

Building Workplace Resiliency

Fostering
Strong
Leadership



Igniting the bio-economy's brainpower

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1 How does leadership impact organizational resiliency?

1.1 What is leadership?

Leadership is the act of influencing and inspiring individuals or teams to maximize their effort and commit to their organization’s mission, vision and values to achieve goals. Effective leaders are mentors, protectors and champions for their employees.

Getting the best out of employees requires that, in addition to being a “boss” instructing a team, a leader must introduce change, help their employees meet their needs (e.g., development, career growth), resolve conflict, provide guidance, set a vision for their organization and create a positive, inclusive and equitable work environment.

While there are natural-born leaders with the charisma, communication skills and decision-making ability required to be successful, not every leader is born with all these skills. New and seasoned leaders alike must learn and develop their leadership skills through training, coaching and direct experience.

1.2 What is resiliency?

Resiliency is the capacity to “bounce back”—to absorb, react, adapt. Recent definitions of organizational resiliency emphasize less the “fortress” approach to addressing challenges and disruption—that is, attempting to rigidly protect the company from external factors that could cause uncertainty—and instead focus on flexibility, adaptability and risk management.¹ For a company, resiliency is the ability to effectively anticipate and address disruptions and their impacts at the organizational level. In this sense, resiliency is characterized as *a set of specific organizational capabilities, routines, practices and processes by which a firm*

¹ Denyer, D. (2017). Organizational Resilience: A summary of academic evidence, business insights and new thinking. *British Standards Institution and Cranfield School of Management*, 9.

*conceptually orient itself, acts to move forward and creates a setting of diversity and adjustable integration.*² Its goal is to support organizational sustainability in the face of disruption and enable organizations to absorb, react and adapt to it now and in the future.

Leaders from Canadian bio-economy companies that successfully responded to disruptions created by the COVID-19 pandemic described resiliency in similar terms, including being adaptable, agile, flexible, financially sound, responsive to change, transparent and open.³

1.3 How does leadership relate to resiliency?

Leadership plays a critical role in building resiliency. In a recent survey of over 300 Canadian bio-economy employers, leadership and management were identified as key contributors to mounting an effective response to the disruption caused by the pandemic (directly behind the abilities to adapt working environments and institute risk management procedures for containing exposure). Similarly, most companies (94%) identified leadership skills as important for building resiliency within their organizations.⁴

Strong, inclusive leaders have a direct impact on employee engagement, workplace culture and performance—all of which contribute to organizational resiliency. Research shows that leaders must cultivate and support resiliency on several levels, either on a strategic level or by ensuring that others in the organization are incentivized to engage in behaviour supportive of resiliency. Cultivating resiliency at the individual level within an organization and among groups or teams will ultimately feed into an organization-wide capacity for resiliency.⁵

Leaders who contribute to organizational resiliency are often resilient individuals themselves. They are characterized as being highly adaptable and able to focus on resolving challenges they face while also seeing opportunities. They are generally leaders who can quickly recover from challenges and support their team to push through stressful situations and motivate them to perform. These types of leaders do more than just bounce back from unexpected situations—they bounce forward and keep their focus on the future goals of the organization.

2 Lengnick-Hall, C. A., and Lengnick-Hall, B. (2011). Developing a capacity for organizational resilience through strategic human resource management. *Human Resource Management Review*, 21 (3), 2.

3 From the BioTalent Canada survey for the “[Building resiliency and sustainability for the bio-economy to withstand disruption](#)” research project, which gathered feedback from 344 Canadian bio-economy employers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

4 From the BioTalent Canada survey of Canadian bio-economy employers for the “[Building resiliency and sustainability for the bio-economy to withstand disruption](#)” research project.

5 Denyer, D. (2017). Resilience reimagined: A practical guide for organizations. *Report for the National Prepared Commission*, Cranfield School of Management and Deloitte, 1–52.

Successful leaders often have highly developed emotional intelligence, able to control their thoughts, behaviours and emotions when faced with disruptive changes and overcome challenges without engaging in toxic or dysfunctional behaviour. Such leaders contribute greatly to the overall strength and intellect of their organizations. They play a vital role in building resilient teams through their inclusive leadership style and ability to keep employees connected to each other and the organization.

