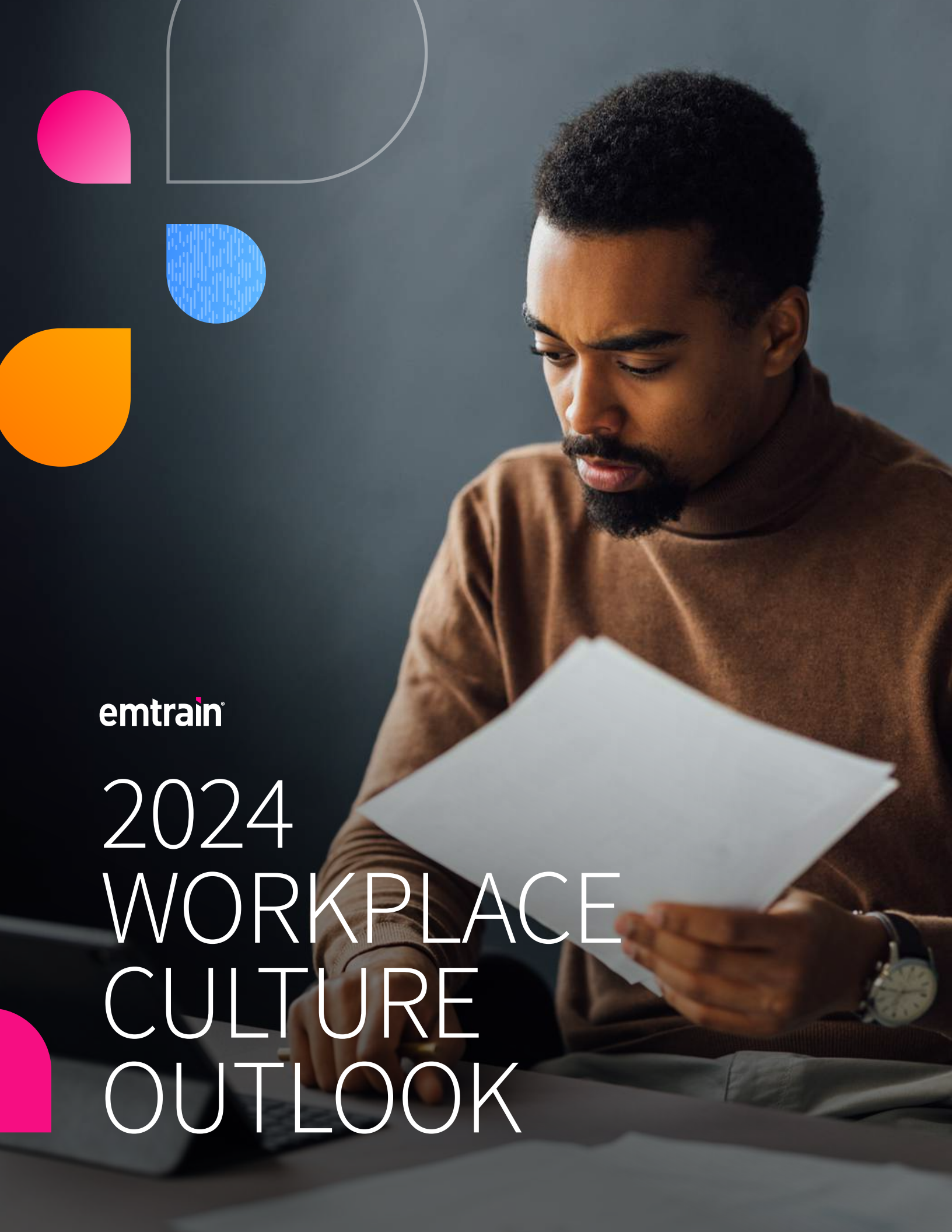




emtrain®

2024 WORKPLACE CULTURE OUTLOOK



As The Pendulum Swings Towards the Balance Sheet, Employees Have Less Trust and See Less Allyship From Leaders

We are in the middle of turbulent societal shifts set against the backdrop of a changing economy, and 18 months of workforce contraction and consistent layoffs. The pendulum is swinging away from the employee experience and towards the corporate balance sheet. When that happens, it's natural for employees to feel less trust in their leaders and experience far less allyship, which is what we saw in last year's Culture Report and what seems to be trending again for 2024.

