

RBH Mindset

Job satisfaction

April 2024



90% of workers
in the UK hate
their jobs

Are employee
benefits really
necessary?

Improve
wellbeing in
the workplace

90% of workers in the UK hate their jobs.

What can your company do about it?

Since December 2023, UK employment rates have been sitting at about 75%, having almost returned to pre-pandemic levels of 76%. Despite this, we are seeing a reduction in permanent hires and increasing dependence on temporary workers due to continuing economic uncertainty.

We've also seen a drop in the number of fully remote job postings, from 20% in 2022 down to 8% in December 2023. However, hybrid roles have remained popular, especially with younger people starting their first corporate jobs. Humans are social creatures, and people want the human interaction that comes with working on-site.

Many companies are relying on specialist recruiters and long hiring processes to improve the quality of applicants and employee retention rate. The average retention rate for companies in the UK is just 65%, meaning that 35% of employees leave their jobs within a year. This is often even higher in smaller companies. It can be frustrating and expensive for employers to continually interview, hire and train employees, only for them to move elsewhere within a short space of time.

35% of employees leave their jobs within a year

1.3m vacancies - a 60% increase from before Covid



However, a recent study by Gallup found that 90% of workers in the UK are unhappy at work, with only 10% reported as being engaged in their job. This is one of the lowest levels across the world. In contrast, the US reported three times this level of engagement.

With the amount of flexibility and options available to UK workers in 2024, this made us wonder what is falling short in the industry for so many people. Are workplaces failing to offer meaningful fulfilment to their workers? Or is it that, with rising demands and expectations, the grass is always greener? And before you blame those pesky Gen Zers for never being satisfied, the level of disengaged employees is split evenly across all age groups. Globally, over half of those who are currently employed are actively looking or applying for other jobs. But what is it that they're looking for?

In the past couple of years, job opportunities across the world have seen a massive increase, reaching 1.3m vacancies – a 60% increase from before Covid. Employee engagement levels have also reached a record high. People were excited about getting back to life as usual without the threat of a global pandemic looming over them, reporting that their jobs felt rewarding, and they enjoyed the socialisation and sense of purpose they felt in going to work.

Of the massive percentage of disengaged employees, 72% are so-called 'quiet quitters' – those employees who get the job done but with the minimum effort required and are not emotionally or socially connected to their workplace. Gallup's State of the Global Workplace report found that what quiet quitters dislike most about their workplace

is low engagement and little or no culture, with 41% wanting to change this. Coming in second place is pay and benefits, with 28% and, finally, employee wellbeing at 16%. Let's take a deeper dive into these categories to learn what employees are looking for in a job in 2024, and how we address them here at RBH.

Why is corporate culture important, and how do you avoid a toxic workplace?

Workplace culture is the set of values, beliefs, attitudes, and goals of a company. There has been increased visibility of company culture recently as it starts to become more and more important to all involved. A workplace culture that provides a positive employee experience was ranked by 46% of jobseekers as their top priority (TeamStage, 2024). This is ranked higher than both salary (31%) and work which challenges them (28%).

While competitive pay and benefits remain important to all employees, it's not enough on its own anymore. The push towards better mental health in recent years has caused many people to look at their job as more than just somewhere to make a living, but somewhere they can be challenged as well as being valued and supported. A massive 88% of those looking for jobs say that workplace culture plays at least some part in their considerations.

88% of those looking for jobs say that workplace culture plays at least some part in their considerations

You're looking at

90,000

hours spent at work during your life

But, of course, workplace culture isn't just important for attracting new hires. It's an essential part of retaining your employees and keeping them engaged. In fact, 57% of employees say that workplace culture plays a bigger role in job satisfaction than their salary (Glassdoor, 2019). 63% of UK adults say that their workplace's culture is their main reason for staying with them, with 70% saying that they would leave if the culture declined. This isn't surprising when you think about the amount of time the average person spends at work. If you work a full-time job until retirement, you're looking at over 90,000 hours spent at work during your life. So it isn't surprising that people generally want to be working somewhere that has a positive attitude towards them and aligns with their own values.



Receiving recognition for good work boosts morale

It's clear that workplace culture is essential for employee satisfaction. But what sort of attitudes do people value in an employer, and where are many falling short?

Diving back into Gallup's State of the Global Workplace Report, the biggest area of importance for most employees is that everyone should be recognised for their contributions. Receiving recognition for good work boosts morale, and makes people feel as though their work is worthwhile. 69% of employees would work harder if they received more recognition (Officevibe, 2014).

This links directly with managerial and leadership style, which is also mentioned frequently among dissatisfied workers. Up to 70% of team engagement is attributable to the manager, however only 28% of workplace leaders have a good grasp on their workplace's culture. Understandably, this disconnect can easily cause some friction between managers and their employees. One of the most common grievances in the workplace is that a manager isn't present or accessible enough. When asking those who are dissatisfied with their job what they would change, many said that they would like their managers to be more approachable and friendly.

Many workers have also said that when they have made comments or complaints to workplace leaders or HR, things have not improved. This can make employees feel ignored and undervalued, which leads them to become at best disengaged or, at worst, seeking alternative employment.