1.3.1. Six leadership skills that support organizational resiliency

1. Emotional intelligence: Emotional intelligence involves being self-aware, having the ability to regulate one's own behaviour, thoughts and emotions, and being socially aware of the situations and people around you.

Leaders with high emotional intelligence are often perceived by their employees as caring, supportive, honest and empathetic. They are also often better able to cope with and even thrive following change and crises because they have the social and relational skills to effectively manage disruption.

Tip: A leader's behaviour and control of their emotions can have a significant impact on their team and how their employees feel about their jobs.

- Leading by example and modelling the behaviour they want to see from their team members is key.
- Managing others effectively is difficult without efficient self-management. A leader can start by noticing when they're in a negative mood and take a break in an effort to shift their mood (such as by taking a walk, doing some breathing exercises or listening to music.) Learning to manage stress levels is crucial as it affects how a leader responds to challenges and keeps the team focused and motivated.

2. Communication: Effective leaders must communicate their ideas clearly, ask the right questions of their team and other stakeholders, be clear and concise with the information they share, and communicate company goals and requirements effectively. A leader's communication style is part of their personal brand and helps keep team members engaged. Having an open and inclusive communication style fosters a positive working environment where employees can openly share and discuss issues and ideas.

Tip: A leader can improve their communication skills by actively listening to their employees and being open to their ideas and opinions. A great way to do this is to solicit feedback from everyone in meetings or when considering changes. When in doubt, leaders should choose verbal over written communication (i.e., via email) as verbal is interactive and thus often more effective.

3. Accountability: Leadership accountability requires leaders to take responsibility for their actions, decisions and mistakes, the actions and decisions of their team, and results—goals, milestones or deadlines. It is a tool that helps leaders achieve their own goals and inspires those around them to achieve results. A lack of accountability can be a significant barrier to success.

Leadership accountability has several benefits, including better teamwork, alignment, engagement and productivity. Accountability also allows leaders to build trust within their organizations. When employees can trust in their leaders to take responsibility for their actions and decisions, they are more likely to have confidence in their leaders and their organization.

Tip: Setting SMART goals, tracking progress and engaging in regular discussions about goals and how they are progressing are opportunities for leaders to improve their own and their team’s accountability.

4. Flexibility: The idea that leaders must adopt a fixed leadership style is out of date, according to research by HBR.⁶ In today’s rapidly changing environment, leaders must be ready to deal with change and disruption.

Leaders should also be prepared to adapt their leadership styles and change their course of action depending on the situation.⁷ Whether dealing with employee retention issues, changes in strategic direction, budget cuts, supply chain disruptions or other challenges, flexible leaders tend to be one step ahead.

Tip: A leader can improve their flexibility by being more open minded and thinking through a situation from another perspective (individually or with insights from colleagues).

5. Empathy: Inspirational author Simon Sinek once said, “Empathy—the ability to recognize and share other people’s feeling—is the most important instrument in a leader’s toolbox.”

Empathy has been linked with effective team collaboration, reduced stress, increased morale and more inclusive attitudes at work.⁸ As a skill connected to inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility (IDEA), leaders who demonstrate empathy can have a positive effect on employee wellbeing, motivation, productivity, retention and engagement.⁹

6 Jordan, J., Wade, M., and Yokoi, T. (2022). [Finding the Right Balance — and Flexibility — in Your Leadership Style](#). *Harvard Business Review*.

7 Jordan, J., Wade, M., and Yokoi, T. (2022). [Finding the Right Balance — and Flexibility — in Your Leadership Style](#). *Harvard Business Review*.

8 Pasquarella Daley, L., Van Bommel, T., and Brassel, S. (n.d.). [Why Empathy is a Superpower in the Future of Work](#). *Catalyst*.

9 Pasquarella Daley, L., Van Bommel, T., and Brassel, S. (n.d.). [Why Empathy is a Superpower in the Future of Work](#). *Catalyst*.

Showing employees that you care can help establish trust and perspective, two things successful leaders must possess. Leaders can practice empathy by paying attention to everyday gestures and offering acts of kindness such as holding an elevator or asking how someone's day is going. "These little considerations for others have a building effect," says Sinek.

