

● 2023 Alight international workforce and wellbeing mindset study

A culture of caring

Reshaping the employee experience
with a commitment to wellbeing

alight



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Building a high-performing workforce isn't simply a matter of hiring talented people. We must also foster an environment where they are inspired to do their best, where they feel connected to the purpose and values of the organization and where the company is willing to invest in tools and resources to help them attain optimal wellbeing in every facet of their lives. When people feel good, they are happier, healthier and more engaged and productive at work.

In these challenging times, however, workers aren't feeling very positive about their employee experience. Employers simply aren't meeting their needs in terms of work-life balance, leaving many employees disengaged, uninspired and ready to make a change. They're burned-out, checked-out and have one foot out the door.

What does this mean for employers struggling to recruit and retain workers in a historically tight job market? How can they ensure their people are motivated to bring their best selves to work every day? And what investments should they be making to deliver the kind of employee experience that will keep the workforce feeling happy, fulfilled and engaged?



Workforce check-in: restless and disaffected

Emerging from the pandemic, employers expected to heave a sigh of relief. Instead, they found themselves facing a whole new slate of challenges—from rampant inflation and economic uncertainty to a raging debate over work-from-home/work-from-office and a restless workforce that's feeling decidedly disengaged and discontented.

Hunkered down at home for the better part of two years, people took to reevaluating their lives. Many realized their jobs weren't fulfilling their personal – or professional – needs. This led to the much-maligned Great Resignation, which saw nearly 48 million Americans voluntarily leave their jobs in 2021, followed by 50.5 million in 2022.ⁱ Bolstered by the newfound recognition they didn't necessarily have to live in the same geographical location as their job, this vast segment of the American workforce happily bid adieu to their current employers and sought opportunities with companies whose values align with their own, who provide better work-life balance and invest in their employees' overall wellbeing.

As the Great Resignation gave way to quiet quitting, employers found themselves facing an altogether different challenge—a faction of workers who weren't in a hurry to leave but didn't feel any motivation to go the extra mile either. Instead, they resigned themselves to doing the bare minimum necessary to keep their jobs. By some accounts, as many as 59% of employees are engaged in quiet quitting globally.ⁱⁱ

