



THE MANUFACTURING EXPERIENCE
**THE ROLE OF CULTURE
AND EMPLOYEE
ENGAGEMENT**

in Workforce Attraction and Retention

SEPTEMBER 2023

**KEY FINDINGS AND INSIGHTS
FROM MANUFACTURERS**

WITH SUPPORT FROM

Colonial Life

THE MANUFACTURING EXPERIENCE: THE ROLE OF CULTURE AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN WORKFORCE ATTRACTION AND RETENTION

Key Findings and Insights from Manufacturers
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September 2023

By Chad Moutray and Anjana Radhakrishnan¹

About the Manufacturing Institute

The Manufacturing Institute builds a resilient manufacturing workforce prepared for the challenges and opportunities of the future. Through implementing groundbreaking programs, convening industry leaders and conducting innovative research, the MI furthers individual opportunity, community prosperity and a more competitive manufacturing industry. As the 501(c)3 nonprofit workforce development and education affiliate of the National Association of Manufacturers, the MI is a trusted adviser to manufacturers, equipping them with solutions to address the toughest workforce issues.

The MI's mission is to build, diversify and strengthen the manufacturing workforce of today and tomorrow.

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➤ Executive Summary

Facing a historically tight labor market, manufacturers have significantly raised wages over the past few years to compete for scarce talent. While this tactic has been successful to a certain extent, companies also recognize that increased pay is not the only thing job seekers prioritize. What else can manufacturers do to differentiate themselves in the labor market? A study conducted by the Manufacturing Institute in partnership with Colonial Life in May 2022 found that company culture can be an effective and important differentiator in the competition for talent. This is an encouraging insight. Manufacturers, no matter their size, industry or ability to raise wages, can cultivate a positive company culture by actively engaging their employees.

To further explore this topic, the MI and Colonial Life conducted a study on the role of company culture and employee engagement in workforce attraction and retention from March to May 2023. The study consisted of two online surveys, one among manufacturing employees and another among manufacturing leaders, as well as in-depth interviews with manufacturing leaders. The purpose of this project was to identify key aspects of company culture, impacts of culture on attraction and retention and methods of engaging employees.

➤ Topline Report Findings

- Both employees and manufacturing leaders ranked “family-friendly” as the top descriptor of their company culture. Companies communicate this aspect of their culture through their core values, flexibility options and providing family leave or child care support.
 - Manufacturers see company culture as an important tool in recruiting employees. Nearly 87% of those completing the survey said that they communicate their company’s culture in their interviews. Companies also incorporate culture into onboarding processes so that new hires can see commitment to core values.
 - Company culture also serves as an important way of retaining employees, particularly through social bonds. Nearly 97% of employees said that they stay because of their colleagues, including co-workers and their manager. Manufacturers have invested in building these bonds through encouraging referrals, organizing social events and providing flexibility.
 - Manufacturers have undertaken several efforts over the past year to better engage their workforce with 69.2% hosting town hall meetings and 63.3% conducting employee engagement surveys.
 - Non-salary benefits play a key role in company culture. More than 79% of respondents agreed that the more employees understand about their non-salary benefits package, the more these workers feel cared for by their company.
 - Other key dimensions of company culture include upskilling and training, workplace safety and diversity, equity and inclusion efforts.
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➤ Introduction

The labor market remains very tight with challenges in attracting and retaining talent continuing to top the list of primary challenges in the latest NAM Manufacturers' Outlook Survey² as well as significantly more job openings than people who are actively seeking employment. This is not something that is expected to go away anytime soon. It is a structural issue many years in the making, due largely to the rapidly aging population³ and baby boomer retirements, but with the economy at or near “full employment,” the impacts are broad. Worker shortages challenge nearly every sector, limiting service and sharply pushing up wages. In addition, more than 59% of manufacturers in the NAM Outlook Survey said that not having enough employees would impact their ability to make investments or expand.

Job openings in the manufacturing sector have averaged 763,000 over the past 12 months, but that figure slows to 702,000 when averaging over the past six months. Yet even with some easing, manufacturing job openings remain above pre-pandemic levels. Companies continue to cite “churn” as a significant challenge, even as the pace of quitting has eased from record levels. More importantly, there are significantly more job openings in the U.S. economy than people who are actively seeking work—there were roughly 62.1 unemployed workers for every 100 jobs in May. With such a wide gap, it is clear why so many companies—not just in manufacturing—are looking for workers. Everyone is competing for the same workers—a structural issue that will go beyond the current business cycle, particularly given demographic trends.

Manufacturers have aggressively raised compensation over the past couple of years to stay competitive, particularly in local markets, with wage growth increasing at the fastest pace in more than 40 years in early 2022 and continuing to go up significantly (even with some moderation). But, at a time when it seems that every company is competing for talent with everyone else—and not just manufacturers—the battle for workers must go beyond wages and benefits alone. Company culture and employee engagement matter too.

A study conducted by the MI and Colonial Life in May 2022 found that a company's culture can be an important differentiator in the competition for talent.⁴ Manufacturing leaders stressed the need for workers to know that their company cared for them through developing a consistent company culture. Leaders viewed company culture as a wide range of actions that communicate a singular ethos. Along those lines, the report added that while company culture “includes frequent and effective communication (including ‘being heard’), training and upskilling, the emphasis on health and safety and drives for more inclusivity can also be helpful in making employees ‘sticky,’ helping with retention.”

In 2021, the MI and the American Psychological Association conducted a study on retention to explore the reasons that manufacturing employees stay with their current employer that similarly indicated the importance of company culture.⁵ While roughly four-in-five survey respondents said that they remained with their job because they enjoyed the work that they were doing and they appreciated their job security, just over two-thirds noted the family-oriented culture and work-life balance affected their decision to stay.

Beyond those elements, it is also important for manufacturers to have a culture that allows workers to bring their whole selves to the workplace; that speaks to the progress that many companies have made in their approaches to diversity, equity and inclusion. As observed in a recent MI report, “A diverse workplace can also help to improve the bottom line, attracting workers who might have looked elsewhere otherwise and improving productivity and employee retention.”⁶ This only works when there is a workplace culture that reflects that commitment, with leadership that speaks to these values and that models such diversity and inclusivity in its decisions and its structure. More importantly, prospective

² [NAM Manufacturers' Outlook Survey](#). National Association of Manufacturers. First Quarter 2023, March 2023.

³ [The US Population Is Aging](#). The Urban Institute.

⁴ [“The Manufacturing Experience: Compensation and Labor Market Competitiveness.”](#) The Manufacturing Institute and Colonial Life. May 2022.

⁵ [“Manufacturing Engagement and Retention Study.”](#) The Manufacturing Institute and the American Psychological Association. July 2021.

⁶ [“The Manufacturing Experience: Closing the Gender Gap.”](#) The Manufacturing Institute and Colonial Life. November 2022.

candidates and existing employees are more likely to gravitate to a workplace that “does the right thing” by its workers and customers; these efforts can help with attraction and retention.

Expanding upon previous work on this topic, this study looks at the role that employee engagement and culture plays in helping manufacturers attract and retain workers. To understand both the employer and employee perspective, we conducted two surveys among leaders in the sector and manufacturing employees. In addition, seven manufacturing executives were interviewed for their insights. This report summarizes the findings of those surveys and conversations.

➤ Sample Characteristics

To gauge the opinions of workers on the topics of employee engagement and culture, the MI conducted an online survey from March 8–20, 2023. The final sample comprised 340 self-identified full-time employees in the manufacturing sector. Survey respondents worked in the chemicals, computer and electronic products, electrical equipment and appliances and fabricated metal products sectors. The majority of respondents worked in small or medium-sized companies. Respondents were fairly evenly distributed across the number of years they have worked with their current employer as well as the roles and levels they hold within their company. See Appendix A for the employee survey questions and the breakdown of responses.

In addition to surveying manufacturing employees, the MI also polled leaders in the sector. This survey fielded from March 13–31, 2023, with 137 respondents. Respondents for this survey spanned a broader range of sectors including chemicals, computer and electronic products, electrical equipment and appliances, fabricated metal products, food manufacturing, furniture and related products, machinery and nonmetallic mineral products. The majority of respondents worked in medium- or large-sized companies. See Appendix B for the survey questions and the breakdown of responses. In addition, there were interviews with seven manufacturing leaders, mostly with executive leadership and human resources functions, from which insights were drawn upon in this analysis.

➤ Key Aspects of Company Culture

Employees were asked to characterize their company’s culture by ranking a list of descriptors (Figure 1). It is interesting that there was little difference in the rankings of the various options, suggesting that respondents were likely to associate many or nearly all of these descriptions similarly when depicting their company and its focus on employee engagement. With that said, the descriptions that best illustrated respondents’ company cultures were family-friendly, collaborative, flexible, welcoming, inclusive and transparent.

In looking at their company’s culture, leaders in the sector would describe their workplaces as being family-friendly, caring, welcoming, innovative and engaging (Figure 2). As previously noted, family-friendliness was also the top ranking for manufacturing employees in their descriptions of company culture. Welcoming was in the top four descriptors for both groups.

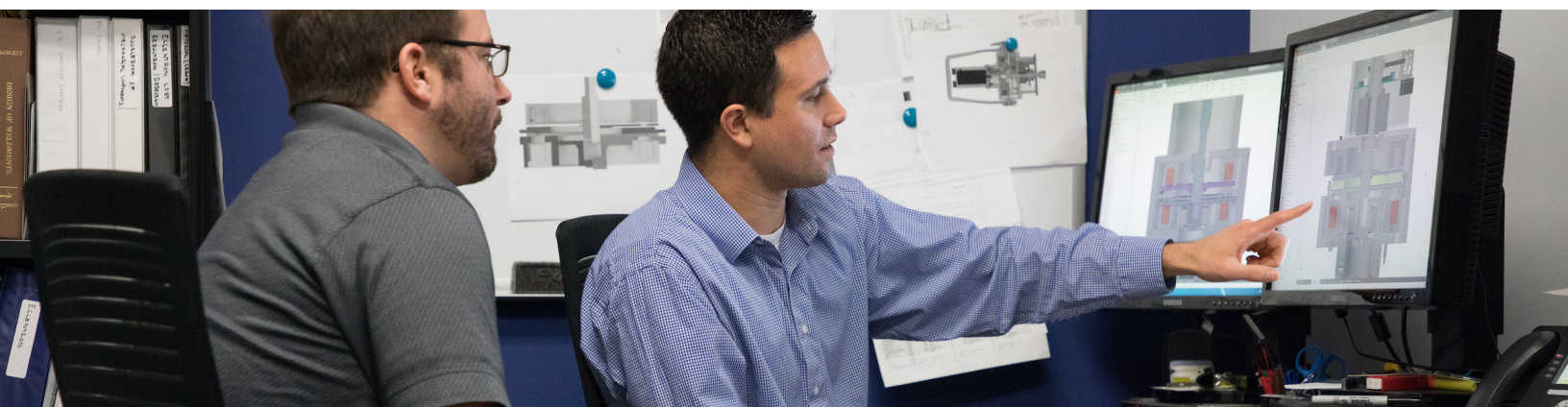
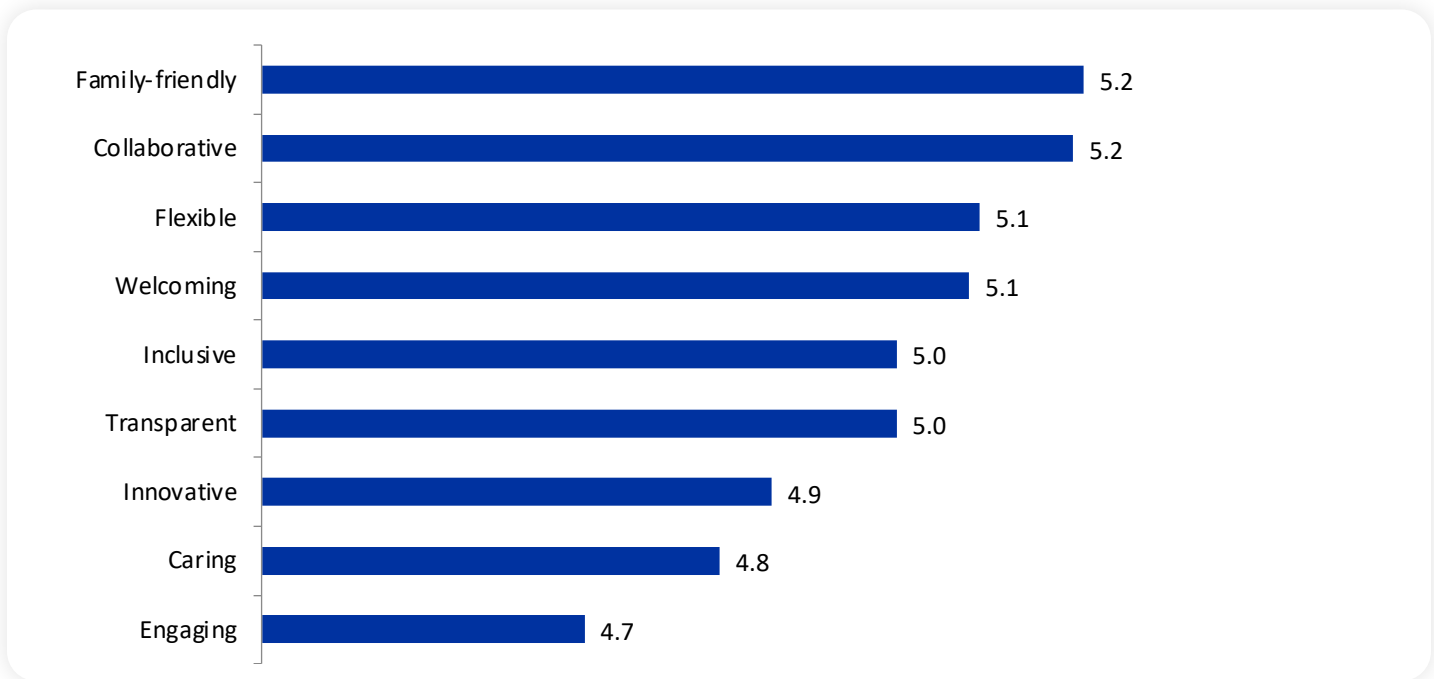


