



Overcome Common HR Challenges

How to Cultivate a Thriving Company Culture

Overcome Common HR Challenges

Authors

Claire Murphy,
executive vice president, customer success

Claire Hastwell,
content program manager

Matthew Bush,
principal strategic advisor

- 04 Building a great workplace
- 06 Obstacle or opportunity?
- 09 Obstacle #1 – “I don’t have time”
- 14 Obstacle #2 – “My operating environment is too different”
- 19 Obstacle #3 – “It’s not the right time”
- 24 Obstacle #4 – “My employees aren’t on board” (survey fatigue)
- 28 Obstacle #5 – “My boss isn’t interested”
- 33 You’re going to do a great job



Building a **great** workplace

Creating a great workplace can seem like a daunting task. Poor timing, budget constraints, competing priorities – these can all make the process overwhelming. But not pursuing greatness is a serious risk to your business.

It's precisely in these challenging circumstances that organizations like yours have turned to Great Place To Work® as an authoritative partner to comprehend, enhance, and endorse their company culture. Powered by our proprietary platform and methodology and by participating in the **Great Place To Work Certification™ program**, these organizations pave the way for a thriving workplace culture.

Our position on company culture was carved out of thousands of hours of conversations, interviews, and focus groups with employees from various industries. The rich tapestry of these employee experiences helped us to decode the DNA of great workplaces. That DNA is still infused in everything we do.

Thirty years and running, our methodology is reaffirmed by millions of employees around the world every year.

Thirty years and running, our methodology is reaffirmed by millions of employees around the world every year.

A great workplace is one where employees **trust** the people they work for, have **pride** in the work they do, and **enjoy** the people they work with. And to be great, that experience must be consistent for every employee, no matter who they are, what they do, or where they work.

Our exhaustive database draws a clear and impactful connection between these key elements of company culture and increased profitability. A strong company culture acts as a catalyst in:

- Amplifying employee engagement
- Improving employee retention
- Fueling the innovative thinking that drives breakthroughs

But the influence of a positive company culture extends beyond simply minimizing personnel costs. It's an engine that propels higher revenues, fostering not just a better workplace but also a more successful business. So, let us guide you toward creating a culture that truly pays off.

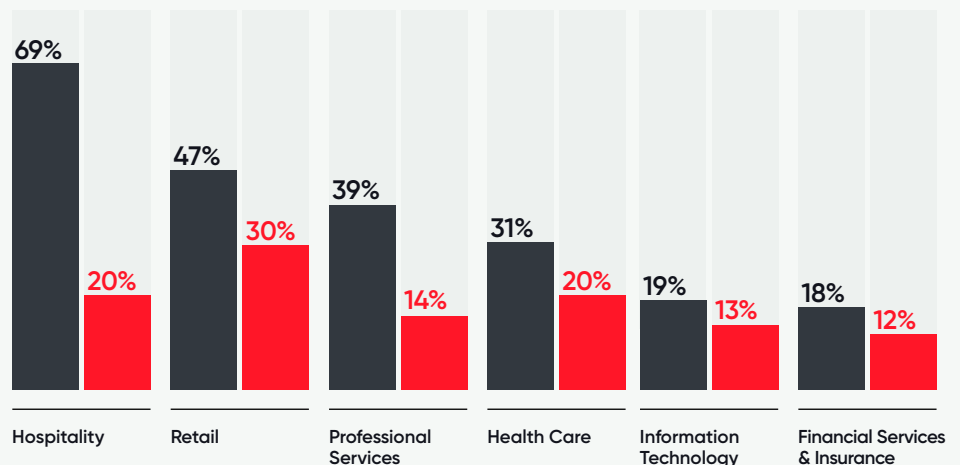
Not seeking greatness could leave your business behind.

Voluntary Turnover By Industry

Great workplaces typically have 1/2 the turnover of their industry peers

2023 Average Workplaces

2023 Certified™ Companies



Source: Employee feedback data captured through Great Place To Work Certification™ ©2023 Great Place To Work® Institute, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

How Any Manager Can Overcome
Common HR Challenges

Obstacle or opportunity?



