

Culture Shift

PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST IN RETAIL



workvivo
by zoom



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01. INTRODUCTION

AN INDUSTRY AT A CROSS- ROADS

It's a well-worn cliché that the customer is always right.

Of course, anyone who has ever worked in retail has encountered many customers who are bound and determined to disprove this bit of common wisdom. The underlying point is a solid one, though: retail businesses are made or broken based on the customer experience.

Here's the tricky part: customer expectations are at an all-time high. 84% of customer service leaders say customers have raised the bar higher than ever.



Unfortunately, there are a lot of factors making it difficult for retailers to provide the unforgettable experiences customers have come to expect.



Disruptions to the supply chain, from unforeseeable environmental catastrophes to unpredictable geopolitical conflicts



The dominance of online shopping, where customer service takes a back seat to price and convenience



Years of a strong job market has made it more difficult to find, train, and retain the employees that can deliver exceptional customer experiences



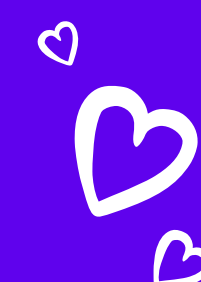
Retailers who want to win in this environment must understand the challenges they're facing, adapt to new solutions, and create a solid plan of action for how to move forward.



The retailers who can figure out how to **grow their customer base** and reignite **brand loyalty** through **meaningful customer experiences** will thrive in the consumer environment of today and tomorrow.

In this guide, we'll explore the most pressing **challenges and concerns** facing workers in the retail industry today and the often-overlooked solution for attracting and retaining talent, increasing engagement, and improving employee output: **culture**.

We'll see how a strong company culture is the **secret advantage** that can elevate your company above the competition, and we'll offer **actionable steps** to help leaders build a resilient, dependable workforce that is equipped to take on the challenges of the future.



02.

RETAIL INDUSTRY OVERVIEW

Reckoning with the reality of retail

Retail has always been a sector with a lot of ups and downs. Lately, it feels like there are a lot more downs than ups, with retailers juggling an extraordinary number of challenges.

Trade turbulence

The more interconnected the world becomes, the more a single shakeup, from a storm to a war to a challenging trade policy, can cause a ripple effect that disrupts the entire supply chain. This ultimately impacts consumer confidence, which impacts sales, which leads to stores closing. To make matters even worse, competition for available retail space keeps rising. In short, the state of trade? It's a mess.

Consumer conundrums

Consumers have seen the promised land, and they're not going back. Cheap, foreign goods and fast, convenient delivery have raised expectations to new all-time highs. Customers expect personalized, omnichannel experiences and the ability to get what they want, when they want it. Reaching customers is harder than ever, too, with a segmented media landscape making micro-targeting a necessity. In addition to being masters of logistics and marketing, retailers now need to be tech wizards if they hope to survive and thrive.

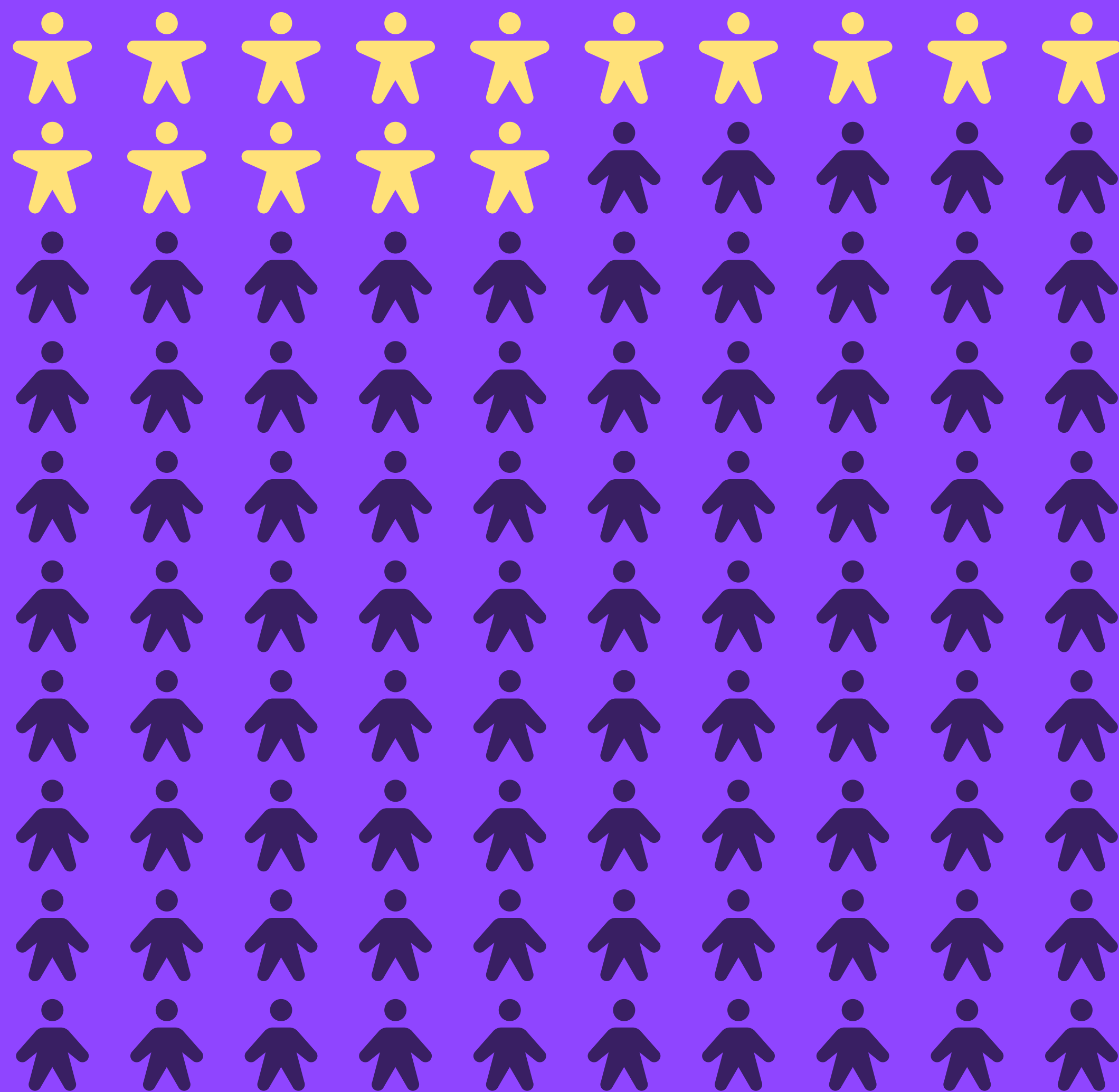
Worker woes

Years of low unemployment and a robust job market have not translated into big wins for retail. Retail work is still viewed by many as more of a temporary gig than a career, which makes it difficult to find workers who want to invest their time and talent into helping your company grow. When your best workers have their pick of opportunities, it becomes that much harder to retain them.

On top of that, retail employees don't feel connected or engaged with their jobs.

15%

In fact, only 15% of retail employees report feeling valued by senior leadership



Who wants to stay in a profession where you don't feel valued?