Tip: Curiosity can help leaders build empathy. Curious leaders display a genuine interest in who their employees are and frequently ask questions about their lives, interests, families, aspirations and challenges. Leaders can also build empathy by being good listeners, encouraging team members to do their best and making sure everyone on the team feels heard.

6. Individual resiliency: Resiliency is a mindset; it is the leader's ability to bounce back when things don't go as planned. Resilient leaders have the ability to sustain their energy levels under pressure to cope with any setbacks. Rather than being locked into negative thought patterns, (e.g., "my team failed," or "I failed as a leader"), resilient leaders look at challenges as an opportunity to do better next time (e.g., "the project failed, but we need to consider whether we had the right tools and whether we were sufficiently staffed"). Such a mindset facilitates finding solutions and moving forward.

Tip: A leader can build resiliency by reframing how they think. When faced with challenges, they can consider not only how they can resolve the issue but also what opportunities exist. Is there an opportunity to learn and grow from the situation? Transition to a new opportunity?

Identifying coping mechanisms that help relieve stress is also beneficial (e.g., meditation, exercise, outings with friends, vacation, yoga, hiking). Getting adequate rest and living a healthy lifestyle are also important. The more a leader reduces their stress levels and clears their mind, the better prepared they will be to handle setbacks or adversity.



2 What is a leader's role in building organizational resiliency?

2.1 Leadership at different employee stages

The employee lifecycle can be conceptualized according to four main stages, whether an employee moves through their employment journey with your company for an intentional short period of time (e.g., an internship) or for a longer, multi-year experience. Those stages are:

1. recruitment
2. onboarding
3. development
4. retention

Stages of the Employee Journey



Building a strong, resilient organization requires effective leadership at all stages of the employee lifecycle. Leaders play a critical role in the recruitment of new candidates, onboarding new team members, providing learning and development opportunities, and retaining employees. This makes it imperative for leaders to continually develop their leadership skills. A good place to start is with a self-assessment to identify potential areas for development.

Conducting self-assessments and asking these reflective questions on a periodic basis can help leaders identify any potential gaps and areas for improvement:

- How am I inspiring my team?
- How do I communicate and connect with my team members?
- How do we communicate in meetings? Is it all one-way communication (me) or does the whole team engage in discussions and share ideas?
- How do I build and nurture relationships with peers, employees and my team? Are there any patterns/opportunities to improve those relationships?
- Is my team happy/positive?
- Do we trust each other?
- How do I handle stressful situations?
- How do I react to mistakes or failure?
- Do I take accountability for my actions, work and goals?
- Do I hold my team accountable for their actions, work and goals?
- When faced with disruptions in the past, how did I cope? How did I lead my team through that time? How did it work out?
- What were our opportunities?
- How do I influence others?

After conducting this type of assessment, create an action plan to improve those areas you feel you could do better, or quickly use the “*Stop, Start, Continue*” method to help create your plan. This approach requires you to consider: 1) what you would like to *stop* doing, 2) what you would like to *start* doing and, 3) what you should *continue* doing.

2.2 Stage 1: Recruitment – Attracting and recruiting talent to build a resilient organization

Attracting and recruiting talent to your organization is the first step to creating a high-performance team. In the bio-economy sector, where most organizations are subject-matter

experts, attracting top talent can be a challenge. Unlike larger businesses, these organizations are often not able to rely on their company brand alone to help them attract and recruit talent. There are several things leaders can do to help market their company and its roles and hire the candidates they need.

- **Develop an online presence** to help amplify their company mission, vision and values to potential candidates
- **Cultivate partnerships and expand networks and channels** to meet and engage talent from different backgrounds
- **Ensure comprehension** of both the technical and behavioural skills needed for candidates to be successful in the role¹⁰, and interview with these criteria in mind to avoid bias and microaggressions from creeping into the recruitment process

Recruiting top talent can be both time consuming and challenging. Leaders can facilitate by being more intentional in the interview and selection process. Often, hiring managers are so focused on technical skills and industry experience that they overlook other important traits during the interview process.

Beyond skills and experience, consider what traits would make the new hire successful in the role. These can include behaviours that demonstrate a positive attitude, motivation, goal orientation, resiliency, a willingness to learn, ability to manage stress, being a team player or taking pride in their work. Recruiters have used behavioural interviews for decades to gain insight into how candidates think and behave at work based on facts and previous experiences.

