



HR Webinar

# Focus on Resilience: How to Engage and Retain Canada's Frontline Workforce

10 April 2025

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# TODAY'S 60-MIN SESSION

1. Introductions
2. Focus on Resilience: How to Engage and Retain Canada's Frontline Workforce
3. Q&A



Hosted by Lisa Ursano (she/her)  
UKG Canada

# OUR WEBINAR EXPERIENCE INCLUDES YOU

 Q&A for questions for our speakers

 Participate in **polls**

 Live **closed captioning** is available 

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 **This session is being recorded.**  
The recording will be sent to you after the event.

 After the event, you'll receive a **copy of the slide deck** and some additional resources by email.





The Promise of UKG  
Our Purpose Is People.

We're on a mission to inspire every organization to become a great place to work through **technology built *for all***.

# UKG

## Take care of your workforce through an unmatched focus on people



# Guest Speaker



**Kyleene Zenk**

Senior Principal - Human Insights  
UKG

# Session Takeaways

Learn how employees feel about compensation, overtime, trust, leadership, well-being, workplace technology and more

Discover what employers can do to support, engage, and retain frontline employees

Get actionable tips for building a resilient frontline

# Canada's Economy and Labour Market are Facing Challenges...

...Workforce **RESILIENCE** is Essential

## Poll Question #1:

**What's your BIGGEST challenge with frontline employees?**

- a) Recruiting/hiring
- b) Keeping them engaged and productive
- c) Retraining or upskilling
- d) Retention
- e) Something else

# Three Issues Facing Canadian Employers

- 1 Unfilled jobs** in Canada persist – more than ½ million, most in ON, QC, and BC
- 2 Non-permanent residents** (temporary foreign workers) permits are being cut
- 3 Immigration** (and therefore population growth) will decrease substantially

## Job Vacancy and Skills Shortages

3 in 4 Canadian employers are struggling to fill roles



# Why Study the Frontline Workforce?



Nearly  
**80%**

of the Canadian workforce is frontline employees

# Frontline Survey Demographics



## 12,715 Global Respondents

51% Female; 49% Male



## 1,868 Canadian Respondents

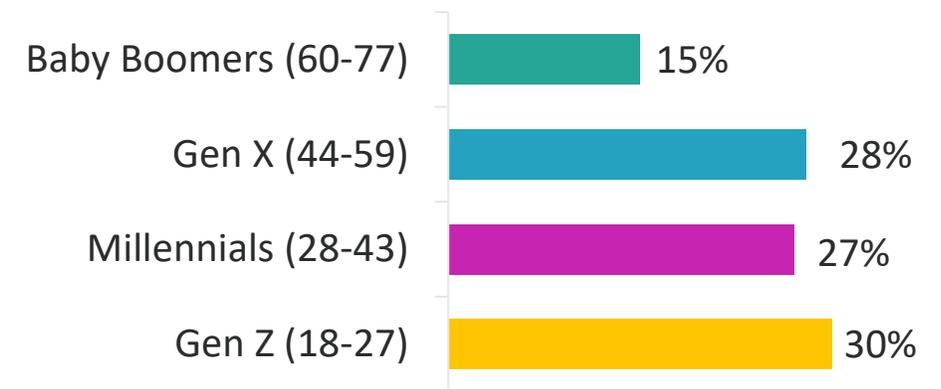
53% Female; 47% Male



## 14 Industries

Distribution/Logistics /Transportation; Education (College/University, Secondary Education); Education (K-12; Primary Education); Financial Services; Foodservice; Government; Healthcare (Acute/Ambulatory); Healthcare (Long-Term Care);Hospitality; IT / Technology; Manufacturing; Professional Services; Public Safety; Retail

## Age Group



## Role



# Key Insights: How Canadian Frontline Employees Feel

**57%**

are dissatisfied with their overall employee experience

**52%**

say there are two separate cultures: one for the frontline and one for everyone else

