PerkSpot

The Ultimate Guide to
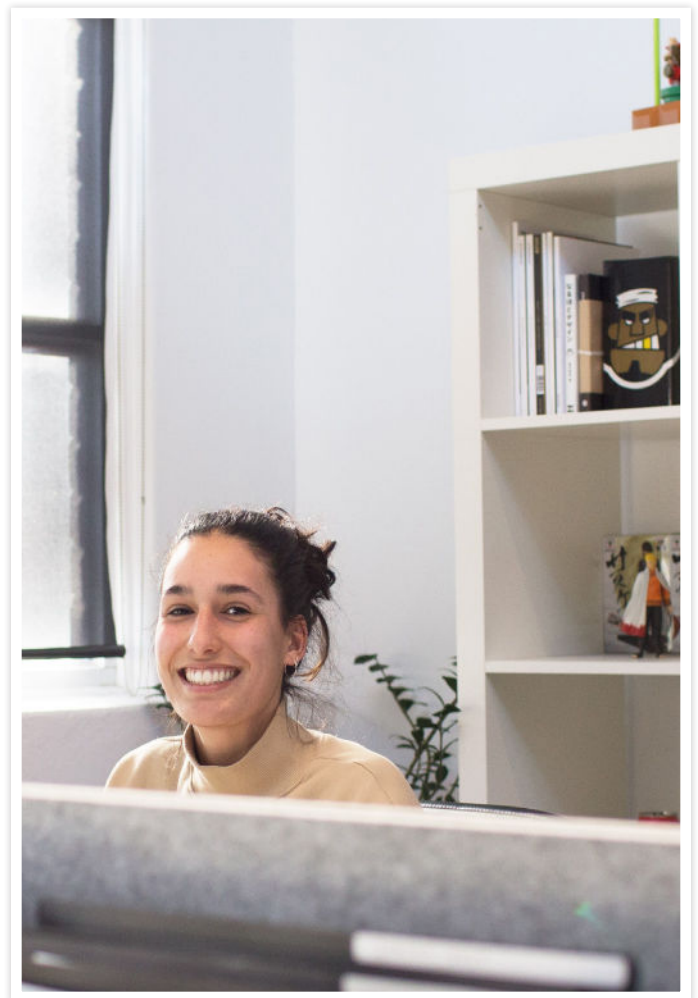
A Better Workplace

