ADP Research INSTITUTE

## Evolution of Work 2.0:

# The Me vs. We Mindset

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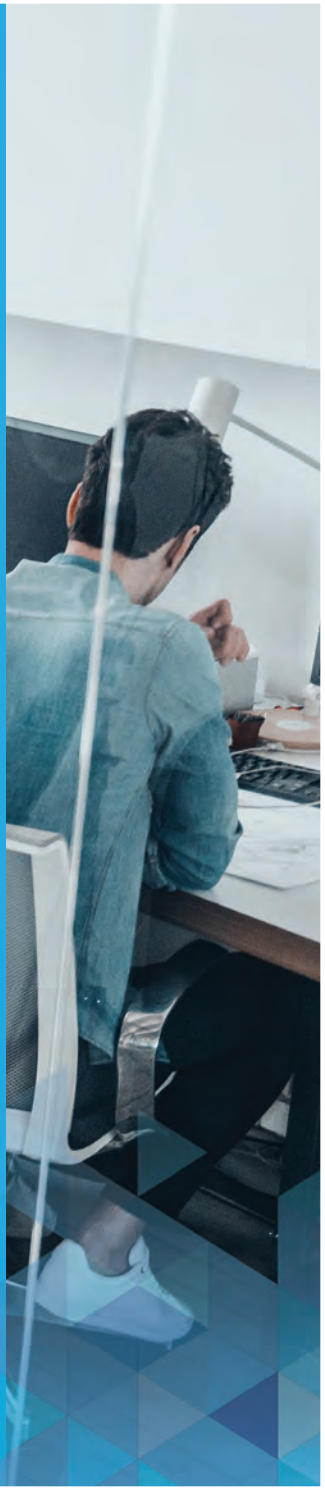


# Contents

# INTRODUCTION

# Two thirds of employees are actively looking, or open to a new job. Yet, employers report a continual struggle to find the right talent for their organizations. What's going on?

In an effort to better understand what workers consider when deciding to stay at their current job or accept a new position, ADP Research Institute® (ADP RI) surveyed employees and employers in 13 countries. The responses highlight a disconnect between workers and their employers around important factors such as talent management, recruitment, retention, and corporate performance.

A majority of employees take pride in their work and have greater loyalty to their companies than employers estimate, the survey reveals. But globalization of business, domestic and world politics, corporate profits and automation erode the confidence that employees feel in their companies and the work they perform. While the continued rise of multinational corporations and a global workforce have led to more efficient and streamlined business practices, they have also created a script to HR policies that risks being too impersonal to attract and retain the best talent.

As ADP RI's original **Evolution of Work** report revealed last year, even as HR departments have embraced the ability to search internationally for top talent, they still struggle to understand workers' needs and ensure that, once hired, employees are managed to make their fullest contributions.[1] Last year, we identified five overarching trends that are driving global workplace transformation: employees' desire for greater choice and flexibility; access to real-time learning; increased autonomy; a sense of stability; and the ability to work on personally meaningful projects. This report expands on that work by measuring how employers and employees rate a variety of talent management efforts. It offers a peek inside the minds of workers and their employers to understand what each group values and what they think they know about each other.

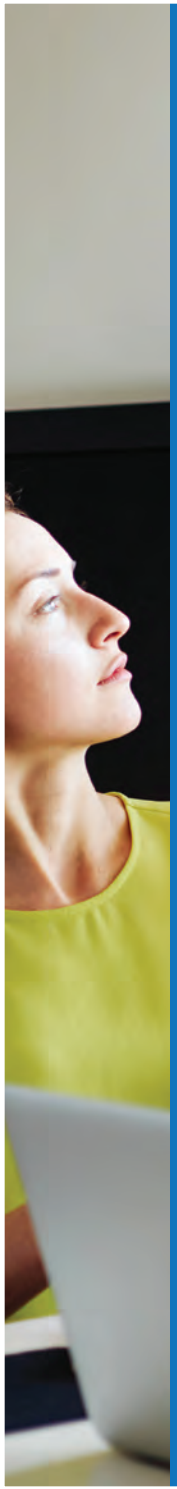
Priorities and attitudes vary among different regions of the globe, but it's safe to say the heart of the disconnect among employers and employees is the micro/macro view: employees concentrate on the day-to-day—what's important for them today, and will impact them at work. Employers focus on the bigger picture and long term view—what's the health of the business and how well developed is long-term career pathing?

The "we" perspective leads employers to neglect the importance of day-to-day experiences for workers. Although employers recognize that performance management and career planning will be the top drivers of talent management in the future, employees remain wary about the meaningfulness and fairness of these initiatives. Companies that can bridge this disconnect between management and employee expectations—and are able to understand and address the nuances of different attitudes by region/country—will be better positioned in an increasingly competitive era to recruit and retain global talent. This report is a wakeup call to HR professionals to not just follow your company's talent management policies, but also innovate and tailor them in a way that humanizes the overall experience for the larger good of the business.

[1] https://www.adp.com/tools-and-resources/adp-research-institute/research-and-trends/research-item-detail.aspx?id=DF55E8A7-906A-4E81-A941-E886886BC9B2

# Methodology

An online survey was conducted among 5,330 employees and 3,218 employers across 13 countries in companies with 50+ employees. Countries surveyed include: U.S., Canada, Mexico, Brazil, Chile, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Netherlands, Australia, China, India and Singapore. Data was weighted by country based on size of the workforce. Employee data was also weighted by age and gender based on their representation in the individual country's workforce.



