

A guide to people-first workplaces

How to attract and keep
talent in today's market



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Salo

FORWARD

Running a business is increasingly complex and unpredictable. Traditional wisdom tells you to concentrate on products and profit but, in today's world, there are so many other priorities—from health crises and technology transformation to sustainability and social responsibility. It's hard to know where to focus first. Organizations need to be agile, innovative, authentic, and fiscally successful. But how?

FOCUS ON PEOPLE

It's a deceptively simple idea. When you focus on serving people—your customers, employees, and community—your focus shifts from “How can the business succeed?” to “How can people benefit?”

With a sense of people-fueled purpose:

- **Prioritization is easier:** You do the work that makes the biggest difference.
- **Agility is the default:** Instead of fixating on specific solutions, you're fixated on human needs.
- **Culture is creative:** It's an evolving constructive conversation between leadership and employees at every level.
- **Authenticity is obvious:** When you're serving the common good, it's easy to be transparent.

And the best part? The financial success follows. Organizations that empower talent have improved creativity, increased employee motivation, more trust in leadership, and are up to 21 percent more profitable¹. Organizations that don't evolve will be left behind. There's no longer a choice between people, productivity, and profitability. Instead, satisfied, fulfilled talent resources are the key to productivity and profitability.

INTRODUCING SALO'S PEOPLE-FIRST WORKPLACE MODEL

The model outlined in this report is intended to help organizations understand what it takes to truly put people first. We'll dive into nine key components that organizations need to create an environment that attracts top talent and entices people to stay.

IT'S TIME TO BE BOLD

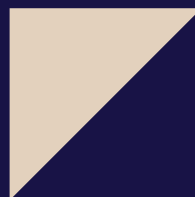
People-first work isn't a trend or an anomaly. It's here to stay. And the best part is: it's good for all of us. It leads to better business outcomes, better work-life balance, and more fulfilling careers.





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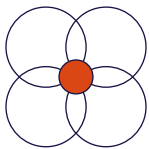


Salo's people-first workplace model: An overview

Salo's proprietary model is designed to help organizations create people-first workplaces where talent and businesses thrive. It gets to the heart of what it takes to create meaningful work experiences—which, in turn, creates business results.

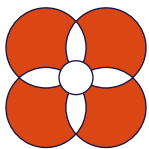
In this guide, we'll examine the nine key characteristics of a people-first workplace and how to advance each one in your organization. The characteristics are connected and interdependent. They overlap and build upon each other.

The nine characteristics are:



PURPOSE: THE CENTER OF IT ALL

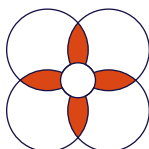
The foundation of this model is purpose: a persuasive reason why the organization (and each person's work) makes a difference in the world.



FOUR TALENT DRIVERS

Set up talent for success and satisfaction on the job by providing these foundational elements:

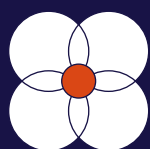
- **Empowerment:** The flexibility for people to make decisions and choices about their work within clear guidelines.
- **Vision:** An exciting future the organization wants to build and each person's role in getting there.
- **Community:** Supportive, diverse colleagues that work together and learn from each other.
- **Engagement:** Satisfying work that keeps people learning and growing.



FOUR TALENT CATALYSTS

Inspire people to do their best work by creating an environment that emphasizes these cultural factors:

- **Optimism:** Confidence in future success (and the tools to get there).
- **Diversity:** Exposure to people with different backgrounds/points of view and a variety of teams/tasks.
- **Recognition:** An environment where people feel heard, rewarded, and valued as an important part of the team.
- **Safety:** The psychological safety to make decisions and choices without retribution.

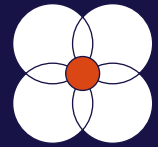


Purpose

Making work purposeful makes work meaningful

Purpose

Making work purposeful makes work meaningful



Purpose is the anchor—or core—of any people-centered model. It, literally, puts people at the center by answering questions such as:

- What primary human need does the organization exist to fulfill?
- What difference do we strive to make for others in the world?
- If our work isn't done, who suffers?