The state of people in retail at a glance

15%



of retail employees report feeling valued by senior leadership

52%



of retail workers report feeling burnout

44%



of retail workers plan to leave their job in the next 3 to 6 months

20%



of retail workers plan to stay at their company long term





CLEARLY, THERE ARE ISSUES RETAILERS CAN'T CONTROL.



No matter how great your floor displays are, they're not going to set you apart from the competition. But don't despair! One of the most important factors to retail success is solidly within your control — and that's **how you treat your people.**



03.

THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES IN RETAIL

Give your people what they want ... which is what, exactly?

You need competent, well-trained employees who can help you grow your business by providing the kind of service that keeps customers coming back for more. But finding and retaining the talent you need comes with its share of challenges, such as:



Let's take a closer look at some of these challenges and the impact they have on your business.

CHALLENGE 01

Failing the loyalty test

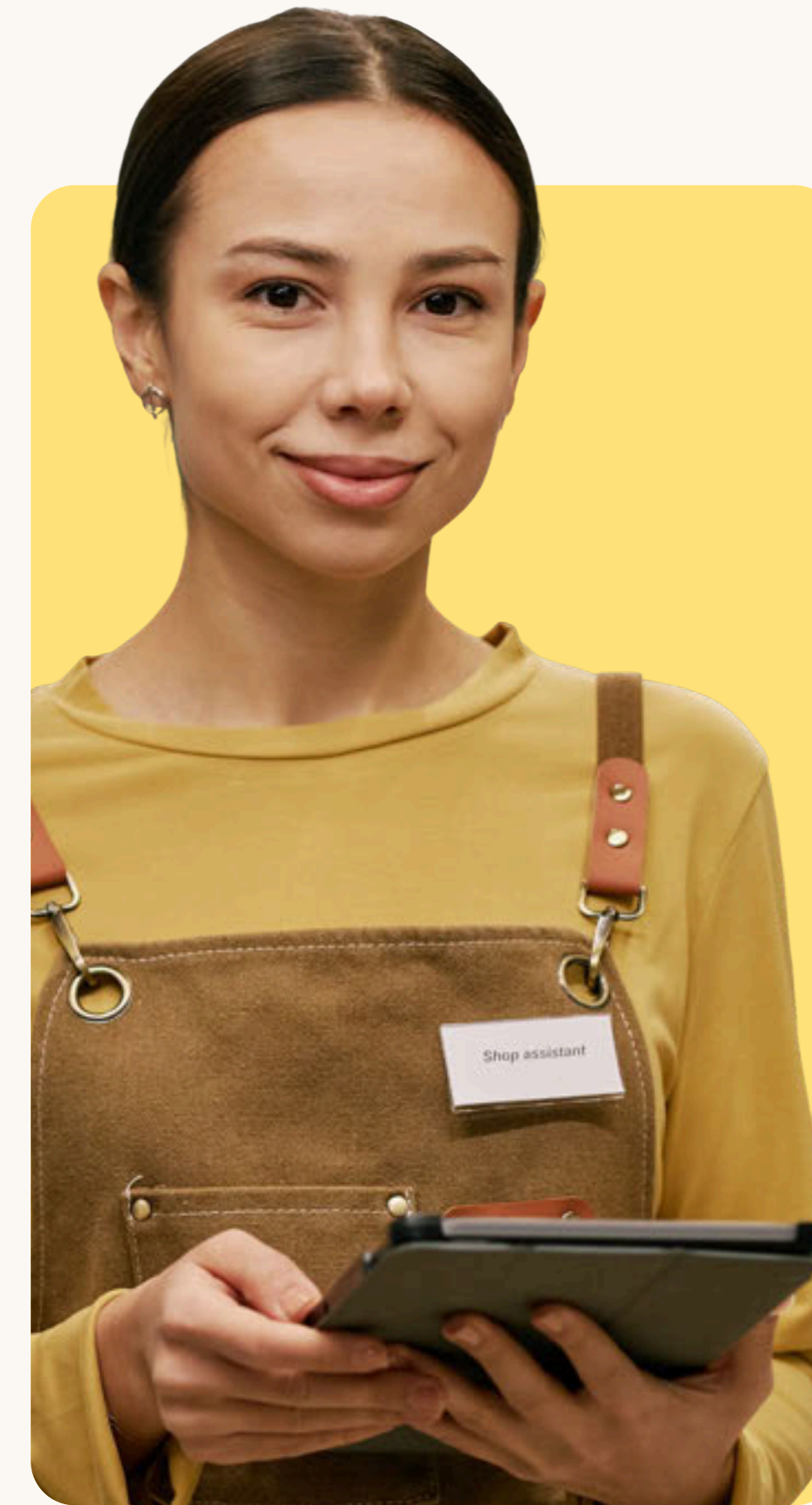
Low expectations for employee loyalty have become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Retailers assume their employees aren't going to stick around for long, so they don't put in the effort to retain them, creating a vicious circle that makes employees even less likely to stick around.

THE IMPACT

Improving the customer experience takes time and knowledge. When retailers are constantly having to backfill positions, they miss out on the quality customer service & institutional experience they need to plan for the future.

The constant talent drain is costing you, not just in the amount it takes to find and train new employees, but in the value you get from workers who know their stuff. It's difficult to move ahead when you're spending all your time playing catch up.



20%

Only 20% of retail workers have plans to stay at their company for the long-term.

60%

Every year, 60% of retail employees change jobs or careers.



CHALLENGE 02

Everybody's working for the weekend

Retail employees do not feel a connection to their employers or a sense of pride in their jobs.

Many retail employees are just there to cash a paycheck, with no greater goals or aspirations beyond making it to the end of their shifts.

THE IMPACT

Employees aren't fulfilling their potential. Retail is a consumer-facing business, and when workers are just going through the motions, customers can tell. We all know what it's like to be on the wrong end of poor customer service; one negative experience can cause a shopper to turn around and never come back.

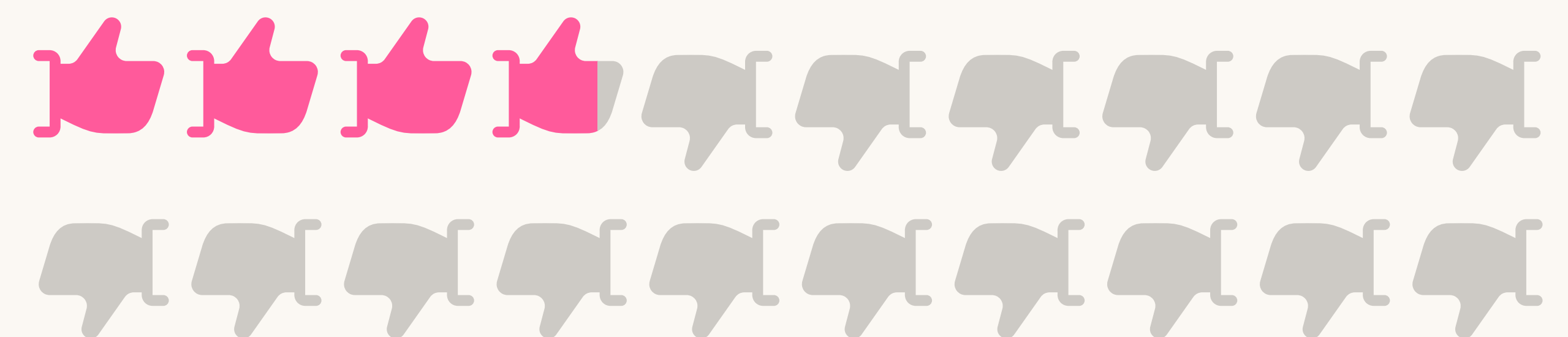


15%

Only 15% of retail employees report feeling valued by senior leadership.