# STUDY FINDINGS FRAME A CALL TO ACTION FOR HR

# Of interest to HR professionals are both the snapshot of sentiments across the 13 countries and what it suggests for the way forward.

ADP RI's surveys reveal a workforce generally satisfied with the work it performs, but skittish about its job security and advancement due to domestic and global market demands, rising healthcare costs, pressure for greater corporate profits, automation, and the domestic/global political climate.

The level of company engagement or movement varies by region and country. North American and European employees, for example, tend to stay at their job the longest but exhibit some of the lowest feelings of satisfaction and being valued, compared with Latin American workers who move slightly more for career advancement, but express stronger feelings of satisfaction and value.

Across all measures involving talent management, though, there is a consistent gap between how employers rate themselves and how employees regard their companies' efforts, with the widest divide around career planning—a key need for the global workforce. Delving into the figures, the data suggests that change is unlikely to come about organically from either employers or employees. Rather, HR professionals can take an interventionist role to effect change. The importance of HR's role becomes clearest in the findings on three main thematic areas: **Openness and Transition; Creating Meaning, Human Connections and Advancement**; and **Attraction, Retention and Attrition**.

## 1. Openness & Transition

When it comes to the employer/employee relationship, there are some off-base assumptions around loyalty and job security, who's looking for a new job—and who should be looking. Despite perceptions that corporate loyalty has declined over the past decades, it is in fact one of the strongest emotions workers feel.

However, such loyalty doesn't stop employees from being open to new possibilities. Perhaps that's because 56% of employees globally feel there is "no such thing as job security today." This indicates that while employees may be grateful for the jobs they have, even dedicated workers remain on the lookout for fresh opportunities to work in ways that better suit their personal "me" needs.

Employees and employers appear stuck in a perpetual dating game where even those employees who say they are committed (meaning loyal) or in long-term relationships (tenure at a job) are constantly on the lookout for something better. For some, like employees in France, this translates into sticking it out but not necessarily being happy or committed: French employees surveyed have been at their current jobs for an average of 10.2 years—the highest of 13 countries surveyed. But only 56% express feelings of loyalty (ranking in the bottom 4 of the 13 countries surveyed), and 48% are actively looking or would consider a new company if contacted.

By contrast, Chilean employees have the shortest average tenure of the 13 countries surveyed, with 6.2 years. Nearly 75% of those employees say they feel loyal to their current jobs, but 69% also admit to looking or being open to moving to a new company. Even in India—where 81% of employees express loyalty to their company, and workers have been at their jobs for an average of 7.3 years—80% are looking or would consider moving to a new company.

# Employers are not exactly shocked about their employees' wandering eye.

Employers are fully aware that their employees are looking or would move to another company if contacted. But they underestimate the number of employees actually doing so: even among those employees who said they were not "actively" looking, 42% in the 13 countries said they were open to the idea. Employers predicted only 21% of their workforce would feel this way. (Globally, 66% of employees are actively looking or open to a job move, employers predicted 58% of its workforce is doing so).

| | | AVG. #OF YEARS @ JOB | % FEELING LOYAL | % ACTIVELY LOOKING | % PASSIVELY LOOKING |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Asia Pacific | Australia | 7.4 years | 49% | 27% | 47% |
| | China | 9.3 years | 64% | 20% | 38% |
| | Singapore | 7.2 years | 32% | 28% | 49% |
| | India | 7.3 years | 81% | 34% | 46% |
| Europe | UK | 8.2 years | 48% | 24% | 46% |
| | France | 10.2 years | 56% | 15% | 33% |
| | Germany | 9 years | 67% | 23% | 35% |
| | Netherlands | 8.3 years | 63% | 27% | 37% |
| Latin America | Brazil | 7.2 years | 72% | 19% | 42% |
| | Chile | 6.2 years | 75% | 20% | 49% |
| | Mexico | 7.2 years | 79% | 26% | 49% |
| North America | US | 7.5 years | 59% | 17% | 46% |
| | Canada | 7.5 years | 57% | 20% | 43% |

# What's more, in a contradiction of sorts, employers give themselves high marks for managing talent.

However, in 10 of the 13 countries surveyed, more employers than employees say you have to leave a company for career advancement and higher income. It seems employers, too, have a wandering eye—verbally saying they are committed to the future of their employees, but keeping their options open for "better" outside candidates. This idea of "shopping around" for better talent may supposedly be "good for business," but erodes trust on both sides of the HR table.

China, Mexico and Brazil are the only countries where fewer employers than employees believe that career advancement and pay raises typically require an employee to move to a new company. But only in China does this employer belief translate into small career management gains for employees. When compared with other countries in our survey, China has the fewest and smallest gaps between employer and employees around talent management drivers such as compensation management, training, onboarding, and succession planning.

Employers also overestimate social media's role in influencing employees to move companies. In all 13 countries surveyed, more employers than employees agreed with the statement that the more you see job opportunities in social media, the more you think about looking for a new job. And, they have an inflated idea of how often their workers hear about new opportunities at their own companies. While there may seem to be greater channels for identifying new opportunities, employees don't feel as if they have as much access to those—especially not to the extent that their employers believe.

Across the board, employees say they hear about new job opportunities at their companies in far smaller rates than their employers. This is particularly true in France where 68% percent of employers surveyed say their employees hear about new job postings at their company. But only 29% of French employees surveyed actually say they hear about fresh opportunities internally.

