How High-Trust Culture Drives Business Success

by Great Place To Work.®

Great workplaces outperform the competition

Building a great workplace culture can have significant downstream effects for your business. The proof can be found in the millions of employee surveys we receive every year from companies around the world.

Companies with high levels of trust, as reported by employees across the organization, are consistently outperforming their competition. Having a "high-trust culture" has become a strategic advantage for companies operating in an era of historically low trust across society and institutions.

Employees with consistently positive experiences in the workplace are more likely to stay with the organization. They experience less burnout, give higher levels of effort, and drive faster rates of innovation.

The cumulative result: Companies with high-trust cultures see stronger financial performance and have higher stock market returns.

Great Place To Work has studied the impact of workplace culture since 1992. Via our proprietary analytics platform, over 20 million employees are surveyed annually in hundreds of countries around the world.

Leaders focused on the financial performance of their business can't afford to ignore culture, and the leadership behaviors that build trust across the organization. The data shows that when leaders invest in the employee experience, they find:

- **Stronger financial performance**
- **Greater stability and resilience amid market disruption**
- **Lower levels of voluntary turnover**

Our data proves that profits don't create great workplaces. It's the other way around.

Researcher Alex Edmans found that a more positive employee experience at companies, resulting in ranking on the *Fortune* 100 Best Companies to Work For® List, preceded the positive gains those companies later saw in stock market performance[1].

[1] Edmans, A. "The link between job satisfaction and firm value, with implications for corporate social responsibility." *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 26.4. (2012): 1-19.

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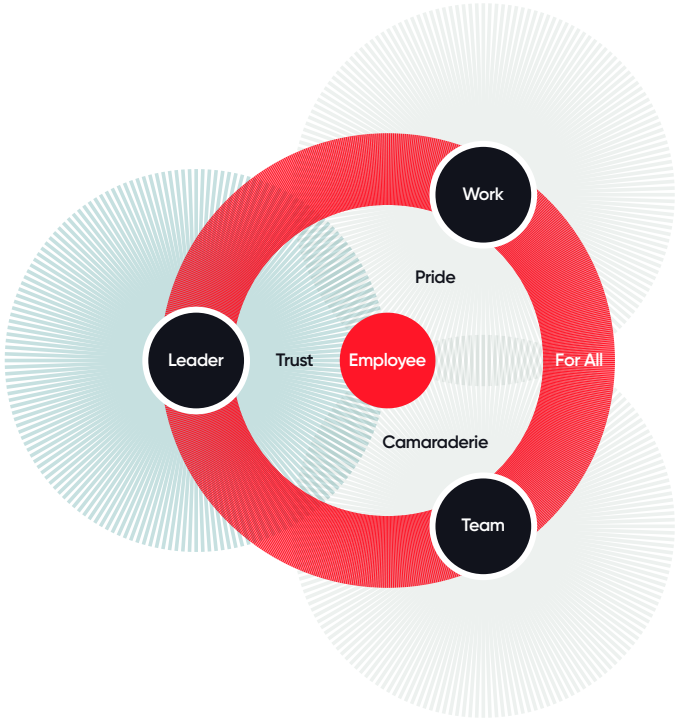
Why we measure trust in the workplace

Trust initially starts with leaders and the relationships they build with employees. Those experiences go on to influence an employee's relationships with colleagues and the overall organization, driving experiences of pride and camaraderie.

The Great Place To Work Model



A trust-based approach offers unmatched insight into leadership performance and has clear ties to downstream stakeholders, including customers, investors, and communities.

Our decades of research identified three components that underpin trust in the workplace:

1. **Credibility.** Do workers believe leaders are competent, communicative, and honest?
2. **Respect.** Do workers feel respected both as professionals and individuals with lives outside of work?
3. **Fairness.** Do workers see the organization as a place where everyone has a fair chance to succeed?

To build a high-trust culture, these experiences must be consistent for every employee, no matter who they are, what they do, or where they work — what we call having a "For All" culture. Without a consistent, inclusive, and equitable culture, trust is quickly lost.

