

# WORKPLACE SATISFACTION REPORT

WHAT WORKERS WANT —  
AND WHAT DOESN'T MATTER



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A high-performing workforce is essential for any business to be successful. And while most companies strive to keep employees engaged and productive, they may find it difficult to know which workplace factors will make a positive and sustainable impact, justifying the investment of time and resources. In order to attract candidates and motivate current employees, companies need first to know — what do workers want?

This report will present the findings of a 2019 survey among more than 1,200 workers across industries and skill sets, revealing how they prioritize the drivers that influence their workplace satisfaction.

Today's workers have more leverage than ever to decide what job offer they accept and how long they'll stay with a company before looking around for new opportunities. Because of this, employers need to be intentional about what they can offer to recruit and retain employees, not just in compensation but in other less tangible factors as well, such as interesting work, growth opportunities and culture.

"Workplace satisfaction is increasingly understood as an important driver of employee engagement," explains Aerotek Senior Inclusion and Diversity HR Business Partner Charmaine Thomas. "Engaged workers are generally the most successful employees because they take advantage of more opportunities and have a stronger career journey." But understanding workplace satisfaction, to a degree that drives employee engagement, requires a deeper commitment to and understanding of employees, Thomas explains.

"Unfortunately, employees have been groomed as a society to mistrust employers, but it's employers' responsibility to create an atmosphere of psychological safety, where teams can connect on a deeper level, helping unlock an individual's motivations to do more and achieve more."

## Survey results

The Workplace Satisfaction Report examines each attribute on two dimensions: stated importance and derived importance — a correlation between experience and workplace satisfaction. The model classifies attributes into different categories revealing the expectations and true impact of various workplace benefits.

The survey results represent trends and demonstrate that satisfaction drivers have varying levels of impact. Because of that, they can be useful guideposts for how managers go about understanding their own employees' drivers.

### **Delighters**

*Low expectation  
High impact*

Employees don't assume they will receive these benefits, but they have a high impact on their satisfaction when they do.

### **Desired**

*High expectation  
High impact*

Employees expect to receive these benefits, and they have a high impact on job satisfaction when they're delivered.

### **Expected**

*High expectation  
Low impact*

Employees expect these benefits, but when they're delivered, they don't really impact overall job satisfaction.

### **Other**

*Low expectation  
Low impact*

Employees don't expect these benefits, and they have a low impact on job satisfaction even when they get them.

## What factors delight workers

“Knowing how much weight employees place on different factors can indicate areas of opportunity where companies can radically improve the candidate and employee experience,” notes Aerotek Executive Director Keith Mirabile. By considering this information, employers have an opportunity to go beyond what employees expect and prefer, to provide what workers really want — what delights them and makes them want to come and stay.



# PERCEPTIONS OF WORKPLACE BENEFITS

## EXPECTED

↑ EXPECTATION | ↓ IMPACT

- › Clear communication about your performance
- › Reasonable hours
- › Company is stable
- › Job security

## DELIGHTER

↓ EXPECTATION | ↑ IMPACT

- › Business practices in line with personal values
- › Gaining marketable skills
- › Recognition for your work
- › Manager(s) care about your career
- › Healthy relationships with peers

## DESIRED

↑ EXPECTATION | ↑ IMPACT

- › Opportunities for growth and advancement
- › Your ideas are taken seriously
- › Clear communication about what is expected
- › Gaining a broad spectrum of skills
- › Transparent communication about job and company
- › Compensation in line with expectations
- › Your work contributes to success of company

## OTHER

↓ EXPECTATION | ↓ IMPACT

- › Having a sense of autonomy
- › Company has a positive impact on world
- › Having a mentor or coach
- › Commute is reasonable
- › Being included in office culture & events
- › Peers that you can rely on for help
- › Company is well-known, has name recognition

## Gaps in worker satisfaction provide opportunities for employers

According to the research, the top seven factors by importance are also those with the largest variance between what employees want and how often they experience them. “The factors with the largest gaps can provide direction for employers who want to know what changes can have the most impact,” says Mirabile.

	Importance Rank	Performance Rank	Gap
Business practices in line with personal values	1	12	-11
Opportunities for growth and advancement	2	22	-20
Your ideas are taken seriously	3	16	-13
Recognition for your work	4	14	-10
Manager(s) care about your career	5	21	-16
Transparent communication about job and company	6	19	-13
Compensation in line with expectations	7	18	-11

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Within the survey results, Mirabile says, “one of the factors with the largest gaps — business practices are in line with my values — indicate that employees are taking a broader view of their employer as well as their position as part of the workforce at large.”

Awareness of companies as corporate citizens that embody the values of the individual employee is increasing, he adds. Employees may feel more invested in a company that aligns to their principles, such as respect, openness and cooperation.

