

UDEMY IN DEPTH

2018 Employee Experience Report



As Cultural Changes Reshape Our World, Companies Haven't Caught Up

Employers today face a tight labor market. Low unemployment combined with a persistent skills gap have made for a competitive hiring environment, where the most sought-after talent has plenty of opportunities to jump ship for a better offer.

At the same time, the workplace has evolved in profound ways. Women are in positions of authority, but the gender gap persists and people of color are still underrepresented. Technology has made it easier and more desirable for people to work remotely and has enabled businesses to operate in global markets. Younger workers haven't been reticent about pushing companies to invest in their learning and development and to acknowledge the importance of having fulfilling lives away from work. And, on top of all of that, our personal and professional lives are blurring and becoming more frenetic. Nearly half of our survey respondents say they suffer from burnout.

Have companies kept up with these technological, societal, and cultural shifts? Are they delivering an employee experience that resonates with the modern worker?

There's a lot more to a satisfying job than clocking in for eight hours a day, and there's a lot more to a great workplace than having access to unlimited LaCroix water. One's overall **workplace experience** is really shaped by the company culture, the availability of learning and development opportunities, and how well managers and colleagues have mastered the soft skills that underlie effective leadership, communication, and productivity.

The findings from our survey into the state of employee experience bear similarities to what's happening in the U.S. economy at large. While the numbers look good at a high level, not every person, job, or industry is benefiting equally. Overall, respondents expressed positive feelings about their workplaces and interactions with colleagues, but there were definitely cracks in the facade once we dug deeper into specific demographics, including gender, age, job level, and education level.

A fractured experience lurks beneath the surface

Our research shows that companies would be wise to get proactive in addressing the less tangible aspects of employee experience. Employers can't simply find the talent, hire them, and then leave them to "just do their jobs." Rather, organizations need to invest in building a learning culture where people can fulfill their potential, build careers, and find meaning in their work.

The good news is most people strongly believe in their leaders' and coworkers' ability to grow and develop, and they believe in the power of training as the best way to improve those "intangibles" outside job function that contribute directly to an employee's experience.

Experience starts on day one, for better or worse

It's so important to get new hires off to a positive start and send the right message from day one about how people are valued by the organization. In our research, 73% said they received some kind of onboarding from their company, and most (69%) rated it good or excellent. A higher percentage of younger employees (millennials/Gen Z) said they'd had onboarding training (82%) and also felt they were given enough time to ramp up in their new roles (81%).

Key Findings

A strong start makes a difference

79% believe onboarding training would accelerate time to productivity

Managers aren't cutting it

60% agree there's a need for more manager training, and

56% think people are promoted too fast

Men and women are perceived and treated differently

66% of men meet with their managers monthly or more, but only half of women do

70% of men say their manager shows interest in their career goals, but only **55%** of women do

39% of men prefer a male manager, twice the rate that women prefer a female manager (**17%**); among managers themselves, **37%** prefer a male manager

Many find their colleagues lacking

51% don't believe remote workers put in a full day

72% think their coworkers need communication training

Productivity doesn't equate to a positive experience

47% of all workers suffer from burnout

The vast majority of survey respondents (79%) believe onboarding training can accelerate their time to productivity in a new job, but it needs to go beyond telling a new hire, “Welcome to the team; here’s your desk and here are some forms to complete.” Survey respondents told us they want substantive content around business processes, using productivity tools, and understanding each department’s place in the organizational structure.

This aligns with [past Udemy research](#), which found that workers want more guidance on managing the many digital productivity and communications tools now at their disposal, e.g., chat apps, email, project trackers, and so on.

Another important aspect of the onboarding process is clear and consistent communication around how quickly new hires are expected to make an impact. Overall, 69% of survey respondents said they felt expected to show impact at a new job in less than three months, but that perception wasn’t consistent across demographic groups.

Our research uncovered differences among women, older workers (Gen X/Boomers), non-management staff, and those without a college degree, all of whom felt pressure to ramp up more quickly and show measurable impact in less than a month. These groups seem to fear being unfairly judged and sense a heightened need to prove themselves.

Employees frustrated by underprepared managers

Virtually everyone in our survey (88%) values emotional intelligence in leaders, not surprising since they set the tone for the employee experience. This soft skill, closely tied to empathy, helps managers and other leaders motivate their teams, foster collaboration, handle interpersonal issues, and so on.