19%

Only 19% of retail workers would recommend their company as a good place to work.



CHALLENGE 03

Waiting on that train(ing)

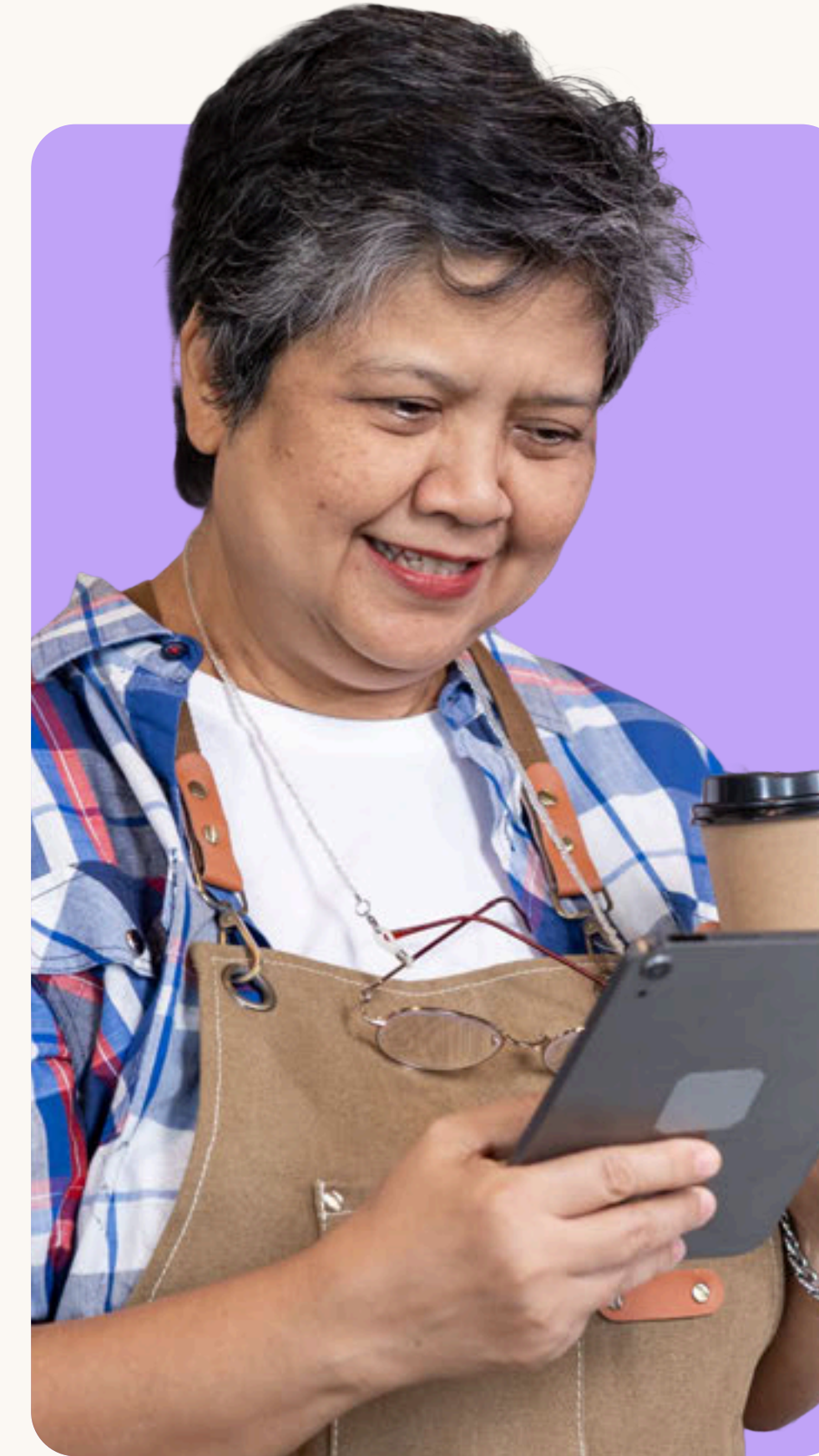
Employees are not getting trained properly or upskilled to keep improving at their jobs.

There aren't enough opportunities for frontline retail workers to advance internally and not enough emphasis placed by employers on rewarding quality workers.

THE IMPACT

Employees lack the knowledge and ability to function as good representatives of the company to customers.

Employees aren't driven to improve or achieve more. The retailers who are going to succeed are the ones who can keep innovating, and innovation can come from anywhere — as long as your employees are encouraged to keep striving.



52%

Only 52% of retail employees feel their company is invested in them.

40%

of retail workers say they do not get the right amount of training to do their jobs properly.



CHALLENGE 04

Flex in flux

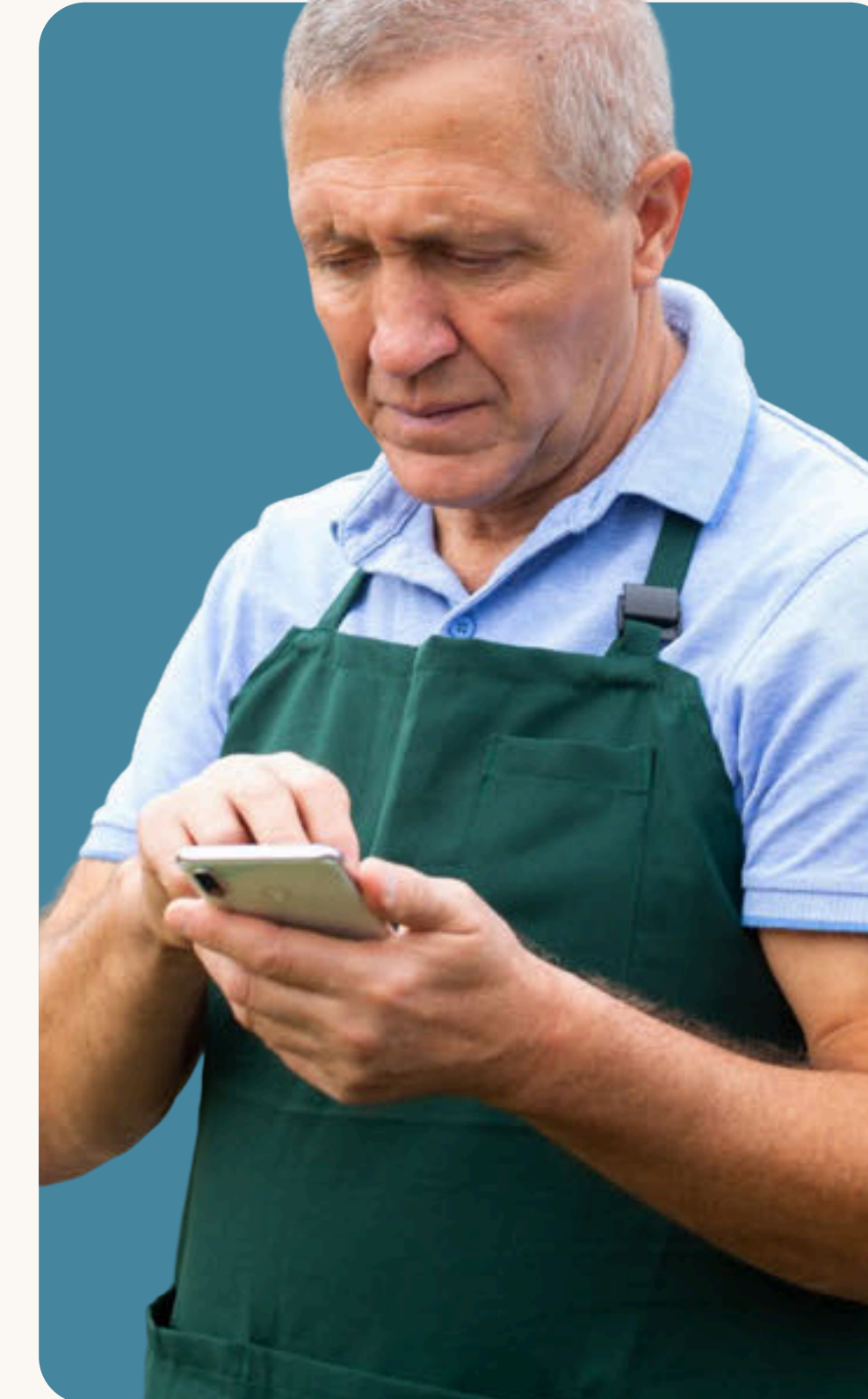
Fluctuations in worker needs due to seasons, holidays, and economic factors can make it an erratic profession for anyone who needs a reliable, stable schedule.