## 2. Creating Meaning, Human Connections & Advancement

Whether they're looking elsewhere or not, a majority of employees desire to be an integral part of their organization. Overall 82% of those surveyed globally say they want to play an important role in their company. But this doesn't seem to match how employees feel about their workplace. Employees may have a hard time understanding their importance and how they make a difference, in part, because business tends to view a job as a simple transaction of money for labor. Yet, sociological research shows that work is also about a sense of purpose and identity.[2]

Employers misunderstand the extent to which employees feel valued or recognized for the work they perform. In all 13 countries, more employees feel undervalued than what employers believe. However, the gap between employer perception and employee feelings is particularly significant in France, Australia, Mexico and Brazil. In China, Chile and the U.S., fewer percentages of workers feel undervalued but still more so than employers believe.

That's not to say that feeling undervalued diminishes workers' beliefs that their work has meaning. More than 60% of workers surveyed feel a sense of purpose in their jobs. But employers, yet again, overestimate the degree to which this is true. This is particularly true in Europe where 56% of employees feel purposeful; their employers think 68% of employees feel their jobs have a purpose.

[2] https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/17/upshot/what-if-sociologists-had-as-much-influence-as-economists.html?mwrsm=Facebook&_r=1

## Even in countries where the percentage of employees express a high level of purpose, such as India (73%) and Mexico (69%), the percentage of employers who think so is even higher: 88% of employers in India and 74% in Mexico.

Overall job satisfaction for employees is also directly correlated with how useful and connected they feel—and whether they have the ability to provide feedback that will make a difference. Work relationships are a key factor in how satisfied or not employees feel. And, while a majority of employees feel most connected to their immediate peers, it's interesting to note that fewer feel the same way about their direct managers, senior management and company leadership. These feelings of connectedness vary among those actively looking for a job versus those who are not: for example, 45% of employees who are not looking feel connected to their company's senior management, compared with 34% of those who are actively job hunting.

Even the relationship with direct managers can be strengthened: in every country except India, less than half of all employees surveyed feel connected to their direct managers. In fact, India is the only country where employees feel just as connected to their direct managers as to immediate peers. Here is an instance where what might be assumed to be a close, organic connection has not spontaneously developed. HR executives may want to consider additional options of strengthening the bonds between employees and their supervisors.

The disconnect between employers and employees continues in how differently each views performance management and career planning.

While employees want personal direct connection, employers want to see the ROI, measure performance, and have predictable career progression through stable hierarchies. Employees, though, are skeptical about whether these processes are meaningful and fair. In fact, these efforts may come across to employees as more generic and perfunctory than personal and meaningful. In the U.S., career planning isn't even a top driver for talent management. This may speak more to the lingering mood of business conditions: while companies may have bounced back financially from recessionary times, employees continue to have feelings of helplessness about their own futures in an ever-changing workplace.

While employers think they are doing an admirable job at managing talent, their current and prospective employees are less impressed by such efforts. Only about one-third of U.S. employees give their companies high marks on career performance, compensation or learning management, onboarding and succession planning and recruitment strategies—similar to workers in Singapore, Chile and France. Less than one-third of French workers express confidence in their companies around all aspects of talent management.

Employees and employers believe that talent should be protected and nurtured much like financial performance (84% of all employees surveyed and 90% of employers), but they differ on how well this is being done within their own companies.

# Talent Management Outlook Around the Globe

## Europe

Less than half of all European employees rate their employers highly on talent management. In fact, training and orientation of new employees is the only bright spot, specifically in Germany and the Netherlands. More employees in the U.K and the Netherlands say their companies do a strong job on career development, performance reviews, and recruitment. But barely a third of French employees give their employers high marks on any talent management efforts.

## North America

Like France, few U.S. employees rate their employers as strong talent managers. U.S. employees give the highest marks to their employers on training (38%) and orientation (39%), while their Canadian counterparts rate their employers significantly higher (similar those in the Netherlands).

## Latin America

At least half of employees in Brazil and Mexico give their employers strong marks on ROI drivers such as career planning, recruitment, training and onboarding. Among the three Latin American countries surveyed, Chilean employees rate their employers the lowest across all talent management measures. Less than one-third of Chilean employees rate their employers as strong on recruitment, compensation management, and succession planning.

## APAC

More than half of Indian and Chinese employees say their companies are strong on talent management. Employees in Singapore give similar marks to employers as those in the U.S. and France, while responses from Australian employees are more akin to employees in the U.K.

# Despite employees' misgivings about their employers as talent managers, a majority of workers in all 13 countries say they feel empowered to excel in their job today.

They also know how to be successful at their companies. Latin American employees feel the most empowered to excel in their jobs today, followed by India and China. Even a majority of French employees (69%)—arguably the most skeptical of those surveyed in all 13 countries—feel they can excel in their positions.

Taken together as a whole, the widespread sense of disconnect from direct managers, low ratings for employee talent management, and sense of empowerment paint a picture in which employees feel they succeed either independently from, or perhaps even in spite of, their employers' talent management. Employees feel undervalued and under-recognized, but still believe strongly in their own abilities to excel and be successful on the job. It's clear that employees believe in themselves, but don't think their employers believe strongly in them. Given this, a first step for HR professionals to motivate workers may be to approach employees on their own terms: focusing on employees' individual positive attributes and strengths—and how they contribute to the overall team—rather than on broad, generic or sanitized measures of productivity that eliminate a personal approach to talent management.