Purpose challenges the organization to go beyond thinking about “What are we good at?” and start thinking about “What good can we do?” Purpose isn't bound by limits of the organization; it provides license to break through them.

PURPOSE IS AN ACTION

Purpose-driven companies have employees that are four times more engaged than other organizations². That's because a compelling purpose is both aspirational and immediately active. It gives employees the meaning they crave and inspires innovation around:

- How many different ways can we think of to fulfill that primary human need?
- What can we do today and how can do even better tomorrow?
- What can I do, in my role, to contribute?

In concert with your vision, purpose sparks innovation, increases resilience, and keeps your team motivated.

PURPOSE NEEDS TO BE LIVED DAILY

Purpose can't be an exercise done once and put on a plaque on the wall. It needs to be infused into every decision the organization makes. To become truly purpose-driven, you need to walk the talk by:

- Allocating resources with purpose in mind
- Hiring people who share the organization's values
- Being accountable to employees and people you serve
- Keeping up with trends and pain points for the people the company serves
- Creating clear qualitative and quantitative metrics around purpose
- Updating (or replacing) key processes and product lines
- Developing new partnerships and new business models

SALO LINKEDIN POLL

How important are company purpose and values to your job satisfaction?



Based on 73 responses





ARE WE MAKING A DIFFERENCE?

“ Especially coming out of 2020—where people took a closer look at how they were spending their time—employees want to work for companies that don’t just define their brand’s ‘purpose’ but take real ‘brand actions.’ Companies need to ask themselves, ‘How are we making a difference beyond just selling things?’

— Amanda Brinkman, chief brand officer, Deluxe
Creator and host of Deluxe’s *Small Business Revolution* series

THE KEY TO MEANINGFUL WORK

With purpose, work becomes more than getting paid or making a profit: it becomes a legacy. A purpose unifies your organization behind the common good and common goals—making everyday work more meaningful and rewarding.

HOW TO GET STARTED

- _____ **Review (or identify) your purpose.** Ask: Does your purpose focus on who you serve and their primary needs? Is the purpose compelling enough to inspire employees to act?
- _____ **Encourage employees to get to know the people you serve.** Whether they meet your target customers face-to-face or through user research/stories, find ways for every employee to feel connected.
- _____ **Connect employees’ work to the purpose.** Work with employees to draw direct lines between the work they do and the contributions they make to the organization and the people the organization serves.





The 4 Talent Drivers

Set talent up for success

Empowerment

Want employees to trust you? Trust them.



In today's competitive talent market, top candidates want a say on a wide variety of issues—from where and when they work to what kind of work they do and who they do it with. But an empowered workforce is more than a good talent acquisition and retention strategy; it's critical to advancing your business. Empowered employees are more innovative, nimble, confident, collaborative, and 67 percent more willing to put in extra effort on the job³. It's a win-win situation.

The question is: How do you empower people effectively? Unfortunately, you can't just give people autonomy and wait for the magic to happen. Creating a lasting culture of empowerment requires hard work from organizational leadership, managers, and each employee or talent resource.

EMPOWERMENT STARTS WITH SHIFTING RESPONSIBILITIES

Implementing empowerment isn't easy. We think about empowerment as giving people new choices and opportunities. But it's also about giving people new *responsibilities*. And that's where things get tricky.

In traditional workplace models, organizational leaders are responsible for setting goals, generating plans, making decisions, and assigning tasks. The employees are there to support the leader's agenda. In an empowered workplace, that paradigm flips. The leader is there to support the employees and their work—they become mentors more than managers. Leaders set goals or define challenges, but it's up to the employees to figure out how to get the work done.

This major shift in responsibility can be uncomfortable for everyone. Leaders often have a hard time letting go—it's tempting to override employee choices or fall back into command-and-control mode. Employees, meanwhile, worry about keeping up with new expectations and testing the boundaries of their newfound freedom.

