The Connection Crisis

Why community matters in the new world of work

BetterUp Labs Report 2022

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A monumental study about workplace connection

Our research spans

78
independently analyzed companies on Glassdoor

4
surveys conducted over the last three years

3,000+
US Workers

150,000+
BetterUp Members evaluated

What did we study, and why?

This in-depth research explores the connection problems workers face today, what it means to find community at work, and how it leads to better outcomes for individuals and their organizations. The research also sheds helpful and hopeful light on what organizations can do, including pragmatic, science-backed strategies to help people build connection and create workplace community.

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BetterUp research reveals a growing connection crisis

69% of employees aren't satisfied with their opportunities for connection in their workplace

43%

don't feel a sense of connection to coworkers

52%

of employees want more connection at work

38%

don't trust their coworkers

More than

1 in 2

do not feel like their coworkers know the "real" version of them

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With dispersed teams, employees feel more disconnected & siloed than before

BetterUp Lab's research found that those with *lower levels of belonging* experience:

More Stress	+77%
More Burnout	+1.9x
Stronger Intention to Quit	+3.1x
Higher Likelihood to Job Search	+1.8x
Higher Quit Rate (actual turnover)*	+39%

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Connection fuels employee well-being & performance

Employees *high in belonging & social connection* experience:

+24%
more resilience

+27%
more job satisfaction

+36%
Boost in well-being

+34%
greater goal attainment

+59%
more positive relationships

+92%
more professional growth

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When managers foster connection, their teams benefit

Why coaching managers on connection matters

+16%
Direct report
sense of agency

+16%
Direct report investment in
relationship building

+19%
Direct report
self-compassion

Managers who
champion connection
see ripple effects

+16%
Direct report
emotional regulation

+15%
Direct report social
connection

-16%
Direct report
burnout risk
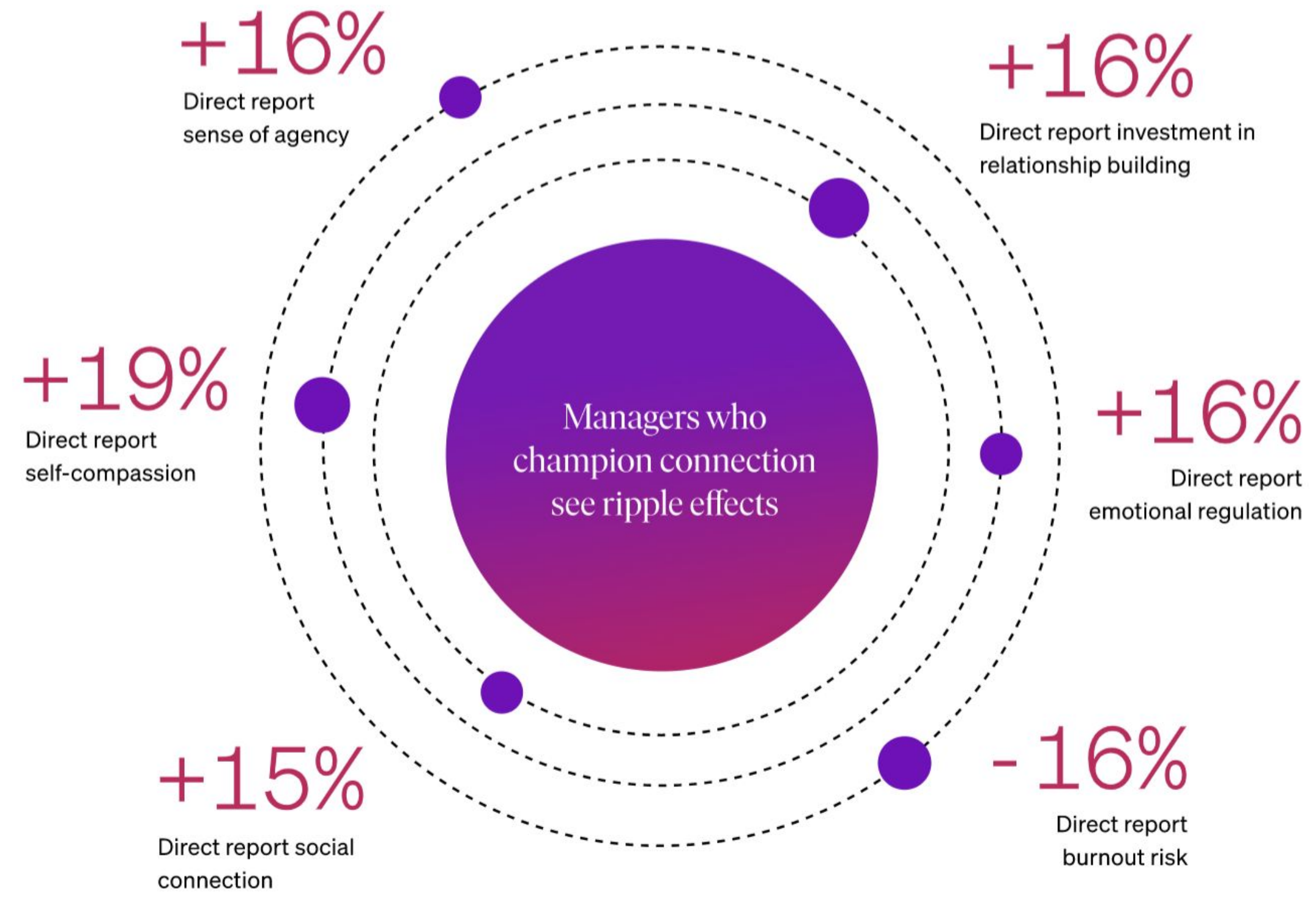
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More connection helps attract & retain top talent