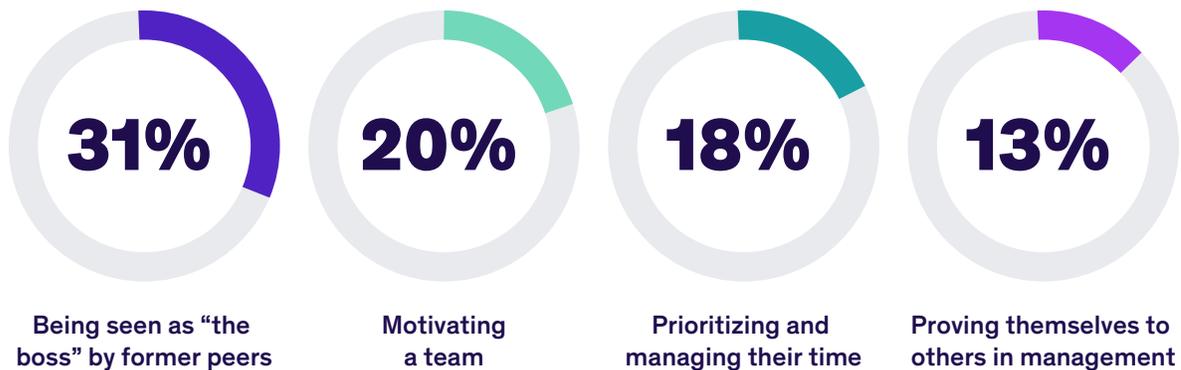
That doesn’t mean everyone believes their leaders possess emotional intelligence, however. In fact, more than half (60%) think their manager needs (more) manager training. Millennials/Gen Z seem to be more demanding and are more likely to have quit because of a bad manager (51%) than their older coworkers (43%). They expect hands-on management that helps them develop in their careers, not just someone monitoring performance in their current jobs.

Moreover, while 52% of GenX/Boomer respondents said people are promoted to management too quickly at their companies, even more millennials (62%) felt that way. This fits with what [millennial management expert Aaron Levy](#) has seen in his consulting practice: too many companies promoting based on past performance instead of leadership potential. There’s a difference between doing a job and being a leader, and companies should seize opportunities to offer more effective training to ease that transition.

Leadership and management training tops the list of **soft-skills courses Udemys for Business customers are taking**, in fact.

Levy also explains that, when people move into management, 30–40% of their time shifts from “doing work” to dealing with people issues. That’s not limited to negotiating team disputes and problems; managers also need to tend to their direct reports’ career development, but only 62% of survey respondents feel their managers take an interest in their career goals.

What is the hardest adjustment after getting promoted to management?



Regardless of why this perceived discrepancy exists, it can eat away at employee engagement and, ultimately, drive some to get a new job where they’ll have a more supportive and involved manager. According to **recent Gartner research**, only 35% of employees say their manager understands their day-to-day work.

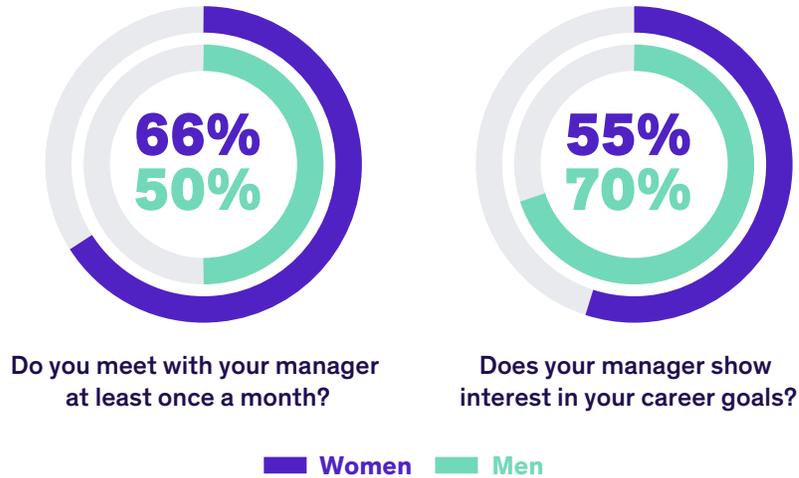
Perhaps not surprisingly, younger workers get more frequent one-on-one time with their managers than their older colleagues. This could be because more seasoned workers don’t want or need as much manager oversight and, thus, don’t ask for it. Or it could be that managers see a bigger upside to investing time in inexperienced workers who need more guidance. Believe it or not, 9% of respondents across all age groups claim they never meet with their managers.

