

Want to hold on to your best people? Keep up with these five culture shifts



It's a massive understatement to say that recent years have changed how we work. Living through a pandemic has prompted soul-searching for employees and employers alike, and work culture has continued to evolve rapidly.

That's why keeping your best employees — or rather, your best people — is a bigger challenge than ever.

It might surprise you to learn that more than half of U.S. workers say they are job hunting or open to new job opportunities, while only about a third feel strongly engaged at work — the lowest engagement level in a decade.¹

Then: There's one "right" way to work.

Now: Employees can work in whatever way is best for both them and the company

In pre-pandemic times, some offices had a culture of "be the first one in and the last one out." Being ever-present in the office was seen as a sign of hard work and dedication, and employees who had conflicting personal responsibilities, such as picking up children from school, were sometimes penalized. COVID-19 has thrown these "rules" out the window. In fact, of those who are able to perform their jobs remotely, nearly 8 of 10 are either working exclusively remotely or are taking a hybrid approach (part of their week at home and part on-site).²

How to keep your best people

Embrace individual needs, goals and challenges. Encouraging employees to work when and how they see fit — within reasonable boundaries, of course — broadcasts trust, increases loyalty and makes you a more attractive employer to potential hires.

Then: Nonstop work is a virtue.

Now: Burnout is real, and it's bad for people and business

For some people, the phrase "I haven't taken a vacation day in two years" is a not-so-humble brag of one's perceived importance to an operation. But consequently the percentage of Americans who are stressed at work is high, and it's only getting higher.³ Furthermore, workplace burnout may impair short-term memory, attention and other cognitive processes essential for daily work activities.⁴

How to keep your best people: Help employees manage workload

It's more critical than ever to communicate with employees about how to prioritize their workload and which tasks can wait. Combating "meeting fatigue" from too many meetings that take too much time can be a good first step. You can also encourage employees to take advantage of any paid time off you offer.



Then: Keep your private life out of the workplace.

Now: Employees are human beings with families, pets and problems

If you've started working remotely during the pandemic, you've likely experienced a new side of your colleagues. You've seen their homes, their children and pets, and sometimes the emotional strain of trying to keep everything afloat. In the past, employees were expected to keep personal challenges, such as mental health or family issues, mostly to themselves. But with work and home melding together, that's no longer possible — and that's a good thing.

How to keep your best people: Prioritize emotional support

Don't just tell employees you care, show them with policies that help them balance work and family responsibilities while supporting mental health.

Then: One-size-fits-all benefits.

Now: Personalized benefits

Traditionally, employers have offered a slate of standard benefits: major medical, dental, vision and life insurance. Today's employees want those benefits plus expanded options, such as supplemental insurance, that they can pick and choose based on their life circumstances and concerns.

How to keep your best people: Offer robust benefits options and give employees the opportunity to opt in or out

Personalized benefits are a great recruiting and retention tool. Offering supplemental insurance can help since 52% of all American workers have high anxiety about health care costs that go beyond what their health insurance covers.⁵

Then: Facilitate professional development.

Now: Facilitate growth in as many areas of life as possible

It's always been important for employers to give employees opportunities to gain knowledge about how to excel at their jobs and advance in their careers. But now employees expect their leaders to help them be healthier in several realms: physically, mentally and emotionally.

How to keep your best people: Consider your employees' whole experience, whether you're designing a benefits package or a new policy

When you can help employees feel happier, healthier and more fulfilled, it's good for business — and, of course, good for people.



¹Archie. "The State of the Workplace: Statistics to Know in 2026." Published 11.20.25. [Accessed 12.30.25.](#)

²Gallup. "Hybrid Work." Published August 2025. [Accessed 12.30.25.](#)

³Aflac WorkForces Report. "Mental health + well-being in the modern workplace." Published October 2025. [Accessed 12.30.25.](#)

⁴Coursera. "How to Recover from Burnout." Published 12.16.25. [Accessed 12.30.25.](#)

⁵Aflac WorkForces Report. "2025-2026 Employee financial fragility + the value of supplemental insurance." Published October 2025. [Accessed 12.30.25.](#)

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