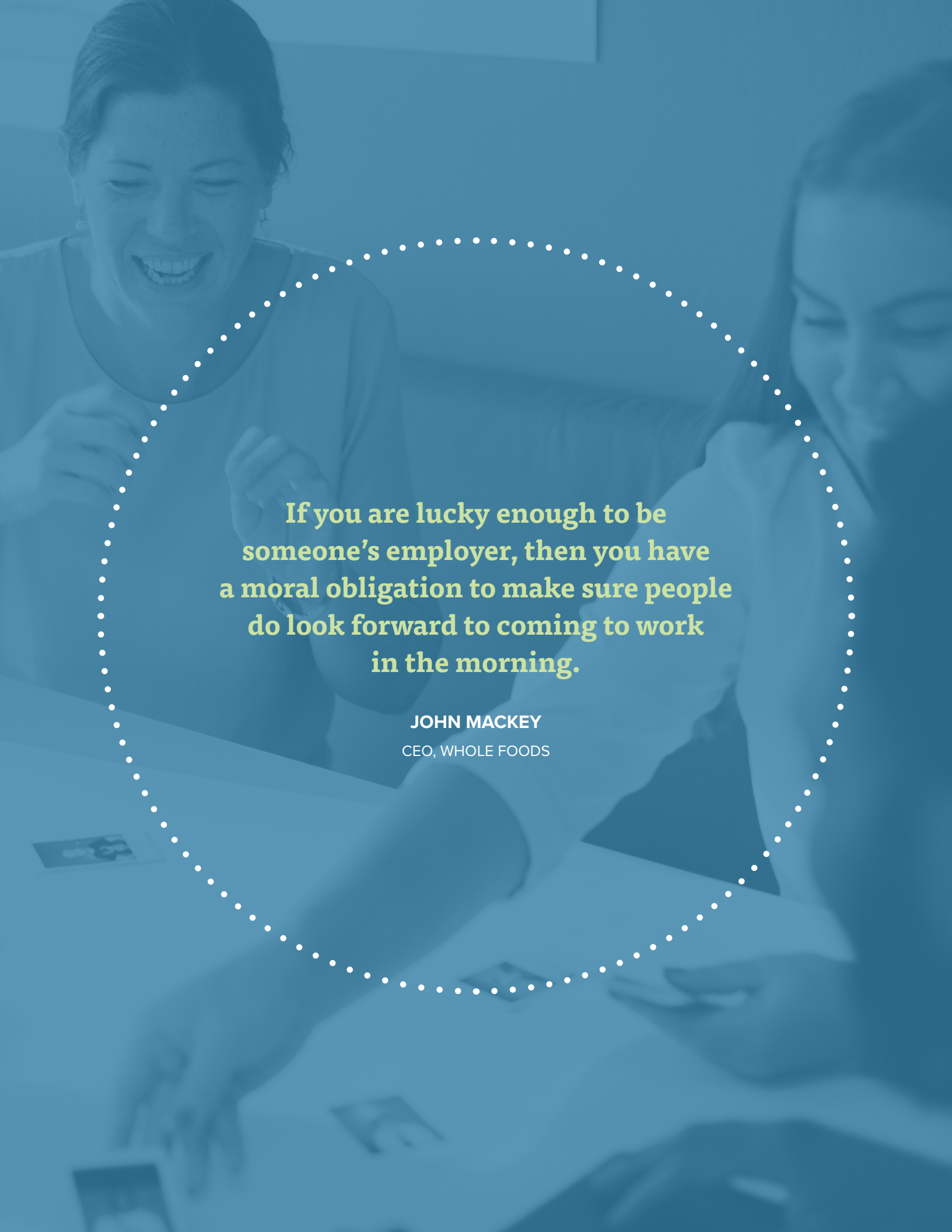# Table of Contents

Introduction

Since most of us spend 40+ hours at our jobs each week, we believe at PerkSpot that the workplace should be an avenue for growth, opportunity, and joy. Unfortunately, this isn't always the case.

The good news is that you're reading this because you believe in making a difference in the workplace. We're excited that you're here and want to champion you, through this guide, to empower your leadership, impact your employees, and change the way we view work.

In this guide, we'll begin by tackling what truly matters to our employees and what attributes make a better workplace. From there, we'll examine the state of the workplace today in order to understand our shortcomings. Lastly, we'll discuss how to accomplish tactics that tie into our overall culture and ultimately, the way we view our work.

Plus, new to this e-book, we're taking a look at what it means to create a better place to work during the COVID-19 pandemic, including its impacts on your employees and how you can especially support them during these trying times, no matter your company's situation.

If you are lucky enough to be someone's employer, then you have a moral obligation to make sure people do look forward to coming to work in the morning.

JOHN MACKEY

CEO, WHOLE FOODS

PerkSpot

What Makes a Better Workplace

To To understand how to make a better workplace, we have to dive into what we mean by this term in the first place. A workplace is far more than four walls, a desk, and a chair. While the physical environment plays an important role, the term workplace can be synonymous with company culture and envelops a company's mission, values, goals, expectations, recruitment, training, and engagement efforts. It is every factor that shapes an employee's experience from day one to 100. It determines whether employees actually enjoy coming to work in the morning, or if instead, they come down with a "Case of the Mondays."

By now you should be getting it. A better workplace means good vibes when you walk through the doors on the first day. It's the excitement in the conference room brainstorming a new idea. It's the triumphant feeling of reaching goals and celebrating achievements.

So, what do employees look for in a better workplace? Maybe it isn't always tangible. It is often unseen and unspoken, but it's not invisible.

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A Better Workplace Develops

According to a recent Gallup[1] report, the majority of employees today (60%) say "the ability to do what they do best in a role is very important to them." A better workplace for employees will mean a place that inspires them to do their best work and develops their skills. They want somewhere they can learn, grow and become the best version of themselves, and a better workplace does just that.

A Better Workplace Rewards

While many studies show that compensation isn't the most important thing to employees, there is still a disconnect when it comes to how employees feel about their pay. In fact, 21% of employees[2] said they feel they are paid fairly, while 43% of employers felt that to be true. Employees are obviously craving transparency around their pay, and we're starting to see that more and more with the gender pay gap initiatives. A better workplace is one that pays fairly and isn't afraid to boast about it.

A Better Workplace Inspires

With so much competition out there for high-level talent, it's important to know what employees are looking for in a business. A Mercer study[3] in global workplace trends showed that "thriving employees are **3x more likely** to work for a company that has a strong sense of purpose." Today's employees want to know that they are making a difference. They want to feel inspired when they are creating new products or encountering difficult challenges in the workplace. A better workplace passes this test by keeping its mission and vision front and center.

1. The Dream Job | https://news.gallup.com/businessjournal/204533/dream-job.aspx#:~:text=We%20found%20that%20employees%20place,greater%20stability%20and%20job%20security

2. Payscale 2018 Compensation Best Practices | https://www.payscale.com/cbpr

3. Mercer Talent Trends Stucy 2018 Global Findings | https://www.mercer.com/content/dam/mercer/attachments/global/Career/gl-2018-talent-trends-2018-infographic-global-mercer.pdf

"If culture is like personality or character, then it matters in the sense to what extent is the culture adaptive to both the external and internal realities. If it's not adaptive, it matters a lot. If it's adaptive, it doesn't matter much, people don't notice it, they just go along their merry way. So culture really only matters when there is a problem. In the same sense that personality only matters when things aren't working right for you. Otherwise, it's just there. It's part of you."