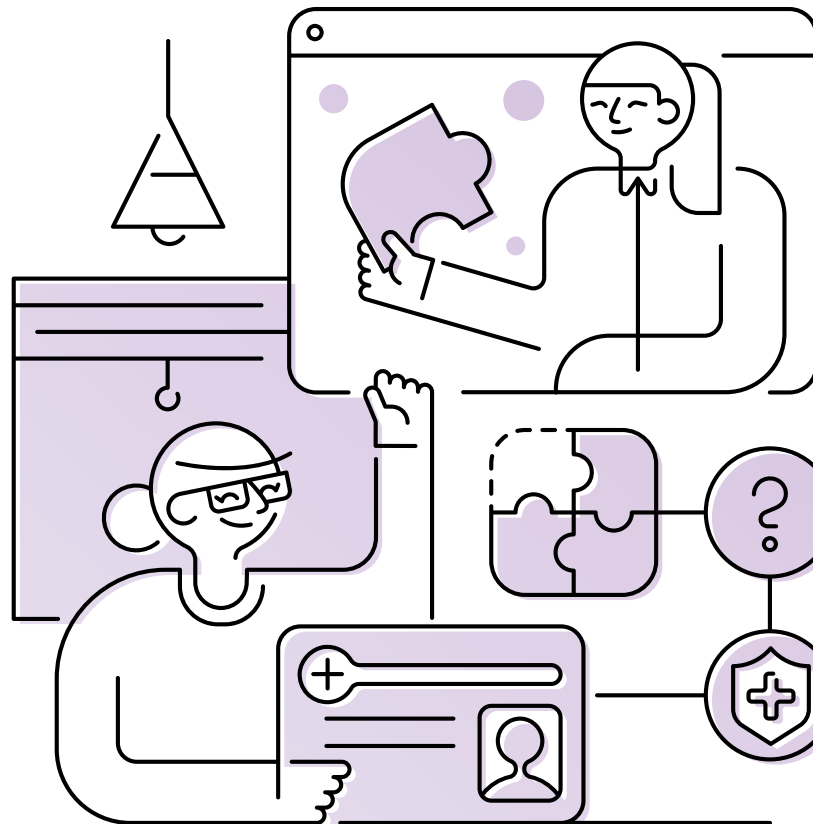


It wouldn't be long before employers would be pining for the days of quiet quitters, as those disengaged workers became loud leavers—that is, disgruntled employees who may not technically be quitting, but who cause trouble for the organization by creating unpleasant public scenes; posting inflammatory comments online; refusing to do tasks they find needless or insulting; setting a negative tone for new hires and triggering other employees to engage in the same destructive behaviors. Gallup defines loud leavers (aka loud quitters) as employees who engage in actions that “directly harm” the company, while undercutting its goals and opposing its leaders.ⁱⁱⁱ

While it's too early to say whether it's an actual movement or merely a catchy (if inaccurately and problematically named) phrase on TikTok, “lazy girl jobs” is emerging as the latest trend sweeping disaffected workers. By definition, a lazy girl job is a “flexible remote position that's non-technical, high-paying and doesn't require extreme efforts or difficult performance goals.”^{iv} It doesn't mean you don't want to work, but rather, your expectation is that in exchange for your efforts, you'll be paid fairly with good work-life balance and not be overworked, thus avoiding burnout. This evolving expectation of how work and life intersect is borne out in our data.

All these trends point to one thing: an increasingly disengaged workforce that has decided there's more to life than work. They are making it their priority to set boundaries, live by their values and achieve true balance in their lives. They may still physically be in their current job—at least for the time being—but they are emotionally and mentally detached. It won't take much to convert one-foot-out-the-door into two.

Human Resource Executive magazine went so far as to label the “lazy girl job” a “craze.”^{xii}



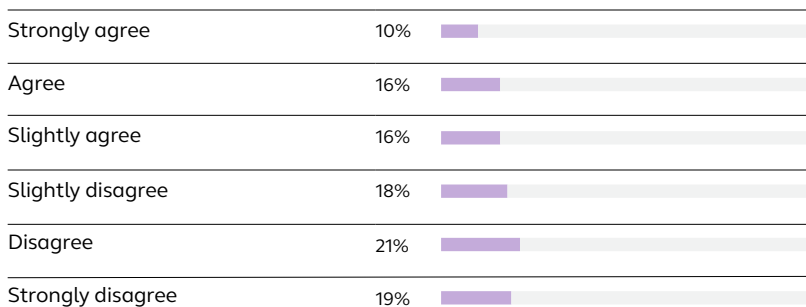
Lacking inspiration, motivation falters

For generations, it was widely accepted that the secret to success was working hard and going the extra mile for one's employer. By all accounts, however, the days of exceeding expectations are long gone, at least for a growing portion of the workforce who see no value in doing more than what is necessary to earn their paycheck.

Not only are employees less willing to do more than what is asked of them, they also no longer feel inspired to excel in their day-to-day responsibilities. According to the 2023 Alight International Workforce and Wellbeing Mindset Study, just over half (53%) of U.S. employees say their organization inspires them to do their best work every day, a decrease of 6% in just one year.

This translates into a significant number of employees openly admitting they no longer desire to produce top quality work for their employer. Even up the pay ladder, this alarming finding is true, with 36% of people making upwards of \$100,000 a year agreeing or strongly agreeing, compared to 26% overall.¹

I no longer desire to produce top quality work for my employer



Source: 2023 Alight International Workforce and Wellbeing Mindset Study

Why are fewer employees feeling inspired to do quality work? There is no single answer to this question. Rather, there are a number of converging factors contributing to the overall disengaged attitude becoming more commonplace among today's workers. In fact, their reasons for feeling that way are fairly evenly split.

