kunik

C^3:
Culture,
Community, &
Communication

Hiring in a competitive market is *usually* a simple equation:

Talent Acquisition =
more compensation + lots of perks

The answer isn't so straightforward this time.

Over the last year, employees have roundly rejected the typical 'carrots'. People are questioning what they want. Talented individuals are actively searching for new roles or simply leaving the workforce altogether. Why? **Because employers are failing to meet their true needs.**

Attractive compensation, mission statements, and flexibility have become table stakes. So what are people looking for?

The answer is clear:

A workplace that offers an authentic sense of belonging, driven by a combination of communication and connection with peers and the organization.

COVID and the profound adoption of remote work has led to a mass existential review of life & work priorities. Talent can ***now work from anywhere and for anyone.*** With such a dramatic upheaval, people leaders have the opportunity to completely reimagine the employee experience and redesign the relationship between the organization, managers, teams, and individuals.
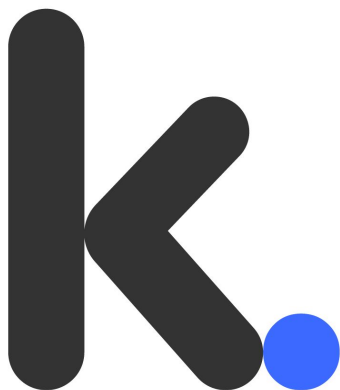
This should be terrific news for employers, and for many, it is. Yet, the cultural insecurities of remote/hybrid have proven hard for many to accept. The reasons are understandable: the vast majority of corporate cultures have always come from the organic alchemy of throwing people together in an office. But culture is an intentional and habitual exercise, cultivated from threading an individual's sense of belonging into the greater mission and goals of the organization. In doing so, individual bonds are interwoven like tree roots forming a collective unit. Whether in person or remote, the critical task is to put forth the effort to listen to, understand, and act upon the challenges employees face.

How you work

Microsoft Teams

slack

Dropbox
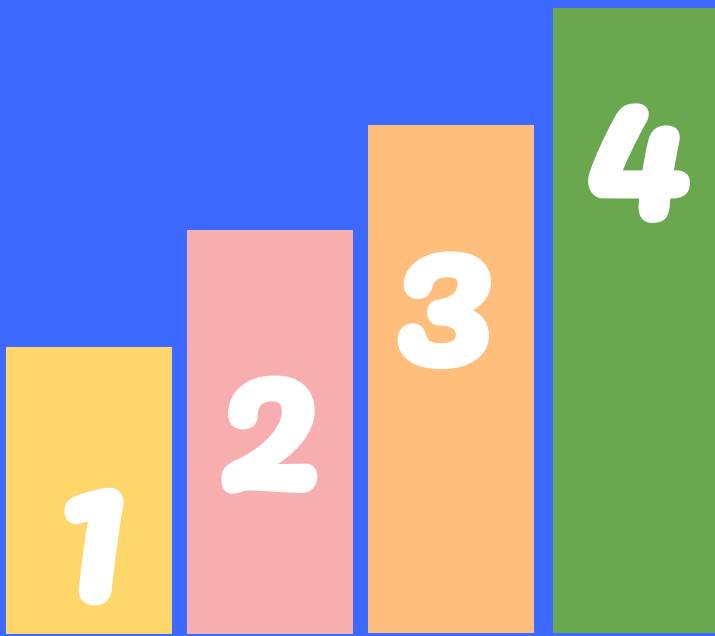

zoom

asana

G Suite

What builds belonging

What drives a culture of belonging?

It starts with communicating effectively. Developing a process of continuous listening is essential. It's not enough to just connect your workforce with tools like Slack and Zoom. You must intentionally connect and develop these "tree roots" to build a sense of belonging.

Why such a deep focus on belonging? Simple. Belonging is the single most important driver of employee engagement and long term success.

This moment of transition and disruption presents companies - and their culture champions - the opportunity of a lifetime. However, achieving a breakthrough may not be as revolutionary as you think. Having worked with thousands of employees and companies across a breadth of industries, we've distilled four simple tenets that we've seen correlate to an increase in belonging.

4 steps to belonging

start small & grow over time

1 Amplify Your Managers:

News flash: Managers are the direct stewards of culture. That also makes them the primary conduit of employee experience and loyalty. In remote/hybrid managerial empathy and compassion are imperative. Managers must retool and adopt empathic intentions, widen their lens, and lead empathic conversations in order to transform their relationship with their teams.