That kind of personally-tailored specificity might also help address another key challenge: Workers remain skeptical that they have a clear and fair path for advancement, especially in the U.S., Australia, Singapore and Europe. In fact, employers are more likely than employees to say workers can make a difference and have more flexibility in shaping their careers. Given these attitudes, it's possible that employees expect more help from employers to manage their careers than employers realize. HR professionals should look for ways to strengthen employer/employee relationships by abandoning a one size fits all approach to managing talent. While such blanket practices may be easier to manage for multinational companies, it has the potential to de-humanize the actual work experience. Tailoring talent management to the needs of the local/regional workforce may result in more satisfied employees. Given that the status quo on career planning is less than satisfactory for most employees, it's also worth thinking outside-the box on what an enhanced, consultative role for HR professionals might look like on this front. Asking employees to quantify and detail the attributes and strengths that they feel make them successful in their current roles, soliciting their ideas on future roles they'd like to pursue and perhaps discussing these ideas in the context of broader industry career trends can help build feelings of individual attentiveness and connection that are currently lacking.

# Employers and employees are sometimes on different wavelengths when it comes to factors that influence job selection/movement.

## 3. Attraction, Retention & Attrition

In the search for global employees, it's crucial that companies understand what current and prospective employees want in their jobs/opportunities.

For employees, there is a push-pull when it comes to reasons to stay or leave a job. The reasons to stay (the day-to day environment and work itself) are not the same as reasons to leave (relationships with direct manager, corporate health). Employees may like the actual jobs they are doing—enough that they want to stay. But the lack of personal connection with supervisors may be a final straw in whether they leave: 46% of employees globally would consider a job that offered the same wages they receive today, or slightly less.

Conversely, employees may choose not to move companies if the pay, benefits, actual job or career advancement opportunities are not noticeably better than their present employer. It may be useful for employers/HR executives to differentiate their companies from competitors when wooing talent—similar to how companies use segmented marketing strategies to attract specific customers.

In every country except India, Netherlands, U.S., and the U.K., employers underestimate the percentage increase in salary it would take to prompt an employee to change jobs. The biggest gap is in Latin America where employees will consider moving for a 19% rate, while employers think it's 16%. Employees look for jobs within their knowledge areas, industries and location. And, on average are willing to switch jobs for a 16% raise. Latin American workers and some in the Asian Pacific countries, in particular, are most prone to job hopping. In these regions employees are loyal to their jobs but move for additional experience and greater career advancement (instead of salary alone).

When considering staying at a job or moving to a new one, employees consider similar factors: the day-to-day environment and the work itself. Employees focus on work hours, the work itself, flexibility and career advancement when looking for a job. Employers, however, tend to think that the company's financial performance and reputation are key to employees' consideration—more so than in actuality.

In 11 of the 13 countries surveyed, work hours is one of the top three factors in job selection. In 10 of 13 countries, the work itself ranks as one of the top three factors. Career development ranks as a top three factor in job selection for employees in France, China, India and all three Latin American countries: Brazil, Chile and Mexico.

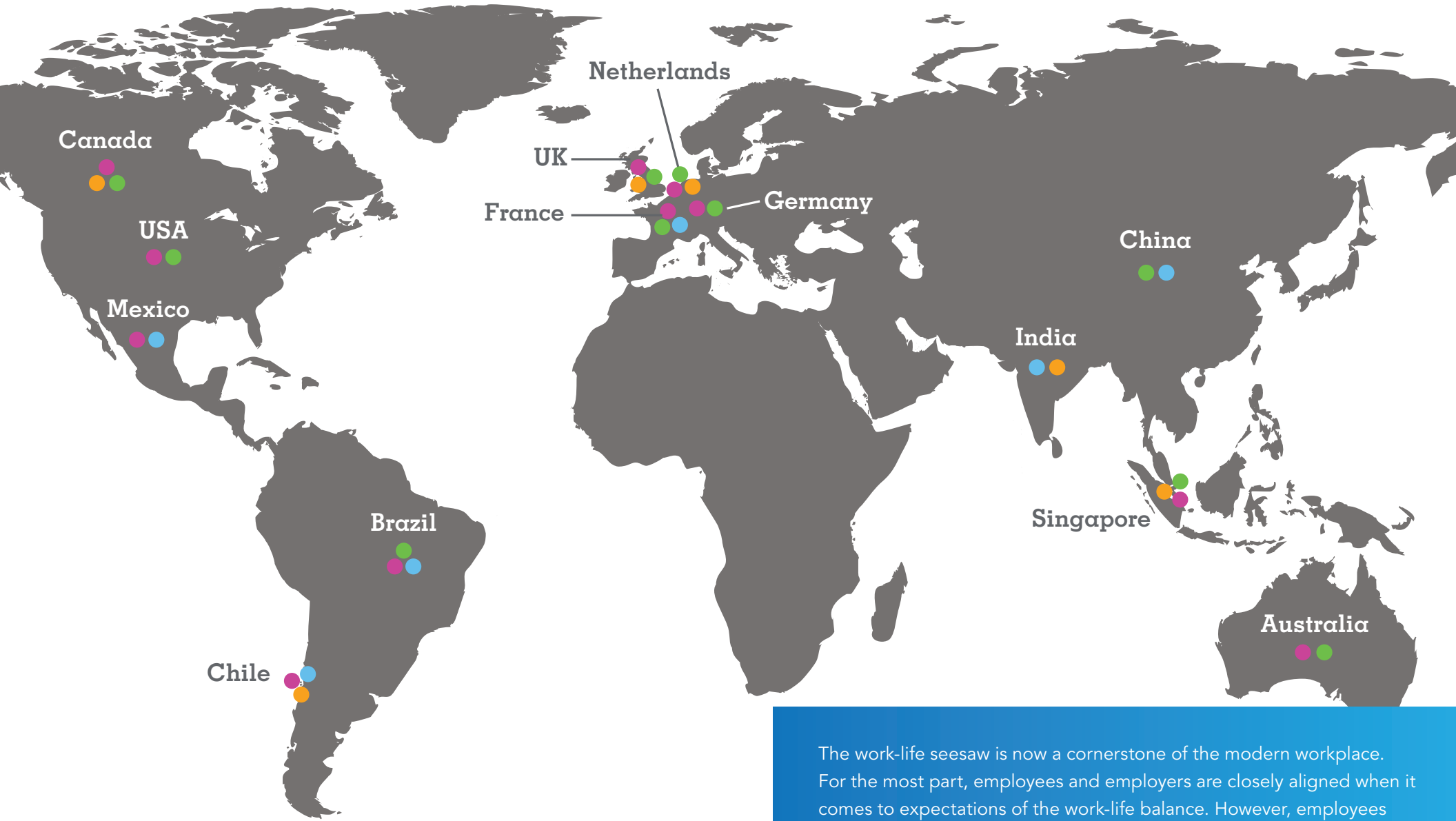
While career development and benefits are important factors in job selection, employers *overestimate* its significance and *underestimate* the importance of work itself, hours, time off, relationship with direct manager. To be sure, career development is important, and employers generally understand the top factors in attracting employees, but focusing even more on day-to-day of the job and work-life balance will help better capture talent, as will fostering trust and meaningful processes around career development. The lesson for employers is to deliver on their initial promises to their workers or risk losing them: A whopping 60% of employees said they have left a job if it did not live up to initial expectations.