Women still face strong headwinds on their career paths

Despite increased scrutiny of the gender gap in corporate leadership, as well as in specific fields like technology, the daily experience of women in the workplace leaves many feeling unsupported. Women in our survey aren’t getting the same amount of facetime with their

managers or support for their career development as men. In general, respondents of both sexes were less favorable toward the idea of female managers.

Many women feel unsupported in the workplace



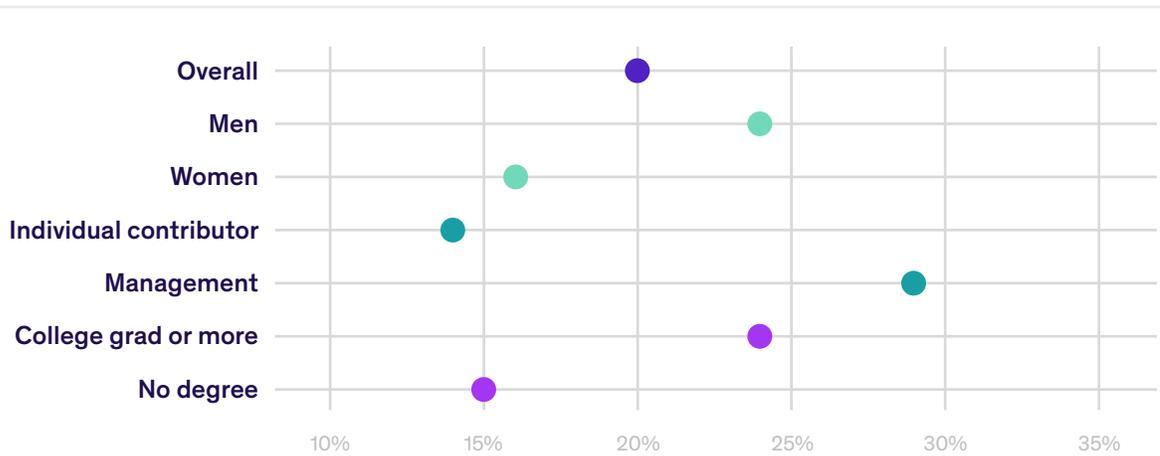
About a third (36%) of all employees say they meet with their manager at least once a week, but gender differences persist. Forty-two percent of men meet with their managers once a week, but only 30% of women do. Half of women said they don't even meet as often as once a month. We can't know if men are more assertive in demanding frequent one-on-ones or if managers favor their male direct reports or something else entirely, but the net result is the same. Employees who get more manager face-time tend to **perform better** and be more engaged.

Women also reported having managers less invested in their career goals. While 70% of men said their managers demonstrate interest in their long-term career goals, only 55% of women could say the same.

We also found interesting deviations as well as similarities between the sexes when we asked whether they'd care about having a manager younger than them and whether they have a preference for having a male or female manager.

On the age question, the vast majority (80%) claim not to care about having a younger manager, but men, those already in management, and people with a college degree are less comfortable with the idea.

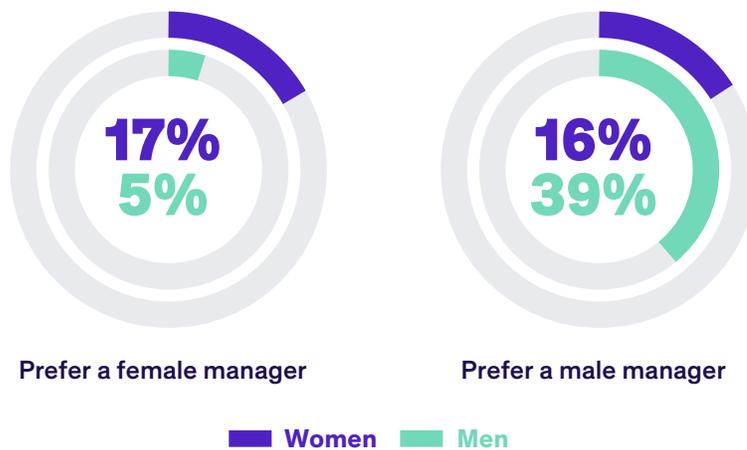
Would it bother you to have a manager younger than you?



When it comes to manager gender, however, the general population shows a clearer bias. While most say they have no preference (62%), only a scant percentage (11%) say they'd rather have a female manager, compared to 27% who'd rather work for a man.

Even millennials, who tend to be more vocal about diversity and inclusion in the workplace, express a strong preference for male managers that's consistent with older workers.

Do you prefer a male or female manager?