**44%**

say their organization treats them like a number, not a person

# A Closer Look at Trust in Leadership

**33%**

of frontline employees **completely trust their direct manager**

**26%**

of frontline employees **completely trust their senior leaders**

**1 in 4**

Frontline employees **do not trust** their managers or senior leaders



# Communication Matters

**Q: How often does your organization communicate important information in your preferred language?**

Always/often **61%**

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Sometimes **30%**

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Never **9%**

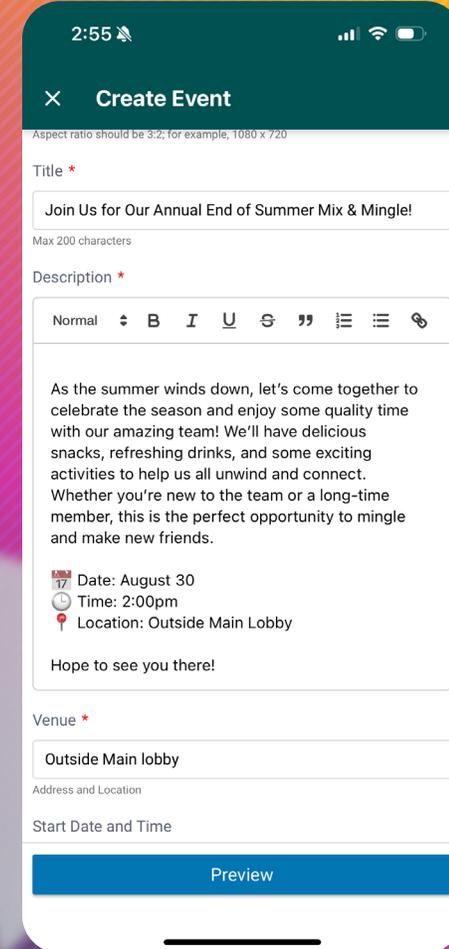
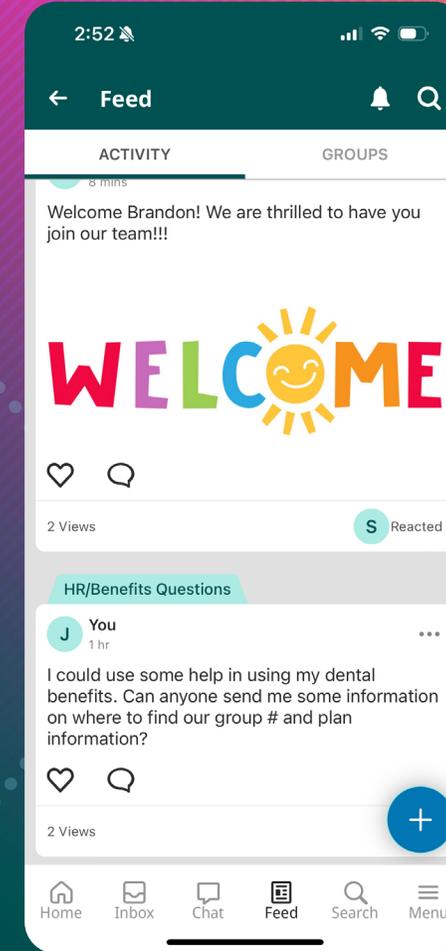


## RECOMMENDATION

# Nurture Trust and Belonging

Create an environment where frontline employees feel connected to the organization, leadership, and their colleagues

- Leadership transparency and authenticity
- Proactive and inclusive communication
- Feedback loop / stay interviews
- Action = words
- ERGs
- Corporate volunteer programs



# Key Insights: Frontline Job-Seeking Preferences

## MOST IMPORTANT FACTORS IN CHOOSING AN EMPLOYER

- 1 Pay/compensation **73%**
- 2 Work schedule **66%**
- 3 Work-life balance/flexibility **62%**
- 4 Location (proximity to home) **60%**
- 5 The nature of work itself **59%**

# Flexibility Matters

A photograph of two men in a factory setting. The man on the left is wearing a yellow hard hat and safety glasses. The man on the right is wearing a white hard hat with a green logo, safety glasses, and red ear protection around his neck. He is pointing towards the right with his right hand. They are both looking at a large white sheet of paper, likely a blueprint or set of plans, which is held by the man on the right. The background is a blurred industrial environment with various pieces of machinery and equipment.