BUILDING TRUST BUILDS EMPOWERMENT

The root of the discomfort during the tricky transition period is a lack of trust. Leaders aren't sure they can trust employees to get the job done. Employees aren't confident leaders will give them the space and support they need to succeed.

The only way to achieve empowerment is to build trust on every level. The first step is for leaders and employees to acknowledge that this change is challenging (and exciting). With everyone in the organization learning a new role, people will make mistakes. The only way to get to an empowered workplace is to keep working at it.



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Each person has a role to play in building trust and empowerment.

Organizational level

Leadership team members can set the stage by:

- Clearly defining a **purpose** and **vision** that everyone works toward together
 - Valuing curiosity, initiative, and learning over obedience and procedure
 - Modeling empowerment and backing up empowered teams (even when mistakes are made)
 - Training leaders and managers in mentorship, delegation, change management, and conflict resolution skills
-

Managerial level

Supervisors can set up employees for success by:

- Cultivating a culture where it's **safe** to try new things, ask for advice, and make mistakes
 - Asking employees about their career ambitions and development goals
 - Providing opportunities, resources, support, and authority to make decisions
 - Assigning responsibilities instead of delegating tasks
 - Training employees in areas such as project management, collaboration, strategy, and decision making
-

Individual level

Employees need to collaborate with their supervisors and colleagues to:

- Align individual goals with organizational opportunities
 - Get support and training when necessary
 - Prioritize work to avoid burnout and frustration
 - Identify areas of improvement or development
 - Recognize successes
-



The only way to achieve empowerment is to build trust on every level.





WE KNOW IT'S POSSIBLE

If we've learned one thing over the past few years, it's that people can thrive in a wide variety of working arrangements. Now it's time for companies to step up and formalize empowerment. By communicating, learning from mistakes, and assuming goodwill, teams will learn how to make empowerment the default, not the exception.

HOW TO GET STARTED

—— **Start regular 1:1 conversations with employees:** Connecting with employees is the best way to build mutual trust and provide support. Set up conversations that are focused exclusively on development, not just status updates or check-ins.

—— **Find out what types of empowerment are most important to your talent.** Knowing each employee's priorities will help you assign responsibilities—whether an employee prioritizes working from home or having more decision-making power.

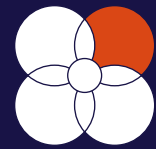
—— **Assess skills readiness.** Figure out how much training your team (managers and employees) will need to transition to more empowered work. Will they need more conflict resolution skills, change management methods, or something else?

—— **Create a training plan.** Let employees know what kind of training to expect. Even if you're just starting small at first, a plan helps employees see your commitment to helping them learn the skills they need to feel truly empowered.



Vision

Create a future worth working toward



A vision, sometimes called a strategic vision, is what a company wants to become in the future. And what it wants to be is the organizational equivalent of a Superbowl-winning quarterback or a Nobel Prize winner. Vision is about dreaming big. It's a story that everyone on the team wants to make come true. Said another way: A vision is what success would look like if the organization's goals were accomplished.

PURPOSE VS. VISION VS. MISSION

Purpose and vision—each in their own way—give employees something to believe in. Unlike a mission, which describes what an organization does now, purpose and vision are active investments in the future. Vision imagines the future of the company, while purpose envisions the future of the people the company serves. Unlike a purpose, which is infinite, a vision can be completed. (Sometimes a vision becomes reality!) And, when the vision is achieved or outgrown, the organization can replace it with a new one.

YES, VISIONS ARE STILL RELEVANT IN A FAST-PACED WORLD

Although these days it might feel ridiculous to envision what will happen 5, 10, or 30 years from now, a vision provides tangible goals and reduces day-to-day uncertainty. Organizations may not need a formal vision statement anymore, but they do require motivational, energizing ideas that the team can get excited about.

Creating a vision of where the company is going—even if everyone knows it will change—gives employees a way to see how their personal role impacts the company's success. It empowers employees to make suggestions, be proactive, and work more agilely. And, most of all, it helps people envision themselves at the organization for the long haul.