Employees also value a culture which promotes personal and professional growth. One of the leading reasons for employees losing engagement is that their jobs and daily tasks are too repetitive, with too few opportunities for learning and upskilling. In fact, 40% of employees' main reason for leaving is that they are unhappy with the opportunities for career progression in their current workplace (McKinsey, 2022). Employees have started asking for clearer goals and stronger guidance in order to help them get to the next level. Giving someone a clear goal to work towards can help keep them motivated and avoid a sense of stagnation.

74% of workers believe that workplace culture impacts their performance (Forbes, 2022), and more than that, it has been found that workplaces which have best practice in place have a level of engagement 213% higher than the global average. Best practice in this regard refers to a workplace which focuses around teamwork, community, and professional growth. It's clear that more companies need to focus on the environment they are creating for their employees in order to keep them engaged, motivated and, most importantly, happy.

Are employee benefits really necessary?

Lately, we have seen major employee strikes over matters of pay in countless industries, from education and healthcare to public transportation and services. Research has found that most people in the UK believe they are being underpaid (Indeed, 2022). This figure hits its peak with those working in healthcare, of whom 64% feel as though they are not paid enough, even after recent salary increases following strike action.

A feeling of being underpaid can very easily lead to disengaged employees and quiet quitters. An underpaid employee is likely to feel undervalued by their employer, and will chase pay rises elsewhere. This goes hand in hand with employees going elsewhere to climb higher up the ladder when they are unable to progress with their current employer.

Apart from a person's salary, there are other benefits which are important to employees. Benefits like subsidised childcare, a cafeteria, and rewards for excellent work are also on the wish list for many. These can all help to make employees feel valued and part of a community. Although this fits under the 'salary and benefits' umbrella, it sounds rather a lot like part of workplace culture.



Employee wellbeing – another **buzzword**, or an **important part** of creating quality work?

Last up on the list for what's important in a workplace is employee wellbeing. This has been shouted about for a while now, and includes topics such as working from home, more work/life balance, and proper breaks for employees. Employee wellbeing was front of mind during the pandemic and has remained a priority ever since. Despite this, employee stress has remained at the same level since Covid – an all-time high, with 44% of employees saying that they are stressed for a lot of their day. Interestingly, this falls to 30% when looking at engaged employees, and rises to 56% when looking at disengaged employees (Gallup, 2023). You would think that disengaged employees would exhibit lower stress levels, seeing as they do not put in the same amount of passion or enthusiasm for their work. However, this could be an indication that workplaces prioritising employee wellbeing have more engaged workers.



Aside from introducing hybrid working or longer breaks, which is not possible for some sectors due to the nature of their work, what else can employers do to improve wellbeing in the workplace?

Why is an engaged workplace important?

RBH Mindset



It's not surprising to learn that engaged employees show increased productivity. This is not a new discovery – research by Dale Carnegie found that companies with engaged employees outperform those with disengaged employees by 202%. These employees are also more likely to take initiative, be innovative and go above and beyond in their tasks.



45% of UK employees rate having a good culture as the most important factor when looking for a new job (WorkBuzz, 2022). This is higher than both a higher salary or flexible working. With the current war for talent, this gives workplaces with a strong culture an edge over those without – if they can showcase it in an effective way.

The same goes for retaining employees. The first action many managers take when one of their employees mentions moving elsewhere is offer a pay rise. We know through this research that salary is not always the main concern for people. Before jumping to this solution right away, consider whether your environment is a place where employees can develop, advance, and feel valued.

It has been found that Millennials – who now make up 75% of the workforce – value culture above anything else in a job. As Millennials start climbing higher up the corporate ladder, we may begin to see some of these changes coming into force. Especially with the war for talent consistently raging on, businesses need to focus on retaining their employees – their most valuable assets.

How to create an environment which promotes engaged employees

RBH Mindset



We know that creating a good workplace culture is important for both employees and employers, but what's the best way to create an environment that promotes engaged employees?

People are no longer merely looking for a job that pays a good salary. This is not enough on its own anymore. People want employers with a robust culture, employers that value employee contributions and are centred on a positive, healthy, working community.

Quite simply, workplaces need to provide a culture where employees feel valued, respected, and recognised for their work. Managers should be present and open to conversations about workload, professional development, or any issues that their team may be facing.

It's also important that companies respect their employees' personal life and understand that people have competing priorities. Changes to working hours or location should be communicated as far in advance as possible, to allow for necessary arrangements to be made.

Job satisfaction



At RBH we operate internally with all of this in mind

More businesses need to create a robust working culture centred on community, professional growth, and valuing employees. This will encourage people to become enthusiastic about what they do and where they work.

Once your business has leveraged these insights, the next challenge is to employ staff that match these values. We've managed to take these insights and shape them into strong campaign messages for our clients. For one of our travel and hospitality clients, we achieved an under £1 CPA (cost per application) for a huge recruitment drive this year. We did it by running multiple messages – not around salary, but around support, community, team, progression, and flexible working opportunities. We then remarketed to users based on the specific area that meant the most to them.

At RBH we operate internally with all of this in mind, working in a structure that's as flat as possible, keeping as few barriers as possible between our leadership team and our staff. The belief that a great idea can come from anywhere helps us produce our best work, and goes a long way in helping our employees feel genuinely valued and listened to. Our culture is built around our people, challenging us to perform at our best and promoting professional development whilst still feeling supported. We're passionate about the work which we create, and we think the results speak for themselves.

If you want to turn these insights into
a powerful creative-first solution
for your brand, then get in touch at
hello@rbh.co.uk