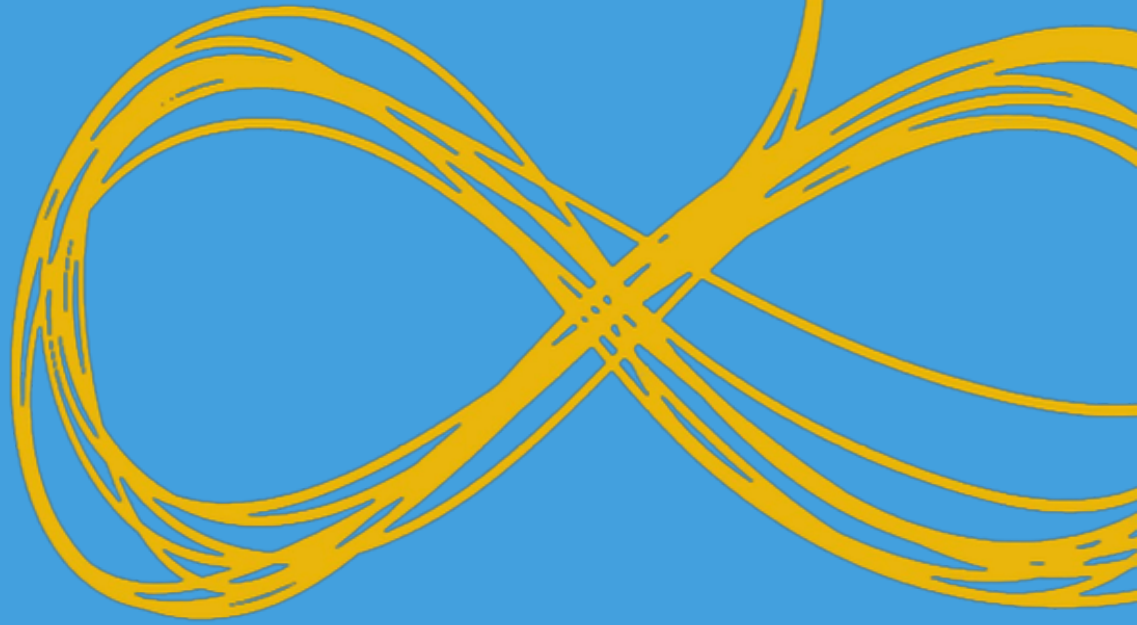


**WHAT IF EVERYTHING
YOU THOUGHT YOU KNEW
ABOUT EMPLOYEE RECRUITMENT
AND RETENTION
WAS WRONG?**





THE LIMITLESS LEADER:

**RECRUITING AND RETAINING TOP PERFORMERS
DURING THE GREAT RESIGNATION AND BEYOND**

**FINDINGS FROM RESEARCH CONDUCTED
BY LAURA GASSNER OTTING
FROM JANUARY 2019-DECEMBER 2021**

MAY 2022

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OVERVIEW

The Great Resignation is not a result of the pandemic. It's been brewing for decades.

Between August and September of 2021, roughly 8.7 million Americans, or about 6% of the U.S. workforce, quit their jobs. The Great Resignation is upon us. But, what is driving it?

In a survey we conducted from January 2019 through the pandemic, one which more than 5,600 workers from every sector and every demographic have answered, several trends have emerged, the understanding of which will allow leaders to recruit, retain, and re-engage their most valuable performers.

As a 20-year veteran of retained executive search, much of my time pre-engagement was spent disengaging my clients from the tried and true scorecard of eight widely accepted key factors which would motivate anyone at any time to consider jumping ship for a new opportunity. This list of what makes a good job good -- mission, leadership, challenge, scope of impact, acquisition of new skills, prestige, benefits, and money -- does not take into consideration what makes a good job good *for each individual*. Worse, employers have become convinced that there is only one prioritization of this list, with money being at the top. (Spoiler alert: it rarely is.)

As employers (and as employees), we pursue happiness. But happiness is fleeting; it is consonance that lasts.

Consonance is the feeling of harmony and alignment that comes from knowing that the very best of what you can do is demanded to solve a problem about which you care deeply, and you are being rewarded for solving that problem in a way that is personally, financially, emotionally meaningful to you. In short, it's when "what you do" matches "who you are."

Consonance is what allows your best employees to keep contributing at their highest levels. A lack of consonance is what is driving The Great Resignation we are experiencing today. These issues didn't arise at the start of the pandemic, but the pandemic laid bare the pain points that your employees have been unable to articulate until now.

And, perhaps, the problem isn't the workers, but you.

Let's dig in, and demystify how to help your star performers get re-engaged in what matters most.

-- Laura Gassner Otting, December 2021

WHAT IS CONSONANCE?

CONSONANCE IS MADE UP OF FOUR FACTORS THAT HELP WORKERS FEEL AS THOUGH THEIR WORK REALLY MATTERS: CALLING, CONNECTION, CONTRIBUTION, AND CONTROL.

Calling

CALLING is a gravitational pull towards a goal larger than yourself—a business you want to build, a leader who inspires you, a societal ill you wish to remedy, a cause you wish to serve, or a family you want to nurture.



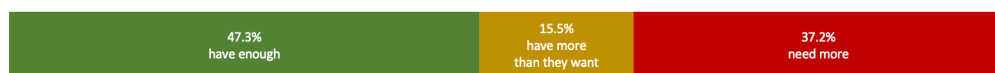
Connection

CONNECTION gives you sightlines into how your everyday actions serve that calling by solving the problem at hand, growing the company's bottom line, or reaching that goal. It helps you understand why your work actually matters.



Contribution

CONTRIBUTION means that you understand how this job, this brand, this product, this paycheck contributes to the company you want to grow, the community to which you want to belong, the person you want to be, or the lifestyle you'd like to live.



Control

CONTROL reflects how you are able to influence your connection to that calling in order to have some say in the assignment of projects, deadlines, colleagues, and clients; offer input into shared goals; and do work that contributes to your career trajectory and earnings.



TEN KEY FINDINGS AND TAKEAWAYS

In the following pages you will find myriad findings and statistics from our research, however these are a few of the key takeaways:

Protect your mid-level managers. Mid-level managers communicate organizational ethos and vision but are resigning specifically because they, themselves, don't have enough of it. While studies show that resignation rates increase at age 30, our data shows that unhappiness begins five years earlier when financial flexibility precludes ease of transition.

Prioritize inspiration. Workers are less motivated by personal gain, and more motivated by leaders who inspire them to be their best, by working on a problem which matters to them, and by having some control over the teams to which they are assigned, their projects on which they work, or the ability to influence their hours or earnings.

Be generationally responsive. Gen Z wants to be an important part of the team. Millennials want to be appreciated for how their work impacts the bigger picture. Gen X wants flexibility for outside demands. Boomers want to feel relevant, included in strategic conversation. All generations want meaning.

Build community around meaning. Millennials and Gen X would work harder, but feel stifled, silenced, and squandered by uninspired leaders and disconnected colleagues.

Hire more veterans. Service veterans desire leadership roles earlier on in their tenure, are far less likely to prioritize pay, but are much more critical of their leaders.

Understand gender differences. Women take a broader view, weaving work and life together to determine overall happiness and satisfaction, while men define their identity more narrowly through the lens of work first, and life second. These gender imbalances get worse as women climb the corporate ladder, where they find themselves stalling out by the Director level.

Invest in your leadership capabilities. Workers are not failing leaders; leaders are failing workers. Very few workers report feeling inspired by their leader, or understanding why their day-to-day work matters and how it affects the overall long-term goals.

Double down on relationships. Bad leaders drive away star players, but even good leaders are at risk too when their employees don't feel like they have a good relationship with them.

Build purpose into work. Nonprofit/Government workers are no more engaged or disengaged than private sector workers, but measure what brings them happiness and purpose differently. Private sector workers can have calling, even if it isn't in the traditional "higher" or "lofty" sense.

Stop blaming the pandemic. The pandemic has had little effect on worker satisfaction but instead has shone a light on what has long been brewing. The happiest post-pandemic workers were no longer burdened by busywork and had more agency over how and when (and where) their work got done.

WORKERS ARE NOT FAILING LEADERS, LEADERS ARE FAILING WORKERS.

Across every demographic, one thing is abundantly clear: it's not workers who are failing leaders, it's leaders who are also failing workers.

While 69.5% of workers say that they do work that makes them proud, only 35.8% say that they serve under a leader who inspires them to be their best, with on average only 40.8% to say that they are the best versions of themselves at work.



Leaders can turn this tide by opening up more frequent channels for feedback, asking more and better questions about projects and problems, and remembering that small check-in moments about immediate crises are more useful than annual reviews or All-Hands type State of the Union speeches which leave them wondering, "Yeah, that's great for the company, but how does this affect ME?"