Retail employees can feel as if their lives are at the whim of their employers and a lack of control over their time.

THE IMPACT

Retailers are cutting a significant portion of the talent pool out of the equation, leading them to either hire underqualified workers or leave positions unfilled.

Workers view retail as a temporary job to be abandoned if they can find something that gives them more control over their lives.

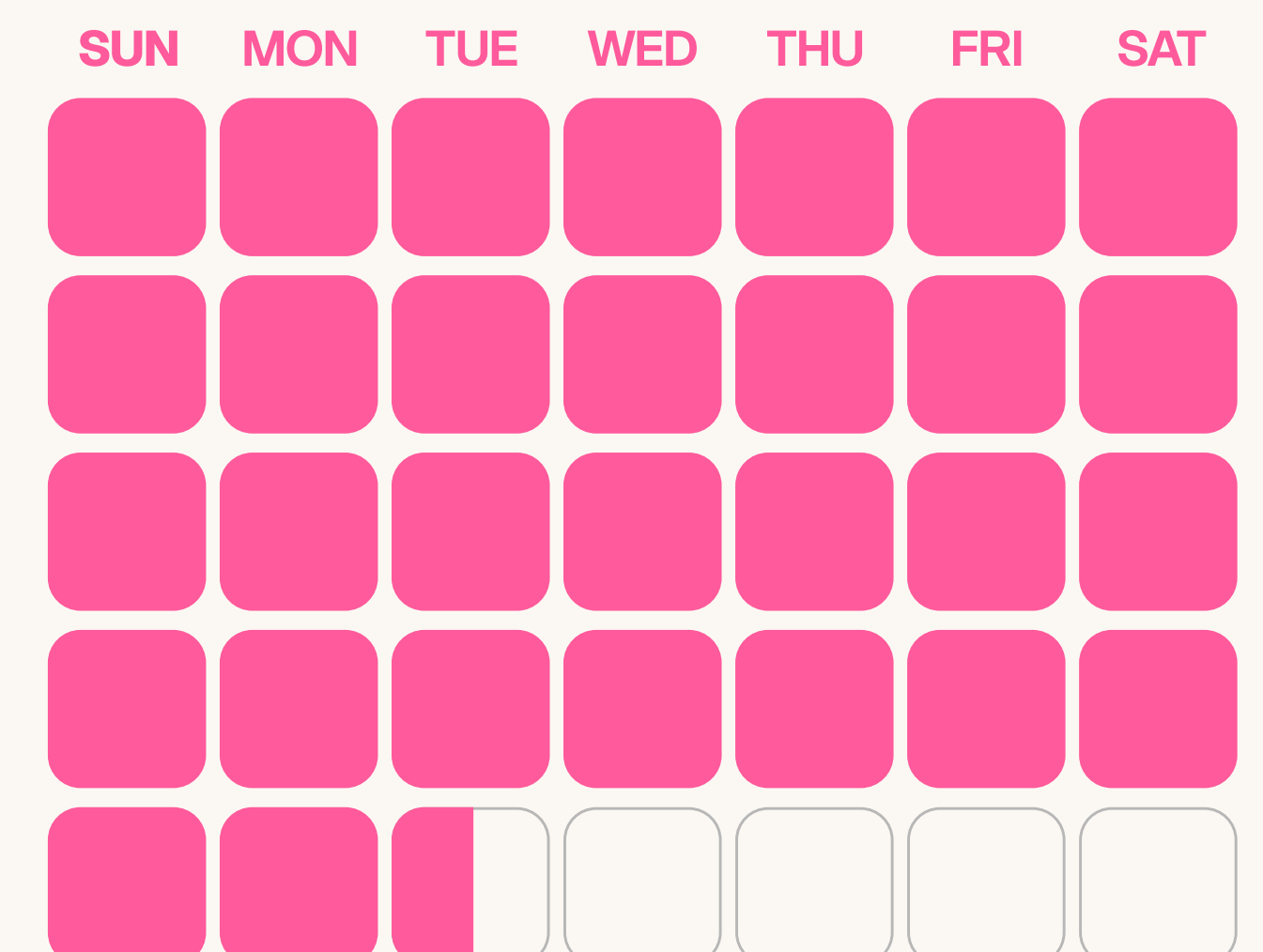


34%

of retail workers listed workplace flexibility as their reason for quitting - the #1 response among those surveyed

87%

of retail workers said flexibility is essential to job satisfaction.



04.

THE 4-POINT RETAIL SOLUTION: CREATING A CULTURE OF BELONGING

Retail is a people-oriented business.

You're not in business to sell to algorithms, so you shouldn't be orienting your business around them. You need to be laser-focused on your customers.



And how do you invest in your customers?
By investing in your people.

Customers will choose you above all their other options when you give them an experience they can't have anywhere else. Trying to compete with Amazon on their terms is a fool's errand: trust us, they're way ahead of you. You probably have three of their boxes sitting on your porch right now.



Where you can compete is by giving your customers a more humane experience. A people-first customer experience that can only come from one place: your people.



To build customer experiences that will set your company up for success, you must create a culture of belonging that turns your employees from disengaged workers into a customer-obsessed workforce to be reckoned with.

We propose a 4-point solution to create a culture of belonging:

01

• **Increase opportunities** for employee recognition so your workers feel trusted, respected, and appreciated.

02

• **Improve communication** between employees and management so your workers feel connected to the wider organization.

03

• Make **employee education and upskilling** an ongoing part of the employee experience to give workers an opportunity to learn new skills and interests.

04

• **Implement technological solutions** to give workers more freedom over their schedules and greater flexibility.



