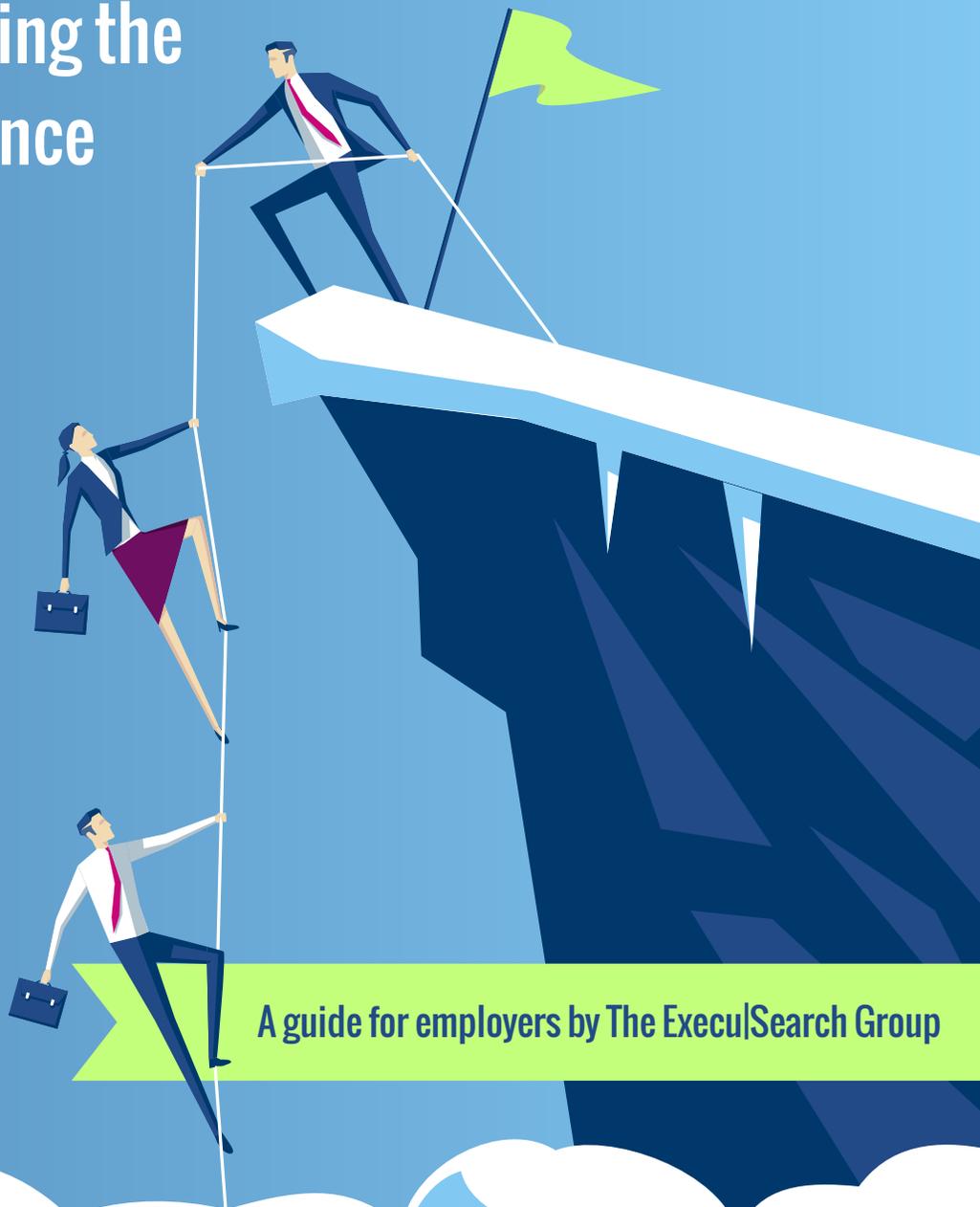


2017 HIRING OUTLOOK

Strategies for engaging with today's
talent and improving the
candidate experience