EDGAR SHEIN[1]

AUTHOR AND PROFESSOR

1. *Culture Fundamentals - 9 Important Insights from Edgar Schein | https://www.humansynergistics.com/blog/culture-university/details/culture-university/2014/03/03/culture-fundamentals---9-important-insights-from-edgar-schein*

The State of the Workplace

Now that we understand what a better workplace is, we need to assess how we're doing. We've come a long way from the Don Draper days, but we still have a lot of work to do when it comes to creating the ideal workplace.

The workplace is under constant evolution and will most likely never be totally perfect. As technology advances and each new generation enters the workforce, we'll see new trends start to emerge that shape the way we work.

Freelancing

Nine-to-five is out, freelancing is in. In fact, 57.3 million[1] people are already freelancing in America and at this rate, the majority of Americans will freelance by 2027.

> **"Corporate culture is the only sustainable competitive advantage that is completely within the control of the entrepreneur. Develop a strong corporate culture first and foremost."**
>
> **DAVID CUMMINGS**[2]
> CO-FOUNDER, PARDOT

Recruitment is easier, onboarding costs are lower and without the obligatory benefit expenses, freelancers are much easier on employers' wallets than the traditional nine-to-fivers.

Freelancing also comes with its own slew of motivational factors for employees. It offers both flexibility and the ability to earn direct compensation for their work. This is even more evidence that a better workplace doesn't always have anything to do with a physical location.

1. Freelancing in America | https://s3-us-west-1.amazonaws.com/adquiro-content-prod/documents/Infographic_UP-URL_2040x1180.pdf
2. The Top 3 Things Every Entrepreneur Needs to Know | https://davidcummings.org/2011/12/07/the-top-3-things-every-entrepreneur-needs-to-know/

Millennial Managers

Another shift we are seeing in the workplace is the number of millennials stepping into leadership roles. They're bringing with them a whole new management style that looks very different than the Baby Boomers and Gen Xers before them.

Millennial managers are more focused on results than time spent in the office, which means they'll allow for more flexibility in the workplace. Millennial managers are also very team-centric, putting a greater focus on collaboration and teamwork. By 2025, 75% of the workforce will be millennials[1], which means a better workplace needs to understand how their management operates and defines success. Diving into this new generation of leadership is crucial.

75%
**OF THE WORKFORCE WILL BE
MILLENNIALS BY 2025**

80%
**OF EMPLOYEES FEEL
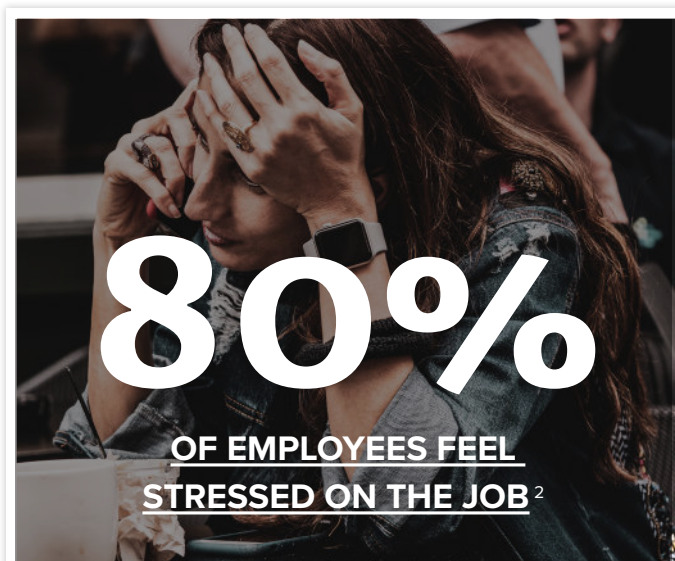STRESSED ON THE JOB** [2]

Well-Being Over Wellness

Pushing for healthy snacks and fitness programs are no longer the only focus for wellness initiatives. Well-being is the new buzzword for the workplace, as it encompasses more than just fad diets or workout regimes, but looks to serve the whole person. Mental health awareness has gained increasing popularity over the years and the onus it has placed on employers is becoming more and more evident. A better workplace in 2021 and beyond will be one that fosters health not only for the body but the mind as well.

1. Millennials are the largest generation in the U.S. labor force | http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/04/11/millennials-largest-generation-us-labor-force/

2. American Institute of Stress | https://www.stress.org/workplace-stress/

#MeToo

It will be incredibly interesting to watch how the #MeToo movement continues to impact the workplace. As more people come forward to speak out against injustices, toxic cultures are being brought to the light. In fact, more than 7,500 sexual harassment claims were filed with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in 2018, a 14% increase from the year before[1]. This means that new guidelines for sexual harassment are sure to be replacing their outdated counterparts in the near future. A better workplace will have a plan in place for dealing with sexual harassment and snuffing out this toxicity.

These workplace trends are important as we look to create a better place to work. By identifying and understanding what employees want, we'll be able to truly assess what it takes to build a better workplace.