Companies with high connection scores

★★★★★

32%

32% higher ratings than peer companies

14x

more likely to be named to a "Best Places to Work" list

25%

more likely to recommend the company to a friend

Employees with *lower levels of belonging* experience:

3.1x

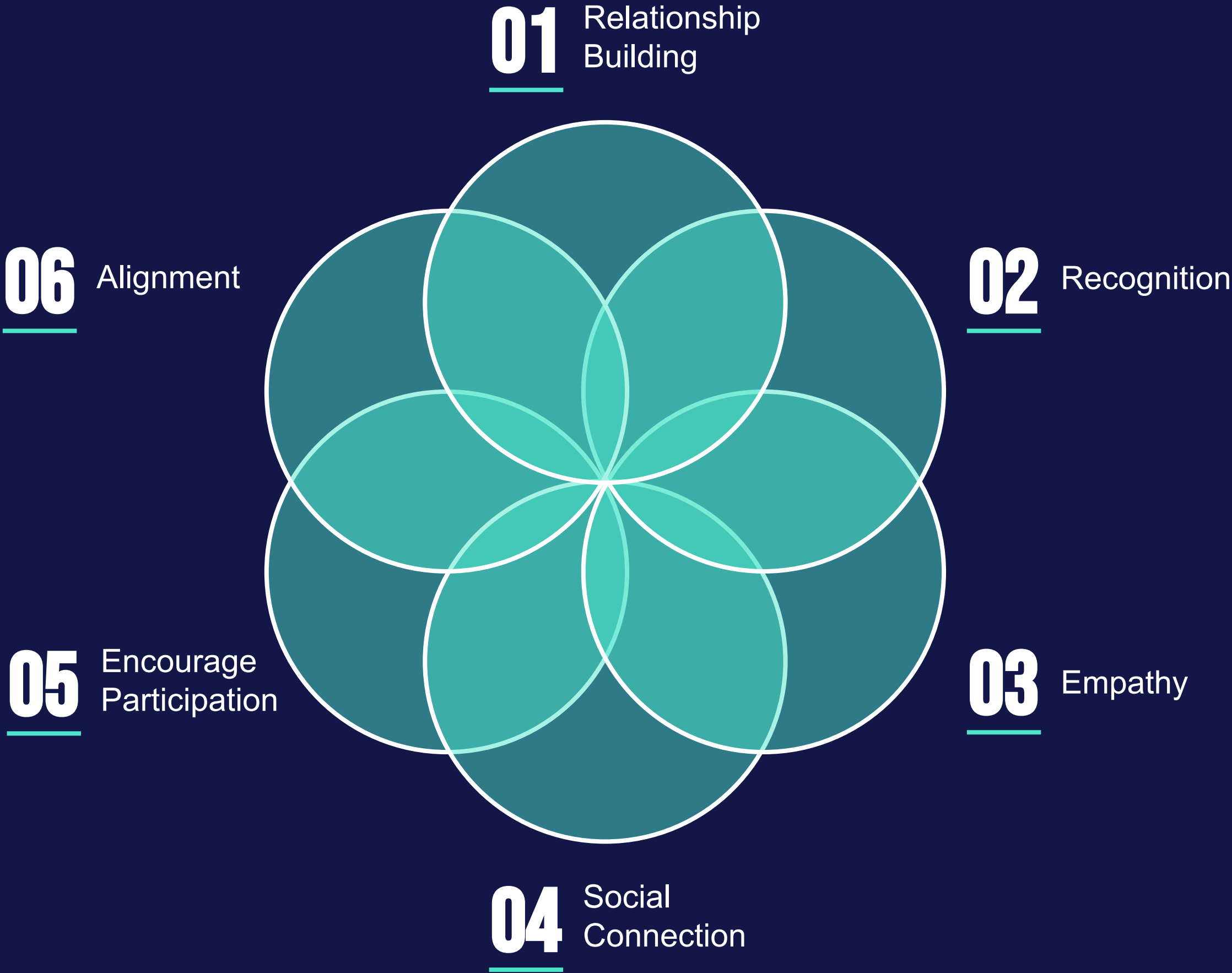*Stronger Intention to Quit*

1.8x

Higher Likelihood to Job Search

39%

Higher Quit Rate (actual turnover*)

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COMPONENTS OF INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP

The profile of an inclusive leader includes six leadership skills that are a part of the **Whole Person Model**

01 Relationship Building

02 Recognition

03 Empathy

04 Social Connection

05 Encourage Participation

06 Alignment

How Remote Work
Impacts Connection

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Interaction is plentiful, but connection remains low

Remote work means a **2X** increase in time spent in meetings	**Technology mediated communication is soaring:** • 2 in 5 use email constantly • 1 in 5 use instant messaging constantly

"The paradox of modern life is this: we have never been more connected and we have never been more alone."

-MATT HAIG
Notes on a Nervous Planet

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In-person, hybrid, & remote can have high connection

No arrangement is perfect. Remote employees tend to be most content, though also want less remote work

32%
In-person are content

of in-person employees are content, 68% want more remote work
In-person employees generally say they want more remote work

20%
Hybrid are content

of hybrid employees are content; 59% want *more* remote work and 21% want *less* remote work
Hybrid work is complicated; some people are content, some want more remote, some want less

68%
Remote are content