Countries where work hours rank in top three factors of job selection for employees

Countries where the work itself ranks in the top three factors of job selection

Countries where career development ranks in the top three factors of job selection for employees

Countries where a flexible schedule ranks in the top three factors of job selection for employees




The work-life seesaw is now a cornerstone of the modern workplace. For the most part, employees and employers are closely aligned when it comes to expectations of the work-life balance. However, employees expect to be able to disconnect more from work than they actually do. The desire for more balance is a universal one among employees.

# NEW HORIZONS & POSSIBILITIES: MILLENNIALS, STEM, MANUFACTURING IN THE U.S.

# Any report on the future of the global workforce wouldn't be complete without the mention of Millennials, STEM workers and the changing manufacturing sector in the U.S.

The historic U.S. election urgently raised the stakes of understanding the future of work—in particular, the fate of manufacturing in the U.S.

The place of Millennials, too, was a recurring theme in campaign rhetoric and post-campaign analysis. This data would be of interest for these reasons alone, but is also of interest given that the U.S.' global footprint means that the workforce trends will be eagerly watched and parsed elsewhere.

Examining trends affecting these groups, once taken in tandem with STEM data, reveal interesting parallels that suggest possible ways forward for labor markets. They also provide HR professionals with some surprising insights to consider as these groups become more firmly established in workforce planning in the long run.

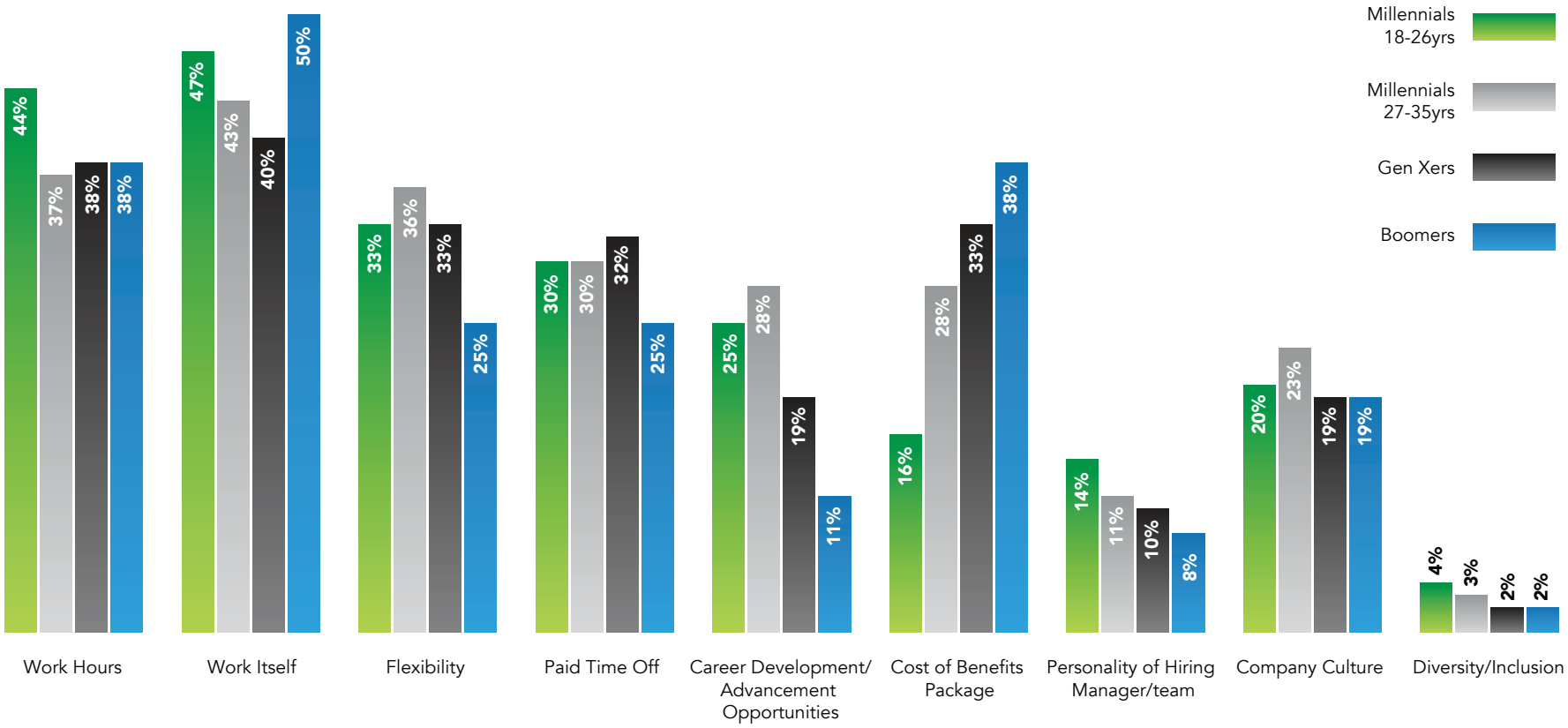
### Millennials: Shifting attitudes as they age

