GLOBAL BENCHMARK STUDY

The Workforce Experience Gap

Closing the Gap Between Employer and Employee Perceptions Requires Focused Action
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Executive Summary

Comprising 80% of the worldwide working population, deskless shift workers play an essential role in every industry. These employees, representing diverse skill sets and expertise integral to their organizations’ operations, are often doing their jobs without the benefit of a desktop computer or even access to a corporate email account.

Despite their significance, these essential workers are continually overlooked in company initiatives, including technology investments, training, and work schedule management. Struggling to retain and attract talent, employers are evaluating employee needs and, in response, seeking ways to implement new workplace practices to address them. Even so, deskless workers continue to quit their roles in favor of better opportunities, leaving many employers without the necessary talent to support existing operations, let alone grow.

To better understand the disconnect in perception between employers and employees about employee needs, the Workforce Experience Gap goes straight to the source, polling each group for their perspectives on the employee experience in scheduling flexibility, pay policies, and assistance with personal circumstances.

The 2021 Workforce Experience Gap report revealed a significant disparity between the viewpoints of managers and deskless shift workers regarding how their organizations were working to successfully engage, develop, retain, and attract talent.

The 2022 survey evaluates what has changed and continues the comparison between managers’ beliefs and the experience of employees. Here we asked both groups to share their perspectives on how their organizations approach scheduling, job training, pay rates, employee recognition, feedback, and communication.

Despite the results indicating that perceptions of managers and employees are growing more closely aligned, they suggest another gap remains—one between understanding and execution. While organizations are more aware of their employees’ needs, they lag in taking action to address them.

2021 and 2022 Workforce Experience Gap Comparisons

- In 2022, there is closer employer/employee alignment in their perception of job training, schedule flexibility, task-based pay, and employee recognition.
- While experience gaps are narrowing, 2022 results reveal that organizations are still behind in implementing workplace processes that reflect employee needs.
- In this latest survey, employees and employers were asked for their feedback on workplace communication, which highlighted a need for more mobile solutions.
- Many employers are still using outdated manual processes to circulate important employee information and trainings.
- Globally, employees are more positive about their organizations’ practices, yet employers and their teams still misalign on the value of important elements such as employee recognition and communication.
Workforce Experience Gap Survey Results 2022

Narrowing Experience Gap Perceptions Between Employees and Managers Emphasize the Need for Modern Solutions
Job Training

Compared to the 2021 results, this year more employees agree or strongly agree that their organizations provide the proper training and information necessary to do their jobs. 61% of managers now agree that their employees receive the right resources, indicating a narrowing experience gap since 2021. Still, there is a clear disconnect between employers and their employees on the best way to circulate information.

Despite the growing number of digital natives in the workforce, organizations are under-utilizing mobile technology to engage their employees. Eighteen percent of employees report that they rely on fellow team members’ knowledge to complete work tasks, and 21% must locate physical employee-only areas to access documents and guides. While 46% of employees say they would prefer to receive training and information via mobile phone, only 20% receive this training option from their organizations.

When asked to rank the importance of easy access to training and information in terms of employee job satisfaction, the 13-point gap between managers and employees likely indicates organizations are underestimating the importance of easily available and accessible training resources.

Over the past year, employees and employers have grown more closely aligned in how they view accessible training in their organizations, with the gap narrowing by 22 points. However, more needs to be done to deliver that training in the easily accessible digital formats employees prefer.
Scheduling

For many deskless shift workers, a flexible, predictable, and accessible schedule offers stability to their personal and professional lives. Despite this, survey findings indicate that 55% of employees experience changes in shift patterns weekly, while the same percentage report they receive their schedules at most one week in advance.

Employees face another barrier in accessing their schedules. Only 25% report that their organizations use online scheduling software. This has a significant impact on employees, especially if they are obligated to travel to a physical work location (that they would typically eschew) solely to access scheduling information. Thirty-seven percent of employees communicate with their managers on unsecured channels such as WhatsApp, email, and social media, otherwise known as “shadow IT”.

