



4 Ways Companies Can Improve Frontline Dynamics

CATALYST

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Even if organizational programs and policies are in place for supporting, hearing, and fairly treating corporate and office-based employees, it's not a given that those programs and policies will flow down to and be relevant to the frontline experience. Catalyst research finds that frontline employees and their teams are at risk of not feeling supported, valued, heard, and cared for by their organization.

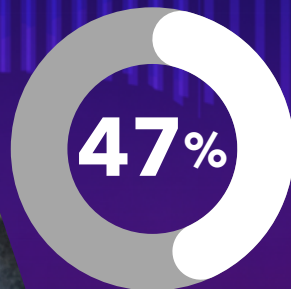
Catalyst's newest report on frontline employees, produced in partnership with Accenture, [Team Dynamics on the Front Line: How Managers and Organizations Impact This Overlooked Key to Retention](#), highlights four actions companies can take to improve work relationships among frontline employees to create a respectful and rewarding work environment.

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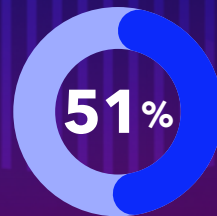




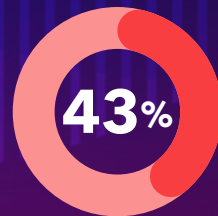
Implement Fair Rewards Systems¹



Women



Men



of employees believe their company does not have fair rewards systems in place.²

As perceptions of fair rewards systems increase, employees are:

2X

more likely to report positive working relationships with coworkers.³

What Actions Can Organizations Take?

1

Ensure fair performance evaluations and offer access to pay raises and bonuses.⁴

2

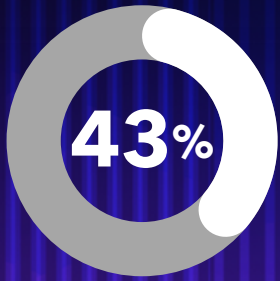
Enhance benefit packages—including for part-time employees—to include paid sick leave, caregiving leave, retirement plans, health insurance, and access to FSAs.⁵

3

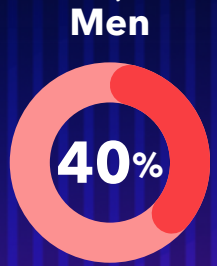
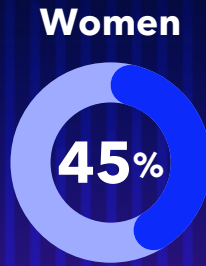
Implement systems for managers and leaders to recognize and reward employees and teams formally when they do great work.



Ensure Fair Decision-Making Systems⁶



of employees indicated that their company does not have fair decision-making processes in place.⁷



As perceptions of fair decision-making systems increase, employees are:

2X

more likely to report positive working relationships with coworkers.⁸

Fair decision-making systems can indirectly improve employees' motivation to help their coworkers when needed.⁹ Perceptions of fair decision-making systems can indirectly boost work efforts and employees' sense of thriving.¹⁰

What Actions Can Organizations Take?

1

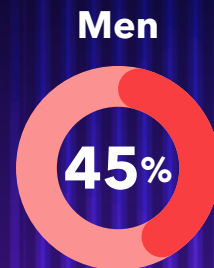
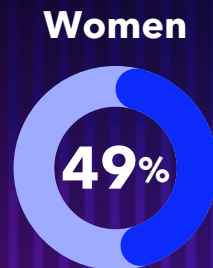
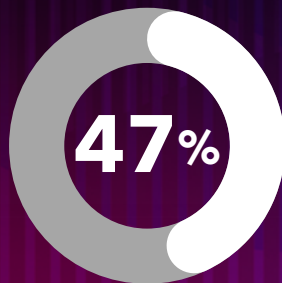
Make sure decision-making processes are consistent, based on accurate information, and provide the opportunity for people impacted to express their concerns or challenge the decisions.

2

Create mechanisms to capture the input of frontline employees—who are a deep source of insight since they handle products, customers, and services and run operations on the floor—before decisions are made (for example, related to timing of inventory delivery schedules, production rates, or operational planning).



Support Employees as Individuals



of employees indicated that they do not feel supported by their organization.¹¹

As perceptions of organizational support increase, employees are:

3X

more likely to report positive working relationships with coworkers.¹⁴

Perceived organizational support is correlated with employee performance¹² as well as emotional investment in the workplace, which in turn leads to positive behaviors such as knowledge sharing and helping other employees.¹³

What Actions Can Organizations Take?

1

Increase flexibility for employees to control their work schedules and decrease schedule instability.

2

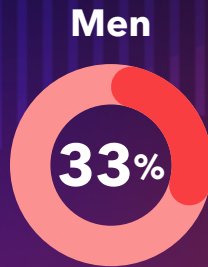
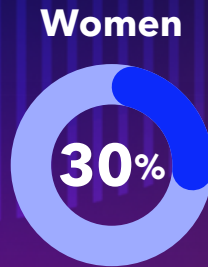
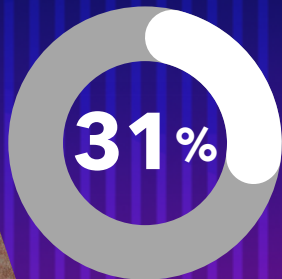
Ensure that employees get enough breaks in comfortable spaces.

