

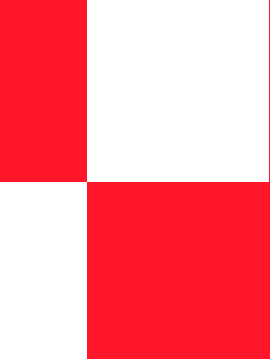


The Trust Advantage:

How New Zealand's Best
Workplaces Are Shaping the
Future of Work

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170+ countries.
Every year.

Great Place To Work®



Rebecca Moulynox

General Manager

**Great Place To Work®
Australia & New
Zealand**

A Message from the General Manager

The workplace landscape in New Zealand is at a crossroads. After analysing data from employees across our Certified™ organisations and comparing it with typical New Zealand workplaces, one truth emerges with startling clarity: trust in leadership isn't just a cultural nicety, it's the defining factor that separates thriving organisations from struggling ones.

This year's insights reveal both encouraging progress and urgent challenges. Great workplaces have mastered what others are desperately trying to achieve: psychological safety that drives performance, multi-generational leadership that honours individual needs while building cohesive teams, and cultures of innovation that position organisations to lead rather than follow technological transformation.

Yet even within our best workplaces, critical gaps persist. The 21-percentage-point drop in women's representation from individual contributors to executives, signals that our work on equity is far from complete. The trust deficit among mid-career employees aged 26-34 reminds us that optimism without delivery breeds cynicism. And while we've built retention rates that outpace typical workplaces by 32 percentage points, the broader New Zealand workforce faces rising psychological distress and workplace mental health challenges that demand industry-wide action.

The organisations featured in this report, Hilton, Rothbury, and Cisco, demonstrate what's possible when leaders choose courage over comfort. They show us that psychological safety isn't about creating soft workplaces, but rather environments robust enough to handle honest conversations, ambitious enough to pursue continuous innovation, and inclusive enough to unlock the potential of every individual.

As we look ahead, the choice for New Zealand leaders is clear. They can build on the trust foundation that differentiates great workplaces, or watch as talent migrates to competitors who understand that culture is paramount. In today's era of AI transformation and multi-generational workforce dynamics, culture isn't just important, it's everything.

The data in this report provides the roadmap. The question is whether we have the collective will to follow it.

About Great Place To Work, Certification™ and Best Workplaces™ Lists

For over 30 years, Great Place To Work's Certification, Best Workplaces Lists, and global benchmarks have set the industry standard—built on annually updated data from more than 20 million employees across 170 countries.

We are the global authority on workplace culture, providing leaders and organisations with the recognition and tools needed to build a thriving workforce and drive strong employee engagement that ultimately improves the bottom line.

Our employee sentiment data is collected directly and confidentially from employees, enabling employers to leverage workplace culture insights to achieve tangible business results and a clear return on investment by enhancing the employee experience.



Certification is based on the results of our confidential Trust Index employee survey. Companies who meet the required Trust Index score are Certified™ 'great' for 12 months.

The global authority on workplace culture

01

Certification & Lists

Our recognition is the most coveted and respected in the world for elevating employer brands to attract and retain the right people.

03

Research & Insights

Our tenable research empowers organisations to build cultures that retain talent and unlock the potential of every employee.

02

Platform & Data

Our proprietary methodology and survey platform enables organisations to truly capture, analyze, and understand the experience of all employees.

04

Resources & Community

Our experienced culture experts, data-driven content, and For All Community connect the boldest leaders, ideas, and innovations in employee experience.

Great Place To Work®

The State of New Zealand Workplaces: What the Data Reveals



This data represents employees across NZ’s most progressive workplaces, revealing the stark reality of workplace performance gaps that separate exceptional organisations from the rest.

Trust in leadership is the sharpest divide

55% of employees at Best Workplaces report a great deal of trust, compared with only 25% in Typical Workplaces. Confidence in leadership directly translates to psychological safety, with scores as high as 87% in Best Workplaces but just 51% in Typical ones.

Best Workplaces refers to companies on the Best Workplaces in New Zealand™ list for 2025.

Certified Companies refers to companies on the Great Place To Work® Certified™ list for 2025.

Typical Workplaces refers to a separate market study by Great Place To Work® in March 2024.

The NZ Typical Workplace data was gathered in a 2024 Great Place To Work® survey of over 43,000 employees covering typical workplaces in 69 countries around the world.

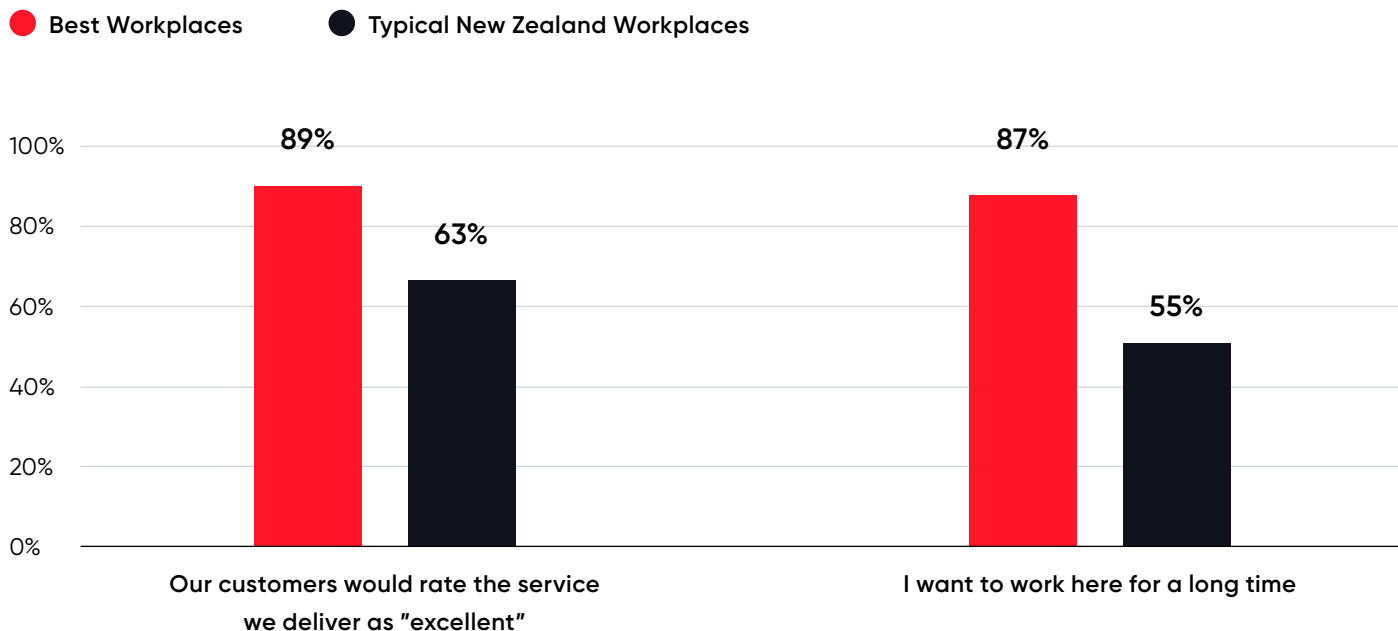
Percentage of Employees with Great Deal of Trust in their Leadership



Leadership trust is the cultural fault line separating thriving organisations from struggling ones.



The data shows a direct correlation between confidence in executive leaders and psychological safety. Employees with a great deal of confidence in their leadership report safety scores as high as 96% in Best Workplaces, compared with just 51% in typical workplaces. Conversely, where employees have little or no confidence in leaders, psychological safety plunges, underlining trust as the single strongest predictor of whether people feel safe to speak up.

