



reimagine work

managing shifts in
talent expectations.



randstad

human forward.



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welcome to the

new world of work.



The Great Resignation remains a global phenomenon, putting pressure on organisations in Asia Pacific as well as the rest of the world, and there are signs that it may persist.

From the lack of technical support to the absence of personal time, the phenomenon persists primarily because the pandemic had transformed business environments and talent expectations, yet companies have not adjusted to these new norms.

The pandemic has also increased scrutiny of **mental health** issues in the workplace, due in part to the hardships and isolation generated by remote work. Today's more conscientious workforce expects

employers to increase their support for mental health by treating it as seriously as they do with physical health.

As pandemic measures come to an end, companies reckon with return-to-office friction, sparking conversations around long-term hybrid and remote work. Employers need to consider their talent pool's unspoken and unmet needs around work flexibility, workload and overall work-life integration.

The return-to-office discussion is merely the start of a new negotiation between employers and employees. The ensuing dialogue may help recast the mismatch of expectations against changes to how work should be performed after the pandemic in the era of advancing technology.

This white paper gathers insights from three surveys to understand what talent expects.

Randstad Employer Brand Research (REBR) is the most comprehensive and in-depth employer brand research in the world. The survey is commissioned by Randstad and independently conducted by Kantar TNS. The 16-minute survey sample, managed by Kantar TNS and conducted in January 2022, mirrors the general working population in the market.

The **Randstad Workmonitor** is a global annual survey that sheds light on talent expectations and trending workforce topics. The study is conducted online among people aged 18–67, employed for at least 24 hours per week (minimum 90%), or sole traders or unemployed but considering looking for a job in the future. This survey was conducted between 21 February to 13 March 2022.

The **Talent Expectations Survey** is an independent survey commissioned by Randstad that reveals insights on the latest talent trends around work-life balance, work arrangements and work environments through surveying more than 1,200 respondents. This survey was conducted between July and September 2022.

In this report, we cover findings from Hong Kong SAR, Malaysia and Singapore.

This white paper aims to help business leaders and HR professionals like you gain insights into changing talent expectations so that you can engage with today's talent more effectively and understand the drivers that can help your employees and organisation thrive.



why people are taking the leap to leave jobs.

Global well-being has **improved**, and this is reflected in the longer and safer lives we lead today. The number of university graduates around the world has **risen** and more people can afford to move and live in cosmopolitan cities, which has led to increasing **material consumption**.

Correspondingly, expectations of life, careers and financial planning have become more sophisticated. In addition to the desire for financial freedom, more employees are seeking **'personal value and purpose'** at work. Younger employees are reported to have more **aspirational ideals** of work and are assessing employers more critically.

However, rising global inflation stands to affect the cost of living, threatening to erode wealth and growth. The overall health of the global economy also **influences career choices like resignations**. A slowing global economy with fewer opportunities may prompt people to be more cautious and make deliberate and mindful decisions about their careers and lifestyles. With a poorer economic outlook, people may feel that their future career prospects and financial stability are under threat.

Despite **fears of a recession** on the horizon, **40% of workers globally still say** they are considering leaving their jobs in the near future. The Randstad Employer Brand Research results show an increase in the percentage of respondents who have switched or plan to switch roles.



more people in asia switched jobs in 2021.

	% of respondents who switched jobs between July and December 2021	% increase from same period in 2020
Hong Kong SAR	21%	5%
Malaysia	14%	3%
Singapore	18%	6%

Source: Randstad Employer Brand Research (REBR) 2022



more people in asia are
looking for a new employer.

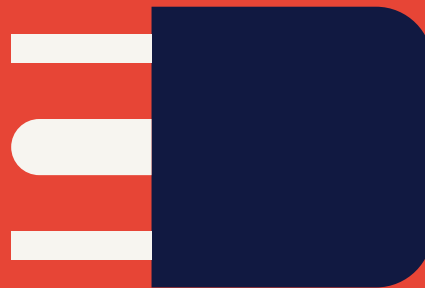
	% of respondents who plan to change jobs in 2022	% increase from same period in 2021
Hong Kong SAR	31%	8%
Malaysia	30%	7%
Singapore	31%	3%

Source: Randstad Employer Brand Research (REBR) 2022

If given a choice, people prefer not to work. According to the Randstad Workmonitor results, the majority of their respondents said that their personal life is more important than their work life, and if money was no object, they would choose not to work at all.

There are several reasons why people are taking the leap, which we will explore deeper in this white paper.

However, this is a privilege that can only be exercised by a handful of people, as most of the population still depend on a regular income to finance their lifestyle. As a result, people are changing jobs in pursuit of greater satisfaction—be it the ability to meet their career and financial goals, or for their freedom and happiness.



why employees leave.

	Hong Kong SAR	Malaysia	Singapore
If money was no object, I would choose not to work at all	62%	54%	62%
My personal life is more important than my work life	55%	57%	56%
I would quit a job if it was preventing me from enjoying my life	48%	50%	52%
I would rather be unemployed than unhappy in a job	45%	34%	41%
I have quit a job because it didn't fit in with my personal life	44%	37%	44%

2



what employees

really care about.



our purpose brings
meaning to work.

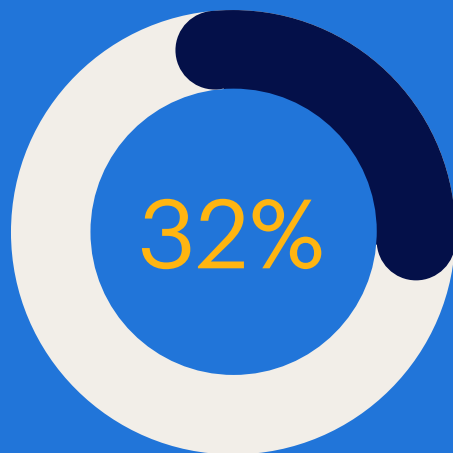
Purpose is the 'why' behind the reason we work. Purpose brings meaning to the daily grind and can increase overall satisfaction.

However, there are differences in how people define purpose.

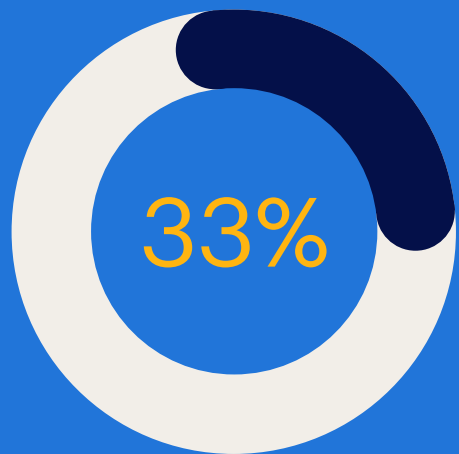
Results from the Talent Expectations Survey, an independent survey commissioned by Randstad, revealed that while about a third of employees (32%) wanted to see a greater purpose to their work by directly contributing to the organisation, another third (33%) viewed purpose at work as simply fulfilling their responsibilities.

This insight may reflect the phenomenon of 'quiet quitting' where employees do the bare minimum and avoid performing more than their contractually defined responsibilities. It may be seen as a direct response to the 'cult' of overwork and the hype over the hustle mentality: the recognition that artificially-imposed passion and purpose ultimately lead to burnout.

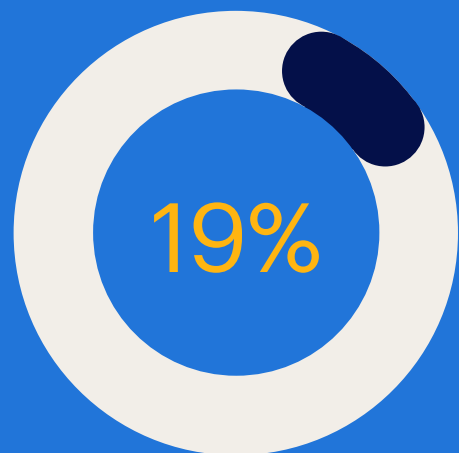
how do you define your purpose at work.