Figure 1: How Manufacturing Employees Describe Their Company's Culture

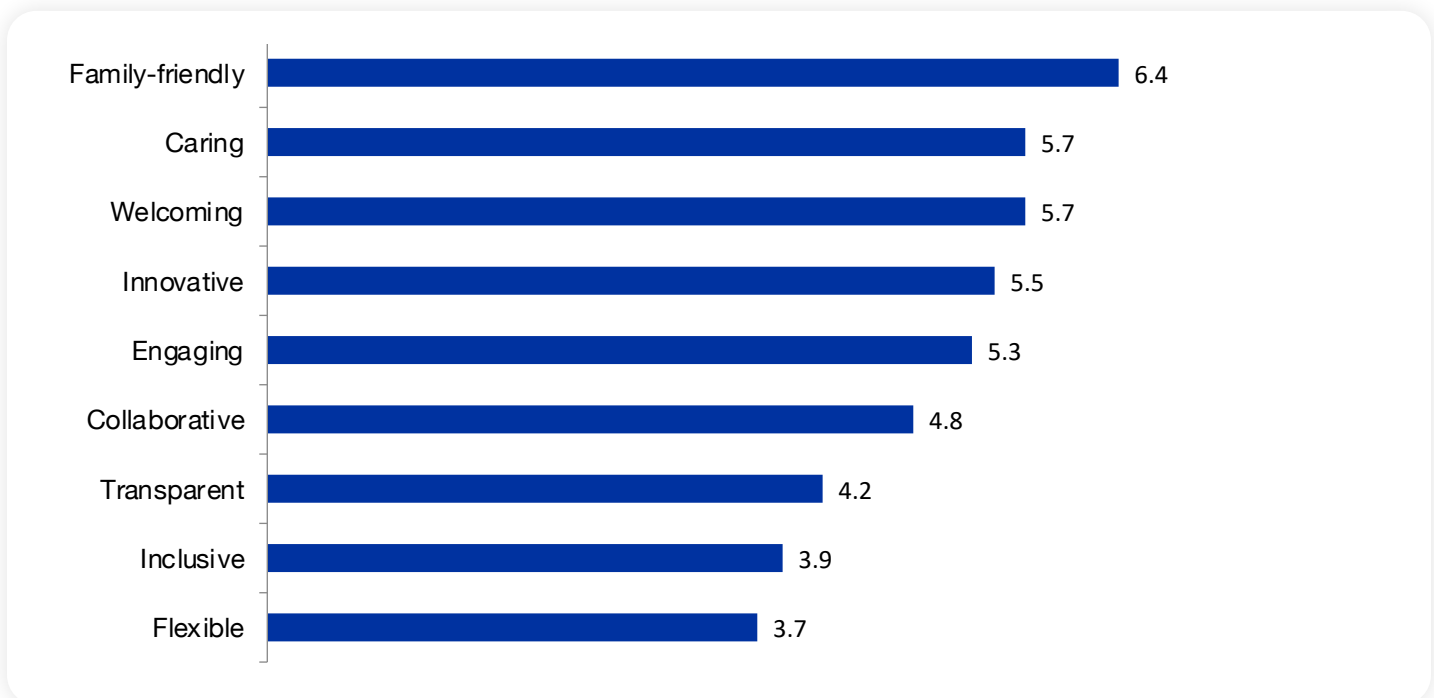
(Averages of Responses, with Higher Rankings Being Most Accurate Description and Vice Versa)



The average rankings were higher for leaders than employees, and there was more of a spread between the top descriptor and the bottom descriptor, indicating that leaders were more likely to rank certain descriptors higher more consistently than employees. It is also interesting to note that employees were more likely to rank flexible, inclusive and transparent higher than leaders. This may be attributed to differences in business practices among the sectors sampled between the two groups or may point to leaders having higher expectations for their companies in terms of these particular descriptors based on their vantage point (i.e., being more aware of what competitors are offering).

Figure 2: How Manufacturing Leaders Rank Their Company's Culture

(Averages of Responses, with Higher Rankings Being Most Accurate Description and Vice Versa)



When thinking about the factors that contribute most to a company’s culture, manufacturing executives tend to rank employees and their customers the highest (Figure 3). In addition, executives cited the company’s ability to achieve its goals as the third-most important factor in describing its culture, speaking to an environment of “getting things done,” with the ability to manage change and leadership also ranking decently. Other factors that speak to the important role that workers play at the company include the focus on teamwork, workplace safety, shared values, workplace flexibility, work-life balance, the human resources development and the organizational structure. While toward the bottom of the rankings in Figure 3, several interviewees cited their involvement with community and volunteer organizations and their diversity efforts as being positive contributors to the company’s culture.

Many of the companies that were interviewed synthesized their company culture through core values that they utilized in interviews to screen applicants, incorporated into onboarding sessions and embodied in their daily business practices. Kate Guess, vice president of human resources at Vermeer, shared how their company integrated their guiding principles into their work: “Our four principles are in everything from our strategic roadmap and measurements, to setting targets for engagement, safety metrics and our ability to attract and retain talent, build out market share and boost customer satisfaction numbers. We use our principles to hold each other accountable.” The importance of company culture was echoed by all of our interview participants. As Tom Kleino, president of L&L Products, put it, “Culture is the number one thing we work on. The basis of our culture is family.” Laura Brock, the chief inclusion and diversity officer at nVent, noted that culture is a significant differentiator for them in the competition for workers, with employees feeling valued and appreciated. At the same time, she noted that having a strong and inclusive culture starts at the top with a highly engaged C-suite, which she fortunately has at her company.

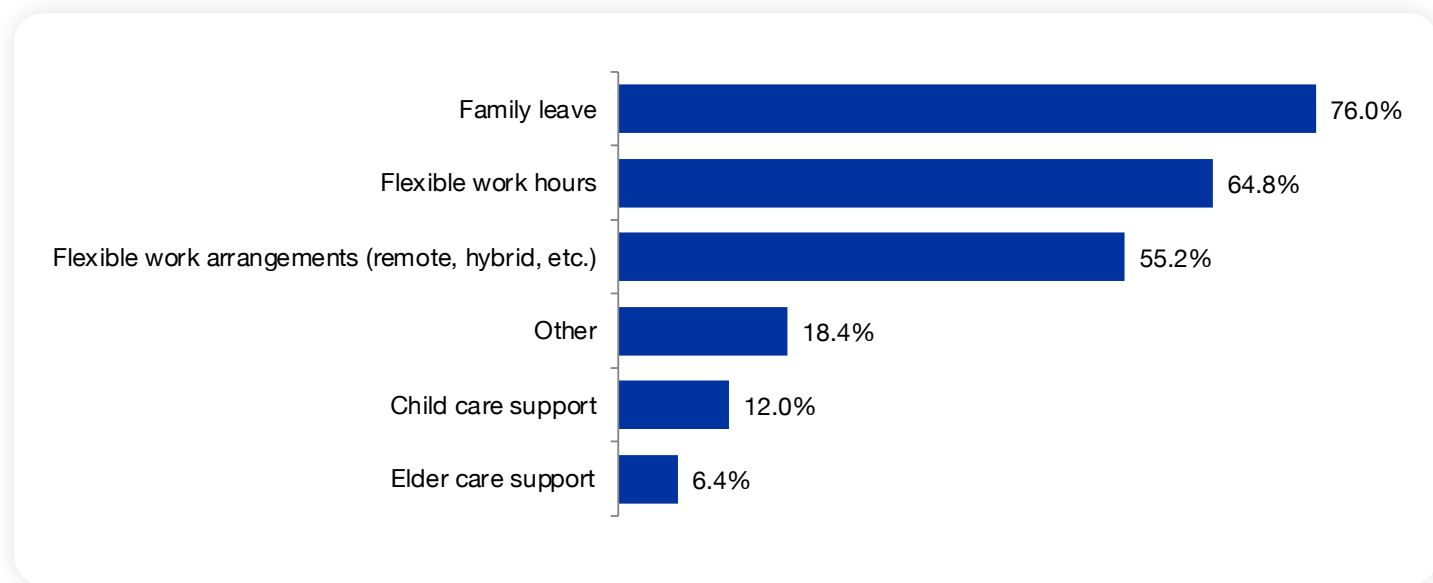
Figure 3: Manufacturers Rank the Factors That Contribute Most to Company Culture
 (with 1 Being the Least Important and 15 Being the Most Important)



Some of the common core values that interviewees shared with us included respect, accountability, teamwork, integrity, centering people, being a good citizen in the community and the obligation to listen. A few companies that we interviewed, like Wire Experts Group, also converted their company to an employee-ownership model, finding it to be an effective and tangible way of communicating the importance of employees to the larger company culture. “We’ve found that it has brought a lot of transparency in the business and helps build long-term value with our employees,” Ted Bill, CEO of Wire Experts Group, said. In a similar vein, Power Curbers Companies and L&L Products have profit-sharing plans that are very popular among their employees. At a smaller scale, Tusco gives everyone \$50 in their paycheck if productivity goals are met and cost of quality is below a certain threshold. If another threshold is met, then everyone receives \$100 for that paycheck. These bonuses are given on a biweekly basis.

When asked how their companies communicate the importance of being family-friendly, 76.0% of leaders shared that they provided family leave, while 64.8% offered flexible work hours and 55.2% allowed flexible work arrangements (Figure 4). Leaders who selected “Other” indicated they provided personal time off, hosted family events, communicated core values and guiding principles and offered birth-benefit programs. Providing child care and elder care support are avenues through which manufacturers can build on their family-friendly company culture. These benefits can be a way to attract female talent in particular. As a recent study conducted by the MI and Colonial Life found, 49.2% of manufacturers reported lack of child care support as a top labor force challenge heard from female employees.⁷

Figure 4: How Manufacturers Communicate the Importance of Being Family-Friendly



Note: Respondents were able to check more than one response; therefore, responses exceeded 100%.

Offering flexibility was a key way that interviewees communicated their family-friendly company culture. At Wire Experts Group, employees who have children, particularly those with special needs, have flexibility with their start and end times. Similarly, Power Curbers Companies has an informal flex hours policy where employees can take time off for family obligations and make up time later in the pay period. Tusco took creative approaches to scheduling, offering a variety of different schedules that are dependent on each team. Additionally, Lauber identified that there was a significant pool of untapped labor—parents with young children—and designed a schedule shift that allowed parents to start work 30 minutes after dropping of their children and ending 30 minutes before.

⁷ [“The Manufacturing Experience: Closing the Gender Gap.”](#) The Manufacturing Institute.

For some manufacturers, determining how to provide the right form of flexibility was a complex effort. Karen McKernan, human resources leader at Miltec, expressed the difficulty in meeting everyone's different needs. "Some people just want some level of flexibility in the hours they work, whether their lunch break is an hour or 30 minutes, while others want to leave early or come late." While it is clear that flexibility is a key component of a positive company culture, it is not always as obvious as to how it should be implemented to effectively run a business.