As organizations adapt to the pressure from employees for greater flexibility, they cannot ignore that modern approaches to support the needs of the business will require operational, process, and system changes. Employees want to work for organizations that work with rather than against short- and long-term changes to their personal lives. Thirty-seven percent of employees—and a similar percentage of managers—do not agree that employees receive help for personal circumstances (about the same results as 2021).

Most managers and employees agree that schedule flexibility is essential to job satisfaction. Seventy-nine percent of employees say they would prefer an organization that offered more flexibility over one that did not. Thirty-nine percent of employees and 43% of managers report their companies do not offer flexible scheduling.

The gap in perceived availability of flexible scheduling declined by 18 points from 2021 to 2022. But timely digital visibility into schedules remains a pain point for employees.
Pay Rates

For many global organizations, deskless shift workers represent a wide range of skill sets and expertise, making job factors such as pay impossible to consider with a one-size-fits-all approach. Task-based pay can be a straightforward method of engaging and motivating workers. Sixty-one percent of employees report they would choose to work for an employer who offered different rates for different tasks over one who did not.

Compared to the 2021 global results, the experience gap between employers and managers regarding task-based pay persists but is narrowing. In 2022, 38% of employees agree or strongly agree that their companies provide task-dependent pay versus 55% of managers who agree or strongly agree. Managers who acknowledge the need for task-based payment may recognize the benefit of assigning shifts based on an employee's level of knowledge, ability, or mastery of equipment in contrast to traditional compensation practices.

Employers and employees have made a significant improvement in alignment since 2021, with the experience gap narrowing to 17 points. Fifty-five percent of employers now say their organization offers task-based pay to workers, and 38% of employees agree.
Employee Recognition

Throughout the challenges of the past few years, significant pressure has been placed on frontline workers across all industries to keep operations running smoothly despite constant disruption and change. **Recognizing and celebrating these efforts is vital in supporting engaged and productive employees while reducing the risk of burnout.**

Since 2021, managers and employees have grown closer in their perspectives on employee recognition, with 61% of employees and 65% of managers agreeing or strongly agreeing that their organizations recognize the contributions of their hourly workers. The closing gap may indicate that managers are more aware of how employees prefer to be recognized by their employers. **Still, there remains a significant percentage of employees feeling undervalued.**

**2021 RESULTS**

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<tr>
<th>Employers</th>
<th>90%</th>
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<tr>
<td>Employees</td>
<td>77%</td>
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**2022 RESULTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employers</th>
<th>61%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employees</td>
<td>65%</td>
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</table>
Employee Feedback

An employee’s value to an organization is not solely communicated through recognition. Employees want to feel that their voices are heard and integral to decision making. Seventy-four percent of employees answered that they would choose to work for an employer who regularly asked for feedback over one who did not.

When asked how often their organizations gather employee feedback, employees and managers were generally aligned. While 61% of employees reported regular feedback loops ranging from every three months to anytime via mobile device, 33% reported they provided feedback either once a year or never, indicating some organizations are still isolating their employees through outdated processes.

2022 RESULTS

Employers

| 61% | 13pts |

Employees

| 74% |

New to the 2022 study, respondents were asked to evaluate their organization’s methods for collecting employee feedback. Seventy-four percent of employees agree that regularly asking for employee feedback is important when choosing to work for an organization compared to 61% of employers agreeing.
Communications

For most of today’s employees, the smartphone is an essential tool for managing their day-to-day lives. Organizations are increasingly employing these powerful pocket-sized supercomputers to connect with workers in the field, on the assembly line, behind the wheel, on the floor, and in hospitals and classrooms.

