

The global view

Through this report we wanted to shine a light on the global view across these three groups of people, but while analyzing the data we uncovered a number of interesting distinctions between different parts of the world.

Below are some of the findings that stood out.



Australia

Australian leaders have a higher-than-average focus on the customer (65%) than the global average. And this seems to impact on the other two groups. 57% of Australian organizations have lost great employees because they felt stifled or frustrated, which is significantly higher than the global average. And 74% believe Australian society has become more critical of business, yet 67% believe CSR is only a nice-to-have and not business-critical, with both these figures significantly higher than the global average.



China

Chinese leaders put more focus on having a positive societal impact than any other group of people across the world, with 63% citing it as their primary concern. In fact, Chinese leaders were the only group of respondents to collectively see wider society as the most important of the three. When it comes to the skills required for future success, Chinese leaders prioritized creativity (58%), while on a global level creativity is only seen as the third-most-important skill. Chinese organizations, too, are more likely to put emphasis on diversity and inclusion schemes (57%) than their global counterparts – further evidence of the positive impact Chinese firms are trying to have on society.



France

While 'creating new opportunities for employees and maximizing their potential' only came fifth on the list of people-led initiatives across the globe, French leaders believe it's more important than that with 36% citing it as the biggest success-driver, placing it third overall. French leaders are also more likely to prioritize creativity above other skills and areas of expertise when it comes to achieving success in the coming years, with 42% citing this as the most important one – higher than the global average.



Germany

Perhaps the most significant difference between German organizations and the rest of the world is what their leaders view as the ideal employee type. While globally the most desired employees are 'innovators', followed by 'collaborators', the story in Germany is quite different. 63% of the German leaders we surveyed said they have a preference for 'doers' – much higher than the global average. This may well reflect the focus German leaders appear to place on more immediate business gains. With financial growth being the clear measure of business success (50%) and only 33% believe the group they have more responsibility for is wider society/citizens. Indeed, while German organizations may not place most emphasis on creativity, innovation or collaboration in their teams, they do very much value their people – the majority (61%) of leaders believe that they have most responsibility to positive impact are their employees.



Hong Kong

Hong Kong tops the list of business leaders who see “having a good reputation” as the key element for success with 61% of the vote, much higher than the global average at 45%. The need to “do good” and develop a positive reputation for that is further highlighted by the fact that business leaders in the region believe that they have the strongest duty to improving the lives of employees (80%). Indeed, Hong Kong businesses seem to truly value and focus on employees in the workplace, as when asked how employee engagement has changed over the last three years, 88% of leaders said that it has improved.



India

India is the country second-most-likely to prioritize creativity above other areas of expertise, with 51% citing it as the key to future success. Indian leaders also differ when it comes to employee type, with a strong preference (66%) for collaborator – the highest score for this employee type of any nation we surveyed. And when it comes to social impact, Indian firms have a strong track record in mentoring and reverse mentoring schemes, with 44% of Indian leaders saying they’ve already rolled these out.



Ireland

When it comes to customer service, Ireland recognizes that the world is changing very quickly and will transform the relationship with the customer. For example 55% of Irish organizations have re-evaluated the business’s approach to service delivery and 45% of leaders say the same in regards to customer satisfaction programs. A further 51% go on to say that “improving processes and service delivery” is the most important factor when it comes to applying creativity to achieve success. Improving the life of customers (60%) is more of a priority than employees and society, while more than two-thirds (70%) believe the overall customer relationship has improved over the past three years.



Italy

When asked to consider their role in the world, Italian business leaders place improving the lives of citizens and society as a whole (50%) above employees (49%) and customers (38%). This is particularly interesting as it’s far higher than the global average (37%), yet less than 20% of Italian business leaders said that contributing to society is what defines their success overall.

When asked which employee types are most important to an organization’s success, only 33% of leaders said that “doers” were most important. This is the lowest of all countries surveyed and much lower than the global average (46%). Italy instead seems to be hungry for “collaborators” (51%) and “innovators” (54%) as the most important types of employees.