SOLUTION 01

Give your workers the loyal treatment

Employees who feel no connection to their company will be out the door the moment a better opportunity comes along.

If you can instill a sense of loyalty in your employees, they'll be happier, more productive, and better customer representatives.

Loyalty is a two-way street. Show your employees you trust and respect them, and they'll do the same for you. And once they feel that connection to you as an employer, they'll be far more likely to stay and grow with you, putting their experience to work to help your business prosper.

HOW TO DO IT

Loyalty starts at the top. Give leadership the space to speak directly and honestly with employees, so they feel in the loop on business decisions and part of the conversation

Recognize employees for doing good work, both privately (bonuses and perks) and in public (praise in front of their colleagues). Everyone appreciates it when their efforts are recognized, and positive reinforcement is far more motivational than negative. Which you already know because you're a genius. (See? Feels pretty good, doesn't it?)



Always treat your employees exactly as you want them to treat your best customers.

Stephen R. Covey

Author, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*



SOLUTION 02

You can't spell community without unity



Work relationships are critical to well-being and motivation.

But too often, retailers treat community as an afterthought, instead of something they have to invest in. You need to build a sense of community that brings the frontline and back office together, so employees feel like they're all a part of the wider organization and they're all working together to contribute to its success.

HOW TO DO IT

Create a single source for communication where all employees can see important company messages and interact with one another.

Create a forum for two-way communication between workers and management. When workers feel free to ask questions and give feedback to their superiors, they feel like they're a part of the culture and not just hired hands.



Listen to everyone in your company. And figure out ways to get them talking. To push responsibility down in your organization, and to force good ideas to bubble up within it, you must listen to what your associates are trying to tell you.

Sam Walton
Founder, Walmart



SOLUTION 03

Don't hesitate to educate

Most workers want to learn important career skills at their job – in fact, 86% of Millennials say they would stay at their current job if their employer offered more training and development. But too often, training ends at onboarding, and ongoing education efforts consist solely of cornball corporate videos and painfully obvious multiple choice quizzes.

It's time to start thinking about training and education in a broader sense, teaching skills that don't just make their workers better at one specific task, but better people. No company ever prospered by forcing their employees into boxes they couldn't escape; any opportunity you can give your employees to learn and grow as people will come back to you tenfold in quality of service and dedication to their jobs.

HOW TO DO IT

Uplevel your trainings to upskill your employees. Empower HR to create a robust program that runs the full gamut of media, from gamified daily quizzes to wiki articles to podcasts.

Reward employees for upskilling and performance improvements with recognition and perks. Promote from within so employees can see the benefits of improving their skills and know they have a future at your organization.



Train people well enough that they can leave, treat people well enough that they don't want to.

Richard Branson
Founder, Virgin Group



SOLUTION 04

Flex your flexibility

Flexibility is a tricky challenge in retail, because there is a reality that stores don't keep bankers' hours. (Bankers don't even keep bankers' hours anymore, for that matter.) But retailers have been exploring ways to give employees more control and flexibility over their schedules, with technology helping to put more power in the hands of workers.

HOW TO DO IT

Use an AI-enabled scheduling platform to quickly create schedules that take all employees' needs into account. Give employees access to schedules well in advance so they can flag any issues or time off requests.

Make it easier for your workers to communicate among themselves if they need to trade shifts or rearrange schedules. Letting employees do some of the groundwork themselves can free up time for managers to focus on more important matters.



We believe that if you get the culture right, most of the other stuff — like great customer service, building a great long-term brand, or passionate employees and customers — will happen naturally. Your culture is your brand.

Tony Hsieh
Former CEO, Zappos
[from his book *Delivering Happiness*]

05.

TOOLS AND TECH: THE HUMAN SIDE OF TRANSFORMATION

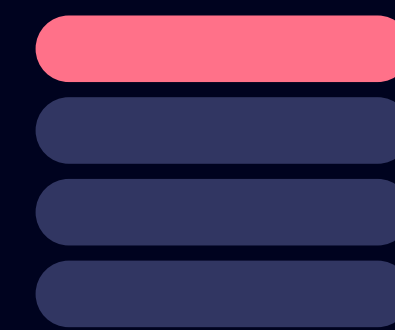
It's tech's world, we just live in it.

Trying to figure out where technology ends and our lives begin is like trying to separate the flour from a cake. Just think of how much tech has changed the way we shop:

Buy now



Consumers can now buy anything they want at the click of a button and get it within a few days, if not a few hours.



Store apps know customer preferences and shopping history, creating a more personalized experience.



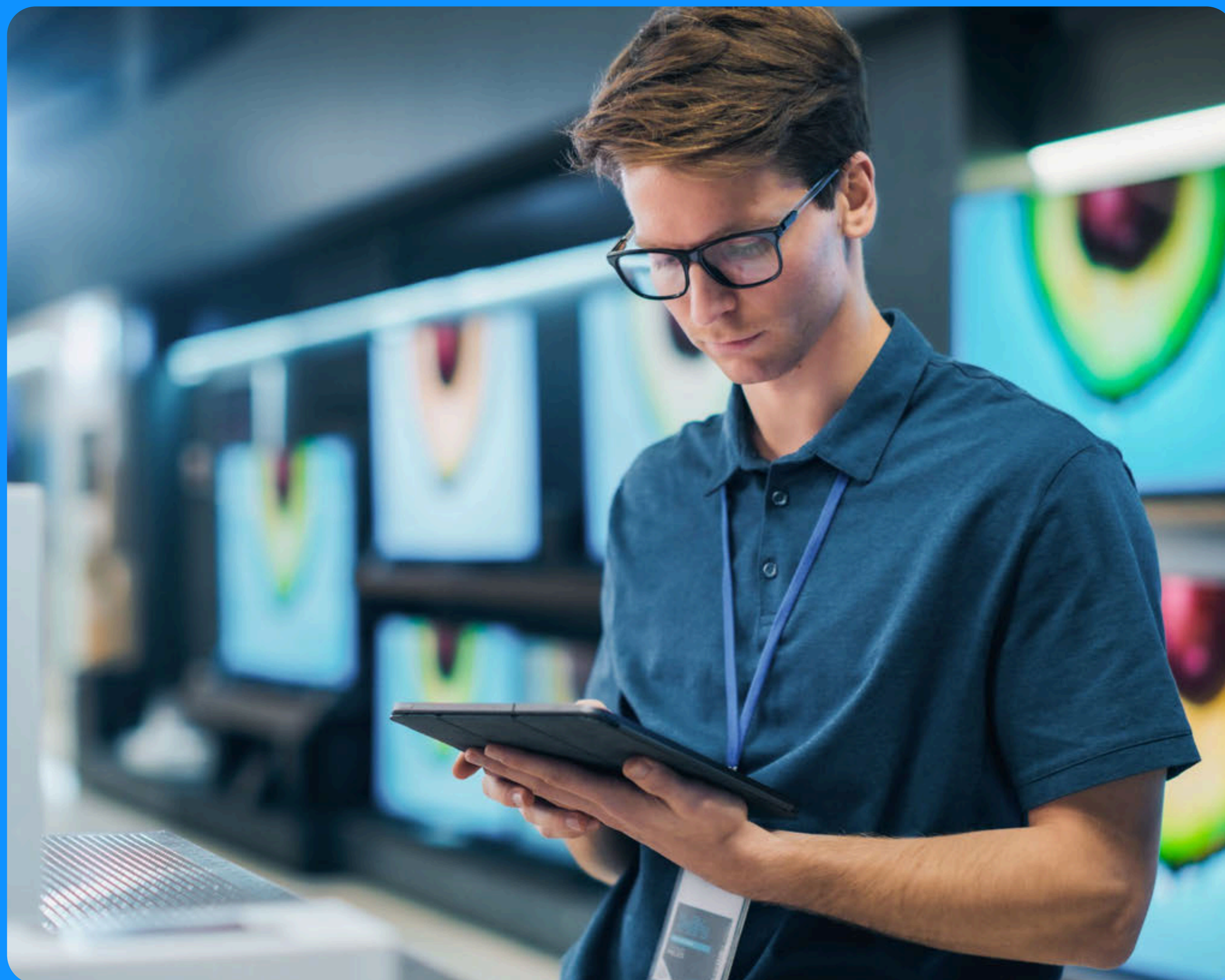
Self- and mobile-checkout have moved beyond grocery and the Apple store, speeding up the checkout process. (Unless you accidentally put your unpurchased items in the bagging area. Don't get us started.)