Tip: When hiring, be intentional about including diverse candidates from equity-deserving groups. Consider how their experiences, knowledge and differences can enhance the culture of your organization and contribute to innovation and performance gains. For further advice, see BioTalent Canada's [Adopting Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility \(IDEA\) resource](#) at biotalent.ca/resiliency

¹⁰ See BioTalent Canada's [National Occupational Standards \(NOS\) for Canada's bio-economy](#).

2.2.1. Putting it into practice: Recruitment and behavioural interviews

Following are examples of questions and prompts you can use during an interview to identify desirable behaviours in candidates.

Positive attitude

- Describe a time where you had a positive effect on a colleague. What did you do? How did the other person react?
- How do you handle situations where you may feel overwhelmed by your work?
- When were you last energized by a project?
- Tell me about a time you wanted to give up on a task or project but chose not to.
- Describe a time when you faced a major challenge and how you overcame it.
- How do you react when asked to do something beyond your capabilities?

Teamwork

- Do you prefer to work alone or as part of a team?
- Tell me about a time when you came up with an idea that involved collaborating with your team to make an improvement or change. How did you present your idea and influence the team to buy into your idea?
- Describe a time when you had a disagreement with a team member. How did you resolve it?
- Tell me about a time when you were in a conflict with a colleague. How did you resolve it? What did you learn from the experience?

Motivation

- What motivates you?
- What type of workplace culture keeps you motivated and happy?
- How do you motivate yourself to complete your work or achieve goals?
- What is the best idea you have come up with on a project? How did it turn out?

Willingness to learn

- How well do you adapt to change?
- How do you ensure you are constantly improving your skills?
- Tell me about a time when you had to learn something new to make your job more efficient. Did you enjoy the change?
- What processes or techniques have you or your leader implemented to make your job easier?

Accountability

- Describe a time when you made a mistake at work. What steps did you take to resolve it?
- What does accountability mean to you?
- How important to you is the accountability of your leaders and colleagues? Why?
- How do you keep yourself accountable to complete your work on time?
- Tell me about a time when you held a colleague accountable for their work.

Goal oriented

- What goals did you or your manager set for you in your previous role?
- Did you achieve them? If not, why?
- Do you enjoy having goals and clear expectations set?
- What is your approach to setting goals for yourself? How do you keep yourself accountable to reach those goals?
- Give me an example of a goal you set for yourself at work and how you achieved it.

Stress management

- How do you handle pressure at work?
- Tell me about a time when you had an unexpected challenge or change that disrupted your work and how you overcame it.
- Tell me about a time when you recognized you were having difficulty managing your work or were at risk of missing deadlines. How did you resolve the issue? Was that stressful? If yes, how did you cope?

- How do you respond to criticism or negative feedback?

Pride in work

- Describe a time when you went above and beyond your manager's expectations to complete a project or important task.
- What has been your greatest accomplishment in your career?

2.3 Stage 2: Onboarding – Enhancing employee engagement at the onboarding phase

Onboarding is a critical part of the employee lifecycle and crucial to making your employees feel included from the day they sign on to your organization. A well-executed and inclusive onboarding program can improve employee retention by 82%, according to research by Brandon Hall Group.¹¹ It has also been shown to improve performance—by 11.5% in one example from Silicon Valley HR leader John Sullivan.¹² High demand for talent across most sectors today, including the bio-economy, makes the onboarding process more important than ever before.

New employees often need time to become fully committed to an organization. In some cases, it can take weeks or months to learn about and adjust to an organization's culture, teams, managers, organization, processes and policies. Clearer guidelines and training would have helped employers retain almost a quarter of employees who quit their jobs within six months, according to a 2014 survey by Bamboo HR of 1,000 employees.¹³

There are three steps to successful onboarding:¹⁴

- 1) **Step 1—Pre-day 1:** Before a new employee begins their first day of work, the focus should be on creating excitement about their new role and letting them know they are an important addition to the team. Leaders should make the effort to communicate with the new hire, welcome them and provide any information they can about the company, the role and the team. This is also the time to ensure the equipment and training the

11 Laurano, M. (August 2015). [The True Cost of a Bad Hire](#). *Brandon Hall Group*.

12 Cleary, J. (July 2019). [The role of managers in employee onboarding, and how to get them involved in the process](#). *Ceridian*.