3

Enhance physical conditions at worksites so employees with a range of body types can do their jobs safely and with the facilities they need.¹⁵



Counter a Climate of Silence



of employees said there is a climate of silence in their workplace.¹⁶

As perceptions of organizational climate of silence increase, employees are:

37%

less likely to report positive working relationships with coworkers.¹⁷

A climate of silence can lead to a range of negative employee outcomes such as lower organizational commitment and job satisfaction.¹⁸

What Actions Can Organizations Take?

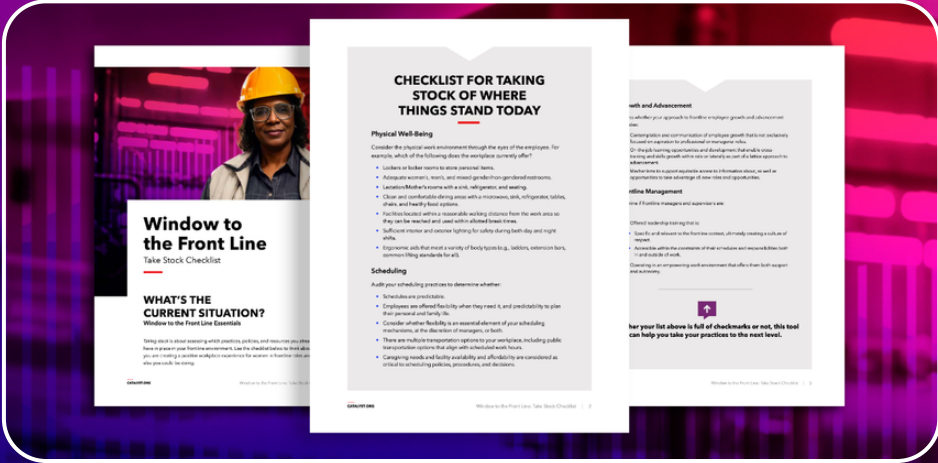
1

Create mechanisms and incentives for both top-down and bottom-up communications with frontline employees.

2

Demonstrate that all levels¹⁹ of the organization want to hear about problems such as safety concerns, operational inefficiencies, or customer dissatisfaction.

Catalyst Supporter companies can access Window to the Front Line, an action-oriented toolkit for corporate leaders to help attract, develop, and retain women and all people in frontline roles through a worksheet, checklist, and information on leading practices.



catalyst.org/window-to-the-front-line/

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Team Dynamics on the Front Line

How Managers and Organizations Impact This Overlooked Key to Retention

Catalyst in partnership with Accenture



ACCESS THE REPORT

catalyst.org/reports/frontline-employee-team-dynamics/

Endnotes

1. In the academic literature this concept is more commonly referred to as “distributive justice.” See for example, Masterson, S. S. (2001). A trickle-down model of organizational justice: Relating employees’ and customers’ perceptions of and reactions to fairness. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 86*(4), 596.
2. An independent samples t-test was conducted to test whether there was a significant difference between women and men who said their organization had fair rewards systems. Men ($M = 3.90$) reported that their organizations had fair reward systems in place more so than women ($M = 3.68$), $t(1767) = -3.55$, $p < .001$.
3. A logistic regression was conducted to examine how perceptions of fair reward systems shape positive team dynamics. Perceptions of fair reward systems were measured by 4 items adapted from the distributive justice scale from Masterson, S. S. (2001). A trickle-down model of organizational justice: Relating employees’ and customers’ perceptions of and reactions to fairness. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 86*(4), 596, and measured on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree) scale. Responses were then averaged to create a composite ($\alpha = .91$). The logistic regression was statistically significant: $X^2(1) = 177.77$, $p < .001$, Nagelkerke R Square = .15. As perceptions of fair reward systems increase by 1 unit, employees are 1.8 times more likely to report more positive team dynamics, $b = 0.60$, $\text{Exp}(B) = 1.82$, [LLCI = 1.66; ULCI = 2.00], $p < .001$.
4. In December 2023, the average hourly wage for production or non-supervisory roles in Retail, Leisure and Hospitality, and Manufacturing was reported as \$20.83, \$19.24, and \$27.16 respectively. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (January 5, 2024). *Table B-8. Average hourly and weekly earnings of production and nonsupervisory employees on private nonfarm payrolls by industry sector, seasonally adjusted*.
5. Research on target industries highlights that frontline employees often have limited or no access to benefits such as paid sick leave, see for example Schneider, D. & Harknett, K. (2020). *Essential and vulnerable: Service sector workers and paid sick leave*. The Shift Project Brief. Harvard Kennedy School. Research also finds that frontline employees highly rate access to benefits, see for example Watts, T. & Umland B. (2021). *Benefits matter to low-wage workers*. Mercer.
6. In the academic literature this concept is more commonly referred to as “procedural justice;” see for example Kim, M. & Beehr, T. A. (2020). Making the case for procedural justice: employees thrive and work hard. *Journal of Managerial Psychology, 35*(2), 100-114.
7. An independent samples t-test was conducted to test whether there was a significant difference between women and men who said their organization had fair decision-making processes. Men ($M = 4.02$) reported that their organizations had fair decision-making processes in place more so than women ($M = 3.91$), $t(1767) = -2.05$, $p = .04$.
8. A logistic regression was conducted to examine how fair decision-making processes shape positive team dynamics. Fair decision-making processes was measured by 6 items adapted from the procedural justice scale from Masterson, S. S. (2001). A trickle-down model of organizational justice: Relating employees’ and customers’ perceptions of and reactions to fairness. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 86*(4), 596, and measured on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree) scale. Responses were then averaged to create a composite ($\alpha = .91$). The logistic regression was statistically significant: $X^2(1) = 257.74$, $p < .001$, Nagelkerke R Square = .21. As perceptions of fair decision-making processes increased by 1 unit, employees were 2.4 times more likely to report more positive team dynamics, $b = 0.86$, $\text{Exp}(B) = 2.36$, [LLCI = 2.11; ULCI = 2.65], $p < .001$.
9. Moorman, R., Blakely, G., & Niehoff, B. (1998). Does perceived organizational support mediate the relationship between procedural justice and organizational citizenship behavior? *Academy of Management Journal, 41*(3), 351-357.
10. Kim, M. & Beehr, T. (2020). Making the case for procedural justice: Employees thrive and work hard. *Journal of Managerial Psychology, 35*(2) 100-114.
11. An independent samples t-test was conducted to test whether there was a significant difference between women and men who said their organization was supportive. Men ($M = 3.93$) and women ($M = 3.88$) did not report differences in organizational support, $t(1767) = -0.92$, $p > .05$.

