

# Attitudes Before Age

A multigenerational study exploring the workforce and how to activate employees as brand ambassadors. The key is to communicate with employees based on what motivates them—not when they were born.

Long—Dash

# Consumers are increasingly choosing to buy from and do business with brands that have clear and well-articulated values.

Aware of these broader trends, executives are working overtime to communicate their organization's values through content, CSR initiatives, and sophisticated marketing campaigns. But more often than not, brands are focusing too narrowly on their external audiences, neglecting to look inward and leverage their most powerful brand asset—their employees.

It is widely known that engaged employees contribute directly to the bottom line. Gallup research shows that productivity among highly engaged teams is 14 percent\* higher than on teams with the lowest engagement. In fact, employees who are not engaged cost their company the equivalent of 18 percent\* of their annual salary. What is less clear is how to generate positive engagement and translate it into an active employee network. Employees tend to have up to 10 times\*\* more followers than a brand's corporate social media account, and employee-shared content gets eight times\*\* more engagement than content that comes directly from the brand. Further, our Brand Prism research\*\*\* reveals that employees are the most trusted public source of information about a brand's values.

\* Source: 2020 Gallup Employee Engagement Study, Base 100,000 teams

\*\* Source: LinkedIn and Altimeter Study, Base N=1,460 "target" and N=1,378 "control" group.

\*\*\*[www.longdash.co/brand-prism](http://www.longdash.co/brand-prism)

**“Whether they realize it or not, every single employee is an *ambassador*,” says a Senior marketing executive at a leading tech company.**

In a hyper competitive, oversaturated content ecosystem, a fresh, credible employee-generated narrative may be the key to standing out.

If employees can so powerfully influence how customers perceive a brand, why have executives not been more successful in engaging them? *And what can they do to change that?*

To answer these questions, Long Dash conducted a nationally representative survey of 1,000 employees of Fortune 500 companies to learn what leads them to have a meaningful work experience, what leaders can do to cultivate a more engaged workforce, and how that engaged experience can translate into ambassador actions.

## Happy employees aren't necessarily *inclined* to be ambassadors.

The vast majority of employees—86 percent—feel proud to work for their organizations, but less than half are willing to share about their companies on social media.

Insight

# 01

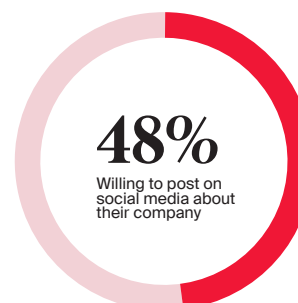
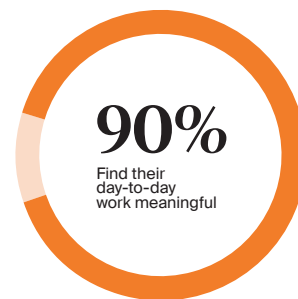
## Happy employees aren't necessarily *inclined* to be ambassadors.

Our research reveals that happiness helps, but is insufficient in making a brand ambassador out of an employee. In addition to most respondents being proud to work for their organizations, 90 percent also say that they find their day-to-day work meaningful. Despite reporting high levels of pride and satisfaction, only 48 percent say they are willing to post on social media about their company, preferring to keep their personal and professional lives separate. But a well-articulated and consistently acted upon set of values can help that.

***Three in four employees want employers to live up to their professed values and take a stand on societal issues. In fact, one in four said they would be more inclined to post on social media if they felt what the organization was doing was worth sharing.***

For brand leaders already contending with growing calls from stakeholders for more transparency, this can seem like another demand for information. But it is perhaps more about credibly connecting the dots between the work of employers and the work of the organization. “The biggest commitment employers can make to turn their employees into ambassadors is by forming cultures and communities inside that represent the employees’ values and needs,” says a DEI expert.

“People amplify where they feel connection, engagement, and inclusion.” This means leadership on all levels needs to translate broader business objectives to match their employees’ values. Younger employees, especially, are susceptible to not seeing or feeling this connection with the organizations they work for. One in three Gen Z respondents say that not feeling a sense of connection to the work is a barrier to sharing positively about their employers online. The generic approach of promoting the company message as it is originally dispatched won’t work. You have to adapt it to meet the needs of your employees.



**When it comes to *company values*, it's not just Gen Z that cares.**

One in two Boomers care that their organization's values align with their own, compared to only one in three Gen Z respondents.

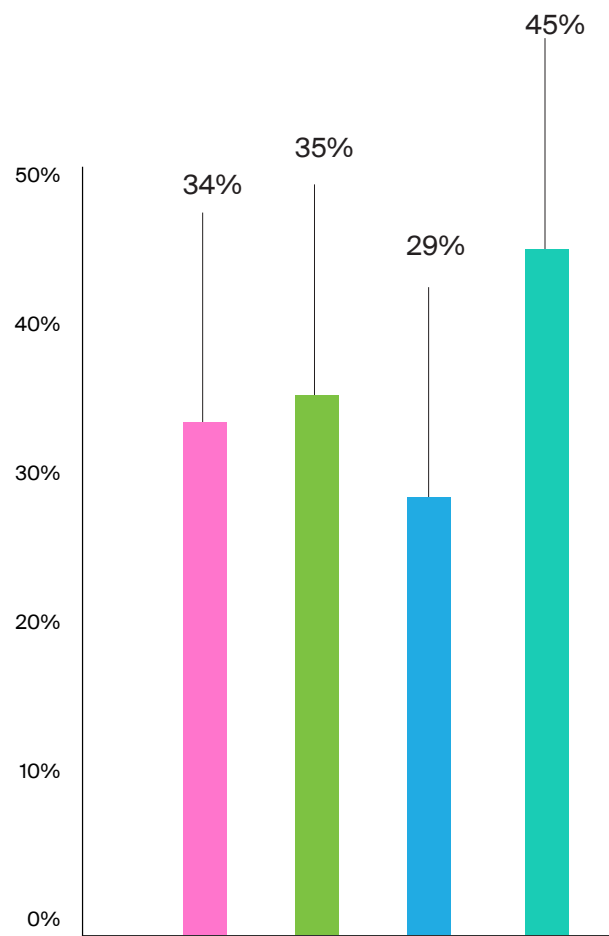
**Insight**

**02**

## When it comes to *company values*, it's not just Gen Z that cares.

Many executives view their workforce through a simplistic generational lens, pitting, for example, Gen Z idealism against Boomers' practicality.

Our research revealed that this isn't entirely the case: While Gen Z and Millennial consumers may exhibit preferences for values-oriented brands, as employees, they seem to be the more practical bunch. In fact, 45 percent of Boomers say that alignment between their values and those of the organization they work for is important compared to 29 percent of Gen X, 35 percent of Millennials, and 34 percent of Gen Z. Boomers, not the younger generations, place the most emphasis on a brand's reputation of valuing its employees, with 64 percent of Boomers saying this is top of mind when considering a job as opposed to 46 percent for Gen Z and 53 percent of Millennials. One possible explanation is that Boomers seek more meaning toward the senior arcs of their careers, while younger Gen Z employees, early in their careers, look to climb the corporate ladder and secure themselves financially. We learned that salary-driven Gen Zers and Millennials said they were even more likely to share information about their companies on their personal social media accounts if they were rewarded or incentivized to do so—a tactic brands might steer clear of, as it would essentially turn employee voices into sponsored content.



