

# Low engagement for healthcare employees makes leaders' fears of retention real

Over the past decade, our research proves that employee engagement has gone up across multiple industries, using a benchmark of 50 statements about workplace experience.

That's good news for employees, right?  
For the most part, it is, but there's one industry that lags behind:

## Healthcare.

Across industries, employees' average agreement with 50 positive statements about workplace experience, organization and leadership is 66%. But for employees who work in healthcare, that rate is significantly lower at only **54% (-12%)**.

**Some key findings of where healthcare employees' experience in the workplace lags significantly behind the average of all employees include:**

Morale:	Employer Perception:	Communications:
<b>49%</b> feel valued by their employer (vs. 63%)	<b>50%</b> believe their employer has a bright future (vs. 68%)	<b>47%</b> say they receive employee communications in ways that work well for them (vs. 65%)
<b>50%</b> feel motivated to do their best work (vs. 67%)	<b>45%</b> care about their employer's reputation (vs 69%)	<b>49%</b> feel their employer does a good job of keeping them informed (vs. 62%)

While this might not be surprising for those on the frontlines, given the talent shortage and emotional toll of the past five years, these trends also ring true for corporate, desk-based healthcare employees in pharma and biotech.

The global healthcare sector continues to navigate an unprecedented level of business, societal and economic change – including challenges around pricing, impending threats of patent cliffs and investor demands to refocus the business through spinoffs and M&A.

**Workers have officially entered the era of post-change fatigue.**

**And the story doesn't stop there.**

**Overall**, the healthcare sector scored lower on almost every indicator, including employees' perceptions and relationships with leadership.

**Alarmingly, among employees in the healthcare sector:**



agree their leadership works to make everyone feel included and respected (*vs. 65%*)



believe their leadership creates a good culture and makes the organization a good place to work (*vs. 66%*)



believe their leadership motivates employees to do their best work (*vs. 60%*)



believe their leadership is transparent and open (*vs. 57%*)



have a great deal of confidence in their chief executive or top leader (*vs. 61%*)

## A stark dichotomy:

### Talent development and retention remains the top priority among the healthcare C-Suite

**Despite lower engagement scores across healthcare employees, leaders appear to understand the urgency and importance of retaining and developing their people.**

In partnership with our colleagues at Weber Shandwick and KRC Research, we surveyed nearly 100 long-tenured C-Suite across the healthcare industry to better understand what keeps them up at night and found:

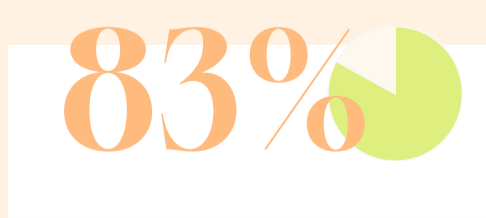
**90%** of healthcare leaders agree workforce and talent retention is a priority

For hospital systems leaders, this goes up to a staggering **97%**

**Among other types of healthcare organizations, C-Suite leaders agree talent retention is the overwhelming top priority:**



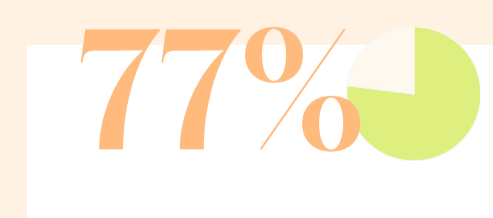
of insurance provider/payer leaders



of medical devices/health tech leaders



of consumer health leaders; and



of biotech and pharma leaders

## And despite all of this:

41%

of healthcare employees would change jobs tomorrow if they could

## Bottom line?

Healthcare employee perceptions of their engagement and relationship with leaders is low. And this data is in direct conflict with key priorities for healthcare leadership, presenting an interesting disconnect for those in the sector to solve.

## The Disconnect Danger:

Not just increased turnover risk, but missed opportunity for advocacy

Low engagement leads to low retention, but another missed opportunity is cultivating your employees as spokespeople for your place to work. Within healthcare:

48% feel a strong connection to their employer (vs. 59% overall)

57% feel proud to work for their employer (vs. 66% overall)

All considered, it's no surprise that the healthcare sector is also lower than average when it comes to publicly advocating or sharing praise about their employers.

16%

posted or shared praise or positive comments online about their employer with family or friends (vs. 32%)

Part of this could be driven by the regulations in the sector that keep employees quiet for compliance reasons, but it is telling that other regulated industries such as financial services and insurance reported significantly higher willingness to promote employers online.



# How to Solve:

**Interestingly**, one of the only areas where healthcare employees reported higher scores than the benchmark was recommending their employer as a place to work (*54% agreed they have done this before vs. the 49% benchmark*).

Though this still equates to only 1 in 2 employees, it indicates that despite disengagement, perhaps the other benefits offered by the sector – such as purpose-driven, impactful work that touches the lives of patient, the potential for career advancement, and strong benefits packages – are enough to outweigh the dissatisfactions.

**How can healthcare companies capitalize on this, move the engagement needle and drive strong agency for employees?**

## When it comes to improving engagement with employees in healthcare, leaders should focus on:

- 1 Closing the employer brand credibility gap:** Make sure what your employees experience on the inside matches what you're saying on the outside. And promote your patient-centered purpose and the benefits that make your healthcare company unique. An earlier version of our study showcased that only 19% of employees globally perceive a strong match between their employer's representation and their own experience.
- 2 Safeguard your culture:** Consider conducting a culture risk assessment to identify threats to the culture you want and uncover ways to reach your desired future state. Employees who agree that their leadership drives culture are nearly seven times likelier to feel a strong connection to their employer.
- 3 Garner trust in and extend impact of CEOs** through a cohesive visibility plan. Ensure that your healthcare leaders “walk the talk” and act as ambassadors for organizational vision and values – both externally and internally. Employees who agree they receive quality, aligned communications from their employer are over 7X more likely to admire their CEO than those who don't (81% vs. 10%).
- 4 Tap into the right channel to reach employees – and do it with transparency:** Employees who are satisfied with the communications that their employer provides have four times higher satisfaction across ALL drivers of experience.

**Finally**, as healthcare employees are slightly more likely than the benchmark to recommend their company as a place to work, **consider ways to better galvanize them through a coordinated champions program that ignites their advocacy as trusted spokespeople**. At the same time, work to strengthen social media policies will help ensure that what gets shared on personal platforms will be a positive reflection of the employee and their experience.