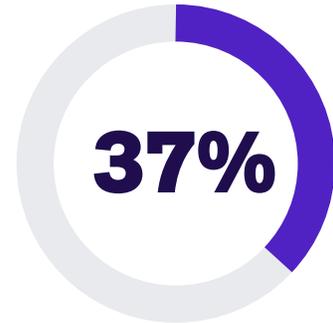


Another troubling finding is that people in management roles also tend to favor male managers, which doesn't bode well for women hoping to move up the ladder. As has been documented, **senior corporate leadership is still dominated by men**, and our research suggests they're

not very open to changing the status quo, despite plenty of criticism and calls to fix the workplace gender gap.

Such bias is typically reflected in how companies evaluate performance, hand out promotions, and make decisions, and this filters down to how individual managers interact with their direct reports. All of this ends up defining the employee experience.

It's also interesting to note that men (68%) and managers (69%) were more likely than their demographic counterparts to agree that their coworkers could benefit from (more) training around workplace discrimination and harassment.



More than a third of managers prefer a male manager

Modern team dynamics present challenges for overloaded employees

Sometimes, the hardest part of a job is finding the space to actually focus and do it. How companies support workers' productivity and effectiveness (or don't) is a big factor in the employee experience.

With relentless meetings, messages, interruptions, etc., too many survey respondents find themselves catching up "after hours," with 61% saying they respond to work-related

Do you respond to work-related messages outside typical business hours?

	Yes	No
Overall	61%	39%
Men	66%	34%
Women	56%	44%
Millennials/Gen Z	64%	36%
Gen X/Boomers	59%	41%

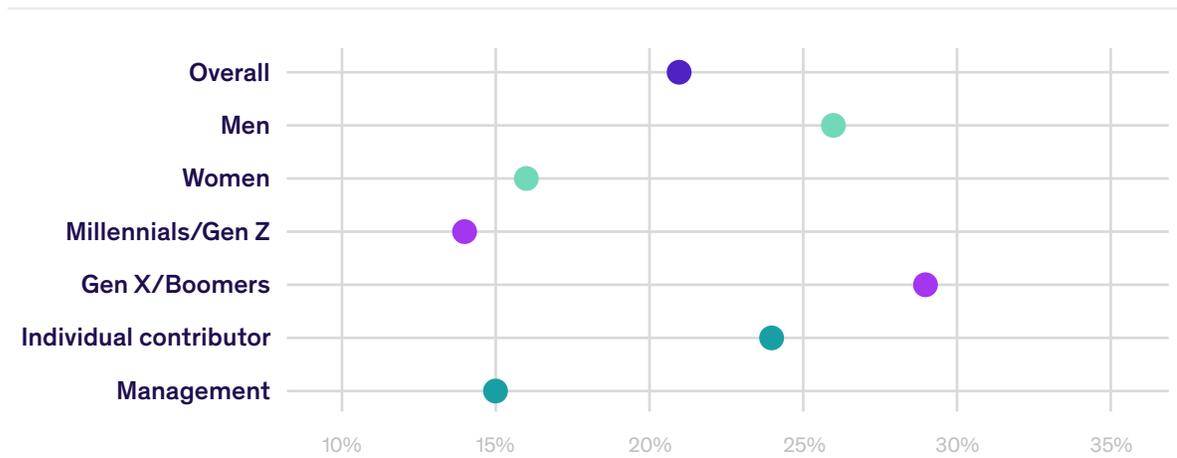
communications outside typical business hours, such as weekends. For the **Udemy In Depth: 2018 Workplace Distraction Report**, 70% agreed that training can help people get better at blocking out distractions and achieving focus.

An entire field of **research has shown that productivity increases when people are allowed to work on flex schedules or remotely**, but our survey uncovered

a significant amount of distrust for coworkers who take advantage of these options. Respondents were evenly split on whether people are really putting in a full day when they're working remotely. Yet our past **Udemy research** found that 40% of workers said they'd be more engaged if they were offered remote work options.

Interestingly, men and managers were more dubious about remote workers' efforts than non-managers. While 46% of the non-managerial workforce looks skeptically upon remote workers, 58% of managers feel that way; 55% of men question the effort of remote workers, compared with only 46% of women. At the same time, managers and men, along with younger employees, were more likely to admit to working from home in order to avoid a coworker.

Have you ever worked from home to avoid a coworker?