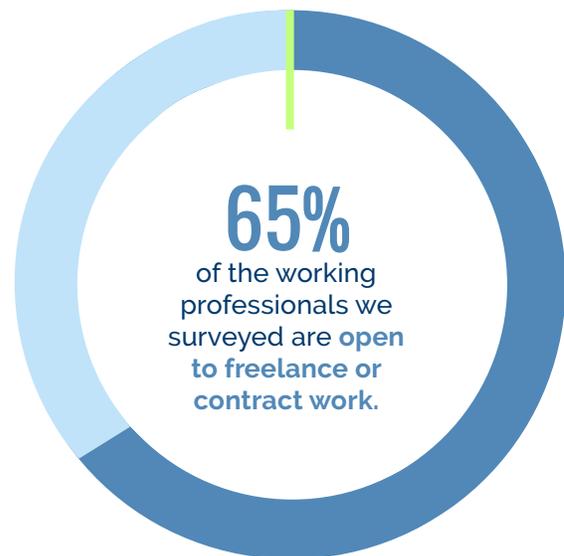
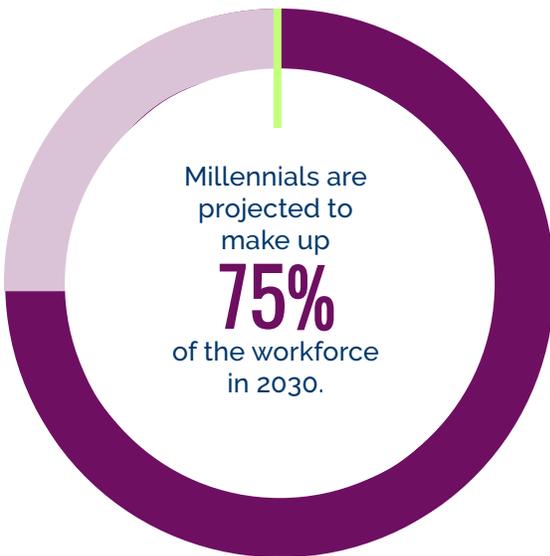
A guide for employers by The Execu|Search Group

- 2** INTRODUCTION
- 4** COLLECTING THE DATA
- 5** IMPROVING THE CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE TO ATTRACT TOP TALENT
- 10** ENGAGEMENT: THE KEY TO IMPROVING THE EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE
- 16** FACILITATING CULTURE THROUGH LEADERSHIP
- 20** SOURCES

2017 HIRING OUTLOOK:

Strategies for engaging with today's talent and improving the candidate experience

Last year, it was clear that the job market was not only recovering, but changing. Consequently, these changes have given way to an entirely new type of candidate profile; one in which job seekers have the advantage and millennials have become the largest share of the American workforce—with both factors bringing an entirely new set of career needs to the table.



For the 2017 Hiring Outlook, we've collected data that further proves that employers will likely miss out on top talent if they don't address these changes. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, **the national unemployment rate as of November 2016 was 4.6%; the lowest it's been since 2007.**

While professionals are aware that this uptick in hiring puts them in a position to be more selective when making career decisions, they also have a wealth of resources at their disposal to determine whether their current employer is offering them benefits or opportunities that are competitive with current market trends.



With this in mind, employers need to embrace transparency in the workplace. However, this is an effort that has to be deeply rooted in company culture to be successful. Companies that want to secure the talent they need should first understand what has to change from within to better engage with these professionals at **all stages of the employee life cycle.**



In sum, this means more than making a few small changes to the way an organization approaches attraction and retention. While that is certainly part of the puzzle, companies should put more emphasis on creating a unified culture that **empowers employees, focuses on career development, and facilitates a new model of leadership**. It is the latter efforts that can better inform employers' talent engagement efforts throughout the next 12 months.

COLLECTING THE DATA

To gain a full understanding of what professionals are seeking in their careers and whether their employers are meeting these needs, we surveyed over 1,000 job seekers, working professionals, and hiring decision makers that we partnered with in the past year.

This allowed us to gather a wide cross-section of insight from professionals at varying experience levels and from different sectors on what they value most in an employer and what they tend to prioritize in their career—making it possible to evaluate whether these findings are in line with what employers are offering their staff.

To help guide employers on how they can facilitate a transparent culture that not only attracts talent, but increases motivation and engagement amongst employees, this eBook offers a unique perspective into:

-  **How to improve the candidate experience to attract top talent in today's job market**
-  **Investing in your employees to reduce turnover and ensure the organization's success**
-  **Facilitating a new model of leadership that empowers all generations of employees, from baby boomers to millennials**