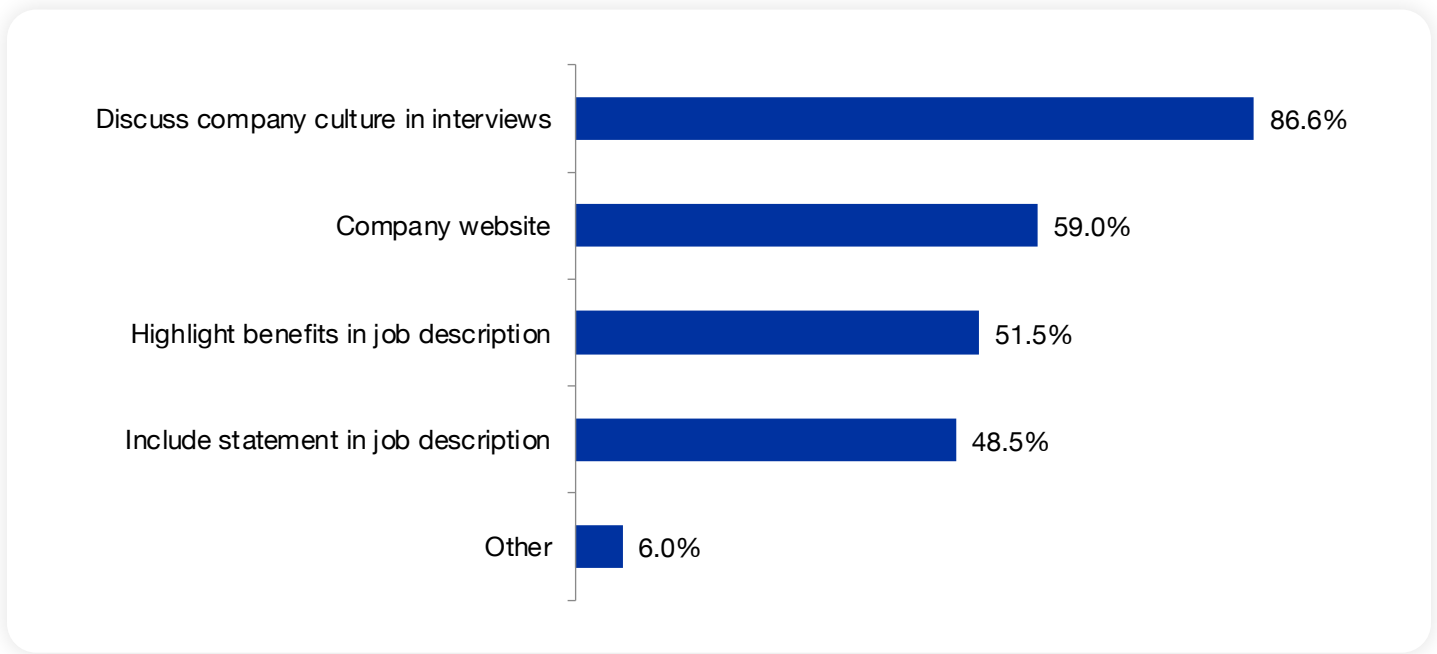
Overall, 83.0% of manufacturing leaders said that their company had a strong culture, with 9.6% saying that they did not and 7.4% uncertain. More importantly, 78.7% of respondents felt that their culture helped with attracting and retaining employees, with 11.0% suggesting that it does not help and 10.3% unsure. We explore the relationship between company culture, recruitment and retention in the following sections.



➤ Company Culture and Recruitment

Nearly 87% of those completing the survey said that they communicate their company's culture in their interviews (Figure 5). It is a selling point for many. Other ways that culture can be communicated include the company website (59.0%) and job description, both by highlighting benefits in the posting (51.5%) and by including statements about the culture or mission of the company on it (48.5%). Social media and company meetings were listed as other options among those selecting "Other" on that question, with one individual offering that their company "demonstrates [its culture] every day."

Figure 5: How Manufacturers Communicate Their Company's Culture to Jobseekers



Note: Respondents were able to check more than one response; therefore, responses exceeded 100%.

Companies see promoting culture as a way to facilitate recruitment. “Our caring culture is the most important [factor] for attraction,” Guess shared. Interviewees pointed out that they often had a better rate of success in recruiting through referrals, attributing this to the fact that the company culture is so positive that current employees are willing to bring in friends and relatives into the organization. This was particularly true for manufacturers in small towns. “We’re in a small town of 35,000 people where word travels fast. Having a family-friendly culture definitely helps. We are known here for that and that gives us a boost when recruiting,” said Stephen Bullock, president of Power Curbers Companies. At L&L Products, it is common to recruit and hire family members, sometimes even grandchildren of employees as well as couples. “At L&L Products, we don’t shy away from that,” Kleino said. “We hire good people, and good people come from good families.”

Miltec emphasizes the importance of work-life balance and sees it as a great recruitment tool. McKernan talks about it in the interview process, sharing that people work 8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m., leave at 5:00 p.m. and typically don’t work weekends. “The regularity of the schedule helps us compete with industries like fast food. We show applicants that with our schedule, they’ll be able to do what they want to do when they’re not working.”

Companies that we interviewed also noted the importance of developing an onboarding process that is steeped in company culture to facilitate the integration of new employees. Wire Experts Group created a six-month onboarding program that includes a walkthrough of facilities, introductions to leaders and fellow employees as well as exposure to core values through supervisors and online videos available through a learning system. For Power Curbers Companies, new hires spend an hour with the president and learn about the “Power Curbers Way,” including the four pillars that serve as their guiding principles. At L&L Products, new hires similarly spend time with the president during the onboarding process.

➤ Company Culture and Retention

In an extremely tight labor market, companies have focused on culture and employee engagement as a differentiator, helping to both attract new workers and to maintain them in the face of tough competition. Along those lines,

manufacturing employees were asked for reasons that they would stay at their current company (Figure 6). Not surprisingly, every respondent said that compensation, including salary, benefits and bonuses, was critical to their retention at the manufacturer where they currently work. More interestingly, 96.8% said that they stay because of their colleagues, including co-workers and their manager. This result indicates that social bonds are nearly as important as pay when making the decision to remain at one's company. Building those relationships is vital.

Such bonds often go beyond simply making friends at work. It reiterates the conventional wisdom that people are more willing to stay if they like and respect their supervisor. Bullock emphasized the importance of hiring and promoting people who value a culture of care. "We don't hire jerks, and we don't put jerks in leadership positions," he put succinctly. By prioritizing qualities such as kindness, fairness and respect in their employees and leadership, companies can create an environment where individuals can connect with their colleagues and will want to stay.

Other interviewees, particularly those at small companies, emphasized the importance of knowing their employees' names as well as their spouses and children in building authentic connections. Several of the manufacturing leaders we interviewed shared how they concretize their family-friendly company culture by hiring individuals who are related to their employees, supporting whole families through well-paying, stable jobs. "We have a young couple who works here," Bill shared. "They have a child, so the mother works the first shift while the father works second shift. We're so happy to provide that flexibility and opportunity."

Beyond compensation and their colleagues, 60.3% of manufacturing employees said that the company's culture, including its reputation and values, were important to their decision to stay at their current company. This was followed by stability/job security (55.0%), enjoying the work that they do (54.4%), workplace flexibility (48.8%), doing a job that makes a difference (48.5%) and having learning and career advancement opportunities (42.1%). Work-life balance (40.3%) and a convenient location (35.3%) were also cited as important. Of note, 24.1% said that they remained at their current job because there were no other opportunities for them.

Figure 6: Reasons That Manufacturing Employees Stay at Their Current Company



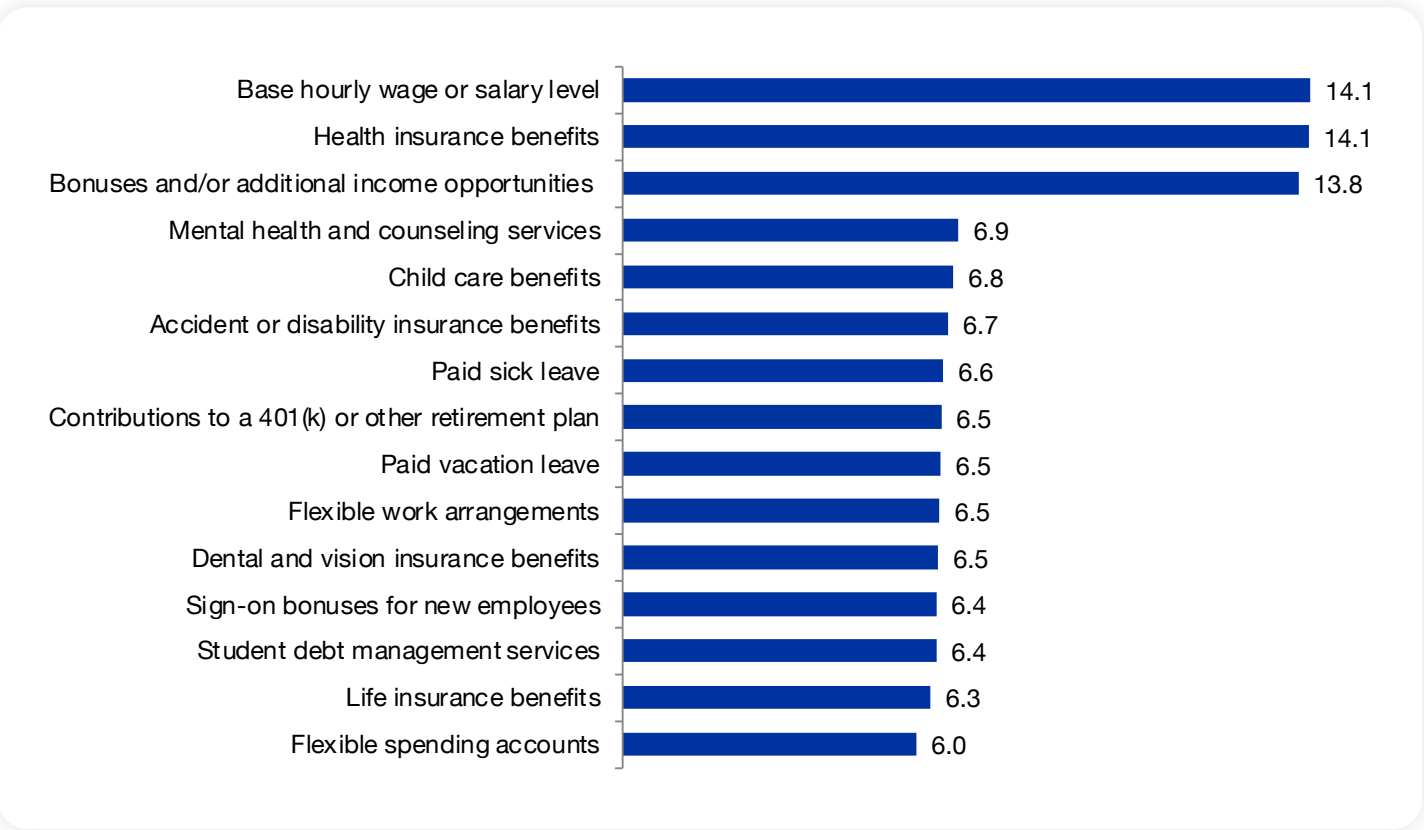
Note: Respondents were able to check more than one response; therefore, responses exceeded 100%.

When asked about their non-salary benefits package, 88.2% of respondents said these benefits had some degree of importance in determining their decision to stay at their company, with 56.3% saying that these elements were either important or very important. With that in mind, employees in the sector were asked to rank what compensation and benefits elements were most attractive to them when thinking about roles at a manufacturing company (Figure 7). Overwhelmingly, those completing the survey said that base or hourly salary, health insurance benefits and bonuses and/or additional income opportunities were the most attractive components in their employment decision. This was followed by mental health or counseling services and child care benefits, both of which have garnered a lot of attention post-pandemic. Other benefits of note included accident or disability insurance benefits, paid sick leave, contributions to a 401(k) or other retirement plan, paid vacation leave, flexible work arrangements and dental and vision insurance benefits, among others.

Another way to look at the issue of retention is to ask manufacturing employees about what might be attractive in a new role if they were to leave. What would be important to them in making such a decision? Every respondent said that they would seek better compensation in any new job, which is not a surprise. A better title (96.5%) and more job stability (91.8%) would also help to motivate a move to another company (Figure 8). Beyond those elements, it would be nice to have increased workplace flexibility (63.5%), more work-life balance (54.7%) or a better location (44.7%), and employees would also be eager to more challenging or engaging work (51.2%) or more learning and career advancement opportunities (46.2%).