“A company known for having a great culture has an advantage in hiring,” he says. “Investing in amenities that benefit employees, such as a gym or a daycare or even work from home opportunities, can show that the company cares about the health and wellbeing of its employees.”



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## GROWTH

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### Opportunities for growth and advancement

Survey respondents also prioritized opportunities for advancement as a satisfaction driver while saying that they don't often experience it. "Every company has its own model for advancement, and it correlates with the organization's history, mission and culture," explains Aerotek Executive Director Rocco Raffo. "For employees who want to move up, companies need to provide that context — why they do what they do — to help employees chart their paths and determine how to take advantage of opportunities that will help them evolve."

"To make this happen, employers should ensure they're being clear and open about what it takes to move up in the organization," recommends Mirabile. "Be specific about what an employee has to do to earn a promotion — how hard they'll have to work and for how long. This doesn't mean he or she can't advance more quickly, they just need to be aware of the usual standards and how they need to outperform them."

Not all career paths are linear, he adds. "Sometimes it's a ladder but sometimes it's more like a jungle gym. Managers should ensure employees know their strengths and what development opportunities will best align them with what they want to achieve in their career. At times, the best fit might not be in the same area or department, so see what can be done to increase visibility into other areas of the organization." Job shadowing can be a good tool to help employees develop a more well-rounded understanding of how the company operates and learn more about different paths they can take to reach their goals, he says.

The common thread among these findings, Mirabile and Raffo both say, is that employees are serious about their careers — they want to learn more, be listened to and progress through their career path.



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## CONTRIBUTION

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### Recognition for your work

Employees are increasingly interested in knowing that their efforts help the company achieve its goals, according to the survey. Employers should provide this information.

"In the spirit of openness and good communication, every company should be providing a clear picture of how each operating unit, department, team and employee contribute to the company's bottom line," says Mirabile. "They can reinforce this through the performance assessment process, providing cascading goals, so that there is a clear chain of responsibility up and down the organization that makes it clear how interdependent the roles are. This lets employees see a direct correlation between what they do and how it impacts the company." Ensure that you have metrics in place to assess how well each objective is being met, so that you can measure and adjust as you go.

Raffo also recommends the value of positive feedback in the moment. Recognizing employees who go above and beyond makes it clear to your employees that what they do matters and helps the company meet its goals.

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## COMPANY RELATIONSHIPS

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### Manager(s) care about your career

The survey results indicate that attention, particularly one-on-one interactions, can be a real driver of employee satisfaction, Raffo notes. To ensure that happens, he recommends that managers develop a consistent, ongoing cadence of communication with their direct reports and other staff and be available to them when they have questions or need advice. Ideally, building those relationships throughout the team will also serve to spur involvement in office culture and events.

“There’s no reason a manager can’t be a mentor as well,” Raffo adds. “Although it’s valuable to have contacts outside your regular reporting structure, an effective manager builds coaching into the relationship and takes a proactive approach to helping the employee succeed.”

“Managers today wear a lot of hats,” Mirabile says, “but they need to prioritize personal attention to their employees. If they don’t focus on their people, have candid two-way conversations and develop them within the organization, the rest of the goals won’t matter.”



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## COMMUNICATION

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### Transparent communication about job and company

“Employees want to be informed about their jobs, performance and the company’s status, and they want that communication to include recognition for their work,” says Raffo.

Whether it’s a company intranet, internal email to all employees or quarterly “town hall” meetings, keeping employees informed about the company’s financial status (and thus their job security) helps maintain trust and keeps the workforce focused on achieving the goals, he says. On a department or team level, managers should communicate any relevant company news so that employees can ask questions or seek clarification.

Regular meetings should also provide recognition to individual and team contributions that make an impact on the company. “Some people appreciate public acknowledgement while others prefer to be more private,” Raffo notes, “but positive feedback reinforces behaviors that benefit the company.” It’s a great opportunity to strengthen the connection between individual employee contributions and how they roll up to the company goals, he explains.