CREATING A VISION IS A SHARED EXERCISE

Vision is about creating a story employees want to be a part of. So, let them be “part of it” from the beginning. Instead of having leadership or internal communications develop, present, and sell a vision to the team, encourage employees to help create it. Each employee looks at the company through their own vantage point. By incorporating employee input and ideas, the vision becomes more inspiring for the whole team and more vivid for each person.

**Vision is about
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MAKE VISION PART OF EVERY DAY

Vision, like purpose, is something that should be part of each employee's everyday experience. Keeping vision top-of-mind is critical to its effectiveness. To implement a vision successfully:

- **Tie goals to the vision:** Make sure individual and team goals are tied to milestones for the vision. And when a team or individual achieves a goal or otherwise advances the vision, celebrate their work!
- **Use the vision as a decision-making tool:** Encourage employees to make choices based on what will help the organization achieve the vision and fulfill the purpose.
- **Progress status meetings/communications:** Keep employees up to date about the vision—ensuring they're aware of any progress toward the ultimate goal. Don't have progress? Create and explain proposed ways to course correct.
- **Make the vision visible:** Put the vision (or its "tagline") on walls, t-shirts, coffee cups, pens, the intranet, etc. Seeing the vision regularly reminds everyone what they're working toward. Having easily accessible, regular training materials is also a great way to keep the team motivated.

Although the vision is the big dream for the organization, it often helps employees dream big in their own careers—seeing their own path for success in the business.



HOW TO GET STARTED

_____ **Create a vision and engage the team to actively work to achieve it.** The world is changing fast. Keep your vision relevant and active by getting employee ideas around vision through surveys or working sessions at least annually (if not more often).

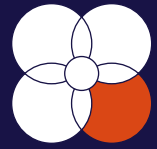
_____ **Stimulate individual action.** Ask employees to suggest a few new ways they could help achieve the company vision. If appropriate, make part of the employee's job profile.

_____ **Look for "constructive disruptions."** Ask employees to identify processes or behaviors that need to change in order for the vision to become a reality.



Community

Go beyond culture, create community



We all have an innate desire to belong—to be included and appreciated, to be part of a group, and to be part of something that's bigger than ourselves. Organizations that create that sense of connection have a distinct advantage in the marketplace and become a destination for top talent. So, how can you make your organization one of them?

YOU NEED CULTURE AND COMMUNITY

Organizations spend a lot of time on creating a corporate culture, but culture alone isn't enough to create meaningful connections. Why? Company culture is about (you guessed it) the company. Maybe it's based on the founder's philosophy or maybe it's an agreed-upon set of behavioral expectations for a respectful workplace. Regardless, culture is defined at the organizational level and enforced by company leaders. This can leave some employees feeling like cultural misfits.

Communities, however, are an expression of the people within them—they evolve as people come, go, and grow. Because the people in a community are united by shared interests, goals, and values; they care about their coworkers and the work they do together. Leaders can only facilitate community, not control it. As a result, community adapts easier to social change—creating a more sustainable, authentic, and inclusive workplace experience. Culture sets interpersonal expectations, but it's community that makes people truly feel connected, recognized, and understood.

COMMUNITY REQUIRES SOCIABILITY AND SOLIDARITY

A healthy community relies on a wide variety of factors—such as communication, collaboration, and company purpose. However, two factors—sociability and solidarity—are particularly important to community building. Sociability is about how friendly people are to each other. *Solidarity* is about how well people unite behind a common objective (whether they like each other or not).

Both sociability and solidarity have advantages and drawbacks. For example, people who enjoy working with their coworkers are more positive about their job, but too much sociability can lead to cliques or favoritism. If solidarity brings people together to accomplish a mission, but no one keeps in contact, it's a community failure. One of the best ways organizational leaders can cultivate community is by helping people find a good balance of sociability connections and solidarity challenges.

Culture sets interpersonal expectations, but it's community that makes people truly feel connected, recognized, and understood.



MAKE TOGETHERNESS INTENTIONAL

Working together effectively requires a level of familiarity and trust. As more people interact, the workplace community becomes more valuable.

