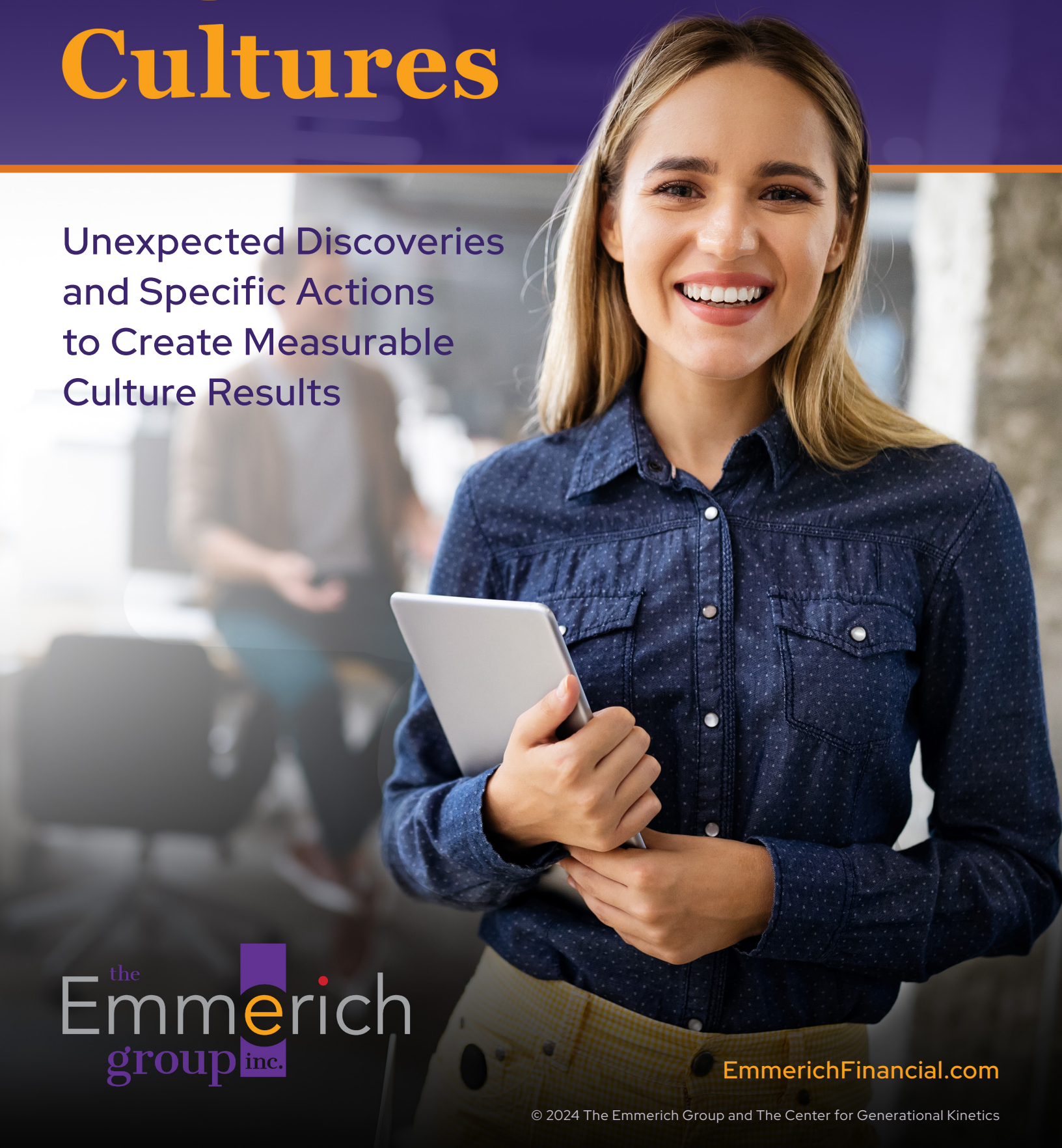
The National Study of

High-Performance Cultures



Unexpected Discoveries and Specific Actions to Create Measurable Culture Results

the Emmerich group inc.

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WELCOME FROM THE NATIONAL STUDY'S AUTHORS

Company culture is a hot topic for leaders at companies of all sizes—and rightly so! A company's culture determines employee performance which ultimately determines business results. However, company culture is frequently misunderstood. Contradictory headlines and ideas about what matters most in shaping culture present unique challenges for leaders seeking to build a high-performance company culture.