Quick Tip!

Stop asking "How can I help?" and start asking "What do you need to successfully solve this problem?" The former makes only you the hero, the latter invites them to shine.

GOOD LEADERS WHO LACK RELATIONSHIPS SHARE SIMILAR RISK TO BAD LEADERS.

It's obvious that good leaders will retain more employees than bad leaders. But when workers don't have a strong relationship with good leaders, even those good leaders are at risk of staff dissatisfaction, disengagement, and disappointment.

Workers who serve at bad leader experience helplessness, lack agency to affect change, feel that they are underpaid and under appreciated, don't like their colleagues (no surprise, bad leaders hire bad people), don't respect their leader, and are looking for a side hustle. They do not feel as though they are the best version of themselves at work. Workers who serve a good leader do but report that, while they are mostly satisfied, they could use a little more pay.

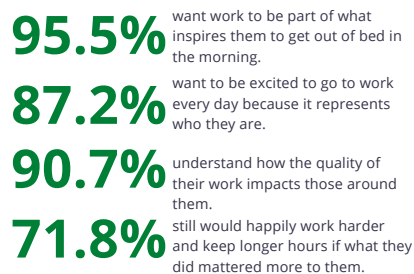
Where things get interesting, however, is that even workers who responded that they serve a good leader feel significantly higher levels of unhappiness if they feel like they have a weak or neutral relationship with that leader. In cases where workers have a less strong relationship than desired, they report having little influence, feeling unimportant, and lacking the agency to be a contributing member of the team.



GOOD LEADERS

GOOD LEADERS BUILD...

Workers inspired by their leaders know how to do their best work.



...BUT THEY CAN IMPROVE.

Even good leaders can do better by workers by including them more.



BAD LEADERS

BAD LEADERS DAMAGE...

Workers who aren't inspired by their leaders feel lost.



...BUT THERE IS HOPE.

Despite bad leadership, these workers are still invested.



GOOD LEADERS WITH NO RELATIONSHIP

NO MATTER HOW GOOD THEY THINK THEY ARE, LEADERS WHO LEAD IN A VACUUM ARE SIMPLY NOT GOOD LEADERS.

Workers who served under a good leader, but who have no relationship with that leader are not much better off.



Quick Tip!

Determine whether you are a good leader or a bad leader by asking your team if they feel empowered to ask for feedback, have agency/influence about how they work, and have an understanding of why their work matters. And, even if you are good, keep building relationships.

MIDDLE AND FUTURE MANAGERS ARE MOST AT RISK OF RESIGNING.

According to data from the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) analyzed by [Ian Cook](#), and [Visier](#), resignation rates are highest amongst workers aged 30 to 45 years old, whose average resignation rates rose by more than 20% between 2020 and 2021.

For many companies this means from middle management all the way up to the most senior ranks, those responsible for setting and spreading corporate culture and goals are considering the exit, something which spells trouble in both the short- and long-term. While recruiting is an excellent opportunity to bring in fresh blood, it can also be a key time to double down on retaining existing team members by giving them what they actually want.

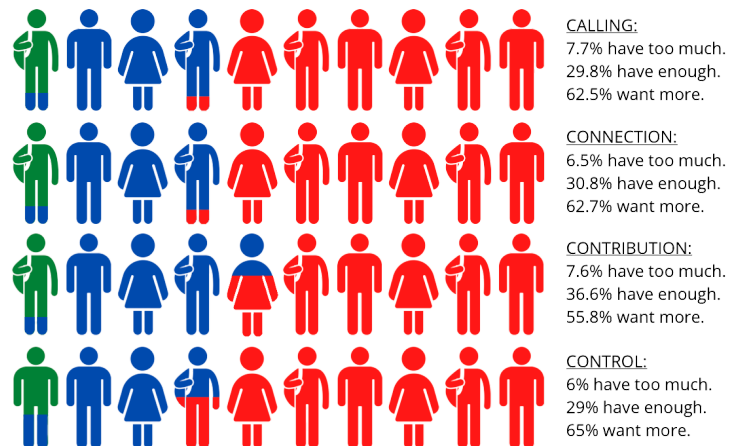
Most surprising of all is that only little more than half (55.8%) of these respondents stated that they needed more contribution from their work than they already had. Another 7.6% said that they had too much. The rewards they were getting from the work they were doing were already satisfactory.

On the other hand, 62.5% were looking for more calling, inspiration to do work that excited them for leaders who inspired them and on problems which

resonated with them, 65% wanted to have more control over the teams to which they were assigned, the projects on which they worked, or they ability to influence their hours or earning through their hustle.

Probably least surprising, at a time when workers have been asking themselves, “Does my work really even matter?” is that 62.7% reported that they wanted more connection from their day-to-day tasks to the big picture.

What is Driving the Great Resignation, Workers Aged 30-45



Key Insight!

Your mid-level managers are the ones most responsible for communicating organizational ethos and vision but are resigning specifically because they, themselves, don't have enough of it.

While studies show that resignation rates increase at age 30, our data shows that unhappiness begins five years earlier when financial flexibility precludes ease of transition.

HIGHER WAGES AND ROBUST BENEFITS ARE NOT A PANACEA FOR A HAPPY WORKFORCE.

...if, that is, you are paying a living wage.

Let's assume that you are paying a living wage. In 2011, Angus Deaton, PhD, and Daniel Kahneman, PhD, reported that the "happiness wage" for US workers was \$75,000, based on 2008 & 2009 Gallup-Healthways Well-Being data points. Adjusted for inflation, that number is now roughly \$93,000 in real wages. However, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average salary in 2021 is \$51,480.

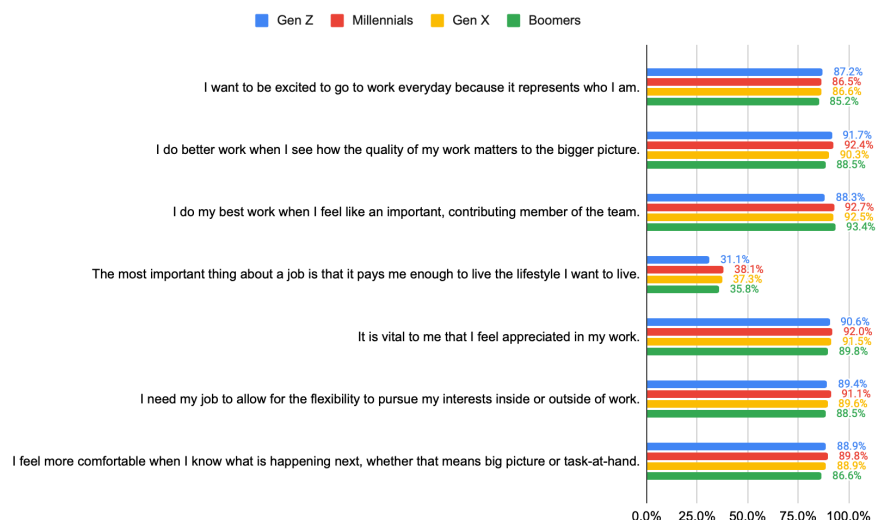
So, that's a big "if." If you are paying a living wage, please continue reading. If you aren't, go fix that first. But, if you are, let's consider that there are a lot of other factors at play in between the living wage and the happiness wage.

The mistake that most managers make is to promise things that will make employees happy, and then assuming that is the end of the problem.

We feel happy at work if we are given great benefits, like free lunch and foosball in the breakroom; if we have an easy commute; salary increases; or if our best friend is in the cubicle next door. These things are good for morale, so managers are constantly

looking for the newest, fanciest perk to trot out as part of the employment proposition.

Here's the problem with that: Any company can hire a clever HR manager who can find the next big thing, whether it's free dry cleaning, dog-friendly offices, or Workout Wednesdays. These things build community, they are good for recruiting, and they look compelling as notices on the back of the door in the bathroom stall. But simple pleasures never last; soon enough, you'll be back on the Hedonic Treadmill looking for the next bright, shiny retention object.



95.1%

of workers want their work to be part of what inspires them to get up every morning.

90.9%

of workers report that it is vital to them that they feel appreciated in their work.

90.4%

of workers do better work when they see how the quality of their work matters to the big picture.

92.4%

of workers do their best work when they feel like they are an important, contributing member of the team.

34.6%

of workers say that their work gives deeper meaning to their spiritual and/or community values.

36.7%

of workers say that the most important thing about a job is that it pays them enough to live the lifestyle they want.



Quick Tip!

Instead of carrots, offer consonance. Instead of a checklist, offer meaning. Regularly allow space in meetings to point out the accomplishments of your team, taking care not just to recognize their achievements but how those achievements enable the entire organization to fulfill specific goals.

