, values, and vision
- Between teammates and leaders
- To an employees' professional and personal aspirations

Organizations that use recognition as a tool for connection are much more effective at creating connection across every measure in our survey.

Organizations that are intentional in using employee recognition to drive connection report better results than those that aren't across nearly every measure in our survey. Companies that use recognition as a connection tool are nearly 2x as likely to report that they've adequately addressed connection challenges than the average organization (figure 12).

We see a similar (but inverted) pattern for companies that are not using recognition to drive connection. For example, these organizations were more than twice (2x) as likely to report that the pandemic had a negative impact on employee connection than those that do use recognition (figure 13).

Figure 12:

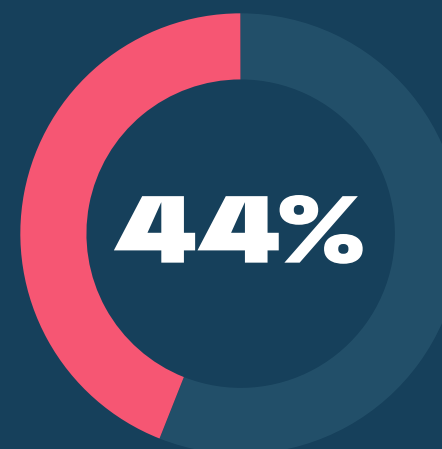
# 2x as likely

Companies that use recognition as a tool for workplace connection are nearly twice as likely to report that they've adequately addressed employee connection challenges than the average (60% vs. 31%).

Source: 2021 Blueboard Connected Workplace Survey, p=384

Figure 13:

Companies that **do not use recognition** as a tool to facilitate connection.



Companies that **do use recognition** as a tool to facilitate connection.



Companies that do not use recognition as a tool for workplace connection were more than twice as likely to report that the pandemic had a negative impact on employee connection (44% vs. 20%).

Source: 2021 Blueboard Connected Workplace Survey, p=384



**The recognition program has been a special way for us to make people feel appreciated when they go the extra mile—it helps encourage the behavior we want to see among our employees to help us build a more vibrant, connected culture.**

**Jess Wagner**  
MANAGER, GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT



Innovative companies are reducing the negative impact of the pandemic by using recognition to help their employees adapt to new routines in hybrid or remote work. For example, enterprise software company, The Trade Desk, successfully adapted its employee recognition efforts over the past two years to drive employee connection regardless of physical distance.

### **How The Trade Desk adapted recognition to drive connection during COVID-19.**

When the pandemic hit, The Trade Desk adapted its recognition and rewards program to help employees stay connected and incentivize healthy behaviors, by:

1. **Tying rewards to company values.** The Trade Desk reimagined their values in 2019 and has leaned into them over the past two years. These values serve as a North Star, helping their team stay focused and aligned on the really important things. During the pandemic, they transitioned traditional in-person office events to virtual “bring your authentic self to work” celebrations. The company used these celebrations as an opportunity to recognize and show appreciation for their “culture champions” with [Blueboard experiential rewards](#).
2. **Recognizing new and different behaviors.** As employees moved to different working environments, The Trade Desk used recognition moments and rewards to incentivize behaviors that increase wellbeing and build a positive company culture. Examples include rewarding culture champions who led inclusion and belonging panels, mentored colleagues, and brought people together for wellness activities.
3. **Appreciating culture champions.** The Trade Desk also launched a values-based appreciation card sender, which allows any employee to send a digital note of appreciation to anyone who displays a company value. Each card represents one of the company’s core values, and the sender can add a personal note of appreciation and encouragement.

Learn more about how The Trade Desk is boosting connection with recognition, [here](#).



Recognition can be a particularly powerful tool for helping employees connect to your organization’s values, which is good news considering the lack of connection employees currently experience (figure 10). But the benefits of recognition don’t stop there.

Our research shows that organizations that are intentional in recognizing their employees perform significantly better than the average company across every measure of workplace connection (figure 14).