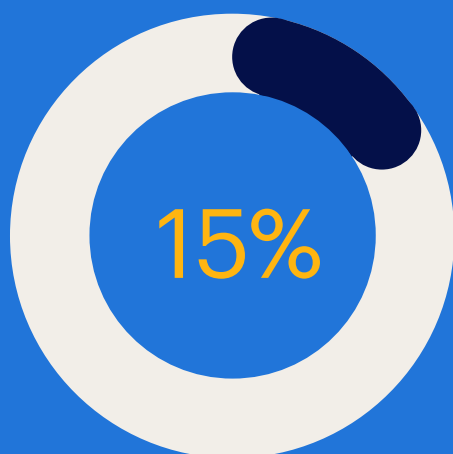
Understanding how my work directly contributes to the organisation's goals



Completing my tasks well and bringing home a steady pay cheque



Knowing my work makes the world a better place to live in



Receiving acknowledgement from my bosses and colleagues



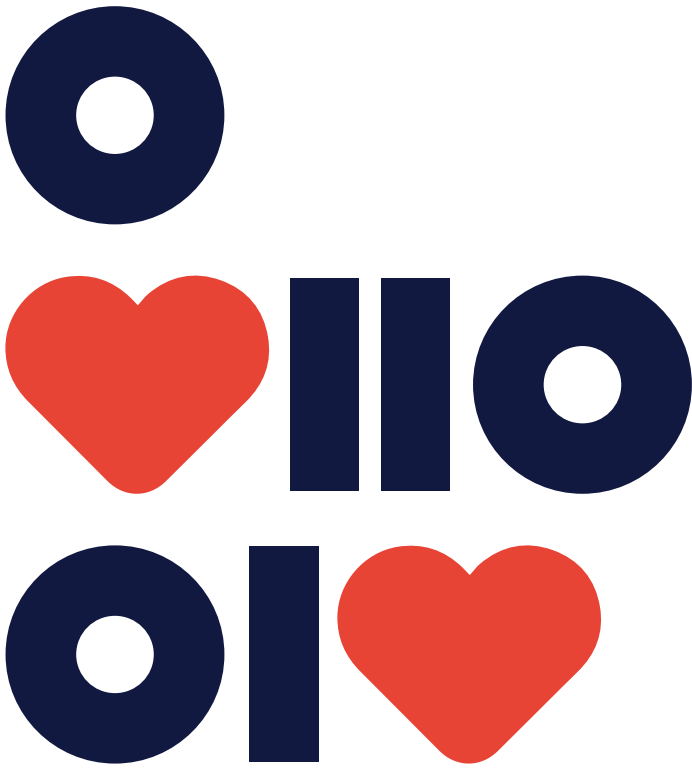
Still, an alignment in values and purpose remains important among employees. When considering an employer, respondents also look at the company's attitudes and practices around social and environmental issues, particularly diversity, equity and sustainability.

Results from the Randstad Workmonitor 2022 survey revealed that a majority of the respondents from the region feel that their employers' values and purpose already align with their own at some levels, especially when it comes to sustainability, diversity and transparency.

The significance of finding a purposeful job will only increase as climate change increasingly affects the quality of our lives.

Even though a pay cheque still weighs heavier at this moment, it would be safe to assume that while people do not actively seek purposeful jobs, they would prefer them if given the opportunity to choose.

For example, when presented with two job opportunities, one with a company that actively gives back to the world and society at large versus one that does not with all other factors constant, the former would come across as a more attractive option.



non-financial factors that drive career choices.

	Hong Kong SAR	Malaysia	Singapore
I feel that my employers' values and purpose align with my own (e.g., sustainability, diversity, transparency)	58%	80%	69%
I wouldn't mind earning less money if I felt my job was contributing something to society or the world	39%	50%	44%
I wouldn't accept a job with a business that doesn't align with my own values on social and environmental issues	42%	48%	43%
I wouldn't accept a job if the organisation wasn't making a proactive effort to be more sustainable	36%	52%	39%
I wouldn't accept a job if the organisation wasn't making a proactive effort to improve its diversity and equity	40%	51%	43%

Source: Randstad Workmonitor 2022



flexibility where work-life balance begins.

Work-life balance is a top consideration among employees and job switchers and it is still the highest unmet workforce expectation.

Results from the Randstad Workmonitor 2022 survey support this as well, as a majority of the respondents from Hong Kong SAR, Malaysia and Singapore have stated that work-life balance is important to them.

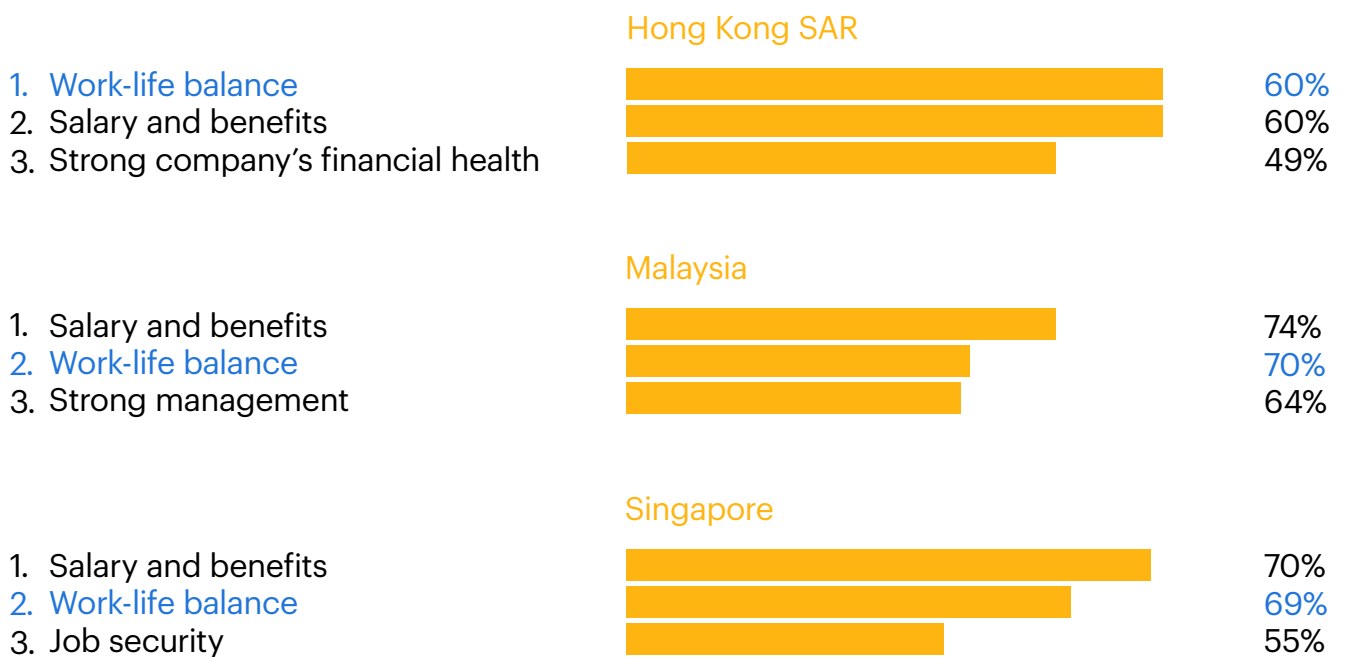
Close to half of these same respondents would not even accept a job if the company does not offer flexibility around working hours and location. A third of these same respondents have resigned from their jobs because of poor work flexibility.

But how exactly is work-life balance defined by employees? Is it all about being able to work from home? Not exactly.

According to the Talent Expectations Survey, people define 'work-life balance' as having enough personal time for themselves.



top 3 employee value proposition factors for employees.



Source: Randstad Employer Brand Research (REBR) 2022



employees are choosing jobs based on flexible work benefits.

	Hong Kong SAR	Malaysia	Singapore
Work-life balance is important	90%	95%	94%
They have quit a job because it didn't provide enough flexibility	29%	33%	27%
They wouldn't accept a job if it didn't provide flexibility around where they work	32%	43%	42%
They wouldn't accept a job if it didn't provide flexibility around working hours	35%	47%	41%

how employees define work-life balance.



27%

Having enough **personal time** to do the things I like with the people I care about



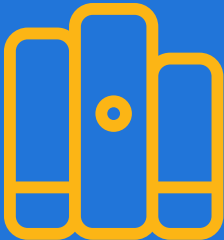
27%

Having the **flexibility** to work anytime and anywhere I want as long as I can meet all the deadlines



24%

Having the **ability to incorporate** my work into my plans for my life and family



22%

Having a **manageable workload** so that I can start and end work on time



	Regional Average	Hong Kong SAR	Malaysia	Singapore
Having the flexibility to work anytime and anywhere I want as long as I can meet all the deadlines	27%	20%	31%	28%
Having enough personal time to do the things I like with the people I care about	27%	29%	25%	29%
Having the ability to incorporate my work into my plans for my life and family	24%	28%	24%	21%
Having a manageable workload so that I can start and end work on time	22%	24%	20%	22%

Source: Talent Expectations Survey



Instead of seeing it as a balance where there is a clear line separating work from life, both companies and employees need to learn how to navigate the crossroads between work and life.

Flexible work is all about the workers being able to meet deadlines without stating when and where they will perform their tasks. It enables workers to have greater control over how they want to spend their time working, so that they can carve out enough personal time to do the things they like with the people they care about.

This degree of flexibility can result in greater autonomy and productivity as employees get to make their own decisions about when, where and how they choose to complete their work.

Additionally, this level of flexibility also gives employees the ability to incorporate work into their plans for life and family, allowing for greater work-life integration.

However, all of us run the risk of blurring the line between work and life and end up overworking anyway, especially if we don't keep track of the time we are giving to work.

Seen through this lens, 'quiet quitting' could be perceived as an action to set up boundaries and manage workload more effectively, albeit a passive approach towards displaying employee discontentment which could harm the organisation's overall culture and reputation.



it's all about having enough time for better balance.

Time is the most finite of all the resources we have.

We measure our work and productivity in terms of time, parcelling it out in 40-hour weeks working a 9-to-5 job. Even when we travel between home and the office, we want to know how much time it will take for us to commute.