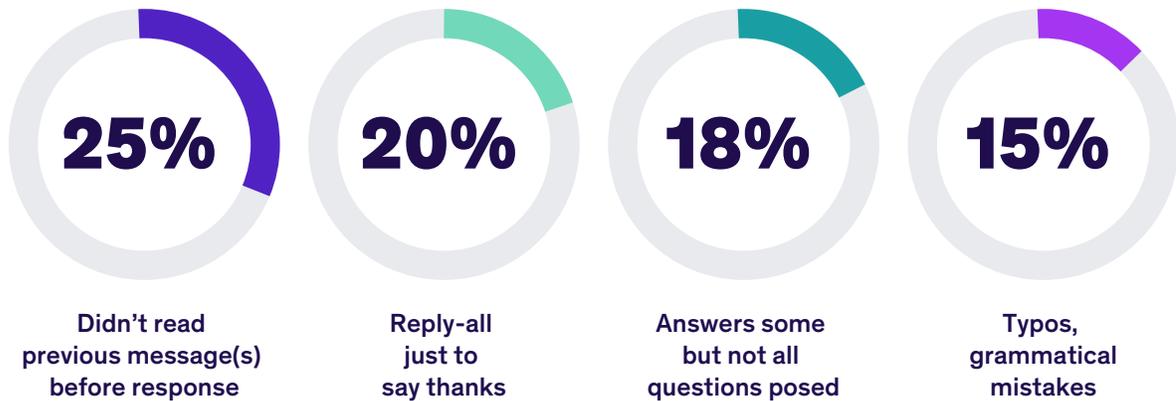


Training would help everyone adapt better to the unique challenges of working on distributed teams, an arrangement that is only becoming more common. Employees need to understand how best to communicate and collaborate when people are in different locations and even different time zones. Managers also need a different skill set for leading and supporting direct reports even when they can't meet in person or pull everyone into a conference room for spontaneous check-ins.

Despite available options for flexible schedules or remote working, today's employees are still struggling to maintain a healthy balance. Almost half (47%) suffer from burnout, and 62% expect employers to provide wellness benefits, such as meditation classes or gym discounts. The youngest survey respondents were more emphatic: 53% of millennials/Gen Z report burnout, and 66% think employers should offer wellness benefits.

Again, training is cited as one remedy for helping harried employees gain control over their workloads. Half of respondents acknowledged they could stand to improve their time management skills; even more (53%) of people in management admit they could do better. Productivity tools like email, chat, online collaboration spaces, etc., get mixed ratings: even though half felt these tools enhance their productivity, another 37% expressed mixed emotions, saying the tools are great sometimes but not always.

Top email pet peeves



More communications tools, more potential misunderstandings

In order to have a positive employee experience, people also have to understand, respect, and successfully navigate different communication styles. This, too, gets more complicated when people aren't sitting in a room together.

Overall, 72% said their coworkers need training around communication skills, and even more (79%) said people could use more specific training on having difficult conversations, such as giving direct feedback. Managers (85%) felt this more strongly than non-managers (74%).

At the same time, a significant number have done absolutely nothing to work on their communication skills, including 24% of GenX/Boomers, 26% of women, 30% of non-managers, and 30% of those without a college degree.

Effective communication also requires that people understand how best to use the tools at their disposal, but our research revealed a lot of uncertainty and, again, distrust among coworkers. For example, most believe they are far more responsive to email, chat, and phone messages than their peers. While 40% say they respond "immediately" to chat and phone messages, they say only 25% of their

Do you think emoji and GIFs are appropriate for workplace communication?

	Yes	No
Overall	34%	66%
Men	37%	63%
Women	31%	69%
Millennials/Gen Z	44%	56%
Gen X/Boomers	28%	72%
College grad or more	39%	61%
No degree	28%	72%

peers are equally responsive to voicemail and 30% are equally responsive to chat. If you're looking for a fast answer, don't communicate via email, which got the slowest response rates across the board.

Even something as seemingly lightweight as the use of emoji and GIFs at work surfaced some pretty clear differences of opinion, especially between the generations and education levels.

Consistent employee experience is worth the investment

Social issues, technological transformation, and changing demographics are reshaping the world of work, but it's not clear employers are keeping pace.

As our research shows, "employee experience" may be subjective, but that doesn't mean companies shouldn't take seriously the concerns of workers who feel they don't get the same opportunities as their peers.

Employee experience is about people and environment, more than job function or healthcare benefits or even salary. Frustrated workers will burn out and disengage from companies that fail to build an environment that supports their growth. On the flip side, employers who build an experience tapping into the modern worker's potential stand to gain employee loyalty, and that's a competitive advantage and no small feat in today's tight labor market.

The survey was conducted online by Toluna Group on behalf of Udemy in August 2018 among 1,000+ U.S. office workers in full-time jobs who are ages 18 or older. Complete survey methodology available upon request.

About Udemy

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