

DESK-FREE WORKERS:
THE ASSET BUSINESSES CANNOT AFFORD TO LOSE

Bridging the workforce disconnect





If leaders are to increase the retention of desk-free workers and drive higher productivity, they can start by working to understand what these individuals need and want. This includes looking into the reasons why they might quit, helping leaders to design and implement more effective retention strategies.

This is crucial to protect the bottom line because the costs of continually advertising, recruiting, and training new workers diverts resources and depletes profit. The time taken by HR employees and other managers means they are not focusing on other, more strategic, higher value tasks – they are just fighting fires every day. This stifles growth, stopping an organisation reaching its potential.

The lack of connectivity between desk-free workers and other areas of an organisation increases disengagement and hinders productivity. This low morale and high churn rate trickles across the business to impact many other workers on the frontline, leading to a negative impact on customer service.

Unfilled vacancies put additional stress and pressure on remaining desk-free workers, risking more fatigue from burnout and even more

workers quitting. The ‘revolving door’ of frequent new staff undermines the organisation’s ability to build effective relationships with customers which can be critical for growing a successful business, while co-workers soon become disenchanted with the idea of having to onboard and train yet another new recruit.

Employee engagement is increasingly being recognised as important for overall business success. According to a [recent poll by Gallup](#), highly engaged teams are 21% more productive. While many organisations now understand this and have strategies in place to improve it, many are overlooking a crucial section of the workforce in this process.

They often focus their engagement efforts on office-based staff, using computer-based engagement platforms and regular digital communication. While this is of course vital, many businesses don’t include their desk-free workers in these processes and according to [research by Blink](#), almost four in ten (37%) of frontline workers feel less valued than colleagues in desk-based jobs.

37%

of desk-free workers feel less valued than office-based colleagues



A number of recent studies also demonstrate the considerable disconnect between what desk-free workers need and want, and how these are perceived by senior management. Possibly contrary to assumption, many frontliners are looking for career opportunities with their employer and are not just using the job as a stepping stone while they consider other possibilities.

According to [Kahoot's 2023 Workplace Culture Report](#) a significant 64% of workers say that being given training and better career support would encourage

them to stay with their employer on average six years longer, and 44% said they would stay for at least ten years.

This is even more of an incentive for younger workers, with 49% of Millennials and 51% of Gen Z staff saying they would stay for at least a decade for improved training and career development opportunities. Other motivators that encourage people to stay in a job include feeling appreciated by leaders and/or customers, having flexibility around shifts, and working in a fun, friendly environment.





For their part, leaders will focus on overall business strategy, looking at the bigger picture of revenue, cash flow, and growth potential. These are outside of the daily concerns of the direct service employee, who can nonetheless identify grassroots issues in the business around inadequate staffing and poor team communication.

There may be considerable frustration among desk-free workers that the powers that be are not dealing more effectively with these. Crucially, by working to address the concerns of desk-free employees that often lead to disengagement, low productivity, and churn, leaders can have a direct positive impact on the efficiency, cash flow, and profit that will help them achieve their business objectives.





Communication between head office and the desk-free workforce is a frequent stumbling block, preventing senior management from adequately communicating important messages to staff while also denying desk-free workers access to information about career opportunities and promotions.

Being desk-free means the usual ways organisations share information via employee-wide emails and other communication channels do not apply.

[Around 80%](#) of the global workforce does not work in front of a computer and many desk-free workers are busy in store, out on the road, or on the shop floor, quite removed from the organisational chatter.

Businesses can improve streams of communication for these dynamic workers who are always 'on the go' by using other digital communications via

smartphones and devices, but in the majority of cases, the most appropriate funnel for information is the direct manager who works alongside them.

When leaders use appropriate methods such as workforce questionnaires, consulting with individuals and managers, and other opportunities such as exit interviews, they can build a more accurate picture of what their desk-free workforce needs and what motivates them.

This will allow leaders to help foster increased stability and consistency within the workforce with reduced churn, enabling them to focus on the wider business strategy built upon a sustainable, engaged workforce that can deliver on its objectives.

Takeaway:

To ensure all employees have equal access to organisational information, leaders must turn to other channels rather than just emails or digital bulletin boards.

Desk-free workers value having a supportive manager and these frontline managerial employees are key to ensuring everyone is kept up to date, feels integrated into the culture, engaged with the business, and knows about career opportunities such as promotions and training.

They work alongside the desk-free team and understand firsthand the everyday challenges and problems they have to overcome. Investment in training for frontline managers, particularly around communication skills and ensuring they have time to communicate regularly with their whole team can help bridge the disconnect.



How can we help?

Purposeful conversations between people and their managers are at the very heart of OneAdvanced's Performance & Talent software. This technology helps managers to ensure their employees feel supported to reach their goals, giving them clarity around expectations, and looking after their wellbeing too. It enables conversations that drive meaningful workplace relationships, while also helping to embed company values across the workforce. Some of the other benefits offered by this workforce management solution include:

Boosted productivity

Managers can uncover blockers within their teams in real-time and intervene much sooner. Workers can seamlessly ask for assistance with challenges they may be facing. And discussion prompts ensure that time spent with employees is meaningful too, rather than having a meeting with no direction/purpose.

Clarity around performance and development

Employees understand what is expected of them, with each objective having key deliverables attached, allowing them to see how they're performing against individual goals as well as how this is contributing to wider organisational success. They also have more control over their own development and can schedule conversations with managers to discuss career progression.

Greater recognition

Worker motivation is increased as they are frequently recognised for their efforts. They don't have to wait until an arbitrary date (such as an annual appraisal) to give or receive feedback, it's a continuous process. Employees inevitably become more engaged leading to greater staff retention.

Performance & Talent allows you to listen to your people and truly understand their needs, thus boosting wellbeing, company loyalty, and employee satisfaction. You can equitably measure staff performance and make data-driven decisions around planning/task-allocation. Empower your employees to reach their full potential and implement performance practices that drive positive organisational results.

A large, bold, orange graphic consisting of the characters '2M+' in a sans-serif font. The '2' and 'M' are significantly larger than the '+' symbol.

pieces of feedback given and received on OneAdvanced's Performance & Talent

Powering the world of work

OneAdvanced is a leading provider of sector-focused software, headquartered in Birmingham, UK. Our mission is to power the world of work through software that effortlessly gets the job done for our customers giving them the freedom to focus on thriving for their customers and people.

Customers trust OneAdvanced to deliver digitalisation through innovative technology, addressing business problems through intelligent insight. Our years of sector knowledge means we are a strategic partner to our customers, who use technology that touches the lives of millions of people every day. From caring for patients in the NHS and social care to meeting tenants housing needs; supporting learners in education and apprenticeships to navigating complex legal matters; and making sure goods get to their destination on time navigating complex supply chains.

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