Leading a workplace can feel like running an obstacle course

You're jumping for targets, dodging competitors, lifting employees, and chasing customers. And when you add in the organizational challenges so many businesses face, from layoffs to mergers to scaling up, it really can require the agility of a gymnast and the endurance of a marathon runner.

Flip every obstacle

It's easy (and tempting) to come to a dead stop when an obstacle stands in your way. This is especially true when that obstacle comes from inside the organization – when instead of helping you sprint forward toward your goal, a person or policy blocks your progress.

Sometimes, you can circumvent these obstacles. Other times, you need help clearing them. You need help from stakeholders who may not instinctively see how their objectives align with yours. Sometimes, these stakeholders are the very obstacles in your way.

So how do you show someone that it's in their best interest to not only stop blocking you, but to actively help clear the way for you?

Here are some of the most common obstacles we hear that prevent businesses from starting or continuing their journey to great, along with talking points and strategies to support you and to help your team get aligned and move forward with confidence.

Top 5 Obstacles to Building a Great Workplace

- | | | |
|-----------|--------------------|--|
| 01 | Time | "I'm swamped, and I just don't have the time right now." |
| 02 | Environment | "I'm all for it, but this would never fly in my industry." |
| 03 | Employees | "Our employees won't get on board with this." |
| 04 | Timing | "We just had layoffs/leadership changes/a merger, so things need to settle first." |
| 05 | Leadership | "My boss/executive team/department head isn't interested." |



Obstacle #1

"I don't have time"



We get it. Time is often more precious than even financial resources.

But while building trust does take time, the results will be worth it – for employees and for you. Investing in people pays off in productivity and loyalty.

Powerful changes can happen without requiring more time, just small shifts in habits.

Tap into systems you already have in place

Here are four new habits you can introduce right now:

Increase Approachability

Dedicate one day a week to eating lunch or virtual 1:1s with someone in your workgroup – or even your full team – so you get to know each other as a person.

Enhance Collaboration

Reserve the last 10 minutes of every staff meeting to have an open discussion about a specific topic, client challenge, or process improvement.

Encourage Positivity

Thank employees for good work in meetings and as you see them doing something well.

Inspire a Sense of Meaning

Choose words wisely when referring to work environments, job titles, or even in general communications. For example, Marriott employees who work behind the scenes are said to work in the “heart of the house,” not the “back of the house.”

Same strengths, new application

The skills you use to lead are the same ones you can use to build things like trust, pride, and belonging. In fact, leaders who adopt a hodgepodge of best practices (instead of using their own strengths) won't build trust among employees, because people recognize and reject inauthenticity.

If you are not a great public speaker, but prefer to communicate in writing,

try sharing your thoughts and insights with employees through a regular blog or newsletter. If you are a task-driven leader, use that focus to celebrate employee accomplishments with the same passion and determination that enable you to get jobs done.

5 tips for overcoming time limitations

01 Listen

to employees with survey and analytics tools like the [Great Place To Work](#) platform to quickly highlight areas needing attention and issues with the most impact.

02 Instill

behaviors that foster trust into habits already in place.

03 Become

the change you want to see. If you want to see more collaboration, invite co-workers to collaborate with you. Then share the experience with your business.

04 Reward

new habits with praise, bonuses, and other forms of appreciation.

05 Recognize

your strengths and use them to drive your mission.



Great Place To Work platform tips & key features for overcoming time constraints

Employee Experience Analytics

Quickly find what makes your team or company unique and competitive, the strength of the connections between and among co-workers, innovation, and how your company benchmarks to the market.

Demographic Consistency Data

Quickly highlight gaps in experience by employee demographics or populations with trending comparisons to evaluate the impact of leader's actions.

Manager Access

Empower managers with their teams' data to respond to challenges and adapt quickly to changes.



Obstacle #2

“My operating environment
is too different”





Is it, though? Many issues are not as unique to an industry as you might think.

The variable that all workplaces have in common is the most important one: the people. Manufacturing and tech companies might have different operations, goals, and contexts, but all of them rely on people. All of them depend on people working together.

Despite all our differences, everyone is looking for the same things in a work environment: a place where they feel valued, where their contributions are meaningful, and where they feel they belong. Our research found that meaningful work is the top driver of retention among employees of all generations and all industries.