To separate myth from truth about company culture and uncover what *actually* drives company culture results, The Emmerich Group envisioned this unique national study focused specifically on the most important aspects of culture. You, as a leader, now have the exact insights, data, and discoveries you need to drive results.

This study dives into the perspectives of current workers to finally reveal what inspires them, what motivates them, how they see the role of leaders, and *what is missing* in the cultural conversation about perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs that drive or undermine performance.

We wanted to not only uncover these missing insights but also test the components and processes that foster a successful high-performance culture. The findings in this national study deliver shape and dimension to the impact that a successful high-performance culture has on employee accountability, resourcefulness, and motivation as well as company profitability.

These findings can help you define a high-performance culture in terms of systems and behaviors and then drive those structures across your organization to improve performance and keep you and your company ahead of your competition. These strategic insights can move you from a position of vulnerability and playing defense to one of strength and confidence in the ability of your company and employees to dominate your market.

All business leaders say they want a great, high-performance culture, but moving the needle from *wanting* a high-performance culture to *having* one requires understanding not only what it is but also how to achieve it. The national study revealed that it means more than just offering education and having fun in the process—the missing factor is *accountability*.

> *We want a great, high-performance culture, but moving the needle from **wanting** a high-performance culture to **having** one requires understanding not only what it is but also how to achieve it.*

In fact, one of the critical areas for exploration was determining ***who*** should be held accountable, ***what*** they should be accountable for, and ***how*** and ***when*** to do it. This national study answers those questions through a statistically accurate analysis of critical factors that cultivate a high-performance culture. These findings represent a tremendous step forward for leaders to drive greater performance with current team members and attract the right new team members.

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One area to pay particular attention to in this white paper is the data substantiating two facts: first, employees want to be developed; and second, they want to be held more accountable. However, to do that effectively means **bridging the gap between desired and actual performance—both at the management and individual levels**.

The best part of the national study?

Every answer uncovered was analyzed across multiple variables, including gender, age, and role, to provide very rich, actionable insights that leaders can use immediately to drive results and profit.

Now is the time for leaders to separate from the pack and prove how to build high-performance cultures so companies and their team members deliver even better results. Turn the page to dig deeper into the discoveries, surprises, insights, and actions you can take to start driving results now.

At The Emmerich Group, we are all about delivering results through our work, and we are thrilled to deliver results to you through this unique national study.

Sincerely,
Roxanne Emmerich
Founder and CEO

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KEY DISCOVERY #1:

MISALIGNMENT BETWEEN PERCEPTIONS AND PERFORMANCE

If you ask American workers—and the national study did—how they stack up relative to their peers, the vast majority pat themselves on the back. In fact, **75% of American workers think they perform in the top 10% at their company or in their field**. WOW! And 68% think they work harder than most of their coworkers. It's easy to spot the misalignment here... 75% cannot perform in the top 10%, yet that is precisely the perception that was revealed!

Misperceptions like these need to be addressed.

Employees must have a realistic understanding of what is expected of them and how they are doing relative to the performance mandated by their roles, positions, and experience levels. Well-defined and clearly communicated expectations not only establish the criteria to evaluate performance but also authenticate the connection between performance and company outcomes such as profitability. Without this kind of specific guidance, employees don't have the tools they need to evaluate and modify their own behaviors realistically. Many times, without clear guidelines, people easily confuse busyness with productivity.

75% of American workers think they perform in the top 10% at their company or in their field.



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KEY DISCOVERY #2:

NEGATIVE CULTURES ARE COSTLY IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE

Clearly, negative work cultures are detrimental to performance and morale, but the impact doesn't stop there. Productivity, customer relations, and team spirit all suffer when employees lose their enthusiasm and eagerness to perform at their peak. This shows up in two costly places...bottom-line profitability and turnover.

The national survey asked employees to identify the circumstances that would cause them to leave a job. It is surprising that the top three situations tied at almost half (48%) of respondents saying they would leave their job if that situation happened to them. What *isn't* surprising is that all three are associated with unhealthy workplace cultures.