Millennials' tech savvy and inclination toward shared experiences makes them truly the first global generation. In the U.S. this younger demographic is not only the largest generation in history, but also the largest in the workforce today.[3]

As the most educated generation to date, Millennials pose an exciting opportunity for employers. Although it's easy to characterize them into one large group, it's important to remember that according to the U.S. Census Bureau, they number more than 80 million. While Millennials as a group say they place a greater value on company culture, career development and diversity, they—like their older counterparts—place greater value on work itself, work hours and flexible schedules when considering a job. Furthermore, ADP RI's survey indicates that older Millennials (age 27 to 35) often have more in common with Gen Xers than their younger selves (age 18 to 26). For example, while younger Millennials are more focused on minimum wage, older ones are more worried about cost of healthcare.

[3] http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/05/11/millennials-surpass-gen-xers-as-the-largest-generation-in-u-s-labor-force/

## Top employment retention factors such as work hours and flexibility are shared across generations.



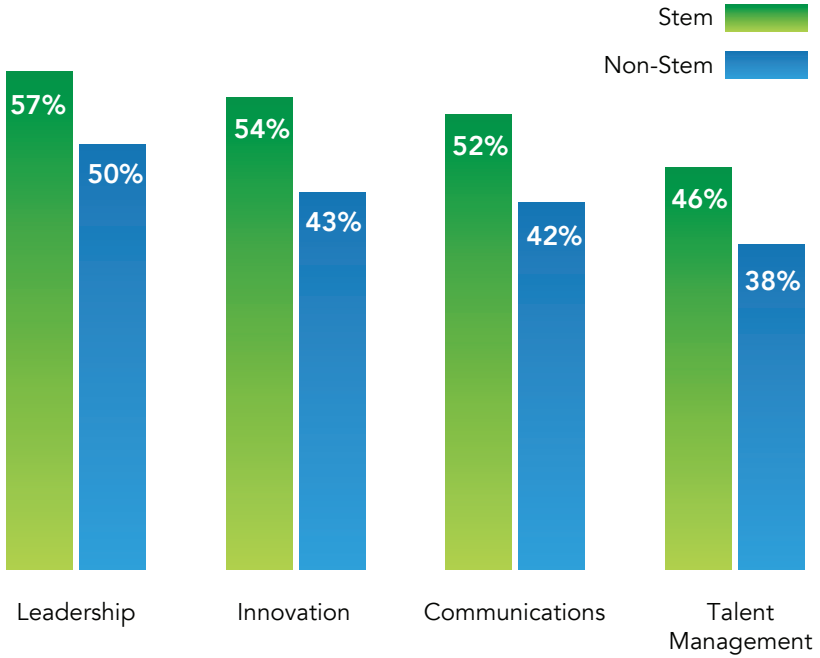

When moving jobs, Millennials leave for many of the same reasons as their older peers: poor direct manager relationship, followed closely by lack of career development and advancement. And, not surprisingly, during the interview process, in-person communication is overwhelmingly preferred by all generations. But the second preferred method of communication varies even among Millennials, possibly signaling a shift in communication and technology styles. Email, specifically has lost its appeal with the youngest of the younger generation: only 37% of Millennials aged 18 to 26 prefer to use it during the interview process, compared with 49% of older Millennials.

What does this all mean for HR professionals? Millennials remain a hot and trendy demographic group for corporations. But this group should not be judged as one large pack. It's important to regularly take the pulse of your own workforce and recognize that different stages of life bring different concerns for employees.

# STEM: Confident and in high demand

Overall, STEM workers feel more accomplished, motivated, valued, satisfied and recognized at work. They are more positive than non-STEM that future workers will have greater flexibility to tailor and shape their professional lives. They are also more likely to have greater confidence in a company's performance management process, and are hopeful they will have an opportunity to advance and play a significant role. In fact, STEM workers—a cohort that is slightly younger and more male than non-STEM—rate their companies more highly on leadership, innovation, communications, and talent management (though talent is still their lowest ranked metric).