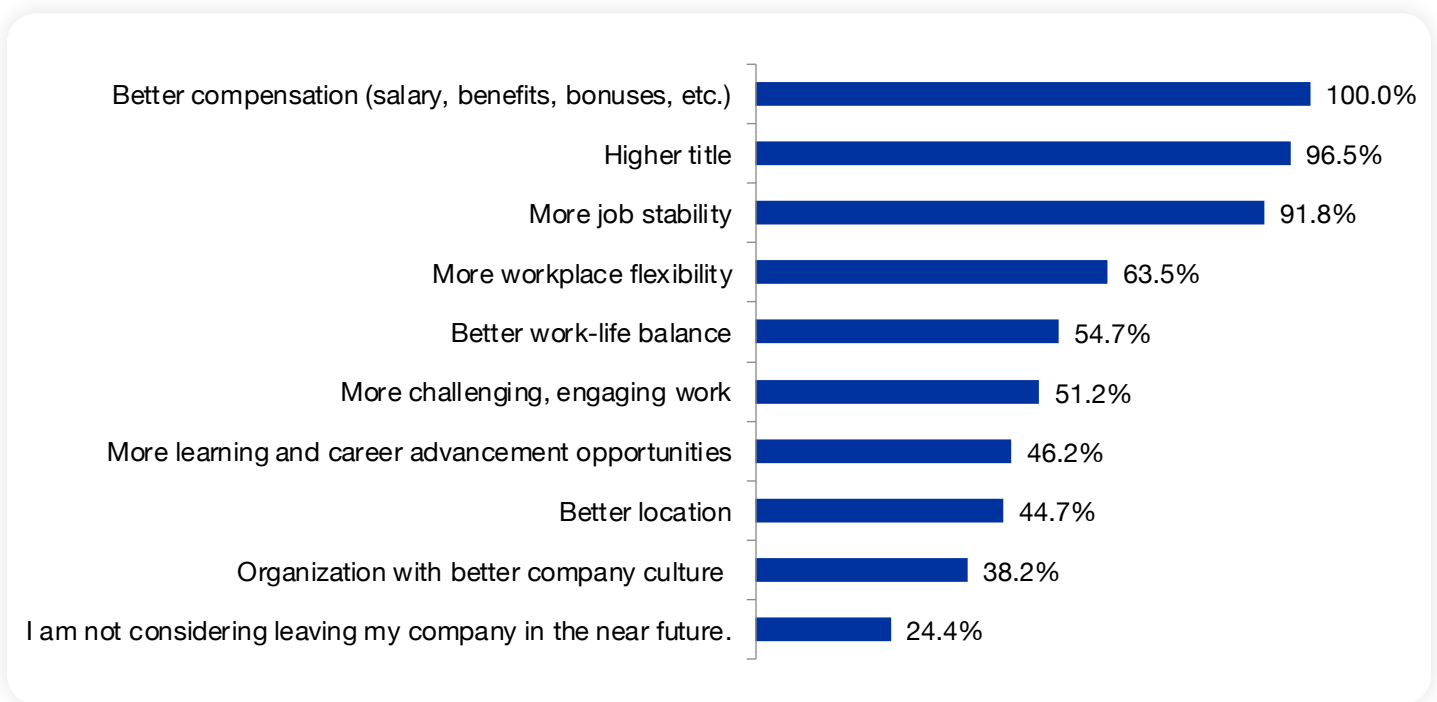
Figure 7: How Manufacturing Employees Rank Compensation and Benefits Elements as Being Important and Attractive to Them

(with 1 Being the Least Important and 15 Being the Most Important)



Note: Respondents were able to check more than one response; therefore, responses exceeded 100%.

Figure 8: What Manufacturing Employees Would Seek in a New Role if They Left Their Current Company in the Near Future



Note: Respondents were able to check more than one response; therefore, responses exceeded 100%.

Unlike the earlier question, where a company’s culture was one of the top reasons why people stay in their role, for those who might pursue another opportunity elsewhere, culture was not one of the top reasons. In fact, it was ninth on the list. Just more than 38% of respondents said that they would seek an organization with a better company culture if they were to leave their current company. This does not take away the importance of culture for employee engagement, as it clearly has value. As much as culture is something that employees appreciate, it might simply mean that, if they were to leave, it would be for other reasons.

To head off attrition, a few companies we interviewed conducted stay interviews with their employees to understand why they chose to stay in their role as well as what could be improved. At Wire Experts Group, for example, new hires are asked a series of stay questions after the first six months to assess their engagement and to demonstrate that they have a voice in the company. Miltec recently started conducting stay interviews in addition to exit interviews to better gauge the level of engagement among their employees.



➤ Employee Engagement

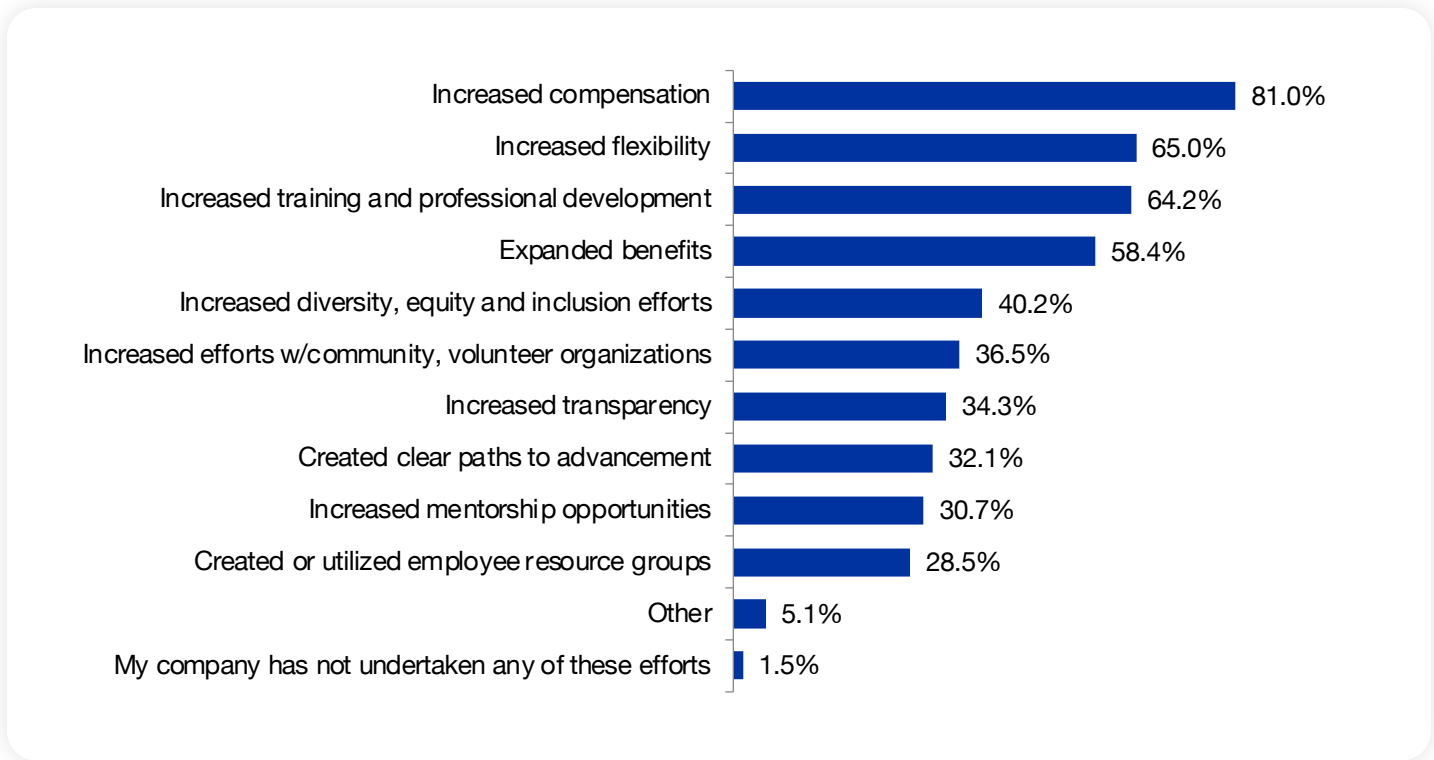
While defining company culture is a crucial first step, taking tangible actions to engage employees is necessary to perpetuate that culture and generate buy-in from employees. Manufacturers have undertaken several efforts over the past year to better engage their workforce (Figure 9). Eighty-one percent of respondents said that more compensation was one of the top ways that they engaged their employees, with increased flexibility (65.0%), additional training and professional development opportunities (64.2%) and expanded benefits (58.4%) also leading the list. Diversity, equity and inclusion efforts (40.2%) and involvement with community and volunteer organizations (36.5%) were also important. Communication and professional development were likewise seen through increased transparency (34.3%), clear paths for advancement (32.1%), mentorship opportunities (30.7%) and employee resource groups (28.5%). Beyond those options, respondents also noted employee engagement surveys, employee action plans done in agreement with their supervisor and building an overall friendly and caring environment.

Companies that were interviewed also organized programs like a recognition system in which managers and fellow employees can tag an employee to a core value and explain how they live up to that particular value. Employees who are recognized receive a certificate, and a company-wide email is sent out.

The most common ways that companies provided opportunities for employees to voice their opinions and feel heard were to have town hall meetings (69.2%) and conduct surveys (63.3%) (Figure 10). Although less common, a fair number of companies also had employee resource groups (40.0%). Other ways companies create spaces for their employees include safety meetings, listening circles, open-door policies and employee suggestion boxes.

In a similar vein to town hall meetings, L&L Products holds monthly focus groups based on the date that new hires join and broken down by shifts to identify what the company can do better. No topics are off limits. Leadership answers questions they can answer as they arise and leave with a list of action items that are then assigned to whichever departments can handle them. Progress in addressing these action items is tracked in an internal system. L&L Products ties one of their key performance indicators to this initiative. In addition to this effort, L&L Products convenes monthly employee meetings during which they ask one employee to communicate their connection to the company core values as well as share safety and quality information.

Figure 9: Efforts Undertaken in the Past Year at Manufacturing Companies to Engage Workers



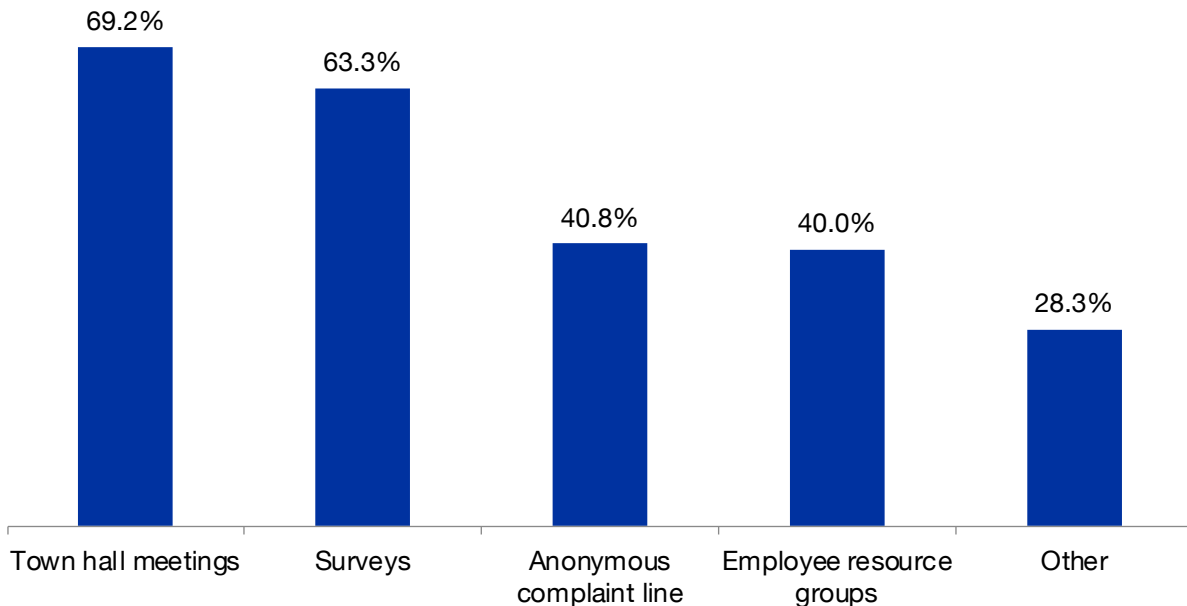
Note: Respondents were able to check more than one response; therefore, responses exceeded 100%.

Several companies that we interviewed implemented employee surveys. Brock shared that nVent conducts an employee engagement survey every 18 months, but they also touch base throughout the year with quarterly surveys. Each quarterly poll has five questions. Among other things, it captures information for an inclusion index, which feeds into the company’s goals. In addition, this more-frequent survey allows nVent to focus on areas that might have scored lower in the larger survey. In the interim, they launch initiatives to improve in those lower-scoring areas. She said, “We are keeping an eye on the pulse for those lower scores [in the quarterly survey] to see how employees feel about them now. In essence, you asked for an improvement in that area, and we listened.”