Portugal

Portuguese leaders find it particularly difficult to serve employees, customers and society in equal measure, with 78% admitting their organization struggles to find the balance between the three – much higher than the global average. And they tend to favor collaborator type employees, followed by doers, rather than the innovators favored by the average global company. As for social impact, the findings are quite significant here. 98% of Portuguese leaders believe trust is important, yet 84% believe Portuguese society has become more critical of the business community – significantly higher than the global average on both counts. Yet 75% don't believe CSR is business-critical – again far above the global average.



Singapore

Singapore is a nation that puts greater focus on initiatives that could have a positive impact on its employees. When asked which of the groups they feel the strongest duty to improving the lives of, the majority (68%) said their employees. Additionally, half (50%) of Singaporean leaders we surveyed said their organizations have already rolled out mentoring or reverse mentoring schemes, significantly higher than the global average. The reasons for this are also made clear – Singaporean leaders strongly believe that the ability to engage and unleashing the potential of their teams is key to business success with 80% stating that unlocking employee creativity specifically is vital to the success of their organization.



Spain

There seem to be conflicting emotions when it comes to choosing priorities in Spain. The nation's business leaders were extremely balanced when evaluating which stakeholders they had a duty to improve life for – 53% picked employees while 52% said customers. With that said, it's no surprise to see that near half (49%) value industry knowledge as the top area of expertise for future success, a figure that only Hong Kong matched and no other country could surpass. The balancing act continues as the majority (54%) of customer satisfaction programs have changed over the past three years, while over two-thirds (69%) believe that employee engagement has significantly improved in the same time period.



Thailand

Thailand scores particularly high when it comes to maximizing the potential of employees and creating new opportunities for them. While only 35% of companies across the world cited this as a primary concern for people-led initiatives, putting it in fifth place globally, 42% of Thai leaders said it's a key area for their organization. This puts it in the top three success drivers according to Thai business leaders, the others being "financial growth" (76%) and "having a good reputation" (50%). It is a noticeable difference compared to other countries and regions, showing that businesses in this country have a higher-than-average focus on unlocking people's potential and helping them grow.



United Kingdom

As in Thailand, UK firms are more focused on unleashing their people's potential than the average organization across the world. 35% of UK companies said maximizing the potential of employees and creating opportunities for them is a key success factor when it comes to people-led initiatives. This is promising in a nation where the skills shortage is widely cited as a future concern across multiple industries. For those organizations struggling to fill gaps in their knowledge and skills, developing and growing from within is a cost-effective way to start.



United States

The most notable differentiator in the US is employee type. While the average global organization favors the innovator, US firms lean much more towards the collaborator, with 57% saying this is their favored employee type. Looking at the three groups, US organizations appear to have a more well-balanced approach than many other regions/countries. The majority (59%) feel they have the strongest duty to improving the lives of customers. However 58% say the same of employees. As is the trend globally, impact on society is not yet as much of a priority, selected by just 31% of US leaders. Though as with their global counterparts, many believe this will change with 70% stating that making a positive impact on society will help their organization succeed.



Japan

The opinions of leaders from Japanese organizations at times differ from their global counterparts – particularly when it comes to employee engagement and customer relationships. Looking at their relationships with wider society, only 39% of businesses said that over the last three years their ability to contribute to society has improved. That said, Japan's leaders acknowledge that their focus may change in future with 55% stating that, to be successful in the longer-term, their organization will need to change its approach to working with society. While almost two-thirds (63%) of leaders believe that making a positive impact on society will help my organization succeed.



Nordics (Finland and Sweden)

When exploring impact on the three core groups, organizations in the Nordics place less emphasis on citizens and wider society than any other region or country. Just 36% of leaders feel their primary duty is to improve the lives of society. The focus is very much on improving the lives of customers (65%). Only India and Singapore gave customers a higher value. Almost half (47%) of Nordic leaders see financial growth as an indicator, while only 19% say that "maximizing the potential of employee development" is pivotal to success; only Portugal puts the figure lower. Similarly, people skills (19%) came last when businesses define the primary areas of skills needed to ensure future success while industry knowledge was the most valuable factor at 47%.