EACH GENERATION WANTS DIFFERENT THINGS FROM THEIR WORK & LEADERSHIP.

By 2025, Millennials will make up 75% of the workforce, so it makes sense to focus on what drives them, if for no other reason than to contradict that common complaint waged against them: that they expect trophies for showing up. It turns out that they do, but so does everyone else.

Each generation wants to be inspired, feel included, and be appreciated in their work.

	GenZ	Millennials	GenX	Boomers
I want my work to be part of what inspires me to get up every morning.	97.2%	95.3%	95.1%	95.6%
It is vital to me that I feel appreciated in my work.	90.6%	96.0%	91.5%	89.8%
I want to be excited to go to work everyday because it represents who I am.	87.2%	86.5%	86.6%	85.2%

But being included, feeling special, and enjoying appreciation looks different to each generation.

I feel empowered to ask for feedback & mentoring.	55.5%	51.2%	50.2%	54.6%
The work that I do feels important to me.	58.3%	56.2%	63.8%	71.6%
I am the best version of myself when I am at work.	39.4%	36.0%	41.1%	48.3%
I only want to do work that helps me get ahead in the future.	52.2%	42.7%	33.4%	27.1%

"Work should be part of what inspires me to get out of bed in the morning, knowing that the quality of my work matters to a goal broader than just me and where I can be an **important** and a contributing member of the team."

- Gen Z

"Work should be part of what inspires me to get out of bed in the morning, so that I am able to do my best work as an important, contributing member of the team, for which I am **appreciated** and where I can draw a direct line between the quality of my work and the company goals."

- Millennials

"Work should be part of what inspires me to get out of bed in the morning, so that I am able to do my best work as an important, contributing member of the team, for which I am appreciated, as long as it is **flexible** for outside demands in my life."

- Gen X

"Work should be part of what inspires me to get out of bed in the morning, where I can be an important, contributing member of the team, where I can remain **relevant**, and where I can be appreciated for my involvement in conversations about strategic direction."

- Boomers



Quick Tip!

Take time to understand what drives each of your employees, whether it is being part of the conversation, enjoying appreciation, accessing feedback/mentoring, or just feeling relevant.

MILLENNIALS AND GEN X WOULD DO MORE, IF GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY.

71.5%

of Millennials would happily work harder and keep longer hours if what they did mattered more.

37.6%

serve under a leader who inspires them to be their best.

56.2%

feel that the work they do is important.

40.1%

feel that the majority of the work they do each day relates to their goals in some way.

92.4%

of Millennials do better work when they see how the quality of their work matters to the big picture.

42.0%

know specifically what they need to do each day to move their goals forward.

47.4%

have sightlines into the bigger picture or strategic plan.

44.2%

see a relationship between their short-term goals and the long-term goals of their employer.

83.6%

of GenXers need to work somewhere where the company and colleagues share interests and values with them.

42.1%

enjoy telling friends and family about their work, their company, or their leader.

30.4%

are surrounded by people they admire and want to emulate.

34.3%

so work that gives deeper meaning to their spiritual needs and/or community values.

71.4%

of GenXers have outside demands that make it important for them to influence the hours they work.

35.1%

are able to influence the amount of money they earn or the number of hours they work.

36.5%

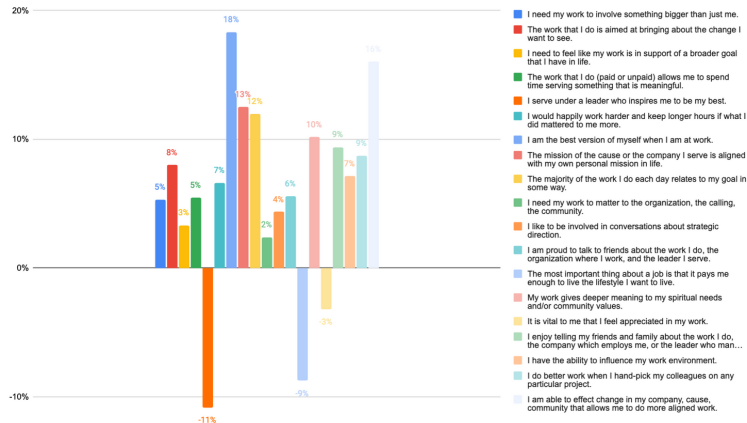
have influence over the metrics by which their work is judged.

45.8%

have input over which projects and teams are assigned to them.

CONSIDER HIRING SERVICE VETERANS AND PUTTING THEM IN CHARGE EARLIER.

Service Veterans -- men and women, across all generations, who have served in AmeriCorps, the Peace Corps, or the military -- have a combination of traits that set them apart in the workforce and which make them ideal for long-term investment.



Service Veterans excel at creative thinking, problem solving, grace under pressure. They know how to prioritize, they have perspective, they bring grit. They have a proven ability to work with people who don't look like them, think like them, or act like them and can bring these skills to management. They know how to bring out the best in their peers, and they know how to lead and how to follow. They are, however, more critical of leadership, likely because

they have been trained in leadership from the beginning of their careers and, regrettably, possibly experienced the tragic consequences of bad leadership.

Service Veterans are quiet in success and thoughtful in defeat. It is in their bones to be loyal in public and honest in private. They've seen the big stuff, so they don't sweat the small stuff, but they also know the small stuff makes the big stuff work.

And, because they were placed in positions of responsibility early in their lives, they are ready to be in charge in the workforce sooner than their peers.

Service Veterans are

18.3%

more likely
than non-Service Veterans
to be the best version of
themselves at work.

Service Veterans are

16.0%

more likely
than non-Service Veterans
to feel like they are able
effect change in their
company, cause, or
community to do more
aligned work.

Service Veterans are

12.5%

more likely
than non-Veterans
to work for a company
that aligns with their
personal mission in life.

Service Veterans are

11.9%

more likely
than non-Service Veterans
to do work each day that
relates to their goals in
some way.

Service Veterans are

3.2%

less likely
than non-Veterans
to say that it is vital that
they feel appreciated in
their work.

Service Veterans are

8.8%

less likely
than non-Veterans
to say that the most
important thing about
their work is that it pays
them enough to live the
lifestyle they want.

Service Veterans are

10.8%

less likely
than non-Service Veterans
to be working under a
leader who inspires them
to be their best.



Quick Tip!

Hire a Service Veteran!

MEN AND WOMEN PRIORITIZE WHAT MATTERS IN THEIR WORK DIFFERENTLY.

Calling

More women than men feel that their work allows them to serve something meaningful, and that their work is aligned with their own personal mission, which is good since more women than men say that it is important for their work to give their life purpose.

However, more men than women say that they would happily work harder or keep longer hours if they felt that their work mattered more.

	MEANINGFUL WORK	MISSION ALIGNMENT	LIFE'S PURPOSE	WORK HARDER
WOMEN	63.5%	47.7%	78.8%	68.0%
MEN	54.2%	34.4%	68.9%	72.6%

Connection

More women than men stated that they needed their work to matter to the organization, calling, or community. More women than men are incentivized by feeling relevant rather than powerful.

Just under 50% of both men and women felt like they had sightlines into how their work impacts the bigger picture, but close to 90% of both said they do better work when they understand this.

	WORK MATTERS	FEELING RELEVANT	SIGHTLINES ABOVE	BETTER WORK
WOMEN	86.1%	87.1%	49.5%	90.1%
MEN	76.3%	76.8%	48.2%	86.1%

Contribution

More women than men feel that the values of their work life align with the values of their home life, and need their job to allow the flexibility to pursue interests both at work and at home.

While more women than men need to feel appreciated in their work, more men than women place an importance on the relevancy of the work they do to get them ahead in the workplace.

	VALUES ALIGNMENT	JOB FLEXIBILITY	FEELING APPRECIATED	GETTING AHEAD
WOMEN	59.0%	90.7%	92.2%	34.5%
MEN	47.7%	81.5%	82.5%	39.6%

Control

More women than men have demands outside of work which makes it important for them to have some agency over the hours they work, though more men than women feel that they actually do have such influence.

Women want influence more than they want power in greater numbers than men, but men say that they feel that they do better work when they can hand-pick their colleagues on any given project.

	OUTSIDE DEMANDS	WORK AGENCY	INFLUENCE DESIRED	HAND-PICK COLLEAGUES
WOMEN	68.3%	33.9%	78.3%	49.7%
MEN	58.8%	39.4%	69.8%	53.4%



Key Insight! Women take a broader view, weaving work and life together to determine overall happiness and satisfaction, while men view weaving work and life together to determine overall happiness and satisfaction. As such, the need to define their identity more narrowly through the lens of work first, and life second, is more acute for men than women. As such, the need to reward accordingly through the different ways each factor weighs each factor differently, and managers must learn to emphasize and reward accordingly.

