

2026 | 6TH EDITION

THE ENGAGEMENT FALLACY

Why employee engagement fails to drive real business outcomes (and what does instead)

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THE
INTEGRAL
INDEX

Integral

Ragan | CLC

Six years. 12,000+ employees. One question.

What actually fosters the employee behaviors organizations need to be successful?

2026 INTEGRAL INDEX | SIXTH EDITION

2,006

full-time U.S. employees,
weighted to census

100+

employee organizations only

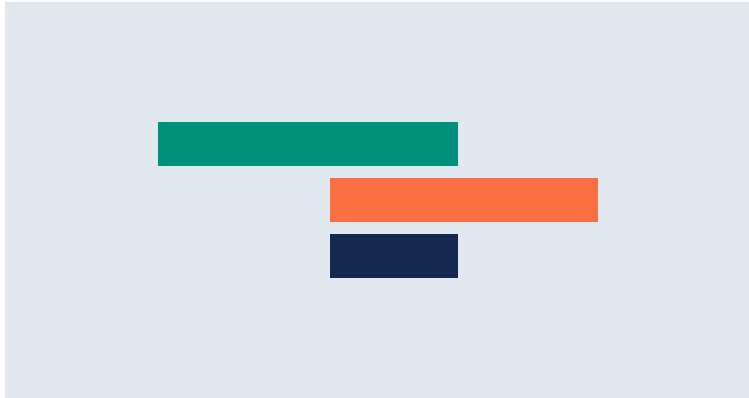
Feb '26

fielded February 3–18 with The
Harris Poll



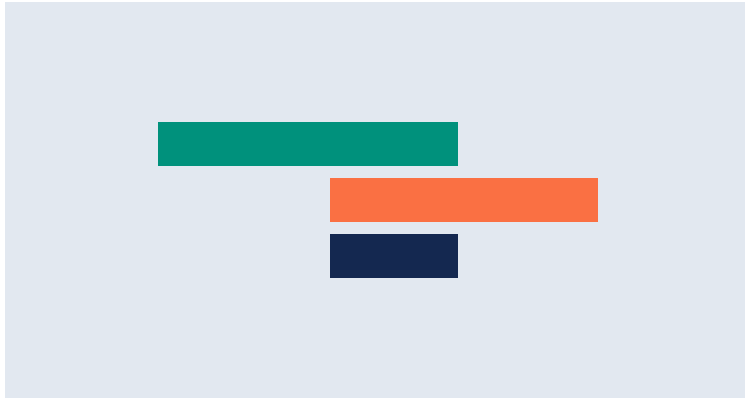
Six findings about today's workforce.

The last one is the literal payoff.



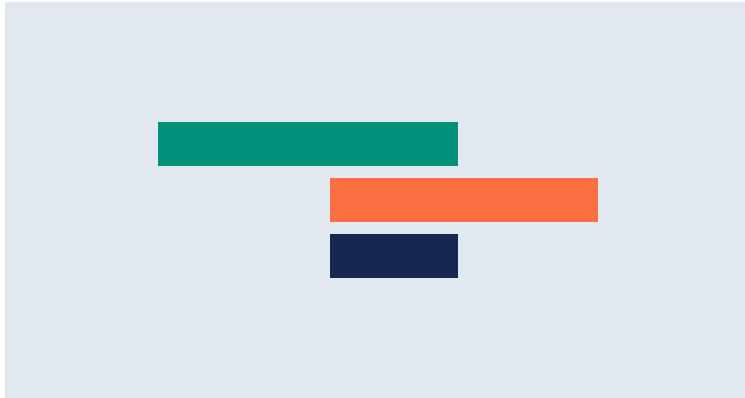
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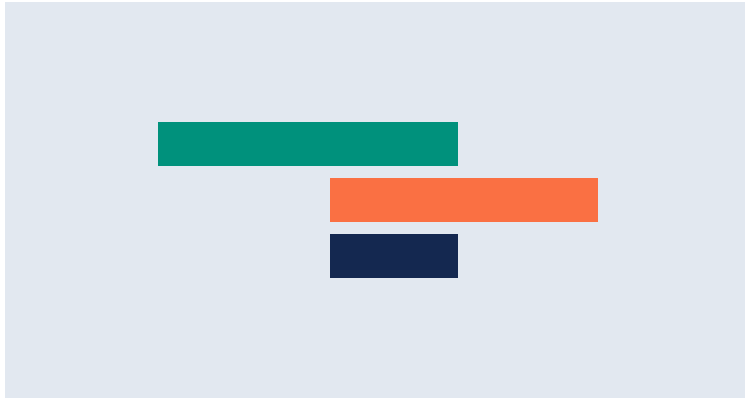
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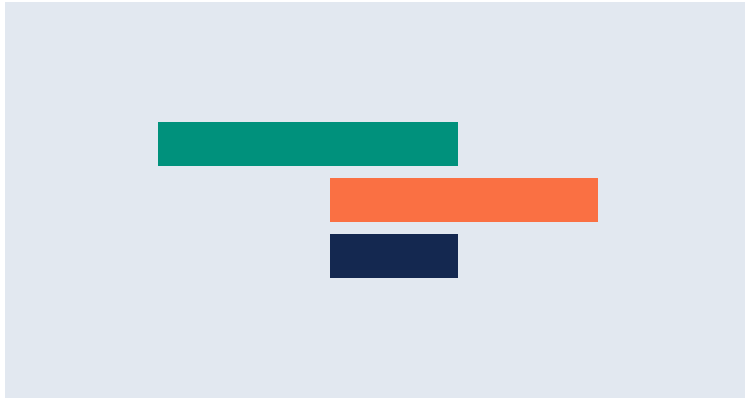
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Six findings about today's workforce.

The last one is the literal payoff.



5 Conditions



Engagement is a lousy predictor of employee behavior.

Two lenses on the U.S. workforce.

76% are engaged.

Emotionally energized by their work
Have a purpose at work
Work is very important to them
Say they're highly engaged in their organization

Engagement is a lousy predictor of employee behavior.

Two lenses on the U.S. workforce.

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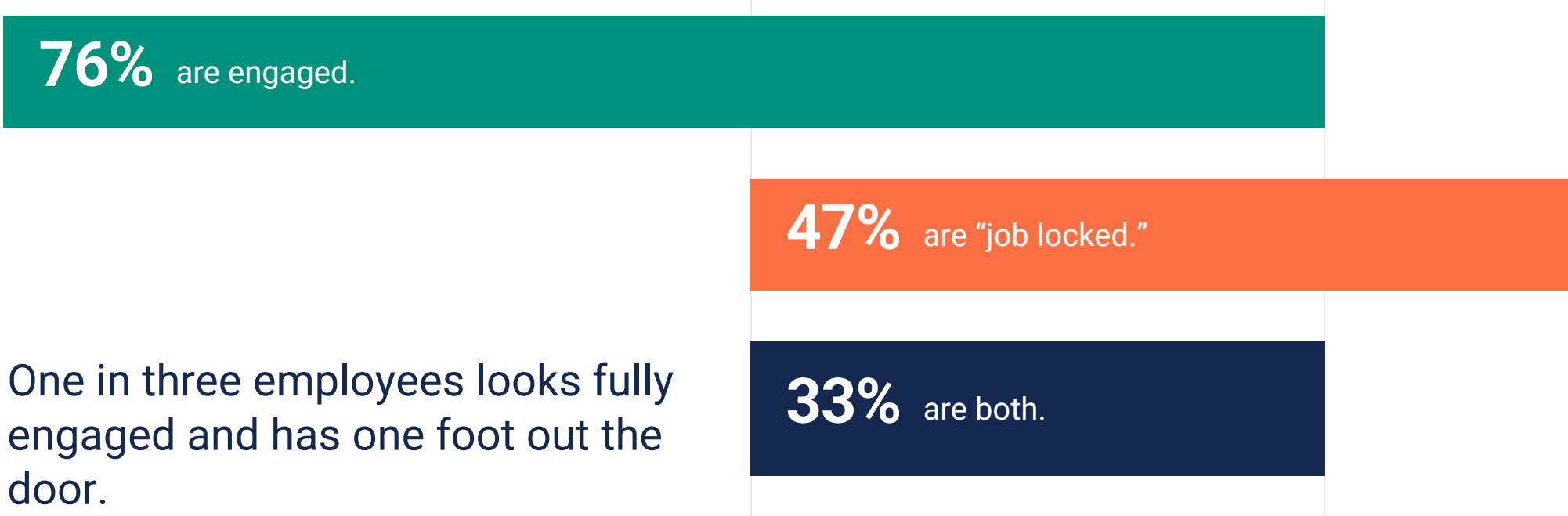
Emotionally energized by their work
Have a purpose at work
Work is very important to them
Say they're highly engaged in their organization