## STEM workers rate their companies higher on the following attributes.



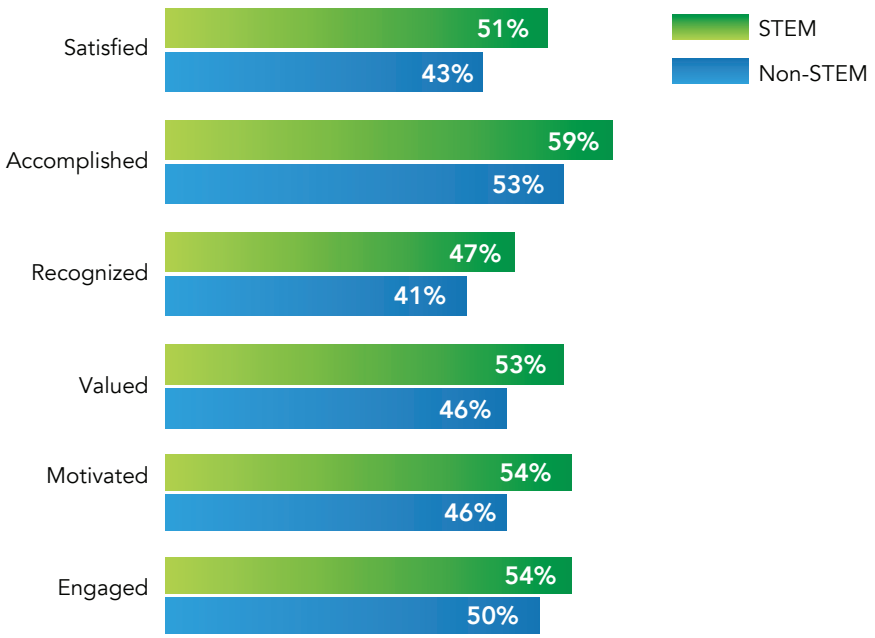
# Yet, while STEM workers express more positive attitudes about the companies they work for, it doesn't mean that they are not looking.

In fact, STEM employees are slightly more likely to be open to a job move than non-STEM. They are more likely to agree with sentiments about job hopping, including that one should always be looking, that you need to leave to advance/make more money and being aware of opportunities. This population also has greater overall confidence in its abilities: when applying, STEM workers are more likely to "reach" for jobs that require more experience than they possess.

Like other workers, the work itself is the top driver of job consideration. STEM workers are more likely to seek opportunities that offer flexibility and advancement; non-STEM workers are relatively more concerned with hours and benefits cost. STEM want unlimited vacation as much as other workers; they are more motivated than others to stay if offered telecommuting or paid parental leave.

For STEM workers, the disconnect between employees and employers seems to not be as wide as in the general population. STEM workers are more confident and have faith in the corporate process around talent management. But this does not mean that STEM workers are any more loyal. In fact, given the confidence in their abilities, these employees are much more ambitious—not only looking for jobs, but also the types of positions they pursue. And, although the work itself is of great significance, so is the ability for telecommuting and flexibility. STEM workers are in demand. And, as such are comfortable they can find an equivalent job to the one they have now, with potentially better flexibility.

## STEM workers are slightly less loyal than their non-STEM counterparts, but express much more satisfaction, accomplishment, recognition, purpose, value, motivation and engagement in their jobs.



# Manufacturing: A critical sector undergoing change

In both the developing and developed world, manufacturing remains a key to economic growth. But the sector has changed dramatically due to automation and productivity gains. And, manufacturing today is not just about production; it has begun to encompass some services.[4] One of the biggest concerns for manufacturers remains education and training, as manufacturing becomes more highly skilled. Though this report did not touch on manufacturing specifically, questions about the future of manufacturing raised in the 2016 U.S. election beckon re-considering the data in a new light. As of December 2016, there were 325,000 job openings in manufacturing, more than double the amount in 2009.[5] Among other factors, a lack of skills in advanced manufacturing might be a cause.

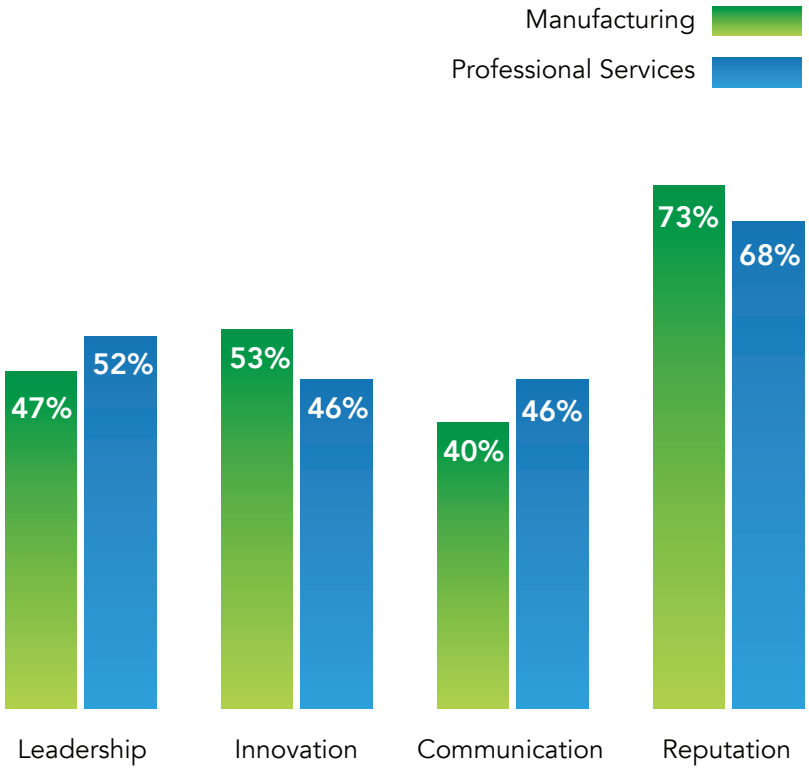
Manufacturing employees are older than those in every other industry, with an average age of 47. Some 45% are Boomers and 59% are male. Nearly all are full time workers (97%), much more so than almost all other industries. The need for succession planning is even greater here, as this massive Boomer generation heads into retirement. Although a percentage may still choose to work past retirement years, this shouldn't postpone discussions and planning on how their successors or automation may fill some employment gaps. What's more, the career development road map is even bleaker for manufacturing employees than their professional services counterparts. Nearly 70% of manufacturing employees surveyed do not believe in job security; 35% don't see a clear career development road map.