Primary reasons people no longer desire to produce top quality work

I don't feel there is any career progression that would result from doing more	33%	<div><div style="width: 33%;"></div></div>
I don't feel there is any upside for doing more in terms of extra pay or benefits	33%	<div><div style="width: 33%;"></div></div>
My company does not deserve my best efforts	32%	<div><div style="width: 32%;"></div></div>
I need to set more boundaries in my working life	31%	<div><div style="width: 31%;"></div></div>
My work is too stressful	31%	<div><div style="width: 31%;"></div></div>
My manager does not deserve my best efforts	29%	<div><div style="width: 29%;"></div></div>

Source: 2023 Alight International Workforce and Wellbeing Mindset Study

The top two reasons could be characterized as: What's in it for me as a worker to do more for you as an employer? Cited by one-third of employees, "I don't feel there is any career progression resulting from doing more" and "I don't feel there is any upside for doing more in terms of extra pay or benefits" clearly point to a sense they won't be rewarded for going above and beyond. Unfortunately, more pay and/or upward mobility is not always possible, leaving employers grappling to figure out how they can better engage these people in other ways.

The next most frequently cited reason, "my company does not deserve my best efforts," is a bold statement that is likely tied to the desire to work for a purpose-driven organization. Half of all U.S.-based employees say having a clearly defined purpose embodying something bigger than products and services differentiates one organization from others where they could possibly work. Innumerable studies have shown that employees value when their employer contributes to society beyond their financial or economic outcome, yet just 57% of workers say they feel connected to the purpose or mission of their company (and a drop of 5% from 2022).^{vi} It's easy to see how this disconnect can lead employees to feel less inspired to do quality work.



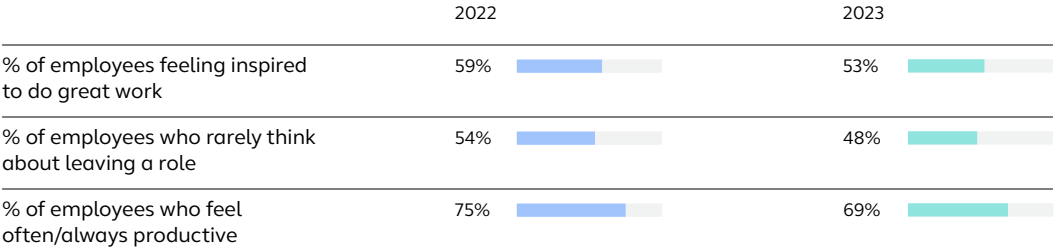
The remaining reasons are more cut-and-dry. Nearly one-third of workers say they need to set more boundaries in their working life. This ties back to the desire for a better work-life balance, which became paramount for employees as they emerged from the lockdowns of 2020-2021. Just as many workers say their job is too stressful. This should be a major concern for employers, as stress often leads to burnout. According to our 2023 Mindset Study, 46% of employees have suffered symptoms of burnout, up 5% from 2022. This can be catastrophic to employee wellbeing and workplace performance as it negatively impacts motivation, innovation and productivity, while increasing absenteeism and presenteeism.

Rounding out the list, “my manager does not deserve my best efforts,” seems to prove the adage, employees don’t leave jobs, they leave managers. Indeed, a 2021 survey of 3,000 full-time U.S.-based workers by employment screening provider GoodHire found an overwhelming majority (82%) of employees would consider quitting their job because of a bad manager. And according to our 2023 Mindset Study, 11% of people who had recently left their jobs did so because they wanted a better manager or leader, overtaking better benefits as the third most-cited reason behind increased pay and more work-life flexibility. This was a 57% jump from the previous year. Why would someone feel inspired to do their best work if their dissatisfaction with their manager is so strong, it might compel them to leave the organization?



In search of greener grass

Against this backdrop, it's not surprising a growing number of employees are open to making a change. The number of employees who say they rarely think about leaving their job has fallen six percentage points in just one year, according to the **2023 Alight International Workforce and Wellbeing Mindset Study**. That alone should concern employers, as more than half of their workforce is thinking about leaving their current role.

