

A Dale Carnegie White Paper

# Bridging the Gaps

Aligning Workplace Perceptions Across Organizational Levels



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**“We all work at the same company; why are none of us ever on the same page?”** Despite sharing organizational goals and operating under the direction of the same corporate leaders, many organizations still experience the frustrating reality of this kind of misalignment.

The simple answer is that while individuals might see the same information, hear the same messaging, and be exposed to the same organizational structures, perceptions in the workplace are shaped by previous experiences and beliefs. As individuals continuously absorb new information, they reconcile it with what they already know and have experienced, influencing their current and future views of reality. This process, which shapes what we can call an "organizational worldview," either strengthens or diminishes their outlook. Thus, each person's unique experiences and interactions within the organization continuously influence their perception of all organizational aspects, either positively or negatively.

But why does it matter if there are different, or even competing, organizational worldviews within one company?

To start, it has tangible implications for the bottom line. While companies aim to increase profit and productivity, they may be wasting valuable resources by assuming that leadership, mid-level management, and individual contributors are working toward these goals with a collective understanding. The reality is that these groups are rarely aligned. Instead, perceptions are often misaligned, and engagement across roles happens without understanding or recognizing the differing views held at various hierarchical levels regarding the company's direction, core values, and contributions to success to name a few key areas.

To help organizations understand how individuals at various levels experience the workplace, Dale Carnegie conducted a comprehensive global study on the state of organizational health. We asked participants to share their views in areas such as work-life balance, communication, job satisfaction, turnover intention, innovation, psychological safety, and the learning culture, among others.

Based on input from 3,375 global respondents across 18 countries, this white paper presents a consistent trend observed in our data analysis. That is, perceptions of key organizational aspects vary significantly and consistently by the roles people hold, impacting the level of engagement as well as turnover intention.

Across numerous topics and targeted questions, we found significant gaps and a consistent negative trend in the perception of key workplace aspects between leaders (director and above), managers (mid-level management positions), and individual contributors in the workforce.

Failure to address and overcome these differences can cost organizations valuable time and resources as they work to pursue organizational goals. They are also gaps that, if closed, can take your organization to another level.



**3,375** respondents  
**18** countries

## The State of Organizational Alignment Today

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For many organizations, workforce alignment is a missing piece of the experiential puzzle.

Even when asked about the same key organizational topics that typically require alignment, leaders, managers, and individual contributors within organizations can have very different outlooks and perspectives. Results of Dale Carnegie's survey showed statistically significant differences in perspectives based on these three levels of the organizational hierarchy, no matter the focus of analysis (i.e. communication, engagement, level of pride, etc.). These gaps in perception across roles demonstrate misalignment on a variety of key metrics.

As one example of how individuals can experience the same event but perceive the outcome differently, we asked respondents to reflect on their team's goal achievement over the past year.

Collectively, 35% of respondents said their teams exceeded their primary goals over the past year, a number that tracks with our previous global study on teamwork. However, when responses are separated and viewed by position within companies (leaders, managers, and individual contributors), a very different picture emerges.

Leaders overwhelmingly believe, by a statistically significant margin, that team goals were exceeded at a much higher percentage than that reported by managers and individual contributors. In turn, managers also believe goals were achieved at a statistically higher proportion than individual contributors.

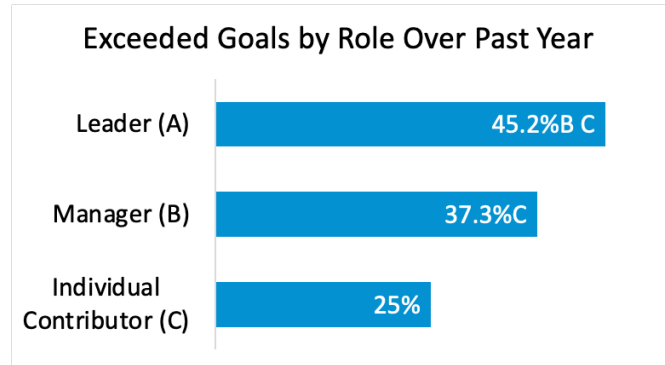


Figure 1: Exceeded Goals Over Past Year  
Source: Dale Carnegie analysis (2024).

Goal achievement should theoretically be an objective measure; either a team has achieved its goals for the year, or it has not. Why then is a seemingly objective measure viewed so differently across organizational levels?

