



FROM CHAOS COMES CLARITY.

How the pandemic caused both the Great Resignation and a great need for fulfillment.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As we look back on nearly two years of what in many ways can be dubbed as emotional chaos, how has what people want out of life changed, and what learnings do they want to carry into the future?

Many of those reading this paper are not only reflecting on their personal lives, but also have the ability to shape their organizational cultures, and have a tremendous impact on how people in their organizations experience their work, how fulfilled they feel, and the impact that they can make.

QuestionPro and RADICL partnered on this study and **surveyed 1,200 full-time U.S. employees in organizations across various industries**. We wanted to know about their work but also about their personal life, a combined whole self-experience, as we believe there has been a significant blend between the two.

As we start the new year, there are so many unknowns, but what we do know is that people's desire to have a positive impact in the workplace has grown exponentially. We conducted this study with the goal of providing a fresh, really human perspective on how together we can help shape the future of work, and what individuals and organizations can do to help us effectively move ahead on this conquest. If you are one of us, who is determined to make a big impact, you found yourself in the right place, please read on.



Sanja Licina, PhD
President
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Dan Riley
Co-Founder
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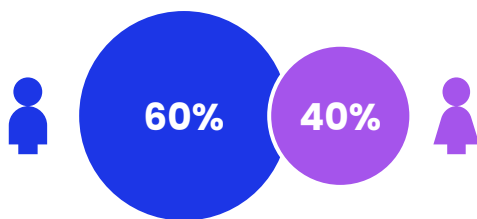
Patrick Riley
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KEY INSIGHTS

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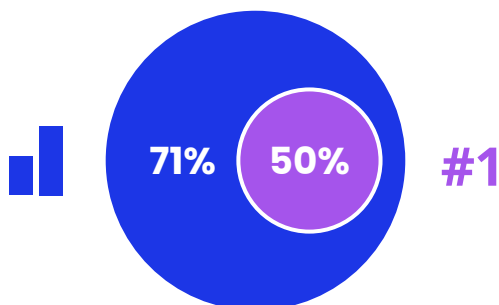
As we reach two years after the Covid-19 pandemic has broken out, **only 47% of workers say they feel fulfilled** with the life they're living right now.

60% of men and 40% of women say they feel fulfilled with their life



Salary is still key for attracting talent

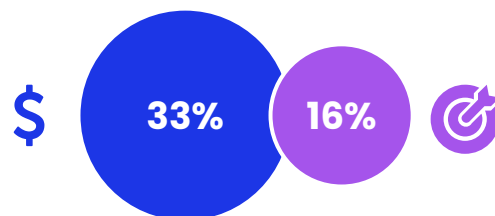
Half of workers (50%) ranked salary as the number one factor when choosing a work opportunity, and 71% ranked it as one of the top two factors.



The price of organizational and personal values misalignment

A third of workers (33%) said that the company would have to pay up to, or over 20% more compared to the offer where their values are truly aligned, and 16% said that there is no price, they would need to be fully aligned with a company's values before they accepted their job offer.

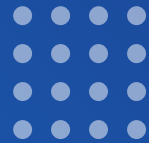
When asked about being fully aligned with a company's values: 33% of workers said the company would have to pay up and 16% said there's no price.



A brave path ahead

73% of workers said the pandemic has given them more courage to take actions on the changes they wanted to make in their lives. 89% of workers said they have already taken at least some action, and many are not done yet; 58% of respondents said that they are absolutely ready to make further changes.

A PATH TO BIG DREAMS AND GREATER FULFILLMENT





Almost all people we asked (88%) said that they have big dreams for their lives, with half (50%) saying they absolutely do. People are increasingly starting to believe that they deserve to live a good life, perhaps even what they envision as their best life. Over the last several years, maybe even decades, we saw tenures in workplaces shorten, the length of marriages follow a similar trend, overall more changes being made that were once thought to be a lot more unconventional.

Yet, a sense of fulfillment trails far below the dreams. Only 47% of workers said that they feel fulfilled with the life they're living right now. There was also a significant gender difference in how fulfilled men and women feel, with 61% of men saying they are fulfilled and 40% of the women saying the same.

For individuals who reported overall lower levels of fulfillment, 34% of women said that the pandemic has had a great impact on how fulfilled they are feeling, as compared to 28% of men who said the same. So, while the pandemic has certainly had an impact, the events that took place over the last couple of years are not the only factor attributed to women feeling less fulfilled than men.

What could be impacting people's fulfillment? How much do employees really value values?