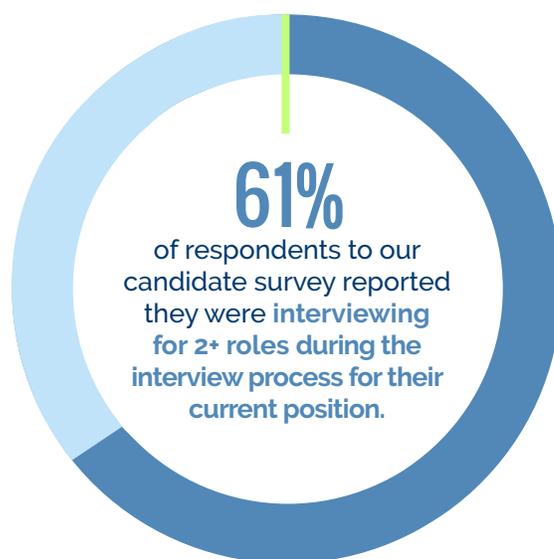
IMPROVING THE CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE TO ATTRACT TOP TALENT



In today's economy, many employers have been faced with a new challenge: how to attract talent in a candidate-driven market. While this may not be news for some, current market trends imply that the stakes are higher than ever before. With the unemployment rate at a nine-year low and job creation in the private sector proceeding at a steady rate, professionals are growing more confident in the labor market.

With job seekers interviewing for multiple jobs simultaneously, they are much more likely to hold out for the opportunity that meets their needs than they were in years past. As a result, **one simple misstep in an organization's hiring process can quickly change a candidate's mind** about an opportunity they were once excited to pursue. Since this can lead them to take their talent elsewhere, it's clear that employers need to start closing the deal much earlier than they might expect—during the application and interview processes.

Why? Before they can accept an offer, a candidate needs to feel that they received an authentic, well-rounded view of the role as well as the company. To create this sense of trust, consistency and transparency need to be imparted into each touchpoint of the hiring process.



That being said, the following practices can help all parties involved in hiring and onboarding—from talent acquisition to human resources to the hiring manager—create a more positive experience that improves offer acceptance rates and builds the organization's reputation as a great place to work:

STEP ONE

PORTRAY A STRONG EMPLOYER BRAND

In today's digital world, most, if not all, professionals utilize the internet to either apply for jobs or conduct company research before an interview.

That's why it's important to understand that strong employer branding is often the first step in attracting talent. Not only can it help build a connection with a prospective hire, but it introduces them to **who you are, what you do, and why you're a great place to work.**



HALF of the working professionals who responded to our survey spend over 30 minutes researching a company before applying and/or interviewing for a role.

While the extent to which this should be done will certainly vary by industry, these are messages that should be communicated across all platforms that are relevant to the organization's business and recruitment efforts.



HIRING TIP: Company culture and the organization's mission and values—which are the top factors that employers feel attract candidates to their organization—should be emphasized across the following channels as they were also found to be top priorities for working professionals.

- Company website
- Career sites
- Social media outlets
- 3rd party review sites

STEP TWO

PAINT A COMPLETE PICTURE OF THE ROLE

To attract the most qualified candidates, it's important to ensure all relevant parties have a full understanding of the role and what it entails. **If the job description varies from person to person during the interview process, this can be a major red flag that there is no clear definition of the role.** Without fully knowing what to expect, the candidate may fear that the job they originally applied to might turn out to be something completely different, and as a result, bow out of the process altogether.



HIRING TIP: Not only does this help define the type of candidate that the hiring manager should be looking for, but it allows job seekers to decide if the position is the right fit for their background and overall career goals. To eliminate any miscommunication about the role, make sure everyone meeting with the candidate is aligned on these basics:

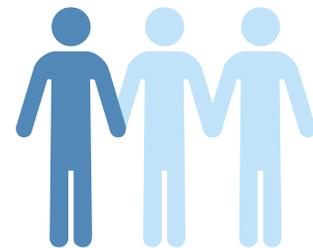
- The title
- The department
- The manager
- Primary responsibilities
- Potential growth opportunities

STEP THREE

HIGHLIGHT THE VISION:

Similarly, all interviewers need to be able to speak to the company's mission and how they envision the applicant complementing it. To do this, everyone involved in the process should be informed of and be able to articulate the company's mission and beliefs.

Professionals—particularly millennials—want to work for a purpose, so helping them understand how their unique skillset and contributions will fit into the big picture is a key—yet often overlooked—step in the interview process.



34% of working professionals said their interviewer could not convey the overall impact that their role has on the company's goals.