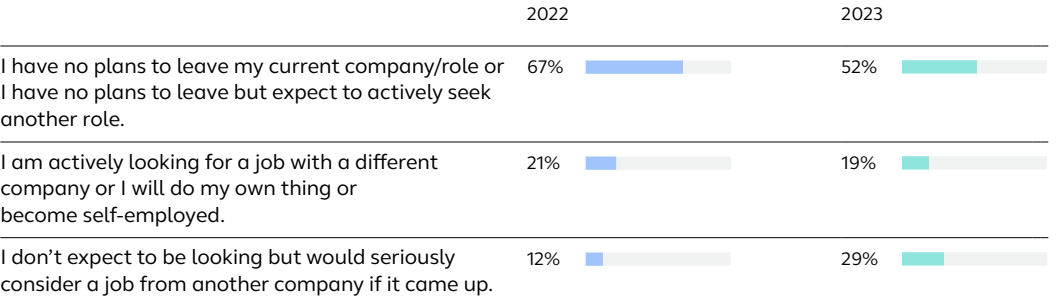


Source: 2023 Alight International Workforce and Wellbeing Mindset Study

Even more worrisome, the number of workers who say they have no plans to leave their current company or role fell precipitously—from 67% in 2022 to 52% in 2023.^{viii} That doesn't necessarily equate to throngs of workers pounding the pavement in search of new opportunities, however. On the contrary, there is a slight decrease in the number of employees saying they are actively looking for a job with a different company or planning to do their own thing or become self-employed.

This trend is more pronounced among younger employees— those workers companies are going to need to recruit, develop and retain to drive future success. Compared to just 19% of the total workforce, more than a quarter (26.5%) of Gen Z and 22.8% of Millennials say they expect to be actively seeking a new opportunity within the next 12 months.^{ix}

Notably, there was a dramatic (142%) increase in the number of employees who don't expect to be looking but would be open to leaving if offered a new job— or potential leavers. This should give every employer pause, as it means they are at risk of losing valued employees who aren't actively looking.



Source: 2023 Alight International Workforce and Wellbeing Mindset Study

Asked why they would consider accepting a job with another company, less than half (45%) cite better pay, while 11% point to better work-life balance. What about the other 44%? What factors would lead an otherwise content employee to seriously entertain a job offer from another employer?

Given the current economic conditions, it's not surprising that concerns over long-term job stability rank near the top. More than one-third (36%) of U.S. employees say they are extremely or moderately concerned about their long-term job stability.^x

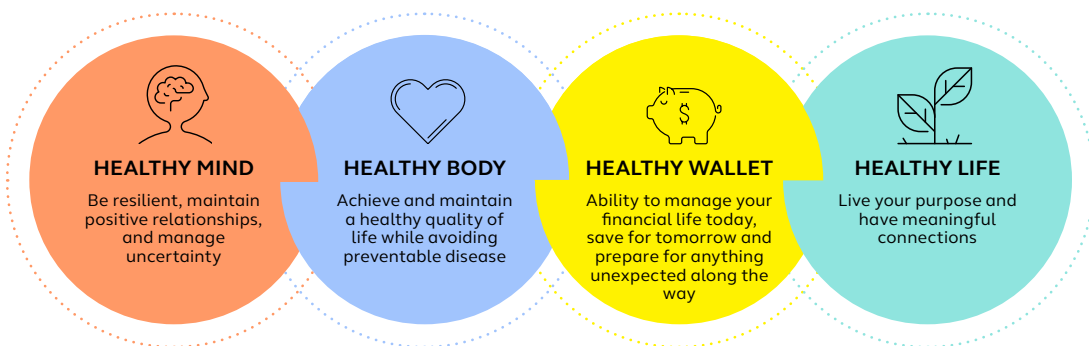
Generationally, Millennials are the most concerned (45%), closely followed by Gen Z at 42%. As might be expected, more than half (55%) of tech workers express serious concerns about job stability. Their trepidation makes complete sense in light of the widespread layoffs which have been plaguing the tech sector, where more than 170,000 people lost their jobs in the first quarter of 2023, compared to 164,000 in all of 2022.^{xi}

With such grave concerns impacting a significant portion of the workforce, it's no wonder many are willing to jump ship if another opportunity comes along.