Shoppers can see how much your competitors are charging instantly, leading to lower margins as retailers try to compete with online stores that have much lower overhead.



ALL OF THESE TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES ARE CONSUMER-FACING.

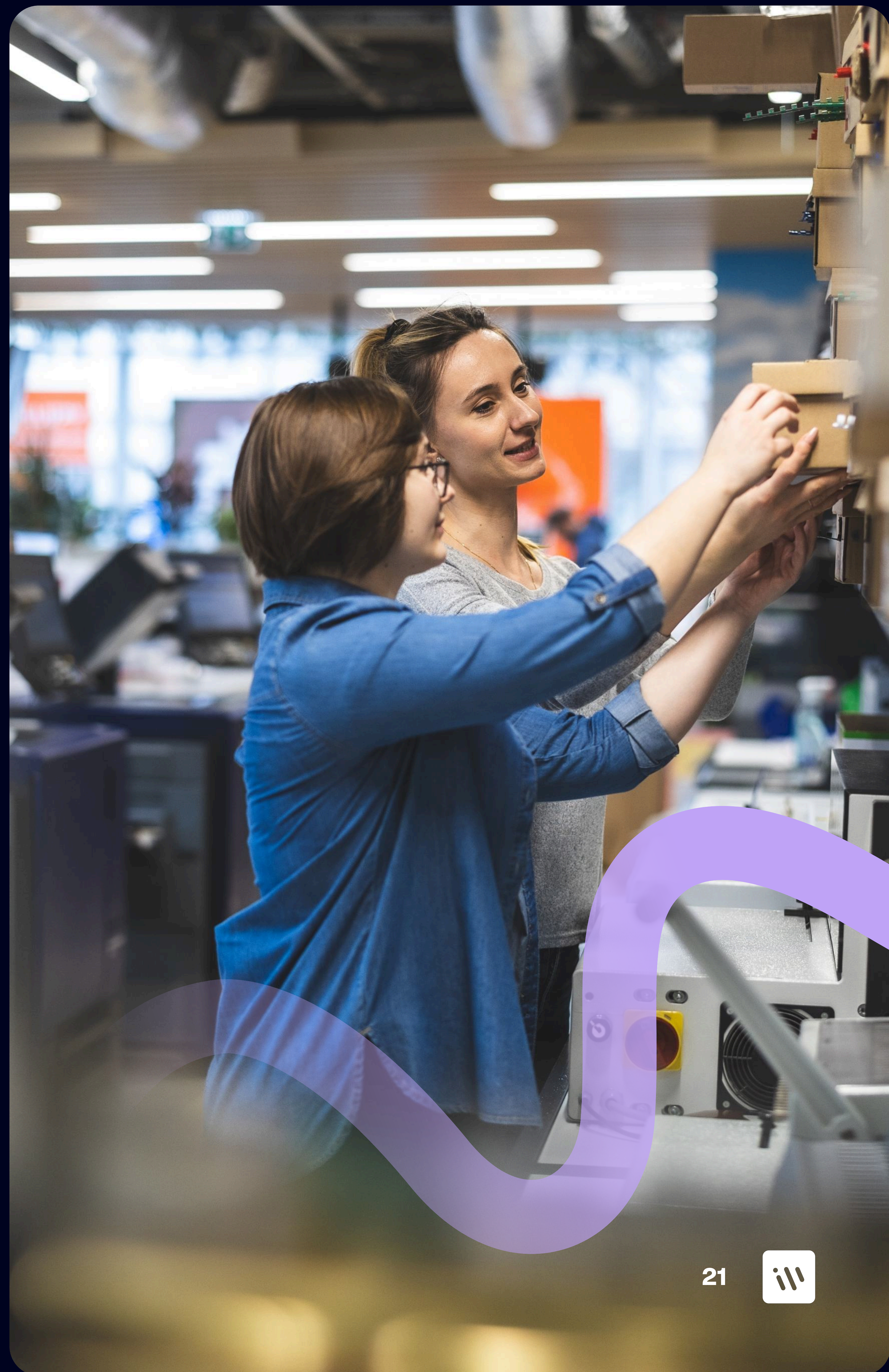


But, as we've been discussing, the way to your customers' hearts is through your workers. Your tech transformation should not be cutting your workers out of the equation, but giving them the power and the tools to better service your customers.

Where everybody knows your name

An increasing number of stores are putting devices into the hands of frontline workers, enabling sales associates to quickly look up inventory, scan products, assist customers, and even punch in and out for the day. These devices don't just need to be glorified scanners: they can also be used to transform how your employees work together.

A holistic transformation requires internal communications and alignment that stretches from IT to leadership to the sales floor. Retailers need to invest in technology that brings their entire organization together, removing barriers between the two sides of the business so the entire org can move together as one unit with a cohesive and reliable customer experience.





This means, implementing a tech solution that:

- ★ Empowers two-way communication
- ★ Gives workers instant access to the information they need
- ★ Enables employee rewards and recognition
- ★ Assists in training and upskilling
- ★ Creates space for helpful feedback that can improve processes and speed innovation
- ★ Brings the entire organization together in the same space



72%

The majority of workers have welcomed devices as a helpful tool, with 72% saying their device helps them do their job better.

50%

The one area where retail workers are still skeptical is when it comes to AI – half of all retail workers surveyed expressed concern that AI would impact their job security.