47% are "job locked."

Would consider leaving their job but for a fear of losing benefits like health care

Engagement is a lousy predictor of employee behavior.

Two lenses on the U.S. workforce.



A horizontal bar chart with three bars of different colors: teal, orange, and dark blue. The teal bar is the longest, followed by the orange bar, and then the dark blue bar. The text is placed inside each bar. The teal bar contains '76% are engaged.', the orange bar contains '47% are "job locked."', and the dark blue bar contains '33% are both.'.

Category	Percentage
Engaged	76%
Job locked	47%
Both	33%

76% are engaged.

47% are "job locked."

33% are both.

One in three employees looks fully engaged and has one foot out the door.

We asked what employees think their colleagues will do (people under-report their own negative behavior).

SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT BEHAVIORS

Go the extra mile for a colleague or client

Stay through challenging times

Mentor one another

Defend the organization in a crisis

Share positive experiences online

CORROSIVE ENVIRONMENT BEHAVIORS

Warn a candidate away

Not comply with policies

Post negative reviews online

Disclose confidential information

Sabotage the organization

FINDING 1

We asked what employees think their colleagues will do (people under-report their own negative behavior).

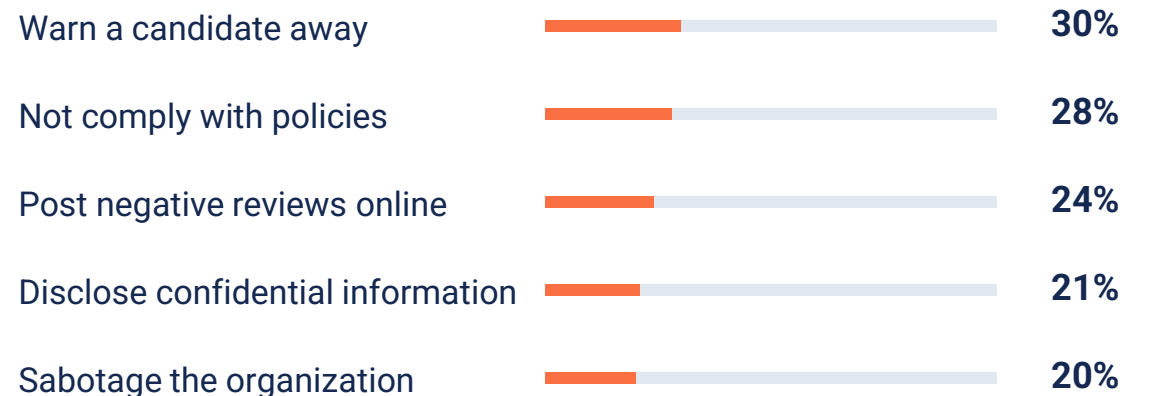
SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT BEHAVIORS

% SAYING THEY EXPECT THEIR COLLEAGUES TO DO THIS



CORROSIVE ENVIRONMENT BEHAVIORS

% SAYING THEY EXPECT THEIR COLLEAGUES TO DO THIS

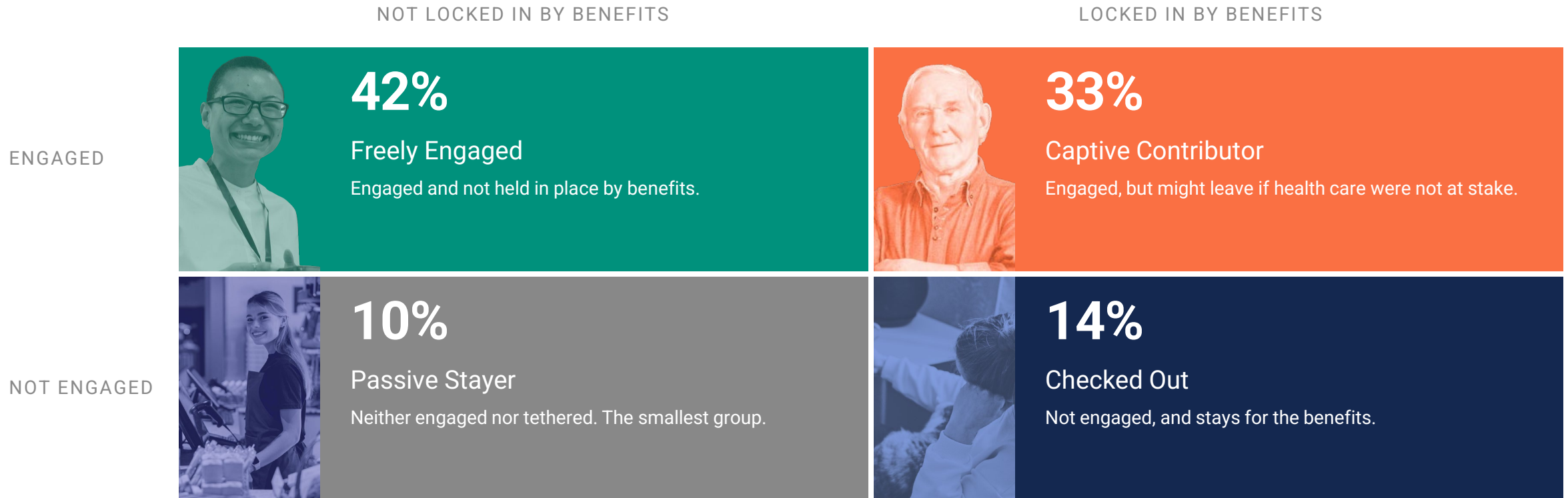


Q560: "How likely are people in your organization to do each of the following?" Top-two box (extremely or somewhat likely). Supportive is Q560 R1, R2, R5, R8 plus Q556 R1 ("I would share positive personal experiences of working at my organization on a website like Glassdoor, LinkedIn, Indeed, Fishbowl, etc.," strongly or somewhat agree); Corrosive is Q560 R9, R10, R13, R14, R19. Weighted. Base: all employees, n=2,006.

FINDING 1

The cohort nobody is looking at.