GENDER IMBALANCES GET WORSE FOR WOMEN AS THEY CLIMB INTO LEADERSHIP.

Unfortunately, not only does it not get easier, it gets exponentially worse for women as they ascend into Director and C-Suite level positions.

Men consistently experience a deficit of **CALLING** compared to their female counterparts at each level of seniority:

	Entry Level	Management	Director	C-Suite
	9.8%	21.4%	8.7%	20.3%

Men experience a reducing deficit in **CONTRIBUTION** until the C-Suite, when they are eclipsed by women:

	Entry Level	Management	Director	C-Suite
	27.4%	22.3%	1.63%	15.1%

Women experience more **CONNECTION** to the work than their male counterparts until they reach Director level:

	Entry Level	Management	Director	C-Suite
	5.1%	12.1%	3.9%	6.4%

Women consistently experience a deficit on **CONTROL** compared to their male counterparts at each level of seniority:

	Entry Level	Management	Director	C-Suite
	10.3%	3.8%	21.4%	61.9%

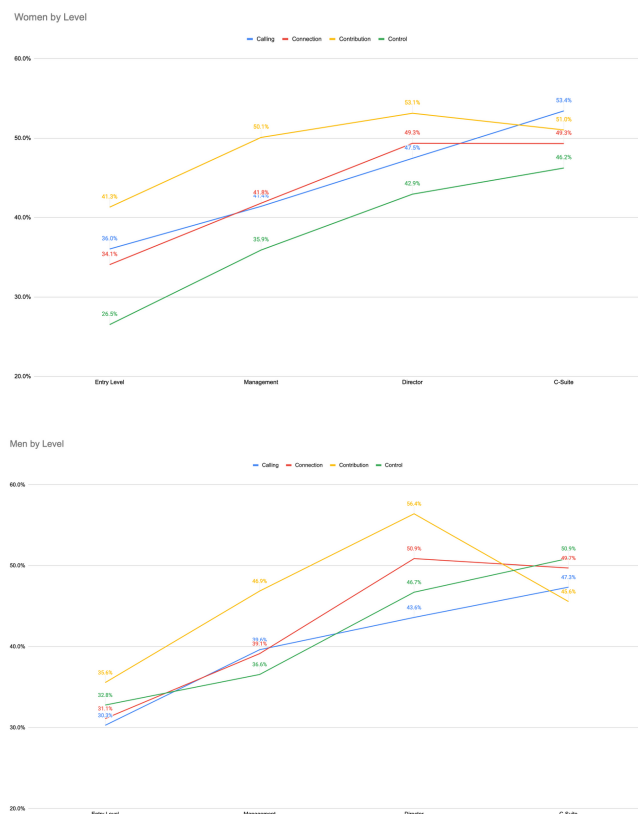
Women feel this level of deficit. Men feel this level of deficit.

At each level of seniority, women are more aligned with their calling, though each (women by 48.3%, men by 56.1%) see an increase as they rise. Throughout their career, 47.7% of women say that the mission or cause of the company they serve is aligned with their personal mission in life, as opposed to just 34.4% of men.

Both women and men stagnate at the director level in terms of how closely their work is connected to their goals. Achieving more power does little for the 87.1% of women or the 76.8% of men who align connection more closely with relevance. Both (92.5% for women, 87% for men) would prefer a seat at the strategic table.

Both women and men lose contribution from their work as they reach the C-Suite. Women become less interested in just doing work that gets them ahead, and more interested in work that involves something bigger than just them. C-Suite Men want most to be appreciated for their work.

As women rise through the ranks, they consistently want more control but find themselves with less. Women, conversely, stall out at Director level and see minimal increases at the C-Suite level, watching their male peers gather a 2-1 increase in control compared to theirs.



WHAT MATTERS MOST TO MEN AND WOMEN AS THEY CLIMB UP THE CORPORATE LADDER?

		MEN	WOMEN
RANKED AS MOST IMPORTANT	ENTRY LEVEL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flexibility to pursue outside interests. Contributing member of team. Sightlines into the bigger picture. Continued education/learning new things. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feeling appreciated for work done. Contributing member of team. Flexibility to pursue outside interests. Work represents personal values/mission.
	MANAGEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involvement in strategy conversations. Contributing member of team. Sightlines into the bigger picture. Feeling appreciated for the work done. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contributing member of team. Feeling appreciated for the work done. Flexibility to pursue outside interests. Sightlines into the bigger picture.
	DIRECTOR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involvement in strategy conversations. Contributing member of team. Desire to do work that earns promotions. Sightlines into the bigger picture. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involvement in strategy conversations. Contributing member of team. Feeling appreciated and relevant. Flexibility to pursue outside interests.
	C-SUITE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involvement in strategy conversations. Contributing member of team. Desire to do work that earns influence. Knowledge of big picture. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work represents something bigger than self. Involvement in strategy conversations. Work represents personal values/mission. Contributing member of team.
		MEN	WOMEN
RANKED AS LEAST IMPORTANT	ENTRY LEVEL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pride in telling friends/family about work. Pay equal to desired lifestyle. Doing work that earns promotions. Ability to influence hours worked. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pay equal to desired lifestyle. Pride in telling friends/family about work. Doing work that earns promotions. Ability to pick team/assignments.
	MANAGEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pride in telling friends/family about work. Pay equal to desired lifestyle. Doing work that earns promotions. Ability to pick team/assignments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Doing work that earns promotions. Pay equal to desired lifestyle. Pride in telling friends/family about work. Ability to pick team/assignments.
	DIRECTOR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pay equal to desired lifestyle. Doing work that earns promotions. Pride in telling friends/family about work. Ability to accommodate outside demands. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Doing work that earns promotions. Pay equal to desired lifestyle. Pride in telling friends/family about work. Ability to pick team/assignments.
	C-SUITE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pay equal to desired lifestyle. Doing work that earns promotions. Pride in telling friends/family about work. Ability to accommodate outside demands. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Doing work that earns promotions. Pay equal to desired lifestyle. Pride in telling friends/family about work. Ability to pick team/assignments.



Quick Tip! More than anything else, your team members want to be included in strategic conversations as contributing members of your team, understand the bigger picture, and be appreciated. These perks are free, and far more valued than the pay increases which consistently rank least important. Bonus tip: mid-career women need more flexibility, too.

GREAT TEAMS FOSTER ENVIRONMENTS WHERE WORKERS CAN BECOME THE BEST VERSIONS OF THEMSELVES.

40.8%

I am the best version of myself
at when I am at work.

59.2%

Agree or Strongly Agree

Neutral, Disagree, or Strongly
Disagree

- Do their best work when they feel like they are an important team member.
- Want work to represent who they are.
- Do better work when they see how the quality matters to the goal.
- Want to feel appreciated in their work.
- Like to be involved in conversations about strategic direction.
- Need their work to involve something bigger than themselves.
- Understand how the quality of their work impacts those around them.
- Are incentivized more by feeling relevant than feeling powerful.
- Want to make an impact on someone or something every single day.
- Feel more comfortable knowing what is happening next.
- Are willing to work hard to get to a place where they are trusted with influence.

- Do not get deeper meaning to their spiritual and/or community values.
- Are not surrounded by people they admire and want to emulate
- Do not serve under an inspiring leader.
- Do not feel able to effect change in their company, cause, or community.
- Do not enjoy telling their friends about their work or their company.
- Do not feel that their day-to-day work relates to the bigger picture.
- Feel unable to influence earnings/hours or team/project assignments.
- Have no influence into the metrics by which their work is judged.
- Feel a lack of alignment with the mission of the organization.
- Do not know specifically what to do each day to move forward.
- Have no sightlines into the bigger picture and how they matter.



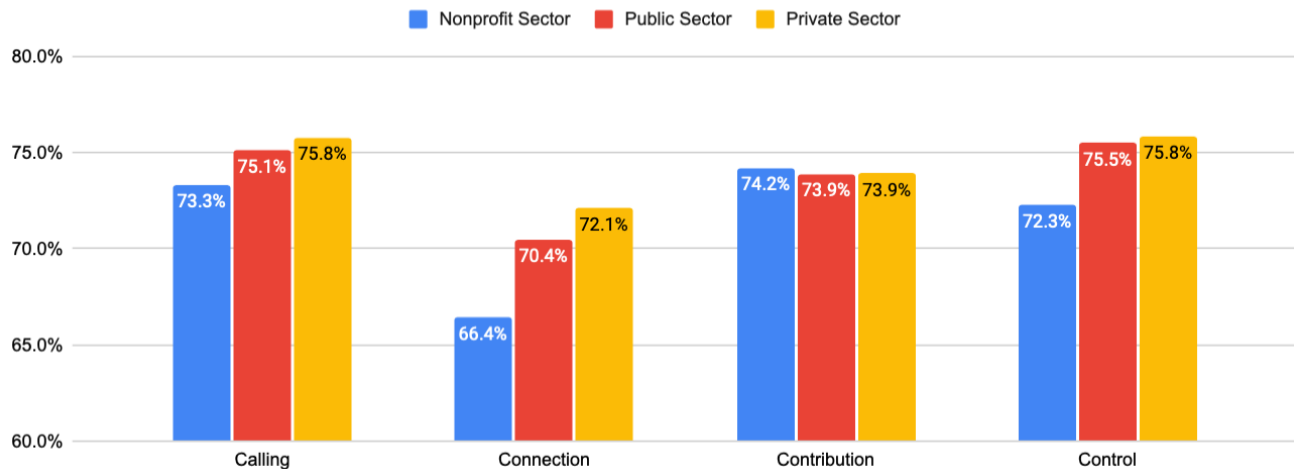
Key Insight!