Resources vs. resourcefulness

A big budget is a beautiful thing, but it's not always the best thing. Throwing money at problems often denies employees opportunities to collaborate and innovate, which ultimately robs them of opportunities to feel pride in their accomplishments and belonging.

Big budgets also increase the chances that you could be wrong in the solution you engineer. For example, one company that heard employee concerns about "childcare issues" tried to solve them with an expensive childcare center. Had it spent a little time uncovering the real need of its employees, it would have discovered the ideal solution – help with fees and flexible work arrangements – for far less investment than a state-of-the-art childcare facility that no one used.

Next time you're faced with a lack of resources, take a cue from other **Certified™ great workplaces**, and invite your team to get creative with you in finding innovative solutions to problems they have identified.

Bright Horizons, for example, launched a new initiative called "Ideas in Action." This contest asked employees to submit ideas that would make their job, team, or center an even better workplace. With a goal of 200 submissions, the contest was a huge success with over 1,300 ideas submitted from Bright Horizons family members.

One low-cost idea this practice generated was to randomly connect employees to deepen relationships, belonging, and learning. Barno Shayusupova, a senior quality engineer in Evergreen, Colorado, suggested creating an employee connection match-up program called "Random Coffees" to match Bright Horizons family members to each other for networking and learning opportunities.

Our research shows that involvement is a key driver of employee experience.

Our research shows that involvement is a key driver of employee experience, including their perception of pay.

Close while apart

It used to be that employees could pop over to a colleague's desk for an informal chat, or that teams could bond over break time in the lunchroom. With today's globally integrated teams, hybrid working arrangements, and flex hours, those organic encounters are much less likely to occur for many employees.

But just because your team is dispersed across offices or working remote doesn't mean you can't be connected. One of the easiest ways to foster connection is to schedule regular meetings via phone or video with satellite offices and exchange ideas about processes and tools that are working.

Be sure to acknowledge those who aren't in the room during meetings when other staff are present in person. Asking for input from those who are calling in can help them feel equally engaged in the conversation.

You can also integrate remote-friendly feel-good social activities. Virtual charity events, online channels for non-work banter, and even mailing handwritten thank you notes to employees can all go a long way towards making a great workplace. Employees who feel socially connected and supported are more likely to experience greater workplace well-being overall.

6 Tips for Overcoming Challenges Posed by Your Environment

- | | | |
|----|--------------|--|
| 01 | View | every decision as a people decision and an opportunity to build relationships. |
| 02 | Find | commonalities you share with other industries and learn from their successes and mistakes. |
| 03 | Focus | on what you can do to give employees more flexibility, not what you can't do. |
| 04 | Visit | with employees 1:1, either in-person or virtually, as often as possible. |
| 05 | Use | your strengths to drive your mission. |
| 06 | Keep | an open mind to new ideas and solutions. Avoid defaulting to "that would never work here." |



Great Place To Work platform tips & key features for environmental obstacles

Custom Location Demographics

Include your working options (remote, hybrid, in-person, etc) in your survey design so you can get a sense of how these environments impact employees.

Industry Benchmarking

Compare your employee experience to the best in your industry or company size with access to benchmarks such as the Best Small & Medium Workplaces™.

Compensation Perceptions

Use the experience filters in your survey results to understand what is driving employee perceptions of pay and resourcing (your CSM or Culture Coach can help you with this).



Obstacle #3

“It’s not the right time”



Mergers, layoffs, and disruptive events like a global pandemic bring big changes to the workplace.

But they also bring big opportunities. Our research has shown that when leaders take the time to foster trusting relationships, employees embrace change better.

If a disruptive event has created a culture of uncertainty, building trust during this time is one of the smartest strategies you can implement. It signals to employees that their experience is a high priority to you. Even if you anticipate the results may be impacted by recent events, you still want to know what your people are experiencing.



Now is always a good time

Even if you're in the midst of a major disruptive event, you can help restore calm and dismantle fear. Continuing your listening strategy in times of uncertainty gives you an opportunity to listen to your employees and address their worries head-on. Even if you don't have answers, acknowledging people's fears and offering continued assurance that you will tell them what you can, as soon as you can, is a trust-building activity.

