



State of the Deskless Workforce 2022

INTRODUCTION



Change is Coming: And the Frontline Workforce is in the Driver's Seat

As the global workforce adjusted to a new way of work and organizations faced massive labor shortages spurred on by the pandemic, there was an overall sense of urgency, unraveling, and exhaustion. An urgency to skip into a post-pandemic future, the unraveling of traditional work dynamics, and the exhaustion of slogging through the reality of it all.

And it's the reality—where once the employer held all the cards—that has shown who truly has the upper hand. With 90% of organizations relying on the deskless workforce, there has clearly been a big shift. Employers now need frontline workers far more than their workers need them. The frontline workforce is also well aware of this change in power dynamic and is demanding more of their employers—making recruitment even more challenging amidst an ever-present labor shortage.

Now, it's up to employers to meet the needs of a workforce that has long since been ignored, overworked, and from our survey, has expressed is uneager to return to work. But there is hope on the horizon and compared to last year—when only 50% of workers had hope for future employment—now, 70% of frontline workers think they have a good chance to find a new job. And hiring companies, that are willing to change, digitalize, and acknowledge this shift in the workforce, have the unique opportunity to position themselves as an employer who cares about their workers. For real.

That's why we took the time to speak directly with our frontline workers; to get a better understanding of what they need, what keeps them motivated, and the challenges they face. And from their responses, it's evident that there has been a massive shift in their mindset. They are more confident, more vocal, and demand that employers recognize their value.

For the frontline workforce, the future is firmly in their hands and that future shines bright.

What the Deskless Workforce Looks Like Today

RETENTION

48%

considered quitting their job in the past year.

And 27% of these respondents said it was because they felt there was no room to progress in their career.



38%

reported uncomfortable working conditions resulting from the labor shortage.



70%

believe there are a lot of employment opportunities based on their skillset.

DON'T FEEL VALUED

33%

don't feel
valued by their
employer.



40%

of them feel disposable.

37%

said their employer does not listen
to their feedback.

A photograph of two young women standing in what appears to be a workshop or factory setting. The woman on the left has long brown hair and is wearing a plaid shirt. The woman on the right has dark hair in a bun and is wearing a blue denim shirt. Both are smiling warmly at the camera. The background is slightly blurred, showing industrial equipment and a staircase.

Understanding What the Frontline Values

There is a huge disconnect between employers and the frontline workforce when it comes to understanding what these workers—the people whose jobs keep our world running—truly value. And our survey shows that above all, these workers want to be recognized for their efforts in order to feel truly motivated and engaged at work. Not only that, but they want higher wages and the flexibility to change their schedules to fit their lives.

The top 3 values for work are:

1.

Enjoyment at work

2.

Higher pay

3.

Flexible scheduling



1

Scheduling Challenges

Scheduling issues, often caused by inflexibility, understaffing, and difficulty swapping shifts are some of the #1 stressors in an employee's work environment. Now, frontline workers are seeking jobs that will give them greater control over their personal lives.



22%

felt penalized by manager for not picking up a shift



25%

feel changing shifts is viewed negatively.



35%

couldn't find shift coverage.



42%

believe their personal time suffers.



**30% have no
control over their
work schedule**



Swapping Shifts

The way shifts are changed also leads to frustration. Often, employees are contacted through text or email—typically last minute—by their managers or coworkers in order to move shifts. And once a schedule is made, it's extremely difficult for workers to either swap or cancel a shift; meaning their level of control over their schedules is seriously limited. Causing even more confusion, there isn't a central hub where employees can clearly see their work schedules and connect with their managers to seamlessly make any adjustments.

How they swap shifts:



48%

through direct contact via texting, calling, or email.



13%

use an app



29%

call or email their manager.

A very low number considering the advanced digital landscape we live in.

No Career Progression

Stereotypically, frontline workers are not known to “climb the career ladder”, but lack of career progression is an emerging frustration in the responses we received in our survey.

Frontline workers want to have a future in the companies they work for. In fact, 47% of employees said they planned on staying long-term (up to 2 years) in their jobs. While others stated that the inability to move forward in their job was a major reason they considered quitting.



62%

are not provided any additional training or educational resources.



71%

don't receive set goals or steps to earn a promotion.

Communication with Upper Management

Frontline workers want to have a more holistic view of their jobs and how it benefits the company. This starts with making them feel they can communicate more freely with upper management—something many respondents currently feel uncomfortable with—and receiving feedback on how they can grow in their respective roles.

It also means that workers need to feel confident that their managers will be responsive and acknowledge their concerns when brought up to them. However, our survey has shown that when asked about communication with upper management...