of remote employees are content; 32% want *less* remote work
Remote employees are the most content, though some are missing in-person interaction

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Is there an ideal work arrangement?

Employees who report working *in-person more often* than they prefer:

- Feel lower social connection, lower belonging, and less cared for

- Are more likely to quit

- Feel more burned out and stressed

- Feel disconnected from their leaders and manager(s)

- Consider leaving their job 20% more than people working remotely or hybrid from their leaders and manager(s)

Remote work has its *disadvantages* too:

- Fewer close connections at work

- 35% loss in network size of close connections

- 14% lower social support from co-workers vs. hybrid and in-person

- 19% lower sense of belonging vs. hybrid and in-person

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What matters for employee connection now?

Top predictors of connection:

- Fostering open communication by being vulnerable, letting people know the real you
- Being mindful of the frequency & timing of communications
- Creating opportunities for spontaneous interactions
- Having casual conversation and fun banter
- Sharing hobbies
- Getting to know someone personally
- Setting shared goals & communicating a clear roadmap and vision to align teams
- Promoting a coaching culture

What employees say orgs should do to help:

83% Employees don't have "play" opportunities and fun events

54% Employees don't have in-person / virtual happy hours

73% Employees don't have in-person / common interest events

78% Employees don't have online groups / channels / communities

40% Employees don't have a culture of small talk during meetings

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Thank you!

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