While 45% of employees prefer to use a single mobile app for workplace communications, only 14% reported having access to an integrated mobile solution. This leaves a significant percentage of workplaces relying on technology such as SMS text messages, company intranets, messaging apps, email, and social media. While these channels do operate in real time, they can lack consistency, efficiency, and accurate record-keeping, leaving organizations vulnerable to cyber threats, miscommunication, and noncompliance issues. Additionally, having too many communication channels can strain an employee’s work/life balance, with 43% of employees reporting that they feel like they had little downtime and have difficulty “switching off.”

Compared to 80% of employees, 62% of managers agree that how easy it is to collaborate and communicate is important in determining whether to work for an organization. In addition to the 35% of employees who are not provided workplace technology, this gap indicates that while mobile communication is becoming more normalized in the workplace, some outdated approaches still exist.

New to the 2022 study, respondents were asked to evaluate their organization’s communication methods. Employers and employees are generally aligned, with an experience gap of only 5 points. Still, these results reveal that a large percentage of employees believe they are not being provided the tools they need to communicate and collaborate with their fellow team members and managers.
Global Comparisons

The effects of the workforce experience gap are being felt globally. Across the following seven regions, employers and employees vary in alignment on key issues impacting today's workforce.

For employers across the globe, retaining and attracting top talent remains a high priority. Of course, engaging and inspiring a productive and agile workforce is not a one-size-fits-all approach. Many factors influence employee experience, including culture, environment, government regulations, political shifts, etc. To foster a workplace where employees want to stay and thrive, employers must first think locally and tune into their employees' specific and unique needs.

Job Training

“All other things being equal, I would choose to work for an employer who provided easy access to information and training for my job over one who did not.”

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>AU &amp; NZ</th>
<th>GERMANY, ITALY &amp; SPAIN</th>
<th>SWEDEN, NORWAY &amp; DENMARK</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>US</th>
<th>CANADA</th>
<th>MEXICO, BRAZIL, COLOMBIA, PERU &amp; CHILE</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employees Agree</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employers Agree</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>81%</td>
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While employers and employees in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark and Mexico, Brazil, Colombia, Peru and Chile are generally aligned when judging the importance of accessible job training in the workplace, many regions underestimate the significance of offering these resources. The United Kingdom shows the widest gap, with a **36-point** difference. Not far behind are New Zealand and Australia, each with a **22-point** experience gap.
### Scheduling

“All other things being equal, I would choose to work for an employer who offered more flexibility in scheduling over one who did not.”

Among all the regions, the United Kingdom displayed the widest gap in their views on schedule flexibility as a reason to choose to work for an organization, with a 27-point difference between employees and employers.

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<th>AU &amp; NZ</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employees Agree</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employers Agree</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>74%</td>
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### Pay Rates

“All other things being equal, I would choose to work for an employer who provided different rates for different tasks for my job over one that did not.”

Across the globe, employers and employees seem to have grown closer in alignment on the importance of task-based pay. For Canadian employers, it is possible they are overestimating how much their employees value this pay system, with 61% of employers agreeing and only 49% of employees.

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<th>UK</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employees Agree</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employers Agree</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>61%</td>
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Employee Feedback

“All other things being equal, I would choose to work for an employer who asked for my feedback on a regular basis over one who did not.”

When brainstorming new ways to retain and attract top talent, engaging with the existing workforce and gathering feedback can be an organization’s greatest resource. Globally, it seems some regions listen better than others, with a 34-point gap between United Kingdom employers and employees.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employees Agree</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employers Agree</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>76%</td>
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Communication

“All other things being equal, I would choose to work for an employer who makes it easy to communicate and collaborate with other employees and my manager over one who did not.”

Employers and employees in Germany, Italy, and Spain and Sweden, Norway, and Denmark only diverged slightly (with 3- and 2-point gaps, respectively) when rating the importance of a potential employer’s communication processes.

Comparatively, New Zealand and Australia and the United Kingdom showed significant gaps of 30 and 36 points, respectively.

