

Women Don't Feel Comfortable at Work. Here's How to Fix Your Culture.

Employee Benefits News | By Paola Peralta | March 21, 2022



Tom Merton/Getty Images

The labor market is fighting to create strategies to attract female talent. But have they put the same amount of effort in creating an environment where they'll want to stay?

More than 20% of women believe that they're not benefiting from their work culture, and it's causing them to rethink their future with their companies, according to a new survey report released last week by time orchestration platform Clockwise. Just 10% of male employees feel the same, highlighting a culture discrepancy that may impact a company's ability to grow.

"Men and women are experiencing work culture in very different ways," says Anna Dearmon Kornick, head of community and certified time management coach at Clockwise. "We have to keep in mind that unsustainability and sustainability are not formulas — they're a feeling. And what is sustainable to me is going to feel different to you. It's a very personal concept."

In order for employees to see a long-term career trajectory for themselves, the job must have three key ingredients, according to Dearmon Kornick: a manageable workload, being rewarded regularly — whether that's praise or reward through promotions or raises — and opportunity. For women, the lack of these components is making their work experience worse.

And women across all age groups are feeling it. Half of working moms said that better benefits or compensation should be a top priority for managers, followed by more opportunities for growth (31%), better communication from management (29%) and more flexibility in when or where they work (27%), according to the report. Nearly a quarter of women without children, those who tend to be younger and earlier in their careers, are also feeling this way.

“For women without children, a lot of them are earlier in their careers in positions that don't have as much autonomy or flexibility, which could lead them to describe their work culture as unsustainable,” Dearmon Kornick says. “For women as a whole, there are a lot of different possibilities — the invisible mental load from handling the soft responsibilities, not only at home but also in the office.”

But are managers willing and able to listen? According to the survey, there is a large disconnect between women and the people with the power to change their circumstances: only 5% of senior leaders feel that their workplace culture is unsustainable, the report found.

“The good news is that now we know that in order to create a sustainable environment for our teams we've got to ask questions,” Dearmon Kornick says. “We've got to create opportunities and implement measures that speak to our people.”

And the lack of intention will cost employers greatly. Employees that reported working within unsustainable cultures were more than nine times as likely to say they don't see themselves at the same company in the next 12 months, the report found. This can have a potentially major impact on retention as organizations continue to feel the repercussions of a labor shortage.

“Don't just make sweeping changes, but actually listen to your team and get that feedback so that you can understand,” Dearmon Kornick says. “Ask, ‘How can we adjust your workload? How are you feeling: red, yellow, green?’ It's so simple, but really getting a read on how people are feeling at an individual level is what creates a workplace culture that truly is sustainable.”