Workers who feel appreciated and involved, who are given sightlines into strategic decisions, and who are surrounded by team members they admire, reinvest themselves into their organizations and amplify team-building behaviors.

PURPOSE-DRIVEN WORK IS NOT UNIQUE TO THE NON-PROFIT/GOVERNMENT SECTORS.

A common misperception about the workforce is that nonprofit or public sector worker feel more purposeful, selfless, and connected to their jobs than those in the private sector. However, that is not exclusively the case. In fact, on average, 71.6% of nonprofit sector workers are in consonance compared to 73.7% in the public sector and 74.4% in the private sector. In other words, it's fairly even.

Consonance by Sector



So, why is this? It stems for confusion around the idea of *purpose*, that the only jobs with purpose are jobs that include service, and service can only be respected if it involves sacrifice. However, people find purpose in different ways. For some it's curing cancer. For others it's getting out of debt so that their children can make different choices. And, for yet others, it's buying a Maserati and a beach house.

Purpose isn't defined writ large, with only the words *higher* or *lofty* in front of it. It's defined individually. So, while 80.5% of nonprofit workers, 77% of government workers, and 76.2% of private sector workers, say that it is important that their work gives their life purpose, that definition of purpose may be entirely different depending on the person. Regardless, those in consonance are the ones who define it in their own ways, and are in jobs where they can fulfill those goals that are specific to them.

I want my work to inspire me every day.	95.5%	94.7%	94.9%
I enjoy my work more when I can influence how its assigned.	87.1%	87.1%	84.7%
I have input to which teams/projects are assigned to me.	51.4%	50.5%	45.3%
The most important thing is that my job affords my lifestyle.	28.3%	37.0%	38.8%
My job provides me with the lifestyle I want.	49.2%	50.5%	51.2%
I do my best work when I understand the bigger picture.	92.1%	84.5%	91.3%
I have sightlines into the bigger picture or strategic plan.	59.8%	49.8%	49.2%
I know specifically what I need to do each day to move forward.	48.9%	45.2%	47.2%
	NONPROFITS	GOVERNMENT	PRIVATE SECTOR

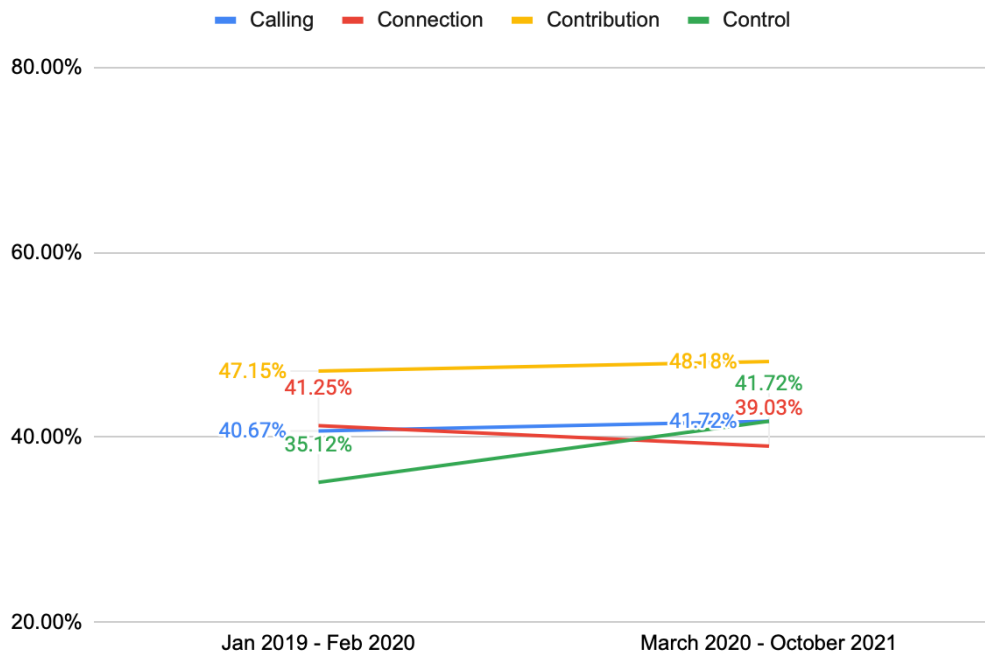
THESE ISSUES HAVE EXISTED SINCE BEFORE THE PANDEMIC.

It would be easy to point to the pandemic and say that it was the culprit behind the sudden unhappiness, disengagement, and dissatisfaction at work. But not only were these issues all present pre-pandemic, it appears that the pandemic did not do much to shift these numbers in any sort of meaningful way. The pandemic merely sharpened the lens through which we all viewed our careers.

When faced with the question, "When life goes back to normal, is the normal I'm going back to really the life I want?" The answer was a resounding "No."

Pre-pandemic and post-pandemic, the top rated determinant of whether an employee was happy at work was whether their work inspired them to get up every morning.

The Pandemic's Effect



Calling increased only 2.59%. Connection decreased by 5.37%, likely caused by remote workers feeling less part of the team. Contribution rose by 2.19%, though it is notable that it was not the primary driver of worker satisfaction pre-pandemic and even with the rise still remains least interesting in a list of more pressing considerations.

The only notable increase was control, at 18.81%, likely caused by companies removing excess and unnecessary projects while focused on survival, and workers having more agency over how and when they got their work done.

More than anything, this is an argument for continued allowances for remote and/or hybrid offices with an increased attention towards building cultures that support employee engagement whether in-person or not.

ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE TODAY TO IMPROVE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Retain While You Recruit

Position descriptions are not just read by job candidates, but often secretly scanned by current colleagues as well. A good job description will excite new candidates to apply, especially some that might not have after reading only a few trite paragraphs of boilerplate information. But a great job description will retell the story of “why” your organization exists and how it dovetails with the callings of your current team members, rekindle the joy and excitement that brought current staff to your organization in the first place, and connecting them to how their day-to-day work fits into the bigger picture.

Additionally, the writing of the position description can be used to bring your team together to discuss central themes and challenges facing the new hire. Meeting with them early will also increase the likelihood that they feel some control and investment in the process and the success of your newest staff member, as well as their own retention. You will benefit by asking questions of key staff and stakeholders who will surround the new hire, which will inform the position description, and in turn, enrich the conversations, the interviews, and evaluation process both presently and in months and years to come through a new, shared, and re-invigorated language and goal posts.

In other words, a great position description will not only make the hiring process smoother, it will sell the organization externally and internally, serve as a mini-strategic planning session, provide performance evaluation clear to the hire and the supervisor, and build interpersonal relationships that have been strained by pandemic-driven distance.

Change Your Message

If your all-hands meetings are not lighting a spark in your team members, it's time to stop and ask if you are speaking their language. Most leaders regale their staff with exciting tales of the future -- big ideas, bombastic predictions, larger-than-life goals -- while the sad truth is that the only one who deeply cares about this is the leader. While pie-in-the-sky dreams feel great to those in charge, everyone else is befuddled, wondering, “Well, where do I fit in to this scenario? Do I still have a job? How will this affect my hours, my earnings, my happiness?”

Most leaders never draw a line from the big goals to how the individual team players will help to (and be rewarded for) making this happen, leaving those workers polishing up their resumes in anxiety-fueled confusion.

Rather than giving the speech *you* want to hear, think about instead giving the speech *they* need to hear, highlighting the importance of their roles, how the work will be measured, and where you will need their input to get there better and faster, together.

CONTINUED ACTION STEPS...

Check In More Often

The distance between project completion and year-end review is often so long that it renders feedback foggy, generic, and useless. Workers leave feeling less appreciated and more confused, with precious little specifics in terms of areas to improve. What's worse: in the absence of feedback, whether filled with praise or criticism, workers feel less connected to their leaders, driving even good leaders to lose star players who feel they have no relationship with them.