"It is important to me that there is an alignment between my values and those of the organization I work for."

- Gen Z
- Millennial
- Gen X
- Boomer

**In fact, only  
27 percent of Gen Z say  
it's important they work  
for a company where  
the core mission is  
*ambitious and exciting.***

When surveying respondents, “a core mission that directly benefits society” and “robust corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives” were not the most important considerations for Gen Z or Millennials when choosing where to work. (What did make it to the top? A competitive salary and flexibility in hours and location.) The assumption that a strong core mission is very significant to young people is already generating backlash. G. brand leader at a technology company suggests that the novelty of purpose-driven narratives have worn off. “It’s really about helping them attach to the one or two things that are important to them and stay focused on how that relates to what they’re working on,” they said. Consider this: 20 percent of respondents said that a major inhibitor to sharing about their organization online was that they have not experienced anything worth sharing, and one in three respondents said they would share if they experienced something personally meaningful. The key for brand leaders now is to create a meaningful experience tailored to the individual and their needs.



**To activate your employees,  
focus on *what they need*—  
not when they were born.**

Employers must transcend the tired assumption that demographic distinctions, such as age, define how an employee engages at work. Instead, our research shows the importance of engaging and activating employees as brand ambassadors based on their underlying needs and motivations.

Insight

03



## To activate your employees, focus on *what they need*—not when they were born.

This research makes clear that assumptions about employee satisfaction and demographic distinctions are an insufficient—and occasionally misleading—way to get your employees to serve as ambassadors. Across generations, genders, ages, and industries, we saw five distinct motivations emerge. Of our respondents, we found 36 percent are most motivated by salary and flexibility; 23 percent are most motivated by career advancement; 16 percent by strong leadership; 13 percent by community-building; 12 percent by self-actualization, or realizing their full potential. These categories transcend age and, instead, focus on people's values and perspectives. Instead of assuming that one generation is significantly more likely to react to a motivation, consider the natural tendencies your employees exhibit and match them to motivations that will encourage ambassadorship activities.

Brand leaders must go beyond a well-crafted mission or a sleek benefits package to engage their employees. To tap into the potential of their employee brand ambassadors, they must pursue a targeted, typologies-driven approach to the employee experience.

### **Typologies are segments based on an investigation into the shared motivations and needs of audiences.**

While personas often hinge on demographic commonalities, typologies group people according to shared mindsets or values. Typologies offer a useful frame of reference for how your employees might be feeling or thinking at a certain point in time. People's perspectives change, and so too might the needs and attitudes of employees over time. "There are times in careers when you are deeply motivated by climbing the ladder, and other times where you are motivated by deep knowledge in the role," a diversity and inclusion expert says. "This changes for people over the course of their career."

### **In short, typologies provide brands with a useful—but not prescriptive—blueprint for achieving their audience goals.**

By understanding shared motivations and needs among employees, brands can use typologies as a guide to shape internal and external experiences or as a starting point for developing employee engagement language and initiatives that resonate with latent brand ambassadors in your workforce.

# Your Five Employee Ambassadors

Looking at what employees value, what delights them, and what motivates them at work, five groups of employees emerged with differing needs and expectations.



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## Disciples — 16%

Leader-followers and workplace politics whisperers eager to be recognized by top brass

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## Altruists — 13%

Socially minded vocal community leaders who want to make a big impact with the work they do

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## Pragmatists — 36%

Job-focused employees who value autonomy and incentives

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## Careerists — 23%

Professional progress-seeking worker bees, looking to hone their strengths and achieve clear goals

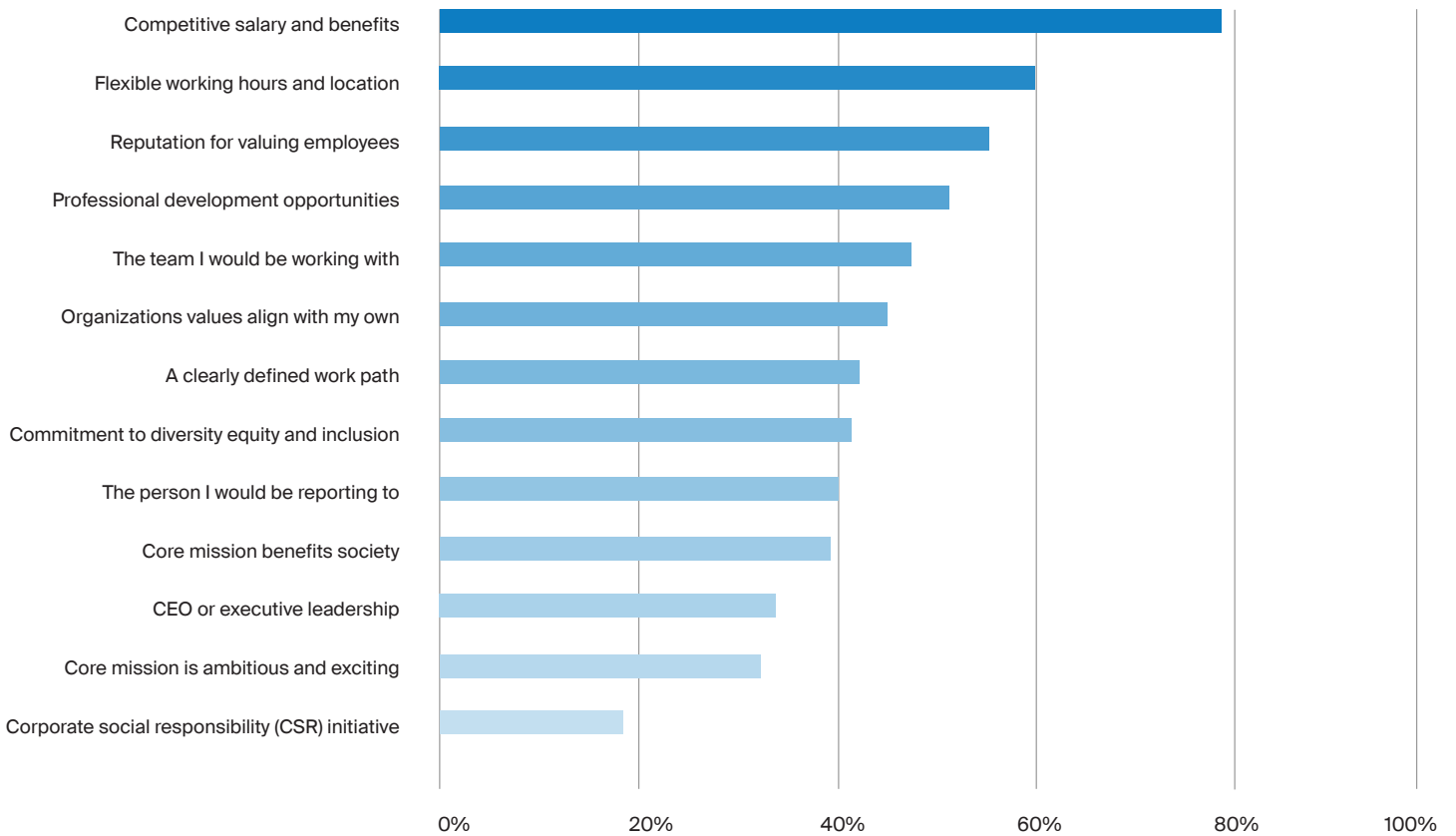
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## Self-Actualizers — 12%