Wire Experts Group does an annual survey, getting high participation rates and using it as a mechanism to drive engagement. Each year, they focus on a particular question in which they performed below the standard they expected and then take concrete actions to address their employees’ concerns. L&L Products approached their employee survey similarly. The management team reviewed the survey as well as more than 900 comments, developing leadership programs and hiring a training and development manager to address employee concerns about supervisors. Kate Guess from Vermeer suggested that when implementing employee surveys, pick a tool and stay with it for a healthy period of time so the business can become comfortable with it and see the value in it longitudinally. “You get more buy-in that way because people understand that it’s not going away and that you’re committed to making real change,” she said.

Another way that L&L Products gauges employee engagement is by monitoring whiteboards that are posted on the shop floor. Employees can write down ideas and concerns they may have on these boards. “Our boards are constantly being filled and renewed with new ideas. It’s a barometer for us for engagement,” Kleino said.

Figure 10: How Manufacturers Provide Opportunities for Employees to Feel Heard



Note: Respondents were able to check more than one response; therefore, responses exceeded 100%.

Other companies take innovative approaches. Bullock shared how his company reserved two registers at a local Walmart and purchased their employees' school supplies every year to emphasize the family-friendliness of his company's culture. "It costs us a couple thousand dollars, but it's a big deal for our employees. That makes it worth it," he said. Power Curbers Companies organizes an annual family Christmas party and dinner with gifts for employees' children and a visit from Santa, ice cream socials with senior leadership, cookouts and celebrations for major tenure milestones.

➤ The Role of Benefits in Company Culture

As noted in the previous section, non-salary benefits play an important role in determining an employee's decision to stay. To further explore how employees navigate their benefits and identify how companies can improve their processes, we surveyed employees on their preferences in engaging with their benefits. The majority of respondents (63.2%) agreed that benefits education and training methods should be tailored to serve the varying learning styles and preferences of different generations and cultural backgrounds. Employees preferred to receive education and training about their non-salary benefits package through an employer website or mobile app (69.1%), printed and sent to the employee at home (69.1%), prerecorded educational videos/webinars employees can access themselves (57.9%) and emailed to employees (55.0%).

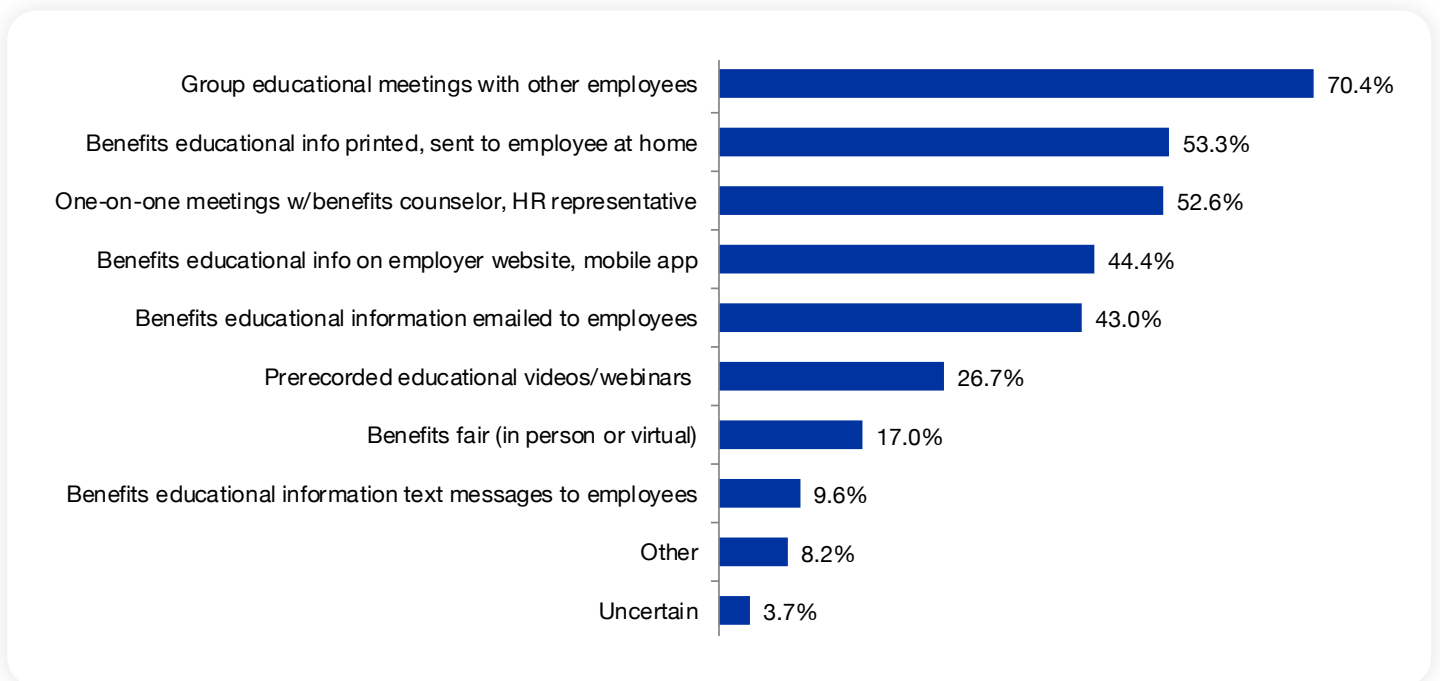
While 12.65% of employee respondents do not receive benefits at work, those who did enrolled for their benefits through meeting with a benefits counsel or HR representative on the phone or in person (45.6%), enrolling electronically by themselves through a website or mobile app (32.4%) and filling out paper forms (9.4%). When asked how they would prefer to enroll in benefits, while a similar number of participants wanted to meet with a benefits counselor or HR representative (47.6%), more participants indicated that they would like to enroll electronically by themselves on a website or mobile app (46.3%).

In terms of benefits, 79.4% of manufacturing leader respondents agreed that the more employees understand about their non-salary benefits package, the more these workers feel cared for by their company, with those uncertain or disagreeing evenly split. Interestingly, only 44.0% of employee respondents feel cared for by the non-salary benefits package being offered at work with another 28.3% feeling neutral. This indicates there may be a gap in communicating the value of non-salary benefits packages to employees.

Educational efforts on non-salary benefits have largely centered around group educational meetings with other employees (70.4%), benefits educational information printed and mailed to employees’ homes (53.3%), one-on-one meetings with benefits counselors or human resources representatives (52.6%), benefits information on the employer’s website or mobile app (44.4%) and benefits information emailed to employees (43.0%) (Figure 11).

Some interviewees noted that while some employees understand and appreciate the investment employers make in providing benefits, the broad employee base does not. “Benefits like health care and 401(k)s are not the reason that most of my employees are getting out of bed,” Bill said. “There is, however, a strong appreciation for paid time off.” Kleino pointed out that younger employees in particular don’t have as strong of an understanding of benefits, especially when it comes to long-term benefits like 401(k)s.

Figure 11: Methods Used to Educate and Train Employees on Non-Salary Benefits



Note: Respondents were able to check more than one response; therefore, responses exceeded 100%.

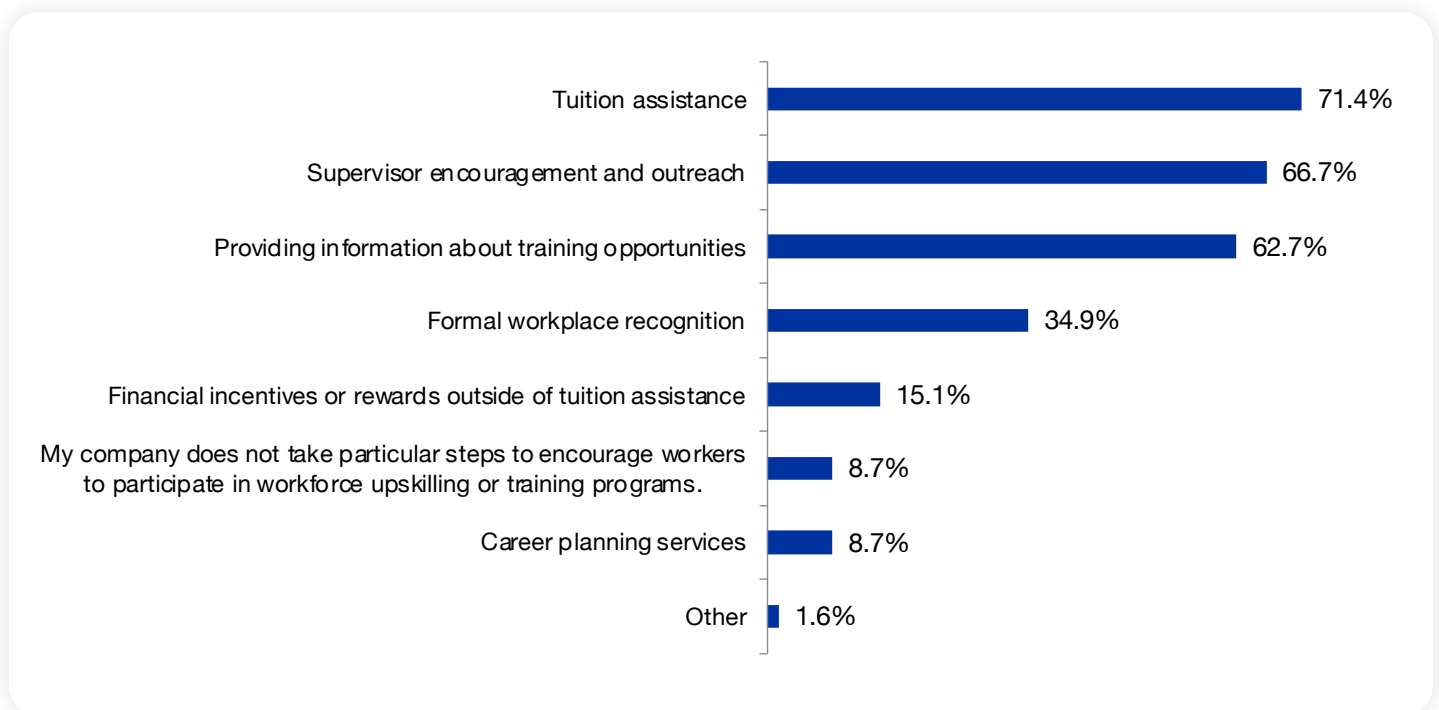
For others, like Tusco, unique in its drug-free policy, the health insurance coverage provided by the company was a key attractor. “We see our culture and our benefits as a way to compete,” said Lauber. “I am never going to compete on wages alone.” Vermeer also saw its benefits as a way to attract, retain and engage its employees. “We focus on supporting our employees in both their professional and personal lives. We offer on-site child care, a chaplaincy program, a clinic and pharmacy, free financial planning and wellness coaches on-site. Our benefits are really convenient, and our employees are appreciative of what we offer,” Guess said.

➤ The Role of Training and Upskilling in Company Culture

Providing training and upskilling opportunities can be an effective way for companies to indicate their investment in employees, creating a company culture in which growth is prioritized. As indicated in Figure 9, providing training and professional development is one of the top ways companies engage their workers. To encourage employees to participate in these opportunities, companies most commonly provide tuition assistance (71.4%), supervisor engagement and outreach (66.7%) and information about what training is available (62.7%). Other methods that manufacturers use to encourage participation include having a formal hourly to salaried development program as well as an apprenticeship program.

The positive impacts of providing these types of opportunities are clear and multifold. Nearly 62% of manufacturing leaders reported that training and upskilling programs have allowed workers to move into supervisory roles and gain more responsibilities (Figure 13). Respondents saw a connection between offering these programs and company culture with 57.9% stating that training opportunities have improved employee morale and 55.6% finding that they had extended the longevity of employees' careers at their company.

Figure 12: Steps Taken by Manufacturers to Encourage Workers to Participate in Workforce Upskilling or Training Programs



Note: Respondents were able to check more than one response; therefore, responses exceeded 100%.

