

## [HEADLINE]

Is your company ready for 2025?

## [INTRO COPY]

As the country continues to evolve, the demands on employers are changing rapidly. More and more candidates are seeking employers that promote work-life balance, foster autonomy and flexibility, and encourage career development. They're also looking for companies and cultures that share their core values, are socially responsible, and have fair and equitable practices. So the age-old question remains: *How can you attract and retain top talent?*

Here, we'll uncover many ways you can differentiate your firm from the competition, while keeping up with the desires and demands of employees, to better prepare your business for the future.

## [SUBHEAD]

**The state of the workforce**

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As workforce dynamics continue to shift, there is a constant struggle to determine how to effectively attract and retain top talent. The new workforce majority brings significantly redefined expectations of an employer. Because of this, we've drifted from the concept of life-long loyalty to an employer. Instead, today's workers prefer short-term engagements that foster the development of skill sets and career advancement.

Aside from these new stipulations, we've also seen cultural shifts as society becomes more technology-dependent. Today, the internet is an intrinsic part of everyday life. We spend so much time attached to our smartphones that it's hard to imagine a world without them. And our social networks include a massive number of "connections," who may or may not have ever met us.

In the past, we've always relied on our networks to provide job referral. Now, entire online communities are relied on as a trusted resource for insight and guidance. Referrals even include information garnered from websites like Glassdoor or Indeed. A new world has opened, allowing people to share their experiences and rate previous and current employers — transforming our workplace into a marketplace.

The effects of this transformation include:

- **Freedom of choice:** Previous generations didn't have such a wide array of choices when it came to employers, so there was no lens of shopping around for the "perfect opportunity."
- **More-informed career decisions:** Since millennials and Gen Zers rely heavily on research and feedback for consumer decisions, accessing this information is a common practice when seeking employment.

A far cry from generations of the past, the new workforce has the world at its fingertips and regularly relies on that for decision making — even when it comes to employment. This is a paradigm shift that is proving to be challenging for even the savviest employers to navigate.

## **[SUBHEAD]**

### **The rise of the employer value proposition**

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As the “marketplace” model has evolved, it’s critical to remember that the job search is a two-way street — both the candidate and employer need to be sure that the relationship is a good fit. To learn more about who you are as an employer, candidates rely on websites and similar forums as the first step their job-search journey. This marks the beginning of the employee-organization relationship.

Studies show that about half of U.S. employees say they are actively searching for a new job or watching for openings. Recognizing access to an audience of more than half of *all* employees, the urgency of defining your value proposition should be crystal clear. Now is the time to build your message as to why people should choose you instead of a competitor.

## **[SUBHEAD]**

### **Creating a message that sticks**

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Developing your value proposition messaging is similar to developing your brand. They should be closely connected. Instead of communicating your market differentiator and value proposition to your customer base, you will customize it to address your candidate base. This is the step that many business owners struggle with because they build a message based on what they *think* the candidate is looking for.

The first step in building the messaging is understanding your workforce. It’s important to learn what is meaningful and valuable to that particular audience, so you can highlight how your organization operationalizes those expectations daily.

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### **Culture is separate from employer brand**

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Many organizations will start by defining their mission, vision, and values, thinking that these three components *are* their culture and brand.

It’s critical to realize that your culture is the outcome of the way you run the business. It’s a byproduct of how you operate. It’s the environment that is created as a result of your day-to-day choices.

Your culture can be defined by a few different things:

- How you communicate with employees
- How employees request time off
- How you assign job responsibilities
- How you onboard new hires
- How you terminate employees
- How you address performance issues
- Whether or not there are policies and procedures in place
- Whether or not policies and procedures are followed

And the list goes on. In essence, your culture is literally everything you do. That's why your company culture is such a major component driving the decision making for candidates.