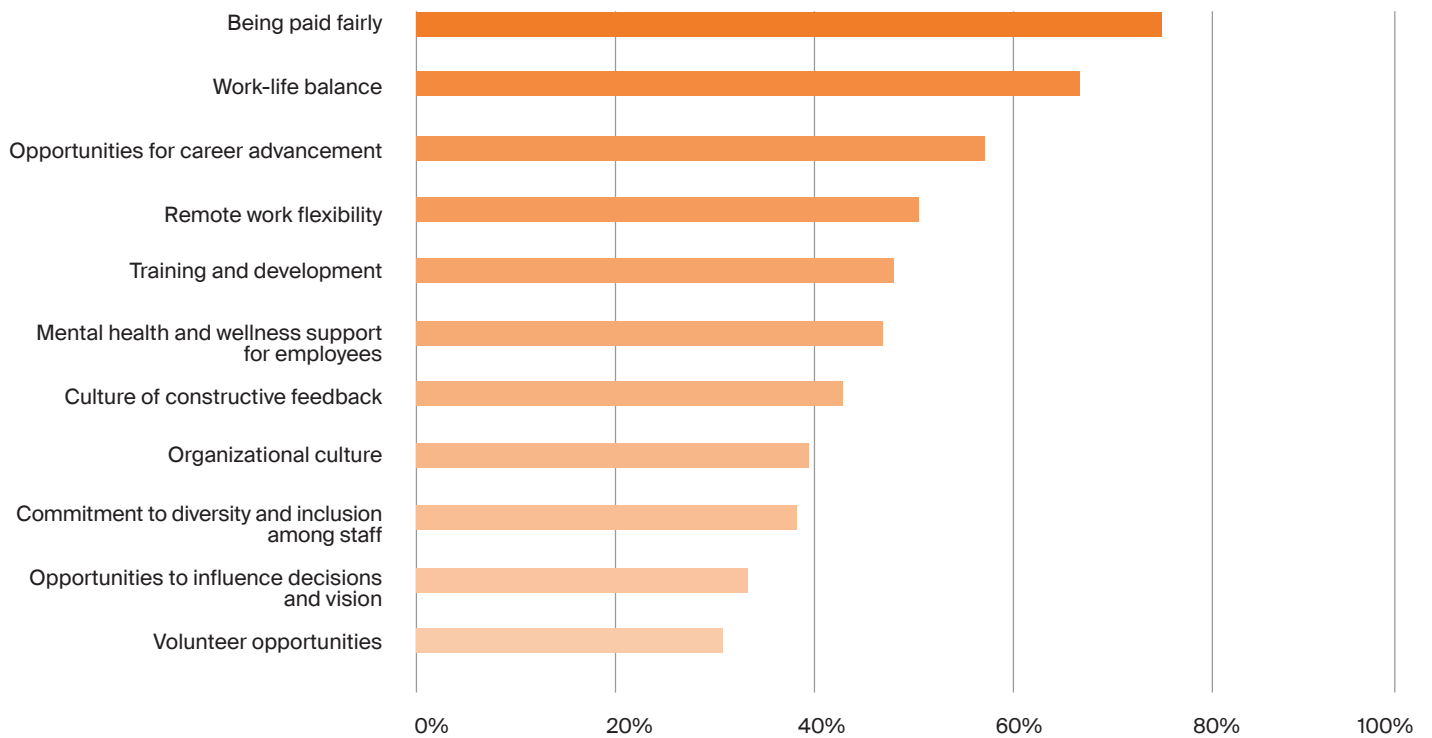
Self-oriented personal branders seeking meaning and purpose through work and peer-recognition

Distribution of segments in Long Dash survey of U.S. Fortune 500 employees  
n = 1,000

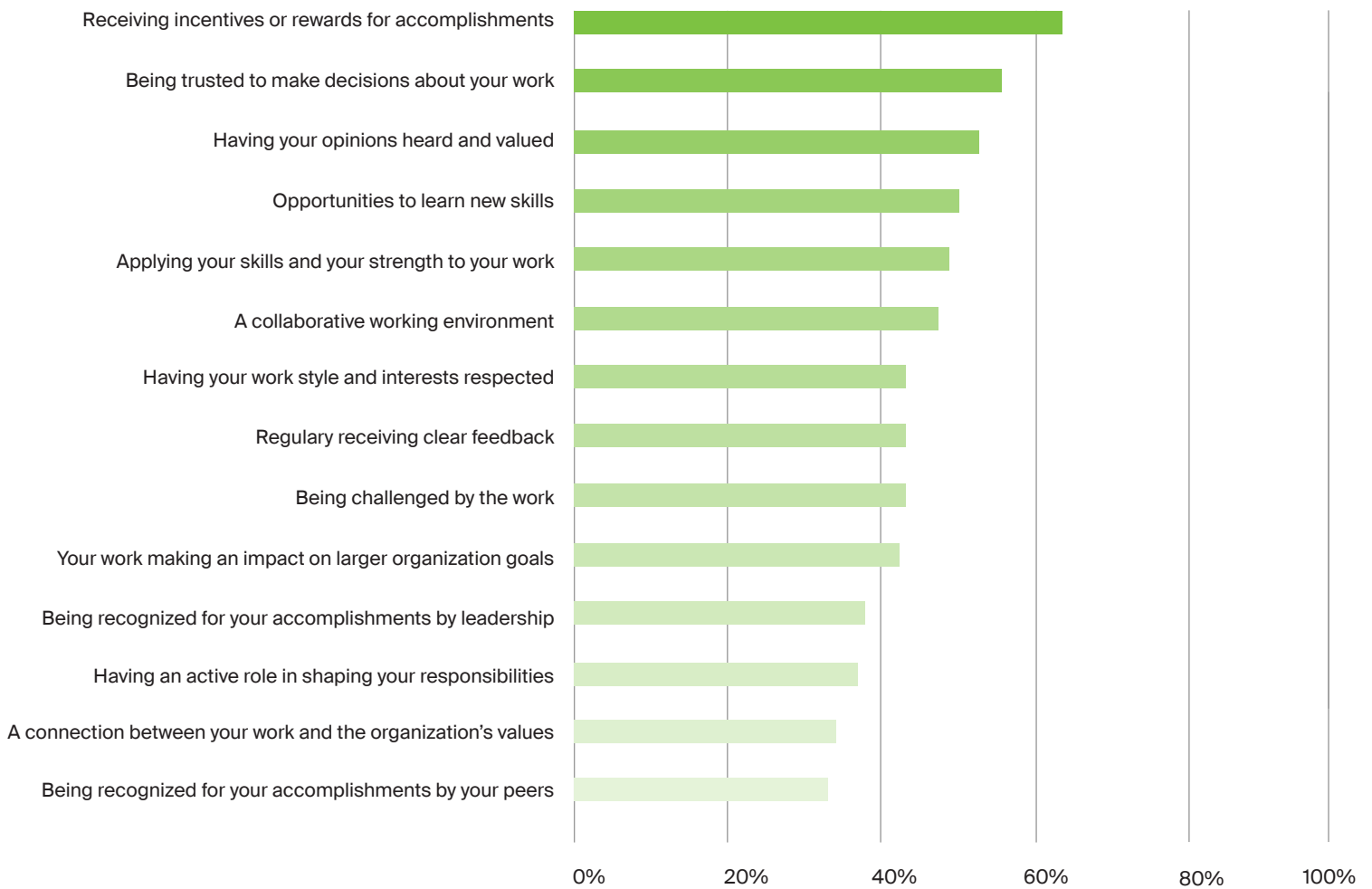
To inform our typologies, we surveyed 1,000 Fortune 500 employees to find out *what is important to them* when choosing a job...