Rather than wait for the end of year review, check in with you team more often, leaning in to the fact that they are closer to the project and can help you understand how to lead them through it better. Listen more, ask them what they need, facilitate an environment where they can be the best versions of themselves at work, and that team will flourish and build up everyone around them as well.

Open the Curtain

So many of the indicators of dissatisfaction come from workers not feeling valued, but the correlation to these emotions isn't through their bank accounts but through their hearts and minds. Workers are confused about how their work matters, why their work is important, and what their work means to the overall bigger picture. Share more, and share more often about these things, even if you feel like you're doing it too much.

Redefine Success

Getting your staff to be engaged (or re-engaged) in their work is not as simple as throwing more money at them. In fact, even when that does work, it proves to be a short-term solution, leading to a toxic culture that incentivizes the worst behaviors amongst your team. There is a better, and cheaper, fix.

Each of your team members defines success differently from each other and, quite possibly, differently from you. Spend time understand what drives them by asking them what brought them to this work, this cause, this team, this organization. Be open to the fact that their answers might surprise, confuse, or even inspire you.

Assess Your Team

Take the [Limitless Assessment](#) and discuss the results.

The best way to understand how your team defines success and to help them attain more of it, is to take a deep dive into the topics discussed in this report. By taking the Limitless Assessment, you can learn where your team is lacking, and where you can fill in the gaps, adjust your leadership style, or craft the correct solutions.

WANT TO DIVE DEEPER?

Hire Laura to Consult

You can't fix what you haven't diagnosed. And, yet, leadership course after leadership course throws generic solutions and platitudes at assumptions about what's ailing your staff.

Using advanced data analysis tools and decades of wisdom, Laura can run a company-wide assessment, whether you have 10 staff or 100,000, and quickly tell you specifically where your organization is at risk, which teams are most likely to flail and fail, and what you need to do to change the results from surviving to thriving.

Hire Laura to Coach

Laura is in high demand as a coach for those facing (or who want to face) massive moments of career and life transformation. She has been named one of the Top 100 Executive Coaches in the World by Dr. Marshall Goldsmith, and has been voted the #2 Start-Up Coach and #10 Motivational Speaker in the world by Global Gurus.

Laura's unique superpower is to get people unstuck. She sees the patterns that are unrecognized by most, identifying the greatness in others and reflecting it back on them in ways that they can either finally believe it and actually act upon it. She uses these skills, honed over a career of working with thousands of executives to draw with her clients the roadmap through their current circumstances to empower them to do breakthrough work.

Hire Laura to Speak

Engaged workers are 22% more productive and profitable for their employers, but what recruits the employee doesn't retain the employee. Stop using an outdated scorecard to motivate your team and start tuning into (and turning on) their purpose, passion, and priorities.

This inspiring and action-oriented keynote is for business owners, corporate leaders, executives, directors, supervisors, and management attendees at industry conferences or individual organizational events.

Learn more about to use the framework on consonance, the cornerstone of Laura's bestselling book, *Limitless*, to re-engage your employees and maximize their productivity and profitability.

METHODOLOGY

Data from 5,606 respondents was collected from January 2019 through October 2021. Respondents learned about the assessment after hearing Laura Gassner Otting speak on stage, on screen, on television, radio, or podcast, and therefore had at least a basic understanding of the concepts surveyed by the questions.

Fourteen questions were asked about each segment of consonance (calling, connection, contribution, and control), divided into “Quotient” (how much the respondent currently has) and “Compulsion” (how much the respondent wants). Answers were provided on a Liekert Scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree.

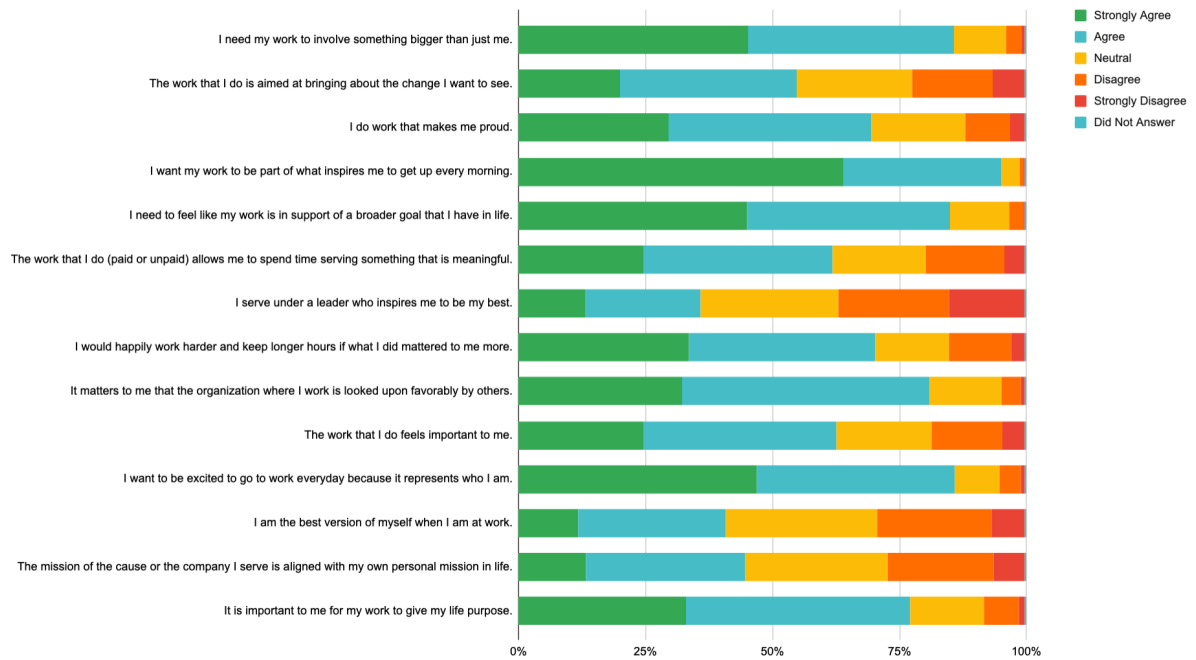
Trust Insights was engaged to assist in the extraction, transformation, and processing of data from the Limitless Assessment. The survey sample comprised 5,606 responses from 74 nations with a concentration in the United States of America. Survey responses were not weighted or ranked and are thus not representative of the population as a whole.

Results indicating gender excluded those individuals who chose not to answer, 2.19% of respondents, and those individuals who chose a category other than identifying as male or female, 0.33% of respondents.

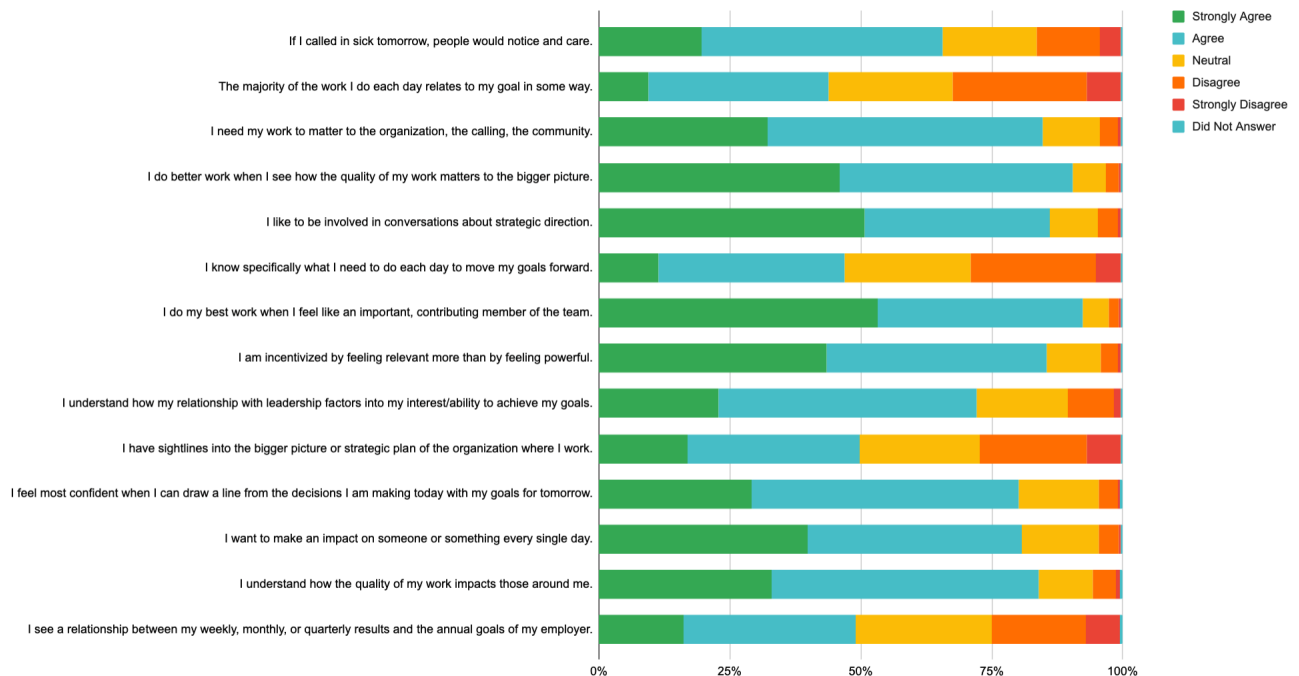
All data were loaded and cleaned in the R statistical programming language and visualized in Tableau Software and Excel.