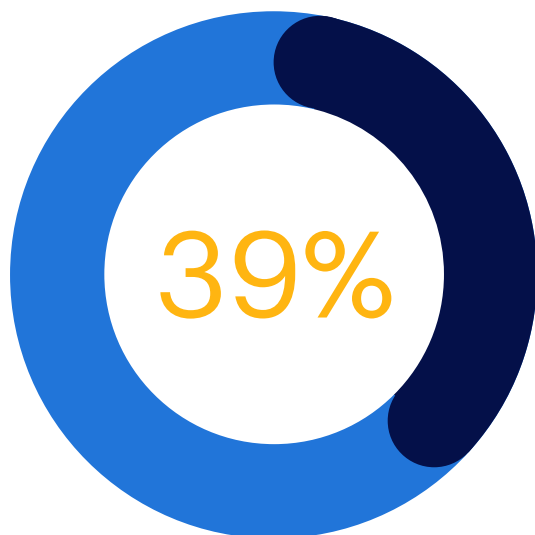
No wonder much of the conversation around maintaining a good work-life balance involves time — how to define it and how to manage it.

Employees' insistence on hybrid and remote work is not just about their resistance to returning to the office. To them, there is a greater underlying implication: returning to the office when work can be done at home is not a good use of **the valuable hours** that could go towards their personal time.

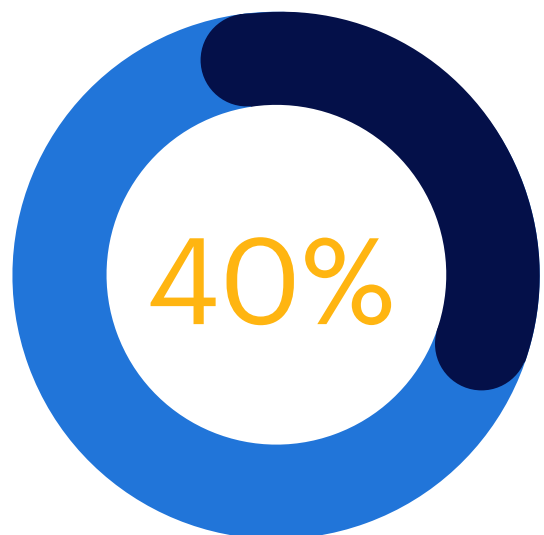
The work-from-home situation brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic has given employees more room to manage their time and more opportunities for work-life integration, and they want to keep that option.



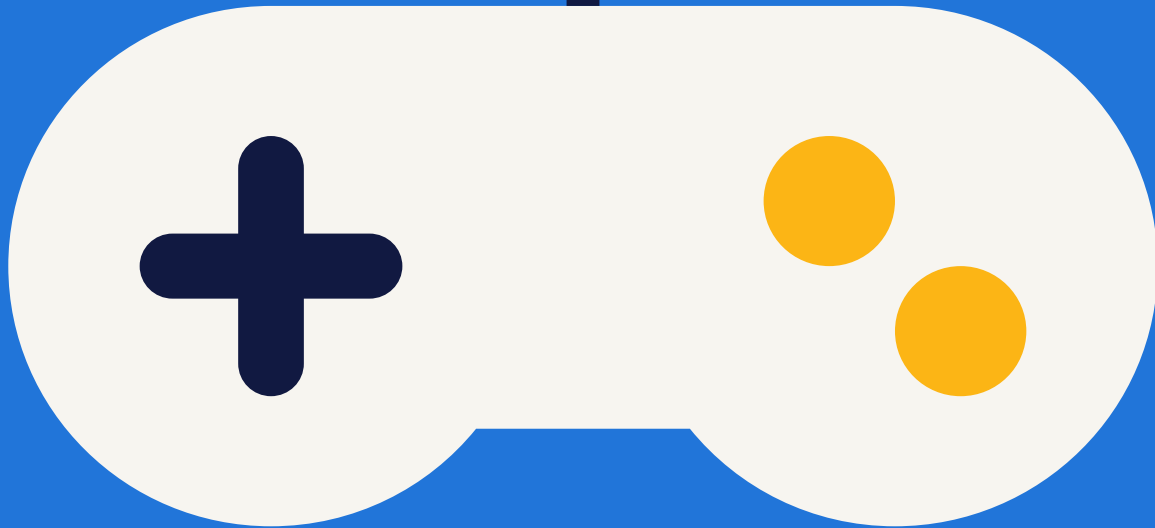
how employees define work-life balance.



I have more flexibility and personal time at night and during the weekends



I get to spend more time with my family



	Regional Average	Hong Kong SAR	Malaysia	Singapore
I get to spend more time with my family	39%	40%	40%	38%
I have more flexibility and personal time at night and during the weekends	39%	37%	45%	34%
I'm more productive at home because I can choose how to carry out my tasks	34%	33%	36%	34%
I don't have to commute to the office	27%	22%	25%	35%

Source: Talent Expectations Survey



Of the things employees like best about hybrid and remote work, the top two responses are related to time:

- spending more time with family (40%)
- having more flexibility and personal time at night and during weekends (39%)

Having enough personal time is a very precious thing to own, no matter how employees choose to spend it. They want time to enjoy and relax so that they feel more recharged going back to work, as opposed to being high-strung all the time, which may strain their mental health and relationships.

With hybrid and remote work, there is an even greater need to ensure employees can manage their time well.

Instead of waiting for employers to act, employees are now taking a more proactive approach to creating more personal time to do the things they enjoy. Two of the top three actions employees have taken to improve their work-life balance involve time: working fewer hours and clocking in fewer overtime hours.

top 3 actions taken to improve work-life balance.

Hong Kong SAR

1. Worked fewer overtime hours		32%
2. Worked less time slots		29%
3. Worked more remotely		20%

Malaysia

1. Worked flexible time slots		44%
2. Worked more remotely		33%
3. Worked fewer overtime hours		23%

Singapore

1. Worked more remotely		35%
2. Worked flexible time slots		31%
3. Worked fewer overtime hours		26%

Source: Randstad Employer Brand Research (REBR) 2022

While time management may be a particular challenge to some employees, employers can help address this by promoting mindful practices within the organisation:



Set a good example and practice what you preach



Align expectations around what's urgent and what's important



Reduce unnecessary meetings and keep meetings short



Offer training and coaching on task prioritisation and time management



Use project management tools to better allocate time for projects



Focus on outcomes rather than working hours



defining personal time.

Studies have shown that having enough personal time **greatly contributes** to a person's sense of well-being. However, defining one's personal time and how it is spent can be a fraught and **stressful** topic for some.

The fact that personal time off (PTO) is primarily an employee benefit reflects how personal time has been largely defined by companies, with work time still at the core of our waking hours.

Most people find it hard to define personal time beyond after-work hours, as they are constantly glued to their phones whenever they receive a work-related notification. Indeed, employees have to work hard at **transitioning** from their work hours to their personal time.

Carving out personal time may require setting up clear work routines and boundaries regarding daily schedules. Some managers have advised their employees not to reply to work emails or messages during their personal time, even when a colleague chooses to send them at night. Others do not keep track of their employees' start and end work times, but rather manage their contracted work hours.

Moreover, the use of personal time largely depends on a person's life stage. While most agree that personal time is for resting, different people use their personal time differently.

Career-driven individuals tend to use it for side hustles or to pursue a hobby. Heads of households may require more **predictable hours** for child care and other domestic affairs. Meanwhile, empty nesters may choose to use their free time for business counsel, social gatherings or volunteering activities.

how to make personal time more meaningful.



balance

Having too much free time **is just as bad** as having too little. Find a healthy balance and clearly define what counts as enough personal time for you.



activity

Spending your free time doing more **active endeavours**, such as gaming, sports and exercise, can make you happier. Conversely, spending your free time passively may contribute to lethargy and a sense of boredom.



productivity

Doing productive activities during your free time, such as side hustles and other income-generating hobbies, also adds to your overall happiness and well-being.



expect to work with side hustlers.

The rise of the **gig economy**, the trend where younger workers pursue side hustles or gig jobs (e.g. yoga instructor, web designer, online seller, etc.) outside of their day jobs, is proof that people are putting their personal time to good use. These side hustles help them to upskill and re-skill, as well as open up opportunities for future career pathways.

This proactiveness serves as an opportunity for many businesses, as employers can **tap** into this trend to address their labour shortages.

the challenges of caregiving.

For many employees, the need for personal time is also driven by family caregiving duties. Other than working parents who need to care for their children, **Asia's rapidly ageing population** means that caregiving for elderly relatives has also become a rising concern.

Often, this involves tasks that cannot be postponed to traditional after-work hours, such as specialist appointments and medical emergencies. Having the flexibility to be available to their family members on short notice is, thus, essential to this group.



the success of remote productivity lies in autonomy.

At Randstad, we define **employee productivity** as 'the amount of work that can be accomplished in a given amount of time.'

It is the most important metric to measure the effectiveness of a workforce and can pertain to a single employee, a team, or the entire organisation.

Different industries and companies may define productivity differently.

Manufacturing companies, for example, may focus on how many products an employee can produce in an hour, a day, or a week. Others may look at the amount of revenue an employee generates. Regardless, employee productivity must always be measured against a certain benchmark.

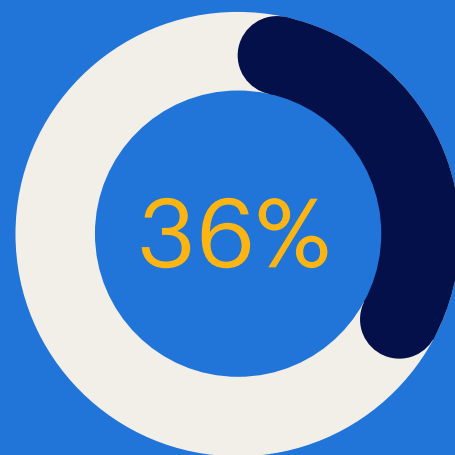
Based on the Talent Expectations Survey, over a third of respondents (36%) were able to prove that they were more productive when working from home. Only 18% said that they are more productive when working in the office.