From September 1, 2023 to January 15, 2024, there's been a further drop in:

- Nurturing Trust (3.48% drop)
- Advancing Allyship (4.21% drop)
- Cultivating Authenticity (5.14% drop)

Unfortunately, 2024 is shaping up to be another difficult year for people leaders. There's likely to be continued scrutiny on all budget requests to support the employee experience and we're likely to experience heightened tribalism and social polarization with the war in the Middle East, backlash against DEI programs and the social rhetoric as we go into the 2024 Presidential election. In preparation, here are four key areas business leaders can focus on to help minimize the decline in workplace culture in 2024.

- **Shifting from employee experience to employee enablement:** Encouraging managers to coach employees to embrace challenges as growth opportunities and to proactively seek help when needed from workplace leaders or other colleagues.
- **Developing an allyship muscle:** Allyship is a skill, which leaders demonstrate when they use their privilege to create an opportunity for someone who likely faces bias and/or has fewer opportunities than the ally. Developing an allyship muscle does not cost any money, and it infuses diversity, ethics, inclusion, and belonging into a workplace culture.
- **Being intentionally transparent and providing context for clarity:** There are no effective shortcuts to communicating with employees and sharing business needs and expectations. Don't just tell employees "the what"; paint them a picture of "the why".
- **Nurturing trust:** Trust is the connective tissue between co-workers, employees, managers, and the organization. Trust is earned through people's actions over time. Coaching and reminding people that everyone's actions impact others, and that people in an organization are interconnected and need each other to achieve shared goals, are critical to nurturing trust.

Society has gone from a focus on employees and a push for inclusion and social justice to shrinking workforces, budgets and austerity measures.

That is a big pendulum swing, which is bound to undermine employees’ trust in leadership and their comfort in showing up as their authentic selves. The four (4) people strategies listed above are designed to strengthen the social fabric and enable workforces to withstand the turbulence that lies ahead in 2024.

Insights from 2023’s Workplace Culture Report

What Does the Workplace Culture Report Measure?

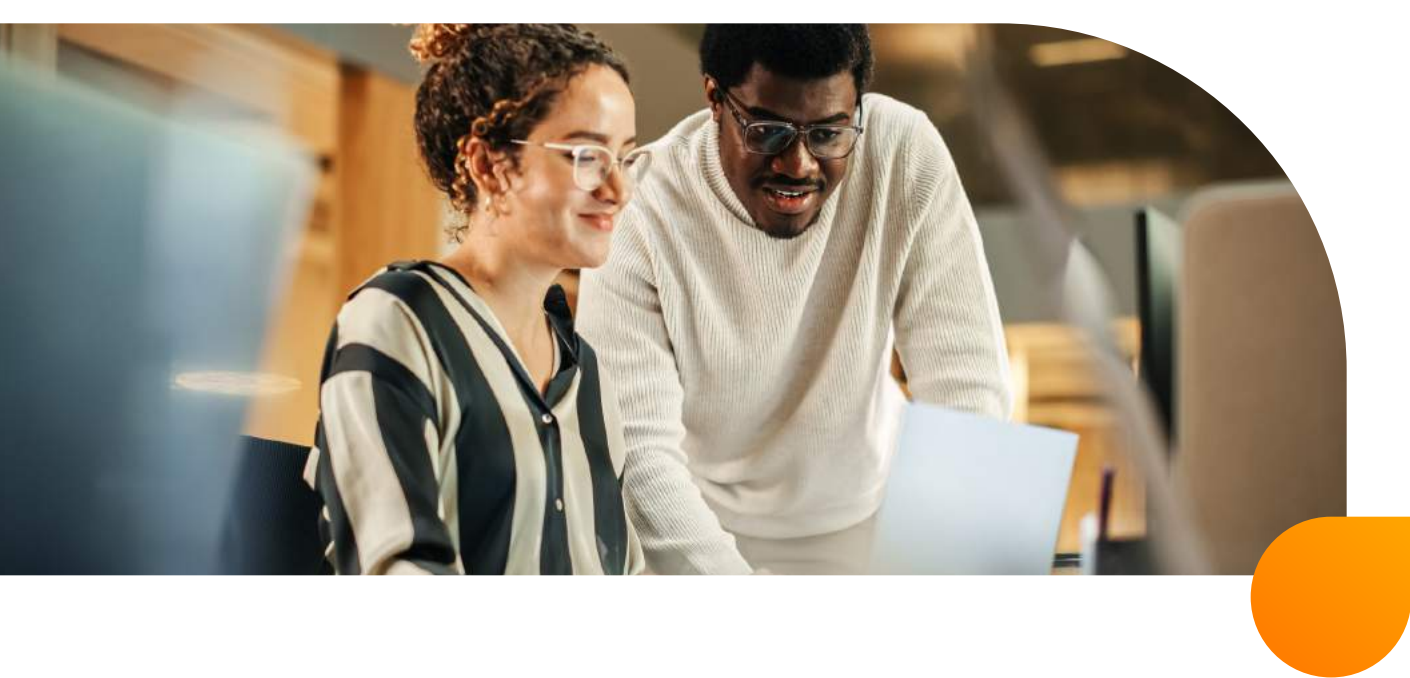
Emtrain measures employees’ perceptions of the skills and behaviors of their managers and co-workers. Emtrain uses a skills framework, our Workplace Social Indicators™, that identifies the individual, peer to peer, team and enterprise level skills needed to generate respect, inclusion, belonging and ethics within an organization. All of Emtrain’s online courses and lessons are designed to develop one or more of these 16 essential workplace skills and include survey questions that prompt employee reflection and solicit employee sentiment about the actions and social dynamics of their peers, managers, teams and organizations in relation to these 16 skills. (See WSI framework below):