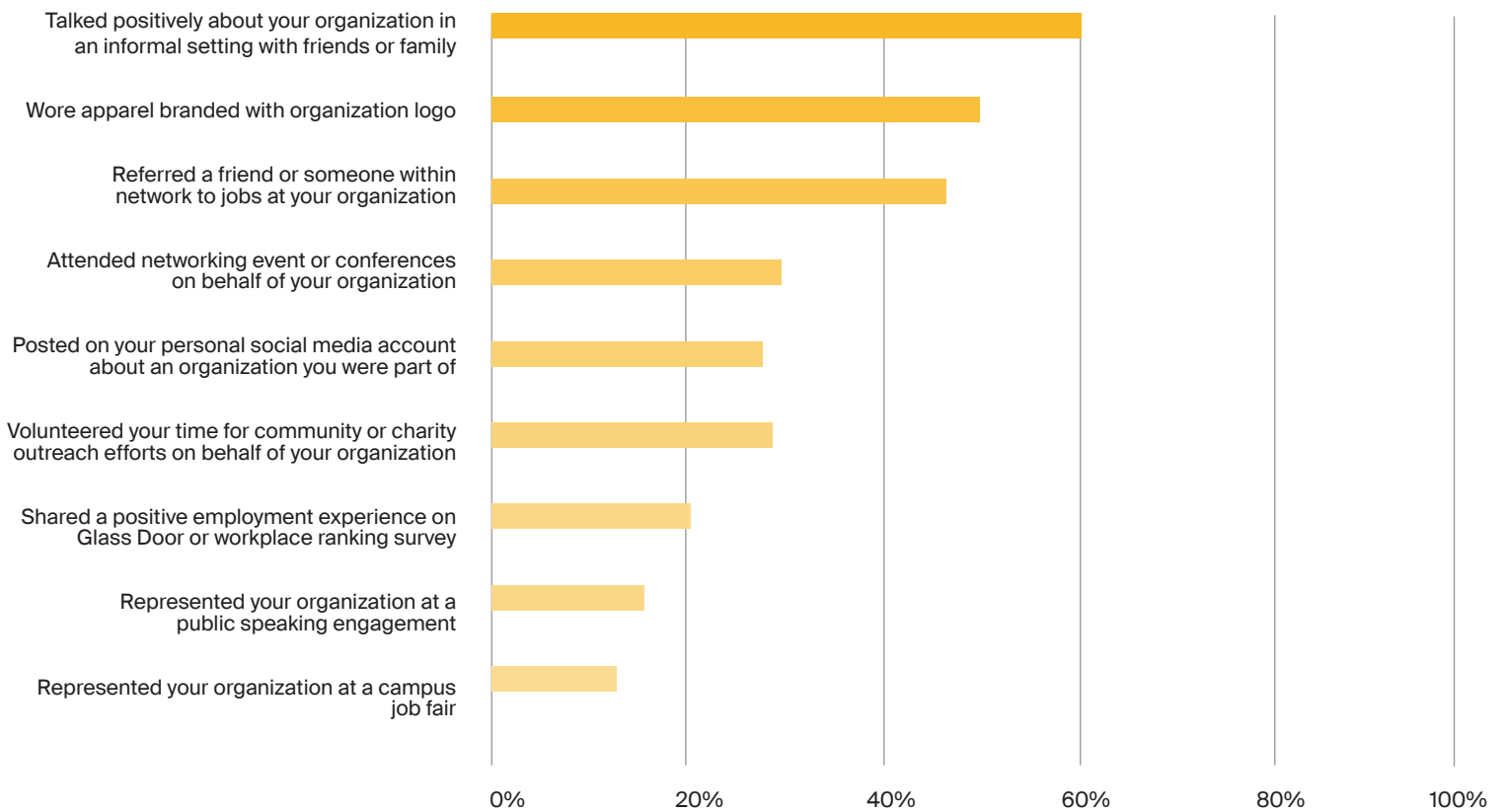
# ...what keeps them *happy* when they are at the job...



# ...and what *motivates* them to do their best work.



# Finally, we asked what ‘brand ambassador’ type actions employees may take on behalf of the company.



# Altruists

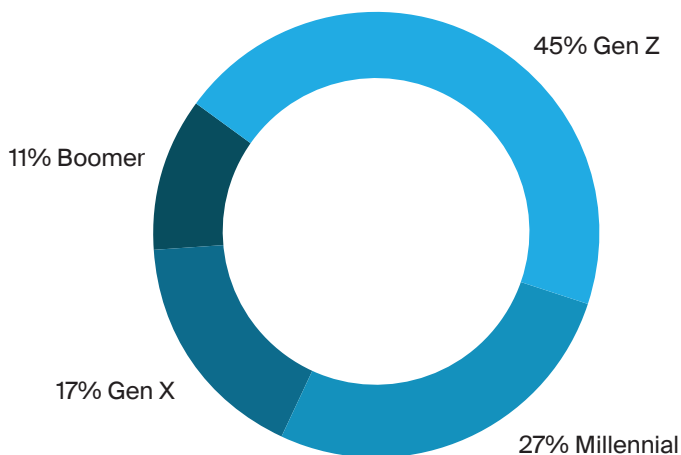


# Altruists

Altruists are attracted to brands that are committed to diversity and inclusion and engaged in robust corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives. They are happiest when they can influence social harmony in the workplace, pushing for mental health and wellness initiatives for all, and fostering an environment for open and constructive feedback. Ultimately, the Altruist focuses on the big picture, community-building aspects of being at work. Although Altruists represent only 13 percent of our total surveyed respondents, they have an outsized voice relative to their prevalence because they are more likely to speak about your brand publicly.

As brand ambassadors, they are inclined to speak positively about their employer through public speaking engagements, sharing the latest DEI initiatives their organization has been involved in on social media or recruiting new candidates at a university or networking event.