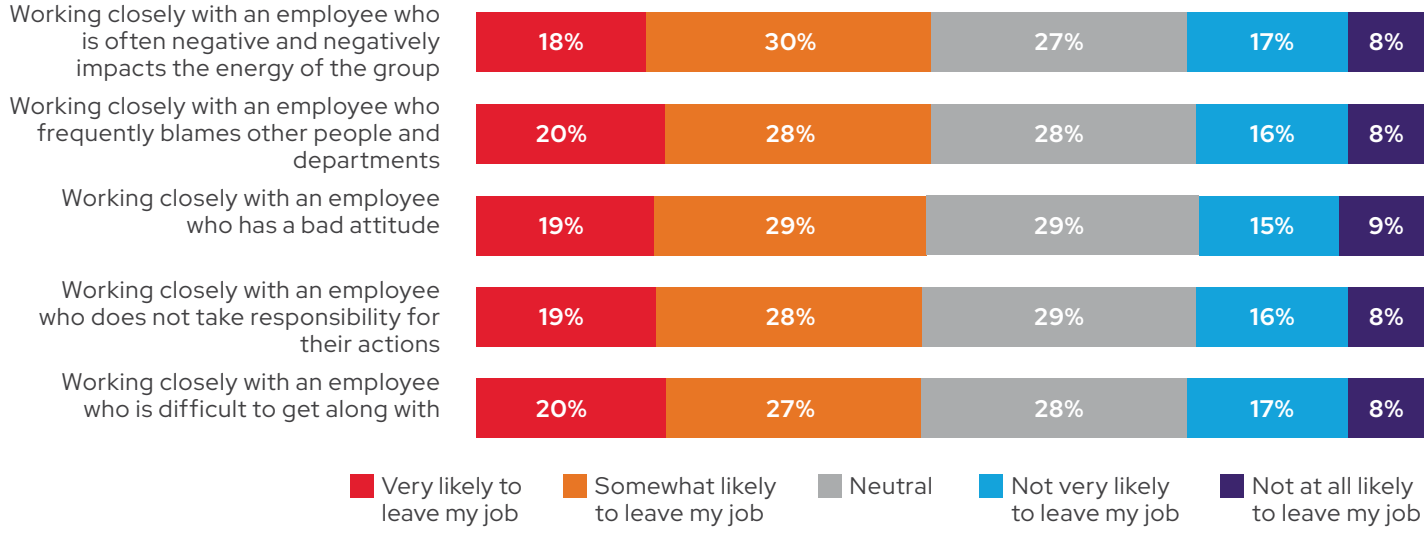
What situations are most likely to influence someone to leave their job?

48% — Working closely with someone who is negative and who negatively impacts the energy of the group

48% — Working closely with someone who frequently blames other people or departments for their own underperformance

48% — Working closely with someone who has a bad attitude

HOW MUCH WOULD EACH SITUATION INFLUENCE YOU TO LEAVE YOUR JOB?
(TOP 5 OF 11, BY TOTAL)



Ever so close behind those top three are:

47% — Working with someone who does not take responsibility for their actions

47% — Working with someone who is difficult to get along with

These findings underscore the fact that unhealthy work cultures are discouraging at best and harmful or even downright toxic at worst.

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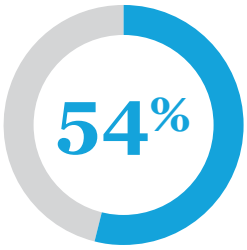
KEY DISCOVERY #3:

EXECUTIVES EXPECT CAREER PATHS

More than those at any other organizational level, company executives prioritize career advancement opportunities. In fact, over half (54%) of the executives in the national study indicated that they would **leave a company** that failed to give them a path of education that advances their careers...the highest percentage of any job role tested.

Replacing an executive is significantly disruptive to the culture and extremely expensive. Investing in current managers and executives through ongoing and responsive learning and development plans and providing them with attractive career options provides a high return on investment. The bonus is that this will not only lead to higher performance but also cultivate a leadership team that is prepared to develop and implement a high-performance culture that inspires all employees to achieve their highest potential.