It could be suggested that many workers are already testing the waters by moonlighting with another employer. More than one-third of employees have taken on a second job, whether that be gig work with companies like Uber, Airbnb or Etsy, independent contracting or a traditional employment arrangement. Nearly eight in 10 (78%) are doing so to ensure financial security and make ends meet amid rising costs and economic uncertainty. Others may be interested in learning whether the grass is greener elsewhere.^{xii}

Whatever their reasons for taking a second job, the added burden will undoubtedly impact an employee's ability to bring energy and focus to their primary role, leading to reduced productivity, increased burnout and an inability to achieve optimal wellbeing across all four pillars: healthy mind, healthy body, healthy wallet and healthy life.

Alight's Wellbeing Framework



Experience matters

Why are some companies full of quiet quitters and loud leavers, while others are bursting at the seams with happy, productive workers? Historically, pay has been the prevailing reason employees look for a new job. According to our 2023 Mindset Study, pay remains paramount, with 45% of those potential leavers saying better pay is the primary reason they would consider leaving for another company. Among those employees who have no intention of leaving their current employer, however, work-life comes out on top as their number one reason for staying put.

Shifting priorities have today's employees looking beyond salary, as they seek a healthy equilibrium between their professional and personal lives. Increasingly, they are seeking flexible working arrangements, such as the freedom to work from home, a choice on which days they come into the office and the option to adapt their working schedule around their personal lives. A commitment to causes, along with a diverse, equitable and inclusive culture are also key to their workplace satisfaction. In other words, it's about the total employee experience.

At its core, employee experience is comprised of a worker's perceptions about the organization where they work. It encompasses every interaction they have with the people, systems and policies of the company, along with the workspace (physical or virtual), culture and technology. Throughout the entirety of the relationship, everything they learn, do, see and feel combines to create their unique, singular employee experience.^{xiii}

Increasingly, employers are focusing on employee experience as a means of improving attraction and retention. However, employee experience influences far more than whether someone stays with the company. It is truly one of the bedrocks of organizational performance. Employee experience – positive or negative – impacts how hard a person works, their willingness to collaborate with colleagues and how personally invested they feel in the company's success.^{xiv}

Organizations that deliver a great employee experience reap the rewards in the form of better productivity, longer tenures, positive energy and excitement and a heightened sense of wellbeing. While 69% of the workforce reports they are able to be fully productive while working, that number soars to 90% for those employees who say they are having a great experience. Likewise, 69% of workers reporting a great experience say they have no plans to leave their current company compared to just over half (52%) of all employees, while 71% are likely to recommend their employer to others. That number falls to 53% among the total U.S. workforce.^{xv}

Indeed, nearly every measure impacting whether an employee is likely to stay with their current employer or leave for a new opportunity is significantly influenced by how they feel about their experience with the company.

Helping employees gain control over stress

	All		If great experience	
I feel connected to the purpose or mission of my company	57%		86%	
There is positive energy and excitement at my company	51%		87%	
I feel like I belong at this company	57%		88%	
My personal values align well with the company's values	55%		85%	

Source: 2023 Alight International Workforce and Wellbeing Mindset Study

Despite the advantages to be gained, just over one-quarter (28%) of U.S. employees rate their experience as great, with 22% rating their experience as good. Half of all U.S. employees characterize their experience as bad or awful. ^{xvi}

Investing in platforms that support employee wellbeing and empower individuals to make smart, confident decisions can make a significant difference from a physical, financial, emotional, social and professional wellbeing perspective. It also makes a difference in terms of employee experience. Seventy-two percent of people having a great employee experience believe their company genuinely cares about their wellbeing, compared to just 8% of those having an awful experience.

It's incumbent upon employers to demonstrate that the organization truly cares about the wellbeing of its people. By aligning with a trusted partner and embracing a tech-enabled solution, powered by AI and supplemented by high-touch decision-support, employers provide their employees access to a broad range of wellbeing resources that power confident decisions and strengthen the employee experience.



How Alight can help

At Alight, we believe employers have no higher calling than to care for the wellbeing of workers and their families. We're leading the wellbeing revolution with Alight Worklife®, a high-tech platform with a human touch, delivering integrated wellbeing solutions and driving better outcomes for organizations and individuals.