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<td>60%</td>
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Communicating Smarter

How Smart Communications Bridge the Experience Gap
Traditional tiered communication structures can be a tricky game of telephone, text, and manual tracking, especially for deskless workers, who often lack access to a desktop computer or company email, at the end of that line. In addition to being vulnerable to costly miscommunications, these systems have no way to ensure that messages to employees are received, understood, and acted upon.

Communication at the time and place work happens is foundational to an engaged workforce. Combining operational performance with employee experience and engagement, smart communications enable meaningful interactions between workers, supervisors, and their peers that are integrated into the flow of work. In the modern work landscape, where rapid changes to procedure, protocol, and compliance are the norm, organizations need solutions that transcend hierarchies and engage front-line teams.

Smart communications are designed to leverage data, advanced analytics, and automation in real time to create personalized experiences in the flow of work while offering managers deeper insight into their workplaces—all on a single enterprise-grade mobile app. By bridging the gap between employee needs and business objectives, smart communications make it possible to create a more interconnected workplace that can predict, adapt, and execute change.
Recommendations for Closing the Experience Gap
Dialing into the Workforce

Use Mobile Technology to Manage and Engage a Digitally Native Workforce from Anywhere

According to a recent People Management Insight (PMI) study, “Smart, Strategic, Employee Centric: The Next Generation of HR Technology”, by 2025, 75% of the workforce will be digital natives who grew up with the interconnectedness of computers, the internet, and cell phones. Mobile applications from shopping to banking and upskilling to networking evolve and emerge seemingly every day, making tasks more efficient, convenient, and entertaining. For these digitally savvy generations, the thought of managing their personal lives without a smartphone is inconceivable. Why should managing their work lives be any different?

Considering the survey responses, it seems many organizations are under-utilizing these supercomputers that are already in most employees’ hands, especially when it comes to deskless workers who are out of the office and on the front lines. Workplace technology on par with today’s most popular mobile apps allows workers to use their digital literacy to stay up to date on critical information, collaborate with coworkers, manage their schedules, and engage with management and each other.

Outdated processes and systems do not solely impact workers. Manual training, communication, and scheduling methods create a hazy picture for managers when judging their teams’ productivity, ability, and needs. Like their employees, managers feel the administrative burden of ineffective time management, time tracking, planning, and decision-making based on limited data.

Mobile-enabled software offers employees more autonomy and control over their own roles while also equipping managers to better understand their teams’ needs and act in real time.

People Management Insight

By 2025, 75% of the workforce will be digital natives.
Evening the Scales

Promote Work/Life Balance with Flexible and Predictive Scheduling Solutions

Creating fair, predictable, and flexible schedules for deskless shift workers can be daunting for most managers. Every employee comes with a unique set of needs, obligations, and personal circumstances, rendering uniform approaches to scheduling ineffective. Employees, especially younger generations, want to feel that their organizations are invested in their mental, physical, and emotional well-being, and that requires workplace processes that are collaborative, responsive, and adaptable to change. The result is not only happier employees but employees who are more engaged, productive, and loyal to their organizations.

Survey results indicate that while managers are increasingly aware of today’s scheduling needs, employees still deal with the stress of chaotic and unproductive manual workplace processes. These findings suggest that managers and employees often lack the resources from their organizations necessary to implement adaptations to workplace practices that best meet employee and employer objectives.

The Ventana Research report “Modern Workforce Scheduling Requires a New Mindset” reinforces the notion that reforming scheduling practices can be a significant step toward offering employees more autonomy and independence in their roles. Modern workforce scheduling capabilities allow employees to access their data from anywhere and communicate directly with their supervisors, making it easier to plan for change. For managers, these solutions leverage real-time data and analytics that reveal a clearer picture of their employees’ needs while optimizing, automating, and streamlining schedule creation.

Today, many employees, especially Gen Z and Millennials, are incentivized by schedule flexibility and often prioritize it above higher pay. With benefits including reduced absenteeism, higher productivity, improved retention, increased job satisfaction, and higher engagement, schedule flexibility cannot be ignored by organizations wishing to stand out as an employer of choice. Modern workforce management software sends a clear message to both employees and managers that their needs are heard and valued.