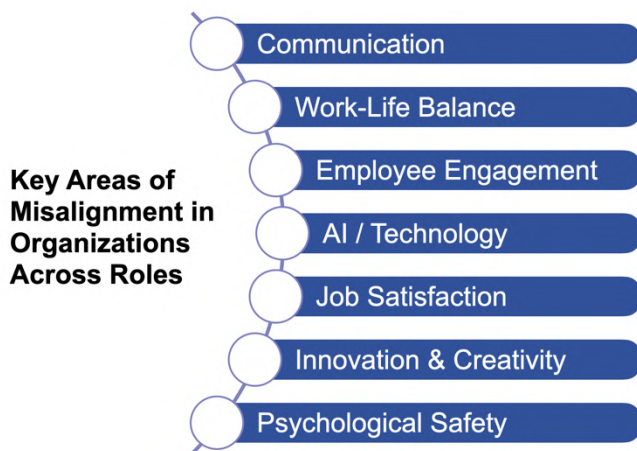


Figure 2: Areas of significant disconnect identified across roles.  
Source: Dale Carnegie analysis.

This disconnect is not limited to how different employees view goal achievement either. In fact, our research found large discrepancies and a consistent decline in favorable responses from leadership, to management, to the individual contributor level across many workplace topics. These include areas of communication, work-life balance, engagement, turnover intention, job satisfaction, psychological safety, innovation and creativity, and technology and AI. In addition, significant differences across several targeted individual questions relating to their company continued to reflect a consistent decline in favorability (those with strong positive agreement with the statements) by role.

In general, leaders tend to have a much sunnier outlook, perceiving key workplace aspects in a more favorable light compared to managers and individual contributors. But while leaders may have more strongly held positive beliefs, it is just as important to be mindful of the strongly held negative ones as well.

Being attentive to those with strongly held views, beliefs, or attitudes, whether positive or negative, can help generate more actionable insight that can be particularly useful to the practitioner as:

- It focuses on people who are most passionate about the issue or their stance.
- Helps provide clearer insight into support and opposition, exploring the source of deeply held beliefs or attitudes.
- These individuals are more likely to act based on strong opinions and perceptions.
- Identifying insight and trends at the extreme (i.e. strongly held) can help predict future behaviors such as loyalty or turnover.
- Combining categories in aggregate can potentially obscure differences of opinion and remove granularity that can lead to impactful insight and actionable outcomes.

In other words, those with strong views are the ones most likely to make decisions based on their perceptions, experiences, and beliefs. They are also more likely to exert influence those around them as they feel strongly about their position and their viewpoints can be a good indicator of future actions and behaviors, for themselves and the organization as a whole.

Thus, looking at the strongest-held perceptions by role, rather than analyzing data in the aggregate, can help guide companies toward more targeted action items, interventions, and improvements. Identifying the gaps in those perceptions can also be the first step in driving greater organizational alignment.

## Consistent Disconnect Across Roles

Organizations can spend millions on initiatives meant to create alignment and foster cohesive teams, while never truly understanding where the true gaps in alignment exist.

The assumption that everyone within an organization has the same or similar views of strategy, priorities, goals, and desired outcomes is also not uncommon. However, this can lead to employees at different levels pursuing individual goals that are potentially in conflict with the broader objectives of the organization.

In one survey of 500 frontline employees, managers and senior executives across 12 organizations, respondents were asked how well aligned they felt their company was on corporate strategy.<sup>1</sup> In response, 82% said their company was indeed highly aligned in its corporate strategy. But when respondents described that strategy, and responses were analyzed by linguistic markers such as concepts and words used to describe that corporate strategy, alignment dropped to 23%. Middle managers and senior executives were also shown to believe strategic alignment to be higher than that reflected in the responses by lower-level employees.

Assessing participant responses across a wider range of workplace topics, our research found a similar trend in misalignment across a variety of topics and individual statements related to organizations. Responses to several of these individual statements are displayed in Table 1. While our analysis will focus on the first seven highlighted as they reflect the largest gaps between leaders and individual contributors, the longer list is included here as it provides a visual of the magnitude and consistent level of disconnect we refer to as “perception gaps” within organizations.

As seen, there is clearly a consistent negative trend between leaders, managers, and individual contributors. Broken out and viewed by our three core role groups, the consistently significant differences or gaps in perception on various workplace aspects becomes clear and hard to overlook.

Table 1: Significant gaps surrounding targeted statements and key perspectives on organizational components.