**Altruists make up 13% of total respondents.**



## How to activate them:

Because they view organizations as having an important role in addressing societal challenges, Altruists want to actively shape their company's agenda and have their opinions valued. It is important to the Altruists that their interests and working-style preferences are well understood, so they can best work toward a common goal. Altruists personify a top line finding from our study—that, overall, brand ambassadors are more likely to say that it's important that they work at an organization with an inclusive culture compared to one year ago.

Altruists are primarily asking: "What impact will my company have on society and the world at large?" Show them that they can trust the direction and vision of the organization's leadership. They want to give back to others, so energize them to do so by connecting the dots for them between what leadership is doing and what is important to their goals.

## What to watch for:

While Altruists are most likely among all groups to serve as brand ambassadors, they will hit a wall if they do not feel confident in the organization's future, perceive a lack of inclusivity, or feel no connection to the big-picture purpose of their work. They may also be the most likely to speak against a brand they feel has let them down—something to consider knowing that more than 80 percent of people trust online reviews just as much as personal recommendations. "Employees are the best advocates and ambassadors for the brand, and can also be the worst. If they're happy they'll tell everybody, if they're not happy they'll tell everybody," says a brand expert. "It's the responsibility of the organization to fuel what they can tell."

# Altruists

are socially minded vocal community leaders who want to make a big impact with the work they do

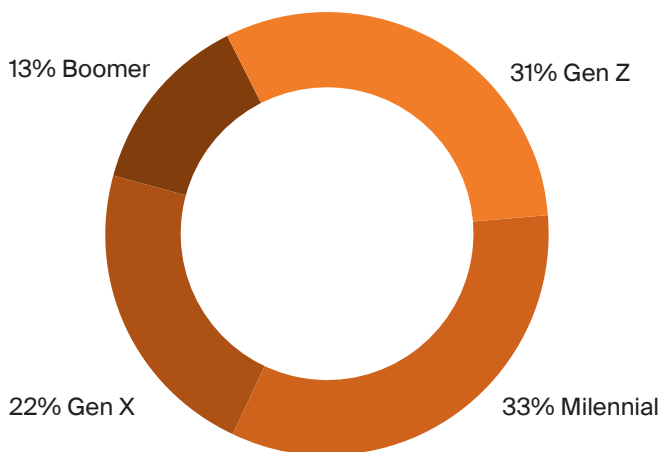
Where to work	Salary and benefits	● ● ● ○ ○
	Flexibility in working hours or locations	● ● ○ ○ ○
	Strong reputation of valuing their employee	● ● ○ ○ ○
	Robust corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives	● ● ● ● ●
What keeps them happy on the job	Being paid fairly	● ● ● ○ ○
	Work-life balance	● ○ ○ ○ ○
	Training and development	● ● ○ ○ ○
	Demonstrated commitment to diversity and inclusion among staff	● ● ● ● ●
DEI beliefs	“It is important to me to work on a team with different racial and ethnic backgrounds”	● ● ● ● ○

# Disciples

# Disciples

Disciples tend to choose their employer based on the strength of its leadership. A well-written mission is not enough for the Disciple to feel engaged. They need to see leadership directly manifest corporate values in daily work—both internally and with customers. Disciples are attuned to workplace politics and seek a good culture fit when deciding where to work. It's important to them that the company's processes, values, and ways of working align with their own. They are happy to devote a majority of their time and effort to furthering their employer's success, as long as leadership continues to recognize their contributions publicly.

## Disciples make up 16% of total respondents.



\* Source: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-03-22/bosses-are-clueless-that-workers-are-miserable-and-looking-to-leave>

## How to activate them:

Because leading by example is so important to them, Disciples expect the organization they work for to acknowledge and respond to societal and cultural changes from the top down. Disciples tend to take their cues from leadership, which is why one DEI expert suggested training leadership to create original LinkedIn content that demonstrates genuine pride for their workplace. With leadership helming this sort of social media outreach, Disciples are likely to follow through and share the same sentiments—especially if leadership actively encourages employees to tweak and reshare their original posts. Another idea for engaging Disciples is to create open forums where employees can ask questions directly of leadership. “Our CEO does an all-company video call every other week, where everyone is invited and can ask whatever questions they want,” one brand leader reports. “That is where you see a lot more people speaking up.” What it boils down to is this: To engage Disciples, leadership must communicate a clear and motivating vision for the business.

## What to watch for:

While they are likely to serve as brand ambassadors, there's an important caveat: They need to see good leadership and know that they are secure in their roles and contributing to the health of the organization's culture. And don't think you already know what they are thinking. One Microsoft survey\* found the majority of global workers felt they were struggling or just surviving in pandemic work conditions, and a large percentage were considering leaving their employer. Meanwhile, most business leaders polled said they were “thriving.” While this typology may be eager to please, don't assume that they are automatically happy if they continue to say yes to more work.

# Disciples

are leader-followers and workplace politics  
whisperers eager to be recognized by top brass

Where to work	Salary and benefits	● ● ○ ○ ○
	Flexibility in working hours or locations	● ○ ○ ○ ○
	Strong reputation of valuing their employee	● ● ● ○ ○
	The organization’s CEO or executive leadership	● ● ● ● ●
What keeps them happy on the job	Being paid fairly	● ● ● ○ ○
	Work-life balance	● ● ○ ○ ○
	Training and development	● ● ● ○ ○
	Organizational culture	● ● ● ● ●
DEI beliefs	“It is important to me to work on a team with different racial and ethnic backgrounds”	● ● ● ● ○

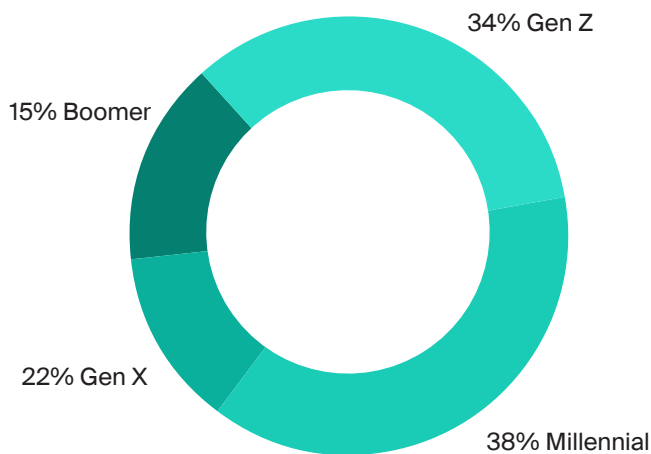
# Self-Actualizers



# Self-Actualizers

Self-Actualizers look for personal fulfillment and meaning in their jobs and want to work for a company whose values align with their own. They are driven by working for a brand with an exciting and profound core mission. The opportunity to personally contribute to the bigger picture—and to be individually recognized for it—is what gets them out of bed in the morning. “I used to think the more you pay people, the more engaged they are,” says a B2B Marketing Executive at a leading FinTech firm. “But it’s all about finding what people’s passions are and making sure they are part of the big growth moments and helping them understand how their small projects are part of the bigger impact.” Self-Actualizers embody a broader finding from our survey—that those who serve as brand ambassadors are 35 percent more likely to say that their organization leverages their individual strengths than unengaged employees.