“...For front-line deskless workers, scheduling flexibility is second only to payroll in HCM processes that drive employee sentiment.”

Ventana Research
Continuing to Close the Experience Gap

Leverage Real-Time Data and Feedback Loops to Drive Operational Improvement

While the unprecedented challenges of the past few years have made the term “essential worker” a part of mainstream conversation, deskless shift workers should not have to rely on global pandemics or labor shortages to be prioritized by their employers. Data collected through software and time-tracking technology reveal a strong correlation between employee well-being and successful business outcomes. Harvard Business Review had this takeaway after performing research on how employee experience impacts the bottom line: Executives might be more accustomed to seeing business cases and ROI calculations from marketing and sales teams, but they should start empowering talent departments to make their own case. By capturing and connecting the right data, executives will begin to see the link between employees, customers, and revenue.3 Comparing 2021 Workforce Experience Gap survey results against 2022, it is clear that managers and employees mutually benefit when gateways to communication, awareness, and understanding are opened.

To keep pace with an evolving workforce, shorten the time between feedback and operational change, and ultimately improve business performance, organizations need readily available channels to better connect with their employees and understand what they need. With organizational goals in mind, these channels shorten the time between feedback and operational action to improve business performance.

Modern workforce technology is designed to connect managers and employees on a human level, recognizing that workers have the same basic needs to feel valued, appreciated, and heard, whether on or off the clock. While real-time data and analytics provide insight into an employee’s performance, they offer more opportunities for managers to support, connect, and celebrate their workers. Tapping into the power of people, these solutions thrive off of in-the-moment employee feedback and support an organization’s ability to adapt to the new normal of the modern workforce.

Any organization that has customer-facing employees should realize that they matter immensely to business success.

*Harvard Business Review*
Build Your Case For Change

Informed by employee feedback and backed by quantifiable business value benefits and cost savings to be gained by improved employee engagement, prepare yourself to lead a case for change that can drive down costs, increase revenue, reduce turnover, and improve operational performance.

We’ve developed an activation toolkit including these resources to help build your case for better workforce experience:

- Stakeholder Enrollment Presentation
- Employee Survey Questions
- Quantifiable Business Value Drivers

Based on aggregated results of value studies with our customers across a range of deployments, industries, and organizational maturities, we are confident we can help you define quantifiable benefits and savings using WorkForce Software solutions.

We understand that your organization is unique. No two organizations share the same workforce management process maturity or level of automation. WorkForce Software’s Customer Value experts are dedicated to partnering with you to make a compelling case for change that appeals to the stakeholders of your organization.

Enterprise-grade and future-ready, WorkForce Software adapts to your needs to improve employee communication and engagement, operational performance, and your bottom line—no matter how unique your pay rules, labor regulations, labor allocation, scheduling, and employee needs.

An Engaged Workforce Can Deliver Many Benefits

- Employee Turnover Cost Reductions with Improved Engagement
- Employee Turnover Cost Reduction with Integrated Pulse Surveys
- Revenue/Employee with Improvement Engagement
- Survey, Training, and Document Cost Reductions
- Employee Collaboration Efficiencies
- Document Search Efficiencies with Mobile Access
- Task Management Efficiencies
The Workforce Experience Activation Guide