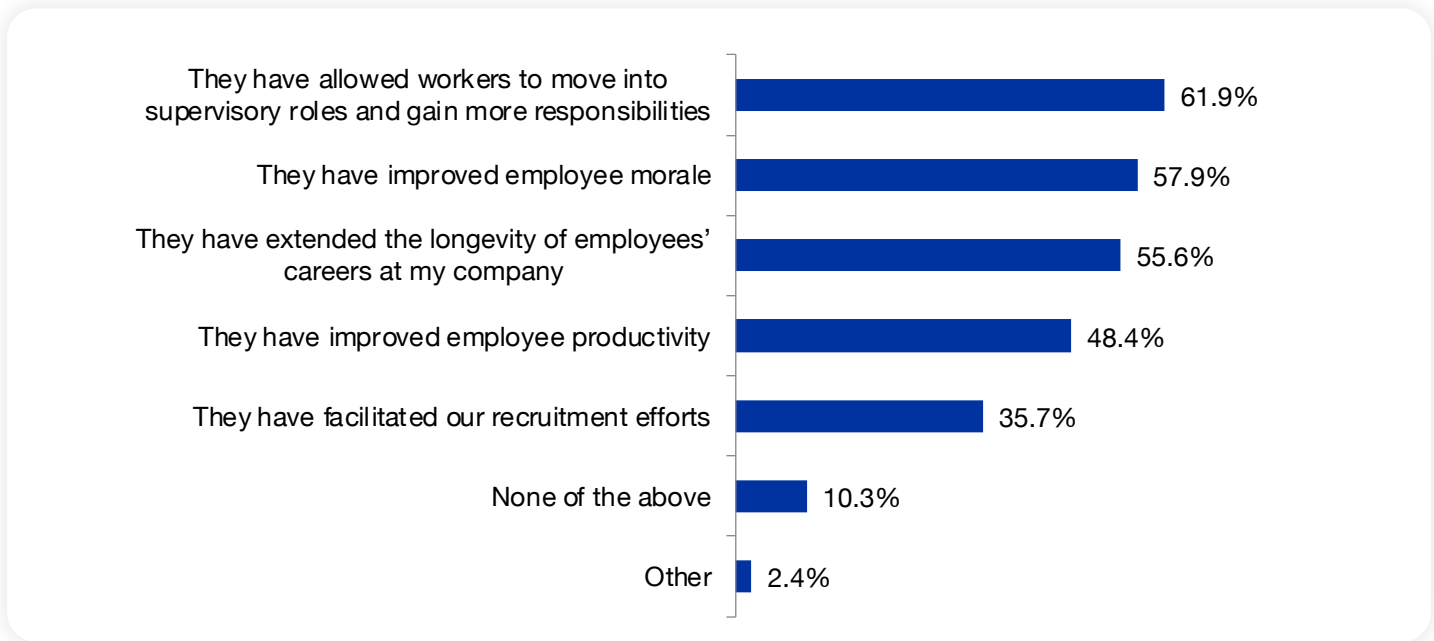
McKernan emphasized the importance of providing training opportunities. "Training is a huge part of retaining staff. It's great to have programs to talk about when you're hiring because everyone wants to advance at some level." However, among our interviewees, only a few had formal training programs. Most provided on-the-job training or cross-training. Some companies, like Tusco, provided tuition reimbursement for employees who were interested in gaining certifications and additional training as well as supporting them through college.

Both L&L Products and Vermeer prioritized leadership development opportunities for their employees. L&L Products has developed five leadership courses, emphasizing the ideal team player who they defined as humble, hungry and

smart. Vermeer created a 33-day study for leadership that is moderated by fellow employees. For Vermeer, there are opportunities to be developed once an employee joins the workforce. “We like to hire from within, and there is openness for anyone who has the appetite to learn,” Guess shared.

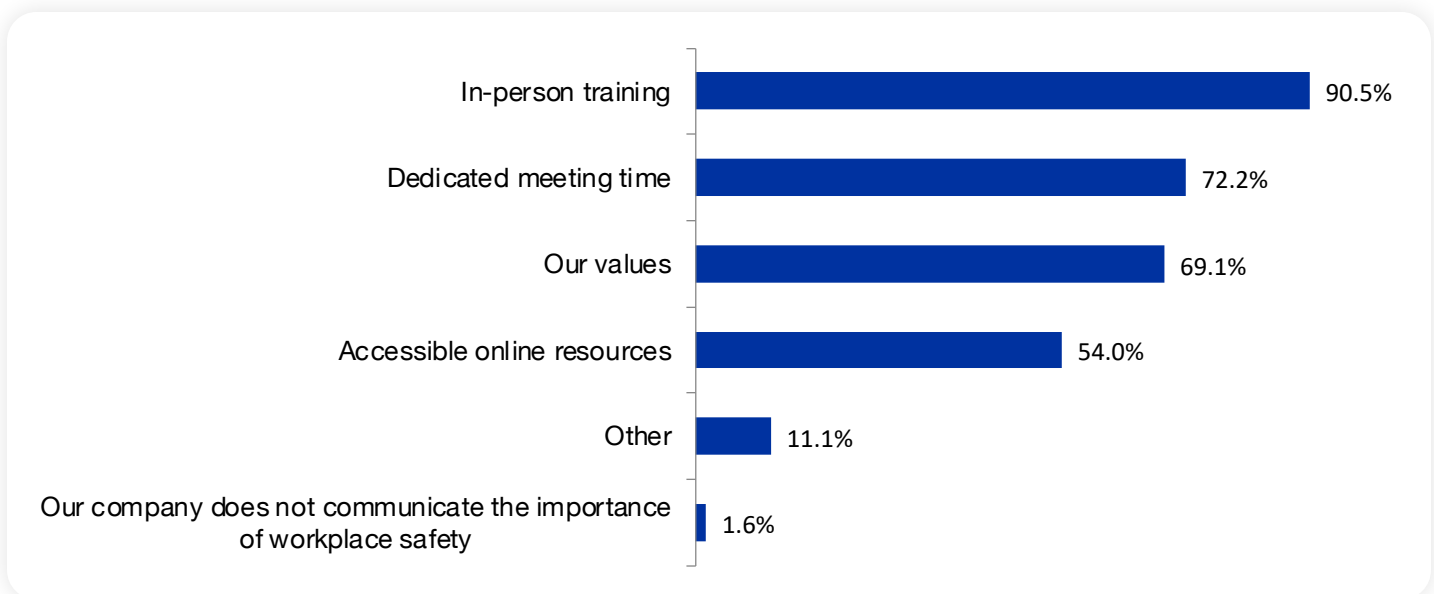
Vermeer also offers a robust technical operations training program in addition to programs in engineering, marketing, business development and sales. Guess talked about the importance of providing clear pathways to advancement in retaining employees. “We’re constantly thinking about how we can help people see paths to make them stay,” she said.

Figure 13: How Workforce Training or Upskilling Programs Have Influenced Employee Careers at the Company



Note: Respondents were able to check more than one response; therefore, responses exceeded 100%.

Figure 14: How Manufacturers Communicate the Importance of Workplace Safety



Note: Respondents were able to check more than one response; therefore, responses exceeded 100%.

› The Role of Workplace Safety in Company Culture

A critical aspect of company culture is promoting workplace safety. By valuing the safety of their employees and communicating their commitment through concrete action, companies create a company culture that prioritizes people. The most common way that manufacturers communicate the importance of workplace safety is through in-person training (90.5%) with a significant majority providing dedicated meeting time (72.2%) and emphasizing through values (69.1%) (Figure 14).

Several companies that were interviewed emphasized the importance of having everyone leave the way that they came in. Most companies had weekly safety meetings, safety committees and signage. A few, including Power Curbers Companies and L&L Products, visited other manufacturers to learn best practices. “We’ve learned a lot from the facilities we’ve visited, and we’ve done a lot with our lean team. Visitors are always impressed with how clean and well-organized our shop floor is with clear signage everywhere,” shared Bullock. At Miltec, the company has a safety committee that includes safety champions, both to facilitate new ideas and to promote that safety is a top priority for all employees.

Brock suggested that while a culture of safety can be an excellent differentiator in the labor market, company culture can also help to improve safety. She asserted, “When you have a trusted culture, where everyone cares about and respects each other, you are likely to have a better safety rate. Employees will say that I do have your back, and you can do the same for me.” Overall, nVent has an excellent safety record—much like the others interviewed for this report—and it is something that they tout in their environmental, social and governance report. Prospective and current employees are aware of their safety reputation, largely because it is something that they promote in interviews and in employee communications.

› Company Culture and DEI

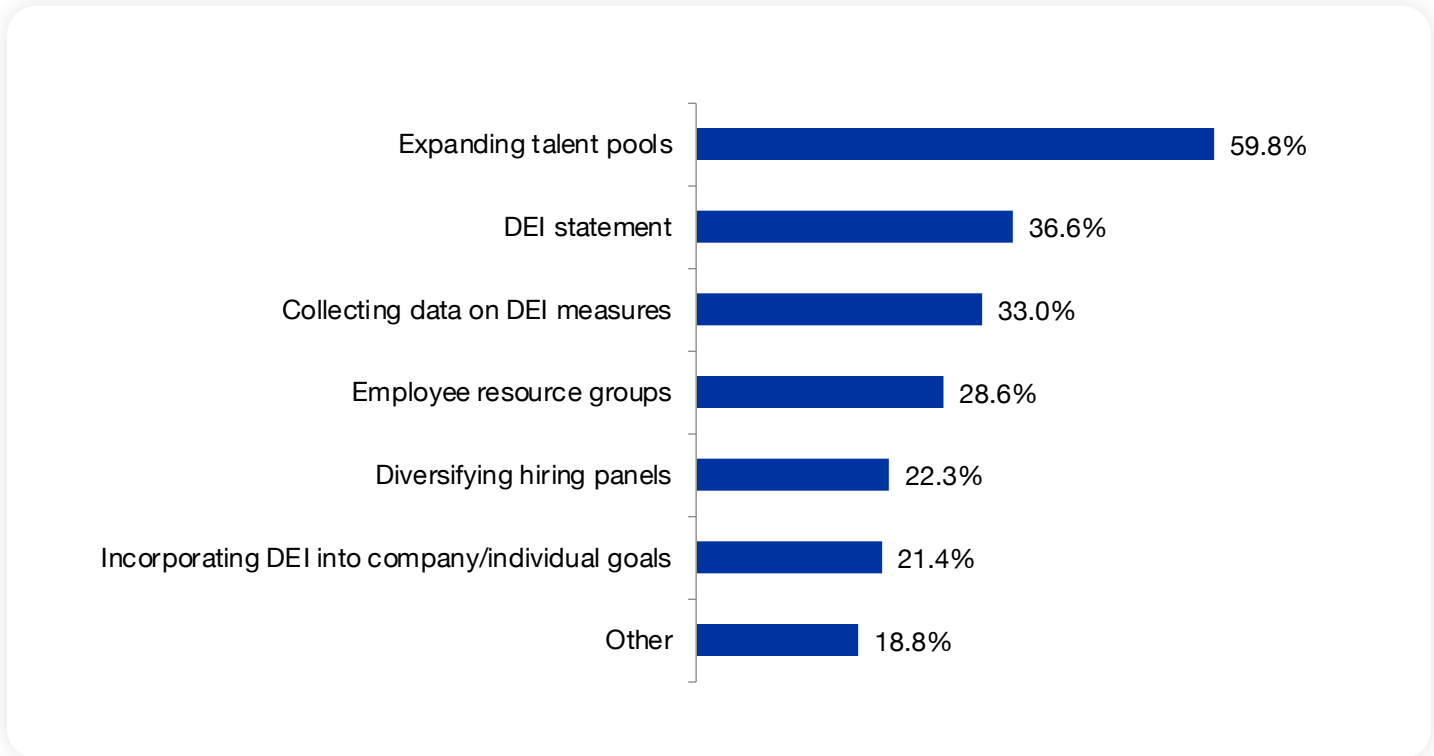
Having a more diverse, equitable and inclusive work environment can also foster a positive company culture. The primary way that manufacturers communicated the importance of DEI was to expand talent pools (59.8%) with others using DEI statements (36.6%), collecting data on DEI measures (33.0%) and building employee resource groups (28.6%) (Figure 15). Respondents who selected “Other” mentioned organizing a DEI report, incorporating diversity action plans and diversity metrics in management incentive plans, leadership development and one-on-one communication.

Of the companies that were interviewed, nVent was likely the furthest along in its approaches toward increased diversity, equity and inclusion. Its goal is to promote DEI efforts for its four main constituencies: employees, local communities, suppliers and customers. They started with employees and have been working to promote diversity and inclusion initiatives to the other groups. The company has detailed tracking metrics on DEI, which are tied to compensation (see the inclusion index discussion in the previous section) and to their ESG scorecard. Most importantly, they have a diversity action plan, which is largely centered on goals and tactics that start at the executive ranks but also cascade down the chain into other roles. Their efforts have paid off, with nVent winning awards and, in Brock’s view, helping with attraction and retention. She added, “Younger workers love working in an environment where they can feel appreciated and included.” It likely helps that their CEO is female and is seen as a national and community leader in helping to promote more diversity and inclusion. Applicants are likely to be aware of that reputation.