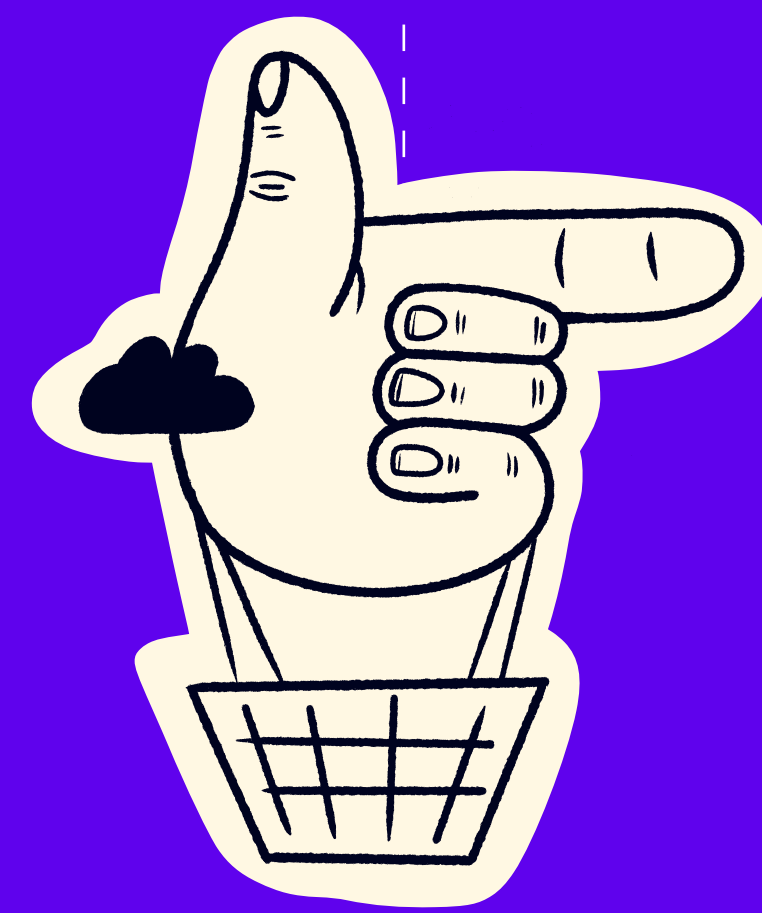


06. CONCLUSION

ONE COMPANY, ONE CULTURE

The retail organizations that will thrive this year and beyond won't be those with the most cutting-edge technology or the most aggressive pricing strategies. They'll be the ones that successfully unite their entire workforce, from the CEO to the newest sales associate, around a shared customer obsession, enabled by tools that bring workers across the org together in pursuit of one shared vision.

All the challenges facing retailers right now — well, the ones within their control, anyway — really boil down to one question: how do you get the most out of your people? And the answer is: by putting the most into your people. The key to attracting and retaining high-quality talent, increasing productivity, boosting sales, and developing exceptional customer experiences is to **create a culture where every employee feels like they belong**.



This means:



Improving how your company communicates so your knowledge workers and frontline associates all feel like they're a part of one united team.



Investing in systems that get everyone in your organization on the same page, working to move the org forward.

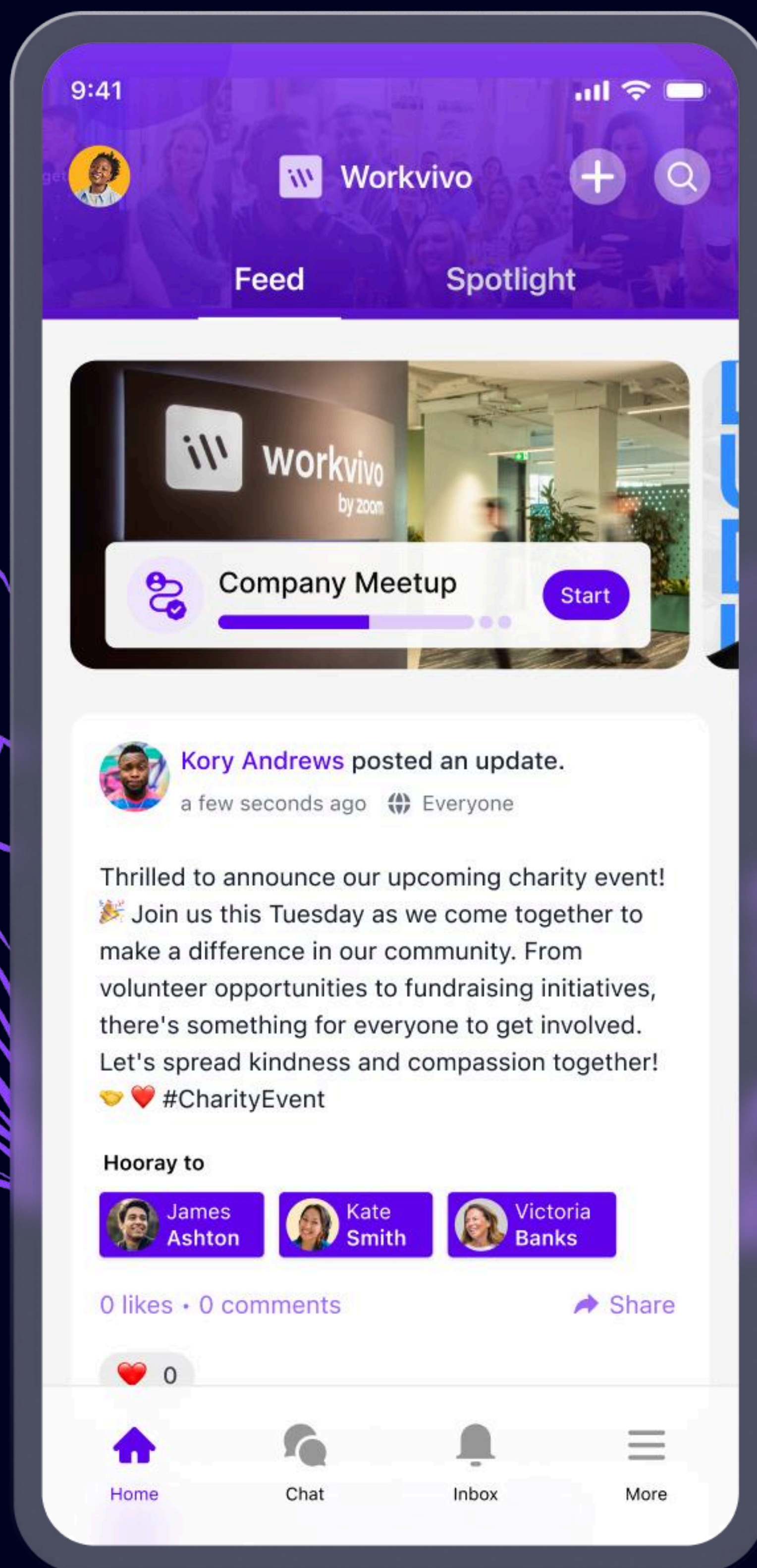


Creating a hub where information can flow freely and every employee can understand how their role contributes to the customer experience.



Most importantly, demonstrating through your actions that you value your people's contributions, well-being, and future. Your employees will become invested in your success because you've shown that you're invested in their success.

When you build this united organization, you don't just increase employee satisfaction and loyalty — you create the competitive advantage that will define retail success in the years to come.



07.

About Workvivo

Workvivo is the all-in-one employee experience platform built to meet the complex needs of retail organizations with distributed teams, multiple shifts, and diverse roles spanning from corporate headquarters to individual store locations. From flagship stores to seasonal pop-ups, Workvivo provides a centralized digital hub that brings communications, culture, and operations together in one intuitive mobile experience.



With no email required, frontline workers can access updates, resources, and recognition from anywhere – whether on the sales floor, in the stockroom, or between shifts. Workvivo supports real-time coordination and visibility across teams through powerful, easy-to-use tools and features, including:



Chat (1:1 and Group)

Enable real-time coordination between sales associates, store managers, and corporate teams with secure, mobile-friendly chat and automatic translations – no email needed.