Managers often have to deliver the message of layoffs, budget cuts, and restructures. Rather than sugarcoat, which dismisses employees' feelings and impedes trust, the best leaders:

- Are authentic, honest, and forthright about what has to be done
- Promote that everyone is facing change together
- Supply employees with all information available and outline next steps
- Use adversity as a catalyst to bond and work together to develop solutions
- Offer a sense of safety and support

Stay strong

Examine what your people do best and how those advantages can be applied to the new circumstances. When you focus on strengths, it enables everyone to find their footing faster and manage change with less fear and more trust in their company, co-workers, and abilities.

And don't let change undo your efforts so far, such as diversity initiatives (often the first to fall away during layoffs) or commitments to transparency (often absent during M&As). To better position your team for success in the new setup, double down on clear communication and showing employees that you care.

5 Tips for Overcoming Bad Timing

- 01 Communicate** with and check in on employees, either ad hoc or with surveys.
- 02 Involve** employees as much as possible in problem-solving, which fosters a sense that everyone is facing change together.
- 03 Consider** all solutions and possibilities, not just the quickest and easiest to implement.
- 04 Look** for opportunities to pause and bring employees together to reflect or honor results of the change.
- 05 Focus** on the strengths of your company's identity and people and build from there.



Great Place To Work tips & key features for preserving trust during disruption

Measure Trust

The Great Place To Work platform is purpose-built to measure the levels of trust between employees and management – the most important defining factor of great workplaces.

Regular Pulse Surveys

Setting up consistent surveys shows ongoing care for employee well-being and fosters trust.

Promoting Inclusion

Involving employees in feedback processes can make them feel more included in decision-making.

Trusted Third-Party Platform

Survey responses are confidential and managed by Great Place To Work. This allows for transparent communication and helps employees voice concerns without fear.

Customized Communication

Add customized survey statements to get specific feedback related to your organization's change.



Obstacle #4

“My employees aren’t
on board”

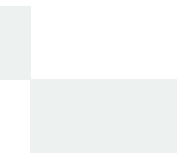




Relationships are complicated. And while managing people is rewarding, it's not without its challenges.

From remote or hybrid teams, to multi-generational teams, to personal issues outside of work, there's no shortage of factors to keep people managers on their toes.

If you're struggling with a team that's disengaged or disillusioned, the best path forward is to re-examine your approach, then look for creative ways to rebuild trust. Employees never get tired of feeling heard and understood.



Some customers have told us that they don't want to risk survey fatigue among employees. But survey fatigue results from a pattern of minimal transparency and action

Employees never get tired of feeling heard and understood.

with previous survey results. (If an employee takes three surveys, but no meaningful changes happen after any of them, of course that person isn't interested in taking another survey.)

In our experience, companies who communicate what they have heard from employee feedback (regardless of where it came from) and take at least one action on the most important issue build a sense of trust that employees can continue to expect to be heard.

Understanding why a pattern of behavior is developing, whether good or bad, is critical to creating a great workplace.

Set employee expectations

Employees have opinions about how the workplace should be. And when those ideas don't align with actual workplace culture and goals, trust and morale suffer. To ensure employees' expectations are aligned with the company mission, vision, and culture, answer these questions:

- How well have we articulated the company's mission, vision, and values?
- How do we create opportunities for employees to understand what's happening in our business?
- What do our employees say it takes to be successful in our organization? Are our policies, practices and programs aligned with our values and how our employees experience them?

Engage all employees

With remote workers, part-time workers, multiple generations, different cultures, and more, it may feel like an uphill battle to engage everyone at all times. Some of the ways you can motivate all employees to run with the vision of your organization include:

- Conveying to them how their work is making a difference in the company
- Involving them in company culture initiatives
- Soliciting their feedback on team processes and goals
- Making sure they are equipped with the training and resources needed to do their job

5 Tips for Getting Employees Onboard

- 01 Listen** to employees and help them see the value of creating a great workplace.
- 02 Address** people's needs and interests with creativity and innovation.
- 03 Diffuse** issues by talking to employees openly about their expectations.
- 04 Collaborate** to develop trust-based relationships.
- 05 Recognize** the unique gifts and ideologies that each employee brings to the workplace and look for ways to use them to accomplish company goals.