**Self-Actualizers make up 12% of total respondents.**



## How to activate them:

Self-Actualizers tend to ask: “Is the work I am doing aligned with my deeper purpose?” As such, it is important for brand leaders to show them ways to personally contribute to the company’s bigger picture while simultaneously tapping into their individual strengths and working styles. Find ways to illustrate the direct impact Self-Actualizers are making on your broader organizational goals—and then ask them to share their individual wins and achievements with their social networks. Active brand ambassadors are more likely to seek meaning through their jobs. In fact, 88 percent of strong ambassadors agree with this statement: “I find my day-to-day work to be meaningful.”

“We all have a really big focus around our own identity and relation to our jobs,” says a senior marketing executive at a leading consumer packaged goods brand. “If you can make someone feel fulfilled and excited about what they’re doing, there’s more of an opportunity that they’ll be spreading the word and speaking about your brand.”

## What to watch for:

Self-Actualizers will resist serving as brand ambassadors if they lack a sense of personal connection and purpose to the work. They are less likely to advocate for the brand if they’re not made aware of the things that your brand is doing that is worth sharing with their networks. One third of survey respondents said they would be more interested in posting about their organizations on their personal social media if they experienced something at work that they felt was personally meaningful.

# Self-Actualizers

are self-oriented personal branders seeking meaning and purpose through work and peer-recognition

Where to work	Salary and benefits	● ○ ○ ○ ○
	Flexibility in working hours or locations	● ● ● ○ ○
	Strong reputation of valuing their employee	● ● ○ ○ ○
	Organization’s values align with my own	● ● ● ● ●
What keeps them happy on the job	Being paid fairly	● ○ ○ ○ ○
	Work-life balance	● ● ● ○ ○
	Training and development	● ● ○ ○ ○
	An environment that encourages giving and receiving constructive feedback	● ● ● ● ●
DEI beliefs	“It is important to me to work on a team with different racial and ethnic backgrounds”	● ● ● ○ ○



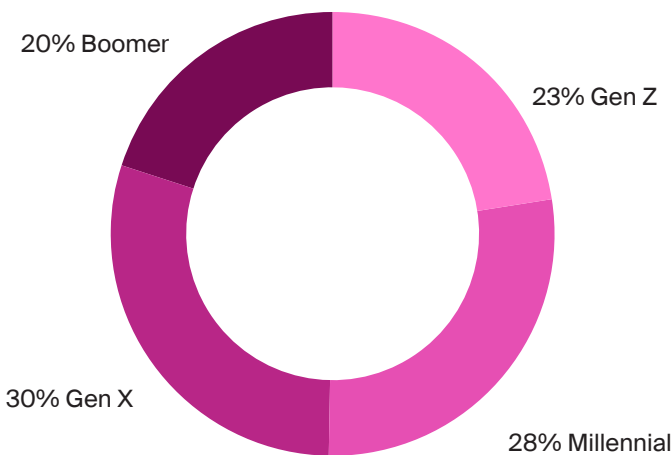
# Careerists



# Careerists

Careerists choose jobs based on opportunities for career advancement, a clearly defined growth path, professional development, and competitive salary. While they are less likely than the previous typologies to be active brand ambassadors, they are at their happiest when they understand their opportunities for career progression, have access to training and development, and believe that they are being paid fairly for their talents and contributions.

**Careerists make up 23% of total respondents.**



## How to activate them:

Their inclination to serve as brand ambassadors is directly related to their potential for career growth. Careerists are more likely to serve as brand ambassadors if their organization continues to promote them and give them access to career-advancing opportunities. Although Careerists are not as likely as Altruists or Self-Actualizers to represent your brand at a conference or job fair, they can thrive in more informal settings. If their career growth goals are met, expect them to refer someone within their network to jobs at your organization or to talk positively about your organization with friends or family.

## What to watch for:

Careerists generally wish to keep their personal and professional lives separate. Appeals to engage them as brand ambassadors must be firmly grounded in the promise of career growth and professional advancement. Many employees are more likely to seek that sort of professional growth trajectory in exchange for promoting their workplace, a finding noted at the top of the report. “When you’re more junior or lower on the ladder, you see many rungs when you look up, and there’s an expectation you’ll climb them,” says a management coach and brand expert at a leading media company. “When you are more senior, there is less expectation to grow because you’re near the top. There is also the understanding that it’s not realistic to constantly be promoted, which comes from more professional experience.” Ultimately, Careerists will continue to climb the corporate ladder. They want to know how the efforts they undertake will be recognized and rewarded, including requests to tap into their personal networks.

# Careerists

are professional progress-seeking worker bees, looking to hone their strengths and achieve clear goals

Where to work	Salary and benefits	● ● ● ● ○
	Flexibility in working hours or locations	● ● ● ● ○
	Strong reputation of valuing their employee	● ● ● ○ ○
	Mentorship, training, and professional development opportunities	● ● ● ● ●
What keeps them happy on the job	Being paid fairly	● ● ● ● ○
	Work-life balance	● ● ● ● ●
	Training and development	● ● ● ○ ○
	Opportunities for career progression	● ● ● ● ●
DEI beliefs	“It is important to me to work on a team with different racial and ethnic backgrounds”	● ● ○ ○ ○

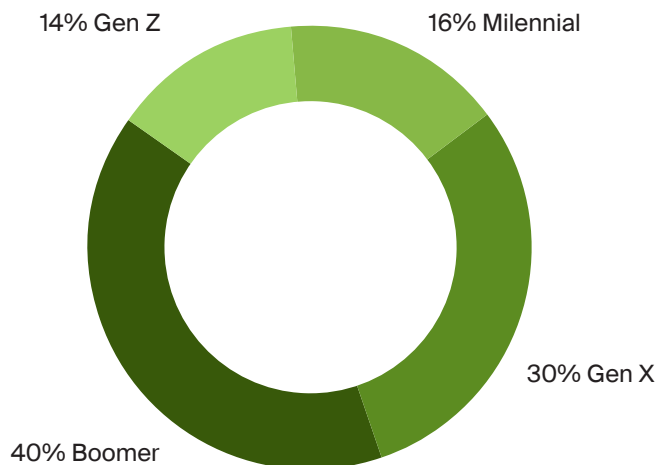
# Pragmatists



# Pragmatists

Pragmatists are primarily driven by job security, compensation, and other tangible benefits that an organization offers. Pragmatists generally keep their professional and personal lives separate, clocking in and clocking out. Of all segments, they are the most passive as brand ambassadors and they are also the most prevalent group in our research. If you provide them the space to maintain autonomy in their decision-making and ensure they have flexible working hours, they can serve as quiet but reliable advocates for your organization.

## Pragmatists make up 36% of total respondents.



## How to activate them:

Seeing their private and professional lives as separate, Pragmatists see their interactions with an organization as transactional: they fulfill their job description and, in return, are compensated fairly for doing so. You can engage them more deeply, however, by showing them how acting as an employee ambassador ultimately benefits them, even if those benefits are indirect or intangible.