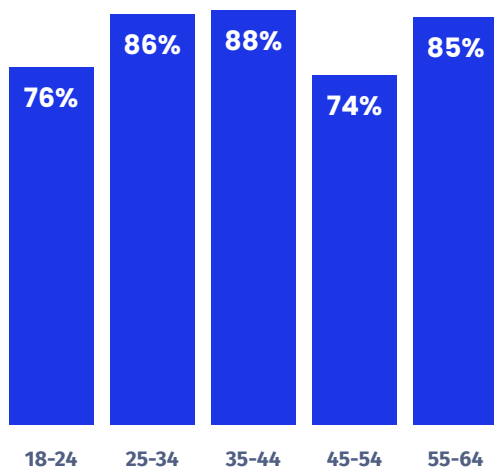
As we wanted to understand what drives a sense of fulfillment better, we took a closer look at career aspirations. Nine out of ten people said that they want to have a meaningful career. So what are some things that organizations can do to help positively impact people's sense of fulfillment?

Too often people think of salary as the enemy of fulfillment — as if you can really only have one or the other, that it is nearly impossible to find a job that both pays you well and that you feel good about. With this mindset some organizations are hopeful that if they can give fulfilling opportunities they may be able to do so at a significantly lower pay.

It is important that we challenge that way of thinking and work to find a win-win. Why? Because salary should not be the enemy of fulfillment. Actually, for many workers, their salary is the keyway they can find fulfillment in other parts of their lives, such as having a comfortable home, taking a family vacation, etc. This is likely why in our survey we found that salary was still ranked as the number 1 factor for 50% of the workers

when choosing a work opportunity, and 71% ranked salary as one of the top 2 factors. So, as organizations continue to get creative about the best way to attract and retain talent, it is important to keep in mind that a fair and competitive salary will be a difficult variable to compromise on. Once the organization has the salary right, the alignment of a person's values with that of the organization becomes critical. When asked if they received two job offers, and everything else was pretty much equal (salary, benefits, industry, etc.), 83% of workers said that it was either extremely or somewhat important that their personal values are aligned with the company values. Fewer than 3% said that this alignment was not important. Though some may expect generational differences in this sentiment, we saw that values were important to workers across the board when choosing an employer.

The percentage of employees who said that a company's values are important when deciding whether to work for them.



Now, for companies who are not as focused on having strong values, they will have to pay a premium to attract the talent they're looking for if their values are even somewhat misaligned with a person's values.

A third of workers (33%) said that the company would have to pay up to, or over 20% more compared to the offer where their values are truly aligned, and 16% said that there is no price, they would need to be fully aligned with a company's values before they accepted their job offer.

For organizations who are asking themselves, and anyone who will give them the time to listen during this tight labor market, on the best way to attract talent, these are some key answers. Even though people want to make a great impact, salary is still often non-negotiable, but in a bidding war for talent, it is not enough. For the organizations who have not done so yet, it is critical to do some soul searching and spend time defining the values, because even for those who have healthy budgets for salaries, that won't be enough to win the best talent if the values are not competitive or appealing as well.

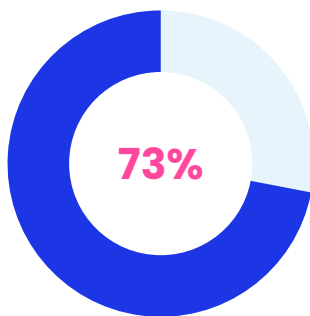


We have already seen unprecedented movement in the labour market.

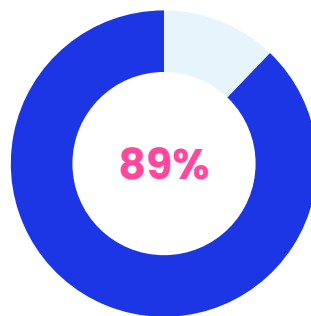
What will happen next?

Most people spent more time than usual reflecting during the pandemic, wondering if they are living their lives to the fullest. And as mentioned before, only 47% of workers said they feel fulfilled with the life they are living right now.

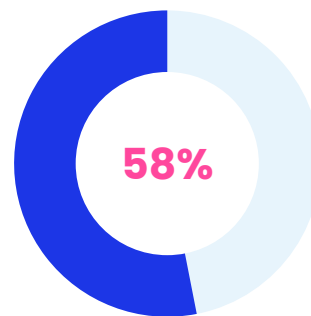
With that, people have started to make changes. Nearly three out of four workers (73%) said the pandemic has given them more courage to take actions on the changes they wanted to make in their lives and 89% of workers said they have already taken at least some action on the changes they wanted to make. But, people are not done yet. Looking ahead to the next six months, 58% said that they are absolutely ready to make further changes.