Arm yourself with data on the value of improving employee experience and its role in driving operational improvements. Then consider who else in the organization benefits most from more engaged and informed employees and enroll them in your organization’s plan for change. From there, gather feedback from your employees on how they feel about their workplace experience. Finally, use the insights gathered to build an action plan for improvement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Now</th>
<th>Next 30 Days</th>
<th>Next 60 Days</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Enroll Key Stakeholders</strong>&lt;br&gt;Start by socializing and building consensus with key stakeholders in your organization who will benefit most from improved operational communications, recognize the value of improved employee experience for your operation, have the innovative mindset to think differently, and use their influence to implement change.</td>
<td><strong>Understand Your Gap</strong>&lt;br&gt;Before you can target the right recommendations for workplace improvements, you first need to understand how your employees view the experience you’re currently delivering. We can help you perform a survey to your front-line employees and managers. Then benchmark your results against the data in this study for a baseline to guide your best improvement areas.</td>
<td><strong>Map Out Your Action Plan</strong>&lt;br&gt;Use your survey results to make data-driven decisions to improve your workplace practices. Identify quick wins while making progress on transformative changes with the help of a purpose-built workforce management solution designed to engage employees when and where they work, improve scheduling flexibility, and optimize labor.</td>
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**Share The Gap Study Presentation with Stakeholders to Build Consensus for Change**

**Use Our Survey Questions to Understand Your Opportunity Areas From Your Own People**

**See Quantifiable Savings and Benefits Value Drivers to Build a Data-Driven Business Case**

Visit the Workforce Experience Activation Hub

See resources and tools to help you close your employee experience gap for game-changing productivity, thriving employees, and delighted customers.

Visit the Activation Hub
Conclusion

The war for talent has challenged organizations to prioritize and act upon the needs of their deskless workforce. This attention has brought new awareness to what workers require to remain engaged and productive, requiring managers to consider the realities of their workers’ day-to-day lives. While managers today are becoming more attuned to their employees and better understand the importance of accessible job training, fair pay rates, flexible scheduling, and employee recognition, they often face challenges to implement workplace processes that adequately address these needs.

A heightened awareness of employee needs has a limited impact on the overall employee experience if it does not lead to action. Managers need the right tools and resources to act as empathetic and responsive leaders who can respond when employee well-being and business objectives are on the line. With the right technology, organizations can foster a happy, engaged, and productive workforce led by managers who are informed and responsive to the needs of their employees. Modern workforce management can break down the barriers created by dated corporate hierarchies and connect the entire organization when and where work happens. Employees enjoy more autonomy and control over time management, scheduling, workplace communications, and training. At the same time managers can gather real-time data and analytics to make informed decisions that are best for their employees, organization, and customers.

With further opportunities to close the work place experience gap, now is the time for organizations to leverage this knowledge and act.

Discover Modern Workforce Management

Bridge the divide between desired business outcomes and employee expectations by tapping into the power of your people.
About WorkForce Software

WorkForce Software is the first global provider of workforce management solutions with integrated employee experience capabilities. The company’s WorkForce Suite adapts to each organization’s needs—no matter how unique their pay rules, labor regulations, and schedules—while delivering a breakthrough employee experience at the time and place work happens. Enterprise-grade and future-ready, WorkForce Software is helping some of the world’s most innovative organizations optimize their workforce, protect against compliance risks, and increase employee engagement to unlock new potential for resiliency and optimal performance. When your employees include deskless or hourly workers, unionized, full-time, part-time, or seasonal, WorkForce Software makes managing your global workforce easy, less costly, and more rewarding for everyone.

For more information, please visit workforcesoftware.com.

About Pollfish

Pollfish offers a next-generation polling platform that helps brands get a direct line to consumer thinking. With Pollfish’s advanced sampling approach and real-time DIY platform, companies can enjoy faster access to reliable consumer insights. The cutting-edge software, coupled with Pollfish’s unparalleled global network of respondents, allows fast access to high-quality consumer data and provides an easily usable analytics dashboard that allows straightforward data interpretation, allowing companies to make well-informed business decisions.

To learn more about their innovative approach to market research, visit pollfish.com.

Methodology

This global survey, conducted by Pollfish on behalf of WorkForce Software, was completed by 1,684 employees and 1,701 employers from a wide range of industries. The survey comprised 28 distinct questions, both open-ended and single-selection.

EMPLOYEES

1,684

EMPLOYERS

1,701

QUESTIONS

28

The Workforce Experience Gap