*of executives indicated that they would **leave a company** that failed to give them a path of education that advances their careers*

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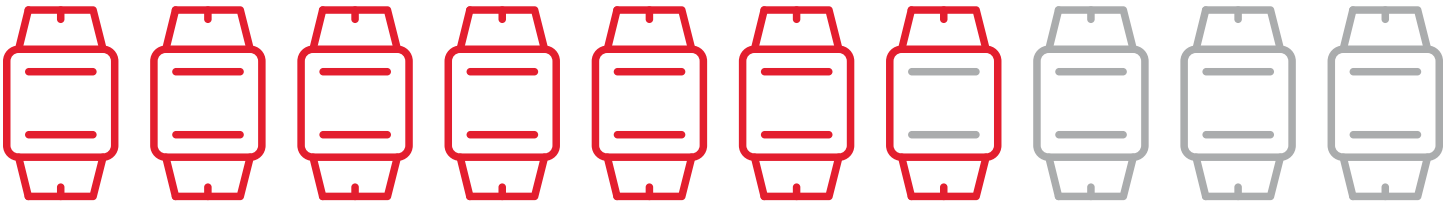
KEY DISCOVERY #4:

GEN Z EXPECTS GREATER FLEXIBILITY

Although Gen Z employees are earlier in their careers, they are making their presence known when it comes to the expectations they have for employers. Flexibility is high on their list. One example is the traditional hard-and-fast rule associated with starting times. Gen Z's view of unforgiving starting times differs significantly from that of older generations. Fully 68% of Gen Z said they would quit a job if they could get fired for being five minutes late. WOW!

This potential source of friction between employers and younger employees requires a creative approach. Customer service firms, in particular, are accustomed to fixed and unforgiving start and stop times which enable them to provide timely and responsive customer service. Leaders need to be very clear in messaging the flexibility they can and cannot offer to Gen Z. Smart leaders will look for creative ways to provide flexibility that is aligned with the company's key performance metrics.



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KEY DISCOVERY #5:

AMERICAN WORKERS ASSOCIATE ACCOUNTABILITY WITH POSITIVE WORK CULTURES

The connection between positive work cultures and accountability brings us back to the idea of alignment. Positive work cultures are a natural by-product of effective alignment between values, expectations, behaviors, and outcomes, so it should not be surprising that the national study revealed that employees advocate for accountability.



In fact, 84% of American workers believe accountability creates a positive work culture! In addition, 67% of working Americans say that they are encouraged and supported for pointing out a lack of accountability at work.

Perhaps even more interesting is the fact that **younger people are significantly more likely than older people to want to quit their jobs if leadership does not hold people accountable for living the defined values of the organization**. Across the board, employees are significantly more likely than managers and executives to associate underperformers with blaming others instead of taking accountability for their performance.

The national study reveals a clear, consistent call for a culture of accountability. Furthermore, 84% is more than a request...it is a **direct appeal to leadership** to give dimension, depth, and specifics to a high-performance culture that encourages all employees to realistically evaluate their own performance against well-defined and clearly communicated expectations.



of American workers believe accountability creates a positive work culture!

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KEY DISCOVERY #6:

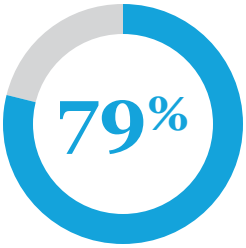
AMERICAN WORKERS BELIEVE PERFORMANCE METRICS HELP THEM UNDERSTAND HOW TO WIN

Does that surprise you?

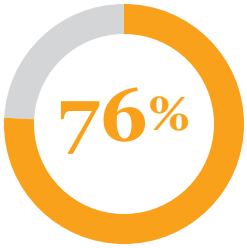
Employees want to feel good about themselves and their performance...and can only do that when they understand the game plan. They want to know the target so they can figure out how to hit it. What is surprising is that almost eight out of ten (79%) employees ***wish*** companies had clear performance metrics for all positions so ***all*** team members would ***know how to win***...the emphasis is on ***wish***.

In addition, 76% of older Millennials (36-43) think unclear work expectations hurt both companies and employees...the highest of any generation tested. Who knew? Instead of wishing for poorly defined performance metrics that would make it easy to slide by on mediocre performance, employees want to know what is expected, where they stand, and what they need to do to be the best.

Clearly, well-defined metrics are not only important to employees—they are also essential components of a high-performance culture!