Have more courage to take action as a result of the pandemic



Have already taken action



Are ready to make changes ahead

When it comes to career changes, who are those making the greatest moves?

Ninety percent of full-time employees said that they want to have a meaningful career. Of those who said that it's important to have a meaningful career, 90% have already taken some action on the changes they wanted to make.

More than 9 out of 10 (93%) individuals surveyed who are in managerial positions said they have already taken some action on the changes they wanted to make, and 68% say they are absolutely expecting to make more changes. This compares to 83% and 50% respectively to individual contributors.

These changes are likely not exclusively related to work. For organizations who are concerned about keeping their best talent, this data shows that it's important to make sure the workplace offers the greatest fit across all levels of employees, and that the greatest urgency may be in speaking with those in managerial positions.

We often talk about the concept called "Empathy at Scale." This refers to effectively connecting to a large number of people, and in our industry we accomplish this through listening and taking action. Focusing on this as a part of an organizational practice today is critical for just this reason, and is supported by the statistics we are seeing.

Often times organizations are not fully attuned with what it is that their people are looking for professionally, and hence they don't know how to effectively communicate if it is truly available in their organization. When this information is not effectively exchanged, and people are not aware of the opportunities available in their organizations, they will look to leave. Once they have decided to look externally it may already be too late to get them to change their minds and stay.



What kind of experience do people really want in the workplace?

Is my son in my meeting or is my meeting during my son's dinner? The pandemic surely blurred the lines of how, when and where many of us work. Sometimes we celebrated being able to share more of ourselves with our colleagues. Other times we wished they didn't hear so many questions coming from our kids, significant others, or parents, who didn't notice we were on a massive conference call, and for once, were not on mute as they fired away somewhat inappropriate questions.

As we are further defining and redefining how we want to work moving ahead, two thirds of workers (64%) say they want to be able to discuss personal matters with their colleagues, leaders, and team, or show up as their whole selves to work.

As we continue to discuss the concept of a whole-person experience, it is important to clear up a misconception of what it means to show up to work as a whole self. At times people believe that it's a complete blur of personal and professional life, that when a person wants to show up as a whole self, they don't want to differentiate between the two at all. That, however, is not the case. Of those who said it's extremely important to be able to show up as their whole self, fewer than half (45%) said they want their work and

outside of work life to be fully connected, with 31% saying they wanted either some or complete separation. So it's really about finding an organizational culture where a person feels like they can choose how much they want to share about themselves, it's not an all or nothing game, like most things in life, people's ideal space is somewhere in between.

Nearly all of us have heard more about the concept of empathy during the pandemic. When it comes to understanding how someone wants to show up to work, this is a real opportunity to ask questions, be open minded and empathetic, because we are seeing both big differences across ages and genders in how people are saying they want to show up to work.

45%

Want their work and outside life to be fully connected



What percentage of people want to show up as their whole selves to work, by age



It seems that significantly more workers 44 and younger are looking to discuss more personal matters at work than those 45 and over. This could be perhaps because of the life stages. For many of those who are new to the workforce, they are still trying to figure out how things work and how they may be able to influence it. It's likely a lot of their social life is tied to work, that they have made more friends there and naturally there becomes a blend between personal and professional topics. For those 35-44, a big subject may be parenthood. Not only with children running into rooms and joining video meetings unannounced, but perhaps having more conversations about navigating the balance of work and parenthood responsibilities, managing work schedules and travel and such.

As one gets deeper into their career, it is possible the newness of certain life events wears off, and as the desire to get life hacks from their colleagues lessens, people don't want to speak about personal matters at work as much. It may also be somewhat a result of generational differences and how those who entered the workforce several decades ago were more used to keeping personal and professional matters separate, and partly out of desire, but also partly out of habit, are continuing to keep them separate.

When it came to differences in men and women, at first we found the results quite surprising. Significantly more men than women said they wanted to show up as their whole selves to work.

**75% OF MEN
COMPARED TO 58% OF WOMEN
SAID THAT IT'S IMPORTANT TO BE
ABLE TO DISCUSS PERSONAL
MATTERS THAT THEY WANT TO
DISCUSS WITH THEIR COLLEAGUES,
LEADERS, AND TEAM.**

After we further discussed the possible reasons, we believe this could be a result of women facing a “**double bind**” in the workplace, that they may have a significant concern that if they overshare about their personal life that it could backfire and make them appear as less committed, unable to prioritize their work, etc.