13 BambooHR (2014). [The Definitive Guide to Onboarding: Everything You Need to Know to Onboard Like a Pro](#).

14 Atkinson, Kate, (n.d.). [3 Key Phases for a Successful Onboarding](#). *TTRO*.

employee will need on their first day is set up or arranged, as well as to prepare your existing employees to make sure they are ready to include and welcome their new team member.

- 2) **Step 2—Day 1:** The first day should involve some type of orientation that includes a discussion about the employee's role, expectations and objectives, and provides a plan for training on the tools, resources and information they need to do their job. It is also important to help your new employee feel included by sharing knowledge about the organization with them. For example, sharing your organization's strategy and goals as well as an organizational chart can help employees better understand how the team shares responsibilities and how they fit into the organization. Orientations should also include compliance and policy information, as well as a tour and introduction to team members.
- 3) **Step 3—First 90 days:** Leaders must carve out the time to support the new hire in their growth and learning within the business to help them succeed. Spending this time early will keep new hires engaged, solidify their commitment to the organization and promote retention.

2.3.1. Putting it into practice: Questions for leaders when creating an onboarding plan

Every role and every organization is different. When creating an onboarding plan for a new employee, think about how to replicate and standardize the plan for all new hires—save for any information and training pertaining to a specific role.

Questions leaders can ask when creating an onboarding plan include:

- How long should the onboarding program be?
- How do we want new hires to feel during all three phases of onboarding? What can we do to develop a program that engenders these feelings?
- At what stage do we get feedback from the new hire to improve our onboarding process?
- What information do new hires need so they can be successful?
- Who can best prepare a training plan and train the new hires?
- Who will need to participate in the onboarding process?

- Who will connect with the employee during the "hype phase?"
- Who will meet with the employee during the immersion phase, on the first day, during the first week?
- What will the orientation include?
- How will we measure success?

For further advice on how to build a more inclusive onboarding experience for employees, refer to [Adopting Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility \(IDEA\) resource](https://biotalent.ca/resiliency) at biotalent.ca/resiliency

2.4 Stage 3: Employee development — Fostering skills development and professional growth

The success of every organization depends on its talent. Companies that can match talent to strategy are more likely to outperform their peers, according to a study by McKinsey. Companies and leaders need to rethink their approach to talent management, with 45% of organizations anticipating skill gaps within the next five years.¹⁵ Professional development opportunities can keep employees engaged and prepare them for new challenges and opportunities within the organization. Upskilling talent also builds organizational resiliency by enabling employees to better resolve issues and take on new responsibilities.

To build resiliency within their organization, leaders must help their employees meet their skill development and professional growth needs. Leaders focused on building resiliency invest in their employees' development because they know doing so helps to create the high-performing teams needed to achieve organizational goals. There are several ways leaders can support the development of their employees.

1. Understand your employees' career goals and aspirations and share resources

Have regular one-on-one conversations with your employees to understand their career goals and aspirations and provide them with the opportunities and resources they need to achieve these goals and thrive. By investing time and resources into employee development, leaders can help their teams build skills they will need in the future, resulting in higher engagement and performance.

2. Facilitate continuous feedback and Inclusivity

¹⁵ Agrawal, S., et al. (February 2020). [Beyond Hiring: How Companies Are Reskilling to Address Talent Gaps](#), McKinsey & Company.

Taking the time to provide your employees with timely feedback about weak areas and providing them with the encouragement, guidance and opportunities to improve performance and build new skills makes clear that their professional growth is important to you and the organization. Engaging your employees in regular conversations about their challenges and development will show them their opinions are valued.

3. Be a role model for the behaviours your organization needs

Employees learn and are influenced by their environment. Leaders who model effective behaviours can influence employees to raise their standards and improve performance.

4. Create a coaching and mentorship culture in your organization

Leaders can support the development and professional growth of their employees by creating a work culture that encourages communication and learning. Leaders should regularly ask employees if they need help and seek opportunities to share skills and knowledge.