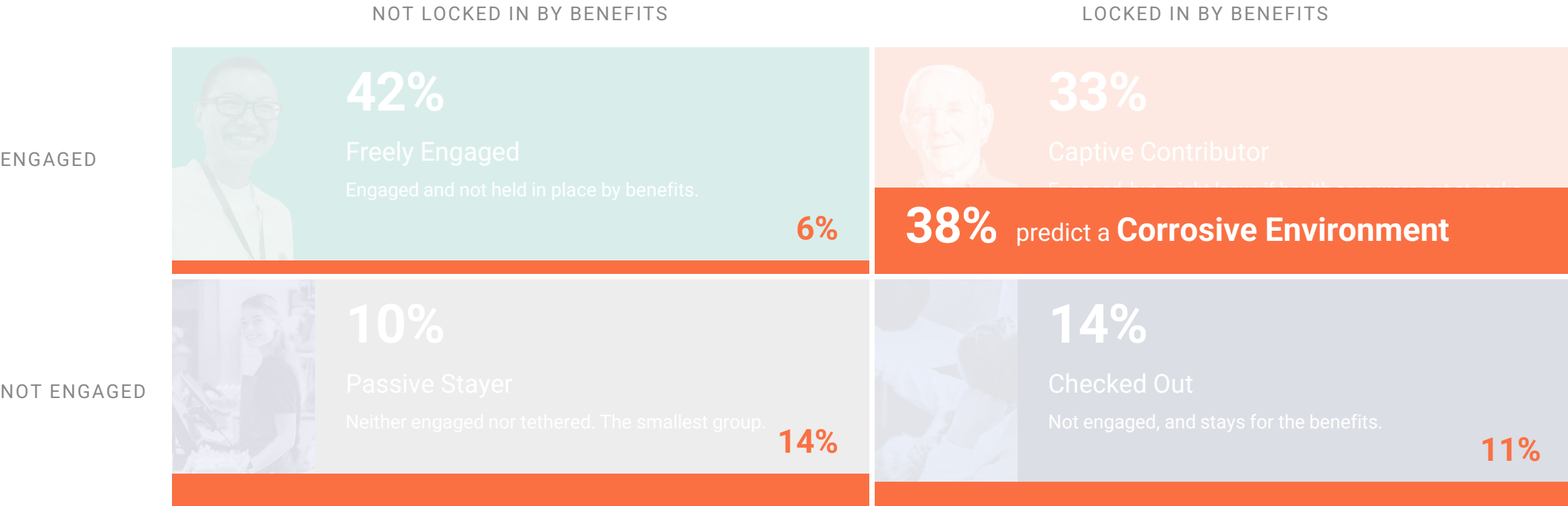
Cross engagement with job lock and you get four archetypes.



FINDING 1

What's hiding in captivity?

Captive Contributors predict a Corrosive Environment at more than 3x the rate of the Checked Out and more than 6x the Freely Engaged.



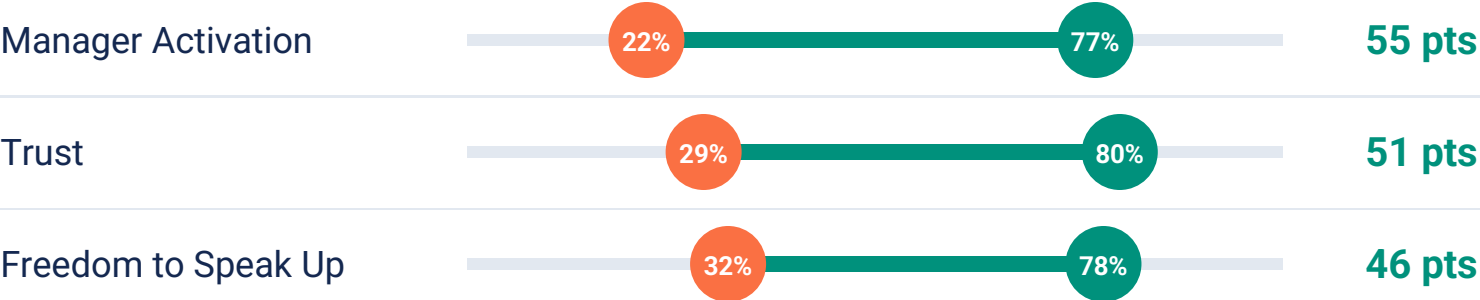
Share predicting a Corrosive Environment (Q560 R9, R10, R13, R14, R19 composite, mean 3.41 or above) within each archetype. Weighted: Captive Contributor 38%, Passive Stayer 14%, Checked Out 11%, Freely Engaged 6%. Unweighted bases 715 / 177 / 243 / 871.

Five conditions relate to what employees do.

Each is associated with a double-digit shift in predicted colleague behavior.

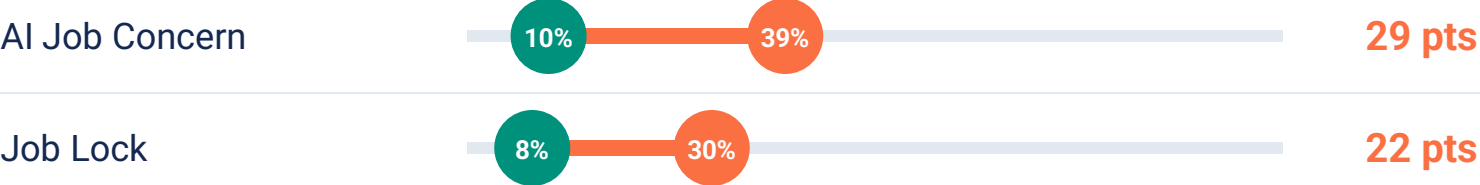
THREE LIFT THE WORKPLACE UP

% PREDICTING A **SUPPORTIVE** ENVIRONMENT | WEAK (LEFT) VS. STRONG (RIGHT)



TWO DRAG IT DOWN

% PREDICTING A **CORROSIVE** ENVIRONMENT | WEAK (LEFT) VS. STRONG (RIGHT)



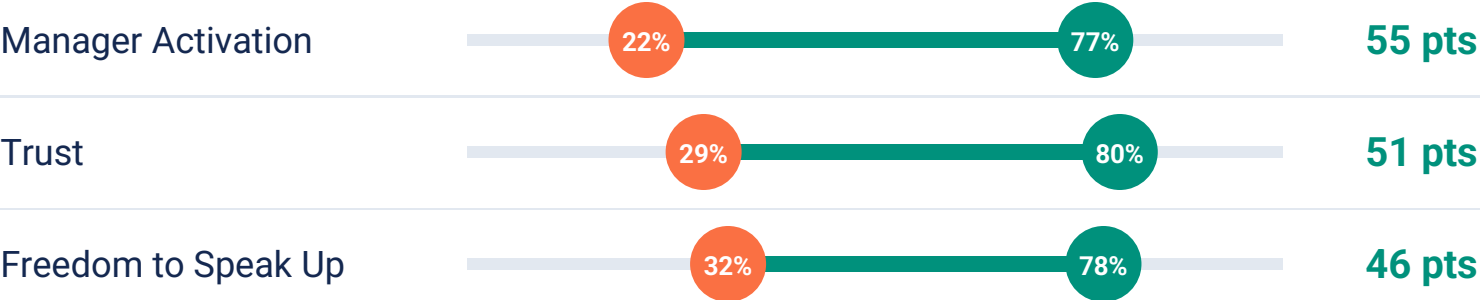
AI Job Concern is based on employees who use AI at work, n=1,456. The other four conditions are based on all employees, n=2,006.