## [SUBHEAD]

### **The top drivers of attraction**

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Look at any recent survey or study on what is important to job seekers and you'll likely find the following as top considerations for evaluating job opportunities:

1. **Total compensation (salary plus benefits)**  
This one's expected. Most generations will consider compensation and benefits first, based on fundamental human needs.
2. **Work culture**  
Company culture is a large part of the overall employee experience and seems to be a unique driver for both millennials and Gen Zers.
3. **Growth and development opportunities**  
Like we mentioned earlier, people are attracted to improving their own skill sets and continuing to find new ways to develop and advance their careers.

In order to attract the best and the brightest, you've got to understand your potential candidates. What are their top considerations when accepting a job? As you look ahead and prepare for 2025, also consider these other areas that that can help you attract the best and the brightest.

## [SUBHEAD 2]

### **Corporate social responsibility**

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Now more than ever, employees want to work for an organization whose values align with their own. They want to believe their employer is committed to the issues that impact society as a whole.

There seems to be an expectation that companies take a stand and take action. These decisions are examples of how your values are operationalized and how they will translate into a culture. As such, leveraging these types of messages will clearly articulate your culture and make it easier to attract top talent that is culturally aligned.

Employers that encourage employees to participate in initiatives that directly impact areas they are passionate about, and provide the opportunity to create positive change, will foster a sense of empowerment for millennials, ultimately making the company a more attractive place to work.

## **[SUBHEAD 2]**

### **Work-life balance**

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Millennials and Gen Zers are more likely to use paid time off (PTO) to focus on outside commitments than any of the previous generations. There is a strong emphasis to be present and involved in *all* aspects of their lives. As a result, there is a significant rise in the demands on work-life balance. This area is commonly discussed synonymously with flexibility practices; however, there is a stark difference here. In simplest terms, there is now an expectation that employers understand that employees “have a life outside of work” and create a workplace that allows and encourages employees to effectively manage both sets of responsibilities.

The traditional view of providing work-life balance revolves around PTO policies while the recent, “more evolved” approach being touted just increases the amount of time off – including offering sabbaticals, endless PTO, etc. The approach that is less commonly discussed (because it can be a very difficult challenge to overcome) is ensuring that there are adequate staffing levels, expectations and workload distribution to support employees struggling to balance expectations at work with the various roles they play in their lives.

Providing unlimited PTO banks, month-long sabbaticals or remote working arrangements aren’t the only ways to provide work-life balance. Make it clear that employees can handle personal matters, like scheduling doctor appointments or renewing drivers licenses, during business hours with the common assumption that everyone is a responsible adult who won’t abuse the practice or disrupt work deadlines. While not every company can accommodate these day-to-day requirements, the more common stressors that employees can eliminate, the more balance they will have.

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### **Autonomy and flexibility**

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Autonomy and flexibility are different from work-life balance in that autonomy and flexibility are really about providing your employees with the choice as to when, where and how they conduct their work. Employees who have a say in what projects they work on, and when and how they do them, are simply less prone to burnout.

The concept of flexibility is sometimes used synonymously with a casual environment. However, flexibility efforts may include non-traditional work arrangements such as:

- Not having assigned work hours, but instead relying on an employee to select the most productive time for their work style
- A part-time self-scheduling agreement where the employee is part time and flexes worked hours based on their personal situation on a week-to-week basis

- Telecommuting options where an employee can choose the best environment to conduct the day's work

Recognizing that Gen Zers typically have more entrepreneurial tendencies, and millennials crave autonomy, it seems logical that they would be attracted to businesses whose culture reflects those same qualities as evidenced by reviews from current employees.

The need for increased autonomy and flexibility can create a challenging dynamic to navigate for managers. It's critical to develop leaders that can coach for peak performance and delegate appropriately. Most people have heard the statement "people leave managers not jobs." So it makes sense that strong managers who promote autonomy and leverage the expertise of their employees play a critical role in getting top professionals in the door and making them stick around.

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### **Fair and equitable practices**

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As more and more people expect their organization to take a stand on impactful topics, it's logical that the new workforce also wants an employer that has fair and equitable practices. Pay equity is an area that has taken the limelight, with women across almost every industry echoing that they only earn a portion of what men earn. As a result, pay equity has risen to the forefront of many Americans' and legislators' concerns. The government halted data collection on large corporations' pay practices in 2017; however, the EEOC announced in March 2019 that this practice was reinstated.