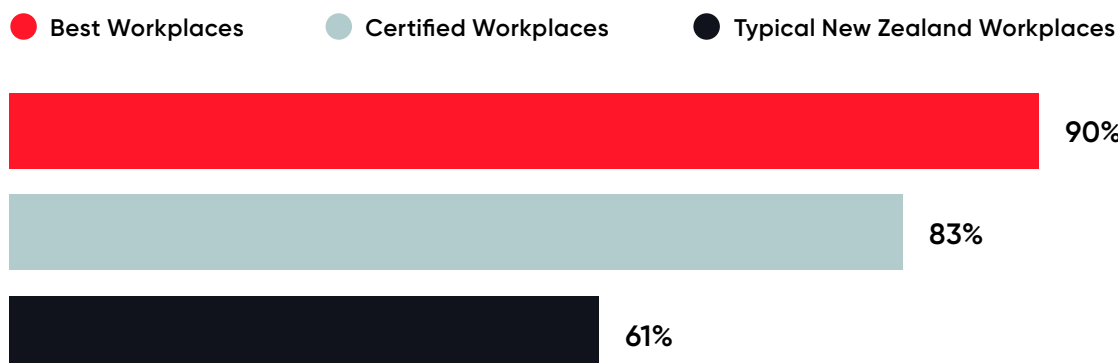


When trust and safety are strong, the impact is unmistakable. 89% of Best Workplaces' employees believe customers would rate service as "excellent", compared to only 63% in typical workplaces. Retention tells the same story: 87% want to stay long-term at Best Workplaces, versus 55% in typical ones.

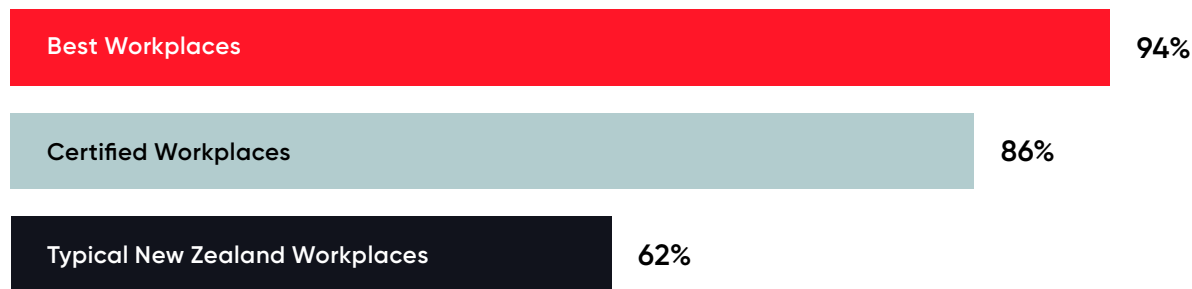
Trust doesn't just feel good, it shows up in customer loyalty and employee commitment.

Trust Index

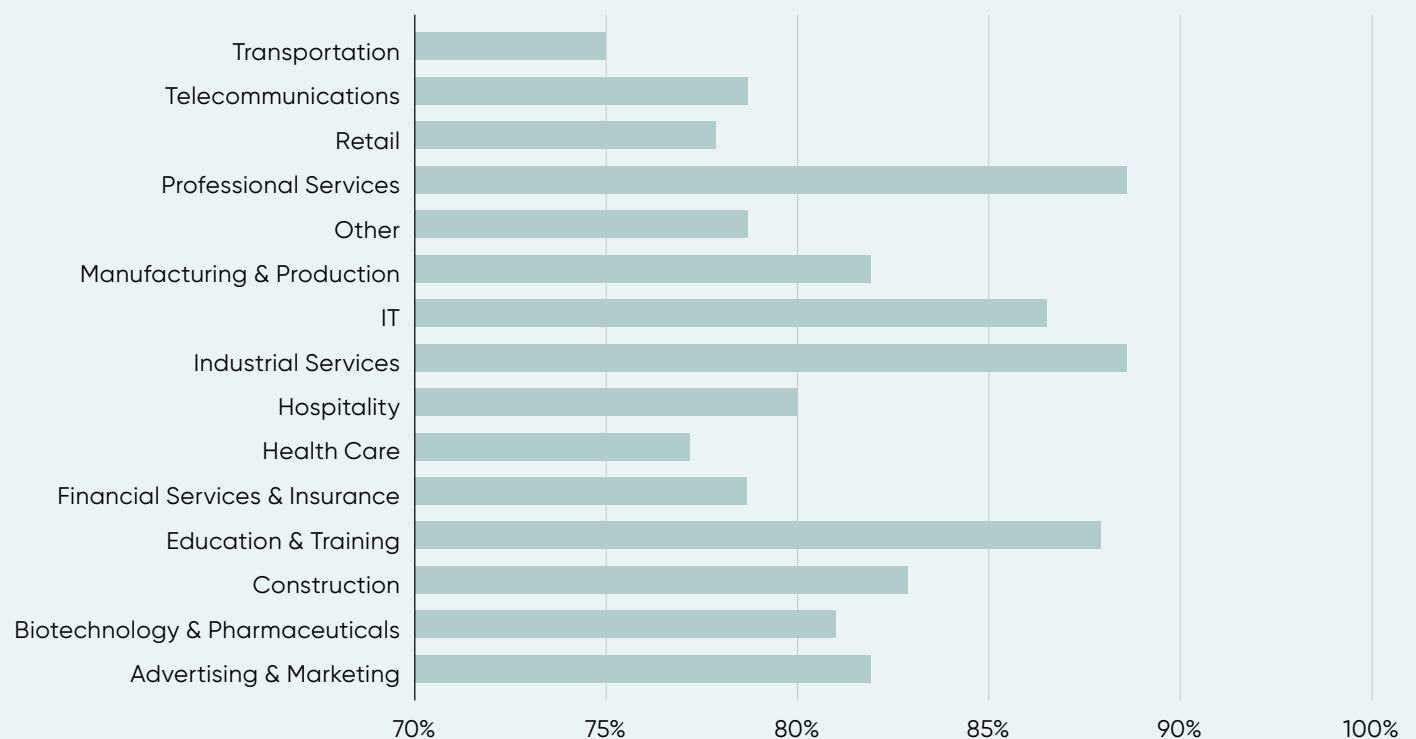
The Trust Index™ is the average of all Great Place To Work® survey questions that measure trust, pride, and camaraderie in the workplace.



Taking everything into consideration I would say this is a Great Place To Work



Great cultures aren't fragile; they endure, adapt and continue to deliver.



Trust Index scores stretch from around 70% in Telecommunications to nearly 90% in Advertising & Marketing.

Some industries set a higher bar, showing what's possible, and where others risk being left behind.

82% of employees at Best Workplaces say they have meaningful opportunities to develop, compared to just 61% in Typical Workplaces.

Meaningful Opportunities to Develop

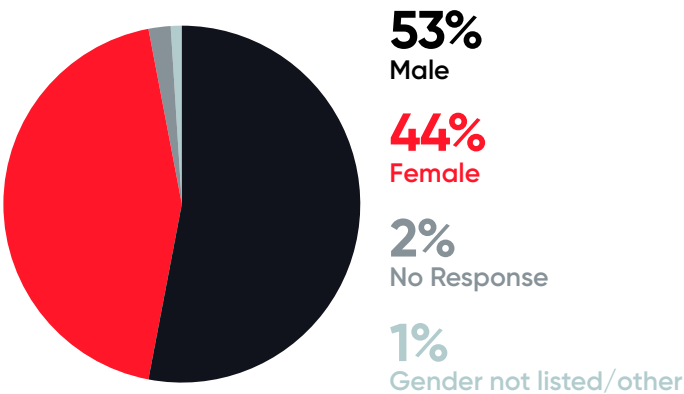


When people see a path forward, they bring more energy and ambition to their work.