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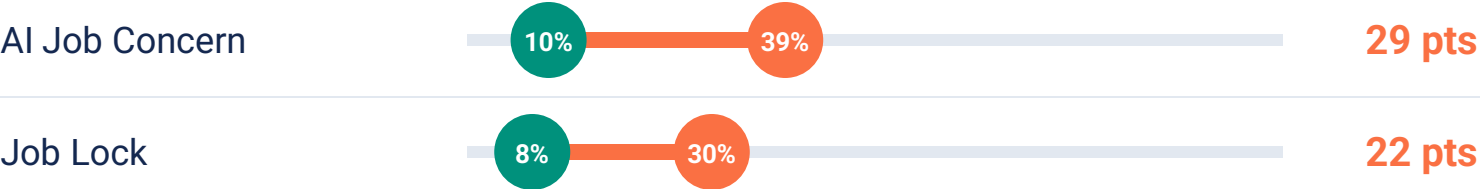
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HOW COMMON EACH CONDITION IS TODAY
All five are addressable.

Manager Activation	76%
Freedom to Speak Up	70%
Trust	68%
Job Lock	47%
AI Job Concern	41%

AI Job Concern is based on employees who use AI at work, n=1,456. The other four conditions are based on all employees, n=2,006.

FINDING 3

Managers are the biggest lever.

The largest single effect of any condition in the framework.

+55 pts

lift in expected supportive behavior when a manager is activated

% PREDICTING A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT



On commitment the pattern repeats: 26% under a weak manager, 66% under a strong one.

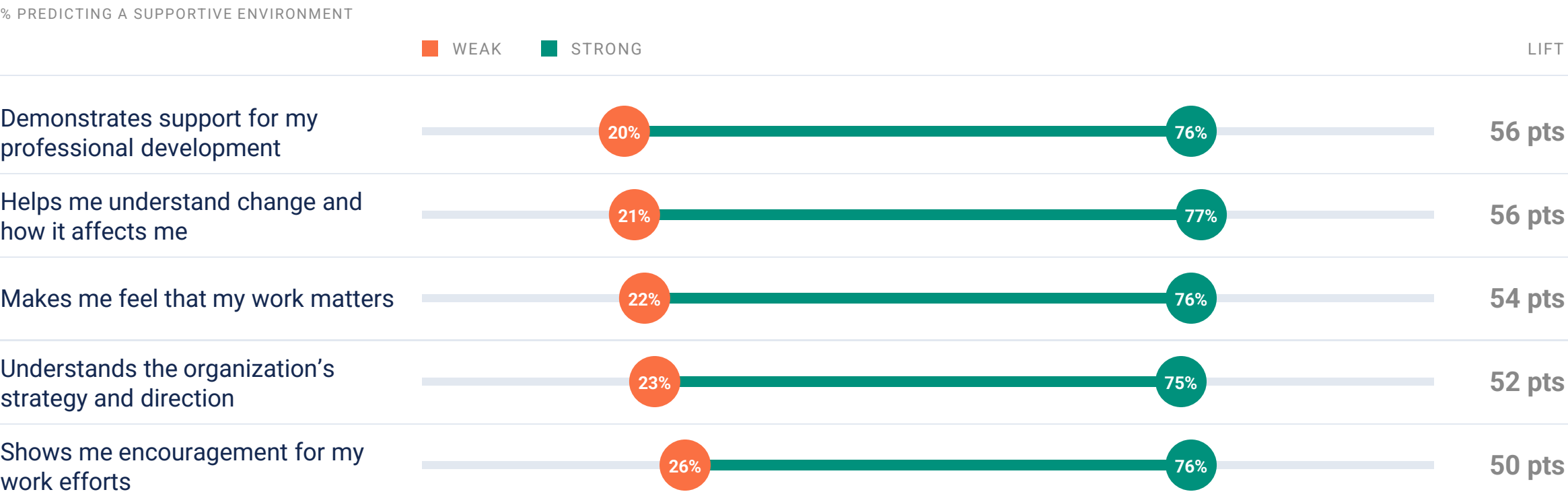
Commitment: Q560 R20, top-two box. Would stay with the organization even if offered an equivalent job at equal pay elsewhere. Manager Activation high n=1,519, low n=487.



FINDING 3

Not every manager behavior is worth the same.

All nine activation behaviors clear 46 points. These are the five largest.

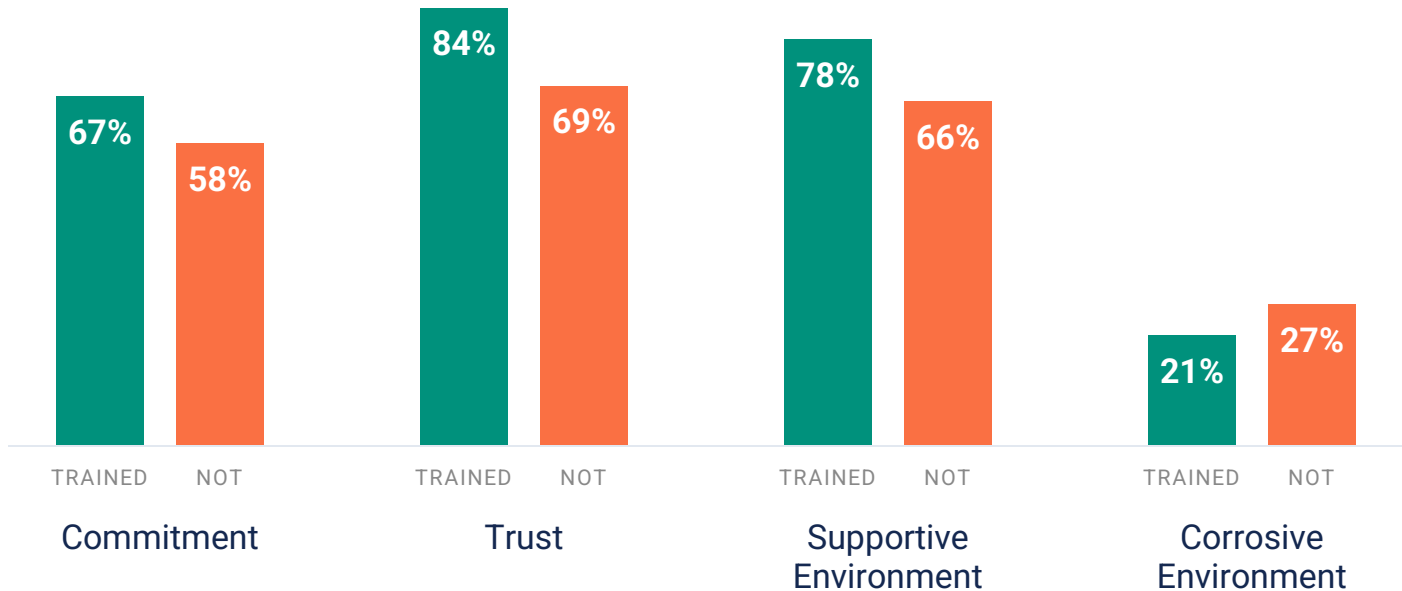


For each Q801 manager-behavior item, the percentage-point difference in the Supportive Environment rate between employees in the top-two box and those in the bottom-two box. Base: all employees, n=2,006.

FINDING 3

Trained managers come out ahead on all four measures.

% OF MANAGERS AT THE STRONG END OF EACH MEASURE



Managers only (Q456 1-3). Trained = yes on Q900 R1, received training in employee communications. Trained n=724, untrained n=642.