## What to watch for:

Pragmatists reflect the attitudes of 36 percent of overall respondents, who said they would be more likely to post about their organization on social media if there were rewards or incentives tied to it. However, compensating employees for social media posting is a strategy many brands might steer clear of, since it essentially turns employee content into sponsored content. There may also be deeper reasons for a Pragmatist's lack of involvement in company culture: They may feel left out. Many companies don't realize how pervasively they uphold a narrow default culture. "If we don't know how patriarchy, sexism, assumptions, and defaults are skewing to benefit us culturally, then we're not going to be in an inclusive environment that allows other people to flourish," says a leading DEI expert.






# Pragmatists

are job-focused employees who value autonomy and material incentives

Where to work	Salary and benefits	● ● ● ● ●
	Flexibility in working hours or locations	● ● ● ● ○
	Strong reputation of valuing their employee	● ● ● ○ ○
	The person I would be reporting to	● ● ● ● ●
What keeps them happy on the job	Being paid fairly	● ● ● ● ●
	Work-life balance	● ● ● ● ○
	Training and development	● ○ ○ ○ ○
	Remote work flexibility	● ● ● ● ●
DEI beliefs	“It is important to me to work on a team with different racial and ethnic backgrounds”	● ○ ○ ○ ○

## Attitudes Before Age

## Your Five Employee Ambassadors

	 <p><b>Altruists</b></p>	 <p><b>Disciples</b></p>	 <p><b>Self-Actualizers</b></p>	 <p><b>Careerists</b></p>	 <p><b>Pragmatists</b></p>
Typology					
Typology Overview	Socially minded vocal community leaders who want to make a big impact with the work they do	Leader-followers and workplace politics whisperers eager to be recognized by top brass	Self-oriented personal branders seeking meaning and purpose through work and peer-recognition	Professional progress-seeking worker bees, looking to hone their strengths and achieve clear goals	Job-focused employees, who value autonomy and material incentives
Propensity to be a brand ambassador	● ● ● ● ●	● ● ● ● ○	● ● ● ○ ○	● ● ○ ○ ○	● ○ ○ ○ ○
How to spot them?	<b>They are asking:</b> "What impact will my company have on society and the world at large?"	<b>They are asking:</b> "Did I meet my boss's expectations?"	<b>They are asking:</b> "Is the work I am doing aligned with my deeper purpose?"	<b>They are asking:</b> "How does this ladder up to my growth plan?"	<b>They are asking:</b> "How does this benefit me?"
How to create a meaningful employee experience for them?	Altruists want to create a culture of inclusion and societal impact. Let them play an active role in shaping their responsibilities at work, and make sure their opinions and preferred working styles are valued and understood.	Disciples are tapped into the inner politics of the organization and want to contribute to a strong company culture. They are happy to devote a majority of their time and effort to furthering their employer's success, as long as leadership continues to recognize their contributions publicly.	Self-Actualizers look for personal fulfillment and meaning in their jobs and want to work for a company whose values align with their own. They are driven by working for a brand with an exciting and profound core mission.	Careerists are ever climbing the corporate ladder. They want to know how the efforts they undertake will be recognized and rewarded, including requests to tap into their personal networks.	Pragmatists generally keep their professional and personal lives separate, clocking in and clocking out. Provide them the space to maintain autonomy in their decision-making and ensure that they have flexibility in their hours.
What can an employer do to motivate them to be an ambassador?	Show them that they can trust the direction and vision of the organization's leadership. They want to give back to others, so energize them to do so by connecting the dots for them between what leadership is doing and what is important to their goals.	Give them templates for what to post online and guidance on how to edit the language so it feels more personalized to them. Demonstrate that leadership is also participating in the same activities that you want them to follow.	Show them how they can contribute to the bigger picture that simultaneously taps into their strengths. Find ways to show their direct impact on organizational goals, and then ask them to share with their broader networks what they achieved.	Show them how ambassadorial activities are tied back to clear career-advancing opportunities.	Explain how promoting the company externally benefits individual employees.
What would discourage them from being an ambassador?	Lack of confidence in the organization, because of poorly defined direction, inclusivity, or diversity.	Experiencing poor company culture.	Not feeling a sense of personal connection to the purpose of their work.	Fear that their career may be in jeopardy.	Being asked to do something outside their perceived job description.
Where will they shine as ambassadors?	Through active public engagements like speaking at an event on behalf of their organization, sharing the latest DEI initiatives their organization has been involved in on social media, or recruiting new candidates at a university or networking event.	Through active representation of their employer, like being part of a job fair, potentially onboarding new team members, or leaving a positive review on Glassdoor.	Through active, social engagements like representing their organization at conferences or networking events. They will also post to their social media accounts if they can connect the dots between the organization's goals and building their personal brand.	Through less-formal activities, like referring a friend or colleague to a position at their organization, or talking positively about their work among family and friends.	Through more day-to-day activities, such as rocking company gear, or promoting content they believe benefits their own interests.

# Implications for Brands

**Your public-facing brand has evolved, but has your internal brand evolved with it?**

Our research is a starting point to craft a stronger employee experience and inspire employees to advocate for your brand in the ways that feel most natural to them. Here are recommendations to consider as you engage your ambassadors.





*Implication 01:***Ensure your brand's positioning addresses the needs of external customers *and* employee motivations.**

There now exists a tight synergy between the internal employee experience and the external customer experience—your brand is made up of both. We call this a two-audience mindset: considering both your external and internal audiences across all you do. These internal and external experiences must be unified under a single compelling core narrative people can rally around. For example, the Walt Disney Company expanded from a cartoon studio to a media empire by staying centered on a core narrative of happiness, dreams, and bringing families together.

The better your positioning is articulated, the easier it will be to translate it into messages and experiences tailored to different employee motivations. Without this north star, Altruists may feel rudderless; Self Actualizers may sense lost potential; Disciples may bristle at a lack of leadership; Careerists may feel stalled; and Pragmatists may fear instability.

**To make your brand's positioning effective, you must:**

**Consider cultural and market context, internal and external audience needs, and your brand's innate strengths.** When crafting or updating your positioning, taking these different lenses into account helps ensure it resonates and becomes a useful foundation for informing your messages, values, and experiences.

**Understand your brand's employee experience as deeply as you understand your customer experience.** Many brands have ample research on their customers, but very little on the needs of their employees. Employee research can take several forms, from surveys to interviews and informal group discussions. Having this research is key to crafting positioning that resonates.

*Implication 02:*

## Address inconsistencies in how your core narrative is expressed across the employee journey.

The employee journey encompasses the entire lifecycle of touchpoints an employee has with your brand, from the moment they apply for a job to their onboarding, day-to-day experience, and exit interview when they leave. Inconsistencies in that journey can lead to miscommunication, frustration, and unhappy employees who may even become detractors to your brand. These gaps can, in turn, impact retention, morale, productivity, customer service, and ultimately business growth.

The antidote is to understand every touchpoint along the employee journey, identify the blind spots, and align them with your core narrative. Investing in these touchpoints can pay off in deeper employee retention and loyalty, as well as business outcomes such as customer satisfaction and growth.