When asked what they liked best about hybrid and remote work, more than a third of the respondents (34%) said that they were more productive at home because they can choose how to carry out their tasks, as long as deadlines are being met.

For example, employees may choose to take a longer lunch break to run personal errands and continue working at night after dinner. They may also start work earlier so that they can meet their friends for dinner.

This shows that remote work has granted employees greater autonomy, allowing them to be more efficient in how they use their time in their work and personal lives.

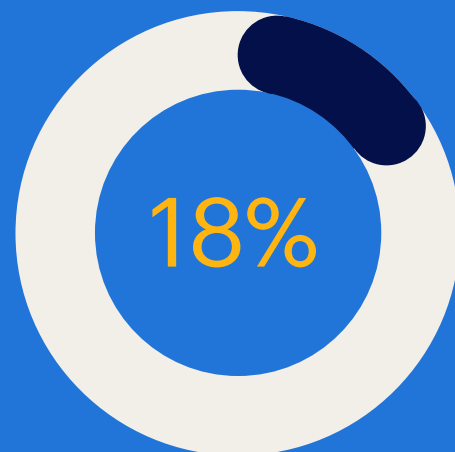
employees in asia are able to prove that they are more productive when working from home.



Yes, I've tracked all my projects and tasks to ensure I have evidence of being productive when I'm working from home



Yes, I feel more productive when I'm working from home



No, I am more productive in the office



the top reason why employees like hybrid and remote work.

34%

said that they are more productive at home because they can choose how to carry out their tasks

food for thought

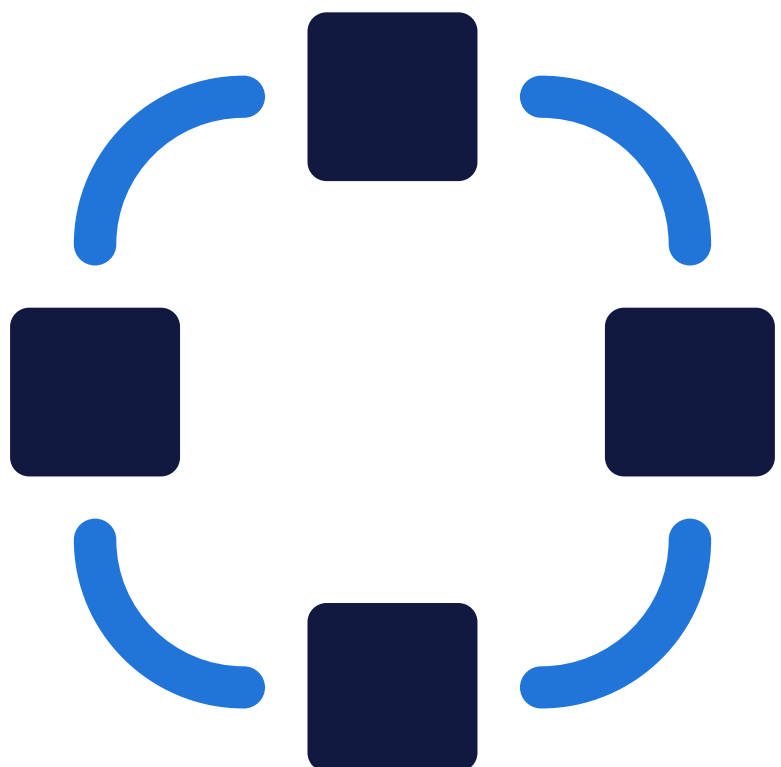
reimagining performance in a hybrid workplace.

In many Asian countries, the culture of long working hours as a measure of productivity persists. In Singapore – the [most overworked country in Asia Pacific](#) – employees clock an average of 45 working hours per week. However, long hours don't necessarily translate to high performance, as employees may burn out and [struggle with productivity](#) as a result.

In a hybrid workplace, it no longer makes sense to track and monitor employees' hours the way you might do in an office.

It's time for a mindset shift from input to outcome. Forward-thinking leaders must reimagine the metrics used to evaluate performance.

1. How are your employees assessed based on productivity and performance?
2. How much of their performance is determined by the quality of their work, as opposed to the amount of time spent on doing the tasks?
3. Does your company use effective and agile productivity trackers?
4. Can you trust your employees to work independently and deliver results without supervision?
5. How transparent are your productivity measurements and trackers to the employee and team?



3

reshape your

total talent
attraction strategy.



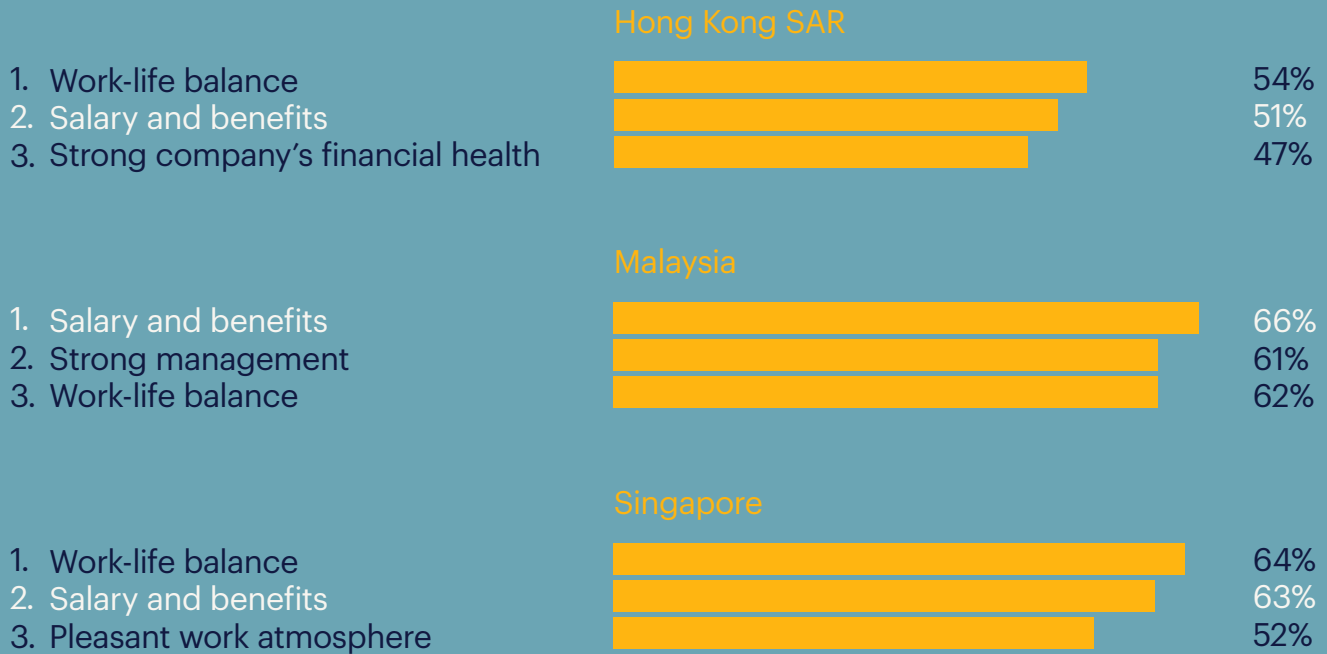
Regardless of whether employees work on-site in a physical office, or in hybrid or remote work arrangements, talent expectations around salary and benefits remain high.

As attractive salary and benefits remain top employee value proposition (EVP) factors among job seekers, companies must conduct regular salary assessments to ensure that they are offering competitive remuneration packages. In response to the hiking inflation and rising cost of living, some organisations have made an off-cycle salary adjustment to help their employees tide through life challenges, while responding to the increasing expectations on salary and benefits.

Companies that are looking to save costs by reducing the salaries of their remote workforce must reconsider the impact of such a move, especially since employees believe they have become more productive while working flexibly or remotely.

Employers should proactively review their total remuneration package and think holistically about how their compensation and benefits can meet evolving talent expectations around work-life balance and remote productivity.

top 3 employee value proposition factors for respondents who switched jobs in 2021.



Source: Randstad Employer Brand Research (REBR) 2022

63% of employees in asia said they would not accept a pay cut in return for the opportunity to work from home or remotely.



Source: Talent Expectations Survey

the most important benefits employees hope their companies offer to achieve a good work-life balance.



52%

Being able to work from home or remotely



40%

Shorter working hours on Fridays



32%

Good and reliable technology



31%

Family care leave for both married and single employees



	Regional Average	Hong Kong SAR	Malaysia	Singapore
Being able to work from home / remotely	52%	45%	60%	52%
Shorter working hours on Fridays	40%	40%	36%	43%
Good and reliable technology	32%	28%	38%	29%

Source: Talent Expectations Survey



In addition to the key benefit of flexible working, employers who want to attract talent should offer thoughtful benefits that support employees in a hybrid environment.

With the shift away from office spaces, companies can look at cutting spending on traditional in-office perks, such as an extensive variety of pantry supplies and big office spaces.