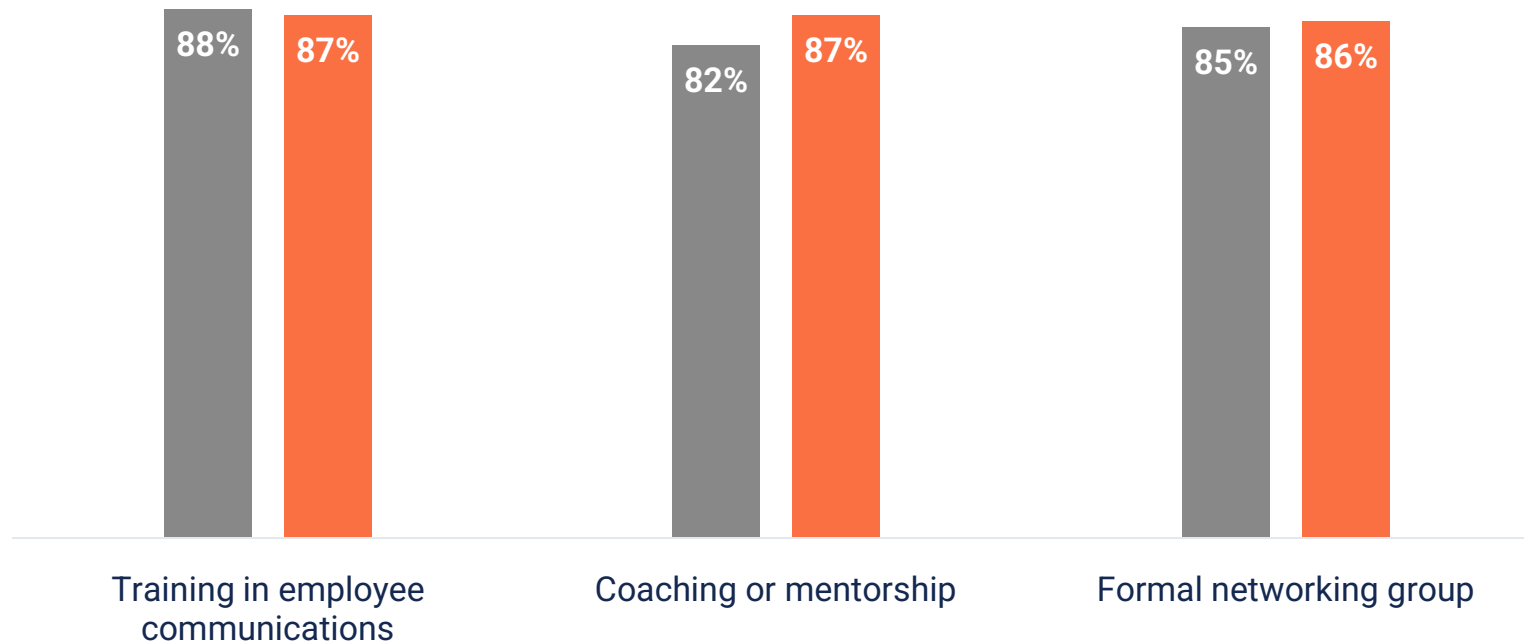


FINDING 3

Managers value support in employee communications.

% OF MANAGERS WHO AGREE EACH FORM OF SUPPORT HELPED THEM COMMUNICATE MORE EFFECTIVELY

■ 2025 ■ 2026



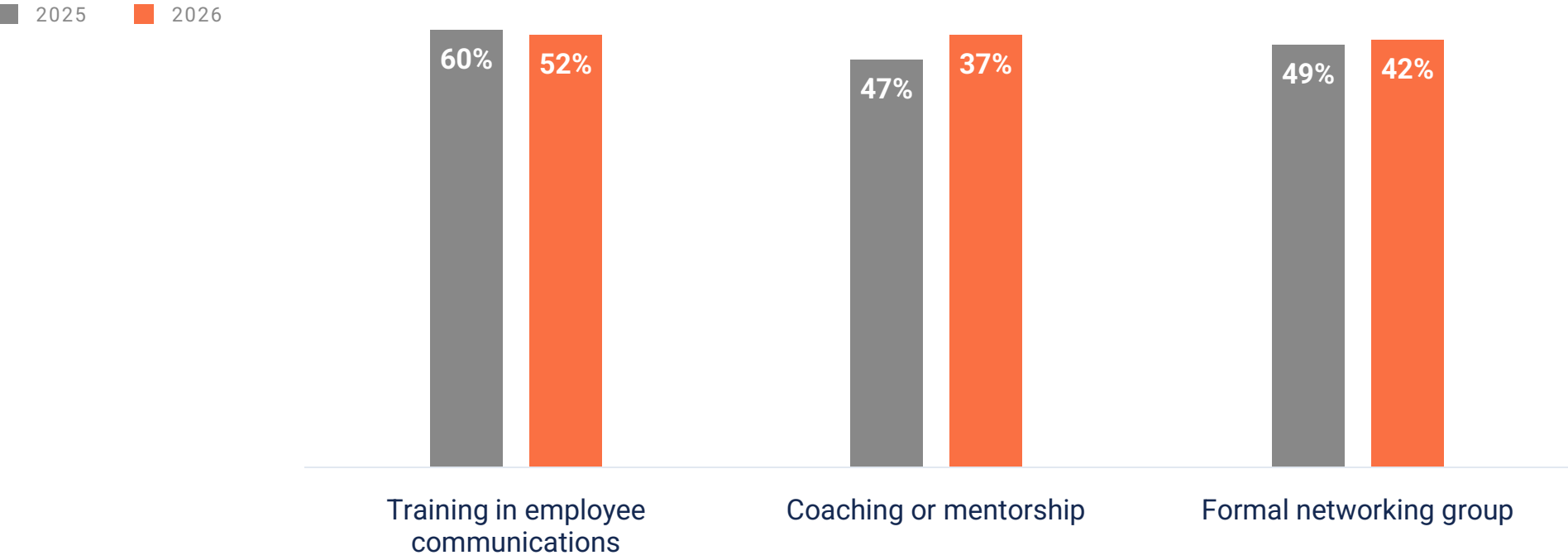
Q905: "How much do you agree or disagree that the following has helped you communicate more effectively with your employees?" % strongly/somewhat agree. Base: managers who received each form of support.

FINDING 3

Support for managers is being cut.

Every form of manager support in employee communications declined year over year.

