

Employees Seek Personal Value and Purpose at Work. Be Prepared to Deliver.

March 29, 2023 **Gartner Group** [Employees Increasingly Seek Value and Purpose at Work \(gartner.com\)](#)

Contributor: Jordan Turner

More than a year out from the Great Resignation, we're at another liminal moment for work.

Between **layoffs** and employees quitting their jobs in large numbers, it's clear that the management principles underlying the employee value proposition (EVP) are outdated. Many organizations still seem focused on patching together short-term tactics to solve what has become a series of longer-term systemic truths regarding the **future of work**. Namely:

1. Employees are people, not just workers.
2. Work is a subset of life, not separate from it.
3. Value comes through feelings, not just features.

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"The intent to leave or stay in a job is only one of the things that people are questioning as part of the larger human story we are living," says Caitlin Duffy, Research Director in Gartner's HR practice. "You could call it the 'Great Reflection.'It's critical to deliver value and purpose."

And, ignoring this shift is shortsighted. The pandemic stretched this elastic band so far that it can't snap back. Moreover, people don't want to go back. Many have developed a new sense of self-awareness and worth, and they won't easily forget if they have felt undervalued.

A sense of personal value is key





People are continuing to ask themselves questions such as:

- What makes me happy and whole?
- What truly satisfies me?
- Where have I given away too much of myself for little return?

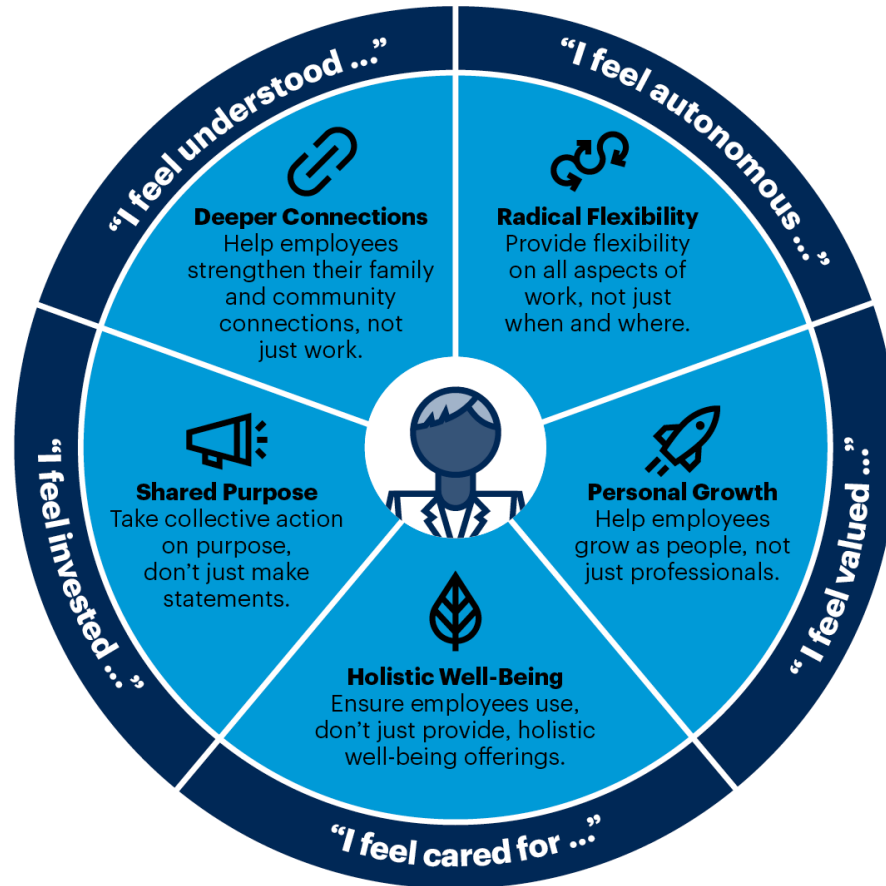
The last three years were a catalyst to elevate personal purpose and values. Unfortunately, while 82% of employees say it's important for their organization to see them as a person, not just an employee, only 45% of employees believe their organization actually sees them this way.

This translates into soul searching over whether one feels valued in their work or whether they are merely creating outcomes and value to benefit others. Dissatisfaction with the answers increases employees' intent to leave a job.

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The Human Deal Framework



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Why this shift is happening

The pandemic and subsequent economic and political volatility has forced everyone to examine their choices about how they spend their time, energy and social capital. Employees seek to gain more value from their jobs. Gartner calls this “The Human Deal,” which has five components:

- **Deeper connections.** Feeling understood through family and community connections, not just work relationships.



- **Radical flexibility.** Feeling autonomous in all aspects of work, not just when and where it gets done.
- **Personal growth.** Feeling valued through growth as a person, not just as a professional.
- **Holistic well-being.** Feeling cared for by ensuring holistic well-being offerings are used, not just available.
- **Shared purpose.** Feeling invested in the organization by taking concrete action on purpose, not just through corporate statements.

How employers should respond

Let's start with compensation. Employees **are growing more sensitive to pay disparities**, especially in light of the salary transparency laws taking effect across the U.S. Negative employee perceptions of pay equity can result in a 15% decrease in intent to stay, 13% increase in job searching activity, and 13% decrease in employee engagement.

But pay is far from the only motivator. People want acknowledgment and growth opportunities and to feel valued, trusted and empowered. **Frontline workers** in particular voice a desire to feel respected. Employees increasingly want to bring their authentic selves to work.

Bottom line: People seek purpose in their lives — and that includes work. The more an employer limits those things that create this sense of purpose, the less likely employees will stay at their positions. The era of the employment contract, where a worker provided services purely in exchange for monetary compensation, is over. Now, employees expect deeper relationships, a strong sense of community and purpose-driven work.





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How to make your EVP more human-centric

Gartner research shows that a human-centric approach, which provides people with more control over their work and work environment, also makes them more productive. But it requires employers to rethink their approach. As with all fundamentally transformative strategies, this will take strategic commitment, leadership, culture development and thoughtfully applied technology.

Both leaders and employees must incorporate new norms and behaviors for enterprise culture that support the new reality. For example, leaders and managers will need to focus on eliciting sustainable performance without compromising long-term health through practices such as **proactive rest** — helping employees maintain their emotional resilience and performance, as opposed to taking recovery after both have plummeted. This may show up as mandated PTO before high-demand working periods, no-meeting Fridays, allotted wellness time and manager goals for team PTO.

This is an overall shift in performance management, which is moving beyond just measuring employees' outcomes to reflect more context and empathy.

Caitlin Duffy is a Research Director in the human resources practice, where she develops insights and best practices on employee experience.

This article has been updated from the January 13, 2022 original to reflect new events, conditions and research.





Recommended resources* for Gartner clients:

Reinventing the Employee Value Proposition: The Human Deal
Address Pay Equity by Rebuilding Employees' Trust

*Note: Some documents may not be available to all Gartner clients.

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