**47%**

of frontline employees  
say it's difficult to  
change their shift for  
personal reasons

**34%**

of frontline leaders  
admit switching shifts  
is difficult for their  
frontline

# Flexible Work Options: Reality vs. Preferences

TOP 5  
USED BY  
ORGS

1

48%

2

37%

3

26%

4

25%

5

17%

METHOD



Flexible  
hours/self-  
scheduling



Shift trading with  
co-workers



Compressed  
workweek



Part-time work with  
no loss of benefits



Job  
sharing

TOP 5 EMPLOYEE  
PREFERENCES

85%

1

52%

4

68%

2

63%

3

33%

5

# Work-Life Balance: It *Really* Matters

**52%** of frontline employees would rather have more vacation time than a pay increase

## WHAT FRONTLINE EMPLOYEES WOULD GIVE UP FOR AN EXTRA WEEK OF PTO ANNUALLY

- 1 Learning & development opportunities **29%**
- 2 A promotion **26%**
- 3 Flexible work arrangements **25%**
- 4 A portion of my salary/wage **17%**
- 5 Nothing **31%**

# The Burnout Struggle is Real

A healthcare worker in blue scrubs and glasses is looking at a tablet in a hospital hallway. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people and hospital equipment.

**76%**

of frontline employees feel burned out, including 1/4 who say they're "always" or "often" burned out at work

**60%**

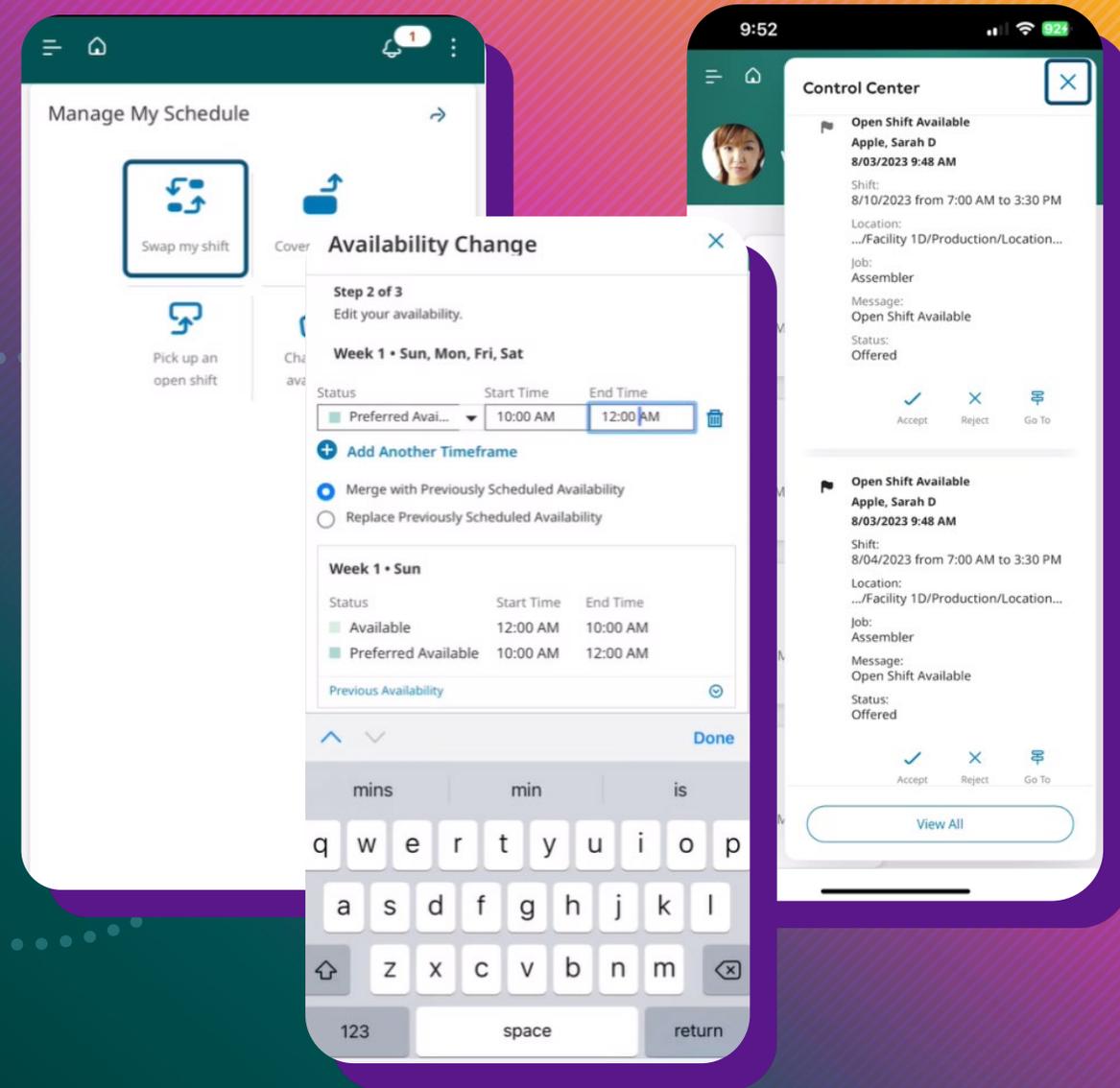
of frontline employees say they're pressured to be more productive without additional compensation