Strong Favorable Perception Regarding Workplace Statement			
	Leader	Manager	Individual Contributor
	(A)	(B)	(C)
There is a high level of trust within the organization	45%*	27%**	15%
I feel valued as part of this company	46%*	29%**	17%
I am proud of where I work	49%*	36%**	23%
There are career advancement opportunities available	43%*	30%**	18%
I feel the work I do contributes to the overall success of the company	49%*	37%**	24%
There is accountability here	46%*	30%**	22%
I understand the current goals of our company	50%*	37%**	26%
Considering my skills and the effort I put into my work, I am satisfied with my pay	35%*	22%**	12%
Individual contributions are acknowledged	38%*	25%**	15%
There is opportunity for collaboration	41%*	30%**	19%
My organization has a clear purpose that guides our work	46%*	34%**	24%
I have the tools/materials necessary to do my job	43%*	31%**	24%
My role in contributing to the experience of our customers has been made clear to me	42%*	33%**	23%
There is recognition between co-workers	37%*	26%**	19%
I receive the information I need to do my job	40%*	30%**	22%
Members are empowered to make decisions	30%*	22%**	13%

\* Indicates statistically significant difference with columns B and C

\*\* Indicates statistically significant difference with column C

Source: Dale Carnegie analysis (2024).

<sup>1</sup> Vikas Mittal, Alessandro Piazza, and Ashwin Malshe, “Is Your Company as Strategically Aligned as You Think It Is?” Harvard Business Review, May 1, 2023, <https://hbr.org/2023/05/is-your-company-as-strategically-aligned-as-you-think-it-is>

Table 1 is organized so that the statements with the highest disconnect between leaders and individual contributors are at the top. The first seven statements each represent a difference of 24% or more between leaders and individual contributors who strongly agreed with the statement presented. The first four statements consistently ranked among the top five with the largest disconnects across roles, regardless of which groups were compared (leader-individual contributor, leader-manager, manager-individual contributor). These statements relate to the perceived level of trust within the organization, feeling valued as part of the company, being proud of where one works, and having career advancement opportunities available.

In addition, three other statements surrounding accountability, feeling that the work one does contributes to the overall success of the company, and understanding the current goals of the company, also reflected a high level of disconnect across roles. With that in mind, we focus on the first seven statements in the table that represent the largest gaps between organizational levels. Analyzing these results across roles allows us to generate insight that might otherwise be overlooked.

For example, trust is a key component of workplace success; it also represents the largest gap between leaders and individual contributors in our table. However, if we were to look at the average across all responses (not by role), overall, 29% of respondents said they strongly believed there is a high level of trust within their organization, a number that obscures underlying differences.

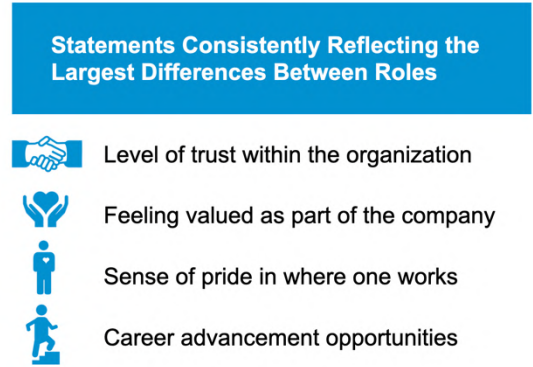


Figure 3: Consistent areas of disconnect between roles. Source: Dale Carnegie analysis (2024).

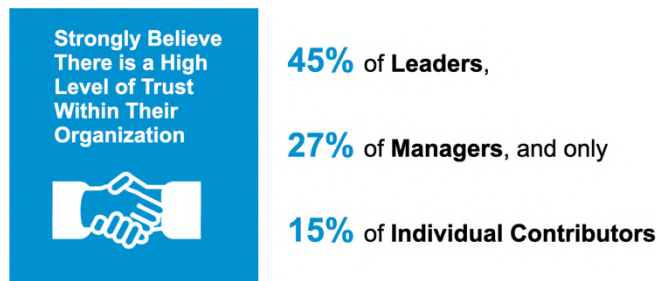


Figure 4: Disconnect surrounding trust by role. Source: Dale Carnegie analysis (2024).

A more granular look reveals that 45% of leaders strongly believe there is a high level of workplace trust in their organization compared to only 27% of managers. Meanwhile, only 15% of individual contributors perceived a high level of trust within their organization. This is valuable insight as a disconnect this significant on organizational trust has wide-reaching implications as it can ultimately impact motivation, job satisfaction, productivity, and many other areas that shape the bottom line.