% OF MANAGERS GIVEN EACH FORM OF SUPPORT

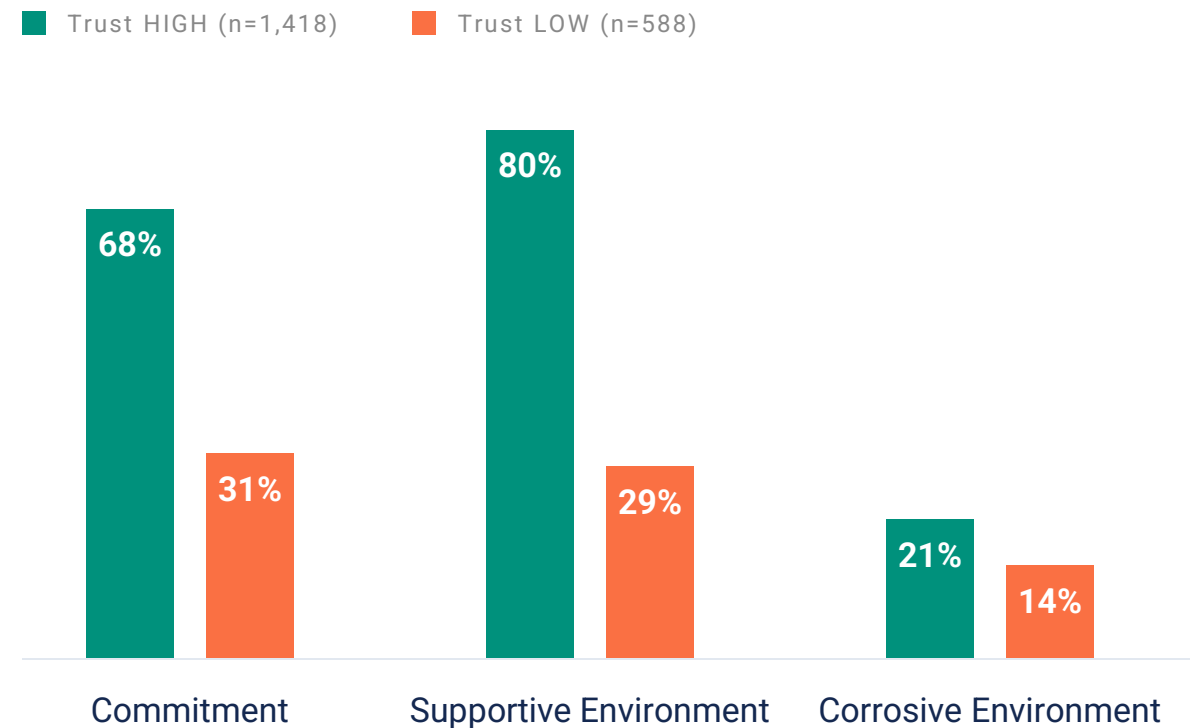


Q900: "Has your organization prepared you to communicate effectively with your employees by doing any of the following?" Multi-select. Base: all managers (2026 n=1,366; 2025 n=1,281). All declines statistically significant.

When organizational trust is high, Commitment more than doubles and a Supportive Environment is 2.75x as likely.

51 pts

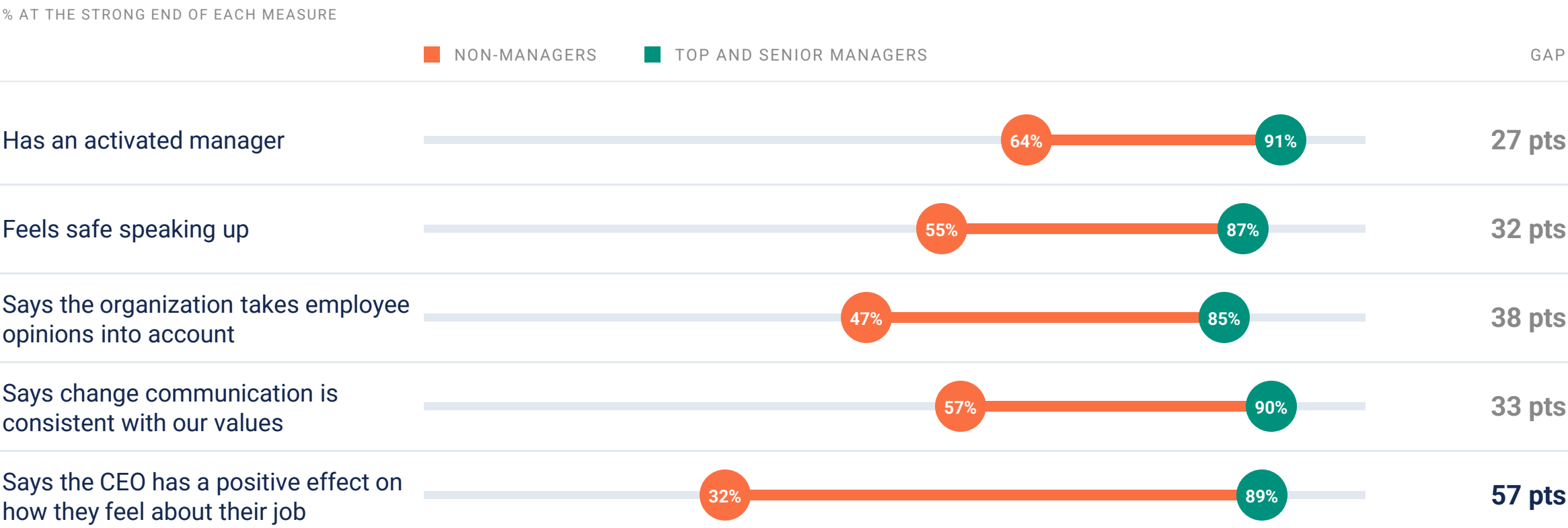
The percentage point increase in expected supportive colleague behaviors when Trust is high.



Trust is the Q541 R1–R5 composite (treats employees fairly; makes decisions with concern for employees; keeps promises; takes opinions into account; able to deliver on what it says), five-point agreement scale; high = composite average ≥ 3.41 .

FINDING 4

The top and the frontline work at different companies.



AI anxiety is not a future workforce issue.

41%

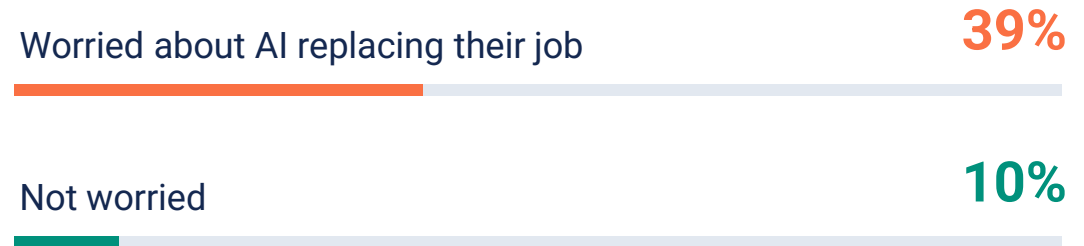
of employees who use AI at work worry
it will replace part or all of their job.

AI anxiety corresponds with more corrosive behavior.

41%

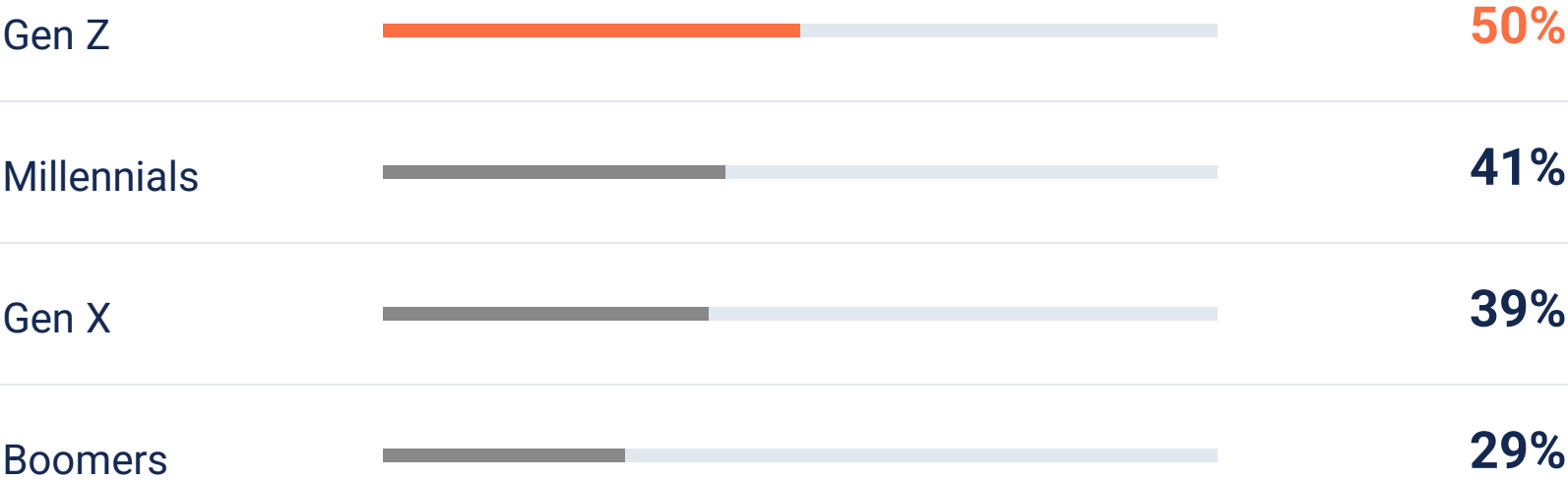
of employees who use AI at work worry it will replace part or all of their job.