While many companies are in the beginning stages of establishing stronger DEI cultures, some are taking active steps toward it. Companies that were interviewed tended to have open attitudes toward hiring people of any background, and in light of workforce challenges, they were exploring ways to expand their talent pools with an eye for increasing DEI to help meet their labor needs.

Vermeer shared its investment in employee resource groups to help advance the company’s understanding of unique needs and preferences of different populations as well as identifying gaps. In particular, Vermeer has been working to understand how to create Hispanic and Spanish-speaking friendly environments, making the workplace more flexible and bilingual with an eye toward removing language barriers more generally. “We’re doing this work so that we can create a greater sense of belonging and a more inclusive environment,” Guess said. Wire Experts Group created a cultural awareness team across their business units and has started to have better conversations about DEI.

Figure 15: How Manufacturers Communicate the Importance of Creating a More Diverse, Equitable and Inclusive Work Environment



Note: Respondents were able to check more than one response; therefore, responses exceeded 100%.



› Conclusion

The market for talent is intense, even if manufacturers may find it slightly easier today than several months ago. With significantly more job opportunities than people who are actively seeking work, businesses of all types are scrambling for qualified applicants, and there continues to be a lot of churn in the labor market. Wage rates have risen steadily over the past few years, yet businesses continue to suggest that difficulties in attracting and retaining employees remains a top challenge.

The battle for workers cannot rest on compensation alone. Wage increases need to make sense from a business perspective, and there are limits to such growth, particularly if firms want to remain competitive with their peers in the marketplace for their goods and services. To successfully identify candidates and keep employees, manufacturers need to differentiate themselves from other possible employers—a list that increasingly includes nontraditional players, including those in high-tech and service sectors.

The results of this study reinforce the importance of company culture as a critical differentiator in the competitive landscape of today's economy. Focusing on company culture can be an effective strategy, particularly for small and medium-sized manufacturers. As Bullock put it, "If you can't be the highest-paying company, if you're on the smaller side and you can't offer many opportunities for advancement, then you have to treat your employees really, really well." Lauber added to this approach to company culture, "You need to do everything with integrity and genuineness. It's hard to do but vitally valuable. Having a positive culture requires a thousand little things. It's not just one magic thing."

At the end of the day, employees want to work for a company that appreciates them and their families. They want to feel like they are being heard. If a manufacturer invests in their professional growth, it goes a long way in helping improve employee morale and retention. Surveys and stay or exit interviews can help to identify weaknesses and the possible strategies that companies can utilize to address them in their efforts to improve operations and to keep employees engaged.

At the same time, it is notable that workers want to get along with their managers and their colleagues. While a competitive compensation package was universally accepted as the top reason that employees stay at their current company, it was closely followed by a desire to continue working with their colleagues. Employees often spend

more time with their work colleagues than with others; it is important for them to like who they work with. This social aspect helps explain why so many firms describe themselves as family-friendly, with each organizing several activities throughout the year designed to bring workers together to get to know one another better.

Increasingly, manufacturers are being asked to be more flexible with their workforce, particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. With other companies offering remote and hybrid opportunities, and with more employees reevaluating their work-life balance priorities, manufacturing leaders need to rethink the workplace in the competition for talent while preserving their overall culture and continuing to meet their production goals to meet the needs of customers. This is easier to accomplish with administrative workers than with production employees, but efforts are being made to be as accommodating as possible. Even with shopfloor workers, companies are getting more innovative in their attempts to increase flexibility options, including a truncated workweek, part-time options and a more-tailored schedule to employees' preferences. In fact, each of the manufacturing leaders we interviewed spoke about the importance of flexibility in their ability to attract and retain workers, even as many were still unsure about what that might look like moving forward.

Importantly, a company's values matter. Those values are evident to both prospective and existing employees with 60% of manufacturing employees saying that they remain at their current company because of its company culture (including its reputation and values)—only surpassed by pay and other workplace colleagues as a reason to stay. The leaders interviewed in this paper said that company values are both shared with candidates in the interview process and discussed through various communications, including during onboarding and at staff meetings. Further, providing upskilling and training opportunities can communicate the company's investment in their employees, boosting employee morale and increasing the longevity of employees' careers with their company. These values are also prevalent on the company's website and in job postings. Investing in these aspects of company culture has impact. Overall, nearly 80% of manufacturers say that a company's culture has helped them attract and retain more workers.

In sum, manufacturers depend on their workers for success, and engaged employees help to improve productivity and reduce turnover. As such, it should not be a surprise that so many company leaders are investing in their workforce with initiatives to enhance employee satisfaction and to ensure that the business embraces its mission and values. By strengthening their culture, manufacturing firms can ensure that they are putting their best foot forward in the competition for talent, helping to improve operational excellence and the company's competitive position.

➤ Appendix A: Survey Responses (Employees)

1. Are you currently employed full time?

- a. Yes – 100.00%
- b. No – 0.00%

2. In what sector are you employed?

- a. Business management and administration (human resources, finance, marketing, sales) – 13.61%
- b. Communications and information systems (IT, software programming, audio/video services, data management) – 10.28%
- c. Construction – 1.70%
- d. Food and agriculture (farming, ranching, food processing) – 16.90%
- e. Government – 1.58%
- f. Health sciences (medicine, medical research) – 6.99%
- g. Hospitality (restaurants, hotels and entertainment) – 18.69%
- h. Human services (education and training, government, law and order, security) – 1.51%
- i. Manufacturing (manufacturing, supply chain, goods transport) – 8.06%
- j. Self-employment or business owner – 16.21%
- k. Other – 4.47%

[Only the manufacturing response moves on; all others – END SURVEY]

3. I feel valued by my employer.

- a. Strongly agree – 20.35%
- b. Agree – 21.53%
- c. Neither agree nor disagree – 20.35%
- d. Disagree – 33.63%
- e. Strongly disagree – 4.13%

4. I feel a sense of belonging at work.

- a. Strongly agree – 30.68%
- b. Agree – 7.37%
- c. Neither agree nor disagree – 35.99%
- d. Disagree – 16.22%
- e. Strongly disagree – 9.73%

5. I am satisfied with the work-life balance practices offered by my employer.

- a. Strongly agree – 19.17%
- b. Agree – 16.22%
- c. Neither agree nor disagree – 38.64%
- d. Disagree – 19.17%
- e. Strongly disagree – 6.78%

6. I would recommend my organization to others as a good place to work.

- a. Strongly agree – 16.81%
- b. Agree – 17.11%
- c. Neither agree nor disagree – 47.20%
- d. Disagree – 13.86%
- e. Strongly disagree – 5.01%

7. How important is your company's approach to diversity, equity and inclusion to your sense of belonging?

- a. Very important – 6.76%
- b. Somewhat important – 17.06%
- c. Somewhat unimportant – 43.82%
- d. Not important at all – 32.35%

**8. On a scale of 1 to 5, how well do you understand the non-salary benefits package being offered to you at work? (1 being a very low level of understanding and 5 being an extremely high level of understanding)
[SCALE QUESTION, 1 to 5]**

Average Response: 3.45

9. Do you agree that benefits education and training methods should be tailored to serve the varying learning styles and preferences of the different generations and cultural backgrounds of employees at your company?

- a. Strongly disagree – 0.00%
- b. Somewhat disagree – 8.55%
- c. Neither agree nor disagree – 28.32%
- d. Somewhat agree – 25.37%
- e. Strongly agree – 37.76%

10. Do you agree the current non-salary benefits package being offered to you at work makes you feel cared for?

- a. Strongly disagree – 5.90%
- b. Somewhat disagree – 21.83%
- c. Neither agree nor disagree – 28.32%
- d. Somewhat agree – 17.99%
- e. Strongly agree – 25.96%

11. How would you prefer to receive education and training about your non-salary benefits package? (Select all that apply.)

- a. One-on-one meetings with a benefits counselor or HR representative (in person or virtual) – 27.06%
- b. Group educational meetings with other employees (in person or virtual) – 47.35%
- c. Prerecorded educational videos/webinars employees can access themselves – 57.94%
- d. Benefits educational information made available on employer website or mobile app – 69.12%
- e. Benefits educational information printed and sent to employee at home – 69.12%
- f. Benefits educational information emailed to employees – 55.00%
- g. Benefits educational information text messages to employees – 45.00%
- h. Benefits fair (in person or virtual) – 35.00%
- i. Other – 0.00%

12. How do you enroll annually for your benefits at work?

- a. I enroll electronically myself on a website or mobile app – 32.35%
- b. I fill out paper forms – 9.41%
- c. I meet with a benefits counselor or HR representative on the phone or in person who enrolls me – 45.59%
- d. I do not receive benefits at work – 12.65%
- e. Other – 0.00%

13. How would you prefer to enroll annually in your benefits at work?

- a. Enroll electronically myself on a website or mobile app – 46.28%
- b. Fill out paper forms – 6.15%
- c. Meet with a benefits counselor or HR representative on the phone or in person who enrolls me – 47.57%
- d. Other – 0.00%

14. I stay with my employer because of: (Select all that apply.)

- a. The compensation (salary, benefits, bonuses, etc.) – 100.00%
- b. My colleagues (co-workers, manager, etc.) – 96.76%
- c. Learning and career advancement opportunities – 42.06%
- d. The flexibility – 48.82%
- e. The stability/job security – 55.00%
- f. The company's culture (reputation, values, atmosphere, social responsibility, etc.) – 60.29%
- g. I enjoy the work I do – 54.41%
- h. My job gives me the opportunity to make a difference – 48.53%
- i. My job fits well with other parts of my life – 40.29%
- j. The location is convenient for me – 35.29%
- k. There aren't any other opportunities for me – 24.12%

15. Please rank the following compensation and benefits elements as to their importance and attractiveness to you (1 is the least important, 15 is the most important).

- a. Base hourly wage or salary level – 14.09
- b. Bonuses and/or additional income opportunities for existing employees – 13.84
- c. Health insurance benefits – 14.05
- d. Dental and vision insurance benefits – 6.46
- e. Paid vacation leave – 6.51
- f. Paid sick leave – 6.56
- g. Child care benefits – 6.77
- h. Flexible work arrangements – 6.49
- i. Contributions to a 401(k) or other retirement plan – 6.52
- j. Life insurance benefits – 6.30
- k. Flexible spending accounts – 6.01
- l. Accident or disability insurance benefits – 6.66
- m. Student debt management services – 6.42
- n. Mental health and counseling services – 6.88
- o. Sign-on bonuses for new employees – 6.42

16. How important is your non-salary employee benefits package in determining your decision to stay at your company?

- a. Very important – 28.61%
- b. Important – 27.73%
- c. Unsure – 11.80%
- d. Somewhat important – 31.86%
- e. Not at all important – 0.00%

17. Please rank the following terms as to how you would describe your company's culture (1 is the least accurate, 9 is most accurate).

- a. Family-friendly – 5.19
- b. Innovative – 4.89
- c. Engaging – 4.71
- d. Transparent – 5.01
- e. Inclusive – 5.01
- f. Collaborative – 5.18
- g. Welcoming – 5.08
- h. Flexible – 5.09
- i. Caring – 4.84

18. How many years have you worked with your current employer?

- a. 0–5 – 16.76%
- b. 6–10 – 25.29%
- c. 11–15 – 17.94%
- d. 16–20 – 22.06%
- e. > 20 – 17.94%

19. If you are considering leaving your company in the near future, what are you looking for in your next role? (Select all that apply.)