75%

58%



For years women have received lower pay than their male counterparts for the same types of jobs, have been underrepresented in the top management and executive levels across organizations, and the differences were only further exaggerated during the pandemic and a period that was dubbed The First Female Recession.

For the employees who said that it was extremely important to them to be able to show up as their whole selves to work, 59% said that they were absolutely able to. For those who said that it wasn't important at all, 48% said they didn't think they could show up that way anyways. Based on these findings it seems that employees are selecting cultures based on how important their whole self experience is to them, and as such it is an organizational aspect that is important to discuss during the recruitment process.

An alarming expectation to look out for is that for those who say that it is extremely important for them to show up as their whole selves to work, 44% are saying that they don't feel like they'll be able to share as much of their personal lives after the pandemic as they did during the pandemic. For organizations it is important to measure and see if the dynamic truly changes, and take a proactive role in shaping a culture they want to have, or else it could have a significant impact on their retention.

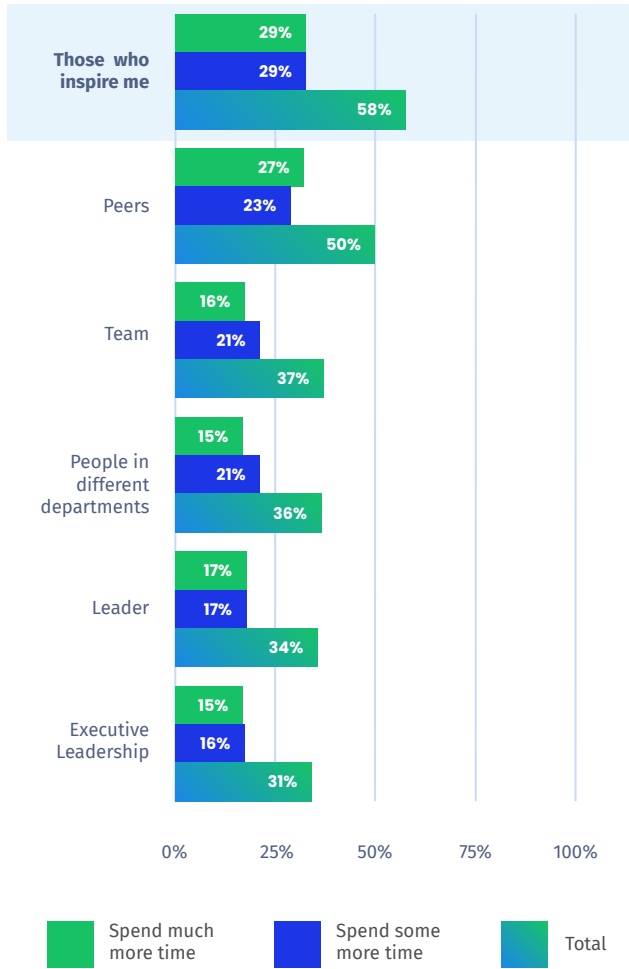
There is a great opportunity for individual employers to better understand how their people want to show up to work and why they want to show up a certain way.

Nowadays, the goal is to promote a culture that's best suited for what your employees are looking for to help them thrive by growing and developing their careers.

Work design moving ahead: there is a lot of talk about when and where, but how about who?

The pandemic has certainly opened our eyes to there being a better way to work, whether it was offering more flexible hours, or giving more freedom in the choice of whether to work from home or the office. But regardless of time and place, those who we surround ourselves with have a great impact on our satisfaction and productivity, and do make up a significant part of the culture.

So, we asked workers how much time they want to spend with people at work, and we found that above all else, most people (58%) want to be surrounded by those at work who inspire them.



What we found, however, is that the executive leadership group scored the lowest, with just 31% of people saying they would want to spend more time with executives in the future. In research we are increasingly seeing that people want to be inspired by those similar to them, who are likely facing similar challenges and have relatable dreams. This is likely why peers were the second highest scoring group in the question.

These findings give organizations a lot to think about, and action. For example, an Academy of Management study found that when it comes to newcomers to the organization, they prefer to hear stories from their peers rather than from leaders, but often there is less visibility for the “average” employee as compared to leadership in onboarding programs, inclusion training, etc. We’re seeing that a great number of people are looking to be inspired, and if organizations do it right, this inspiration can come from many more people, and be much more effective than the strategies they are likely using today.