% PREDICTING A CORROSIVE ENVIRONMENT



The greatest worry might not be where you think.

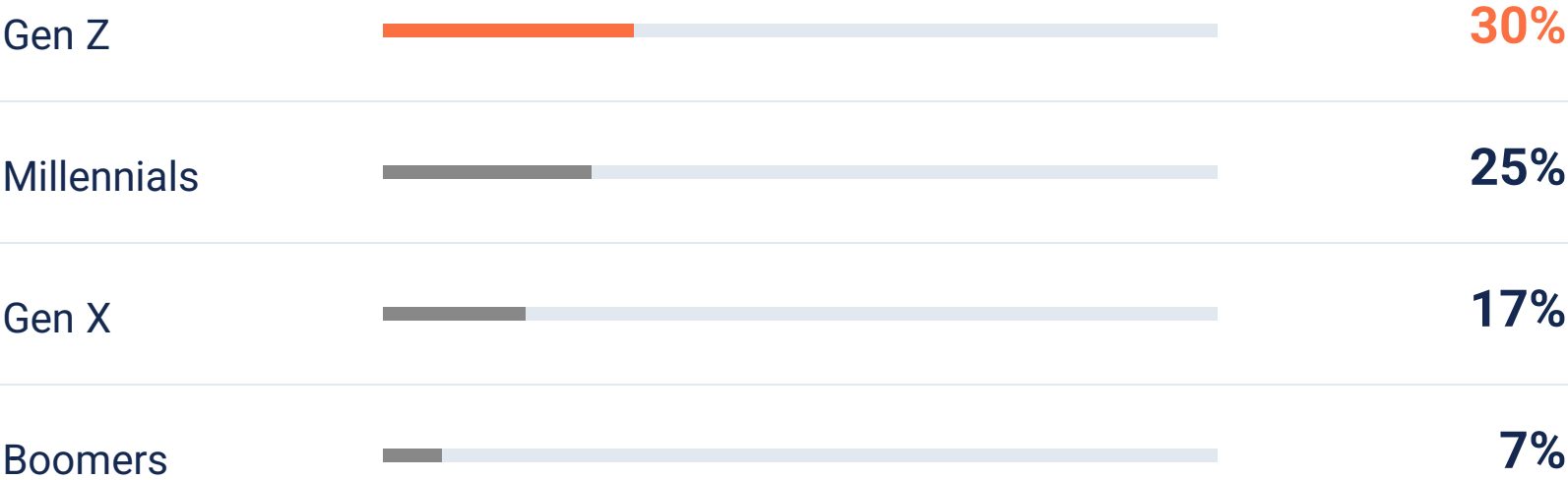
% OF AI USERS WORRIED AI WILL REPLACE PART OR ALL OF THEIR JOB



Base: employees who have used AI tools for their job, n=1,456. Q550a R21: "I'm worried AI will replace part or all of my job," strongly or somewhat agree. Generations per Integral definitions: Gen Z 18-28 (n=151), Millennials 29-44 (n=688), Gen X 45-60 (n=468), Boomers 61-79 (n=148). Gen Z 50% weighted, 52% unweighted. Gen Z and Boomers each differ significantly from Millennials and Gen X; Millennials and Gen X do not differ. Percentages weighted; significance tested on unweighted data at 95%.

AI anxiety correlates with a corrosive environment.

% OF AI USERS PREDICTING A CORROSIVE ENVIRONMENT



Base: employees who have used AI tools for their job, n=1,456. Corrosive Environment is the Q560 R9, R10, R13, R14, R19 composite (mean of 3.41 or higher). Generations per Integral definitions: Gen Z 18-28 (n=151), Millennials 29-44 (n=688), Gen X 45-60 (n=468), Boomers 61-79 (n=148). Gen Z 30% weighted, 34% unweighted. Every step down is statistically significant. Percentages weighted; significance tested on unweighted data at 95%.

FINDING 5

Training, policies and tools barely affect worry.

% WORRIED, BY WHETHER THE ORGANIZATION...

Provides AI training



Has AI policies or guidelines



Licenses AI tools



No difference is statistically significant.

Enablement explains the tool. The worry is about the job.

Q550a R21: "I'm worried AI will replace part or all of my job," strongly or somewhat agree. Base: employees who have used AI tools for their job, n=1,456. Organizational practices from Q543b, yes vs. no: provides training in how to use at least one AI tool (R8); has policies or guidelines on generative AI (R4); uses or licenses at least one AI tool (R3). Percentages weighted; no difference is statistically significant at 95%.

Bad conditions carry a price.

Modeled on public BLS, SHRM and Gallup inputs, reviewed by the University of Florida and IPR.

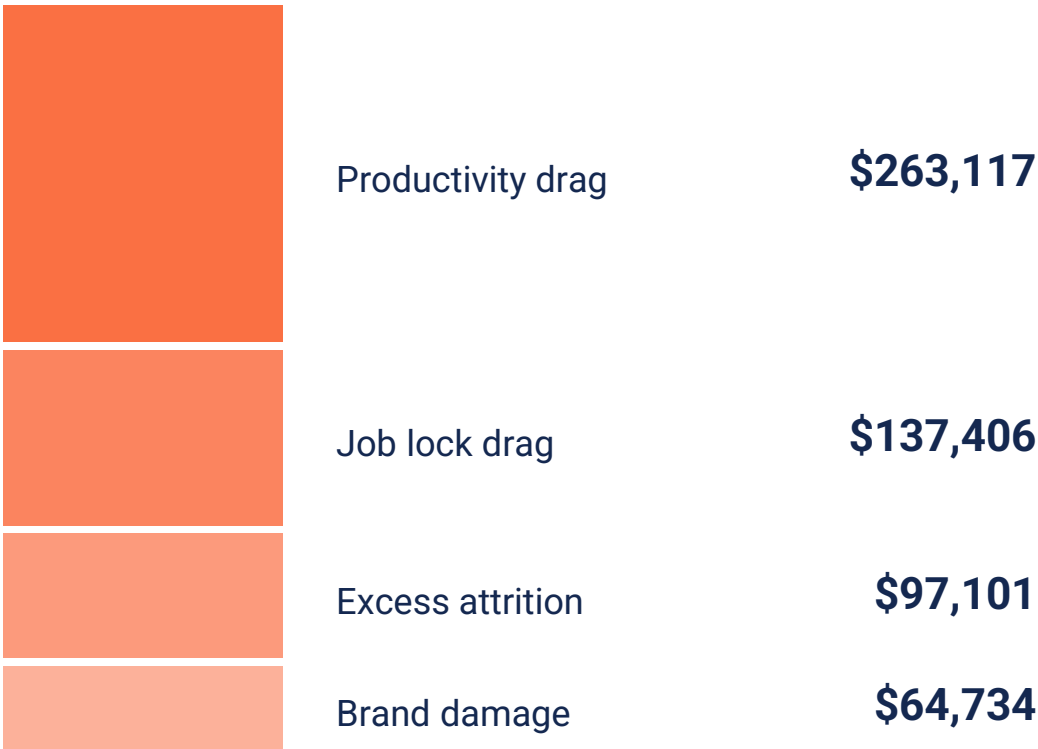
THE COST OF POOR CONDITIONS

\$562,358

per 100 employees, per year

Nearly half of it is productivity drag — people who stay and do less.