These cost savings can instead be channelled toward more attractive benefits tailored to employees' remote work needs, such as:

1. Allowances for work-related equipment for home, like company-issued laptops, wireless keyboards and monitors
2. Subsidies for mobile phone bills and home utility bills
3. Mental health support
4. Coaching and upskilling opportunities

Employers can consider organising more purposeful office activities with the goal of bringing people together. Initiatives like early-release Fridays, team outings and company events create more opportunities for employees to get to know each other better while having an enjoyable time.

realise people's true potential through learning and development.

Employers should not overlook the benefits of coaching and upskilling opportunities as a value proposition to attract potential talent.

Based on our survey results, good training and career progression opportunities are among the top five considerations among job switchers.



top 5 employee value proposition factors job switchers consider.

Hong Kong SAR

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----|
| 1. Work-life balance | 54% |
| 2. Salary and benefits | 51% |
| 3. Strong company's financial health | 47% |
| 4. Good training | 46% |
| 5. Strong management | 42% |

Malaysia

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----|
| 1. Salary and benefits | 66% |
| 2. Strong management | 62% |
| 3. Work-life balance | 62% |
| 4. Strong company's financial health | 61% |
| 5. Career progression | 59% |

Singapore

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| 1. Work-life balance | 64% |
| 2. Salary and benefits | 63% |
| 3. Pleasant work atmosphere | 52% |
| 4. Career progression | 51% |
| 5. Good training | 50% |

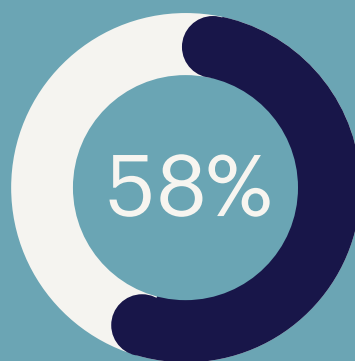
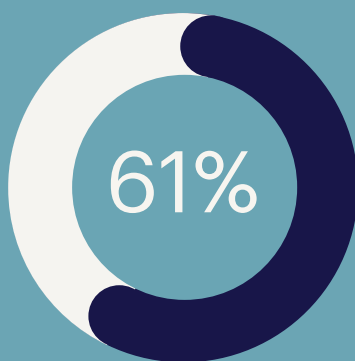
While it is not the most important aspect to consider when looking for an ideal employer, training and career progression opportunities work towards defining how successful an employee can become.

It is also an indicator of whether companies care enough about their workforce to want to develop them into more high-value roles that would help them gain higher job satisfaction.

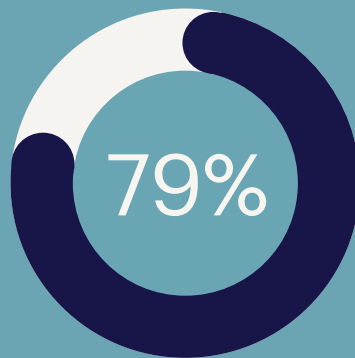
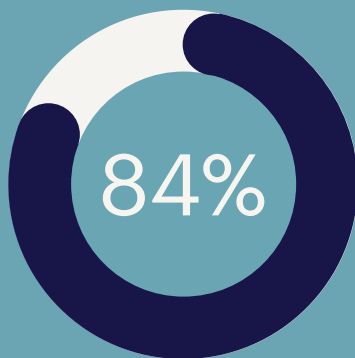
Training and development is important

Personal career growth is important

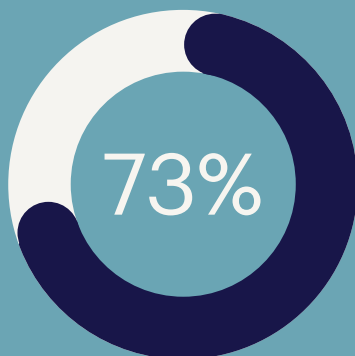
Hong Kong SAR



Malaysia



Singapore





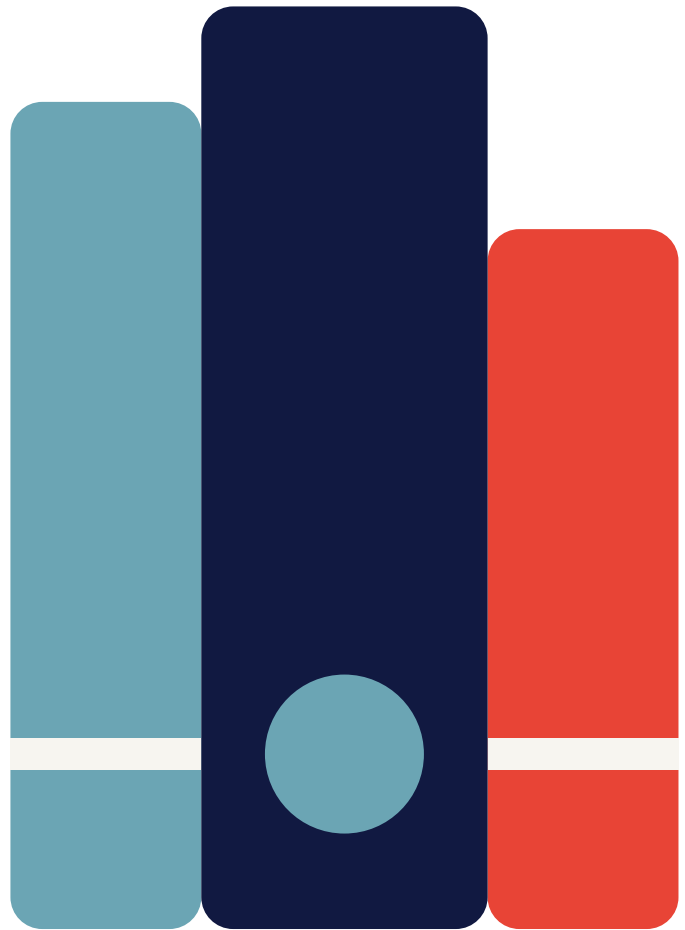
the top 3 learning and development opportunities that employees are interested in.

	Hong Kong SAR	Malaysia	Singapore
Developing the technical skills needed for my role	56%	61%	47%
Developing my soft skills (e.g., communications, leadership, etc.)	55%	60%	56%
Developing in my current role	51%	54%	49%

Source: Randstad Workmonitor 2022

Globally, employees of all ages want to seize learning opportunities to advance their careers. Most respondents say they will avail of additional skilling opportunities if offered by their employer (88%) and will also speak to a career coach if given the chance (84%).

In the Asia Pacific region, employees are interested in speaking to a career coach, primarily to learn how to make more money, improve their work-life balance and advance their careers.



the top 3 areas workers are interested in speaking to a career coach about.

Hong Kong SAR	Malaysia	Singapore
<p>63%</p> <p>Earning more money</p>	<p>65%</p> <p>Finding a better balance between my work and my personal life</p>	<p>60%</p> <p>Earning more money</p>
<p>53%</p> <p>Finding a better balance between my work and my personal life</p>	<p>64%</p> <p>Earning more money</p>	<p>49%</p> <p>Finding a better balance between my work and my personal life</p>
<p>44%</p> <p>Setting out a long-term career plan</p>	<p>43%</p> <p>Advancing my career with my current employer</p>	<p>40%</p> <p>Advancing my career with my current employer</p>

A perceived lack of training and coaching, as well as a [lack of future career development](#), leads to employee dissatisfaction and, ultimately, employee attrition.

The shortage of training and mentoring opportunities [became more pronounced](#) during the COVID-19 pandemic, despite best efforts to facilitate and even master training and [mentoring remotely](#).

According to [Randstad Sourceright](#), 93% of the C-suite and human capital leaders surveyed believe that employers are responsible for providing reskilling opportunities to their employees; however, only 29% are investing in training and development.

Based on the survey results, employees have high expectations for employer-provided upskilling opportunities. However, these expectations often remain unmet as employees do not receive adequate opportunities to upskill or develop their careers.

The onus is on employers to offer more upskilling and training so that employees are more likely to stay in the company to continue developing their careers.

upskill the workforce to deepen employees' capabilities and improve retention rate.

	Hong Kong SAR	Malaysia	Singapore
It's important for employers to offer chances to upskill	66%	85%	74%
Employees have adequate opportunities to develop	46%	59%	48%
They received new training or development opportunities in the past year	15%	36%	22%
They will stay with their current employer if upskilling opportunities are offered to them	58%	74%	65%

Results from the Randstad RiseSmart Worklife Coaching Report 2022 further underscore the importance of forging an all-pervasive culture of learning and development. Even if the employee is looking to change employers, they would be more likely to accept another position internally if given the right opportunities.

Nearly all the employees surveyed (87%) who wanted to change their roles would prefer to do so within their current organisation.

While employees do not necessarily want to leave their current organisations, they do want to feel a sense of progress in their careers and will probably leave when they see no possibilities for this on the horizon.

This offers hope, especially if you can make your organisation a compelling and attractive place to stay by offering improved salaries and benefits, creating a more agile career development plan for employees and curating a friendly and supportive culture.

food for thought

reshaping your employee value proposition.

While hybrid working is often hailed as a cost-saving solution for businesses, it's perhaps more accurate to say that the costs are reallocated somewhere else. By spending less on overhead costs, employers can now look at the areas that need improvements.