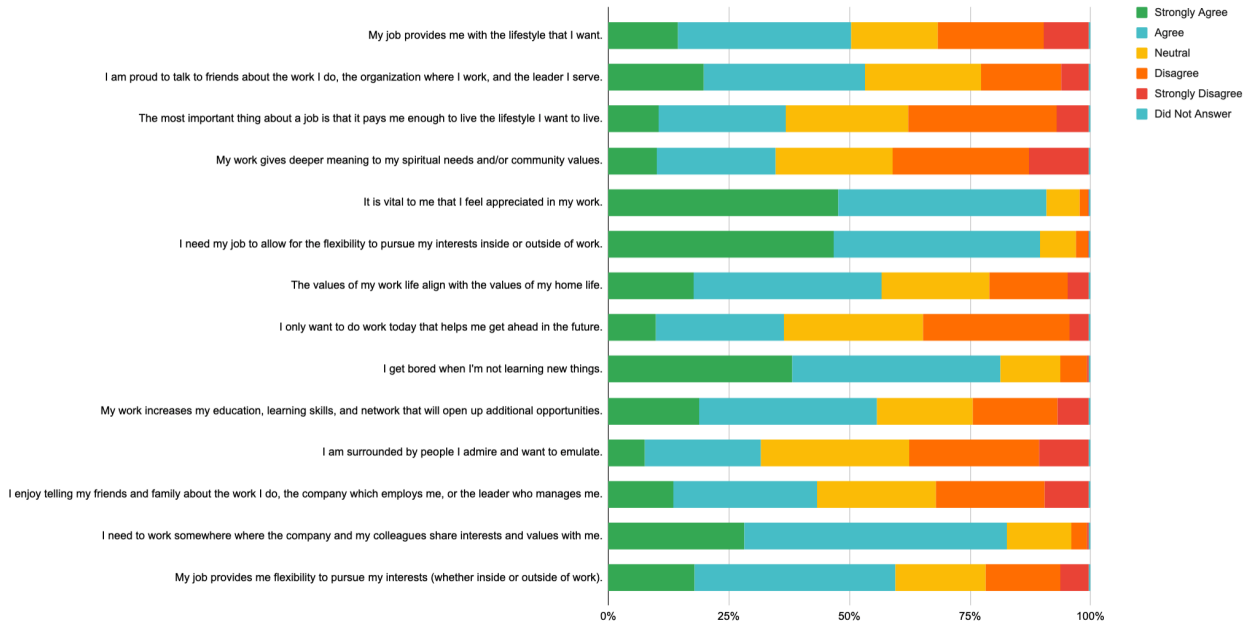
QUESTIONS TO MEASURE CALLING QUOTIENT AND COMPULSION



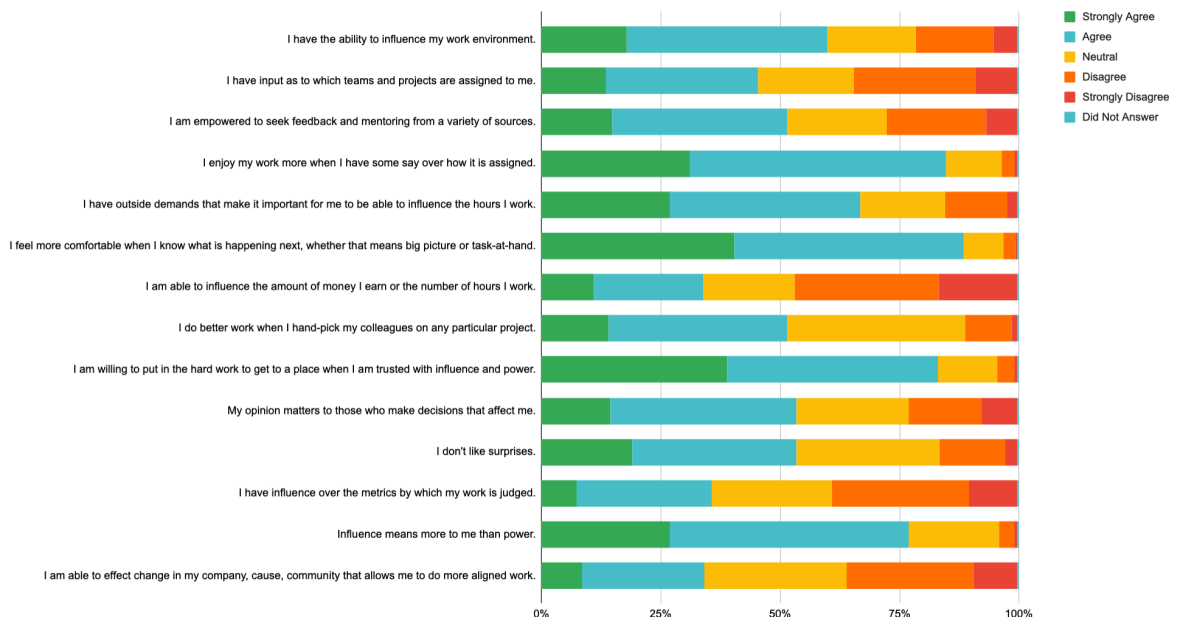
QUESTIONS TO MEASURE CONNECTION QUOTIENT AND COMPULSION



QUESTIONS TO MEASURE CONTRIBUTION QUOTIENT AND COMPULSION

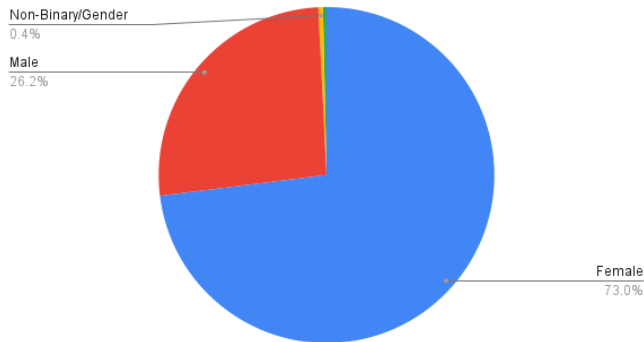


QUESTIONS TO MEASURE CONTROL QUOTIENT AND COMPULSION

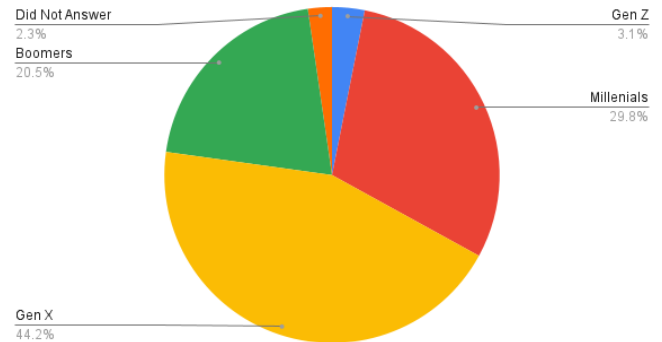


DEMOGRAPHIC DATA ABOUT ASSESSMENT RESPONDENTS

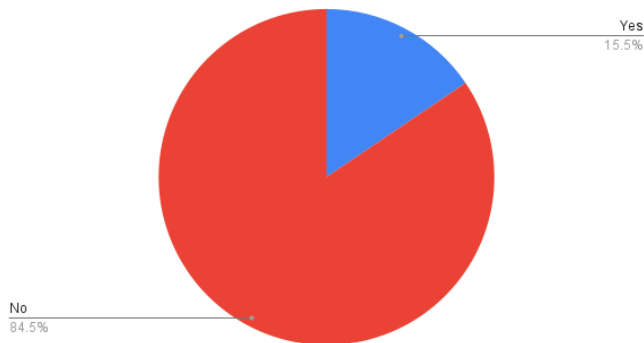
Gender



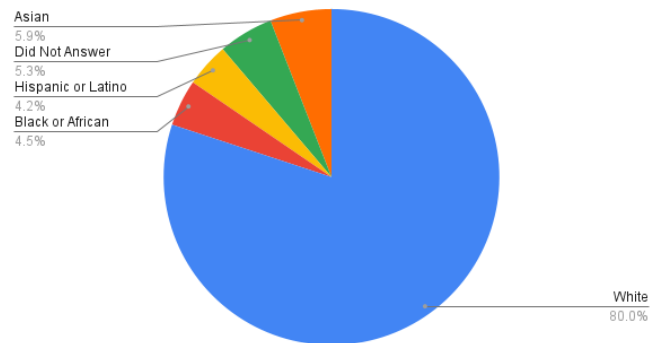
Age



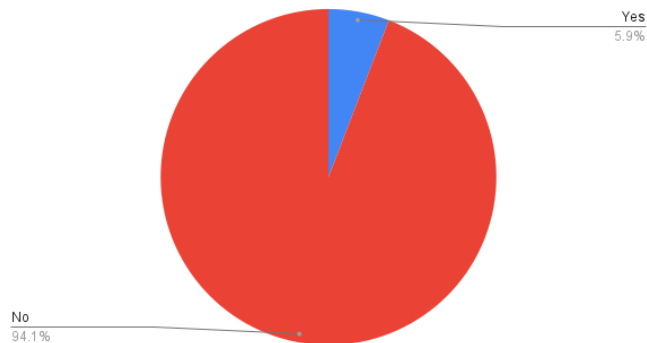
Are you self-employed?



Race

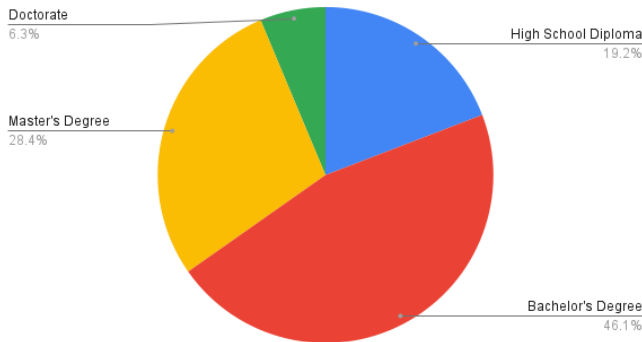


Service Veteran (AmeriCorps, Peace Corps, or the military)

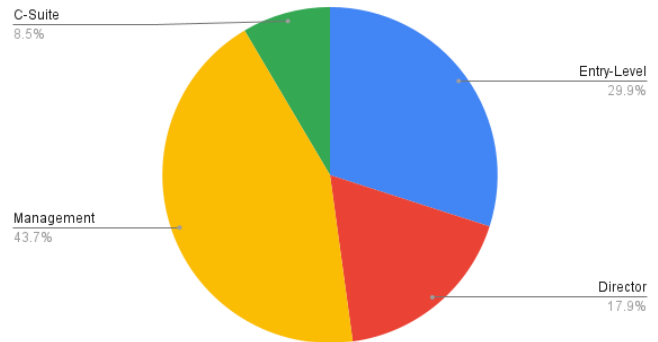


EDUCATION/WORK DATA ABOUT ASSESSMENT RESPONDENTS

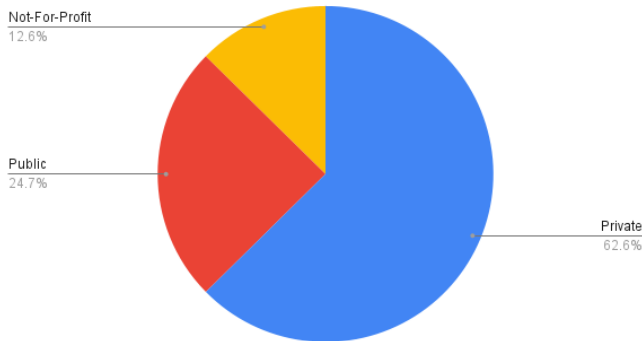
Level of Education



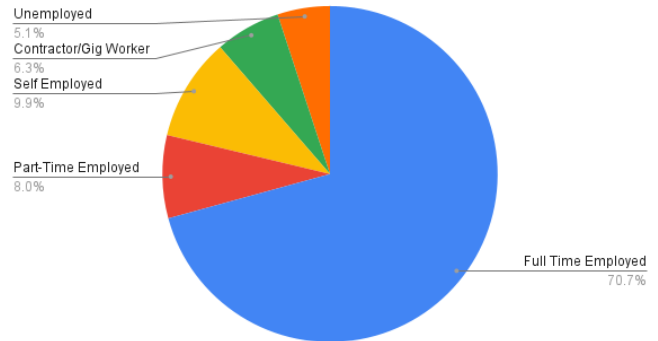
Level of Seniority



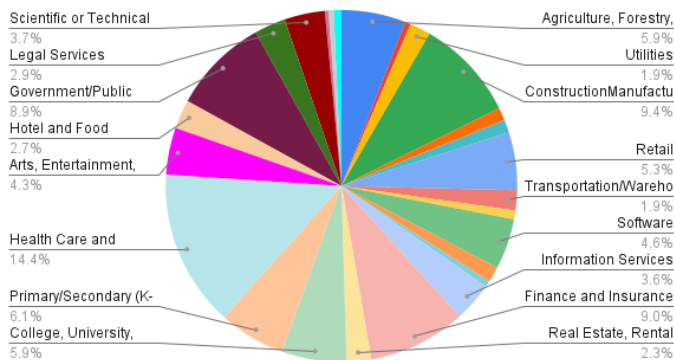
Sector



Work Status



Field of Work



LAURA GASSNER OTTING

Washington Post Best Selling Author and Keynote Speaker, Laura Gassner Otting, inspires people to push past the doubt and indecision that keep great ideas in limbo because her presentations make listeners think bigger and accept greater challenges that reach beyond their limited scope of belief.

She delivers strategic thinking, well-honed wisdom, and perspective generated by decades of navigating change across the start-up, nonprofit, political, as well as philanthropic landscapes. Laura dares listeners to find their voice, and generate the confidence needed to tackle larger-than-life challenges. She leads them to seek new ways of leading, managing and mentoring others.