Obstacle #5

“My boss isn’t interested”



Unfortunately, not all leaders immediately see the value of a great workplace.

Or they do, but instead of understanding that culture fuels performance, they think of culture as something separate from running a successful business, and that running the business has to come first.

If this is the case, share with them how **research shows** that great workplace practices increase productivity and profitability, and reduce turnover.

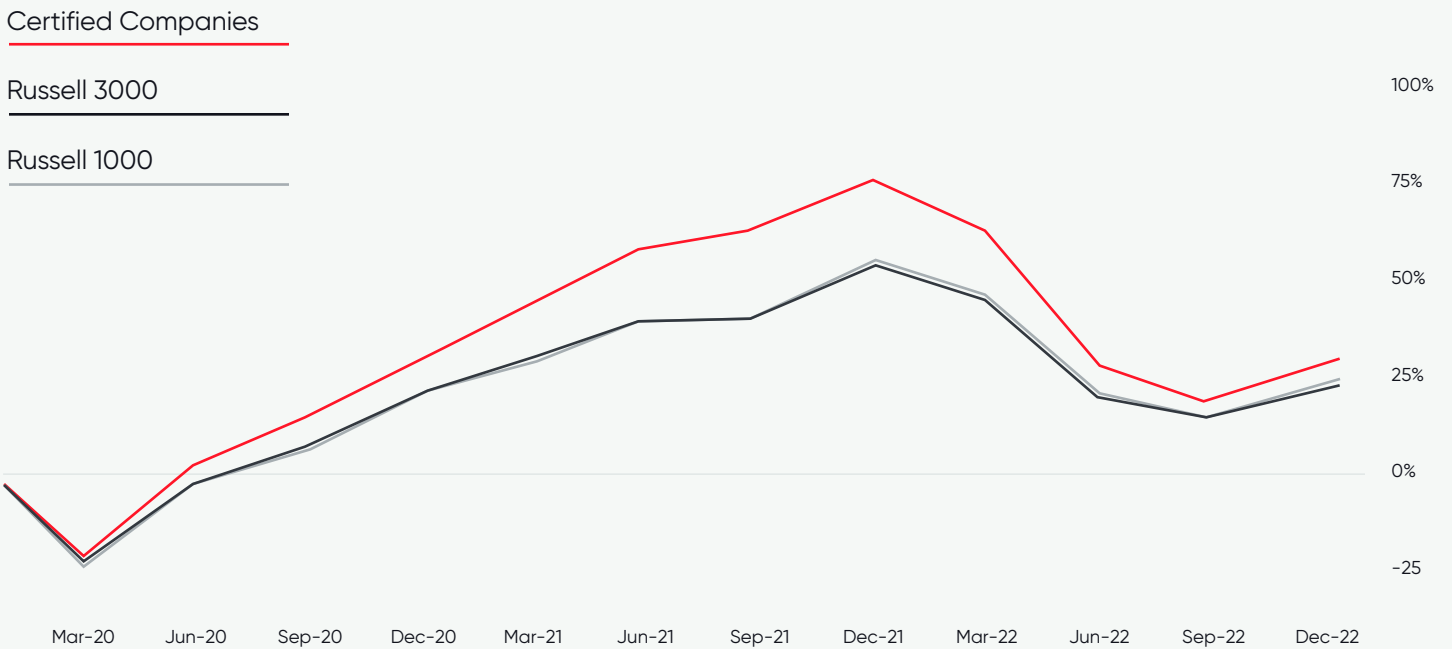
According to 2023 research from FTSE Russell, companies on the *Fortune* 100 Best Companies to Work For® list, which are also Great Place To Work Certified, outperform the market by a factor of 3.36.

If that doesn't work, you can always create a great workplace in your own department. In time, those same leaders who "didn't get it" may be clamoring for you to replicate your results throughout the rest of the company. Let your own team be the proof of concept.

Stay focused on those things that you can influence – in time, your sphere of influence will increase and open doors that were once closed.