Here are some questions that will guide you towards reshaping your EVP to better attract and retain the talent you want:

1. What are some expenses you can save on in a hybrid workplace?
2. Where can you reallocate these savings to help employees in their new hybrid work setup?
3. What HR policies do you need to change to support hybrid work?
4. How should you revise your learning and development roadmap to focus on human development?
5. How should you measure the success and performance of employees who are working remotely?
6. How can you develop a more robust talent review that considers your employees' career progression and mobility expectations, as well as create more internal mobility opportunities as part of a long-term employee retention strategy?



4

what flexible work

cannot fix.

Flexible work is a good start to meeting talent expectations about work-life balance – but it's not the be-all and end-all solution.

Remote work comes with its own set of pitfalls, ranging from a breakdown in work-life separation to disintegrating workplace culture. It also cannot serve as a magic bullet for existing problems around work overload.

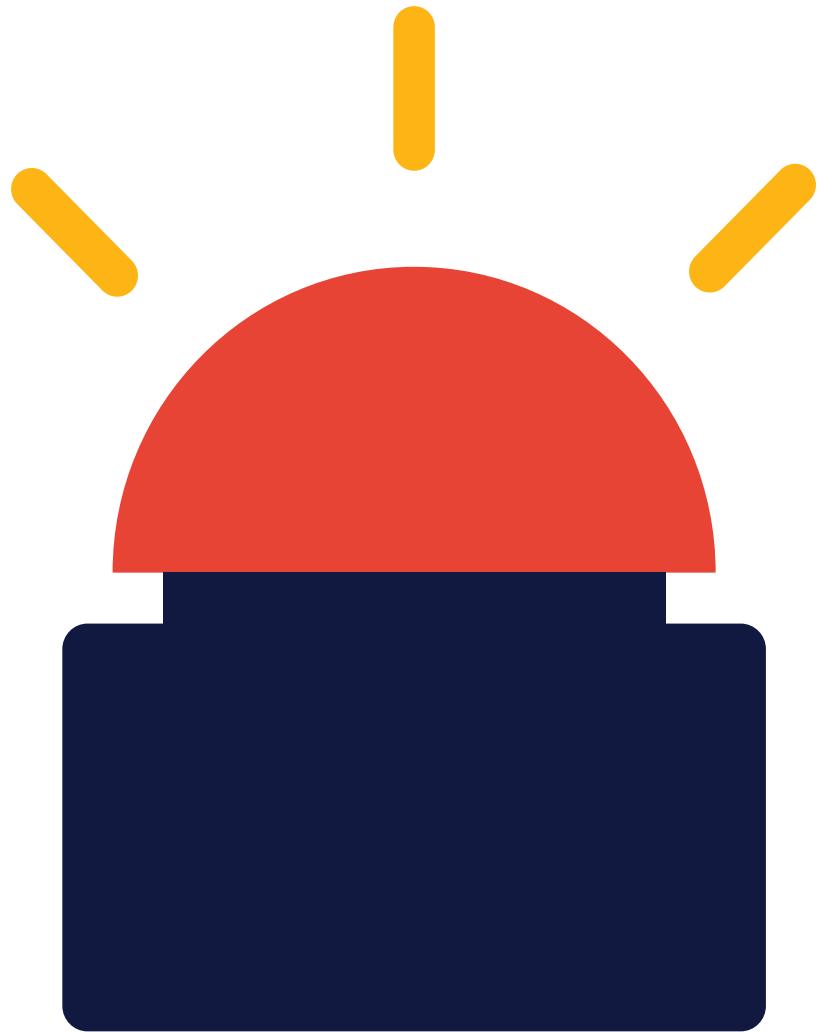
As organisations make the leap toward hybrid work, it's understandable that people leaders often **struggle to build trust** in employees whom they can no longer monitor in-person. If left unchecked, this distrust can exacerbate the complex challenges of remote working, transforming it from a benefit to a bane.

Our data shows that employees have three factors that shape their experience of flexible work: workload, communication and team culture.

Employers will need to reimagine their strategies for each of these factors from a starting point of trust and empathy to best engage and retain talent.



'we're overwhelmed' tackling work overload and overtime.



Our independent survey revealed that the flexibility to work anywhere and anytime is central to employees' sense of work-life balance, enabling them to carve out more personal time.

But when workloads become unmanageable, the impact on work-life balance far exceeds the inconvenience of being office-bound.

An overwhelming workload was the most-cited situation that threatened work-life balance for 68% of respondents, while 64% cited unnecessary or excessive overtime. In contrast, working on-site was by far the least influential factor, with only 33% of respondents selecting this.

Leaders cannot overlook poor workload management. [Employee burnout due to overwork](#) ranks highly among the driving forces behind the Great Resignation.

When an employee has too much work with limited or no support, they are more likely to either sacrifice their personal time and mental health for work, resulting in burnout and eventual resignation.

situations that lead to
poor work-life balance.



68%
An overwhelming
workload



64%
Unnecessary or
excessive overtime



58%
An unreasonable
boss and/or
unsupportive
colleagues



37%
Lack of paid leaves
(i.e., annual leave,
medical leave)



33%
Working in the
office or on-site
every workday



	Regional Average	Hong Kong SAR	Malaysia	Singapore
An overwhelming workload	68%	60%	73%	70%
Unnecessary or excessive overtime	64%	66%	62%	63%
An unreasonable boss and/or unsupportive colleagues	58%	52%	63%	57%

Source: Talent Expectations Survey

how to move away from 'virtual' presenteeism.

The problem of work overload and consequent burnout remains evident in Asian countries, with some companies still practising a culture of presenteeism.

Across Southeast Asia, **71% of employees** have opted not to take sick leave despite being physically unwell and 65% have gone to work despite not feeling mentally well.

This points to a workplace culture where employees feel pressured to clock in the hours – so much so that they are willing to sacrifice their health for their careers.

This culture of presenteeism hasn't just disappeared with the rise of flexible work arrangements. According to a **study** by global health insurer Cigna, 37% of employees in Asia Pacific are working longer hours when working from home.

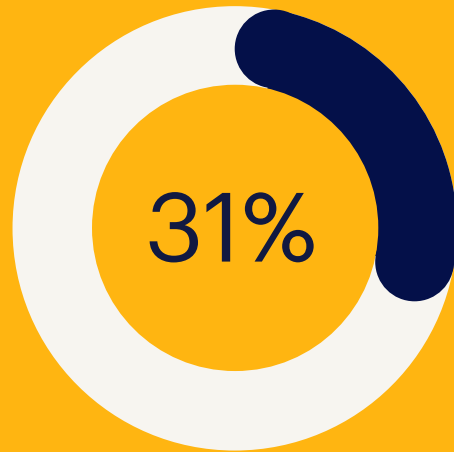
There are many reasons why employees end up working overtime during hybrid work. Excessive virtual meetings and poor communications can lead to employees spending more time to complete their work.

Another common fear that drives presenteeism – in the office or virtually – for workers is **career FOMO**, which is the fear of missing out on promotions, project opportunities and pay increments when working remotely.

As such, employees often feel compelled to come back online after working hours when they see an email or message from their managers to show their dedication to the job.



top 3 reasons
why employees
dislike hybrid and
remote work.



I am unable to communicate or work effectively with my boss and colleagues



I tend to work overtime because my bosses and colleagues like to send emails and text messages at night and on weekends



I fear that I'll miss out on work and promotion opportunities if I'm not physically present at the office

To resolve these threats to employee satisfaction and experience, people managers must take the lead in tackling any culture of unnecessary overtime and improve communication skills and processes in a remote workplace.



tip 1



limit workers' overtime hours

Our 2022 Randstad Employer Brand Research report reveals that reducing overtime hours is among the top three actions taken by employees to reduce work-life balance. Leaders can do more to support your team's efforts.

tip 2



look out for burnout

Set guidelines on weekly workload to prevent your team from getting burnt out.

Conduct regular check-ins to help workers feedback on their well-being.

tip 3



make performance assessment transparent

To fight career FOMO, employers must reassure employees with transparent feedback about career progression and performance assessment.

communicate to draw boundaries.

Poor communication in remote teams correlates strongly with the problem of overtime. Our survey shows that communication is a two-pronged issue that impacts employee satisfaction.

Nearly a third of respondents struggle to communicate effectively with colleagues, while another 28% grapple with overtime due to a lack of communication boundaries.

Remote work entails a huge shift from face-to-face communication to virtual channels like messaging – and many non-verbal cues can be lost along the way.

In a multi-generational workplace, vast [differences in communication styles](#) between mature leaders and Gen Z talent can result in misunderstandings and lowered productivity. Indeed, a [Grammarly study](#) finds that in today's hybrid work era, teams lose 7.47 hours every week due to poor communication.

Teams may often find themselves working overtime to compensate for ineffective communication, while also contending with constant work communication after working hours.