*of employees **wish** companies had clear performance metrics for all positions*



of older Millennials (36-43) think unclear work expectations hurt both companies and employees

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KEY DISCOVERY #7:

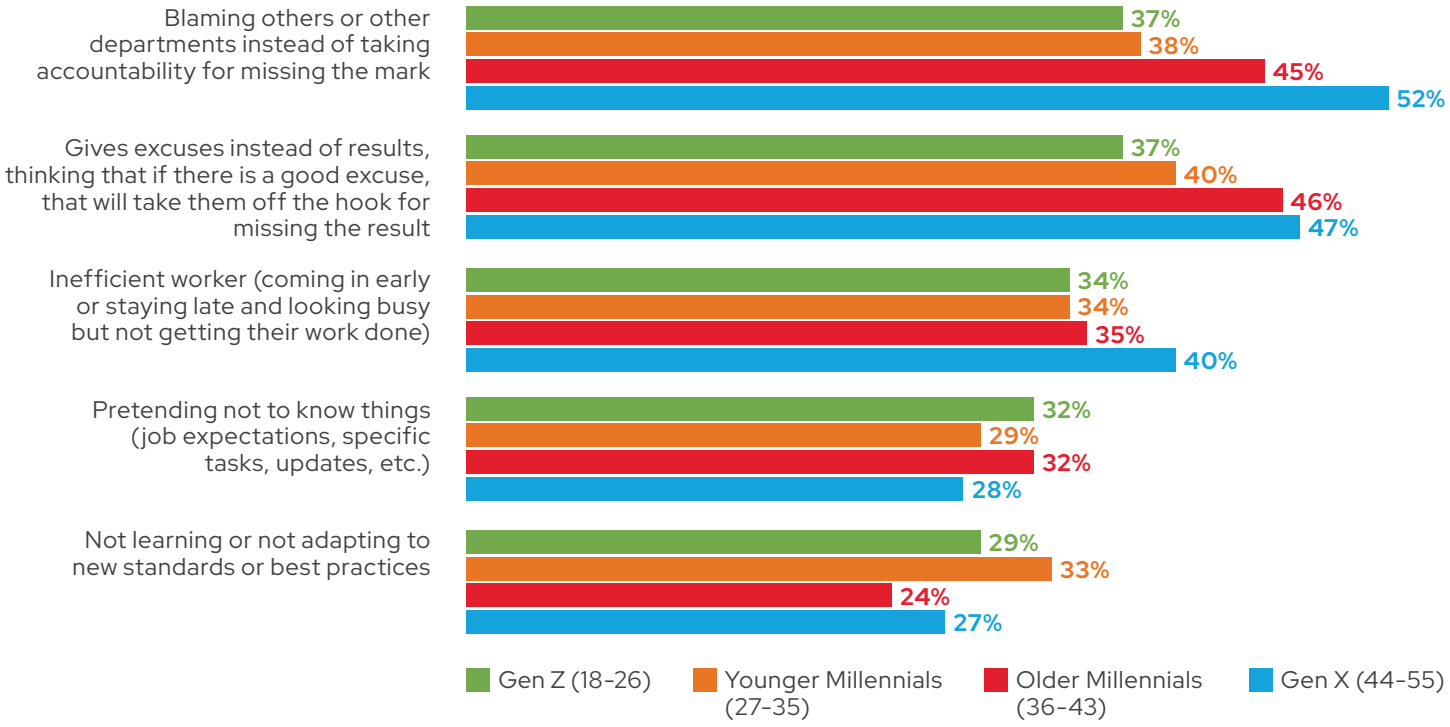
IS IT A RESOURCE ISSUE OR A CULTURE ISSUE?

People are generally pretty savvy when it comes to recognizing whiners and complainers at work. Most employees know when others are disingenuous about why they are not doing their job on time or up to expectations. In fact, 63% of working Americans think that people say they do not have enough resources to do their jobs when the real problem is that they just don't want to figure out how to do them.

A disdain for underperformers is apparent across generations.

Gen X and older Millennials are significantly more likely than younger generations to associate underperformers with blaming others or other departments instead of taking accountability or delivering results instead of excuses. Gen Z is significantly more likely than older generations to associate underperformers with using non-committal statements like "*I'm working on that*" or "*I'll get back to you*."

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING ATTRIBUTES OR QUALITIES WOULD YOU MOST ASSOCIATE WITH AN UNDERPERFORMER AT WORK? (TOP 5 OF 12, GENERATION; RANKED #1/#2/#3)



High-performance cultures make it much more difficult for underperformers to turn into long-term employees. This crucial insight underscores the fact that high performers both embrace responsibility and accountability in the workplace culture and expect colleagues and peers to perform up to expectations as well.