Conducting your own internal audits to ensure that people in similar positions with similar experience levels are paid equitably will help build a culture of equality. This cannot exist without mechanisms in place to ensure internal equity. Some common pay practices – e.g., limiting salary increases for internal transfers to a certain percentage of their salary, including a maximum increase amount or moving them to the bottom of the next pay grade – can actually be a barrier to internal equity.

When this happens, it can drive dissatisfaction and disengagement. It may be best to leverage the same compensation methodology for both internal and external candidates. By creating a fair and equitable environment, current employees will become your advocates and even help you attract sought-after candidates.

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### **Development and career advancement**

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The internal transfer pay practice discussed above can also breed the thought process that it's better to quit and come back to an organization than to grow within it. This will be catastrophic to retaining millennials and Gen Zers because of their strong drive for advancement and development.

As previously discussed, having the opportunity to learn new skills is a top factor among candidates when applying to jobs. To be clear, there is a distinct difference between the historical appeal of hierarchy and the desire to grow one's skill set. The development doesn't necessarily require a promotion or even a title change. A best-practice solution is to encourage regular coaching and development conversations between managers and employees.

These conversations can focus on future career goals – including potential goals beyond your organization – and what knowledge, skills, and ability gaps exist in order to meet said goals. Each employee can then be given a development plan that includes things like taking on certain projects to strengthen a needed skill or potentially cross-training to learn a new skill set.

While it's not typically discussed in the light of employee development, artificial intelligence (AI) provides opportunities to expand existing skillsets and possibly redirect the workforce in the future. Traditional approaches such as professional development budgets and career paths are still important; however, it's more critical that development and advancement be the foundation of manager-employee relationships. By institutionalizing the practice, it becomes part of your culture and will help attract top talent.

## [SUBHEAD]

### Key takeaways to attract top talent

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- 1. Build a culture that creates brand ambassadors.**  
Rather than change your recruiting process or focus externally, make sure your values are engrained throughout your entire organization. Use your existing employees to naturally create a culture everyone would love to be a part of.
- 2. Ensure that your day-to-day practices match what you're communicating.**  
There's no quick fix when it comes to culture. Because it's created by how you choose to operate, you have to work toward it every day. When you decide to make a change, make sure your practice what you preach.
- 3. Make your job-search process streamlined and easy to use.**  
Remember, the job search can be a painful process. Work to build a better employee-employer relationship early on by making your process streamlined and communicating your value proposition early on.
- 4. Have personalized interactions with your candidate pool.**  
Instead of assuming you know what your candidates and employees want, why not ask them directly? Go straight to the source and understand what they define as valuable in a company.
- 5. Take action on socially relevant matters.**  
The workforce majority (millennials and Gen Zers) are attracted to organizations that take a stand and take action. They're proud to work for companies that impact their lives both professionally and personally.
- 6. Make work-life balance a real thing.**

This goes beyond PTO policies and sabbaticals. Instead, work to remove the stressors and challenges that cause employees to feel out of balance.

**7. Give your employees choices.**

Most employees crave autonomy and flexibility and experience lower rates of burnout if they're given the choice as to what to do, how to do it and when.

**8. Have practices in place to account for equity.**

A socially conscious workforce also craves fairness and equity. Ensure that you have practices in place so people in the same position with similar levels of experience are compensated equally.

**9. Foster a culture based on developmentally focused relationships.**

Work with staff members and management to ensure that employees feel they are being supported and developed on their professional journey.

**10. Commit for the long term.**

Being able to attract top talent requires a long-term commitment to becoming an employer of choice. To be ready for 2025, you have to take the necessary steps to ensure that your operations mirror your culture and employer brand.

**Want more insight on what you should be doing now to prepare your business for success in 2025 and beyond?** Insperity can help – learn how.