Digital channels make it convenient for employers to reach their teams at any time – but this always-on approach will tire employees very easily and result in burnout.



overcome the challenges of
remote communications.

tip 1

be flexible with communication channels



Whether it's instant messaging, virtual meetings, voice calls, or emails, many employees have a range of digital communication tools at their disposal. Narrow your channels down to a few that work best for your team and empower them to select the right tools based on their needs.

tip 2

fix your core hours



If your teammates' work responsibilities are spread across different time zones, find a window of time when everyone can be online and available for meetings. Outside of these core hours, set the expectation that employees can choose their working hours and should not be obliged to reply to messages at once.

tip 3

limit overcommunication



While communication can help keep your team on the same page, too many calls and emails can be seen as a waste of time. Help your talent do their best work by setting strategic limits on communication. This can include scheduling weekly progress meetings as opposed to daily updates and creating guidelines against communication after a certain time.

tip 4



stay transparent and be available

At the same time, there may be instances when your employees need more communication and support. Leaders should stay transparent and accessible by having an 'open door policy'.

For instance, you can keep your calendar updated with free slots that employees can book whenever they need time with you. Alternatively, you can also reserve 'focus time' on your shared calendar for yourself so that your staff know to keep their questions for later.

tip 5



listen with your heart

Work-life balance isn't one-size-fits-all – each employee may have different struggles with work, family life, personal health and more. Encourage your team members to be open about their personal challenges and practise empathetic listening to their needs, so that you can come up with actionable solutions such as deadline extensions and workload management.



build a culture where talent thrives.

'How can we retain our organisational culture?' – the million-dollar question that boggles the minds of people leaders everywhere in this new normal.

Some believe that culture is the energy in the office; others say that it is about how employees interact and form relationships with one another at and outside of work.

In hybrid work, it is critical to first define what 'work environment' means.

The independent survey revealed that friendly bosses and co-workers who make work enjoyable remain the key factor in a work environment for nearly 4 in 10 respondents.

By contrast, factors that affect physical workspace comfort, such as privacy and amenities, take lower priority for employees.



factors about work environment that matter to people.



38%

Friendly bosses and co-workers whom I enjoy working with



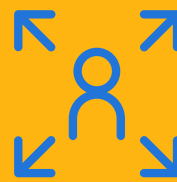
22%

A quiet and private working environment where I can focus on my tasks



20%

The physical work environment doesn't matter to me as long as I have the amenities I need (good WiFi, technology, proximity to eateries)



11%

An open-concept office where I can hotdesk and work next to my favourite colleagues



9%

A space with more meeting rooms than working desks so that I can collaborate with others



	Regional Average	Hong Kong SAR	Malaysia	Singapore
Friendly bosses and co-workers whom I enjoy working with.	38%	32%	42%	38%
A quiet and private working environment where I can focus on my tasks.	22%	23%	21%	21%
The physical work environment doesn't matter to me as long as I have the amenities I need (good WiFi, technology, proximity to eateries).	20%	19%	20%	21%

Source: Talent Expectations Survey

culture is your foundation to a successful talent attraction and retention strategy.

Great cultures attract great talent.

A good environment is defined and measured by the people around us. When employees feel a sense of belonging at work, productivity increases and workplace satisfaction grows. An employee-friendly culture that makes people feel safe, valued and supported will be able to retain employees better.

But the rise of flexible work is changing the game, with many remote workers experiencing a loss of social connection with co-workers. How can employers strengthen company culture to attract and retain talent in a remote work world?

tip 1

create structured opportunities for socialising



In remote teams, there are fewer opportunities for spontaneous watercooler chats or friendly catch ups in the pantry. That means leaders will need to proactively create structured time for socialising. Think about organising team bonding activities such as exercising, karaoke nights or meals with your teams.

tip 2

make your appreciation tangible



While a 'thank you' for their hard work goes a long way, tangible forms of appreciation can make your talent feel truly valued. This doesn't need to be monetary – you can opt for sending care packages, milestone celebrations and team awards. Instead of just expressing your thanks to them in person, you can also write an appreciation post on social media so that they feel more recognised by their leaders and peers.

tip 3

make learning a lifelong journey



As we've highlighted earlier, one key benefit that employers should not overlook is [coaching and career development opportunities](#). When you invest in upskilling your talent, you signal that you value their personal development beyond simply the work they do. In particular, mentoring programmes can help people build connections as well as guide them towards growing into future leaders of your organisation.

tip 4

help talent practice job crafting



[Job crafting](#) empowers talent to make work more meaningful by tailoring their roles to their interests and strengths. Create a culture of empowerment by enabling employees to propose and lead projects that excite them. You can also work with your employees to redesign their job scope collaboratively to fulfil their career goals, giving them one more reason to stay with the organisation.

tip 5

act on employee feedback



To build a culture that employees love, you'll need to get feedback from your employees regularly. This can happen through a variety of formal and informal channels, from anonymous pulse surveys to casual one-on-one discussions. It's critical to take action on employees' feedback so that they feel that their opinions are being taken seriously. This will encourage more employees to share their feedback to help make the company a better place to work for, while strengthening your talent attraction and retention strategy.



people leaders must put people first.

To meet talents' expectations and transform the workplace effectively, people leaders must put people first.

We can parse this vital leadership characteristic further, by looking into the leadership skills employees look for so that company culture transformation can drive workplaces forward.

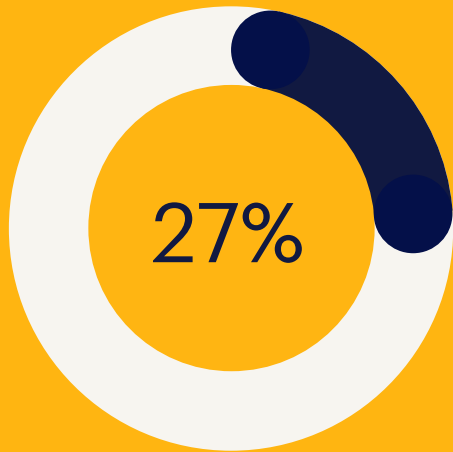
Through tapping into employees' sentiments, the studies covered in this report revealed that workers prefer motivational and empathetic leaders with good coaching skills.

Visionary and ambitious leadership qualities are ranked last, given the poor economic **outlook** and the unrealistic demands that **ambitious leaders** add to the workforce that are not aligned with their people's needs.

Furthermore, uniting the workforce needs strong management; a united organisation attracts talent.

This is one of the top considerations among job switchers in Hong Kong SAR and Malaysia.

leadership qualities
employees in asia expect
in their bosses.