## RECOMMENDATION

# Support Work-Life Balance

Empower employees to have more control over when they work – and when they don't

- Shift preferences/availability
- Alternative shifts /schedules
- PTO programs
- Shift swapping
- Well-being benefits
- Childcare assistance



## Poll Question #2:

**What is the TOP reason that frontline employees would consider quitting their jobs?**

- a) Lack of flexibility
- b) Lack of benefits
- c) Lack of rewards or recognition
- d) Low pay
- e) Job negatively affects physical/mental well-being

# Key Insights: Voluntary Turnover Risk



**49%**

of frontline employees are tempted to quit on days when the job gets tough

## TOP 5 REASONS CANADA'S FRONTLINE EMPLOYEES WOULD QUIT

- 1 48% Low pay
- 2 36% Job negatively affects physical/mental wellbeing
- 3 33% Lack of benefits
- 4 32% Lack of recognition or rewards for their efforts
- 5 28% Lack of flexibility

# Compensation Matters

**65%**

of frontline employees report living paycheck to paycheck

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**54%**

Rely on overtime earnings to cover monthly expenses

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**71%**

Feel they have to work long hours to make ends meet

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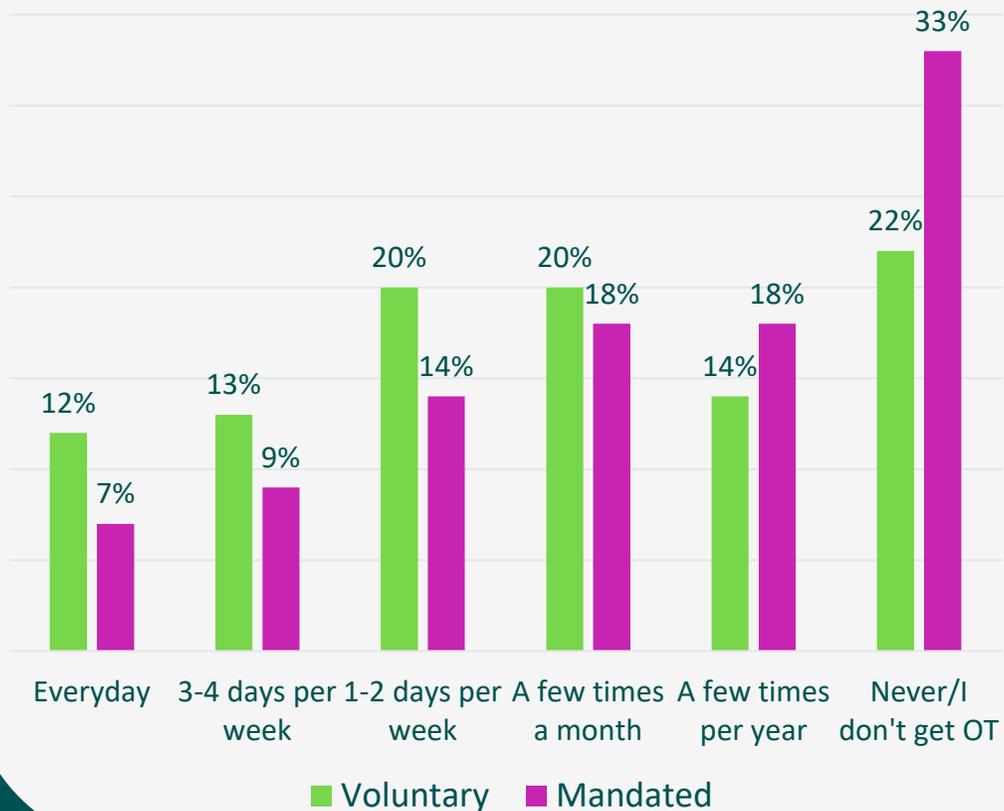
**More than 1 in 10**

say they have never received a pay raise (13%)