However, in today's world, when people are not always in the same room (or country), creating relationships can be tricky. So, organizations need to work harder to make relationships a priority. It's important to set aside time for people to just be people—to get to know each other on a human level:

- Budget some social conversation time into meetings.
- Make social events, like Friday happy hours or monthly birthday celebrations, happen in the office or online.
- Get online teams together in person once in a while to build relationships.

When it comes to innovation, being together is invigorating. Of course, there are brainstorm meetings and strategy sessions, but often eureka moments happen during casual encounters with colleagues at lunch after the meeting. Whether you're in-person or thousands of miles apart, make time between meetings to just chat.

SALO LINKEDIN POLL

What's most important for successful collaboration?

Good communication 57%

Diverse skillsets & mindsets 33%

Solid objectives 10%

Based on 49 responses





COMMUNITY IS MORE THAN THE SUM OF ITS PARTS

Small businesses and startups are often great at community. They have a committed and close-knit group of employees that “feel like a family.” But as organizations grow, community becomes harder to maintain. It’s difficult to be close-knit with 10,000 people dispersed around the world.

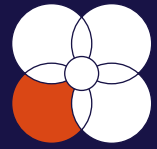
For large organizations, it’s often easier to build micro-communities of people who work closely together—then combine them⁵. To forge a company-wide community, the organization needs to create opportunities for two or more established micro-communities (or their representatives) to work together—creating a web of community that stretches throughout the organization. In the best-case scenario, community ties extend to the organization’s customers, partners, and the greater community the company serves.

HOW TO GET STARTED

- **Spark community connections.** Find meaningful ways for employees to interact—within their own teams and throughout the organization—such as working on task forces, projects, or resource groups around topics or interests.
- **Set aside time for social interactions.** Especially if your team is virtual, create a plan for incorporating social interactions into your daily routines—from having lunch together on Zoom or celebrating milestones.
- **Encourage mutual support.** Encourage people to support each other in good times and bad. Give people the latitude to cheer on coworkers’ successes and help when it’s needed.
- **Turn conflict into camaraderie.** Give employees the tools and support to diffuse conflict, see each other’s perspectives, and find constructive ways to work together.

Engagement

Turning jobs into vocations



We all spend about a third of our lives at work. So, it's important for work to be engaging—fulfilling, interesting, meaningful, and full of growth opportunities. Unfortunately, only 35 percent of employees in the U.S. feel engaged at work⁶. Organizations need to do better. Increasing engagement is vital to retaining talent. Here's how to get started.

KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION AND ENGAGEMENT

It's important to remember there's a difference between people who are comfortable at work and people who are really immersed in their job. Ideally, your employees have both:

- **Employee satisfaction** measures the degree to which people are content at work. Satisfied team members have their “basic job needs” satisfied. They feel fairly compensated, enjoy their work environment, have reasonable schedules, have job security, etc. Satisfaction is important, but it's not enough to create a rewarding work environment.
- **Employee engagement** measures how passionate people are about their job. Factors that lead to high engagement include challenging/impactful work, recognition, and increasing responsibilities. It's employee engagement that keeps high-performing talent on your team and fuels organizational success.

MAKE WORK INTERESTING AND ENRICHING

Although every employee has different priorities, there are several surefire ways to attract today's talent and keep them committed to your organization. For example:

- **Prioritize coaching over “managing”:** The manager/team leader accounts for 70 percent of the variance in team engagement⁷. Managers who can coach employees to the next level are the biggest factor in driving employee engagement.
- **Create flexible paths for growth based on employees' interests:** Make it clear that there's not just one path to growth in your organization. Empower employees to chart their own flexible paths for growth, continuous learning, and career advancement based on their interests and goals.
- **Focus on skills instead of roles:** Instead of thinking about what roles your talent resources will play in the future, think about what skills they'll need to stay engaged and move your organization forward.
- **Provide clear expectations and doable challenges:** Tough challenges help people learn, grow, and gain confidence—unless the challenge is too difficult. Then, employees get overwhelmed. Be sure to set clear guidelines, match the challenge to the employee's skillset, and provide support along the way.