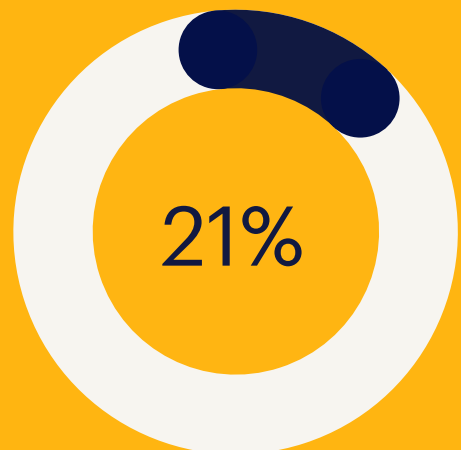
| Motivational



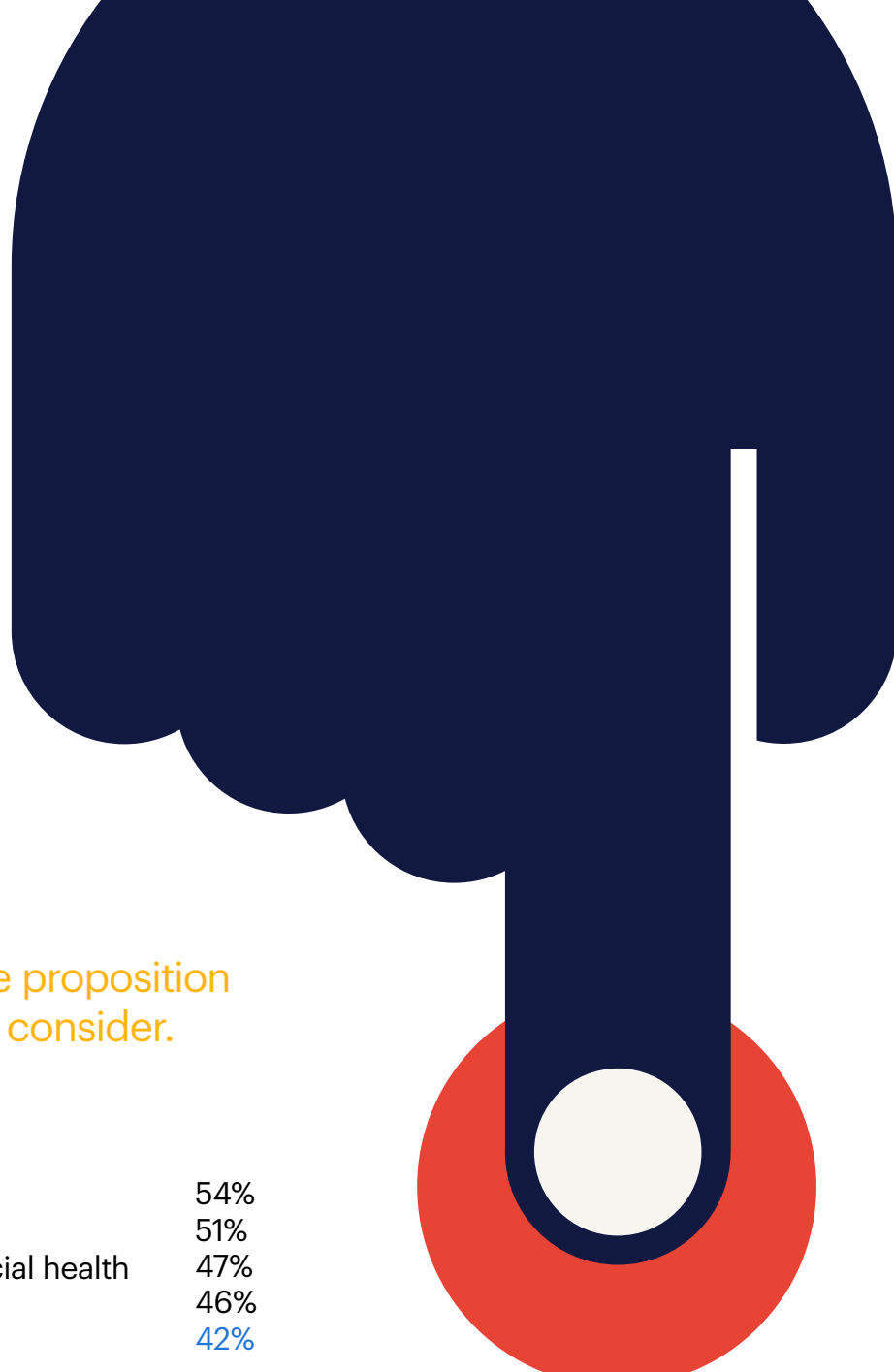
| Empathetic



| Good
coaching
skills



| Visionary and
ambitious



top 5 employee value proposition factors job switchers consider.

Hong Kong SAR

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----|
| 1. Work-life balance | 54% |
| 2. Salary and benefits | 51% |
| 3. Strong company's financial health | 47% |
| 4. Good training | 46% |
| 5. Strong management | 42% |

Malaysia

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----|
| 1. Salary and benefits | 66% |
| 2. Strong management | 62% |
| 3. Work-life balance | 62% |
| 4. Strong company's financial health | 61% |
| 5. Career progression | 59% |

Singapore

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| 1. Work-life balance | 64% |
| 2. Salary and benefits | 63% |
| 3. Pleasant work atmosphere | 52% |
| 4. Career progression | 51% |
| 5. Good training | 50% |

food for thought

what a strong remote workplace culture looks like.

Workplace culture cannot simply be transplanted from a physical office to the virtual realm. If your team is going remote, you will need to reimagine how your culture might look like and function.

Here are some questions to consider:

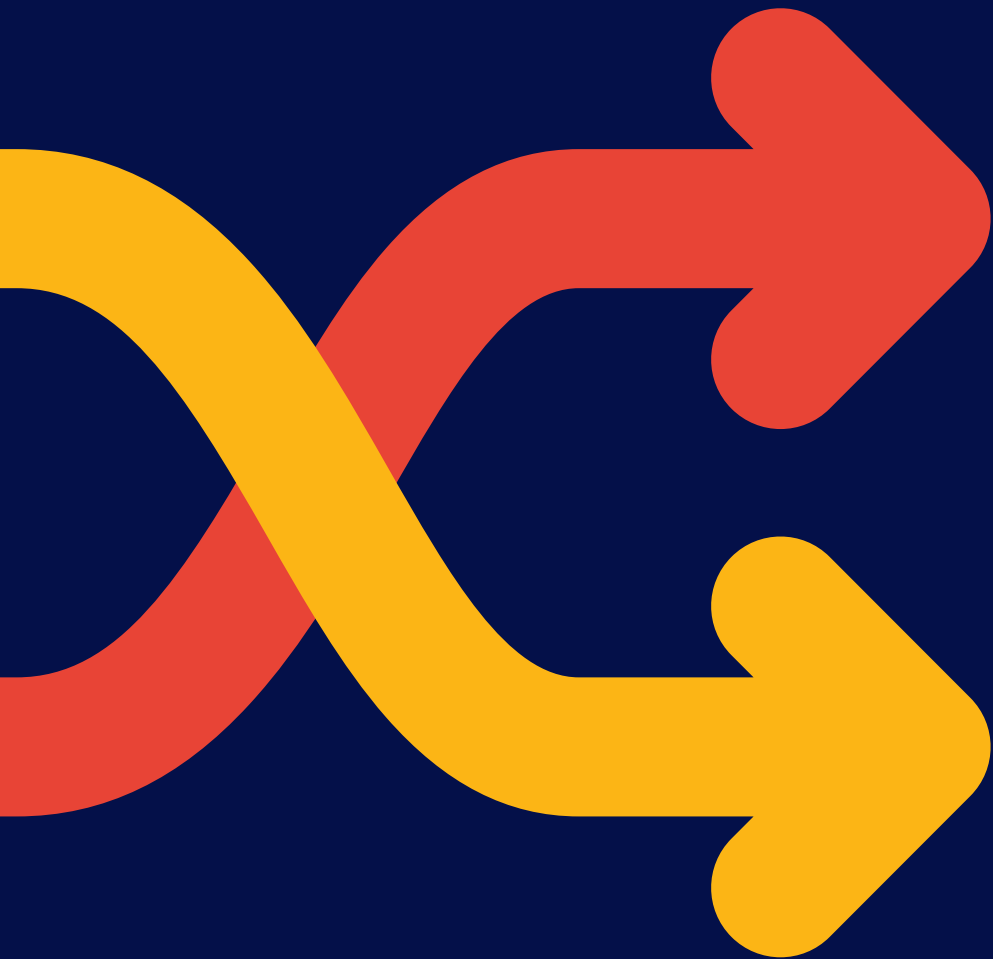
- How significant are the shifts in your workplace's cultural values as a result of going remote?
- How can companies effectively communicate with the workforce to ensure constant engagement?
- How can leaders coach their teams and themselves to communicate effectively over digital channels?
- How can teams build social ties and friendships while working remotely?
- How can employers proactively alleviate fears around missed opportunities for remote workers?



5

redefining

how we work.



From what we have conclusively learned from the Randstad Employer Brand Research, Randstad Workmonitor and the Talent Expectations Survey, **these are the top three employee demands:**



flexible work arrangements

For employees to be able to work anytime and anywhere, as long as they get the job done and in a reasonable amount of time.



supportive work environment and leadership

An environment that values personal time away from the office, boundaries, learning and development, supportive colleagues and reasonable working hours.



work-life integration

Employees' autonomy to integrate personal time into working hours, including decisions about when, where and how they choose to complete their work.



These three expectations sprout from recent developments that have been redefining the way we work. It began with digitalisation and remote work, which are still transforming workspaces and reshaping how we understand and experience work.

Today's employees no longer think about where we work, but what we do and how we are empowered to do it.

The focus must now go into empowering people to create their 'office away from the office'. To do so, organisations must foster a healthy company culture, implement work-life integration and provide meaningful employee support.

envisioning the FUTURE work framework.



Now that we've covered the new talent expectations and dived into the topic of work-life balance, what companies and employers do next will determine not just the productivity of their workforce, but also the company's DNA.

The FUTURE work framework compiles our findings and insights for business leaders to optimise your resources to improve your employer brand and become the most attractive company to work for.

flexibility

in processes

Provide flexible work arrangements, like work timings and locations, so that employees have the autonomy to fulfil the different roles they play in their careers and lives.

upskilling

and development opportunities

Use learning and development to benefit employees. Coach them into high-value roles that would help them gain higher job satisfaction.

trust

in culture and employees

Create healthy communication guidelines and boundaries. Put an end to the culture of presenteeism by looking out for burnout and making performance assessments transparent.

uplift

employees through building a supportive and friendly work environment

Encourage an environment where friendly bosses and supportive co-workers can make work enjoyable.

reshape

total talent attraction strategy

Think holistically about salary and benefits, strengthen career progression for talent and continue building a culture where talent thrives.

empower

employees continually through creating purpose and change

Be empathetic leaders, act on employee feedback and help talent build the career they want.

food for thought

change will always happen get used to it.

Leadership and management qualities in your organisation must transform to align with workplace changes and trends. Change is crucial to thriving in Asia's rapidly evolving corporate landscape—and several successful leaders have already weighed in on how reshaping their approach is proving vital to differentiation and [competition](#).

The shift in leadership and how this transforms company culture will affect the success of the talent attraction strategy.

With people serving as the backbone of any organisation's success, it is important that as a people leader, you address employee expectations for more effective talent attraction and management efforts.

Transformation will not happen overnight and tackling this may be a drastic change organisation project made up of robust training, team and job redesign, constant feedback and more.

However, the investment will prove fruitful at the end when you see your employees feeling happier and becoming more productive. Your organisation will naturally be able to attract top talent because they want to not just work for you, but also stay with you for as long as possible.

When organisational employers and leaders listen and respond accordingly, the workforce ultimately steps up.





who we are

We support people and organisations in realising their full potential. We strive to move them forward because we understand that your success depends on the people around you.

Randstad believes in the power of people and matches great talent to the right employers. By serving as a trusted human partner in today's ever-changing world of talent, we help people secure rewarding jobs and find their purpose in work and life.

about the research

As experts in talent recruitment and strategic HR solutions, we use data-driven insights as well as our knowledge and expertise to help transform your employer brand into the most powerful talent attraction tool.

Learn more about [Randstad's insights and research](#).

We specialise in helping people leaders build an exceptional team of professionals and develop more effective workforce strategies.

[Contact us](#) for your workforce needs.



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