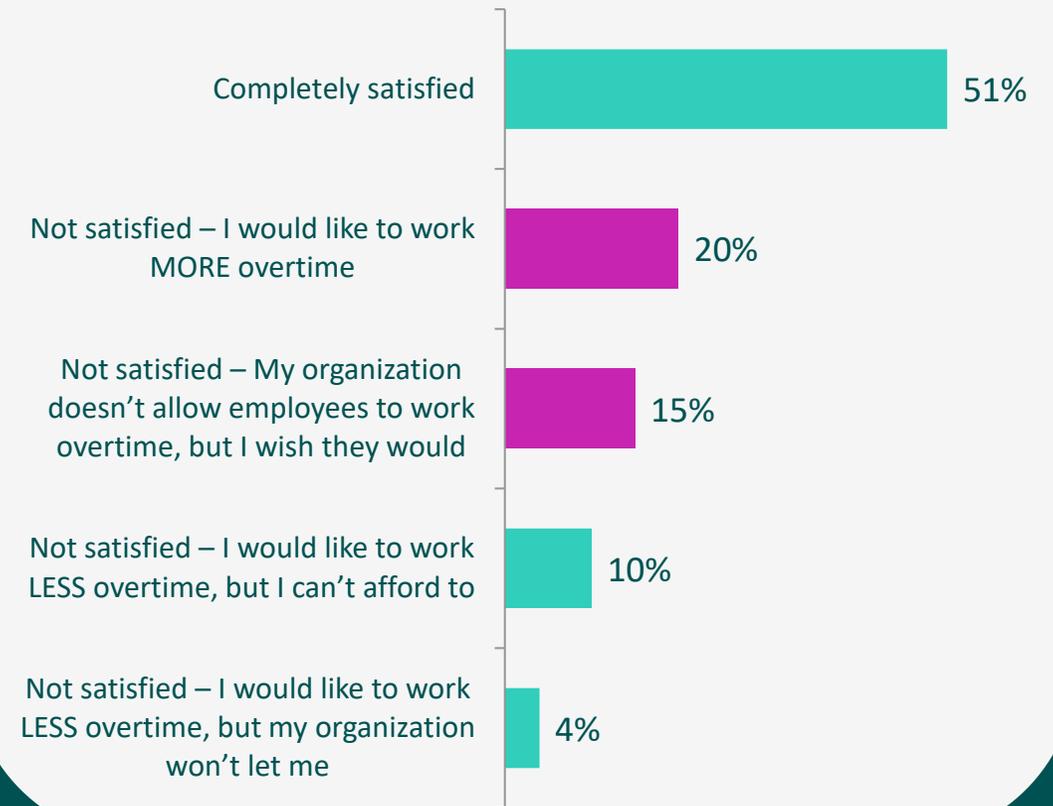


# Overtime Practices: Reality vs. Preferences

Q: How often do you work overtime?



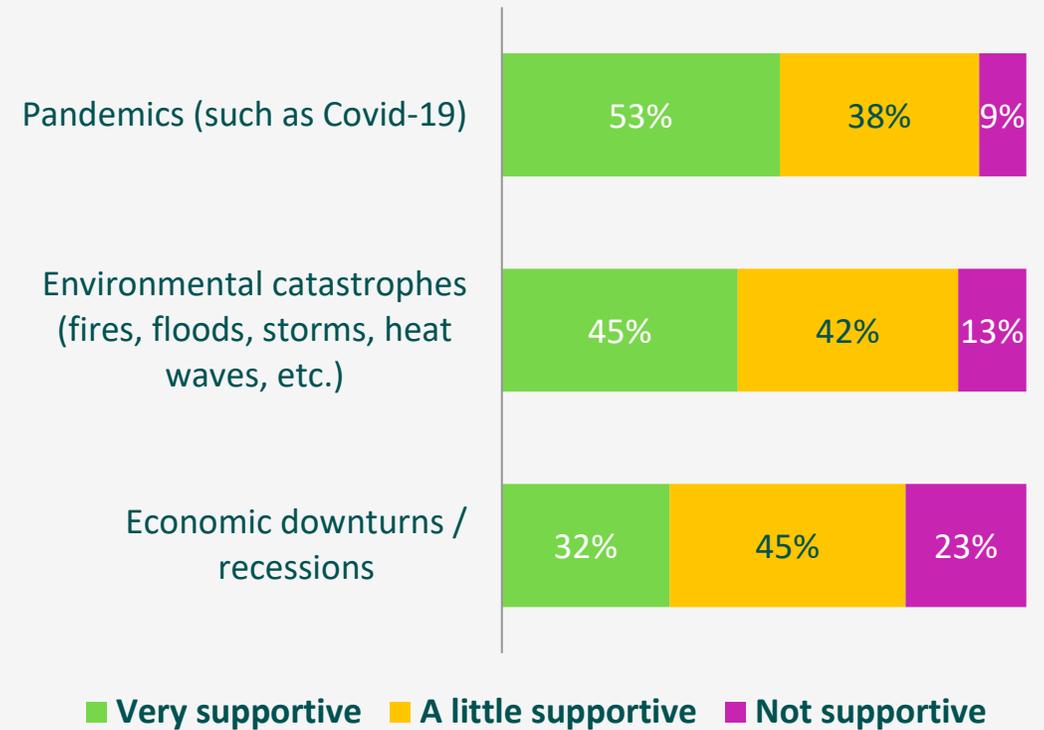
Q: How satisfied are you with the amount of overtime you work?