When it comes to spending more time with those who inspire them, we saw that for workers 44 years old and under on average 32% said that they would like to spend much more time with those who inspire them, with workers 45 years old and over on average 20% said the same.

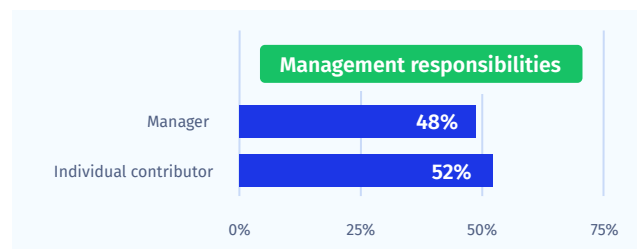
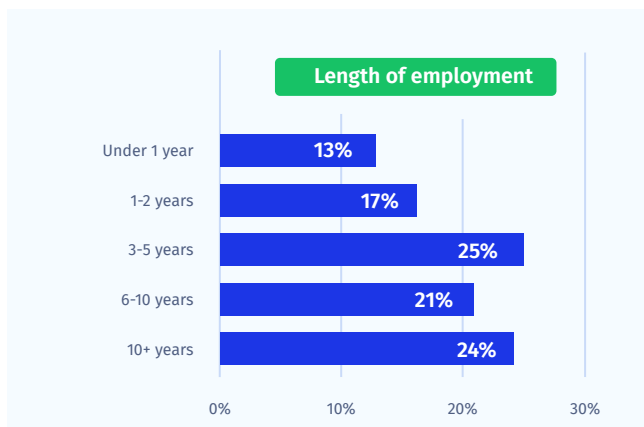
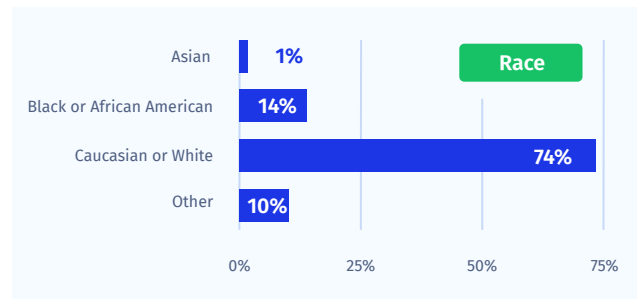
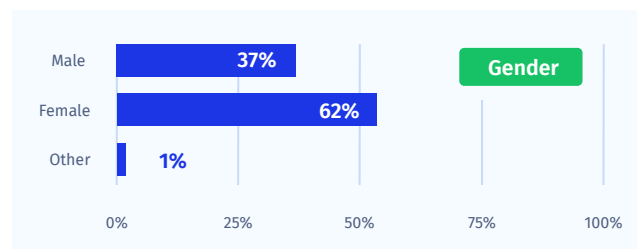
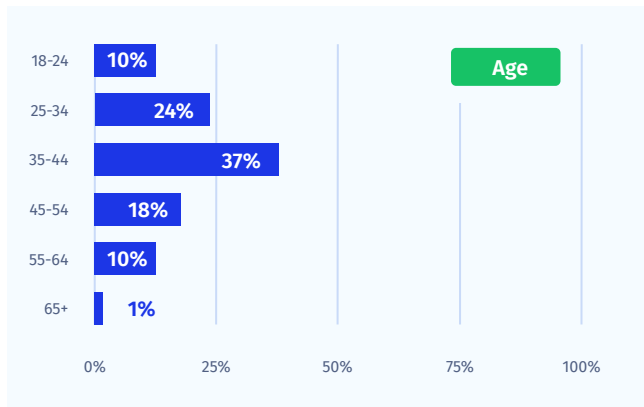
So who in the workplace does inspiration come from? One may think that it’s the executive leadership, the ones at the helm who often set the direction and vision for the organization.

A big, bold move ahead

It has been a hard, messy couple of years, but people are emerging with big dreams and greater courage to pursue a life that will make them more fulfilled. Work and careers will continue to play large roles in people’s lives, and this is where organizations have a huge opportunity to step in and not only make an impact on people professionally, but also in how they shape their cultures in a way where people can show up as their whole selves. This type of organizational change and commitment will without a doubt have a positive ripple effect, and will not only help people feel more fulfilled professionally, but will have a positive impact and inspire all other aspects of their lives.

METHODOLOGY

The “FROM CHAOS, COMES CLARITY“ report explores insights of 1,200 U.S. full-time employees. The survey was conducted in early November 2021, and respondents are broken down as follows:





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