MAKE THE PERSON THE PRIORITY

People do their best work when the organization has their best interests in mind. Giving your talent a say in their (current and future) work will lead to a more committed and engaged workplace community.

- **Value employees' whole lives:** Work is only part of an employee's life. Acknowledging, appreciating, accommodating, and incorporating an employee's life outside of work increases satisfaction and engagement.
- **Support innovative ways to work:** The traditional 9-to-5, in-the-office career isn't conducive for everyone. Help employees find working arrangements that work for the organization and allow employees to do their best work.
- **Encourage feedback and ideation:** Give everyone on your team the opportunity to engage, participate, and provide input into decisions that impact them—from company-wide strategy to their own contributions to the organization.
- **Productivity can happen anywhere:** Whether it's simply working at home or working from across the world, allowing employees to choose their location provides access to significantly more talent resources.

SALO SURVEY RESULTS

Salo's 2021 Talent Trend Watch survey⁴ found: Employees report personal job satisfaction is the number-three thing they look for when searching for a new job (after compensation/benefits and work/life balance—which are both aspects of job satisfaction). But once they're on the job:

- Less than 25 percent of employees are fully engaged with their work, and
- Fewer than 6 out of 10 employees are satisfied with the opportunities for career growth.

ENRICHMENT LEADS TO ENGAGED EMPLOYEES

“ At Robert Weed Corporation, we're creating an environment that provides 'pathways for personal and professional enrichment' through management reinforcement and third-party partnerships. We recognize education is not our core business, but we're committed to providing that primary knowledge to our employees.”

— Steven Ramel, President
Robert Weed Corporation





SALO LINKEDIN POLL

How important is personal development to you right now?



Based on 55 responses

THINK OF ENGAGEMENT AS A CONSTANT COLLABORATION

Finally, engagement is more than something you measure once a year with a survey. Creating a truly engaged work environment requires continuous dedication and collaboration between supervisors, employees, and organizational leaders. Fortunately, focusing on engagement is another way to increase engagement, so it's all time well spent.

HOW TO GET STARTED

——— **Measure current engagement.** Through surveys, focus groups/committees, and 1:1 conversations; find out how engaged your workforce is today. Then create or revise engagement goals.

——— **Review your policies around flexible work arrangements.** Chances are your workplace is drafting policies around flexible work and employee empowerment right now. Advocate for policies that accommodate the workstyles your employees need to be engaged. Don't know? Ask them.

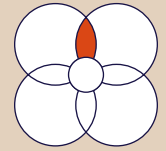
——— **Get serious about employee development.** Work with each employee to set development interests and career goals. Be sure to create or review your plan for budget and time allocated for development work.





The 4 Talent Catalysts

Inspire people to do their best work



Optimism

Optimism is defined as “expecting positive outcomes.” In the workplace, optimism comes from having consistently positive experiences—such as enjoying working with your colleagues, doing rewarding work, or even having respectful (and productive) conflict.

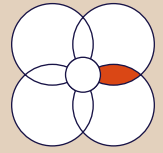
However, workplace optimism doesn’t just happen, it requires active participation. Sometimes that’s going the extra mile to make someone’s day easier or coming prepared to a meeting. Other times, that’s giving coworkers the benefit of the doubt. Regardless, “looking on the bright side” is a cultural behavior that needs to be modeled by leaders and cultivated across the organization through training and practice.

TO NURTURE OPTIMISM:

- **Get interested in your employees or teammates:** Get to know the whole person. Learn about their strengths, goals, and interests. Help everyone in your work community stay inspired.
- **Check in regularly with your team:** Don’t wait for annual engagement surveys or performance reviews to gauge employee positivity. Do it regularly and authentically.
- **Align work to purpose and vision:** Always create connections to the future the team is creating together.
- **Normalize change:** Unexpected change can be a bigtime morale killer, so make change a regular (and positive) part of your culture.
- **Celebrate successes big and small:** Look for the positive aspects in every situation and recognize them—whether they’re team wins or individual achievements.
- **Have fun at work:** Break up the daily grind with fun activities and social interaction opportunities.