While we highlight the statement regarding trust here as an example, there are statistically significant differences in perceptions between all groups, across all topics. These significant perception gaps between all roles reflect areas of concern and contribute to the existing state of disconnect told by the data.

## Communication

Beyond individual statements, analysis of the data shows a similar gap when it comes to the overall topic of communication. Leaders have a significantly more favorable opinion regarding the level of communication present in their organization than that of both managers and individual contributors. Continuing the trend, managers have more favorable views than individual contributors.

Strong communication within organizations keeps everyone on the same page and working in the same direction. It creates a collective understanding of the company's goals and expectations along with molding company culture. Without it, much is left up to individual interpretation and there is little to no alignment to drive daily goals and objectives. Needless to say, if everyone is pursuing independent goals, organizational alignment is absent, and goal achievement suffers as a result.

As part of our survey, we asked respondents how strongly they believed the goals of their position within the organization were well-defined — an attitudinal statement reflecting an individual's belief or perception of their job goals that hinges on clear communication. Results show a 24% gap in this area between leaders and

individual contributors where a much lower percentage of individual contributors (17%) strongly believed they had well-defined goals. This difference represents the largest gap within statements involving communication topics in the survey that contributed to an overall communication score.

Gaps such as this surrounding communication, as well as others shown, demonstrate a concerning level of disconnect and inconsistency within organizations. Left unaddressed, they can have wide-ranging consequences on organizational efforts such as goal achievement, desired culture development, and change processes creating things to work *through* rather than *on*.

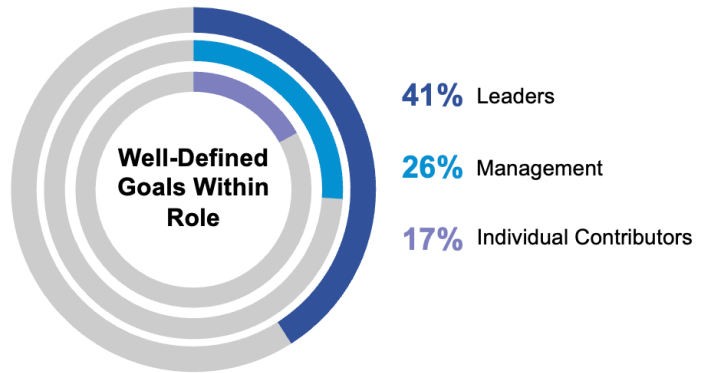


Figure 5: Strongly believe the goals of their position are well-defined. Source: Dale Carnegie analysis (2024).

Given the consistent findings reflecting very different perceptions of key workplace aspects, we wondered what impact these perception gaps between roles might have on two perennial corporate concerns where significant time and resources are spent by many organizations: employee engagement and turnover.

## Perception Gaps and Level of Engagement – Significant Drivers

### Percent Currently Reporting a High Level of Engagement By Role

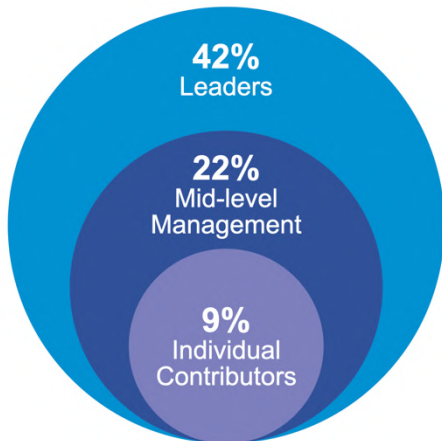


Figure 6: Percent currently highly engaged. Source: Dale Carnegie analysis (2024).

We discussed earlier the importance of paying attention to differences in organizational worldviews as those with strong opinions are the ones most likely to act and influence others based on those opinions. Engagement is one of the areas where differences in perception and perceived experiences by role can have real consequences for productivity and company success. Companies with high employee engagement enjoy stronger performance across markets such as profitability, productivity, turnover, absenteeism, shrinkage, safety incidents, quality, wellbeing, and organizational citizenship.<sup>2</sup>

However, when we asked participants about their current level of engagement with the company, the same downward trend across roles continued with a decrease from leaders to managers to employees. Specifically, 42% of leaders considered themselves highly engaged, while only 22% of managers and 9% of employees feel the same. Such a stark difference by role is certainly cause for attention when it comes to something as foundational as feeling properly engaged in the organization where you work.