Figure 14:

Respondents say they’re extremely successful or very successful at:	Those who <b>do not</b> use recognition to facilitate connection.	Those who <b>do</b> use recognition to facilitate connection.
“creating employee connection to their company’s mission”	<b>48%</b>	<b>69%</b>
“creating employee connection to their company’s values”	<b>51%</b>	<b>72%</b>
“creating employee connection to their company’s leadership mission”	<b>37%</b>	<b>62%</b>
“enabling employees to build authentic relationships with coworkers”	<b>61%</b>	<b>82%</b>
“enabling employees to build authentic relationships with managers”	<b>49%</b>	<b>69%</b>
“aligning career growth and development with an employee’s aspirations”	<b>31%</b>	<b>49%</b>
“empowering employees to create a positive impact in the world around them”	<b>50%</b>	<b>74%</b>

Source: 2021 Blueboard Connected Workplace Survey, p=384

Figure 15:



Going forward, nearly 3 in 4 HR professionals agree employee recognition will be an important tool they'll use to facilitate employee connection at work.

Nearly three out of four HR professionals believe that—regardless of the state of recognition at their organization, today—employee recognition has to be part of facilitating employee connection at work going forward (figure 15).

It's important to note that not all recognition programs are equal. Recognition and rewards must be meaningful and strategic to drive employee connection in the workplace. Whether you're reexamining your program or launching one for the very first time, here are four steps you should take to create an employee recognition program that improves connection.

**Recognition and rewards must be meaningful and strategic to drive employee connection in the workplace.**



# 4 best practices to build a recognition program that drives connection.

## 1. Recognize employee contributions frequently and in the moment.

Recognizing everyday contributions can be just as important as recognizing extraordinary contributions. This is why it's essential to express employee appreciation frequently and in the moment.

You can make sure your team's many contributions are recognized by nurturing an environment or building structures that facilitate frequent, peer-to-peer employee recognition. This can be as simple as creating a culture of gratitude and public praise or as robust as allowing employees to nominate colleagues for higher value [spot recognition rewards](#).



### Resources to help you get started:

- This [spot recognition planning guide](#) offers in-depth strategies to build an effective program based on a real-world example.
- If you'd rather watch than read, get spot recognition best practices from leaders at Medidata Solutions and Addison Group in this [webinar recap](#).

## 2. Build a program people want to participate in.

Don't waste your time trying to push employees to participate in a recognition program they're not excited about. Focus your energy on developing a program that's so enticing, they want to be a part of it.

One of the easiest and most effective ways to do this is to include rewards in your recognition program. When there's a tangible reward attached to a recognition moment, you'll dramatically increase the impact of that recognition and continued engagement at work. Of course, you'll want to offer rewards your people actually want. That's where [Blueboard's experiential rewards](#) come in.

Michele Allegretto, SVP of Human Resources at Glaukos, offers her perspective: *"I was talking to vendors who had more traditional service award programs, where you get a plaque, a pen or something you would pick from a catalog, but it really didn't fit our culture. When I think about the benefits packages we can offer, I want to be competitive, but I also want to be uniquely competitive. We're an innovative company, and everything we do needs to be innovative."*



### Resources to help you get started:

- Learn more about what motivates your employees and get tips for building a truly motivating recognition program in our [inspiration hub](#).
- Get a blueprint from the HR team at Glaukos for a recognition program employees love in the [complete case study](#).

### 3. Tailor employee rewards to your unique team and values.

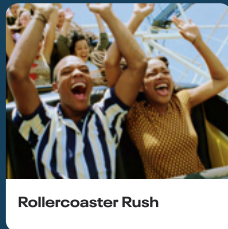
Your organization is unlike any other. The individuals on your team are unlike anyone else. That's why it's critical to make personalization part of your employee recognition plan.

At GoPro, for example, the People team designed a manager-driven spot recognition program, called the Legends Program. Through this program, GoPro's managers can request and send experiential rewards to any employee they feel embodies one of the company's core values. The employee then gets to pick and choose an experience that fits their desires and lifestyle.