HIRING TIP: To convey a united message about the vision of the role, all people involved in the interview process should debrief each other on:

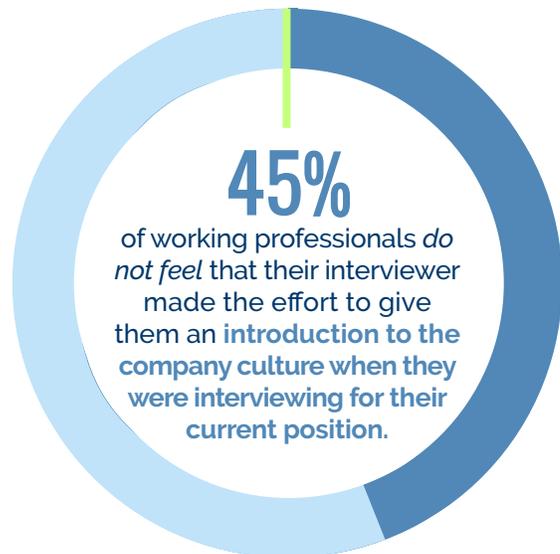
- The business objectives and how they relate to the role
- How this person would contribute to the company's bottom line
- The challenges the role will be addressing
- How the role will help the company make an impact on the industry, the world, its stakeholders, etc.

STEP FOUR

EMPHASIZE THE COMPANY CULTURE

Working for an organization with a unique and attractive identity has always been important to professionals, but today, it matters even more. In fact, an increasing number of professionals won't even entertain an offer unless they feel confident that they fit into the company culture.

This disconnect makes it clear that it's not enough to simply say that the organization offers the elements of a great culture. Instead, hiring decision makers need to prove it by giving the candidate an accurate view of what it's like to actually work for the organization. That's why culture is another area where authenticity is critical. Everyone, from the chief executives to any prospective team members, needs to be selling the same message about the company's beliefs and practices.



HIRING TIP: This especially relates to the following elements, which were ranked by working professionals as the most important aspects of company culture:

- Opportunities for professional development
- Collaboration with team members
- Emphasis on work-life balance
- Access to leadership/management

STEP FIVE

BE FLEXIBLE + EFFICIENT

When job seekers are interviewing with multiple companies, the inability to be flexible with current market trends can lead employers to miss out on top talent. For example, taking too long to make an offer is just one way in which this sense of inflexibility can hinder an employer's ability to secure new hires.



75%

of employers stated that their hiring process, from initial interview to offer, takes 3+ weeks, while the vast majority of professionals felt it should take 2 weeks at most.



HIRING TIP: To minimize the chances of a candidate accepting a position with another organization, employers should be open to shortening their hiring process. To do this, try:

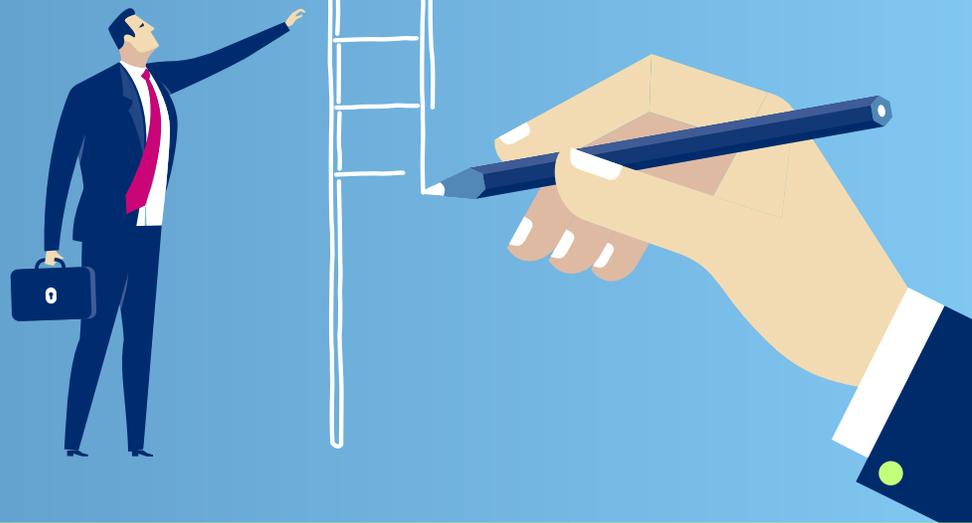
- Reducing the number of interview rounds
- Having candidates meet with multiple parties in one day
- Covering more ground in each interview
- Introducing top applicants to the team they would be joining earlier on

Once it's time to extend an offer, understanding what quantifies a competitive salary or pay rate is key. There are a variety of resources that job seekers can leverage in today's market to determine their value, and they won't hesitate to look elsewhere if the employer doesn't pull through. As a result, **hiring decision makers must be willing to do their research and keep an open mind regarding these factors.**

This is something that is especially relevant in today's gig economy, one in which temporary, flexible jobs are commonplace and companies contract with independent workers for shorter-term assignments. In today's market, temporary professionals have more job prospects than ever, and as a result, it isn't enough to simply offer them an assignment.