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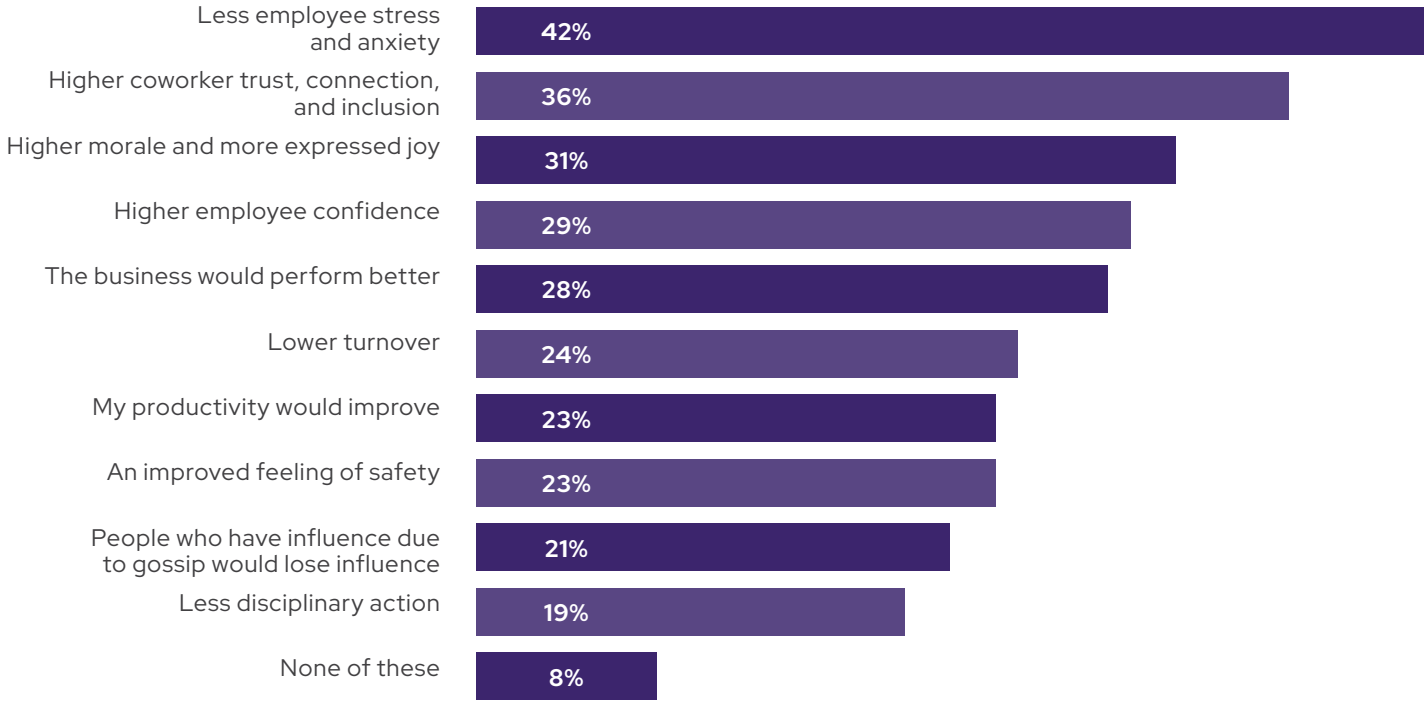
KEY DISCOVERY #8:

ERADICATING GOSSIP IMPROVES PERFORMANCE AND REDUCES STRESS

Gossip is an insidious, duplicitous, and even dangerous behavior that contributes to an unsafe and untrusting culture. The national study asked respondents to identify what the most significant outcome would be if gossip were eradicated at work. The top five answers, in order of importance, were (a) less employee stress and anxiety; (b) higher coworker trust, connection, and inclusion; (c) higher morale and more expressed joy; (d) higher employee confidence; and (e) improved business performance.

WHAT WOULD BE THE BIGGEST OUTCOME IF YOUR COMPANY ERADICATED GOSSIP?
(BY TOTAL; RANKED #1/#2/#3)



At the organizational level, employees are significantly more likely than managers and executives to say that the most significant outcome of eradicating gossip would be less employee stress and anxiety. In contrast, executives and managers are more inclined to consider business performance, saying that performance would improve. Those are two sides of the same coin!

Other interesting generational insights emerged from the national study regarding understanding workplace views toward gossip. Gen X believes an absence of gossip would result in higher morale and more expressed joy. At the same time, Gen Z pointed out that people whose influence is tied to gossip would lose that influence, and less disciplinary action would be needed.