Finally, at its core, optimism is confidence. When people have empowerment and vision, they feel confident about the organization’s future and their place in it. They expect good things to happen because they make them happen.



Diversity

Putting people in the center of the work means fostering a workplace community where everyone feels empowered to help realize the organization's shared vision.

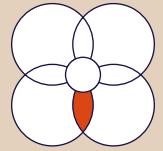
There are many types of diversity in an organization, and they all play a role in helping the company thrive. Research shows that high-performing teams are demographically and cognitively diverse⁸. Demographic diversity includes factors such as race, sexual orientation, and age. *Cognitive diversity* refers to diversity factors like education, past experiences, and types of mental frameworks people use to solve problems.

TO INCREASE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN YOUR ORGANIZATION, START BY:

- **Practicing diverse hiring:** Diversity starts with hiring, which means employers have to network with people in diverse communities, insist on diverse slates of candidates, and design inclusive onboarding practices.
- **Creating a shared definition of what inclusion means:** Make sure everyone in your organization knows how the organization expects people to treat others and why it's important.
- **Encouraging vulnerability and curiosity:** Everyone—including leaders—should be able to ask questions, to identify their biases, make mistakes, and listen to criticism.
- **Creating psychological safety to speak up:** Make sure that diverse employees feel comfortable bringing up inequity, issues, or ideas—after all, listening to employees is the best way to gain understanding and make changes.
- **Identifying diversity champions:** Whether it's an internal committee, outside support, or both; put people in charge of keeping your diversity initiatives top of mind and effective.

When all of this diversity is combined with inclusive business practices—businesses and their employees reap the benefits.





Recognition

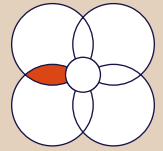
Everyone likes to be praised once in a while, but did you know recognition is a workplace superpower? Studies show 74 percent of those who say they receive praise also strongly agree that they “have the feeling that what [they are] doing at work is valuable and useful.”⁹ And, on the flip side, 79 percent of people who quit their jobs say “lack of appreciation” is why they left¹⁰.

Recognition is also inexpensive and fairly easy to implement. There are several easy ways to demonstrate how valuable your employees and coworkers are, including:

- **Encourage 360-degree recognition:** Recognition from a boss or leader is great, but recognition from peers can be just as rewarding. Make peer-to-peer recognition a habit on your team.
- **Recognize regularly:** Recognition works best if you do it in a timely manner. Ideally people need recognition every seven days to stay satisfied at work.⁹
- **Be specific:** Throwing out generic platitudes like “you’re doing great” isn’t enough. Effective recognition is as specific as possible, providing details about what the person did well.
- **Customize your recognition.** If you’re recognizing a team, do it in public. If you’re recognizing an individual, find out if they prefer public or private acclaim. If someone has done many great things, ask which ones they’d most like to be publicly recognized for.
- **Celebrate everyday successes:** When someone does something positive, take notice. It doesn’t have to be a party. Even a simple “thank you” goes a long way.
- **Help out when someone needs support:** When a coworker is overwhelmed or having a bad day, send in the reinforcements. (Better yet, be the reinforcements.)
- **Provide recognition training for leaders:** Help managers and supervisors honor their coworkers by taking time to learn how and when to recognize employees.



When people get (and give) honest and authentic recognition from members of their workplace, they become more engaged with their work community and the job they do.



Safety

People need to feel safe to be engaged in their work and empowered to make choices. Psychological safety—the belief that you can speak up, make reasonable mistakes, and bring your true self to work without negative consequences—has always been important. But today, as organizations try out different ways to work together—such as work from anywhere or fractional consulting—it’s paramount.