1. *Sexual Harrasment in the Workplace | https://www.ncsl.org/research/labor-and-employment/sexual-harassment-in-the-workplace.aspx*

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Similar to the #MeToo movement in 2017, 2020 has brought to light what many of us already knew: we need to be making a more concerted, concentrated, and permanent effort to incorporate not just diversity, but also inclusion and equity, into our workplace. Furthermore, this needs to be implemented across every stage and area within your organization. Recruitment, hiring, and professional development are all great examples of instances in which your company would benefit from DE&I.

Remember, these three concepts, while typically grouped under one umbrella, still differ significantly. A diverse workplace is one that has a wide variety of ages, races, genders, sexual orientations, ethnicities, and more. An inclusive workplace takes this one step further by ensuring that an organization's diverse workforce is regularly brought into the conversation. This means that decisions and strategies are developed with input from those with different backgrounds, perspectives, and opinions. Finally, an equitable workplace is one that fully understands that not everyone is placed on a level playing field and works to offer support and the necessary tools to give equal opportunities to those without access to them.

To develop a workplace and culture that understands and incorporates DE&I, review your current workforce and its demographics, so you can see and begin filling gaps to create a more well-rounded workforce. Actively welcome the input of every team member and search for ways to lift up and support those in need to create a more equitable workplace.

Building a Better Workplace

of these points. Building a better workplace doesn't happen overnight and we're constantly growing and moving forward as we learn what it takes to inspire employees to love where they work.

> **"Shaping your culture is more than half done when you hire your team."**
>
> **JESSICA HERRIN**[1]
> FOUNDER STELLA & DOT

This is where the fun starts. We've defined what a better workplace entails and we've analyzed how we're doing so far. Now, it's time to take this knowledge and put it into action.

There are so many ways to build a better workplace. We'll discuss a few here, but a deeper discussion could be held on each

1. *Startup Founders Reveal 5 Ways to Build a Strong Culture |* *https://www.americanexpress.com/en-us/business/trends-and-insights/articles/startup-founders-reveal-5-ways-to-build-a-strong-culture/*
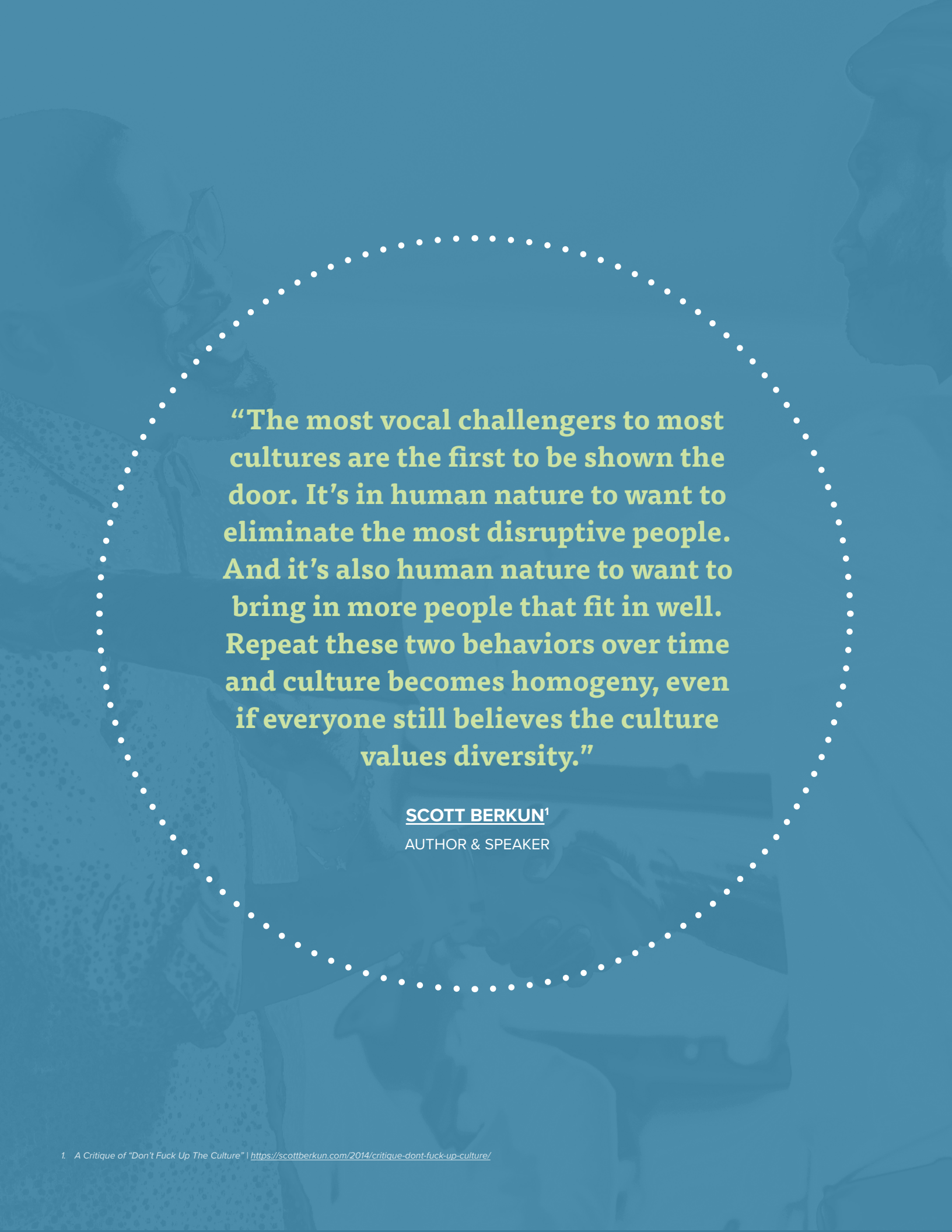
Recruitment