# Support During Difficult Times Matters



**Q: How supportive has your organization been in helping you deal with the following?**



# Support Preferences

## HOW EMPLOYEES WANT TO BE SUPPORTED DURING DIFFICULT TIMES BY THEIR ORG

Paid Time Off **58%**

Health & Wellness Benefits **51%**

Additional Financial Support **44%**

Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) **37%**

Clear Communications About Org Updates **33%**

Managerial Support & Empathy **25%**

**39%**

of organizations provide PTO and health or health & wellness benefits, while *just 20%* offer *additional financial support*, during difficult times

## RECOMMENDATION

# Facilitate Financial Wellness

Take a holistic approach by addressing employees' immediate needs and guiding them towards long-term financial stability

- Competitive compensation & benefits
- Equitable pay practices
- Accurate and timely paycheques
- Earned wage access
- Financial education tools
- Retirement savings plans



# Learning and Development (L&D) Matters



**72%**

of frontline employees are interested in learning new skills

**60%**

say continuous learning is important for personal and/or professional growth

**76%**

say they don't mind learning new skills on their own time

# A Closer Look at L&D

**34%**

of frontline employees spend less than an hour on learning and skills development activities per month, while *another 18% spend no time at all*

## TOP 5 SKILLS FRONTLINE EMPLOYEES SAY THEY NEED TO BETTER PERFORM IN THEIR ROLES

- 1 Technical skills (software, equipment, etc.) **36%**
- 2 Leadership and management skills **35%**
- 3 Communication skills **34%**
- 4 Functional skills related to my job, such as certifications, and additional training **32%**
- 5 Critical-thinking skills **32%**

### Poll Question #3:

**Other than a raise or promotion, how would frontline employees PREFER to be rewarded/recognized?**

- a) Paid time off
- b) Cash bonus
- c) Gift card
- d) Free meal
- e) Positive rating on their performance review

# Recognition Matters



**More than 1 in 5** frontline employees (22%) say they're *never* recognized by their managers

## HOW OFTEN FRONTLINE EMPLOYEES WOULD LIKE TO RECEIVE RECOGNITION FROM MANAGERS

- 1 Monthly **30%**
- 2 Quarterly **23%**
- 3 Weekly **19%**
- 4 Once a year **11%**
- 5 Semiannually **10%**

# Recognition Practices: Reality vs. Preferences

TOP 5  
USED BY  
ORGS

1

40%

2

38%

3

36%

4

32%

6

26%

METHOD



Cash  
bonus



Positive rating on  
performance review



Verbal praise in a 1:1  
meeting manager



Gift  
cards



Paid  
time off

TOP 5 EMPLOYEE  
PREFERENCES

66%

1

30%

4

N/A;  
#5 Free Meals (26%)

6

45%

3

58%

2

# The Technology Factor: Frontline Feelings

**82%**

say technology plays a role in enhancing their experience at work

**76%**

are open to using their personal device to manage some aspects of their work experience