37%

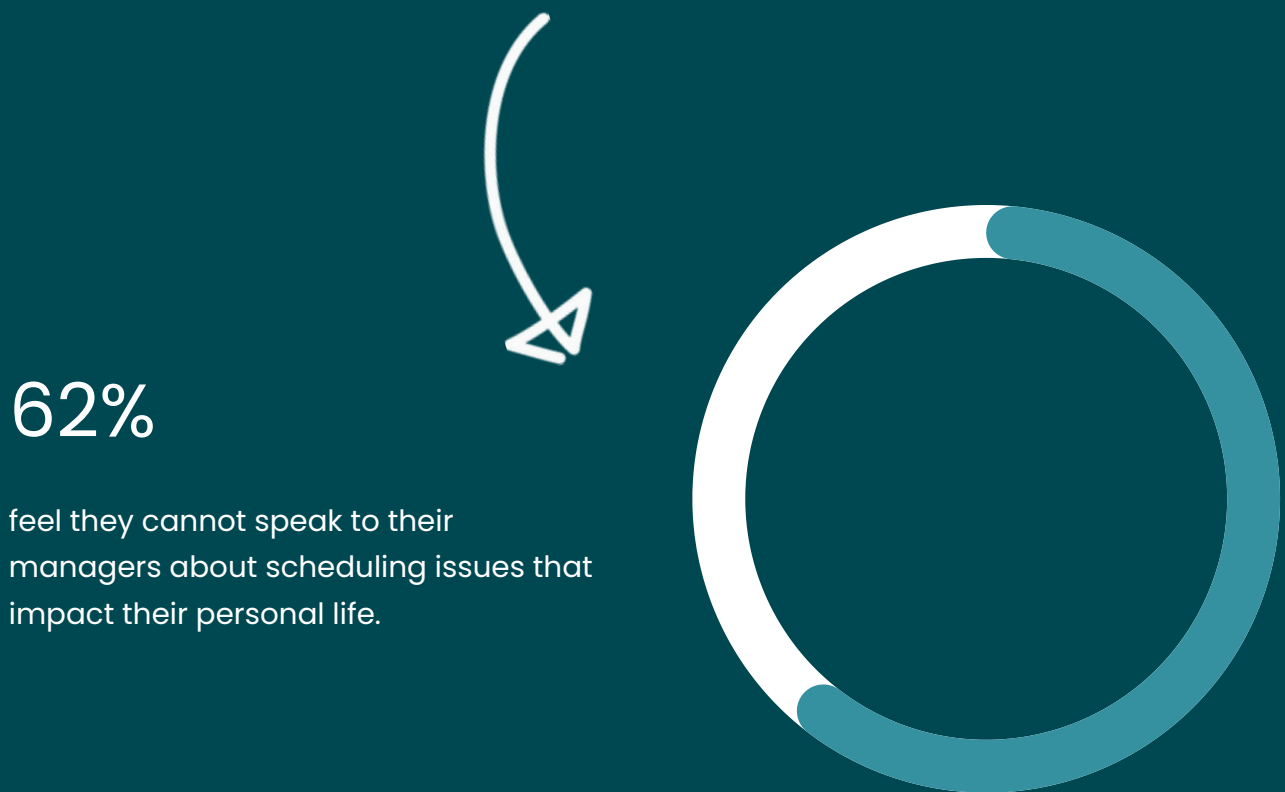
doesn't feel their employer listen to their feedback.



24%

believe that improved communication between management and employees will increase their motivation.

Beyond giving and receiving feedback, many frontline workers expressed discomfort with speaking openly with their managers.



62%

don't believe they can talk to their managers about increasing their work hours.



70%

feel uncomfortable discussing a pay raise with management.

Wrapping up

Frontline workers need to see that their effort is truly valued by the companies they work for. And it is the role of the employer to ensure they not only understand the needs of their workers but that they make a real effort to incorporate the right tools and policies to meet those needs. This will help alleviate any mistrust or disconnects that so often plague the interactions between employers and the frontline.

As we walk further into the future of work, frontline workers will continue to grow in their desire to be heard, recognized, and feel confident in the knowledge that their skills are in high demand. As a collective, they understand their value and what they bring to the global workforce. For organizations to thrive, they can no longer ignore this simple fact: the deskless workforce is the driving force behind the majority of organizations and their value can no longer be overlooked.

Our Methodology

We polled 9,300* workers across ten countries and a range of industries, such as hospitality, logistics, retail, and healthcare.

*For reference, the following breakdown showcases the number of respondents polled from each market: UK (1,500), US (1,500), Netherlands (1,500), Germany (1,400), Sweden (1000), Denmark (600), Finland (600), Norway (600), Austria (500), Switzerland (100)



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