

7 ways to create a positive work environment

What are the ingredients of a positive work environment, and how do you create one when people aren't sharing the same physical space? We take a look.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

[What is a positive working environment?](#)

[Why is a positive work environment important?](#)

[How to create a positive work environment](#)

A positive working environment is critical for [workplace culture](#) and the [employee experience](#). It influences everything from stress levels and mental wellbeing to productivity and performance. But creating a positive work environment goes far beyond the color of the office walls. In fact, it goes beyond the workplace entirely.

Research from McKinsey suggests that some sectors will have up to [5 times more employees working from home after the pandemic](#) than pre-lockdown. However, while this makes your company's 'work environment' less tangible than it was in 2019, there's still a lot you can do to improve and harness it, providing your people with a positive and motivating work environment they'll want to wake up to.

Let's look at some of the key ingredients that make a positive work environment and how to get it right.

What is a positive working environment?

When you think of: 'working environment,' the first thing you might imagine is a physical space. The desk you sit at, how close you are to the coffee machine, the color scheme in the meeting room. But the working environment is about far more than just the physical.

A positive work environment is a space that promotes employee wellbeing, productivity and growth. A few factors go toward this, including having good working practices, relatable values, a supportive atmosphere, and a culture of trust.

In short, a positive working environment is a space that encourages people to perform at their best. And this applies whether they're working collectively in a physical space or remotely through virtual environments.

Why is a positive work environment important?

A positive working environment has benefits for people at all levels in an organization. [Research from Deloitte](#) shows that 94% of executives and 88% of employees believe a positive workplace culture is essential to business success. That's because creating a space where employees feel happy and inspired naturally leads to a more lively and collaborative workforce who are motivated to achieve their personal and professional goals. Here are five of the benefits a positive work environment could bring to your workforce:

- **Less stress and burn-out**

According to the UK's Labour Force Survey, 828,000 employees suffered from work-related stress, depression or anxiety in 2019/20 resulting in the loss of 17.9 million working days. That's *a lot*.

So it's essential to create an environment where people feel comfortable asking for help to manage stress, avoid burnout and minimize absenteeism.

- **Increased productivity**

Happiness and productivity go hand-in-hand. A study by Oxford University into the productivity of BT workers showed employees were 13% more productive when happy - working faster, making more calls per hour and converting more calls into sales.¹

A positive working environment equips people to complete tasks more efficiently, increasing overall work output while helping individuals progress faster up the career ladder.

- **Staff retention**

It should come as no surprise that happy employees are less likely to start searching for opportunities elsewhere. While you might be able to attract talent with a good salary, if company culture, working environment and progression opportunities fail to live up to expectation, people will soon start looking for a new job.

The Work Institute estimates the cost of replacing a single US worker at ,000, or about one-third of a worker's annual earnings.² Meanwhile, employees who leave within the first year bring little-to-no return on the investment made to hire them. This makes quick turnover one of the most expensive and preventable costs a company faces.

- **Better wellbeing**

According to the CIPD's annual health and wellbeing survey, 2020 was the worst year on record for mental health at work. Nearly two-thirds (68%) of respondents reported some form of anxiety, and 58% said they had experienced at least mild symptoms of depression.

With most employees working 5-day, 40-hour week jobs, it's no wonder that physical and emotional wellbeing plays a huge role in how they feel at work. It's clear that in the future, organizations need to take a more proactive approach to support staff wellbeing in the workplace to create and maintain a positive work environment.

- **Improved morale**

In a nutshell, employee morale is the overall satisfaction, attitude and outlook that people feel at work. High employee morale encourages your workforce to engage and work collaboratively, bringing a positive mindset to the job.

Key factors that affect morale in the workplace include good business communication between employees and management, providing clear and measured career pathways, and celebrating accomplishments and employee successes.

Creating a positive work environment extends beyond traditional work spaces

How to create a positive work environment

So how do you do it? According to the Work Institute, 78% of the reasons employees quit are preventable. But creating a positive work environment doesn't have to be an uphill battle. Here are seven of the critical areas to focus on.

1. **Create a great onboarding experience**

You've heard the expression, 'first impressions are lasting impressions.' And it's true – a good employee experience starts from day one. The Hays What Workers Want survey demonstrated that an unwelcoming office environment deterred 64% of

applicants. And unwelcoming staff put off 44% of new starters as early as their first day.

Understanding the needs of your new hire is essential for creating that great first impression. Office-wide introductions and a clear walkthrough of their role, along with tours of the workplace – virtual or physical – can help them feel at home and give them the first taste of your company culture.

2. Own your values

There's a correlation between companies with clearly articulated culture or organizational values and overall business performance. But many organizations find it's easier to talk the talk than walk the walk.

Clear and inspirational company values are what shape your business vision and unite your workers. But you need to make sure you put them into practice to give people a real sense that you're all working toward a common goal.

3. Encourage connections

Building positive connections between all your employees is essential in creating a culture of team collaboration, where workers at all levels feel like part of a team. And it's more important than ever in today's remote working culture where people may have few opportunities to meet up physically.

Team-building exercises – face-to-face or virtual – can be a great way to bring colleagues together, building up rapport and social connections to create an environment that supports mutual respect and trust.

4. Focus on wellbeing

It's essential that employers are aware of what's going on with their employee's wellbeing, and that they demonstrate that awareness. Fifty-eight percent of UK employees would consider leaving their job if company leaders didn't show empathy to staff needs, according to Workplace from Meta research.⁴

Offering benefits like discounted gym memberships, flexible working options, and free counseling can help reduce workplace stress and improve overall wellbeing. But an open-door policy, where people feel free to talk to leaders about what's on their minds, could be even more effective.

5. Encourage diversity and inclusion

Does your company welcome people of all ages, ethnicities, cultures, religions and genders? Diverse, inclusive teams power innovative, forward-thinking organizations. But if diversity in your company is low, it can directly impact the experience of diverse hires and how comfortable they feel in your work environment. Find out more about [how to improve diversity in your workplace](#).

6. Get the physical workplace right

It's incredible just how much of an impact a suitable physical space can have on our mood. Everything from the chairs you provide to the office lighting will directly impact your workers and their ability to perform at their best.

But it's not all about work. While creating a comfortable, productive space is essential, it's just as vital to design spaces for collaborative working and downtime, enabling people to build social connections and take charge of their mental wellbeing in the work environment.

7. Be open

Employees who feel their leaders communicate with them directly and truthfully are far more likely to respect the company they work for and feel positive about their work environment. And people aren't just demanding openness about the organization itself – 62% of employees want transparency on societal issues like climate, diversity and inclusion, our research shows.⁵

With remote and hybrid working increasingly part of the mix, you must get your messages across while enabling employees to communicate effectively with you and everyone else.