Many professionals who pursue temporary/consulting work tend to prioritize opportunities that allow them to focus on career development—making the title of a position very important to them. Since it can directly reflect their value, employers that want to attract the best temporary professionals should work with the candidate to ensure their title accurately describes their level of expertise and positions them for future success.

ENGAGEMENT: THE KEY TO IMPROVING THE EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE



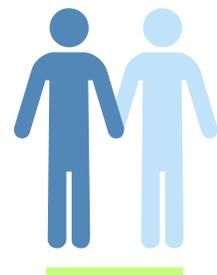
In this candidate-driven market, job seekers are increasingly aware that their skills are in-demand. When they realize that they might be more satisfied or better compensated at another company, employees will not hesitate to test the waters and see what other opportunities are out there. As a result, employers may find it difficult to retain top talent.

With the stakes this high, employers must start by working to better understand their employees.

Without fully grasping why their staff is seeking other employment, employers cannot begin to make positive changes to increase retention. On top of understanding why their staff may decide to leave, managers must be clear on what would make their employees happy to stay. Otherwise, those professionals who don't feel that their needs are being met will take their talent elsewhere. While exploring why professionals leave an organization and what makes them decide to stay, hiring decision makers may gain a better understanding of the steps they need to take to reduce turnover.

WHY DO EMPLOYEES LEAVE?

In today's digital landscape, employees do not need to search very far to discover if they could receive higher pay or better benefits at another company. Additionally, there is no shortage of open positions to explore their career options. As a result, they may not be inclined to stay with their employer for very long—and they have indicated just that in their responses about job tenure.



50% of employees say that they are planning to stay at their current company for two years or less.

Many employers may view this as **“job hopping,”** which is viewed negatively by many hiring decision makers. If someone has a history of leaving an organization within a year or two, there is no precedent to think that they may stay at their next company for any longer. Because of this, employers may invest less time and money in their staff. However, it may be time for employers to rethink their perception of this behavior.

Keep in mind that an employee isn't destined to job hop—they may just be waiting for an employer who reciprocates the same care that is put into their work.

Rather than refusing to invest in new hires, organizations may want to consider that perhaps, professionals would have longer tenures if an employer actually invested in them. To reverse this trend, employers must first learn why they have trouble with retention.

While employers noted “providing upward mobility” and “the inability to provide competitive salary growth” as their top barriers to retention, professionals rated these four elements as the top reasons they would leave a company:



LACK OF
ADVANCEMENT
OPPORTUNITIES



LACK OF
SALARY
GROWTH



NEGATIVE
WORK-LIFE
BALANCE



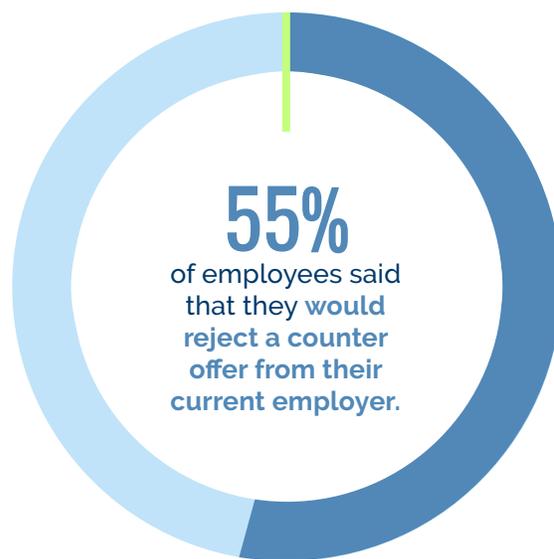
POOR
CORPORATE
CULTURE

While employers and working professionals comparably responded that salary growth and advancement opportunities are top factors in employee retention, professionals also said that negative work-life balance and poor corporate culture heavily contribute to their satisfaction level at work. As a result, employers might consider offering opportunities to improve work-life balance while they work toward a more positive company culture.