When discussing a better workplace, it makes sense to start with an employee's experience on day one, or better yet, on their negative 10th day, before they've actually begun. The recruitment process can be the first taste an employee gets of a company's culture. Plus, who we hire can make a major impact on our culture as well. It's important to examine both of these factors when looking to build a better and stronger place to work.

Culture Add, not Culture Fit

A lot of companies talk about "culture fit" when they are hiring new staff. While the intention is there, perhaps a better approach is to look for "culture add."

Culture fit can often create a homogeneous culture that doesn't foster diversity and growth. Looking for people who can actually add to your current culture, not just fit in, will enhance your diversity efforts and bring in new perspectives that help your business grow.

"The most vocal challengers to most cultures are the first to be shown the door. It's in human nature to want to eliminate the most disruptive people. And it's also human nature to want to bring in more people that fit in well. Repeat these two behaviors over time and culture becomes homogeny, even if everyone still believes the culture values diversity."

SCOTT BERKUN[1]
AUTHOR & SPEAKER

1.   A Critique of "Don't Fuck Up The Culture" | https://scottberkun.com/2014/critique-dont-fuck-up-culture/

Training and Development

After you've established a solid team of talented people, it's important that you implement the training and development they need to succeed. Building a better workplace isn't a finite process. A better workplace continuously pushes its employees to do better and be better, giving them the tools they need to be successful.

"An organization's ability to learn, and translate that learning into action rapidly, is the ultimate competetive advantage."

JACK WELCH[1]

FORMER CEO OF GENERAL ELECTRIC

Focus on Corporate Goals

When it comes to training our workforce, we should begin by aligning their work with our company mission. While we may put these words in fancy fonts on our webpage, only 40% of the workforce[2] reported knowing their company's goals, strategies, and tactics. When employees understand how their work is impacting the big picture, they'll feel better coming into work every day. This is how we build a better workforce - we cast vision and help our employees understand their role in reaching these goals.

"Presenting leadership as a list of carefully defined qualities (like strategic, analytical, and performance-oriented) no longer holds. Instead, true leadership stems from individuality that is honestly and sometimes imperfectly expressed....Leaders should strive for authenticity over perfection."

SHERYL SANBERG[3]

COO OF FACEBOOK & FOUNDER OF LEARNING.ORG

1. *Jack Welch & The G.E. Way: Management Insights and Leadership Secrets of the Legendary CEO* | *https://www.amazon.com/Jack-Welch-G-E-Way-Management/dp/0070581045/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1492093200&sr=1-1&keywords=Jack+Welch+%26+The+G.E.+Way%3A+Management+Insights+and+Leadership*

2. *Chris Zook* | *http://www.bain.com/about/people-and-values/our-team/profiles/chris-zook.aspx*

3. *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead* | *https://www.amazon.com/Lean-Women-Work-Will-Lead/dp/0385349947*

Leadership

Better leadership is a crucial factor in building a better workplace. Having leaders who know how to cast vision and address employee concerns can make or break the employee experience. Unfortunately, perception is not always reality. A recent study[1] actually reveals some of the disparity between employee-manager relationships:

80% vs **55%**

managers who say they're transparent with direct reports

employees who say their manager is transparent

71% vs **44%**

managers who say they know how to motivate their team

employees who say their manager is motivational

75% vs **50%**

employees who think an approachable manager is important

employees who say their manager is approachable

89% vs **12%**

bosses who think employees leave for more money

employees who actually leave for this reason

It's no wonder 75% of employees[2] leave their job because of reasons their managers can influence. Their realities do not align with what a better workplace should be. In today's world, 45% of managers don't receive formal management training and it shows. In order to build better workplaces, we need to train and develop our leadership to be effective and approachable.