According to [*The 4 Stages of Psychological Safety: Defining the Path to Inclusion and Innovation*](#), people experience four levels of psychological safety:

1. **Inclusion safety:** Feeling safe to be yourself and accepted for who you are.
2. **Learner safety:** Feeling safe to learn—ask questions, experiment, make mistakes, and get feedback.
3. **Contributor safety:** Feeling safe and confident to use your skills to make a meaningful contribution.
4. **Challenger safety:** Feeling safe to speak up and challenge existing norms if you see an opportunity for improvement.

To make people feel safe—at any stage—organizations need to make safety a clear priority.

TO CREATE SAFETY:

- **Proactively solicit input:** Don’t wait for people to come to you with insights. Proactively ask them for their opinions and ideas.
- **Provide many ways to share:** Some people like in-person interactions; others might prefer to write things out. Everybody’s different, and there are dozens of ways for people to share their thoughts. Talk to each member of your team about their preferences.
- **Be appreciative:** Make it clear you value input (even if it’s bad news). Whether the input is positive or negative, thank people for expressing their insights and opinions.
- **Encourage curiosity and transparency:** The more people know, the less uncertainty they experience. Answer questions honestly, promote positive discussions, and be as transparent as possible.
- **Own up to your mistakes:** When leaders take responsibility for their mistakes, it shows employees and coworkers that being vulnerable helps the whole team feel safe.



Organizations need to create space for new ideas, encourage people to speak up, and openly discuss how failure is handled. Only then, will people truly reach their full potential.

At Salo, our purpose is to build a world that works better together.

With our purpose in mind, this people-first workplace was a natural fit. As a nationwide talent firm, we have unique insight into the business challenges our clients face each year. This model is based on knowledge collected during our nearly 20 years in the talent industry.

In today's market, talent is an organization's biggest competitive advantage, the not-so-secret weapon, and the scarcest resource. We hope this model—with its focus on putting people first—will help your organization attract (and retain) top talent, achieve your vision, and fulfill your purpose.

We're here to help.

Salo's can help your organization become a people-first workplace. Our consultants can work with you to:

- Measure current employee satisfaction
- Design a people-first workplace program
- Make progress on any of the 9 individual people-first components
- Help on related finance, accounting, and HR initiatives



We're here to help. Contact us at [HelloSalo.com](https://www.hellosalo.com) or 1-866-221-1651.

About Salo

At Salo, when we match an expert in finance, accounting, and HR with an organization that needs their help—we propel both forward. We call these interactions “Meaningful Experiences™.” With every interaction or engagement, it's our goal to Make it Meaningful™.

Our services solve business challenges and make a difference—simultaneously. We help organizations get the interim or project-based help they need. And we empower talented professionals by helping them build impactful consulting careers that allow them to lead fulfilling and purposeful lives.





Attributions

1. Achievers.com; [Employee Empowerment: Definition, Benefits, and Factors](#)
2. McKinsey; [More than a mission statement: How the 5Ps of purpose deliver value](#)
3. Smarp; [Empowerment in the workplace](#)
4. Salo; Talent Trend Watch Survey 2021 (see below)
5. Peter Block, [Community: The Structure of Belonging](#)
6. Gallup; [What is employee engagement and how do you improve it?](#)
7. Gallup; [Managers account for 70% of variance in employee engagement](#)
8. Deloitte; [The diversity and inclusion revolution: Eight powerful truths](#)
9. Gallup; [Add praise to your employee recognition toolkit](#)
10. OC Tanner; [Performance Accelerated \(pdf\)](#)

Salo's Talent Trends Survey 2021

This survey, conducted with 2,194 professionals nationwide, provides insights on how the employer-employee relationship is changing in real time—driven by employers, employees, and world events. The results presented in this report were weighted to be representative of the overall population. Of respondents:

- All were age 35-50.
- All were employed (93% of respondents reported being employed full-time, while 7% reported part-time employment); none were employed by Salo.
- All lived in the United States (regional breakdown: South-38%, West-23%, Midwest-21%, Northeast-18%).
- All reported a household income of \$75,000 or more and lived in a suburban (51%) or urban (49%) area.
- 84% of respondents had completed a bachelor's degree or higher level of education.
- 52% of respondents were female and 47% were male.