Additionally, some employers don't realize the value of their top talent until they resign. While they are struggling to provide more competitive pay and better advancement opportunities, they would overwhelmingly opt to extend a counter offer to retain employees:



62%
of employers said that they **would extend a counter offer in order to keep their best employees.**



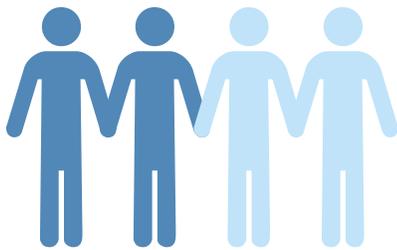
55%
of employees said that they **would reject a counter offer from their current employer.**

If employers are willing to extend a counter offer as an investment to retain talent, this action must take place before their employee has one foot out the door. If employees aren't aware that they are valued through pay, benefits, opportunities, or an enjoyable company culture, telling them once they have decided to leave is too little, too late. While employers may not want to hand over higher pay and more benefits immediately, they must be more proactive about making that investment before they lose talent to their competitors.

WHAT WOULD MAKE EMPLOYEES STAY?

In conjunction with understanding why a talented professional may decide to leave, it is critical to get to know staff members at an individual level to discern what would make them happy to stay where they are. Among the many ways in which this can be approached, employers must remember that **employee retention should start on day one.**

New hires aren't the only ones who have to put their best foot forward during their first few days on the job. Since first impressions often become lasting ones, employers, too, have to ensure an employee's initial weeks and months at the company set them up for success. Alarming, nearly half of respondents to our candidate survey revealed they had difficulties when starting their current position.



47% of professionals reported that they did not receive sufficient training and resources when they started their position.

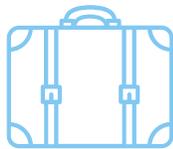
If a recent hire is immediately frustrated with their training or the way they are treated by their colleagues, it shouldn't be a surprise when they don't want to stick around. **While sufficient training and socialization seem simple enough, these are core elements of corporate culture that are sometimes overlooked.** As a result, companies may have a hard time reducing employee turnover without making efforts to refine their onboarding process.

In addition to improving culture through communication practices, company events, and training and development, there are even more ways that office culture can make employees feel more engaged and motivated to stay with the company. The employment experience also hinges heavily on the additional benefits that are offered outside of pay, and employees greatly value these.

Outside of pay and health benefits, employees say that these benefits would make them happier at their current company:



FLEXIBLE SCHEDULING



GREATER VACATION ALLOWANCE



RECOGNITION BY SUPERVISORS



INTERESTING PROJECTS/WORK

From this, it is clear that work-life balance is an important issue. Ranked even higher than greater vacation allowance, employees would welcome opportunities that allow them greater flexibility in their scheduling. As a result, it's important for organizations to foster a culture that focuses on results, not hours.

Additionally, professionals are seeking an environment where their work makes an impact in their own lives as well as the lives of others. Through more support and communication from management, they can begin to find more purpose in their work. Plus, they highly value professional development in the form of hands-on projects:



59% of employees said that access to projects to help keep their skills up-to-date would keep them satisfied at their current company.

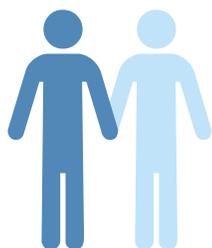
These added benefits are very important to employees, and they are not taken for granted. With this information, employers can consider specific ways in which company culture most heavily influences the lives of their staff, and they can take more strategic steps to make improvements in these areas:

Employees care about:

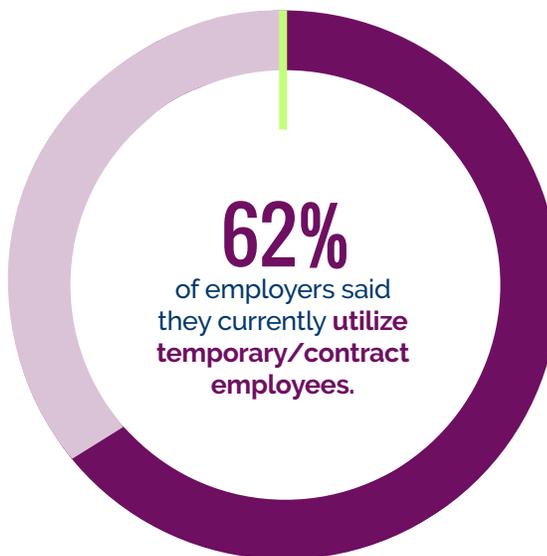
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	EMPLOYERS CAN:
Concrete, hands-on projects that make an impact	Consider expanding responsibilities or projects in order to accommodate the goals of their employee.
WORK-LIFE BALANCE	EMPLOYERS CAN:
Health, wellness, and personal relationships are important to employees	Consider introducing flexible scheduling options or expanding vacation allowance , which show that you value employee wellness and ultimately improve employee morale and productivity.
TRANSPARENCY	EMPLOYERS CAN:
Employees want to learn from their managers and have access to leadership	Consider increasing face time or extending more information about what managers are working on, as it shows you want employees to continue learning and growing in their position.