- a. Better compensation (salary, benefits, bonuses, etc.) – 100.00%
- b. Higher title – 96.47%
- c. More learning and career advancement opportunities – 46.18%
- d. More challenging, engaging work – 51.18%
- e. More job stability – 91.76%
- f. More flexibility (remote work, different scheduling, etc.) – 63.53%

- g. Better work-life balance – 54.71%
- h. Better location – 44.71%
- i. Organization with better company culture (reputation, values, social responsibility, etc.) – 38.24%
- j. Other – 0.00%
- k. I am not considering leaving my company in the near future. – 24.41%

20. Which of the following best describes your role within your company?

- a. Production – 5.59%
- b. Quality control/testing – 5.00%
- c. Research and development – 9.12%
- d. Engineering – 10.88%
- e. Purchasing – 5.29%
- f. Marketing/communications – 9.41%
- g. Sales – 6.76%
- h. Shipping/logistics – 7.94%
- i. Customer support – 7.94%
- j. Human resources – 6.76%
- k. Accounting and finance – 8.82%
- l. IT/technology – 8.82%
- m. Administration – 7.65%
- n. Other – 0.00%

21. Which of the following best describes most of your duties within your company?

- a. Upper-level job within organization: upper-level manager involving coordination of organization, development of plans/goals for the organization, supervision of managers, etc. – 28.53%
- b. Middle-level job within organization: involves some management and supervision or coordination of other people or departments, etc. – 19.12%
- c. Front-line job within organization: directly involved with production of products or providing services such as sales, secretarial, bookkeeping, clerical, customer service, etc. – 22.65%
- d. Individual contributor: do not have management responsibilities, but have a middle-level or senior position – 29.71%

22. What is your company's primary industrial classification?

- a. Chemicals – 20.59%
- b. Computer and electronic products – 27.35%
- c. Electrical equipment and appliances – 23.82%
- d. Fabricated metal products – 27.94%
- e. Food manufacturing – 0.00%
- f. Furniture and related products – 0.00%
- g. Machinery – 0.00%
- h. Nonmetallic mineral products – 0.00%
- i. Paper and paper products – 0.00%
- j. Petroleum and coal products – 0.00%
- k. Plastics and rubber products – 0.00%
- l. Primary metals – 0.00%
- m. Transportation equipment – 0.00%
- n. Wood products – 0.00%
- o. Other – 0.00%

23. What is your firm size (e.g., the parent company, not your establishment)?

- a. Fewer than 50 employees – 41.18%
- b. 50 to 499 employees – 44.12%
- c. 500 or more employees – 14.71%

➤ Appendix B: Survey Responses (Leaders)

1. My company could improve its retention efforts.

- a. Yes – 77.61%
- b. No – 12.69%
- c. Uncertain – 9.70%

2. What are some of the reasons that people stay at your company? (Select all that apply.)

- a. Employees enjoy the work that they do – 68.61%
- b. Job stability/security – 81.02%
- c. Company culture – 78.83%
- d. Company reputation – 55.47%
- e. Work-life balance – 40.88%
- f. Opportunity to make a difference – 32.85%
- g. Connection with co-workers – 64.96%
- h. Location is convenient – 40.88%
- i. Competitive wages and salaries – 62.04%
- j. Competitive benefits – 66.42%
- k. Management leadership – 42.34%
- l. Company's social responsibility efforts – 23.36%
- m. Training and development efforts – 28.47%
- n. Diverse, equitable and inclusive work environment – 24.82%
- o. Other – 6.57%

3. Would you say your company has a strong culture?

- a. Yes – 82.96%
- b. No – 9.63%
- c. Uncertain – 7.41%

4. Please rank the following terms as to how you would describe your company's culture (1 is the most accurate, 9 is least accurate).

- a. Family-friendly – 6.38
- b. Innovative – 5.45
- c. Engaging – 5.28
- d. Transparent – 4.16
- e. Inclusive – 3.86
- f. Collaborative – 4.84
- g. Welcoming – 5.68
- h. Flexible – 3.67
- i. Caring – 5.68

5. Please rank the factors that contribute to your company culture. (1 is most important, 15 is least important)

- a. Our ability to manage change – 9.65
- b. Our ability to achieve goals – 10.83
- c. Our customer orientation – 11.05
- d. Our focus on workplace flexibility – 7.74
- e. Our focus on workplace safety – 10.10
- f. Our focus on work-life balance – 7.17
- g. Our teamwork – 10.17
- h. Our employees – 12.17
- i. Our human resources department – 5.74
- j. Our leadership – 9.01
- k. Our shared values – 8.94
- l. Our company's diversity, equity and inclusion efforts – 3.81
- m. Our organizational structure – 4.37
- n. Our transparency – 4.92
- o. Our involvement with the community and volunteer organizations – 4.35

6. Does your company's culture, in your view, help your efforts to attract and retain employees?

- a. Yes – 78.68%
- b. No – 11.03%
- c. Uncertain – 10.29%

7. How do you communicate your company's culture to jobseekers? (Select all that apply.)

- a. Include statement in job description – 48.51%
- b. Highlight benefits in job description – 51.49%
- c. Discuss company culture in interviews – 86.57%
- d. Company website – 58.96%
- e. Other – 5.97%

8. What percentage of your workforce would you describe as engaged? [SLIDER FROM 1%–100%]

Average Percentage: 69.45%

9. In the past year, what efforts has your company undertaken to engage your workforce? (Select all that apply.)

- a. Increased compensation – 81.02%
- b. Expanded benefits – 58.39%
- c. Increased flexibility – 64.96%
- d. Increased diversity, equity and inclusion efforts – 40.15%
- e. Increased our involvement with the community and volunteer organizations – 36.50%
- f. Increased transparency – 34.31%
- g. Created or utilized employee resource groups – 28.47%
- h. Created clear paths to advancement – 32.12%
- i. Increased mentorship opportunities – 30.66%
- j. Increased training and professional development opportunities – 64.23%
- k. Other – 5.11%
- l. My company has not undertaken any of these efforts – 1.46%

10. On a scale of 1 to 5, how well do you think the employees at your company understand the non-salary benefits package offered to them? (1 being a very low level of understanding and 5 being an extremely high level of understanding) [SCALE QUESTION, 1 to 5]

Average Response: 3.37

11. What methods does your company use to educate and train your employees on their non-salary benefits package? (Select all that apply.)

- a. One-on-one meetings with a benefit counselor or HR representative (in person or virtual) – 52.59%
- b. Group educational meetings with other employees (in person or virtual) – 70.37%
- c. Prerecorded educational videos/webinars employees can access themselves – 26.67%
- d. Benefits educational information made available on employer website or mobile app – 44.44%
- e. Benefits educational information printed and sent to employee at home – 53.33%
- f. Benefits educational information emailed to employees – 42.96%
- g. Benefits educational information text messages to employees – 9.63%
- h. Benefits fair (in person or virtual) – 17.04%
- i. Other – 8.15%
- j. Uncertain – 3.70%

12. On a scale of 1 to 5, how well do you think your employees understand and appreciate your company's financial investment in the non-salary benefits provided to them? (1 being a very low level of appreciation to 5 being an extremely high level of appreciation) [SCALE QUESTION, 1 to 5]

Average Response: 3.04

13. Do you agree the more an employee understands their non-salary benefits package and the investment being made to provide them, the more employees will feel cared for?

- a. Strongly disagree – 5.88%
- b. Disagree – 4.41%
- c. Unsure – 10.29%
- d. Agree – 48.53%
- e. Strongly agree – 30.88%

14. Do you use an electronic platform such as a benefits administration system or HRIS system for employee benefits enrollment?

- a. Yes, we enroll electronically – 68.38%
- b. No, we primarily still use paper – 24.26%
- c. Uncertain – 7.35%

15. What is the name of the platform you use? [SHOW ONLY IF Q7=a]

- a. Arcoro – 0.00%
- b. B-swift – 3.26%
- c. BenefitFocus – 2.17%
- d. Ease – 1.09%
- e. Employee Navigator – 5.43%
- f. BusinessSolver – 2.17%
- g. Oracle – 6.52%
- h. SAP – 2.17%
- i. Selerix – 0.00%
- j. UKG (Ultimate Software and/or Kronos) – 7.61%
- k. Workday – 9.78%
- l. Zenefits – 0.00%
- m. Proprietary “Home Grown” solution – 2.17%
- n. Other – 36.96%
- o. Uncertain – 20.65%

16. What is the main reason why your company is not using an electronic platform for employee benefits enrollment? [SHOW ONLY IF Q7=b]

- a. Cost of platforms – 8.82%
- b. Lack of technical knowledge to select and implement such a system – 8.82%
- c. Not a company priority – 61.76%
- d. Other – 20.59%

17. What steps is your company taking to encourage workers to participate in workforce upskilling or training programs? (Check all that apply.)

- a. Supervisor encouragement and outreach – 66.67%
- b. Career planning services – 8.73%
- c. Tuition assistance – 71.43%
- d. Financial incentives or rewards outside of tuition assistance – 15.08%
- e. Providing information about training opportunities – 62.70%
- f. Formal workplace recognition – 34.92%
- g. Other – 1.59%
- h. My company does not take particular steps to encourage workers to participate in workforce upskilling or training programs. – 8.73%

18. How have these workforce upskilling or training programs influenced employee careers at your company? (Check all that apply.)

- a. They have extended the longevity of employees' careers at my company. – 55.56%
- b. They have allowed workers to move into supervisory roles and gain more responsibilities. – 61.90%
- c. They have improved employee morale. – 57.94%
- d. They have improved employee productivity. – 48.41%
- e. They have facilitated our recruitment efforts. – 35.71%
- f. Other – 2.38%
- g. None of the above – 10.32%

19. Is your company actively creating a more diverse, equitable and inclusive work environment?

- a. Yes – 62.40%
- b. No – 24.80%
- c. Unknown – 12.80%

20. How does your company communicate the importance of creating a more diverse, equitable and inclusive work environment? (Select all that apply.)

- a. DEI statement – 36.61%
- b. Employee resource groups – 28.57%
- c. Incorporating DEI into company/individual goals – 21.43%
- d. Collecting data on DEI measures – 33.04%
- e. Expanding talent pools – 59.82%
- f. Diversifying hiring panels – 22.32%
- g. Other – 18.75%

- 21. On the whole, are your employees satisfied with your company's efforts to create a more diverse, equitable and inclusive work environment?**
- a. Yes – 47.62%
 - b. No – 7.14%
 - c. Unknown – 45.24%
- 22. Do you agree that benefits education and training methods should be tailored to serve the varying learning styles and preferences of the different generations and cultural backgrounds of your employees?**
- a. Strongly agree – 26.98%
 - b. Agree – 55.56%
 - c. Unsure – 12.70%
 - d. Disagree – 4.76%
 - e. Strongly disagree – 0.00%
- 23. Has multilingual benefits education been a challenge for your organization?**
- a. Yes – 26.19%
 - b. No – 62.70%
 - c. Uncertain – 11.11%
- 24. How important is workplace safety to your company culture?**
- a. Very important – 88.80%
 - b. Important – 8.00%
 - c. Somewhat important – 2.40%
 - d. Not at all important – 0.00%
 - e. Uncertain – 0.80%
- 25. How does your company communicate the importance of workplace safety? (Select all that apply.)**
- a. In-person training – 90.48%
 - b. Accessible online resources – 53.97%
 - c. Dedicated meeting time – 72.22%
 - d. Our values – 69.05%
 - e. Other – 11.11%
 - f. Our company does not communicate the importance of workplace safety – 1.59%

26. On the whole, are your employees satisfied with the importance of workplace safety to your company culture?

- a. Yes – 83.20%
- b. No – 4.00%
- c. Unknown – 12.80%

27. How important is being family-friendly to your company culture?

- a. Very important – 51.59%
- b. Important – 33.33%
- c. Somewhat important – 14.29%
- d. Not at all important – 0.79%
- e. Uncertain – 0.00%

28. How does your company communicate the importance of being family-friendly? (Select all that apply.)

- a. Flexible work hours – 64.80%
- b. Flexible work arrangements (remote, hybrid, etc.) – 55.20%
- c. Child care support – 12.00%
- d. Elder care support – 6.40%
- e. Family leave – 76.00%
- f. Other – 18.40%

29. On the whole, are your employees satisfied with how family-friendly your company culture is?

- a. Yes – 62.70%
- b. No – 12.70%
- c. Unknown – 24.60%

30. Do employees at your company generally feel heard?

- a. Yes – 72.00%
- b. No – 7.20%
- c. Unknown – 20.80%

31. How does your company provide opportunities for employees to feel heard? (Select all that apply.)

- a. Town hall meetings – 69.17%
- b. Employee resource groups – 40.00%
- c. Surveys – 63.33%
- d. Anonymous complaint line – 40.83%
- e. Other – 28.33%

32. Does your company's hiring process and onboarding program include an effective overview of the company's culture?

- a. Yes – 75.40%
- b. No – 10.32%
- c. Uncertain – 14.29%

33. Does your company use a benefits broker or consultant to help you design your employee benefits package?

- a. Yes – 77.42%
- b. No – 16.13%
- c. Uncertain – 6.45%

34. What is your company's primary industrial classification?

- a. Chemicals – 4.76%
- b. Computer and electronic products – 1.59%
- c. Electrical equipment and appliances – 3.17%
- d. Fabricated metal products – 24.60%
- e. Food manufacturing – 2.38%
- f. Furniture and related products – 1.59%
- g. Machinery – 11.90%
- h. Nonmetallic mineral products – 1.59%
- i. Paper and paper products – 2.38%
- j. Petroleum and coal products – 0.00%
- k. Plastics and rubber products – 6.35%
- l. Primary metals – 3.17%
- m. Transportation equipment – 3.97%
- n. Wood products – 2.38%
- o. Other – 30.16%

35. What is your firm size (e.g., the parent company, not your establishment)?

- a. Fewer than 50 employees – 14.52%
- b. 50 to 499 employees – 49.19%
- c. 500 or more employees – 36.29%

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