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## PERSONAL FIT

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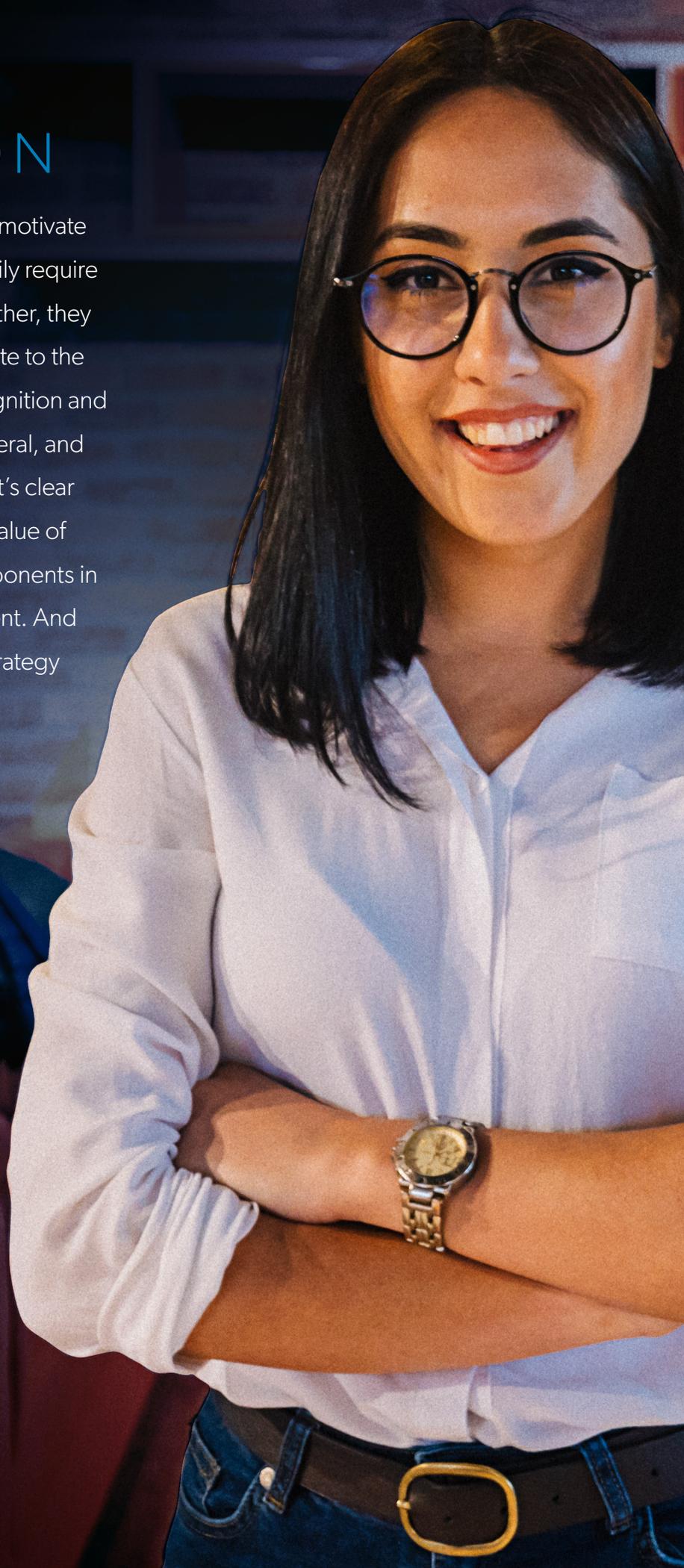
### Compensation in line with expectations

Workers today are more aware than ever about what jobs should be paying, more reluctant to compromise their expectations and more willing to advocate for themselves. “Companies should take a second look at their compensation strategies, knowing that wage growth is relatively stagnant and it’s impacting worker satisfaction,” Mirabile recommends.

In addition to recognizing your top-performing employees, paying market rate wages can also insulate them from being lured away from competitors increasingly targeting passive candidates.

# CONCLUSION

What's notable about the factors that motivate employees is that they don't necessarily require pricey amenities or exorbitant pay. Rather, they indicate that workers want to contribute to the goals of their employer, achieve recognition and stay informed on the company in general, and their department or team in specific. It's clear that the role of the manager and the value of personal interactions are critical components in employee satisfaction and engagement. And although there is no one-size-fits-all strategy for employee satisfaction, leaders need to have these conversations regularly in order to know what's working and what's not in their organization. By striving to achieve an open, cooperative, relationship-oriented culture, employers can provide what workers really want.



## ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS



**Keith Mirabile**

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Keith Mirabile is Executive Director of Strategic Sales at Aerotek. In this role, Keith is responsible for overseeing the strategic initiatives and business development efforts for national accounts across Aerotek's Financial and Business Services sector.



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Rocco Raffo is Executive Director of Strategic Sales at Aerotek. In this role, Rocco leads a team focused on strategic initiatives and business development efforts for national accounts in Aerotek's Life Sciences portfolio.



**Charmaine Thomas**

*Senior Inclusion & Diversity HR Business Partner*

Charmaine Thomas, Senior Inclusion & Diversity HR Business Partner at Aerotek, has decades of experience in talent management and employee engagement. In her role, she advises leadership on opportunities to promote an inclusive environment and foster a culture of trust.



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