\* Source: Kate Watts, Altered, [Think Small to Go Big](#)

### As you address gaps in the employee journey, you must:

**View gaps and blind spots as opportunities for engagement.** No organization has a flawless employee experience. Our previous research shows that consumers, and younger generations in particular, want brands to be open about where they need to make progress and to focus on those areas, as opposed to adopting a self-congratulatory or backward-looking posture. Brands who do this will engender greater trust and credibility with their employees over time.

**View your employees as an audience to be developed.** Brands routinely invest in content, campaigns, and experiences to reduce friction in the customer journey. Apply these same tools to your employee journey. For example, try recruiting with employee-generated content, boost employee satisfaction with campaigns that promote employee benefits, and increase employee engagement by designing employee platforms—like your intranet—to be more intuitive and user friendly.

**Prioritize improvements to the employee journey based on their cost and ROI.** Your work to improve the employee experience doesn't necessarily need to focus on grand gestures or big milestones. In fact, it's the small, every day interactions employees have with your brand that matter most. We call improvements to these everyday touchpoints "micro-disruptions"\*—small, low-lift changes that can radically increase engagement.

*Implication 03:***Establish infrastructure to support ongoing evolution and measure progress.**

The employee journey is inherently dynamic, constantly evolving in response to economic forces, cultural shifts, and technological developments. To keep up with these changes, teams need to commit to an ongoing cycle of evaluation and evolution. This isn't just about mindset—it's also about how well your organization's processes and workflows are set up to accommodate change and encourage collaboration.

**As you seek to establish a culture of sustainable evolution, you must:**

**View the employee experience as the domain of every department, not just human resources.** An employee's experience is influenced by an organization's leadership, culture, technology, and narratives, which makes it the responsibility of every leader in every department to engage their teams.

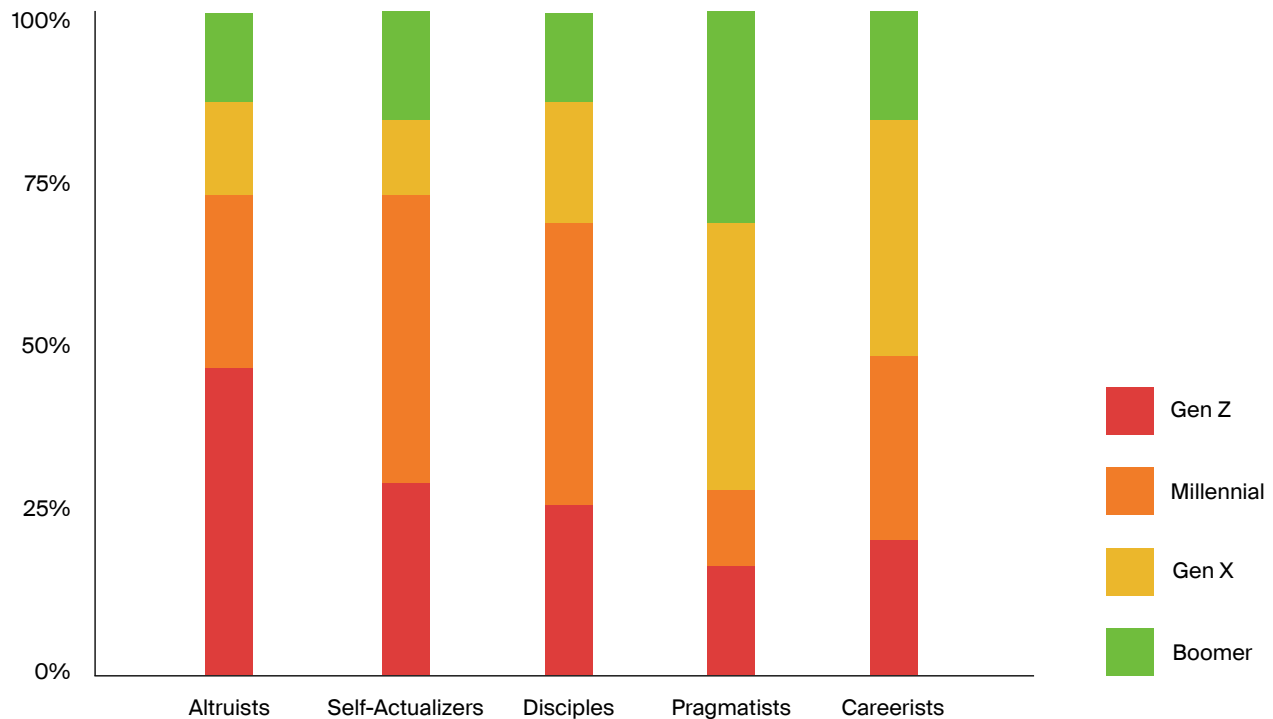
**Empower employees to speak up about where aspects of their job don't align with your core narrative.** Their feedback can help you identify points of friction in the employee journey. Be prepared to take action in response to their input. In the words of one DEI expert, "The biggest problem isn't understanding employee needs, but trying to figure out to what extent businesses are willing to pay the cost for addressing those needs."

**Follow through on your plan to measure impact.** Plan ahead for how you will measure success, whether it's through collecting employee feedback, assessing customer satisfaction, or measuring employee retention. Go into every employee engagement project knowing how you will measure success, and incorporate those costs into the project budget from the start.

# Methodology

Long Dash conducted a nationally representative online survey in April 2021 among 1,000 residents aged 18 to 65, who are employed full-time at Fortune 500 businesses in the United States. The survey was complemented by secondary research and in-depth interviews with brand experts from U.S. companies, as well as DEI experts. To create our typologies, we conducted a segmentation analysis of the survey results to arrive at distinct groupings based on employee attitudes about work and self reporting on activities classified as brand ambassadorship.

Distribution of segments in Long Dash survey of U.S. Fortune 500 employees  
n = 1,000



# About Long—Dash

**We are a creative consultancy  
grown from *journalistic roots*.**

Originally founded by *The Atlantic*, our team's editorial origins influence every aspect of our work. We believe that applying the investigative rigor, powerful storytelling, and resolute clarity of a journalistic approach is key to unlocking business growth.

# What We Do

Applying our journalistic approach, we help brands unearth their core narrative. Then we design and build the experiences that express it. Our goal is to create a unified brand experience for employees, consumers, stakeholders, and communities.

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## Research & Data

We uncover evidence to inform decision-making.

- Audience and user research
- Ethnographic studies
- Quantitative surveys
- Investigative research
- Data analytics

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## Editorial

We find and tell your story.

- Publishing
- Newsroom consulting
- Storytelling

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## Development

We bring your digital experiences to life.

- Front end
- Back end
- Systems architecture

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## Strategy

We help you differentiate and grow.

- Business
- Brand
- Product / go-to-market
- Content
- Communications
- Digital
- Social media
- Media planning

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## Design

We turn your story into an experience.

- UX / UI
- Product
- Brand
- Campaigns

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## Employee Experience

We help you evolve from the inside-out.

- Change management
- Internal communications
- Internal tools and products
- Team design
- Governance modeling and workflows

**We'd love to  
hear from you.**

## **Contact**



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