1. *New National Study Conducted by Ultimate Software Reveals Need for Greater Focus on Manager-Employee Relationships | https://www.ultimatesoftware.com/PR/Press-Release/New-National-Study-Conducted-by-Ultimate-Software-Reveals-Need-for-Greater-Focus-on-Manager-Employee-Relationships*

2. *Turning Around Employee Turnover | https://news.gallup.com/businessjournal/106912/turning-around-your-turnover-problem.aspx*

From Unsplash

Employee Appreciation

Let's imagine your business is a car. It's not just any car, though. It's a best-in-class model with all the bells and whistles to really make it soar. But what happens when you don't have any fuel? This fancy automobile may look great and sound great, but it's not going anywhere. Think of employee recognition as the fuel that drives your business. You can have a car built with all the best parts, but without fuel, it won't move. We need to continuously keep our employees full by "refilling their tank" with appreciation and recognition for their achievements. Employees are motivated to work harder and stay at their jobs longer when they receive recognition for their work.

That's why making employees feel valued and appreciated is one of the best things we can do to build a better workplace.

Wellness

A better workplace is one that inspires and enables employees to be the best version of themselves. Wellness has always been a key component, but as we look toward the future, we'll need to expand our idea of what this truly means. As we discussed previously, well-being has taken center stage for these initiatives, focusing on aspects beyond just physical health.

Mental Health

A better workplace is a mentally healthy workplace. The "hygge" and "self-care" trends are evidence that Americans are looking to be more mentally sound. What better place to start than where they spend 40+ hours each week? Providing your workplace with opportunities to rest and recharge, even as simple as a day off, can do wonders for your engagement.
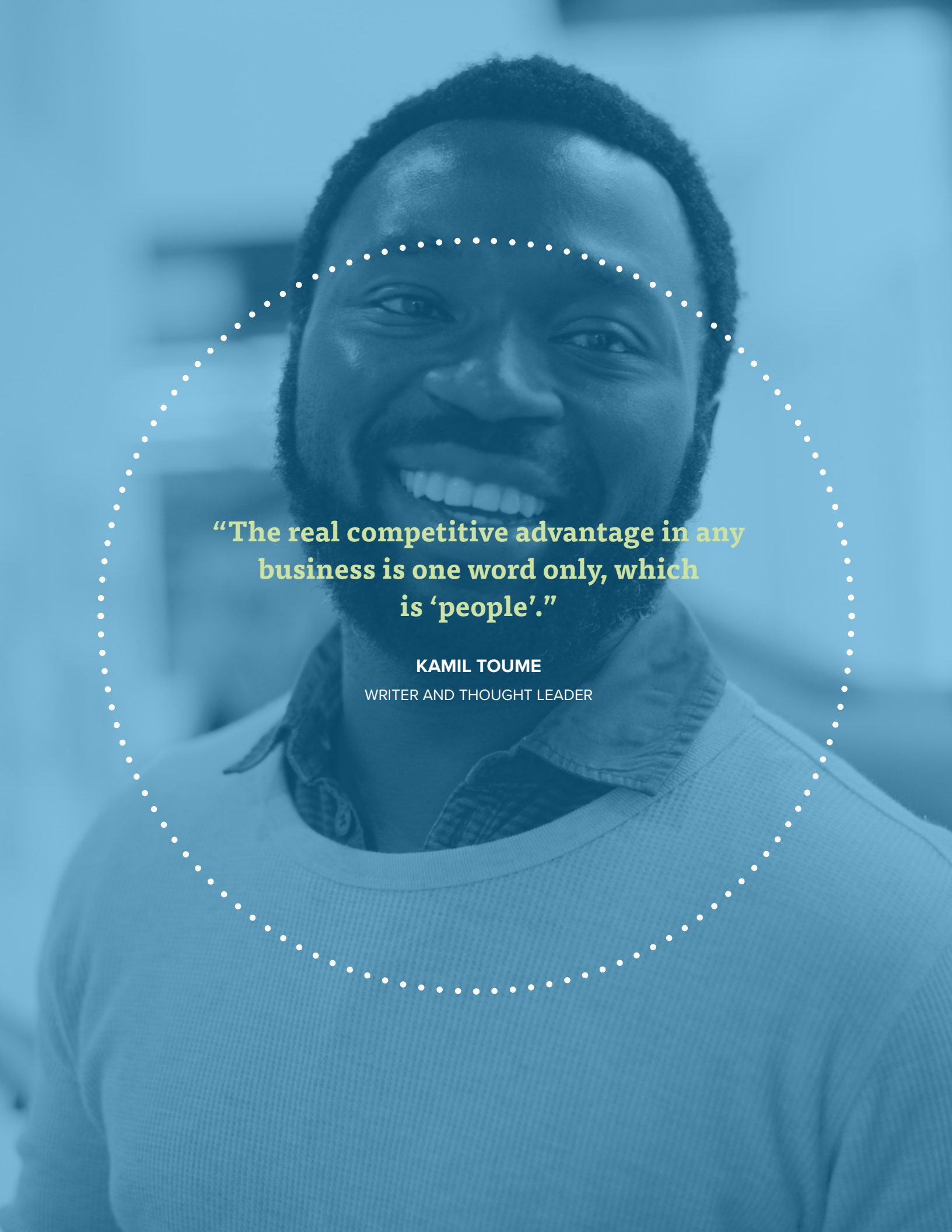
Financial Health

At PerkSpot, we are passionate about inspiring employees to love where they work by providing them with meaningful savings that help them stretch their paycheck. Financial health is often overlooked in the workplace, as we shy away from diving into very personal realities for our employees.