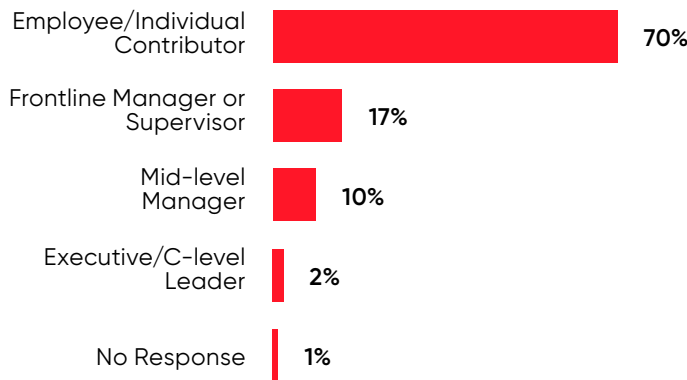
The data reflects a diverse, tenured, contributor-focused workforce: 53% are male, 69% have more than 2 years tenure, and 70% are individual contributors. This is the retained talent that other organisations are struggling to keep, and their commitment to Great Workplaces shows what it takes to win the war for talent.

This is the emerging backbone of the workforce, and their expectations will shape the future of work.

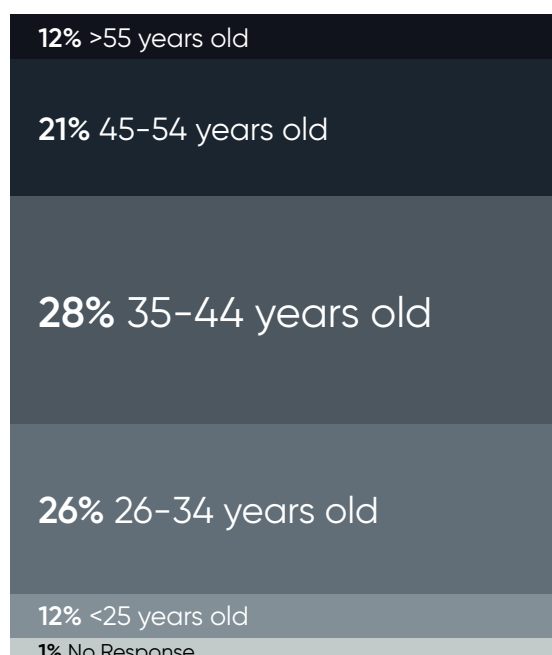
Respondents by Gender



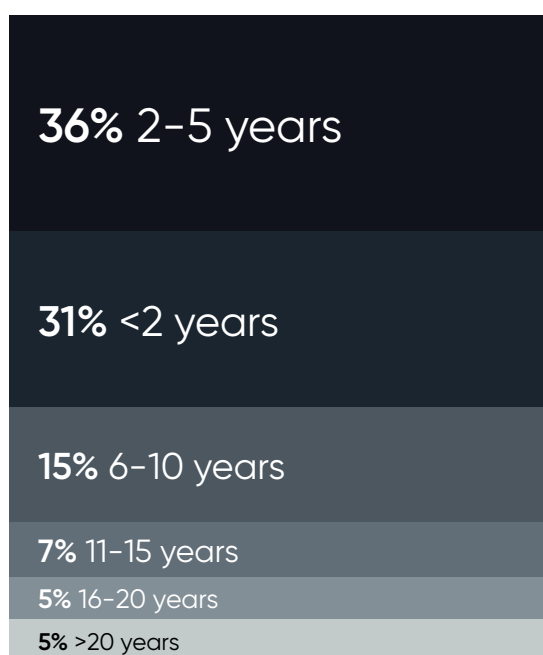
Respondents by Job Type



Respondents by Age

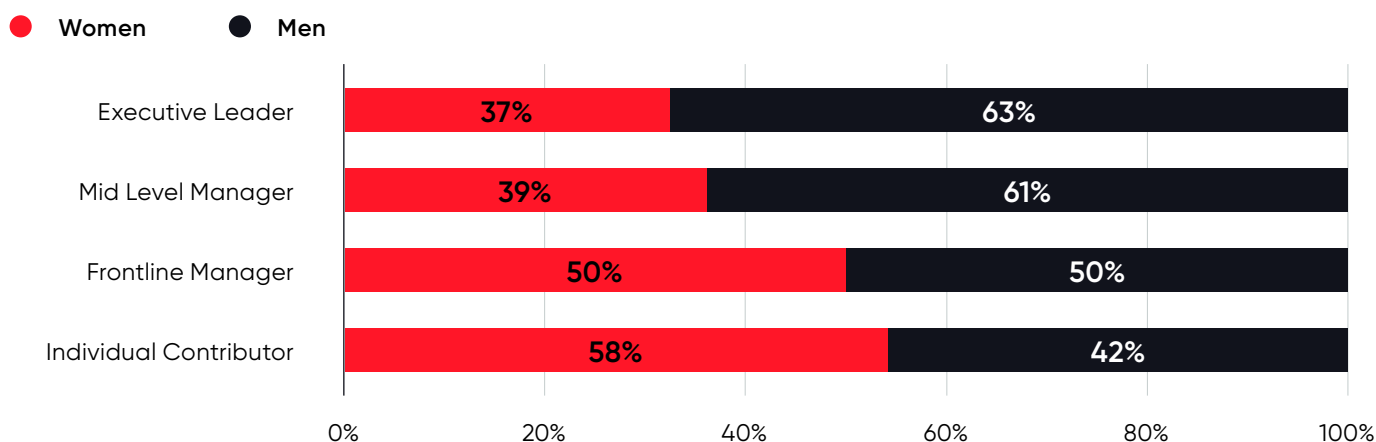


Respondents by Tenure



The pipeline is leaky, equity in leadership remains unfinished business.

Men & Women by job level



While women make up 58% of individual contributors, they drop to just 37% at the executive level.

This data reveals one truth above all: trust in leadership is the defining characteristic separating New Zealand's best workplaces from the rest. Where employees have confidence in their executives, psychological safety flourishes, retention soars, and customer service excellence follows. Great workplaces demonstrate that cultures built on trust can sustain remarkable performance across industries. Yet critical gaps persist, women's representation plummets as they climb the organisational ladder, and while development opportunities exist, they vary significantly between the best and typical workplaces. With a stable, tenured workforce already demonstrating exceptional loyalty, New Zealand's challenge is clear: build on this trust foundation to fix the leadership pipeline and development gaps before the talent war intensifies.