Voice and Video Calling

Supports urgent escalation and direct communication between store managers, district leads, or corporate teams, for those times when chat isn't enough.



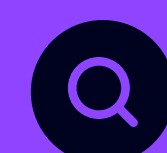
Surveys & Employee Insights

Collect instant feedback from frontline teams – by location, role, or shift – to surface operational issues, engagement drivers, or training gaps across your retail network.



Advanced Analytics & Sentiment Analysis

Combine structured survey data with platform interaction trends to spot sentiment patterns and surface early warning signals across stores or regions.



Workvivo AI 'Ask'

Let employees instantly find policies, procedures, product information, or schedule updates using natural language, saving time and reducing reliance on managers for answers.



Document Storage

Give teams easy access to files, product and pricing info, training materials, and company updates – right from their phones.



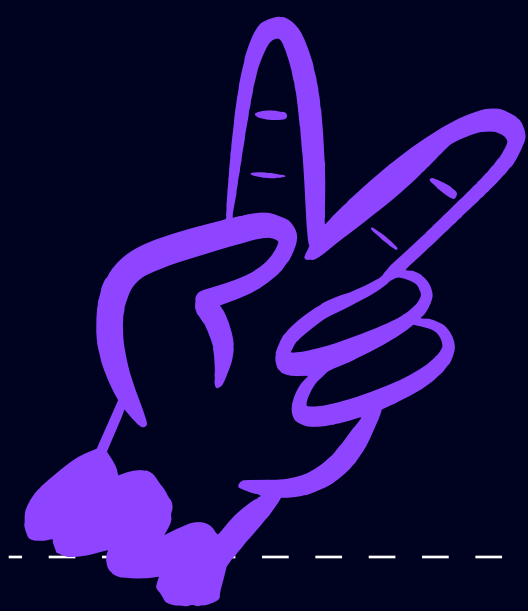
Digital Forms (Coming Soon)

Streamline daily checklists, inventory counts, customer feedback collection, and shift handovers with mobile-first, customizable forms – no paperwork or separate tools required.



Workvivo TV (Digital Signage)

Keep shift-based and frontline teams informed with rotating updates, employee recognition, and company news displayed in break rooms, stockrooms, and employee areas.



Primary benefits of Workvivo for retail teams include:



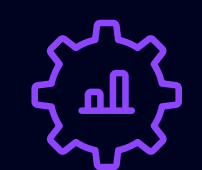
Improved communication across distributed locations

Benefit: Real-time updates, product launches, and location-specific messaging ensure that sales associates, store managers, and corporate teams stay aligned – reducing inconsistencies and improving customer experience.



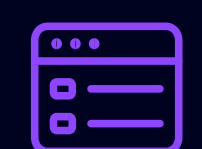
Higher frontline engagement

Benefit: Frontline teams feel more included, heard, and recognized – leading to better morale and lower turnover in a traditionally high-churn industry.



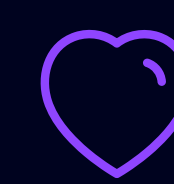
Operational efficiency at scale

Benefit: Digital Forms (coming soon), document storage, and targeted content reduce paperwork and manual processes, so teams can spend less time on administrative tasks and more time serving customers.



Faster onboarding & knowledge access

Benefit: Store SOPs, product information, and company updates in one central place. With AI-powered "Ask," employees can self-serve answers, saving managers time and improving customer service quality.



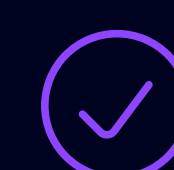
Culture & retention in a competitive labor market

Benefit: Peer recognition, company-wide shoutouts, and purpose-driven messaging help build community across shift-based and distributed teams – keeping people connected to the company and reducing turnover.



Increased visibility for managers & corporate

Benefit: Employee Insights and Surveys give leaders a pulse on engagement, sentiment, and local issues – so they can act quickly to address concerns before they impact customer experience or employee retention.



Consistent, compliant messaging across all locations

Benefit: Workvivo ensures the right people receive the right message, whether it's a product update, policy change, or urgent safety notice – via mobile, chat, feed, or Workvivo TV.



Ready to take the next step in **creating a culture of belonging?**

[Click here](#) to schedule a demo and learn how Workvivo could work for you.





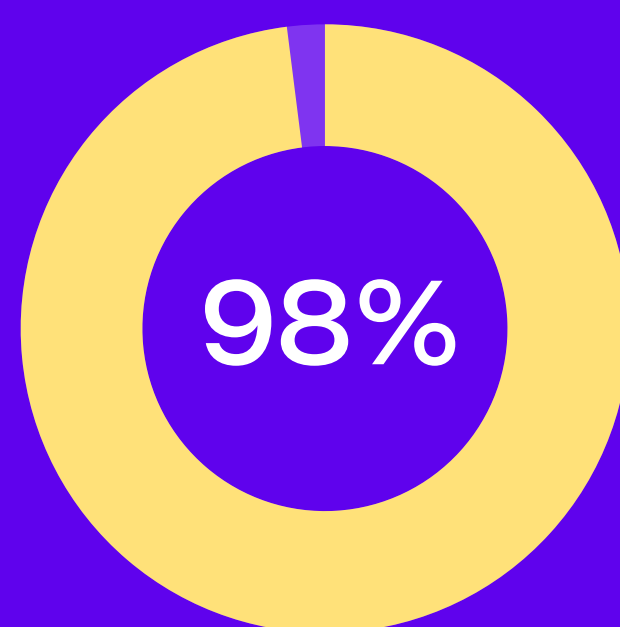
2M

Workvivo has over 2 million global users, 100% YoY growth for the last 4 years

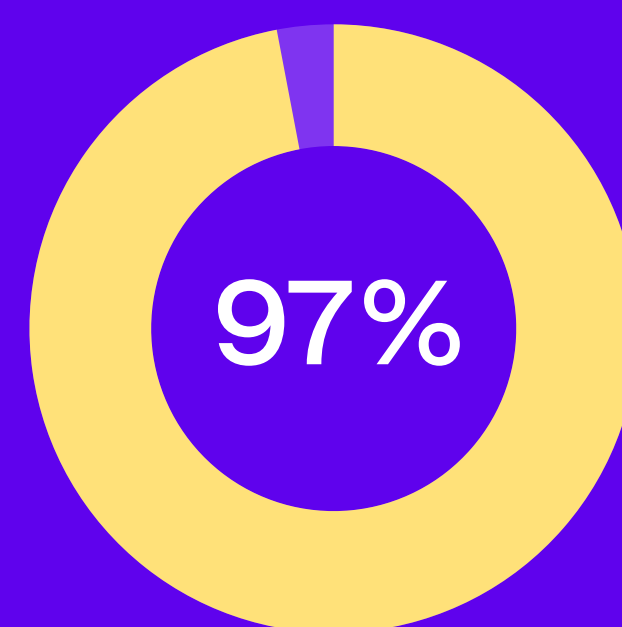
Workvivo was named a Leader in the 2024 Gartner® Magic Quadrant™ for Intranet Package Solutions

Gartner

[Learn more](#)



Our customer satisfaction scores (CSAT)



Workvivo customer retention

#1 Rated Employee App

Market leader per user reviews in 6 G2 categories





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