Endnotes

12. Darolia, C. R., Kumari, P., & Darolia, S. (2010). Perceived organizational support, work motivation, and organizational commitment as determinants of job performance. *Journal of the Indian Academy of Applied Psychology*, 36(1), 69-78.
13. Ficapal-Cusí, P., Enache-Zegheru, M., & Torrent-Sellens, J. (2020). Linking perceived organizational support, affective commitment, and knowledge sharing with prosocial organizational behavior of altruism and civic virtue. *Sustainability*, 12(24), Article 24; Pohl, S. & Battistelli, (2013) The impact of perceived organizational support and job characteristics on nurses' citizenship behaviours. *International Journal of Organization Theory and Behavior*, 16(2) 203.
14. A logistic regression was conducted to examine how organizational support shapes positive team dynamics. Organizational support was measured by 8 items from Eisenberger, R., Cummings, J., Armeli, S., & Lynch, P. (1997). Perceived organizational support, discretionary treatment, and job satisfaction. *The Journal of Applied Psychology*, 82(5), 812, and measured on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree) scale. Responses were then averaged to create a composite ($\alpha = .70$). The logistic regression was statistically significant: $X^2(1) = 275.32$, $p < .001$, Nagelkerke R Square = .22. As organizational support increased by 1 unit, employees were 2.6 times more likely to report better relationships with coworkers, $b = 0.95$, $\text{Exp}(B) = 2.59$, [LLCI = 2.29; ULCI = 2.93], $p < .001$.
15. Catalyst & Accenture. (2023). *Women on the front line: Enabling them to thrive, stay, and perform*. Catalyst.
16. An independent samples t-test was conducted to test whether there was a significant difference between women and men who said there was a climate of silence within their organization. Men ($M = 3.27$) and women ($M = 3.19$) did not report differences in a climate of silence, $t(1767) = -1.49$, $p = .14$.
17. A logistic regression was conducted to examine how organizational climate of silence shapes positive team dynamics. Climate of silence was measured by 8 items from Daşcı, E. & Cemaloğlu, N. (2016). The development of the organizational silence: Validity-reliability study. *Journal of Human Sciences*, 13(1), 33-45, and measured on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree) scale. Responses were then averaged to create a composite ($\alpha = .92$). The logistic regression was statistically significant: $X^2(1) = 94.89$, $p < .001$, Nagelkerke R Square = .08. As perceptions of organizational silence increased by 1 unit, employees were 37% less likely to report better relationships with coworkers, $b = -0.47$, $\text{Exp}(B) = 0.63$, [LLCI = 0.57; ULCI = 0.69], $p < .001$.
18. Vakola, M. & Bouradas, D. (2005). Antecedents and consequences of organisational silence: An empirical investigation. *Employee Relations*, 27, 441–458.
19. *Deskless not voiceless: A new approach to connecting everyone within your business*. (n.d.). Workplace from Meta.
20. Anderson, G. (2021, November 12). Frontline workers say management isn't listening to them. RetailWire; Dickson, G. (2022, February 15). Why frontline worker communication is more important (and easier) than ever. Haystack.