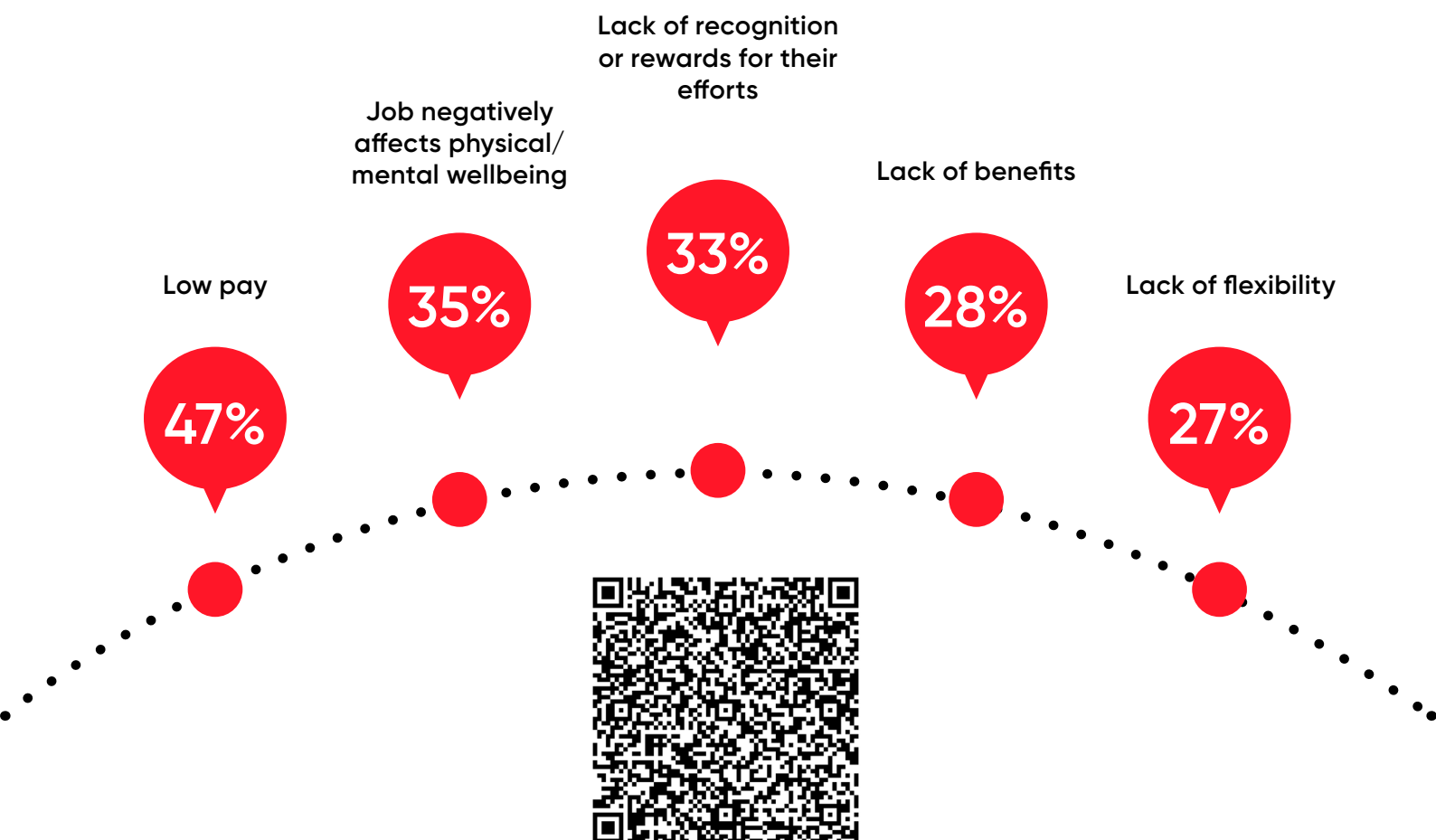
The Frontline Reality: A Hidden Workforce Crisis

While great workplaces demonstrate exceptional performance, a broader crisis affects New Zealand's frontline workforce, the employees who are individual contributors and must be physically present to do their jobs. Recent global research from UKG, covering nearly 13,000 frontline workers including those in New Zealand, reveals the stark challenges facing this critical workforce segment.

The frontline workforce comprises approximately 80% of the global working population, yet they face significantly different challenges than their corporate counterparts. The research shows that 75% of frontline employees globally feel burned out, 55% are dissatisfied with their overall employee experience, and 42% say their organisation treats them like a number, not a person. Most concerning for New Zealand organisations, nearly half (49%) of frontline employees report there are two separate cultures, one for the frontline and one for everyone else.

This data provides crucial context for understanding why Great Workplaces achieve such superior retention rates. While typical workplaces struggle with frontline disengagement, certified organisations have already built the trust foundations and recognition systems that address these fundamental challenges. The 32 percentage point retention advantage of Great Workplaces becomes even more significant when viewed against this backdrop of widespread frontline dissatisfaction.

Top 5 Reasons Why Frontline Employees Would Quit



Read the full report
from UKG here

A woman with blonde hair tied back is sitting at a white desk in a modern office. She is wearing a dark red polka-dot top and black boots, looking down at a laptop. On the desk are a black water bottle, a small jar, and some papers. The background features a wooden wall, a black pendant light, and a glass partition. A solid red square is in the top right corner.

New Zealand's Psychological Safety Challenge: Why Leadership Trust Makes All the Difference

There's a workplace crisis hiding in plain sight. While NZ's Best Workplaces achieve 87% psychological safety, typical workplaces tell a different story: 42% of employees fear speaking to management, 33% can't be authentic at work, and 55% don't look forward to coming to work each day.

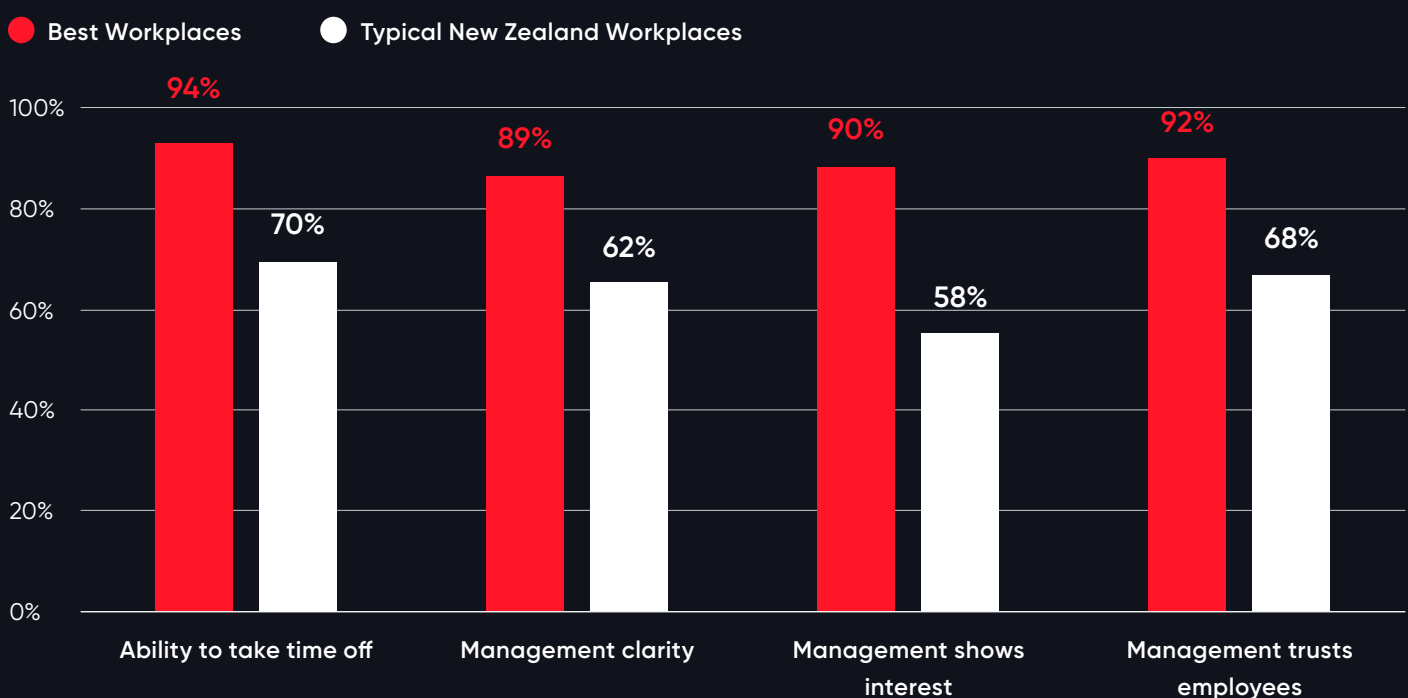
With psychological distress affecting 13% of New Zealand adults, rising from 8.3% just five years ago, and 35% of workers exposed to harmful workplace behaviours annually, this isn't just about satisfaction. It's about performance and people's wellbeing.