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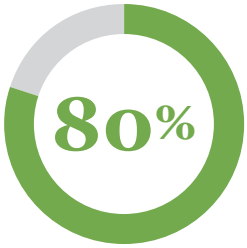
KEY DISCOVERY #9:

CULTURE MOTIVATES WORKPLACE PERFORMANCE

If any doubt about the correlation between culture and workplace performance exists, the national study challenges that belief. The vast majority of participants, regardless of age, validated the strong connection between performance and culture. Fully 80% of working Americans agreed that their company's culture motivates their performance. Even more executives and managers recognize the impact that culture has on performance: Almost nine out of ten executives (89%) and 81% of managers acknowledge the importance of culture and its influence on performance.

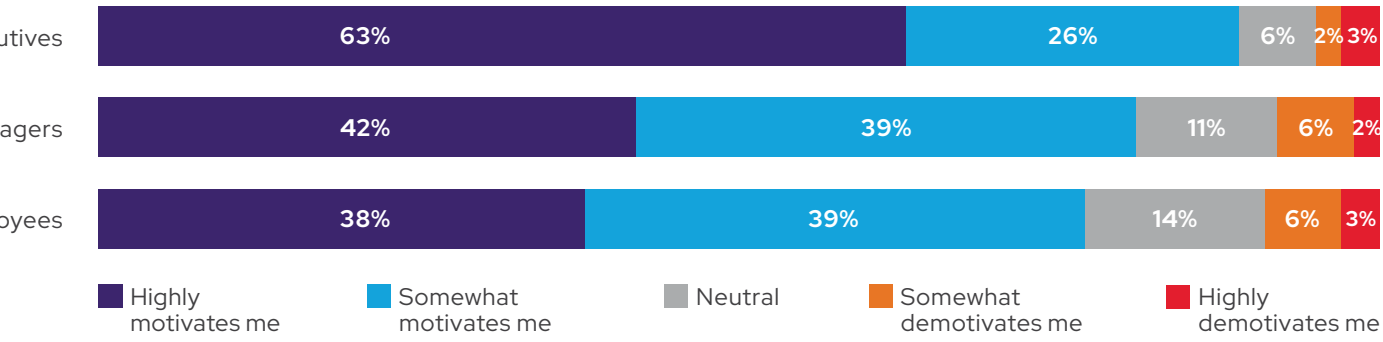


of working Americans agreed that their company's culture motivates their performance

HOW DOES YOUR COMPANY'S PERFORMANCE CULTURE IMPACT YOUR PERFORMANCE AT YOUR JOB?
(BY TOTAL)



(BY JOB ROLE/LEVEL OF RESPONSIBILITY)



Wow! This is compelling, persuasive, and statistically valid proof that the vast majority of employees want to work in a high-performance culture. The challenge comes in creating a high-performance culture—one that breathes life into the workplace. A culture that encourages everyone to strive to become better and to evaluate their own performance against well-defined and clearly communicated performance metrics. A culture where everyone understands that performance not only drives profitability but also moves the organization ahead.

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KEY DISCOVERY #10:

IS AVERAGE GOOD ENOUGH?

This insight from the national study is shocking and should be a wake-up call to leaders across industries, companies, roles, and responsibilities that now is the time to step up and lead for high performance. The national study uncovered that **58% of working Americans think doing average work is acceptable**, only 66% think doing below-average work is unacceptable, and **58% think too many employees strive to be average rather than excellent**.



If this isn't disturbing, it should be because this is a picture of the current reality in too many companies. Even though employees yearn for a high-performance culture that challenges them to become better and despite the fact that managers and executives long for a high-performance culture that translates to improved bottom-line profitability, this finding proves that we still have a long way to go to make this a reality.

When people feel that it is acceptable to perform at or below average, it takes the wind out of the sails of the ambitious go-getters who are essential to successful businesses. However, the corollary to this is that when expectations are clear and well-communicated, and performance metrics facilitate accountability, everyone's sails will be filled with the winds of success.