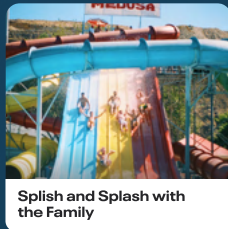
#### Here's a sample of Blueboard experiences:



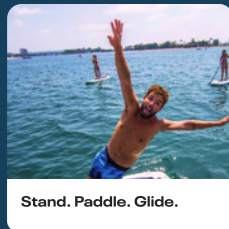
Local Foodie Tour



Rollercoaster Rush



Splish and Splash with the Family



Stand. Paddle. Glide.



Gourmet Food Pairing Class

GoPro's Vice President of People and Places, Tim Betry, explains that this recognition program allows "employees to live their best lives, unlocking new opportunities that push their limits, enabling them to have experiences that they might otherwise not have access to."

When recognition is aligned with your company's unique culture, when rewards offer employees customization, flexibility, and choice—you'll see increased participation in your program and you'll see your recognition program feed right back into your company culture.



#### Resources to help you get started:

- Get step-by-step instructions to build your own values awards program from Blueboard's VP of Customer Success, [here](#).
- Get the details on GoPro's Legends Program in the [complete case study](#).

### 4. Get feedback and measure program success, regularly.

If you don't have an objective way of measuring the success of your employee recognition program, you're going to have a hard time reporting on its impact. As HR and People Operations become more data-driven, this will only increase in importance.

One of the best ways to evaluate a program is simply to ask the participants (aka your people) for their feedback—and ask regularly. Use recurring meetings and surveys to gather feedback at a regular cadence to help you understand program performance.



#### Resources to help you get started:

- Learn how to analyze your employee recognition ROI, identify the metrics that matter, and calculate recognition return in this [free ebook](#).



A blue-tinted photograph of a group of people in a meeting. In the foreground, a woman with long dark hair is smiling and pointing her right index finger towards a document on a table. Behind her, another woman with long dark hair is looking down at the same document. To the right, a man with curly hair is also looking down. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people and what appears to be a large window or screen.

Key takeaways

**Connection is key to the  
employee experience  
and business success.**



# Connection is key to the employee experience and business success.

Employee connection is critical to business success. It drives key outcomes, such as employee satisfaction, engagement, and long-term retention. But there's currently a gap between what employees want in a connected workplace and what most are experiencing.

Organizations that don't quickly diagnose and address their connection gaps will lose top people and struggle to attract new talent. Those that prioritize employee connection, on the other hand, will become what we refer to at Blueboard as “most loved” workplaces.

If you can address your connection challenges, you'll be among the most loved—the innovative companies leading the way toward the future of work. Yours will be an organization people scramble to work for.

If you believe connection is an issue at your organization, make sure to:

1. **Gather evidence.** Collect feedback from employees and key stakeholders to validate or invalidate your assumptions.
2. **Diagnose and prioritize.** Use the information gathered to identify your weaknesses when it comes to workplace connection and prioritize the areas you want to address first.
3. **Test solutions.** Improving connection will likely take time. You may introduce solutions that fall flat but stick with them. Collaborate, create, and iterate toward a more connected workplace. It'll be worth it.

And remember: The data shows that meaningful employee recognition is a key to creating an authentically connected workplace. Organizations that use employee recognition to intentionally drive connection are 2x more likely to report better results across all facets of employee connection.

If your organization is considering recognition as a tool for connection, we'd love to talk with you about your challenges, objectives, and how Blueboard can help you deliver meaningful recognition and drive connection among your employees—wherever they are. [You can get in touch with our team online here.](#)





# 384

US-based HR leaders and professionals.

# 68%

Managers or greater role seniority.

# November 2021

Surveyed in November 2021.

# December 2021

Qualitative interviews in December 2021.