To further understand this disconnect, we performed predictive modeling as part of our analysis to identify what drivers might be unique to each role and serve as significant predictors of the specific level of engagements shown.

<sup>2</sup> James Harter et al "The Relationship Between Engagement at Work and Organizational Outcomes" Q12® Meta-Analysis: 11th Edition, Gallup, May 2024

The following items were considered in the development of the models and include the seven statements discussed previously as part of Table 1, as well as a total composite communication score:

- Level of trust within the organization
- Feeling valued as part of the company
- Sense of pride in where one works
- Career advancement opportunities
- Presence of accountability
- Belief that one contributes to success
- Clear understanding of company goals
- Communication composite score

The final models below reflect predictors of the level of engagement across all three levels.

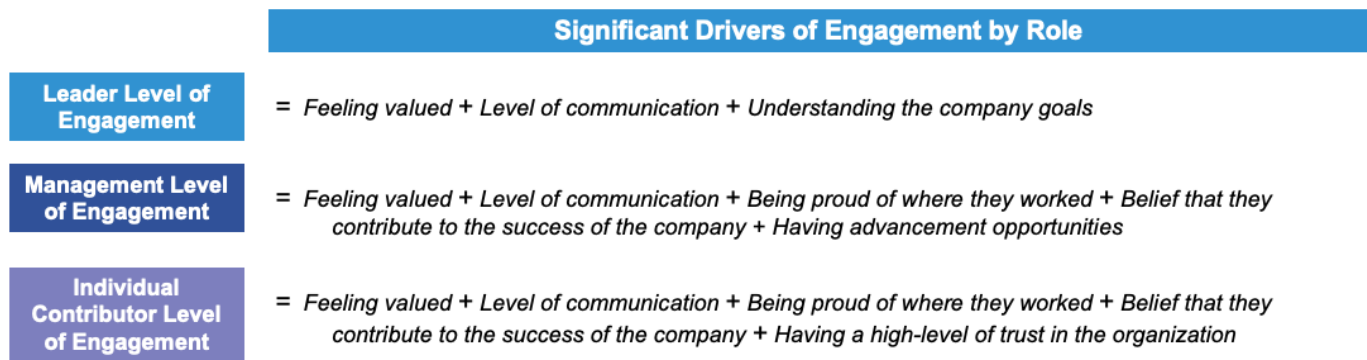


Figure 7: Significant predictors to the current level of engagement by role. Source: Dale Carnegie analysis (2024).

Feeling valued as part of the organization and having a strong favorable outlook on the level of communication positively drives engagement for leaders, managers, and individual contributors alike. For managers and individual contributors specifically, feeling proud about where they work as well as understanding how their work contributes to the overall success of the company were additional shared predictors of engagement between the two roles.

There were also unique predictors of engagement in each of the models not shared by others.

For leaders, understanding company goals was a significant predictor of engagement. For managers, having career advancement opportunities was a predictor unique to that group. For individual contributors, having a high level of trust in the organization drove higher engagement.

The models show key drivers for each group where focused efforts and improvement in the areas identified can impact and increase the level of engagement by role.

## Turnover Intention – Significant Drivers

Another area where we considered the impact of the perception gaps identified in the survey was that of turnover intention.

Employee engagement often lives on the opposite end of the spectrum from turnover and we would expect the desire to leave an organization to be higher where we see lower levels of engagement. Our survey results support this assumption: as engagement increases, turnover intention decreases and vice versa.

But turnover intention is often an area where leaders do not always have a clear understanding of what is driving employees to quit. While they may assume it's due to pay or even a desire to work remotely, the reality is that many motivators behind turnover intention are more intangible. For example, in one organizational survey exploring factors behind employee turnover and quitting behavior, employees most commonly cited not

feeling valued by their organizations (54%) or their managers (52%) as the reason for quitting, or because there was not a strong sense of belonging for them in their workplace (51%).<sup>3</sup>

To identify drivers impacting turnover intention across roles from Dale Carnegie’s research, we began with the same eight items used in the predictive modeling effort surrounding engagement previously.

The final models in Figure 8 reflect the drivers of turnover intention by role based on the inputs considered. Here, there is a negative relationship between the drivers and turnover intention. As the value of the predictors increase (such as employees having a higher sense of value) turnover intention decreases.