5. Be a lifelong learner with a growth mindset

The bio-economy sector is constantly evolving, with new ideas and innovations coming to market every day. To ensure they and their organizations are resilient to change, leaders should be constant learners. Whether it is upskilling their technical capabilities or building inclusive leadership capabilities (e.g., emotional intelligence, empathy, cultural awareness), being proactive about development can help leaders stay up to date with the changes and growth within the organization and the sector as a whole.

2.4.1. A leader's role in employee development

1. Identify skill gaps: Understanding what skills are needed for your company to achieve its business goals is an important first step in identifying any potential skills gaps your employees may have. Conducting regular skill assessments can provide greater insights about potential skill gaps, positioning leaders to better support their teams and provide their employees with the right development opportunities to grow within the organization.

2. Development plans: Involving employees in their development plans is critical. Leaders should meet with each employee to discuss their skills, strengths, interests and career aspirations. Together, leaders and employees can develop a plan that includes an actionable list of steps and learning opportunities for professional growth. Skills to be developed by the employee should align with the organization's goals and strategies.

Development plans can include training as well as coaching, mentorship, feedback sessions, new projects and challenges, working with a different team to learn a new skill or job shadowing a colleague in a role they are interested in. Use the 70-20-10 rule: 70% of

the plan should be on-the-job training, 20% should be coaching and mentoring and 10% should be training or self-study.

3. Career opportunities: Openly sharing information about new roles and future opportunities—and encouraging employees with the skills, knowledge and potential to be successful in these roles to apply—is one way for leaders to support employee growth within their organizations. These conversations can help keep employees engaged in their current roles and motivate them to develop the skills needed for future opportunities.

Career opportunities do not always have to include promotions. They can also include lateral moves, such as working on a new project or client account that interests them. When considering employees for lateral and upward movement, leaders should be aware of biases such as affinity bias or confirmation bias that can create barriers for equity-seeking groups.

4. Feedback and progress: Once a development plan is in place, leaders should set up regular meetings to check in on employees' progress and address any barriers to their success. Such meetings can help create accountability and allow for problem-solving and feedback, ultimately leading to better outcomes for employees' development and for the organization.

2.4.2. Leader's checklist for building successful employee development plans

1. Based on the employee's current skills, what opportunities do I see for their development?
2. What capabilities will be required in the future that must be developed now?
3. Is there alignment with any other career goals or career paths within the organization?
4. What resources, network or opportunities could be valuable to the employee's development?
5. Does the development plan include SMART goals? Are they attainable but challenging? Are the timelines realistic?
6. What coaching or mentorship can I provide to support their development?

Please refer to the employee engagement and organizational culture resources for more details on employee development plans at biotalent.ca/resiliency

2.5 Stage 4: Talent retention – Encouraging engagement that builds resiliency

Retaining top talent

Earlier sections discussed how building strong and resilient organizations requires the support of strong and inclusive leadership at all stages of the employee lifecycle. The role of leaders in processes such as onboarding new team members and providing opportunities for learning and professional growth directly impacts an organization's ability to retain talent. In addition to strategies organizations can implement along the employee lifecycle, leaders can also implement several tactics to help retain talent.

The current competition for talent in most sectors (including the bio-economy) makes it challenging yet increasingly important for companies to retain high-performing employees in their organizations. Many employers are struggling to retain employees because they do not understand why employees are leaving in the first place, according to research by consulting firm McKinsey.¹⁶

Communication

Fully understanding why employees leave your organization begins with how you, as a leader, communicate with your employees. Encouraging your employees to approach you with their questions, concerns and ideas creates a culture of inclusion where employees can feel comfortable sharing their thoughts with you. Open lines of communication can help leaders anticipate potential challenges before they become issues that can result in an employee leaving. Additionally, open and regular communication that addresses needs and concerns can make your employees feel valued and supported, leading to more engaged and happy employees who are more likely to stay with your organization.

Provide regular feedback

Providing regular feedback is another tactic leaders can use to ensure employees are clear about their goals and their progress toward them. Just-in-time feedback offers employees the opportunity to improve their performance. Leaders can also make suggestions and offer support such as learning and development opportunities, including training, coaching, mentoring and on-the-job experiences.

16 De Smet, A., et al. (Sept 2021). [‘Great Attrition’ or ‘Great Attraction’? The choice is yours.](#) *McKinsey Quarterly*.