Countering the Burnout Epidemic

The workplace burnout crisis has reached epidemic proportions globally, with UKG research showing 75% of frontline workers experiencing burnout and 35% citing that their job negatively affects their physical and mental wellbeing. In New Zealand specifically, psychological distress is rising sharply, affecting 13% of adults, up from 8.3% just five years ago, while 35% of workers report exposure to harmful workplace behaviours annually according to WorkSafe data. This burnout epidemic drives a devastating cycle: 46% of frontline employees are tempted to quit on difficult days, while 22% say interactions with leadership have increased their likelihood of leaving. The financial and human cost is staggering, with burnout-related turnover, absenteeism, and decreased productivity costing organisations millions annually.

However, Best Workplaces have discovered the antidote to burnout through psychological safety and supportive management practices. The contrast is striking: 94% of employees at Best Workplaces are able to take time off when they need it compared to only 70% in typical New Zealand workplaces. Management clarity and support create protective buffers against burnout, 89% of Best Workplace employees say management makes expectations clear versus only 62% in typical workplaces, while 90% feel management shows sincere interest in them as people compared to just 58% elsewhere. Perhaps most critically, 92% say management trusts them to do a good job without micromanaging, compared to only 68% in typical New Zealand workplaces. This isn't just about feeling good, it's about creating sustainable work environments where people can perform at their best without sacrificing their mental and physical health.

Comparison of Employee Experience: Best Workplaces vs Typical Workplaces





Leadership Trust Changes Everything

The research reveals one critical factor: **executive credibility creates a 66 percentage point swing in psychological safety.** Employees with high confidence in leadership report 96% psychological safety versus just 30% for those with low confidence.

At Best Workplaces, the leadership behaviours are straightforward but consistently executed:

88%

say their leaders' actions
match their words

91%

find them approachable and
easy to talk with

89%

say leadership makes people
look forward to work

Compare this to typical workplaces where only 58% can get straight answers from management and just 67% can be themselves at work.

The Bottom-Line Impact

Psychological safety transforms business performance in measurable ways:

Retention & Engagement:

87%

want to work there long-term
(vs 55% typical)

91%

recommend their company to
others (vs 58% typical)

89%

look forward to work
(vs 45% typical)

Customer Excellence

Best Workplaces achieve 89% customer service excellence compared to just 63% at typical workplaces, a 26 percentage point gap.

Best Workplaces

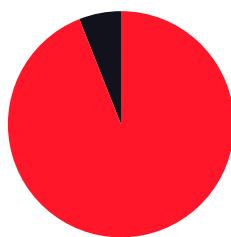
89%

Typical New Zealand
Workplaces

63%

Longevity Advantage

While satisfaction typically drops over time, psychological safety flips this completely. In safe workplaces, satisfaction peaks at 16-20 years, with veterans maintaining 94% satisfaction even after 20+ years.



94%

Satisfaction rate in safe workplaces
even after 20+ years





True Inclusion Through Safety

Psychological safety delivers genuine equity where many diversity programmes fall short. Best Workplaces show perfect gender parity for both women and men, with traditionally marginalised groups reporting high psychological safety scores: LGBTQIA+ employees (83%), and employees with disabilities (89%).

Five Key Leadership Behaviours

The transformation comes from leaders who consistently:

- Admit mistakes first
- Give straight answers
- Treat everyone equally regardless of position
- Stay genuinely approachable
- Set realistic expectations

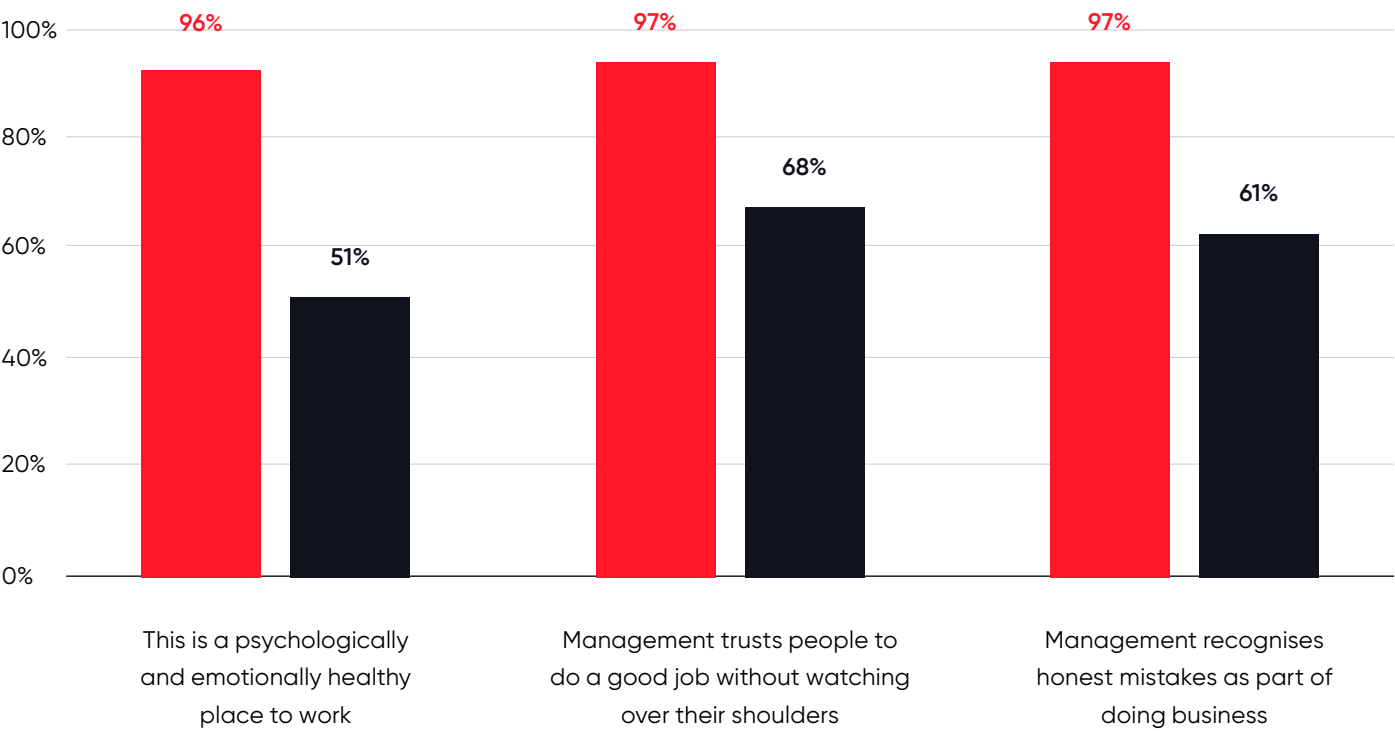
At Best Workplaces, 92% know management recognises honest mistakes as part of business, while 93% feel treated as full members of the organisation.