Laura's entrepreneurial edge has been well-honed over a 25-year career that started as a Presidential Appointee in Bill Clinton's White House, where she helped shape AmeriCorps. She left a leadership role at the respected nonprofit search firm, Isaacson, Miller, to expand the startup ExecSearches.com. Laura also founded and ran the Nonprofit Professionals Advisory Group, which partnered with the full gamut of mission-driven nonprofit executives, from start-up dreamers to scaling social entrepreneurs to global philanthropists. In 2015, Laura sold NPAG to the team that helped her build it, both because she was hungry for the next chapter and because she held an audacious dream of electing our nation's first female president.

Along the way, while serving on Hillary Clinton's National Finance Committee, she was asked to do a TEDx talk which became so popular that it launched a speaking career. Laura has spoken across the United States and internationally to universities, companies, conferences, accelerators, TEDx, and the US Military.

She is the author of *Mission-Driven: Moving from Profit to Purpose* (2015) and the Washington Post Best Seller *Limitless: How to Ignore Everybody, Carve Your Own Path, and Live Your Best Life* (2019) which was chosen by Robin Roberts as one of Good Morning America's Favorite Books of the Year.

Her new book *Wonderhell: Why Success Doesn't Feel Like It Should... and What to Do About It* debuts in April 2023.



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MEDIA INQUIRIES

We would welcome you to cover these findings on your media platform, and provide for you the following resources to make your job easier.

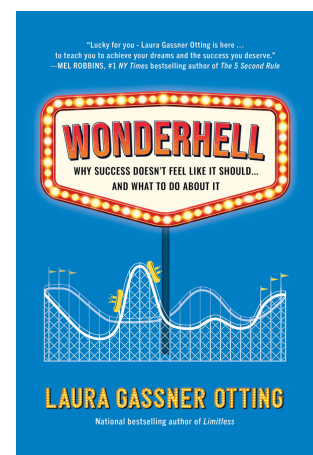
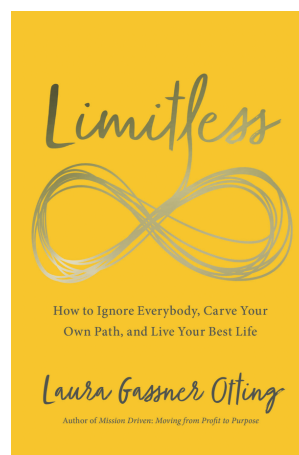
HEADSHOTS

Find your choice of serious, silly, casual, and formal headshots [here](#).



BOOKS

Laura's books can be found on her website at LauraGassnerOtting.com.



NEED MORE?

If you need more, including a formal bio, details about this reports, or some a's to your q's, just give us a shout!

LGO@LimitlessPossibility.com