ENGAGING WITH TEMPORARY STAFF

In an effort to ensure they can be competitive in this evolving market, employers and job seekers alike have begun to seek solutions that allow for greater flexibility. This has ultimately paved the way for an increasing number of hiring managers to see the value in temporary staffing to address business challenges. This shift in hiring strategy has led to the rise of the gig economy, allowing temporary/consulting jobs to grow at an exponential rate.



In 2016, half of employers have hired temporary staff to **replace an employee who left a full-time position.**



While the temporary nature of certain roles makes it less important to focus on retention to a degree, **the same concept does apply:** employees who enjoy their work, have their manager's support, and feel like they fit into the company culture have a stronger commitment to the organization, and therefore, are more likely to produce impactful results. This also relates to company reputation; once a temporary employee's assignment comes to an end, their experience can make or break your ability to attract future talent. To create an inclusive culture for temporary employees, here are some simple practices to start with:

- **Start with a strong introduction:** Even though these temporary employees may not be a part of the organization in the long-term, make sure they receive a strong introduction to the company as well as the full-time colleagues they will be working with.
- **Provide regular feedback:** Regular feedback from their manager will help assure them that the organization is truly invested in the quality of their work and that they are making an impact on the business.
- **Treat them as equals:** Temporary employees should be provided everything they need to be successful in the role, so make sure they are treated like a regular member of the team.
- **Keep in touch:** For an exceptional employee, keep their file on record for future opportunities, and provide them with a reference they can use when seeking other employment.

FACILITATING CULTURE THROUGH LEADERSHIP



Company culture, at its simplest, refers to the shared beliefs and practices of an organization and its staff. This means that everyday company practices—from dress code to time off policies—promote those shared values, and they reflect upon the organization's leaders. For better or for worse, these cultural practices affect the everyday lives of employees, and they say a lot about the values of the people who enforce these policies.

CULTURE STARTS FROM THE TOP DOWN

While an organization's leaders understand the need to put policies in place that promote a positive company culture, they aren't always willing to walk the walk. A company can say, 'We care a lot about company culture!' all they want, but is that an actual reality? Leaders must be sure that they don't just like the idea of it, but that they actually invest in company culture by taking the time to nurture it from within.



42% of employees feel that executive leadership does not contribute to a positive company culture.

For leadership to have a positive effect on the company culture, they must actively work to improve it through:

- ✓ **STANDING UP FOR SHARED COMPANY BELIEFS:** For an organization that promotes certain ideals in order to show their employees that they care, leaders cannot turn a blind eye or become apathetic to sharing these elements of culture with their staff.
- ✓ **WORKING TO UNDERSTAND EMPLOYEES:** On an individual level, managers need to be aware of what each employee is looking to achieve in their position, and where they feel improvements can be made. This is an area that certainly needs improvement, as **52% of employees said that executive leadership does not take their feedback or suggestions into account when they make decisions.**
- ✓ **SHARING MORE INFORMATION WITH EMPLOYEES:** In order to foster a relationship that increases trust between a manager and a subordinate, sharing information regarding how decisions are made or how an employee's feedback was taken into account can allow everyone to work more freely with one another.

SUCCESSION PLANNING FOR MILLENNIALS

In 2015, millennials became the largest segment of the workforce, and with each passing year, they continue to grow in size and influence. Additionally, they are increasingly moving up the professional ladder and transitioning to leadership roles. While they are eager to prove their value, employers aren't always too charmed by their hunger for increased responsibility, and they find it challenging to offer millennials everything they are looking for in a job.

EMPLOYERS RATED THEIR TOP CHALLENGES WITH MILLENNIAL EMPLOYEES AS:



Their desire to move quickly up the ladder



Their lack of loyalty to their employer

In addition to their ambition, the tendency for younger employees to move quickly from one job to the next makes employers feel as though they are not yet ready for the leadership roles they seek. **74% of employers said that millennials are not prepared for leadership positions.** This discordance between managers and their millennial employees shows a lack of trust between the two groups.

While employers don't always show confidence in millennials' ability to perform well in leadership roles or their willingness to stay at the company long, some millennials don't have faith that employers will offer the professional development necessary for them to make progress in their career.