	Respect	Inclusion	Belonging	Ethics	
Managing Ourselves	✓ Mitigating Bias	✓ Fostering Curiosity	✓ Mitigating Bias	✓ Engaging Morally	
Building Relationship	✓ Embracing Interculturalism	✓ Encouraging Empathy	✓ Cultivating Authenticity	✓ Demonstrating Integrity	
Enabling Teams	✓ Managing Power	✓ Advancing Allyship	✓ Valuing Diversity	✓ Nurturing Trust	
Leading Organizations	✓ Ensuring Equity	✓ Thinking Systemically	✓ Deciding Together	✓ Instilling Accountability	

Emtrain’s research, along with our research partners (Work Life Law at UCSF Law and Harvard Business School) proves that these 16 skills are workplace indicators of employees’ perception of workplace culture.

Over the last 16 months, **Emtrain has received over 100 million employee sentiment responses about how these 16 skills show up in their workplaces and help generate ethics, respect and inclusion.** These are the skills that have gone down:

- Mitigating Bias [-3.11%]
- Embracing Interculturalism [-2.91%]
- Managing Power [+2.52%]
- Ensuring Equity [-2.19%]
- Fostering Curiosity [-3.35%]
- Encouraging Empathy [-2.54%]
- Advancing Allyship [-4.21%]
- Thinking Systemically [-0.75%]
- Being Well [-1.25%]
- Cultivating Authenticity [-5.14%]
- Valuing Diversity [-2.36%]
- Deciding Together [-1.84%]
- Engaging Morally [-1.70%]
- Demonstrating Integrity [-3.86%]
- Nurturing Trust [-3.48%]
- Instilling Accountability [-1.54%]



The most significant decline is found in 4 skills that support the Inclusion, Belonging and Ethics competencies:

- (Belonging) Cultivating Authenticity [-5.14%]
- (Inclusion) Advancing Allyship [-4.21%]
- (Ethics) Demonstrating Integrity [-3.86%]
- (Ethics) Nurturing Trust [-3.48%]



Decoding the Decline in Inclusion & Belonging

Employees experienced the biggest culture setback this last year in inclusion and belonging. Inclusion is a workplace competency based on these skills: Fostering Curiosity, Encouraging Empathy, Advancing Allyship, and Thinking Systemically. Belonging is also a workplace competency and involves Being Well, Cultivating Authenticity, Valuing Diversity and Deciding Together. Not surprisingly given the employer pendulum swing away from the employee experience and towards the corporate balance sheet, the peer to peer skill of cultivating authenticity took a nosedive in the past year.

Cultivating Authenticity

In our framework, cultivating authenticity is defined as the ability to acknowledge and express yourself genuinely and comfortably. **From 2022 to 2023, there was a significant 5.14% decline in positive employee responses to authenticity-related questions.** Employees either don't feel like they can be their most authentic selves at work or they have experienced negative repercussions or reactions when they do behave authentically.

Unfortunately, there are a number of social and economic factors influencing employees' perceptions. We have a polarizing controversy regarding the merit of diversity and inclusion programs in corporations. There is also a strong backlash against evolving social norms and increasing acceptance of gender identity, different sexual orientations, racial, cultural, and religious communities. In an environment where social and political values are intertwined, a culture has emerged where employees hesitate to voice their opinions for fear of being labeled as "too woke" or "anti-woke." These turbulent societal shifts are set against the backdrop of an economic downturn and budget cuts, where employees are more likely to keep their heads down and maintain a low profile to avoid drawing attention to themselves.