Great Place To Work[®] Certified[™] companies outperform the market by 6%

Cumulative Returns 2020-2022



Create a great team

In every organization there are departments, divisions, and locations where employees enjoy a great workplace experience. These little pockets of greatness don't happen on their own – they're carefully cultivated by managers who work at it. You can be that manager.

To get started, try adopting the practices listed below that great managers have in common:

- Create a strong sense of identity in your department
- Adopt a healthy mindset that treats cognitive obstacles as issues to be overcome
- Use whatever power and position you have to build a supportive environment
- Lead by example and use your influence to inspire employees

5 Tips for Overcoming Leadership Issues

01 Locate

other managers who are fostering trust, pride, fairness, respect, and belonging, and learn about their successes.

02 Create

a community with other interested managers, so you can generate momentum throughout the workplace.

03 Own

your role as the primary conduit for how employees experience an organization.

04 Develop

an organizational identity that answers why your department exists and how it hopes to impact the larger business.

05 Focus

on what you can change, not what you can't.



Great Place To Work platform tips & key features for convincing leadership

Insight into Leadership Behaviors

Understand the levels of trust between employees and leaders and how consistently that is experienced across the company.

Performance Driving Focus Areas

Explore dimensions of your company's culture to measure and drive business outcomes like Profitably, Productivity, Market Resilience, and Retention.



You're going to
do a **great** job





Creating a great workplace may not be an easy task, but it is within your reach.

As you put these solutions into practice, they will become easier until they are ingrained in your culture.

How to create a great workplace

The good news is that the defining quality of a great workplace isn't in a checklist of benefits. Rather, it is created in the day-to-day relationships that employees experience with their leadership, with their work, and with each other.

That means you don't need to implement pricey perks or programs. Instead, invest time in the key factors our research tells us make a great workplace - one in which employees:

- Feel **respected** and appreciated
- Believe everyone is treated **fairly**
- **Trust** the people they work for
- Have **pride** in what they do
- Feel **belonging** with the people they work with

For any obstacle you encounter:

01 Adopt

the rule of great workplaces: Treat every interaction as an opportunity to build trust, and you will overcome cognitive obstacles.

02 Know

yourself and your workgroup or organization's identity: Be sure you are acting in ways that reinforce that identity and also allow it to evolve.

03 Find

opportunity in the challenges you encounter and seek inspiration from people who lead great workplaces.

You can do this

The elements of a great workplace are fundamental, but challenges can arise in achieving this goal. Regardless of the hurdles that lie in your path, one truth remains:

Any employer can create a great workplace. In fact, any team in any

organization in any industry can become a great workplace.

Go ahead and ask your employees how they are doing. Then, show you've heard them by taking one action that you know will make a difference. **We're here to help!**





Great starts here

"90% of our new hires said that Great Place To Work Certification was the key deciding factor in selecting IDOC."

Nella Gonzalez
People Operations Manager, IDOC

Create and validate your great company culture with Great Place To Work.

Great Place To Work Certification™ can help you build and hold on to a great workplace culture – and get recognized for it.

Powered by our proprietary platform and methodology, we offer unparalleled data and benchmarking, the most respected workplace Certification and lists, and industry leading research and insights, all supported by a wealth of resources and a thriving community.

How will you and the world know that if your company is a great place to work? Learn how to become a Great Place To Work Certified™ company today.

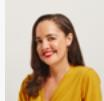
[GET STARTED NOW](#)

Great Place To Work®

Authors



Claire Murphy,
executive vice president, customer success



Claire Hastwell,
content program manager



Matthew Bush,
principal strategic advisor

About us

Great Place To Work is the global authority on workplace culture. We're on a mission to change the way the world works by creating more resilient, successful, sustainable businesses. Great Place To Work gives leaders and organizations the recognition and tools to create a consistently and overwhelmingly positive employee experience.

Learn more at greatplacetowork.com.

Get more advice on company culture

Get the latest advice from Great Place To Work by following us on social media and subscribing to our culture newsletter.

Get our latest insights & research

[greatplacetowork.com/
resources/blog](https://greatplacetowork.com/resources/blog)

Get our latest insights & research

[greatplacetowork.com/
resources/podcast](https://greatplacetowork.com/resources/podcast)

**Subscribe to our company culture
newsletter**

greatplacetowork.com/newsletter