Relative to workers in other industries, manufacturing employees are more worried about trade initiatives such as NAFTA or TPP, and equally concerned as others about globalization, immigration and automation. They are also least likely to be actively looking for a new job, and least likely to consider a new job in their current industry. Whereas a company's financial performance matters more than other groups (and is a reason to leave), their work hours are less important.

[4] http://www.economist.com/blogs/schumpeter/2013/10/manufacturing

[5] https://data.bls.gov/timeseries/JTU30000000JOL?amp%253bdata_tool=XGtable&output_view=data&include_graphs=true

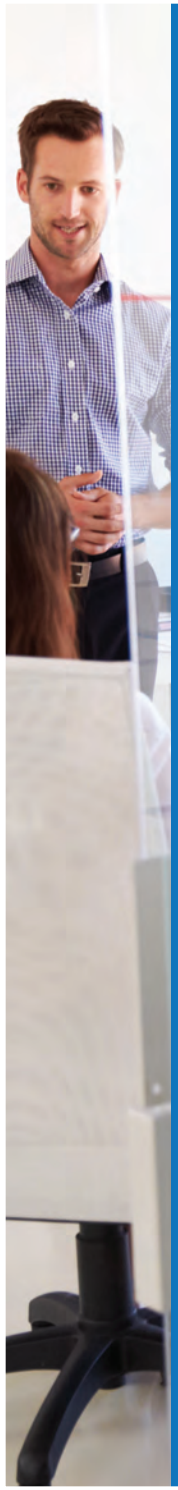
## Manufacturing employees rate their companies higher on innovation, but lower on leadership. Percentage of employees rating their company strong on the following attributes:




As the low skill, low wage jobs of manufacturing are moving away, they are being replaced by high-skill, high-wage positions. The STEM findings of this report suggest an enticing portrait of a sense of fulfillment and optimism that such technically skilled workers might enjoy. But the question remains: Who will take the lead on training these employees?

The World Economic Forum suggests the key to closing this skills gap is a public-private partnership where the education system provides industry-based training, combined with on-the-job learning which would align and elevate manufacturing education with industry standards.[6]

[6] https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/07/how-manufacturing-can-shape-our-future/



# CONCLUSION

# The ways in which employers and employees find each other has changed dramatically thanks to technology.

Job placement ads, resumes and the initial interview can all be done electronically—a benefit that has allowed for greater efficiency. Multinational corporations and a global workforce have allowed an unprecedented speed to doing business. But as this ADP RI survey reveals, technological efficiencies alone do not help engender a workforce that feels valued, recognized, supported or secure. Neither does one global umbrella for managing talent. The executive mantra typically calls for doing what's "best for the bottom line." Making employees feel less disposable and more appreciated also has great potential for the bottom line. Taking this "more human" approach may not end the perpetual dating game for employers and employees, but it can lead to happier, mutually-beneficial, and long-lasting relationships.

Additionally, employers should work towards closing the gap between them and their employees when it comes to future planning. Creating trust seems to be key. Employers should think about taking a leadership role in advising on future opportunities, given that employees themselves are less optimistic and feel less empowered to make change.

STEM jobs show a bright spot of optimism in the labor market. This poses interesting questions, where positions for advanced manufacturing have expanded but skills lack. Given the automation and productivity gains, specifically in the manufacturing sector, employers may do well to provide training or partner with institutions that can train potential employees with the skills they will need.

Employees place greater importance on personal connections as an aspect of retention than do employers. Yet, having a sense of connection at work relates to job satisfaction, with employees with high satisfaction also reporting the greatest degree of connections to others at work. There are clear reasons for employers to generate more satisfaction in the workplace: satisfied workers rate their companies higher on all areas of talent management: 74% of satisfied workers give strong ratings for talent management compared with 29% of dissatisfied employees.

Corporate dogma and financial strength does not necessarily have to come from creating a culture of detachment and fear. Even in these ever-changing and unpredictable times, corporate leadership can harness the true potential of its workforce by deepening the personal connection rather than ignoring it.

Perhaps it's time to change the familiar refrain: "It's business, not personal" and challenge corporate leadership to make business personal. It may not initially resonate with everyone. But it's a first step in shifting the collective corporate consciousness towards more contentedness.

Satisfied workers give about 40 points higher ratings across individual aspects of talent management, especially onboarding, performance reviews, training, and career planning. Such workers are also less likely to have experienced restructuring and layoffs in the past year. And, if not obvious enough, satisfaction correlates with all other sentiments at work such as being motivated, valued, full of purpose with a clear and fair path to advance. In an era of continued modernization and technological advancement, the human connection, it seems, is as powerful as ever.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