# Workplace Technology Used by the Frontline



**46%** Employee scheduling



**27%** Self-service for benefits



**45%** Time and attendance



**24%** Learning & development



**43%** Communication



**23%** AI tools



**36%** Self-service for payroll



**10%** None of these

# Technology Improves the Employee Experience



**88%** Employee scheduling



**80%** Self-service for benefits



**87%** Time and attendance



**87%** Learning & development



**89%** Communication



**92%** AI tools



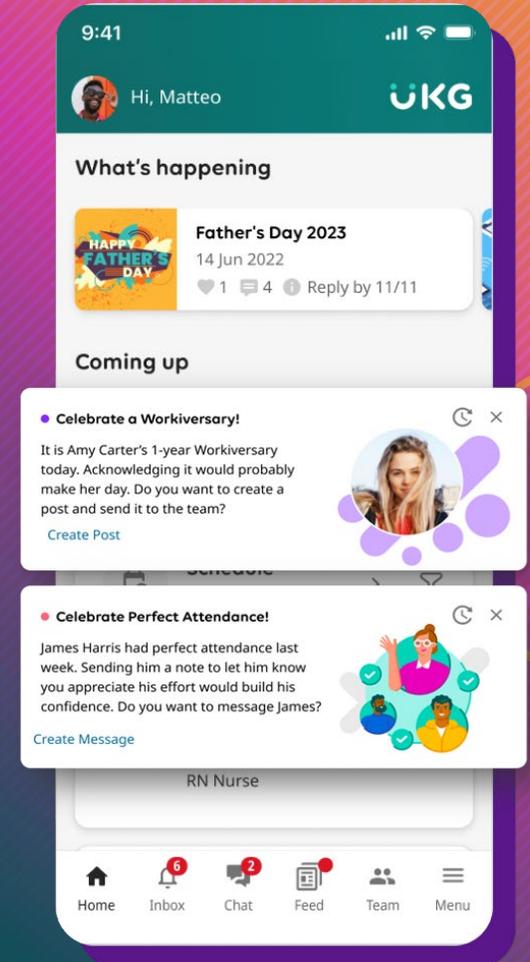
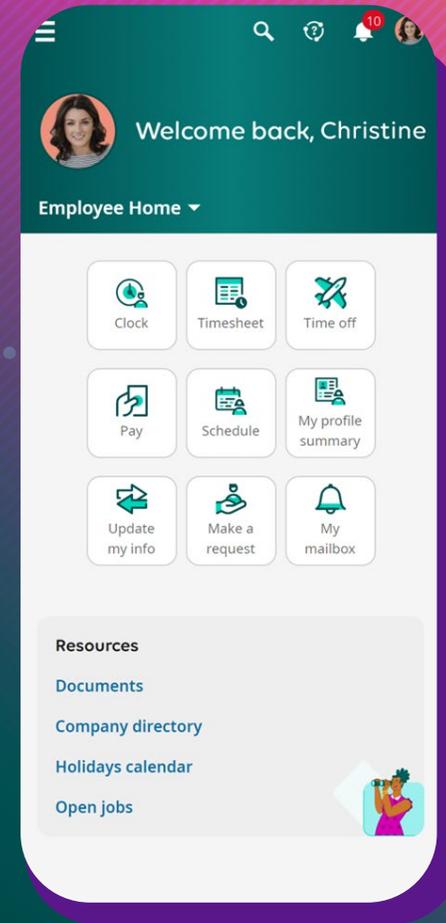
**86%** Self-service for payroll

## RECOMMENDATION

# Personalize the Experience

Create an environment where all frontline employees feel valued and can perform, learn, and grow

- Manager training programs
- Performance feedback and coaching
- Skills enhancement opportunities
- Cross-training and reskilling
- Culture of appreciation and recognition
- Technology access and enablement



# The Employee Experience is defined *every day* in key moments



Value me as a person



Support my work-life balance



Facilitate my financial wellness



Listen to my ideas



Celebrate my accomplishments



Communicate with me regularly



Foster a sense of community



Expand my skills and knowledge



# The Value of Focusing on the Frontline Employee Experience

People at high-trust companies report:

**74%**  
less stress

**13%**  
fewer sick days

**106%**  
more energy at work

**76%**  
more engagement

**50%**  
higher productivity

**40%**  
less burnout

When compared with people at low-trust companies

Source: Harvard Business Review, The Neuroscience of Trust

# Session Takeaways

Learned how employees feel about compensation, overtime, trust, leadership, well-being, workplace technology and more

Discovered what employers can do to support, engage, and retain frontline employees

Gathered actionable tips for building a resilient frontline

# THANK YOU!

## Let's Connect

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**Your Feedback  
is Appreciated!**

# Additional Resources – Coming soon to your Inbox!

1. A link to the **recording** of this webinar

2. A copy of the **slide deck** used in this presentation

3. Report: **Perspectives from the Frontline Workforce: A UKG Canada Study**



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Our purpose is people