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STUDY CONCLUSION AND CALL TO ACTION

The national study finally delved into what truly matters regarding company culture, high-performance culture, and the future of an organization that rallies behind driving results. Several key findings are worth calling out because of their importance in the overall conversation and the influence they have in shaping understanding about leading a high-performance culture:

75% of American workers think they are in the top 10% of workers
The good news is that people want to see themselves as successful...the bad news is that expectations clearly need greater clarity

58% of American workers think average is okay
High-performance cultures strive for much more than average and okay

84% of American workers want accountability
Employees are eager to be held accountable...but only when they know what is expected

80% of American workers believe culture motivates performance
A significant majority of workers are enthusiastic about being part of a high-performance culture that challenges them to more extraordinary achievement

The bottom line is that a high-performance culture is what everyone in an organization should want and what leaders should be determined to create. A high-performance culture is not just possible but essential to competing and leading in today's marketplace. Leaders who take on the responsibility to develop a high-performance culture will be rewarded with more loyal team members, more satisfied customers, and business outcomes that shine.

The groundbreaking insights revealed by the national study indicate that significant numbers of employees are ready and willing. More than that, they are hungry to be part of a company that values them, informs them, challenges them, embraces accountability, and leaves the competition in the dust. In short, they want to be winners in a winning organization.

Want to know more about making your organization a high-performance culture? Reach out to our team at The Emmerich Group. Driving results through a high-performance culture is our passion, and we're ready to help you deliver.

Visit us online: EmmerichFinancial.com

Connect with us on LinkedIn: linkedin.com/company/the-emmerich-group

Speak to an Emmerich Group expert today: (952) 737-6730 | CultureShift@EmmerichGroup.com

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ABOUT THE EMMERICH GROUP

How can 75% of all employees believe that they perform in the top 10%? At The Emmerich Group, we believe that you deserve a high-performance culture where everyone understands what high performance truly means.

Imagine for a moment that your organizational goals ignite a fire of connection, confidence, and cohesion. Imagine that every team member know how they tie to profit and rocks their job because of it.

We have dozens of clients who live this dream every day.

We believe in the relentless pursuit of excellence in all that we do. Contact us and let's explore what a high-performance culture can do for you.

According to hundreds of studies, culture is the leading indicator of future profit and growth.

For action steps to capitalize on this study with strategies and templates, go to:
EmmerichFinancial.com/CultureShift

Thank you to the Center for Generational Kinetics for their invaluable partnership in this research study.

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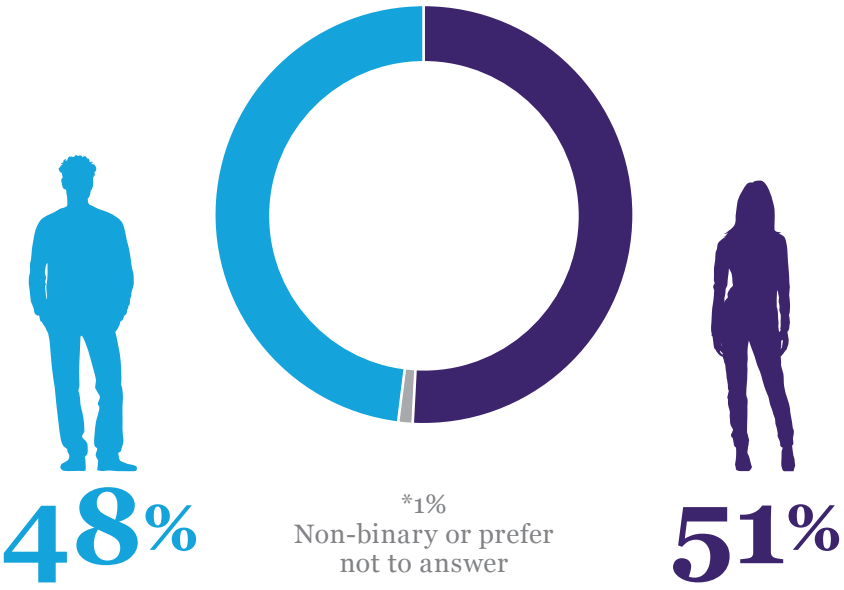
NATIONAL STUDY METHODOLOGY

The research study included a total of 1,000 US participants, ages 18–55, who are currently employed full-time, employed part-time, or self-employed. The study is weighted to the 2020 US Census for age, region, gender, and ethnicity. The research study was conducted online August 3-16, 2023. The margin of error is +/-3.1 percentage points.

Custom 25-Question Survey Completed By 1,000 Us Participants (Ages 18-55)



24% GEN Z (AGES 18-26)

28% YOUNGER MILLENNIALS (AGES 27-35)

26% OLDER MILLENNIALS (AGES 36-43)

22% GEN X (AGES 44-55)

24% WEST

20% MIDWEST

39% SOUTH

17% NORTHEAST

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