Quinyx

United Kingdom

State of the Deskless Workforce 2022 – UK

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

Frontline Workers Are Taking Charge

Traditionally overworked and underpaid, deskless workers in the UK have faced increased, unprecedented challenges in the last two years. They've bore the brunt of supply chain problems and serious understaffing, while hoping for better salaries and more flexibility. Some have questioned if their contribution is even valued by those who pay their wages.

Now, slowly, frontline workers are getting more recognition within their industries; they're the ones who are 'bossing it'. The jobs market, heavily impacted by both Brexit and Covid, is working in their favour.

The UK's deskless staff are becoming increasingly aware of this power shift and demanding more of their employers— making recruitment even more challenging as staff shortages continue.

Now more than ever, employers must meet the needs of a workforce that has long since felt undervalued, but who now know they can have their pick of job roles, due to their transferable skills.

Our research found that two thirds (67%) of deskless workers – from couriers, nurses and warehouse operatives to waiting staff, hauliers and shop assistants – now believe they have many employment opportunities open to them and are confident of finding another job quickly. This is a marked increase from 2021 when just 40% felt this way.

Yet we also found that workers continue to deal with a lack of flexibility, non-existent pay rises and feeling like they're not valued. It's disappointing – and there's a high chance that these newly-empowered workers will walk as a result.

On the plus side, companies have a huge opportunity to position themselves as an employer that really cares about their workers. This is why we've taken the time to speak directly with our frontline users – to get a thorough understanding of what they need, what keeps them motivated, and the challenges they face.

There's been a big shift in workers' mindsets. Employers now need to catch up to the reality and put everything they have into engagement strategies that will encourage their best talent to stay.

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

What the Deskless Workforce Looks Like Today

67%

Two thirds of UK deskless workers are now confident of finding another job quickly based on their skills - healthcare (78%) and hospitality (76%) staff are most likely to feel that they have multiple job options open to them (this is up from 47% and 45% in 2021 respectively).

57%

Overall, more than half of frontline staff have considered quitting their jobs in the past year.

What Really Matters to Frontline Workers

There is often a disconnect between employers and the frontline workforce when it comes to understanding what staff truly value. The bottom line is, it's not always about money for the people who are keeping our world running (although a decent salary is obviously important). Our survey shows that these workers want to enjoy their work and be recognised for their efforts in order to feel motivated and engaged. They'd like to avoid stress, they would like more flexibility and they want to work for companies whose values match their own.

The Top 3 Priorities for UK Workers:

1.

Enjoyment at work

2.

Flexible scheduling
(work-life balance)

3.

Higher pay

The Main Motivators for Quitting

They might not always have acted on it, but the majority of frontline workers have thought about quitting in the last year, for a variety of reasons - reflecting the things that matter to them.

45%

considered quitting due to work stress

45%

wanted to leave for a better salary

38%

have thought about walking out because they don't feel valued by their manager

14%

one in seven considered leaving as their values aren't the same as their employer's

More Flex, Please

While deskless workers are increasingly gaining the upper hand in the jobs market, our research found that many of them are still getting a rough ride; their current work environment is not the one they want (and deserve). The last two years have brought mass 'WFH' and hybrid working for desk-based workers, and this greater flexibility for the 'laptop classes' now looks set to stay. Unfortunately, it's not the same deal for our frontline workforce, with many employees having no say whatsoever about when they work.

32%

almost a third of workers feel that asking to change a shift for personal reasons would be perceived negatively by their employer.

40%

have had to go to work after requesting a shift change because there has been no cover for them.

39% have no control over their work schedule

The Hassle of Shift Swapping

The way shifts are managed also leads to frustration. In many instances, employees are contacted through text or email - typically last minute - by their managers or co-workers in order to move shifts. And once a schedule is set up, it's extremely difficult for workers to either swap or cancel a shift, meaning the level of control they have over their schedules is seriously limited. Causing even more confusion, there often isn't a central hub where employees can clearly view work schedules and connect with their managers seamlessly to make any adjustments.

Our study found that when it comes to changing working hours:

45%

directly contact a colleague (texting, calling or email)

14%

use an app (a very low number considering the advanced digital landscape we live in)

30%

have to call or email their manager

Rewarded and Valued?
Not Exactly

Our research shows that 71% of deskless workers feel pride in their work, and – despite knowing there is now an abundance of opportunity open to them – 46% plan to stay in their current role for three years or more. However, many do not feel valued by their employers (as signified by the 38% who've considered quitting for that very reason), nor are they being rewarded with career progression and pay rises.
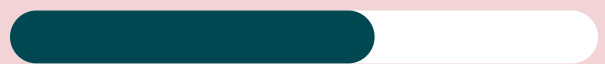
41%
don't feel valued at work

35%
feel like a disposable resource

51%
have not been offered a pay increase in the last year

62%
have received no training or resources to help with career development

It's Good To Talk (And Be Heard)

Providing frontline workers with a more holistic view of their role - and how their individual contribution benefits their company - really matters. And open, two-way communication is a great starting point. Staff should feel able to communicate freely with management, and know they can expect regular input on how they can grow in their respective roles. Employees should also feel confident that any feedback they offer – positive or negative - will be acknowledged and acted upon. Unfortunately, our research shows that many companies aren't there yet.

29%

of workers believe that improved communication between management and employees would increase their motivation

35%

feel that any feedback they give isn't listened to

Many frontline workers are uncomfortable speaking openly
with their managers.

64%

feel they cannot talk about workplace
stress that may be impacting their
health

60%

don't believe they could discuss
problems with co-workers with their
boss

75%

feel uncomfortable discussing pay with
management

On a Positive Note

There are a lot that employers aren't always getting it right – but things can change (and we can help). Ultimately, frontline workers need to see that their efforts are valued, and that they are being listened to. And more flexibility wouldn't go amiss, either.

It's down to employers to understand the needs of their staff, and to make a real effort to incorporate the right tools and policies to meet those needs – helping to alleviate any mistrust or disconnect that so often plagues interaction between managers and the frontline.

Frontline workers are the driving force behind the majority of organisations – a fact that any business should ignore at their peril. And looking ahead, the empowerment of deskless workers will only continue, as they grow in their desire to be heard and recognised, knowing that their skills are in high demand.

Their value can no longer be overlooked. The good news is, that with a greater emphasis on staff engagement, and the tools and tech to make it happen, employers can ensure it won't be.

Here's to a bright future, together.

Our Methodology

Globally, 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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