Significant Drivers of Turnover Intention by Role	
<b>Leader Turnover Intention</b>	= Feeling valued + Level of communication + Being proud of where they worked
<b>Management Turnover Intention</b>	= Feeling valued + Level of communication + Being proud of where they worked + Having advancement opportunities
<b>Individual Contributor Turnover Intention</b>	= Feeling valued + Level of communication + Being proud of where they worked + Belief that they contribute to the success of the company

Figure 8: Significant predictors of turnover intention by role.  
Source: Dale Carnegie analysis (2024).

For leaders, managers, and individual contributors alike, we see that feeling valued, perceptions or beliefs on the level of communication present, and being proud of where one works were shared significant drivers of turnover intention across all roles (in all models).

Of the items eight inputs considered, having advancement opportunities (management) and a belief that they contribute to the success of the company (individual contributors) were the only drivers of turnover intention that were unique to a specific role.

## Action Items

In the context of the three primary roles within an organization – leader, manager, and individual contributor – there exist three very different cultures. This adds complexity to even simple tasks that assume or require alignment. It also introduces barriers to success surrounding larger efforts such as improving motivation, employee engagement, sustainable change initiatives, and other improvement efforts that absorb resources and tend to fall short on results.

In many cases, organizations can spend an abundance of time and resources addressing areas that may not be the true or underlying driver(s) of behavior, nor have a significant influence on improvement. In doing so, they can end up right back where they started a short time later.

Below we’ve outlined common action items (those that are applicable for leaders, managers, and individual contributors) as a starting point, as well as one specific target area for each role group. Practitioners can leverage these solutions to begin bridging these perception gaps and improvement alignment within their organization.

Attention to those areas listed below will not only have a positive impact on the specific topic of focus but will also influence the level of trust and pride felt by all employees within your organization as well.

<sup>3</sup> “The difference in ‘Great Attrition’ or ‘Great Attraction’? The choice is yours.” McKinsey & Company, McKinsey Quarterly, Sept. 8, 2021. <https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/great-attrition-or-great-attraction-the-choice-is-yours>

## The Starting Point: Common Predictors for Leaders, Managers, and Individual Contributors

Considering the drivers of engagement and turnover intention by role, several common components were found to be significant predictors across all levels. Let's start by looking at improvement efforts around these commonalities.

**Feeling Valued as Part of the Company.** Our analysis revealed that feeling valued as part of the company was a significant and universal driver of engagement and turnover intention in every predictive model identified. So how can organizations positively impact this feeling of value and importance at all levels, reducing the gaps to better align the workplace experience and improve overall culture?

A starting point for the practitioner is to identify and understand how each role and individual fits into the larger vision and ultimate success of the company. After all, those implementing and carrying out strategy day to day need to understand the importance of their daily responsibilities.<sup>4</sup> But leaders need to remember that the value an individual's role provides to the organization can differ from the value an individual feels as part of the company; it's important to communicate both to an employee. For example, focusing solely on what someone's role provides to the company on a structural level can result in the person feeling replaceable, that it's only the job and not the person, that's important. It's important to highlight the unique value that an individual brings beyond the job role as well.

When focusing on increasing one's sense of value as part of the company, the dialogue should be open to feedback and discussion. At a very basic level, a person won't feel valued unless he or she feels heard. Including them in the discussions will convey a sense of value as soliciting input and feedback reinforces the importance of all roles through inclusion, increasing understanding, and bringing value to the company. With this approach, leaders can also gain valuable insight and understanding into key areas where the individual finds value, important information that managers and leaders can use to strengthen and support an individual's overall sense of value in the company.



**Feeling valued as part of the company and the level of communication present are significant and universal drivers of engagement and turnover intention.**

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### **Improve the Effectiveness of Communication.**

Communication was another significant contributor to the level of engagement and turnover intention common to all roles and models. From verbal to nonverbal communication, to the channels we select when communicating, we are constantly absorbing information in numerous forms throughout the day, processing, assessing, and drawing conclusions from the world around us and our workplace. The importance of effective communication cannot be overstated when it comes to creating alignment and driving collective understanding.

One method to enhance communication is to work on creating an organizational culture where all employees feel like they are heard — an action item impacting the sense of value as well. In PwC's 2023 "Trust Survey" of 548 business executives, 2,515 consumers and 2,039

employees across various U.S. industries, one finding was the importance of both managers and leaders in building trust and a psychologically safe environment where everyone is supported when they voice their opinions.<sup>5</sup>

Dale Carnegie's research found that the level and quality of that communication is a significant predictor of employee engagement and turnover intention and thus, improving in this area should be a focus for every organization. One example of high-quality communication is providing regular, constructive feedback while simultaneously welcoming open two-way dialogue. This practice can ensure that employees are aware of their

<sup>4</sup> Vikas Mittal, Shrihari Sridhar, Focus: How to Plan Strategy and Improve Execution to Achieve Growth, 2021.