However, 48% of employees reported[1] that they are often worried about their current financial state and 70% of employers feel they should take an active role in helping employees manage their finances better. We believe a better workplace doesn't fear these conversations but participates in them openly and works hard to give employees the tools they need to thrive financially.

As we've said, there are a million ways to build a better workplace and there is no one size fits all approach. Yet, no matter your company's size or structure, implementing new strategies like the one's mentioned can ensure that you're showing your employees their value by creating a better place for them to work.

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1. *Infographic: Worries about financial situation grow among U.S. employees* https://www.willistowerswatson.com/en/insights/2017/11/infographic-worries-about-financial-situation-grow-among-us-employees

"The real competitive advantage in any business is one word only, which is 'people'."

KAMIL TOUME
WRITER AND THOUGHT LEADER

The COVID-19 Workplace

When we originally wrote this e-book in 2019, its focus was on adapting your current company's workplace into one that would support, inspire, and encourage your employees by creating an environment and culture they enjoyed interacting with each day. Now, as the COVID-19 pandemic continues, these conversations are more important than ever. However, they've taken on a new direction as we look at everything through the lens of a world that is navigating the new normal created by COVID-19.

What is the COVID-19 Workplace?

Since Q1 2020, companies across the country and around the world have been reeling as they quickly worked to adapt and evolve their physical workplaces and company cultures, given the new information and employee needs presented during these times. Now, to create a better place to work during the pandemic, the focus must be on employees' health, safety, and holistic wellness, with considerations given to mental wellness, physical wellness, and financial wellness.

Employee Health and Safety

As the pandemic began, hundreds of companies quickly made the hard choice to move their entire workforce to a remote working situation. On the other hand, companies and employees deemed essential had the difficult and honorable job of continuing to come into work every day in order to continue providing others with the things they simply couldn't live without—food, medicine, transportation, and more.

As we take a stronger look at employee wellness, and more and more companies consider making the return to their workplaces, employee health and safety has never been more important. What's more, your employees will be looking to you, as their HR department and leaders in their organization, to dictate how you'll value their health and safety. Around the workplace, physical changes like cleaning tools and supplies, more strict guidelines, and an updated employee handbook tracking these changes will be important.
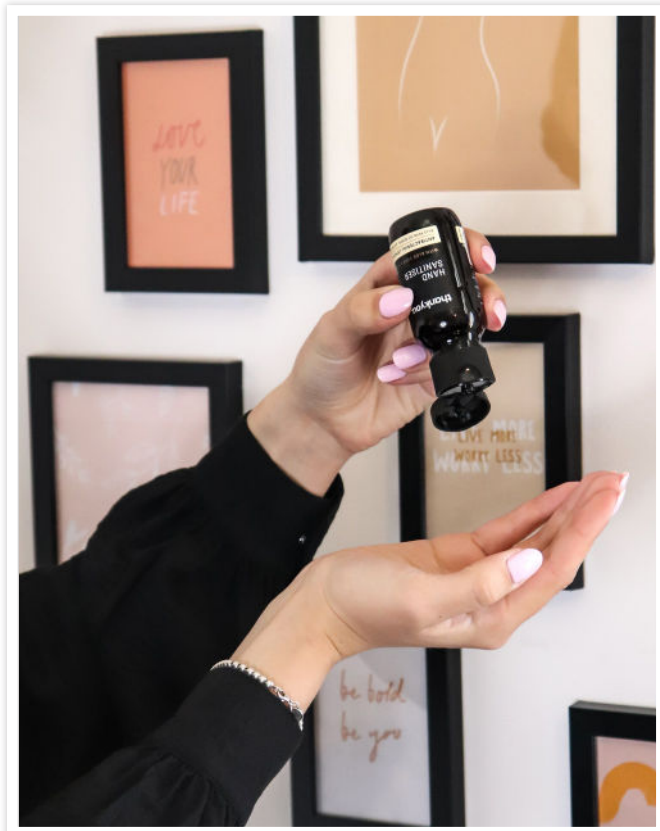
Employee Wellness

As a result of COVID-19, changes to attitude and culture will need to be addressed as well. Whether your employees have continued returning to their workplace, are just beginning to, or you're still operating a mostly remote workforce, a focus on employees' entire wellness—mental, physical, financial—is a must. We know that, even in normal times, employees were looking more and more to their employers to offer support in this area. Now, there's practically no question.