The Choice for New Zealand Leaders

The contrast is stark and the opportunity enormous. NZ leaders face a clear choice: continue managing through fear while talent migrates to psychologically safer competitors, or embrace the leadership behaviours that create environments where both people and businesses thrive.

The data shows the path forward. The question is whether leaders will have the courage to take it.

- Typical New Zealand Workplaces
- NZ Best Workplaces with a Great Deal of Confidence in their Executive Leaders





Hilton: Building Psychological Safety Through Leadership That Walks the Talk

As New Zealand's #1 Best Workplace for 2025 and the #1 World's Best Workplace in 2023, Hilton exemplifies how psychological safety becomes the foundation for exceptional workplace culture. The global hospitality leader demonstrates that sustained excellence comes from creating environments where all 460,000 team members across 139 countries feel genuinely safe to be themselves.



Leading from the Top

Hilton's approach to psychological safety starts with visible leadership. CEO Chris Nassetta is consistently present across the business, demonstrating approachable leadership that sets the cultural tone. This visibility creates what Kay Harriman, Senior HR Director, describes as a culture where "inclusion is a choice", one that leaders actively make every day through their behaviour and interactions.

The company's leadership framework centres on "Inspire Others," encouraging leaders to create environments team members genuinely want to be part of while balancing decisiveness with inclusion and respect. This approach ensures psychological safety isn't just a policy, but a lived experience driven by leadership actions.

The Four Pillars Framework

Hilton's "Thrive at Hilton" value proposition builds psychological safety through four interconnected pillars: Inclusion, Wellness, Growth, and Purpose. The Inclusion pillar specifically creates environments where people feel valued, listened to, and experience true belonging, essential elements of psychological safety.

This framework recognises that psychological safety extends beyond simply feeling comfortable at work. It encompasses the ability to bring one's whole self to work, contribute meaningfully, and feel connected to something greater than individual tasks.

Mental Health and Wellbeing Support

Hilton's "Care for All" platform demonstrates how psychological safety translates into concrete support systems. With 85% of team members reporting comfort discussing mental wellbeing with managers and 88% feeling balanced and healthy, the company has created environments where seeking help is normalised rather than stigmatised.

The organisation provides comprehensive support including Employee Assistance Programs, on-site counsellors, and monthly mental wellbeing webinars. Innovative approaches like the "Escape Room" decompression space at Hilton Barra Rio de Janeiro show how psychological safety can be embedded in physical workplace design.

Voice and Empowerment

Perhaps most significantly, Hilton's "My Voice Matters" campaign, an eight-week listening initiative, enables leaders to receive feedback while providing team members space to share their stories. With 93% of participants reporting their voice matters at Hilton, this programme demonstrates how psychological safety requires active listening structures, not just open-door policies.

This empowerment extends to guest-facing situations where team members feel safe making decisions to resolve issues and learn from experiences when things don't go to plan. Such empowerment only works in psychologically safe environments where people trust they won't be punished for well-intentioned mistakes.

Hilton's sustained success across multiple global markets demonstrates that psychological safety isn't just about employee wellbeing, it's a business strategy that drives performance, retention, and guest satisfaction in one of the world's most demanding industries.





Leading Across Generations: Bridging the Trust Gap in New Zealand's Multi-Generational Workplace

NZ workplaces face a critical challenge: leading up to five generations simultaneously, from Gen Z digital natives to Baby Boomers approaching retirement. The tenure data tells a striking story, 67% of employees have been with their current employer for less than 5 years (31% staying 2-5 years, 36% staying less than 2 years), while only 5% remain over 20 years. This rapid turnover means organisations must constantly attract, engage, and retain talent across vastly different generational expectations and career stages. Understanding generational differences isn't just about accommodation, it's about unlocking the full potential of a diverse workforce where each generation brings unique skills and perspectives.

The Trust Deficit: Mid-Career Crisis

The data reveals a concerning trust gap, particularly among mid-career employees aged 26-34, who consistently report the lowest confidence in leadership:

Management competence



Leadership integrity



Promise delivery



The promise delivery gap is most concerning, a substantial 6 percentage point difference suggesting early workplace optimism gives way to cynical assessment.

Career advancement perceptions follow similar patterns: employees under 25 show the highest agreement (82%) that promotions go to deserving candidates, dropping to 75% among the 26-34 group.

What Each Generation Wants From Leaders

Effective multi-generational leadership starts with understanding that each generation has distinct expectations shaped by their formative experiences, career stages, and life priorities. Rather than applying one-size-fits-all approaches, successful leaders adapt their style to meet these varied needs while maintaining consistent core values.

Gen Z (18-26): Mentors and Advocates

Leaders who create nurturing environments, actively listen, provide rapid skill development opportunities, and demonstrate genuine commitment to diversity and inclusion through actions.

Millennials (27-42): Connectors

Leaders who link diverse workforces to common purpose, prioritise long-term growth, communicate clearly and empathetically, and provide regular feedback during critical moments.

Gen X (43-58): Role Models

Leaders who exemplify company values through actions, solve problems during transitions, stay engaged in work, and create inclusive participation across all levels.

Baby Boomers (59-77): Culture Beacons

Strategic thinkers who drive organisational values and results, admired for vision and strategic thinking while building innovative, results-focused cultures.





Gen Z: Beyond the Purpose Myth

Everyone talks about Gen Z chasing purpose, but New Zealand data reveals the reality: **purpose is expected, not differentiating**. For under-25s, meaning is the price of entry. What actually drives Gen Z satisfaction:

01

Personal connection over purpose

Management showing genuine personal interest ranks as the top driver

02

Fairness and adaptability

Confidence in fair treatment and organisational agility in adapting to change

03

Innovation and positivity

Celebration of new ideas and creating genuinely enjoyable environments

Gen Z doesn't want inspiration from mission statements, they want to be known, treated fairly, and work in environments that adapt quickly and celebrate innovation.

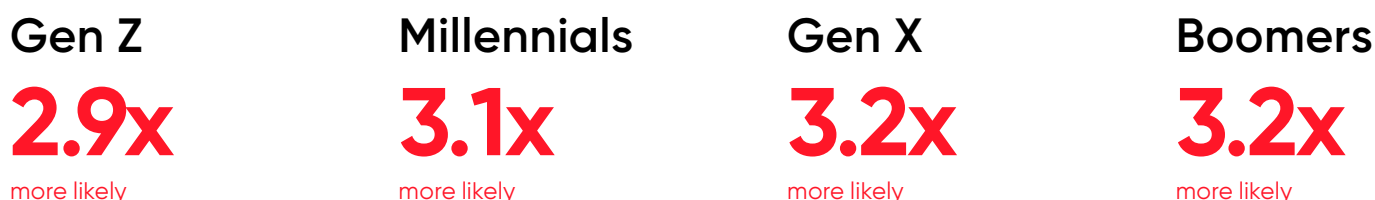
Fun: The Universal Well-Being Driver

Fun is the number one driver of well-being across all generations. Employees who experience fun at work are **190% to 220% more likely to have high well-being levels**.

At Best Workplaces for Millennials, nearly nine out of 10 millennials and Gen Zers report high well-being levels, matching their Gen X and Baby Boomer colleagues. This proves great cultures override generational stress trends.

Fun manifests differently, Gen Z appreciates gamified learning, Boomers prefer milestone celebrations, Millennials respond to collaborative challenges, Gen X values efficiency-focused enjoyment, but serves the same strategic purpose: building psychological safety, connections, and innovation capacity.

Every generation is more likely to experience well-being if they report working in a fun environment.