Our AI-driven employee experience platform cuts through the noise and empowers your people to interact with their benefits in the moments that matter. Alight Worklife's suite of web-based tools guides employees through their wellbeing journey, allowing them to make more confident decisions, resulting in a happier, healthier, more productive workforce.

- 1 Alight Navigation and Clinical Guidance** resources empower employees to make smart healthcare decisions through expert medical opinions and personalized in-network provider recommendations for highly rated, cost-efficient providers with expertise in a specific diagnosis or procedure.
- 2 Alight Well** engages employees across multiple dimensions of wellbeing through team and individual challenges, incentives, digital therapeutics, gamification and activities. Employees also may connect with other resources for additional live coaching and support, resulting in better health and a greater sense of connectedness.
- 3 Alight Engagement Services** uses omnichannel campaigns and AI-based content, along with personalized decision support tools and interactive media to increase awareness, understanding and utilization of wellbeing programs, drive greater engagement in the moments that matter and power more confident decisions.
- 4 Alight Behavioral Health Guidance** matches each participant with a registered nurse and provides access to a range of clinicians: licensed mental health counselors, licensed social workers, psychiatric nurse practitioners, psychiatric advanced practice registered nurses and psychiatrists who provide a completely confidential, non-judgmental space to ask questions, be vulnerable, talk about their symptoms and understand the options for help.
- 5 The Alight Partner Network** combines content, solutions and delivery services to provide access to trusted providers across all four pillars of wellbeing – mind, body, wallet and life. From caregiver support and earned wage access to assistance with higher education funding and the day-to-day management of musculoskeletal conditions, this holistic offering delivers high-value options that promote employee wellbeing at every stage of life.

In this era of economic uncertainty and rampant discontentment, it is not the time for employers to be complacent. Workers have made it clear they're not satisfied with the experience they are having at their current employer. All signs are pointing to lower engagement and higher activity on the job market, as employees prioritize work-life balance and put their energy into finding new jobs.

Increasingly, employers are recognizing the need to ensure their people are not only engaged and performing but that their culture meets employee expectations, demonstrates that the organization truly cares about their wellbeing and delivers on their need for a sense of purpose. By providing robust tools and resources, organizations empower the workforce to take charge of their wellbeing, make confident decisions in the moments that matter and live their best lives at work and at home.

A great employee experience makes all the difference. Together, we can make it happen.

About Alight

Alight is a leading cloud-based human capital technology and services provider that powers confident health, wealth and wellbeing decisions for 36 million people and dependents. Our Alight Worklife[®] platform combines data and analytics with a simple, seamless user experience. Supported by our global delivery capabilities, Alight Worklife is transforming the employee experience for people around the world. With personalized, data-driven health, wealth, pay and wellbeing insights, Alight brings people the security of better outcomes and peace of mind throughout life's big moments and most important decisions. Learn how Alight unlocks growth for organizations of all sizes at alight.com.

Powering confident decisions, for life.

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ⁱ <https://www.nbc.com/2023/02/01/why-2022-was-the-real-year-of-the-great-resignation.html>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/349484/state-of-the-global-workplace.aspx>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/349484/state-of-the-global-workplace.aspx>

^{iv} <https://hrxecutive.com/the-lazy-girl-jobs-craze-whats-the-takeaway-for-hr/>

^v 2023 Alight International Workforce and Wellbeing Mindset Study

^{vi} 2023 Alight International Workforce and Wellbeing Mindset Study

^{vii} <https://www.goodhire.com/resources/articles/horrible-bosses-survey/>

^{viii} 2023 Alight International Workforce and Wellbeing Mindset Study

^{ix} 2023 Alight International Workforce and Wellbeing Mindset Study

^x 2023 Alight International Workforce and Wellbeing Mindset Study

^{xi} <https://layoffs.fyi/>

^{xii} 2023 Alight International Workforce and Wellbeing Mindset Study

^{xiii} <https://www.qualtrics.com/experience-management/employee/employee-experience/>

^{xiv} <https://www.qualtrics.com/experience-management/employee/employee-experience/>

^{xv} 2023 Alight International Workforce and Wellbeing Mindset Study

^{xvi} 2023 Alight International Workforce and Wellbeing Mindset Study