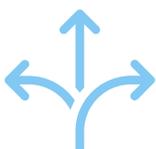
However, employers must face reality; as millennials continue to grow within the workforce, employers must prepare them to take over. While the perception of this generation can sometimes be negative, millennials are often bright, hard workers, brimming with unseen talent. When they aren't afforded the same respect as older employees or aren't encouraged to pursue their ideas, the most skilled and intelligent of the group will get discouraged:



48% of all working professionals say that they do not believe that younger employees are encouraged to pursue leadership positions at their current companies.

If millennials do not feel as though their employer cares to invest in them, why should they stay?

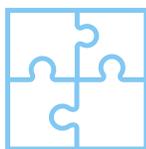
This is an important bridge for employers to cross: they must begin to make smart investments in their younger employees, or they'll risk high turnover and a dwindling applicant pool. While they may feel as though millennials are not ready for management roles, training these younger employees is a necessary step to take. As a result, less focus should be placed on technical skills, and more focus should be placed on **potential**. When considering a millennial applicant, study these elements of their experience and personality:



TRANSFERABLE SKILLS: If an employee lacks the typical technical skills desired for leadership roles, consider their unique background and skillset. For example, a background in data analysis suggests a keen attention to detail that can transfer into many other areas of work.



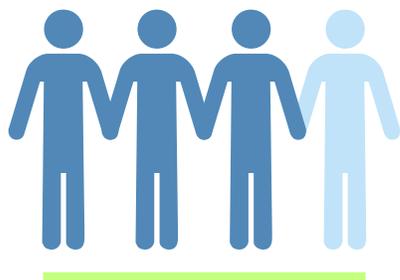
LEADERSHIP POTENTIAL: Even if a candidate does not have management experience, they may show other skills that prove they can be an excellent leader. For example, clear communication skills can show that they would be able to effectively communicate directions and goals to a team.



CULTURAL FIT: While job responsibilities can be taught, attitude is more difficult to change. Therefore, it can be a wise investment to focus on millennials who are team players and have a higher emotional intelligence, as they are more likely to fit in the company culture.

By evaluating a young employee's potential in this manner, employers may discover that millennials are far more qualified than they realize. Additionally, this potential should be clearly communicated to the staff member so that they understand how the organization is working to invest in them. **An employee who knows they are on a track for a leadership role will be more inclined to go above and beyond what is asked of them.**

This means that better communication practices between leaders and their subordinates are required in order to foster positive working relationships. In addition to being more open about how employees are performing and how they can improve, employers can also take this opportunity to learn more about their staff's aspirations and career goals, many of which may center around professional development, as millennials indicated on our candidate survey:



76% of millennials said that professional development opportunities are **one of the most important elements of company culture.**



58% of millennials said that they would be more satisfied at their current company if they had **access to projects to help them keep their skills up-to-date.**

While employers may lean toward lower cost options like e-learning and webinars, keep in mind that millennials want education that can be documented. **Hands-on projects can provide concrete results that look impressive on a resume.** Not only will this type of work keep professionals satisfied in their current role, but it will also make a positive impact on the company culture—one which fosters a hands-on learning community for its employees. **Additionally, this shift toward welcoming hands-on learning at work will provide the best professional development opportunities for millennials to move into leadership positions as they become available.**

IN SUM

As the job market continues to evolve over the next year, talent engagement will become even more critical to an organization's long term success. While the trends outlined in the 2017 Hiring Outlook do point to positive job growth, they also require employers to reevaluate the ways they approach talent and retention—or risk falling behind.

Employers often hear that company culture is crucial within the employment experience; however, this doesn't mean that it's enough to offer simple perks like free snacks. Rather than focusing on short-term solutions, company leadership needs to earn the trust of their prospective and current employees by making improvements to the factors they value most. By taking the steps mapped out in the Hiring Outlook to increase transparency, offer more flexibility, and create new training and development opportunities, organizations can become leaders in talent engagement in 2017.

SOURCES

2017 Execu|Search Hiring Outlook Survey

2017 Execu|Search Candidate Career Outlook Survey

Bureau of Labor Statistics

Forbes

ABOUT THE EXECU|SEARCH GROUP

The Execu|Search Group is a leading recruitment, temporary staffing, and workforce management solutions firm headquartered in New York City with 8 additional offices in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Florida. Since opening our doors in 1985, our company mission has remained the same: to provide leading employers with the highest caliber talent while maintaining our commitment to integrity, honesty and responsiveness.

Today, we serve the following practice areas: Accounting/Finance, Creative & Digital, Engineering, Financial Services, Health Services, Human Resources, Information Technology, Legal Services, Life Sciences, Nonprofit, and Office Support.

www.execu-search.com

blog.execu-search.com



NY



CT



NJ



MA



FL