<sup>5</sup> "PwC's 2023 Trust Survey: 9 key findings and lessons for business executives." 2023. <https://www.pwc.com/us/en/library/trust-in-business-survey-2023.html>

strengths and areas for improvement, provides an opportunity to question and clarify, and fosters an environment of continuous growth and development. Consistent feedback loops build trust, aligns expectations, and maintains employee motivation by recognizing and valuing their contributions.

Other methods to consider for improving communication, and in turn driving higher engagement and lower turnover, include:

- Providing access to communications training for all roles and levels.
- Assessing the channels available for communication within the organization; considering alternatives and options to help more voices be heard in discussion.
- Make known the variety of easily accessible communication channels available in your company.

These efforts can help others join the conversation so that it's not only the loudest voices that are heard, even if the loudest voices belong to higher ranking members of an organization.

Next, we break down targeted (unique) efforts for the different roles examined in this white paper, starting with the group with the lowest scores on our survey, individual contributors.

## Targeted Effort – Individual Contributors

Individual contributors consistently scored the lowest on all aspects measured within our study. In addition to the common starting points of communication and helping workers feel a sense of value and connection to the organization, there are also unique drivers to an individual contributor's workplace perception that speak to the importance of intrinsic motivation at the at this level.

***Feeling That They Contribute to the Overall Success of the Company.*** This attitudinal statement was not only among the largest gaps consistently found between roles but was also a key driver in the models at this level for both engagement and turnover intention. For individual contributors specifically, having a strong sense of where they fit in and how they contribute to the organization can make their daily tasks more rewarding and worthwhile, increasing engagement and lowering turnover intention.

While it's easy to become fixated on tasks, projects, and productivity, both leaders and managers would do well to share with individual contributors how their efforts contribute to the company's success. While all roles are vital, they can feel routine and disconnected when an individual's contributions are not understood or recognized as part of a company's larger efforts. Connecting their efforts to the successes (large or small) within the company can help to minimize turnover as well as increase engagement.

The value an individual's role provides to the organization is different than the value an individual feels as part of the company.

Dale Carnegie & Associates

## Targeted Effort – Managers

Managers, supervisors, and other mid-level career positions occupy a unique niche in the results of our research. They are consistently less positive in their perceptions and views of the organization than leaders, while also remaining less negative than individual contributors. Alongside these differences, they also share common key drivers with both of these other groups when it comes to predicting engagement and turnover.

That leaves mid-level managers in a challenging position. They are tasked with conveying and implementing the strategy and objectives identified by leadership to achieve company goals. But they also need to motivate and direct a workforce that is geographically dispersed, generationally diverse, and experiencing rapid changes in the workplace. Taking these unique factors into account, one targeted effort for improving managers' organizational worldview hinges on providing growth opportunities to help them develop within the company.

**Career Advancement Opportunities (Training and Growth).** Believing that there are career advancement opportunities within an organization was not only one of statements where the largest gaps existed between roles, but also a significant driver unique to the management level for both engagement and turnover intention.

Clearly identifying and conveying the opportunities and possibilities for career advancement to mid-level management can have a significant impact on the level of engagement and turnover intention. In fact, employees often see the opportunity for upskilling or other on-the-job training as a company differentiator – having the chance to learn new skills is a key consideration when deciding to stay with or leave an employer.<sup>6</sup>

Our modeling identified that career advancement opportunities are uniquely appealing to managers in the areas of engagement and turnover intention and have a significant impact on their perception of the workplace.

## Targeted Effort – Leaders

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We've seen how leaders consistently hold the most favorable views on a variety of aspects relating to the workplace. Leadership is also primarily responsible for creating alignment across the organization — acknowledging and bridging gaps between their own perceptions and that of managers and individual contributors. This responsibility is crucial for driving improvement and positive change.

Considering this, how can leaders leverage the insights from our analysis to specifically target improvements and bridge the organizational perception gaps?

**Understanding the Company Goals.** How well a leader feels they understand his or her company's goals was shown to be a significant driver of subsequent engagement. This can be an easy area to overlook as we might assume leaders enjoy an inherent understanding of company goals due to their position.