"The empathy of managers is probably at the highest demand today because in order to discern what flexibility is needed, you need to have that compassion [and] empathy as a leader."
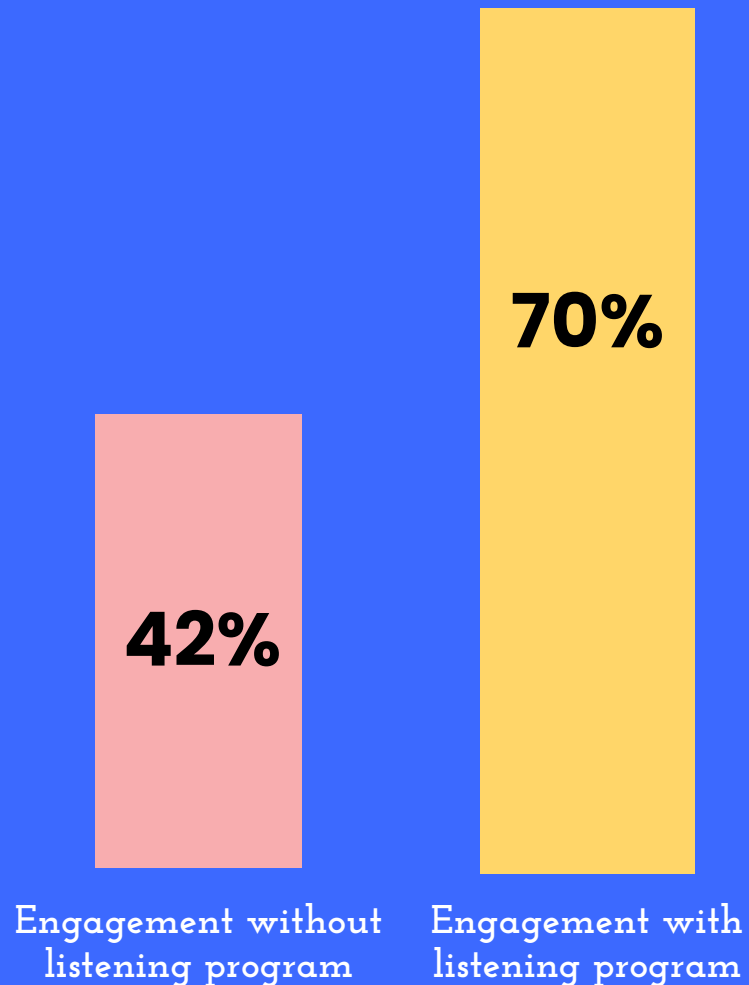
– Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella

2 Active listening, honesty, two way streets:

For too long, communication has been a one-way street - companies talk to not with employees. That has to change and evolve in more vibrant ways beyond pulse surveys. To make employees feel authentically heard, a company must have the channels needed to solicit feedback. Organize a listening program where employees are encouraged to make their feelings heard in an officially acknowledged way. But please remember, with these insights comes a responsibility to *act*.

% of employees who felt engaged at work

70%

42%

Engagement without listening program

Engagement with listening program

3 Deliver change based on feedback:

This may seem self evident, but communication is only impactful if it leads to genuine change. After employees raise their concerns and desires, they need to see some of the change and support they're calling for delivered in an efficient and effective way. Perfect is the enemy of good. Adopt a startup mentality of testing and iterating. Try small scale projects with targeted audiences, collect their feedback, learn and improve. Your teams will feel seen and supported.

4

<u>Create systems of support and belonging:</u>

Want to ensure your people know that they belong? Make sure they can see they're not alone. Studies show networks in companies have grown more siloed with remote work. You must intentionally combat this. Cultivate support for the problems they're identifying as impactful to their lives. Perhaps it's sending a child to college, caring for an eldery parent, holiday stress, or meditation. Provide space for these conversations to happen. ERGs can help build culture and connect individuals who share similar experiences. Consider partnering with third parties like Kunik to provide the needed psychological safety. Partners should bring expertise, design intersectional discussions, and free-up internal bandwidth to drive belonging and understanding across your workforce.

Together, these four initiatives set the stage for success and driving belonging, at a time when doing so delivers an unparalleled competitive advantage. Or as Satya Nadella says:

"Culture eats strategy for breakfast."

Make Work More Human

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