Here are two of several employee sentiment questions that map to the skill of Cultivating Authenticity:

“I think my colleagues are being authentic when they talk about making people feel like they are part of the team.”

There was a **5% decrease** in employees who **agree or strongly agree**.

“The people I work with see the value of creating respectful work relationships.”

There was a **12% decrease** in employees who **agree or strongly agree**.

Advancing Allyship

Advancing allyship is the act of using your resources to create opportunities in the workplace for employees who are likely to face resistance or bias. This practice is vital for cultivating a sense of inclusion and belonging in the modern workforce, fostering a healthy, diverse workplace culture. **Unfortunately, this past year, we've seen a 4.21% decline in positive responses to the questions that inform the Advancing Allyship workplace social indicator.**

All in all, fewer people are stepping up to bat for their colleagues. Similar to cultivating authenticity, this could be a result of a fear of backlash and being labeled as "too woke," or wanting to avoid conflict or drawing attention to themselves. It could also be the result of fewer people feeling confident in their own workplace social standing and, therefore, not confident enough to go to bat for a colleague. There is also the contributing influence of the continued remote and hybrid workplace, where people have fewer unstructured social interactions with each other and, therefore, less opportunity to create and nurture personal connections that are the foundation of advancing allyship.

According to the [American Time Use Survey](#), we are spending more time alone, both in and outside of our work lives. This isolation is reflected in our workflows, how we learn, and how we lean on our colleagues, and most notably, how we look out for and show up for each other.

Here are two of several employee sentiment questions that map to the Advancing Allyship skill:

“People in my organization act as allies when the situation calls for it.”

There was a **20% decrease** in employees who **agree or strongly agree**.

“I believe people at my work would make a concerted effort to use correct pronouns.”

There was an **11% decrease** in employees who **agree or strongly agree**.

Decoding the Decline in Ethics

Similar to Inclusion and Belonging, it's not surprising that employees perceive a decline in organizational ethics when company leaders deprioritize the employee experience in favor of the corporate balance sheet.

Demonstrating Integrity

In ethics, demonstrating integrity means having the strength or capacity to act consistently according to your stated values over time. **Although this might be considered a basic necessity for the workplace, we have observed a 3.86% drop in positive responses associated with this workplace social indicator.**

Given the fading focus on the employee experience and deprioritization of DEIB in favor of prioritizing the corporate balance sheet, it's not surprising that employees are perceiving an inconsistency between stated values and peoples' actions.

Here are two of several employee sentiment questions that map to the skill of Demonstrating Integrity:

"I think our senior leaders lead by example when it comes to making decisions that put the interests of the organization first."

There was an **8% decrease** in employees who **agree or strongly agree**.

"Our leaders wouldn't work with a third party with a bad reputation even if it were critical to getting a deal."

There was a **9% decrease** in employees who **agree or strongly agree**.



Nurturing Trust

Nurturing trust means building confidence that people can rely on each other to meet shared goals and responsibilities. Transparency is often the key to nurturing trust. Nurturing trust lays the foundation for psychological safety within team dynamics, where shared goals and responsibilities are met with positivity and engagement. The presence or lack thereof of this social indicator is directly correlated to executive behaviors, business practices, and internal communications. **Between 2022 and 2023, positive employee responses around Nurturing Trust fell by 3.48%.**

Here are two of several employee sentiment questions that map to the skill of Nurturing Trust:

“I'm confident I can report concerns about someone's conduct or organizational practices without negative impact to myself.”

There was a **5% decrease** in employees who **agree or strongly agree**.

“If I raised a concern about the way my organization handles personal information, I am confident it would be addressed.”

There was a **3% decrease** in employees who **agree or strongly agree**.



Conclusion

The preview into workplace culture in 2024 shows a continuing erosion of trust, authenticity and allyship in the workplace. Business and people leaders should prioritize those programs, management actions and resources to strengthen those three skills to support a better employee experience and better business outcomes this year.

Methodology

To calculate question-level scores, learner responses are aggregated across a 12-month period. In this way, each date represents a full 12-month period ending on the date in question. Responses are collected via employee sentiment questions that are embedded into and throughout Emtrain's compliance and workplace culture training courses.

Scored learner responses from the latest 12-month window are weighted depending on the response input and how the question is worded. After weighting, responses are averaged for each question that meets our Minimum Learner Response Thresholds. From here, scores are standardized across clients to ensure consistency when calculating indicator and competency scores, and when comparing scores between questions.