However, disconnects fueled by individual perceptions and misunderstanding on these key aspects still exist. This can make leaders disengaged, and in turn less effective, if their efforts are alienated from organizational strategy and principles. By contrast, when leaders are engaged, the impact on the organization can be immense. For example, an estimated \$5 trillion in excess value is created by the 200 highest-performing CEOs.<sup>7</sup> That's a huge impact and means that leaders in the top echelons of performance generate a majority of their industry's value. But leaders don't need to create trillions in value to make an impact.

Instead, that impact can start with leaders who take the time to understand and advocate for the goals of their organization. One strategy for achieving this is for leadership teams to take part in regular targeted discussions where each individual leader shares and discusses their current understanding of the company goals in their own words. This helps leadership teams create and ensure alignment between themselves as they identify disparities or misinterpretation of goals for example. Even if a leadership team is small, the opportunity to reassess company goals on a regular basis will clarify priorities, enhance understanding, and support alignment. After all, if a leader has a misunderstanding of a company's goals through their own interpretation, they won't be able to communicate effectively to the rest of the organization and drive alignment with management and individual contributors.

With this renewed focus and clarity surrounding company goals, leaders will be more engaged and turnover intention will be reduced. Other benefits include an enhanced ability to assess how all employees fit into those goals and speak to the value each person provides as it empowers leaders to help others understand those goals and objectives with the same clarity.

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<sup>6</sup> "Global Workforce Hopes and Fears Survey 2024," PwC Global, Today's Issues Workforce, June 2024, <https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/issues/workforce/hopes-and-fears.html>.

<sup>7</sup> The State of Organizations 2023, McKinsey & Co., April 13, 2023, <https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/mckinsey/business%20functions/people%20and%20organizational%20performance/our%20insights/the%20state%20of%20organizations%202023/the-state-of-organizations-2023.pdf>

## Closing Gaps and Creating Alignment

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Our research identified consistent misalignment between leadership, management, and individual contributors in several key areas within organizations. Across all areas of our study, leaders reflected a significantly different, and more positive, perception of work-related topics or statements, managers less so, and individual contributors the lowest. This misalignment creates more work and frustration, ultimately requiring more resources to reach goals and achieve measurable success.

While we identified several areas where workplace alignment falls short, this white paper also shares key areas of focus to improve alignment within companies, which in turn helps to close perception gaps across roles and reduces barriers to success. Through predictive modeling, we identified key drivers and provided targeted solutions and action items for practitioners and organizational stakeholders regarding two crucial areas of consideration and resource allocation: engagement and turnover intention.

To enhance engagement and reduce turnover intention, the starting point should focus on the two common drivers present in all models. Universally, 'feeling valued as part of the company' and 'the level of communication' emerged as significant predictors of both engagement and turnover intention for leaders, managers, and individual contributors. Organizations should focus on these universal drivers as a foundation for improvement efforts.

Additionally, addressing unique role-specific drivers identified as part of the models provides further opportunity for improvement through targeted efforts. For individual contributors, emphasizing their contribution to the company's overall success is crucial. Managers, on the other hand, prioritize career advancement opportunities, including training and growth. For leaders, a clear understanding of company goals is essential.

By focusing on these common and unique predictors, companies can begin the journey toward higher organizational alignment, fostering a more engaged workforce and decreasing turnover intention.

Considering the fast pace of change in today's business environment, achieving success can be severely hindered when we start from a place of vastly different perceptions and misalignment within our organizations. The gaps identified by our research is a call to attention for a focus on internal root cause identification. As organizations of varying sizes and in a variety of industries around the world experience these disconnects, the story as told by the data should encourage organizations to take advantage of these overlooked and untapped opportunities for success. Without strong organizational alignment, even outcomes considered successful will have fallen short of their potential or *what could have been*.

Organizations who are proactive in closing perceptions gaps and working toward greater alignment will be in a much better position to not only compete in the market, but retain quality employees, improve engagement, and free up valuable time and resources.

“ Knowledge isn't power  
until it is applied. ”

—Dale Carnegie

## About the author

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Joining Dale Carnegie in 2023, Robert is responsible for ongoing research into current issues facing leaders, employees, and organizations worldwide. With over 25 years of experience, Robert brings a research-driven approach to help organizations and practitioners identify and address significant areas of impact for workplace improvement.

To learn more about how Dale Carnegie Training can help you improve alignment within your organization, contact your local Dale Carnegie office today by visiting [dalecarnegie.com](https://dalecarnegie.com) to find the location nearest you.



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