Create an inclusive culture

During the “great attrition” influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic, 51% of employees were leaving their workplaces because they did not feel a sense of belonging, while 52% said they were leaving because they did not feel valued by their managers.¹⁷ Inclusive leaders—those who are intentional about making their employees feel valued—are more successful at motivating and inspiring their teams.

Following are some suggestions for leaders to help ensure their employees feel a sense of belonging and appreciation.

1. Create human connections, not just transactional ones. Take the time to get to know employees both personally and professionally. Set up regular one-on-one meetings that begin with asking the employee how they are doing, what they need and how you can support them. (For one-to-one discussion points, see the “Putting it into practice” box that follows).
2. Strive to be an inclusive leader. Inclusive leaders are more likely to build team in which employees feel confident, creative and committed to their organizations.
3. Acknowledge and appreciate employees’ accomplishments. Acknowledge their contributions to the organization and their professional growth.

2.5.1. Putting it into practice: Questions to build connections with your employees

- What was your biggest accomplishment this week?
- What has been a challenge?
- How are you feeling right now?
- What do you enjoy most about working here?
- What do you enjoy least about working here?
- What would make work more fulfilling?
- What at work is helping you thrive?
- When and where do you do your best work?

¹⁷ De Smet, A., et al. (Sept 2021). [‘Great Attrition’ or ‘Great Attraction’? The choice is yours.](#) *McKinsey Quarterly*.

- How can I better support you?
- Are you getting the opportunities you need to grow? What else do you need?
- What motivates you to perform?
- Is there anything that demotivates or frustrates you?
- What are some of your personal goals?
- What helps you feel like you belong?
- What would make you feel more included?
- How do you prefer to be recognized for your hard work?

Intrinsic vs. extrinsic motivation

Some employees have an intrinsic motivation to perform well, while others have an extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation comes from within—the experience of satisfaction and motivation when completing tasks or projects well and a sense of pride in your work. Extrinsic motivation is the opposite, driven by external rewards such as money, recognition and fame.

Examples of intrinsic motivation include:

- “I have worked at this company for many years because I enjoy working here.”
- “I strive to perform better each year to keep improving my skills. “
- “I stay at work late because I love what I do.”

Examples of extrinsic motivation include:

- “I have worked at this company for many years because I will get a great pension plan when I retire.”
- “I strive to perform better because I need to increase my salary or get my bonus.”
- “I stay late at work because I get paid overtime.”

There may be a combination of both intrinsic and extrinsic factors that motivate certain employees. It is those with greater intrinsic motivation who will likely remain with your organization long term, because how you feel about your job, organization or career will affect your performance. Intrinsically motivated individuals find meaning and purpose in their work and will experience higher levels of job satisfaction.

2.5.2. Putting it into practice: 5 tips to help build intrinsic motivation in the workplace

- 1. Engagement:** Find ways to make your employees' jobs more engaging, connect them to the overall purpose of their role and make clear how their role contributes to the big picture. Involve your employees in new projects or opportunities. If necessary, adapt ways of working.
- 2. Growth:** Employees have a need to learn and grow. To ensure employees can thrive, share information with them, send them to conferences or have them replace you in meetings. Have your employees visit a client with you or work at another location if you have one.
- 3. Knowledge-sharing:** Give employees the opportunity to share their talent and skills with their team. This helps them build relationships while also sharing their knowledge with other employees.
- 4. Goals:** Involve your employees in the process of setting their goals whenever possible. Once they commit to these goals, they will be more motivated to achieve them.
- 5. Responsibilities:** There aren't always opportunities to promote employees, but you can plan to develop their skills over time so they are ready for the opportunity when it arises. You can do this by assigning stretch projects or adding responsibilities they agree are part of their development plan.

Building workplace resiliency in Canada's bio-economy

Strong leadership is just one factor that contributes to workplace resiliency. Strengthening inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility (IDEA); hiring and retaining internationally educated professionals (IEPs); and fostering an equitable workforce free of discrimination are among other vital steps.

BioTalent Canada has published a series of resources offering tips, plans and other tools to further support your workplace resiliency efforts. Explore them at biotalent.ca/resiliency.

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