Beyond Stereotypes: The Individual Reality

While demographic patterns exist, individuals don't conform to generational stereotypes. Technology adaptation reveals this clearly: employees under 25 report highest comfort with system changes, but scores create a U-shaped curve, declining among 35-44 year-olds before rising again among those over 55. This suggests adaptation skills aren't purely age-dependent, experience, attitude, and individual capability matter more than birth year.

The reality is nuanced: some Boomers are tech-savvy innovators, some Millennials prefer structured in-person work, and Gen Z employees can be new parents with traditional family priorities.

The Leadership Imperative

Effective generational leadership uses demographic trends as initial guidance while remaining flexible enough to adapt to individual needs. The goal isn't treating all Gen Z workers identically or assuming all Baby Boomers share preferences.

With New Zealand's workforce spanning five generations, leaders who master this balance, understanding patterns while honouring individuality, will unlock performance potential that their competitors simply can't replicate.



Rothbury: Managing Across Generations Through Personalised Growth and Inclusive Leadership

As one of New Zealand's most people-centric workplaces, Rothbury demonstrates how cross-generational workforce management can be embedded into culture, leadership, and development strategy. With a workforce spanning multiple generations, Rothbury's approach is not about one-size-fits-all solutions, it's about intentional, personalised support that meets employees where they are in their career and life stage.



Career Pathways for Every Generation

Rothbury's Pathway Programme is a cornerstone of its cross-generational strategy. It offers a competency framework that maps behavioural expectations across career levels, enabling employees to master current roles, prepare for advancement, or pivot to new opportunities. This structure supports Gen Z's desire for rapid development, Millennials' need for clarity and feedback, Gen X's focus on leadership growth, and Boomers' interest in legacy and strategic impact

Quarterly development conversations further personalise this journey, allowing employees to co-create growth plans that reflect their aspirations and strengths—whether they're just starting out or preparing for retirement.

Leadership That Includes Everyone

Rothbury's leadership philosophy, "everyone is a leader", is a powerful equaliser across generations. Through self-leadership workshops and a leadership commitment framework, employees are equipped with tools like growth mindset, communication styles, and personal branding. These workshops are designed to resonate with diverse learning preferences, from Gen Z's interactive formats to Boomers' reflective approaches

The leadership behaviours promoted— empathy, collaboration, coaching, and recognition, create psychologically safe environments where all generations feel valued and heard.

Flexible Work for All Life Stages

Rothbury's flexible working policy is intentionally non-prescriptive, allowing managers to tailor arrangements based on individual needs. This includes phased returns from parental leave, remote work options, and adaptable hours, practices that support younger employees balancing study or caregiving, mid-career professionals managing family life, and older workers transitioning toward retirement.

Recognition That Transcends Age

From monthly morning teas to the 'Extra Mile' awards and Profit Share scheme, Rothbury celebrates contributions across all roles and ages. Recognition is not limited to tenure or seniority, it's about impact, values, and collaboration. Even employees on maternity leave receive full Profit Share payments, reinforcing the message that every contribution matters.

Wellbeing That Includes Families

Rothbury's wellbeing platform, Clearhead, extends support beyond employees to their families, offering therapy, coaching, and financial advice. This holistic approach reflects an understanding that wellbeing needs vary across generations, from mental health support for younger workers to financial security for older ones.

The Rothbury Impact

By embedding generational inclusivity into its culture, Rothbury has achieved an 84.9% retention rate and high engagement across its workforce. Its success shows that managing across generations isn't about bridging gaps, it's about building pathways, fostering trust, and creating environments where everyone can thrive.



A man in a blue sweater and headphones is sitting at a desk in a modern office, looking at a computer monitor. He is holding a document with charts. In the background, another person is working at a desk. The office has large windows and modern furniture. A red square is in the top right corner.

Innovation with Intention: Why New Zealand Best Workplaces Are Winning the AI Race

As New Zealand organisations accelerate AI adoption, a critical gap emerges between executive ambition and employee readiness. While McKinsey's 2025 workplace research reveals that nearly 90% of leaders anticipate AI will drive revenue growth in the next three years, decades of McKinsey transformation studies consistently show that 70% of corporate transformations fail to achieve their stated goals. The difference between success and failure isn't the technology itself, but how well organisations prepare their people for change.

Great Place To Work NZ data reveals why some workplaces are perfectly positioned for AI success while others struggle.

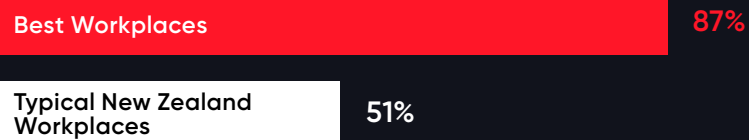
The Readiness Gap

The differences between NZ Best Workplaces and typical organisations are striking:

Professional development access



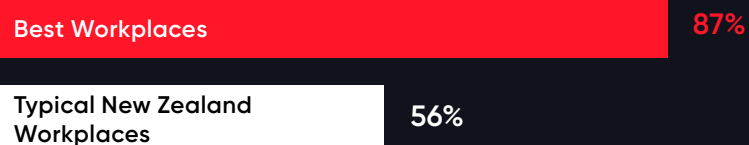
Psychological safety



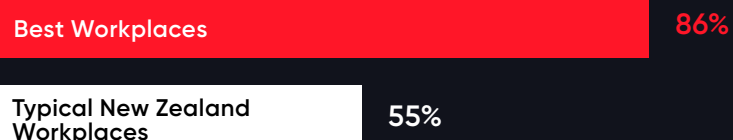
Recognition of honest mistakes



Celebration of new approaches



Politics-free environment



These aren't just cultural metrics, they're the foundation determining whether employees will take risks necessary to experiment with AI.

Why Psychological Safety Matters for AI

If you're worried about criticism for making mistakes or don't trust your organisation's intentions, why would you volunteer to test new AI tools or suggest innovative approaches? Best Workplaces have already solved this problem by creating environments where people feel safe to experiment.

The adaptability advantage is clear:

88% of Best Workplace employees quickly adapt to changes needed for organisational success, compared to only 61% in typical organisations. In psychologically safe workplaces where people feel secure adapting and learning, transformational change happens naturally.

Cultural Advantages Translate to AI Readiness

Best Workplaces' cultural strengths create direct AI advantages:

Service excellence confidence

Best Workplaces

89%

Typical New Zealand Workplaces

63%

Long-term commitment

Best Workplaces

87%

Typical New Zealand Workplaces

55%

Adequate resources

Best Workplaces

93%

Typical New Zealand Workplaces

75%

This stability and commitment provide the continuity needed for successful AI transformation, engaged employees are far more willing to invest time learning new technologies.

The innovation multiplier effect:

Companies where more employees participate in innovation achieve 5.5 times more revenue growth than less-innovative counterparts. Best Workplaces have already cracked the innovation code; they just need to channel that energy toward AI.

Closing the Awareness Gap

Currently, there's a significant gap between executive awareness of AI use (78%) and general workforce understanding (42%). Best Workplaces' superior communication cultures and trust levels position them to close this gap more effectively. They can leverage existing psychological safety to have honest AI conversations without triggering fear or resistance.

The Path Forward

For organisations improving AI readiness, the approach involves building foundational elements Best Workplaces have mastered:

- Creating cross-functional teams for safe AI experimentation
- Developing comprehensive training beyond technical skills to include ethics and effective prompting
- Maintaining transparent communication about how AI enhances rather than replaces human capabilities

The Competitive Reality

NZ Best Workplaces aren't just slightly better positioned, they have fundamental advantages difficult for typical workplaces to overcome quickly. The 36-point psychological safety gap, 28-point professional development advantage, and dramatically different innovation cultures represent years of intentional culture building.