HOW THE COST BREAKS DOWN



Good conditions pay a dividend.

The same model, run in the other direction.

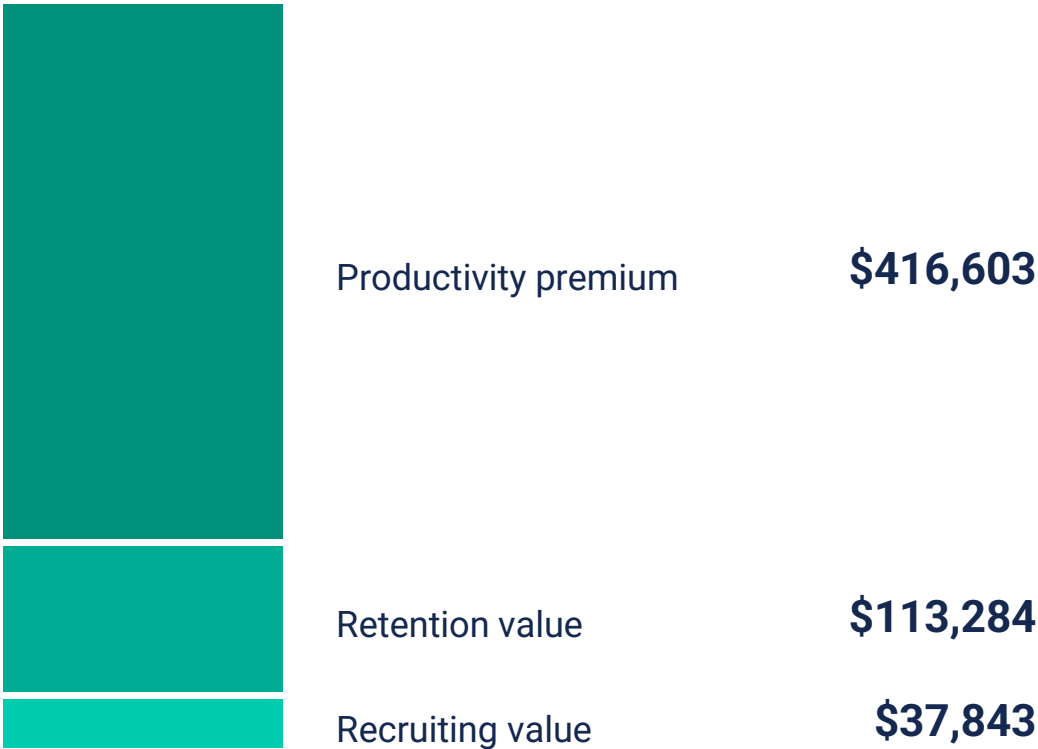
THE VALUE OF GOOD CONDITIONS

\$567,730

per 100 employees, per year

Nearly three quarters of it is the productivity premium.

HOW THE VALUE BREAKS DOWN



The total value at stake is real and attainable.

THE ANNUAL COST OF POOR CONDITIONS

\$562,358 /100 employees

Excess attrition, productivity drag, brand damage, job lock drag

THE ANNUAL VALUE OF GOOD CONDITIONS

\$567,730 /100 employees

Retention value, productivity premium, recruiting value

\$11M+

For a 1,000-person organization, the combined value at stake is more than \$11 million a year.

Run the model on your own organization.

The 2026 Index includes a cost calculator built on the same peer-reviewed model behind every number in this session.



Get your copy of the
Index and check out our
free cost calculator.
teamintegral.com/integral-index

A screenshot of a web browser displaying the 'Integral Index Cost Calculator' page. The page has a white background with teal and orange accents. At the top, the 'Integral' logo is on the left, and navigation links 'Home', 'Who We Are', 'What We Do', 'The Index', 'Insights', and a 'Let's Talk' button are on the right. The main heading is 'Index Cost Calculator' in teal. Below it, a sub-heading reads '2026 INTEGRAL INDEX'. The primary question is 'What are your workforce conditions costing you each year?'. A descriptive paragraph explains the model's purpose. The form includes three main sections: 1) 'YOUR ORGANIZATION'S HEADCOUNT' with a slider and a text box showing '6,200 EMPLOYEES'; 2) 'INDUSTRY (sets your turnover rate)' with a dropdown menu set to 'National average (all industries) - 25.2%'; and 3) 'HOW CONSERVATIVE SHOULD THE ASSUMPTIONS BE?' with three buttons: 'Conservative' (highlighted in teal), 'Moderate', and 'Aggressive'. A small disclaimer at the bottom states: 'Reproduces the figures published in the 2026 Index. The most conservative end of every researched range.'

Sources and methods

All figures are from the 2026 Integral Index, fielded February 3–18, 2026 with The Harris Poll. Significance tested at the 95% confidence level.

THE SAMPLE

n=2,006 full-time U.S. employees at organizations of 100 or more, weighted to census. AI questions use the AI-user subset, n=1,456.

Employees are asked what behaviors they expect from colleagues, not to grade their own.

THRESHOLDS

Strong = top-two box, or composite average ≥ 3.41 on a five-point scale. Weak = everyone below the strong threshold.

CONSTRUCTS

Engagement: Q802 R3–R6 composite. Job Lock: Q560a R2, top-two box. Manager Activation: Q801 R1–R9 composite. Trust: Q541 R1–R5 composite. Freedom to Speak Up: Q541 R10, top-two box. AI Job Concern: Q550a R21, top-two box, AI users only.

Commitment: Q560 R20, top-two box. Would stay even if offered an equivalent job at equal pay elsewhere. Supportive Environment: Q560 R1, R2, R5, R8 plus Q556 R1. Corrosive Environment: Q560 R9, R10, R13, R14, R19.

Employee opinions taken into account: Q541 R4. Change communication consistent with values: Q448 R2. CEO positive effect: Q930. Manager support and training: Q900, asked of managers (Q456 1–3); trained n=724, untrained n=642. 2025 n=1,281 and 2026 n=1,366, no methodology change year over year.

BASES

Archetypes, unweighted: Freely Engaged 871, Captive Contributor 715, Checked Out 243, Passive Stayer 177.

Org level: top and senior managers n=496 (n=488 on change communication), non-managers n=640 (n=604 on change communication).

THE ECONOMIC MODEL

All figures are per 100 employees, per year. Modeled on public BLS, SHRM and Gallup inputs and reviewed by the University of Florida and the Institute for Public Relations. Conservative inputs throughout; a revenue-based anchor would roughly double every productivity figure.