Take the following into consideration: no matter what situation your individual employees are in, their worlds, just like yours, have been turned upside down due to the pandemic. Stress and burnout are at an all-time high, employees are growing increasingly concerned about their financial stability, and these factors are also leading to the erosion of a happy and holistically healthy employee, which does not make for a better workplace. Survey your employees to get a better understanding of their needs and create a plan that helps answer them to the best of your ability. Show compassion and empathy with employees, relaying to them that these are hard times and flexibility will be offered if and when possible. Look for places in your company's structure that can be adapted to better comply with employee needs and increase the cadence and method of recognition to reinforce your appreciation and value of your employees.

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Building a Better Virtual Workplace

If you had told your company a year ago that soon, your entire workforce would be working remotely for an undefined amount of time, you probably would've been answered with several wide eyes, looks of confusion, and a lot of questions. Yet, this is the situation many companies have found themselves in today, which begs the question, how do you build a better workplace if there's no workplace to be had?

While you may not have access to your physical workplace at the moment, it's still possible to build a better place to work that's focused on the remote and virtual aspects of your company. Though many processes and systems were temporarily paused at the start of COVID-19, it's time we start resuming them and working to make changes that fit our new working normal. Likewise, that means it's time to start building a better virtual workplace for your employees. The question is, how?

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Virtual Tools

Just as you're working to adapt your company's culture, benefits, and guidelines with COVID-19 in mind, your employees are working to adapt their roles and responsibilities to an environment that is completely remote. That means a decrease in the tools at their disposal and a shift in attitude to still achieve productivity in an environment that may not be the most productive. Support those remote workers by providing them with any tools that may assist them at this time—portable monitors, internet stipends, office supplies, and more comfortable seating are all great examples.

Communication

With an entirely or partially remote workforce, communication may be more difficult, but that doesn't make it any less important! Without the ease of person-to-person communication or company-wide meetings, the struggle to provide company updates, hold one-on-one meetings, and collaborate with fellow coworkers is real. But it's also easily overcome! Leverage online communication platforms, like Skype, Zoom, Slack, Google, and more, and don't be scared to over communicate.

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Recruitment, Onboarding, and Training

Though the prospect of recruiting, interviewing, onboarding, and training an employee on a completely virtual basis might seem intimidating, you're not the first company to do it, and while the pandemic persists, you certainly won't be the last. As you update and transform your talent acquisition plans, make sure the candidate experience stays top of mind no matter what. Utilize tools like social media to attract a candidate and demonstrate your company's culture, as you won't have the physical office place or personal interactions to do so. Reinforce the new practices your company has adopted to focus on employee health, safety, and wellness to offer reassurance to your candidates. Update your onboarding process and don't forget logistics, like how you'll get new hires the tools they need and how you'll train them as you rely on video meetings and online messaging.

Undertaking the process of building a better workplace for your employees is not an easy task. Doing so virtually, during a pandemic? Pretty tough, if we do say so ourselves. However, now more than ever, striking the right culture of recognition, value, and employee satisfaction can't be ignored or put on the backburner. Continue building your better workplace, now with COVID-19 in mind, to make a difference at your company and for your employees.
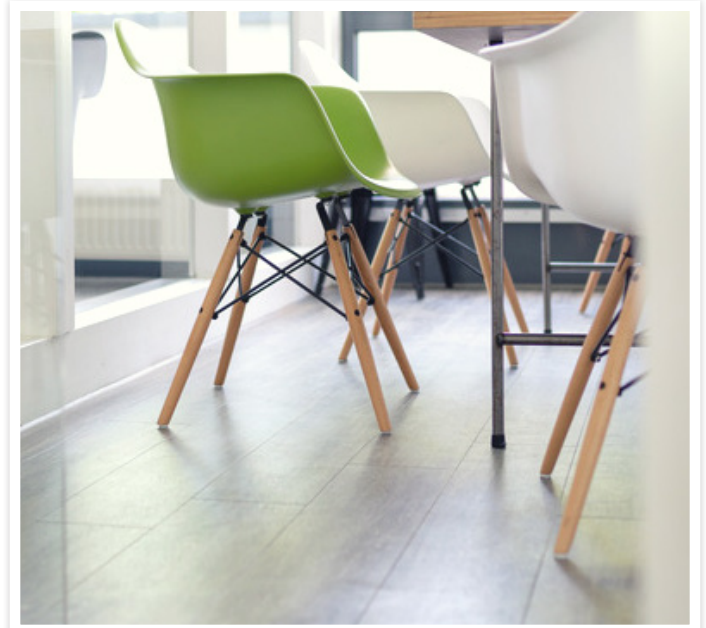
Conclusion

Company culture is complicated. Every business is a complex organism, with its own unique struggles and identities. A better workplace isn't always going to look the same. It's going to change and evolve as generations change and evolve. We'll always have work to do, but the process should be rewarding and exciting as we see employees feeling inspired and engaged at work.

As you reflect on your own workplace, consider what is working and where your weaknesses lie. We hope this e-book will serve as a measuring stick to evaluate your culture and opportunities for growth.