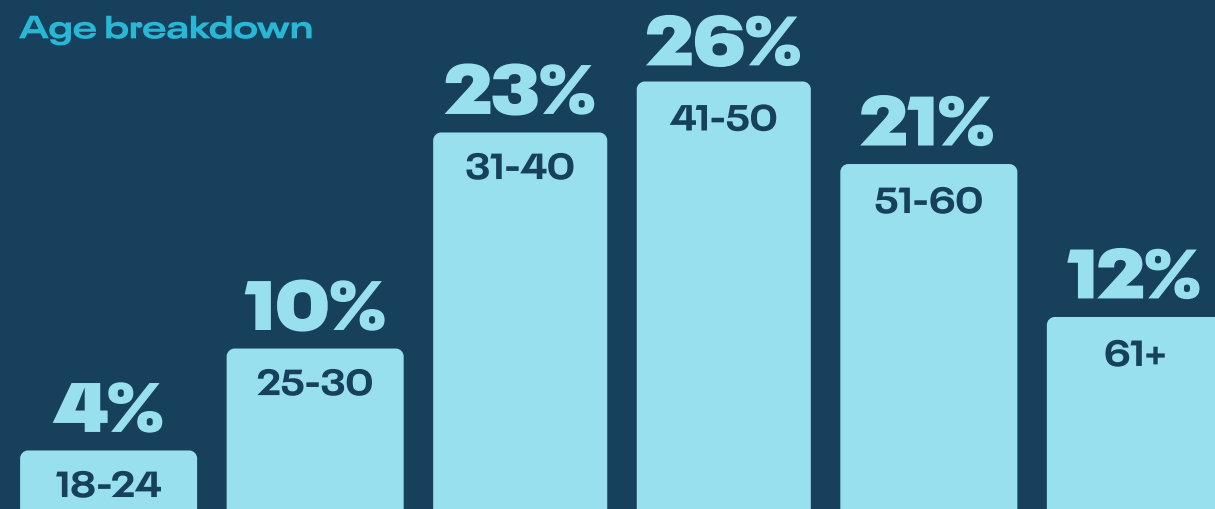
# 506

US-based respondents who are full-time employed.

# 2021

Surveyed in November and December.

## Age breakdown



## Research methodology.

### HR survey methodology.

We asked 384 HR leaders and professionals questions about the state of employee connection at their workplace, along with broader talent initiatives, in a 15- to 20-minute online quantitative survey. We also used qualitative interviews and secondary research to get more in-depth insights about the effects of employee connection on the workplace.

#### Survey demographics.

- 384 US-based HR leaders and professionals
- 68% managers or greater role seniority
- Surveyed in November 2021
- Qualitative interviews in December 2021

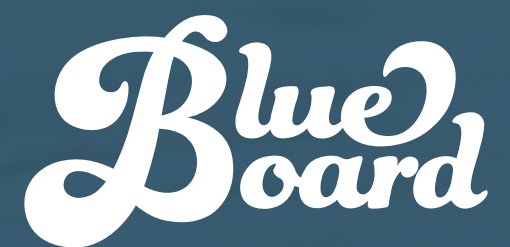
### Employee survey methodology.

We asked 506 full-time employees questions about their views of the importance of employee connection in an online 5- to 10-minute quantitative survey. The results of this survey were compared with other available research on employee attitudes.

#### Survey demographics.

- 506 US-based respondents who are full-time employed
- Age breakdown
  - 18-24 — 4%
  - 25-30 — 10%
  - 31-40 — 23%
  - 41-50 — 26%
  - 51-60 — 21%
  - 61+ — 12%
- Surveyed in November and December 2021





## About Blueboard.

Blueboard is the experiential rewards platform of choice for the world's most loved employers. We make it easy for companies to give experiential employee rewards, incentives, and gifts — from one-of-a-kind to once-in-a-lifetime experiences (think skydiving, dining through Michelin stars, learning to blow glass, or chasing the Northern Lights).

We support enterprise workforces across 70 countries and partner with hundreds of Best Places to Work, including Abbott Diabetes Care, Mixpanel, Segment, Glassdoor, Shake Shack, GoPro, and Ubisoft to help them celebrate their people in a more meaningful way. Learn more at [Blueboard.com](https://blueboard.com).