

Creating a sense of belonging at work

Today's workers are looking for deeper connections at work, but there is a gap between their wants and what they actually experience.

This article will share ways leaders can empower employees to foster connections with others, the important elements of a workplace where everyone feels valued, and how leaders can get involved by forming support networks and similar opportunities.

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Creating a Sense of Belonging at Work as a Connected Company

In today's workplace, the level of connection an employee has with their company is the foundation of productivity, innovation, and overall business resilience, among many other benefits. A workplace that welcomes people to contribute and offers solutions to help them show up differently at work, ensures everyone has a chance to contribute and feel valued. Ultimately, this creates a culture where everyone feels like they can be their authentic selves as an important part of the team. According to the [2024 HP Work Relationship Index \(WRI\)](#), **94% of U.S.-based full-time employees report being more productive when they feel connected to colleagues.** Meaningful relationships with teammates and managers don't just drive engagement, creativity, and innovation – they're also essential to employee satisfaction and overall workplace success. **More than 75% of employees express a strong desire for belonging, and the freedom to be their authentic selves at work.**

These findings highlight an important opportunity for leaders. By cultivating environments and equipping teams with the right tools where people can be seen and heard, they can enable stronger collaboration and nurture a culture of belonging – unlocking the power of connection in their organizations.

The Foundations of a Connected Workplace

A connected company offers an environment where every employee feels valued, heard, and empowered to contribute fully. As **Helen Sheirbon, SVP and Division President, HP Hybrid Systems** puts it, "Inclusivity is about fostering spaces where individuals can show up as their genuine selves, excel at their jobs, and build meaningful connections with others."

The Work Relationship Index identifies six key elements that leaders can use to strengthen employees' relationships with work and with each other and foster a sense of kinship:

Fulfillment	Empathetic Leadership	People-Centric Decision-Making
Employees crave purpose and empowerment in their roles.	Leaders must prioritize emotional connection, with 90% of business leaders acknowledging empathy as vital to employee growth, retention, and wellbeing.	Prioritizing employee wellbeing in organizational strategies is essential.
Skills Development	Tools for Success	Flexible Workspaces
Opportunities for learning and growth boost confidence and engagement.	Access to the right technology enhances collaboration and productivity.	Supporting seamless transitions between remote and in-office environments fosters trust and adaptability.



Best Practices for Cultivating a Connected Company

To create a company culture in which employees thrive, they must feel connected to their work, their colleagues, and their organization. Prioritizing collaboration and engagement is imperative, but leaders should also ensure these efforts are personalized – a universal need for today’s knowledge workers, according to the WRI. Employees want to feel that their unique circumstances, preferences, and responsibilities are recognized and supported, whether that means accommodating caregiving duties, accessibility needs, or personal stressors.

By tailoring tools, systems, and practices to employees’ individuality, leaders empower people to be genuine while still being productive and respectful team members. With personalizing technology, for example, employees are provided with the equipment they most need based on their working environment, job duties, personal comfort preferences. These forms of customization can make all the difference in making employees feel respected and motivated – fostering personal and organizational success.

Another way to cultivate inclusivity and belonging is through Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), which are communities within the workplace that bring together employees with shared identities, experiences, or interests, fostering a diverse, inclusive workplace. ERGs provide support, enhance career development, and contribute to a sense of belonging.



In the process, leaders design organizations to be resilient and adaptable to the demands of a changing work landscape. Some key strategies to achieve this are:

Prioritizing Wellbeing

Support employees’ mental health, ergonomics for physical wellbeing and wellness holistically, emphasizing care for the whole person.

Implementing Inclusive Policies

Introduce flexible work arrangements, equitable benefits, and accessible office spaces to create a sense of fairness and belonging.

Leveraging Metrics

Regularly assess employee satisfaction and inclusivity, using data to refine and improve workplace practices.



The Role of AI for Connected Companies

While employees are seeking ways to engage more deeply with colleagues, AI tools are reshaping how they work, streamlining tasks and improving their overall efficiency. For leaders, an often-unexplored avenue in creating a positive workplace culture is to integrate AI in their organizations so that it complements human connection.

Technology that fosters collaboration improves team cohesion – especially in hybrid environments. When examining the sense of connection and collaboration colleagues felt, the WRI, compared the sentiments from two groups: connected workers, who are knowledge workers that selected ‘I feel connected to my colleagues’ and isolated workers, who are knowledge workers that selected ‘I feel isolated from my colleagues.’

According to the WRI, 59% of workers who say they’re connected believe AI strengthens their relationship with their employer, compared to only 43% of workers who say they’re isolated. Similarly, 70% of connected workers reported using AI at work in the past year, versus 59% of isolated peers. These findings suggest that when implemented thoughtfully, AI can strengthen workplace relationships.

AI tools can serve as bridges, connecting teams and addressing challenges. For instance, technology can help monitor engagement and morale, offering leaders insights to address gaps and provide timely support. Virtual assistants can handle repetitive tasks, freeing up employees to focus on building relationships with colleagues. Meanwhile, AI tools integrated into collaboration platforms can assess workloads and team energy levels, helping leaders foster healthier and more effective teams.

59%

of workers who say they’re connected believe AI strengthens their relationship with their employer

43%

of workers say they’re isolated

70%

of connected workers reported using AI at work in the past year

59%

of isolated workers reported using AI at work in the past year



Building the Workplace of the Future

The future of work will require more efficiency – and more connection. While technology like AI can amplify collaboration, it’s up to leaders to cultivate a culture where human relationships take priority. This means designing workplace strategies that balance technical innovation with empathy, relationship building, and trust.

The result is a workplace where employees feel they belong, their contributions are valued, their individuality is celebrated, and their relationships are authentic.

[Learn how](#) the right technology can reshape the work experience.