For typical New Zealand workplaces, the challenge isn't just implementing AI technology, it's building the trust and cultural foundation that makes successful implementation possible. The organisations recognising this reality and addressing fundamental gaps today will determine their AI transformation success tomorrow.

Innovation with intention requires environments where employees feel empowered to embrace change, and the data shows Best Workplaces have already built exactly that.





Cisco: Leading AI Transformation Through Trust and Innovation

As one of NZ and the World's Best Workplaces and a consistent presence on Best Workplaces list around the globe, Cisco exemplifies how trust-centred organisations successfully navigate AI transformation. The technology giant's comprehensive approach to AI demonstrates why workplace culture foundations matter as much as technical capabilities.

Building Internal AI Capabilities

Cisco's deployment of BridgeIT, an internal version of ChatGPT, showcases how Best Workplaces approach AI implementation. Rather than simply adopting external tools, Cisco developed a secure, tailored solution that empowers employees while maintaining data confidentiality. This reflects the company's understanding that successful AI adoption requires both technological sophistication and employee trust.

The company's commitment to workforce development mirrors the patterns seen in Great Place To Work data, where Best Workplaces excel in professional development access. Cisco offers comprehensive AI learning pathways through partnerships with Coursera and eCornell, covering everything from AI fundamentals to advanced machine learning strategy. This investment demonstrates the company's belief that successful AI transformation requires upskilling the entire workforce, not just technical teams.

Innovation Through Collaboration

Cisco's InnoVerse program illustrates how psychological safety enables AI innovation. Employees collaborate across departments to develop AI-powered solutions including Workday assistants, survey analysis bots, and decision-support tools. This cross-functional approach succeeds because Cisco has already established the trust and innovation culture that Great Place To Work research shows is essential for technological transformation.

Responsible AI Leadership

Perhaps most significantly, Cisco has developed a comprehensive Responsible AI/ML Framework incorporating human rights principles, transparency, fairness, and accountability. This framework addresses the trust concerns that often derail AI initiatives at organisations with weaker cultural foundations.

Cisco's approach extends beyond internal transformation to social impact through the Networking Academy's AI training programmes and leadership of the AI-Enabled ICT Workforce Consortium. This demonstrates how organisations with strong trust foundations can become catalysts for broader industry transformation.

Cisco's AI success story reinforces that technical excellence alone doesn't guarantee transformation success, it requires the cultural foundation that distinguishes Best Workplaces from typical organisations.



Conclusion

The evidence shows us that New Zealand's workplace transformation isn't coming, it's here. The data from employees across our certified organisations reveals both the promise and the imperative facing every leader who wants to build a sustainable competitive advantage.

Trust is the Ultimate Competitive Advantage

Trust in leadership creates a 66 percentage point swing in psychological safety, the foundation upon which all other workplace outcomes rest. Organisations that master this achieve 89% customer service excellence, 87% retention rates, and 82% meaningful development opportunities. Those that don't struggle with the talent exodus that defines today's employment landscape.

New Zealand's workforce spans five generations, each bringing distinct strengths and expectations. The organisations winning this challenge understand that effective leadership isn't about accommodation, it's about unlocking the full potential of diverse perspectives. When done well, it becomes a source of innovation and resilience that homogeneous workplaces simply cannot replicate.

And as artificial intelligence reshapes industries, the organisations succeeding aren't necessarily those with the most sophisticated technology. They're the ones with psychological safety scores of 87%, professional development access rates of 86%, and cultures that celebrate experimentation over perfection. These cultural advantages, built over years, cannot be quickly replicated by competitors.

Even our best workplaces have work to do. The leadership pipeline remains compromised by gender inequity. Mid-career employees report concerning trust deficits. And while great cultures override generational stress trends, the broader workforce faces rising psychological distress that requires collective industry action.

The choice facing New Zealand leaders is stark and the window for action is narrowing. Build on the trust foundation that creates competitive advantage, or risk becoming irrelevant as talent flows to organisations that understand the new rules of engagement.

This isn't about feel-good workplace initiatives. It's about business survival and competitive positioning in a rapidly evolving economy. The organisations that treat culture as strategy, not afterthought, will define New Zealand's economic future.

The research is clear. The examples are compelling. The only question remaining is whether leaders will have the courage to act on what the data so definitively shows: in the modern workplace, trust isn't just important, it's everything.

Best Workplaces

Medium & Large Category



1



2



3



4



5



Best Workplaces

Small & Micro Category



1



realestate.co.nz

2



Cisco

3



Robert Half

4

Medtronic

Medtronic
Australasia Pty Ltd

5



Franklin Smith Group

6

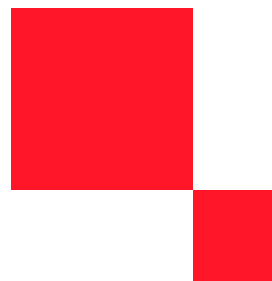
moddex

Moddex

7



Jani-King (NZ) Limited



8



Talent Aotearoa Ltd

10



Roche Products
(New Zealand) Limited

12



Carus Group Limited

14



Builderscrack

9



Mantel

11



Suntory Global
Spirits

13



MSS Mechanical
Support System Ltd

15



SC Johnson &
Son Pty Ltd

The Certification™ Process



Step 1: Launching Your Survey

The first thing we'll have you do is set up the Trust Index™ survey that uses a 1-5 truth scale to assess your employees' experiences at your company. This survey can run within a period of 2 weeks upon launching via Emprising.

Fact: Our survey takes less than 20 minutes to go through, and yields real-time results upon completion!



Step 2: Answer the Culture Brief™

When your employees are done assessing their current workplace culture, we'll have your representative answer the Culture Brief™. This is a questionnaire that gathers crucial information about your company for our reference.



Step 3: Receive Your Certification Badge™ and Profile™

If the results of your survey reach our global threshold*, you'll be awarded our trademarked Certification Badge™, officially marking your organization as a great place to work.

This is complemented by a Certification Profile™ on our website which displays your top statements* and select information from your Culture Brief.

Fact: The Certification Badge™ is a globally recognized icon, and can be used royalty-free for a period of 12 months!

*Top Statements: Each survey question is called a "statement." Your "Top Statements" thus refer to the top-scoring facets of your workplace culture.

Meet the team



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Hey, it's Work. I screwed up.

Yes, it's me, Work. You know, the reason your alarm goes off, coffee sales are booming and why you haven't had a decent nap since kindergarten?

You're probably thinking:

"Since when did Work become sentient?"

"Why is it taking out a full-page print ad just to talk to me?"

And, inevitably, "Couldn't this have been an email?"

Sure, but that wouldn't have been nearly as dramatic. Because here's the thing: Our relationship isn't always easy. And I'm sorry. For all of it.

I know I can be rigid. Demanding. Emotionally unavailable yet ... needy? (Those 2 a.m. pings? Yeah ... not my best work.)

But I've been working on myself—with UKG. Their workforce insights are helping me finally understand what you need and how we can make things work for both of us.

Now, I'm flexible. Proactive. "Agentic" (which is a fancy way of saying I'll finally do stuff without you having to ask). I'm even ready to discuss our future. One where I can be better—for you, your people and your customers.

So give me some credit. I've done the work, I've set boundaries and I'm actually listening now. I even bought a feelings journal.

With love, (respectfully)

Work

The UKG logo is displayed in a large, bold, dark teal font. The letters are closely spaced, with the 'K' being particularly prominent. The logo is positioned in the bottom right corner of the page, partially overlapping a bright yellow triangular graphic that points towards the bottom right corner.

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Get Certified
and start
your journey
to becoming
the Best...

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