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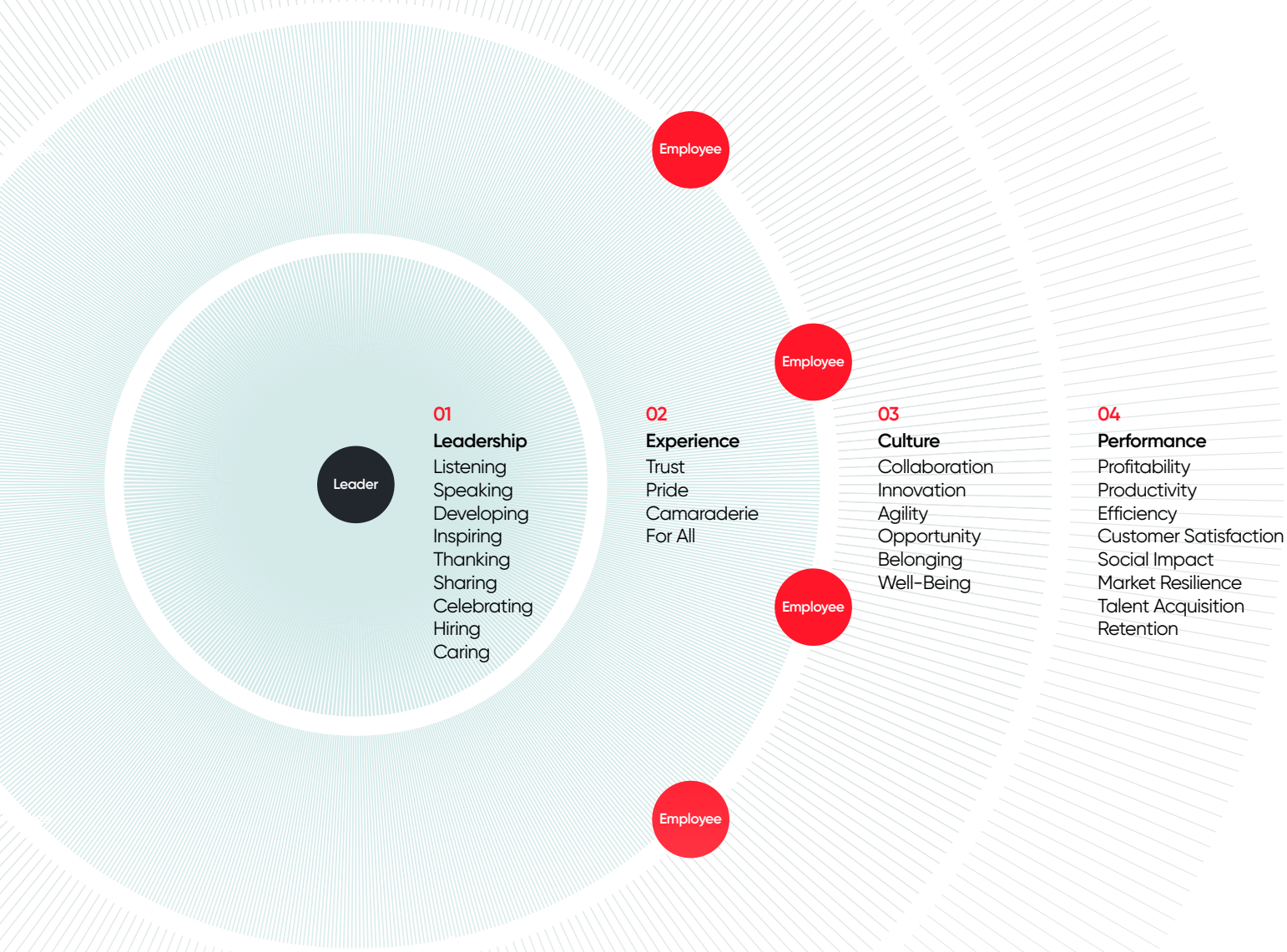
Culture Drives Business Performance

The Great Place To Work Effect



The data proves that being a great workplace drives key business outcomes. We call this the **"Great Place To Work Effect,"** where measurable elements of culture in our model are directly tied to metrics that matter for every company, no matter what industry or market it operates in.

Here are some of the ways a high-trust culture drives key business metrics:

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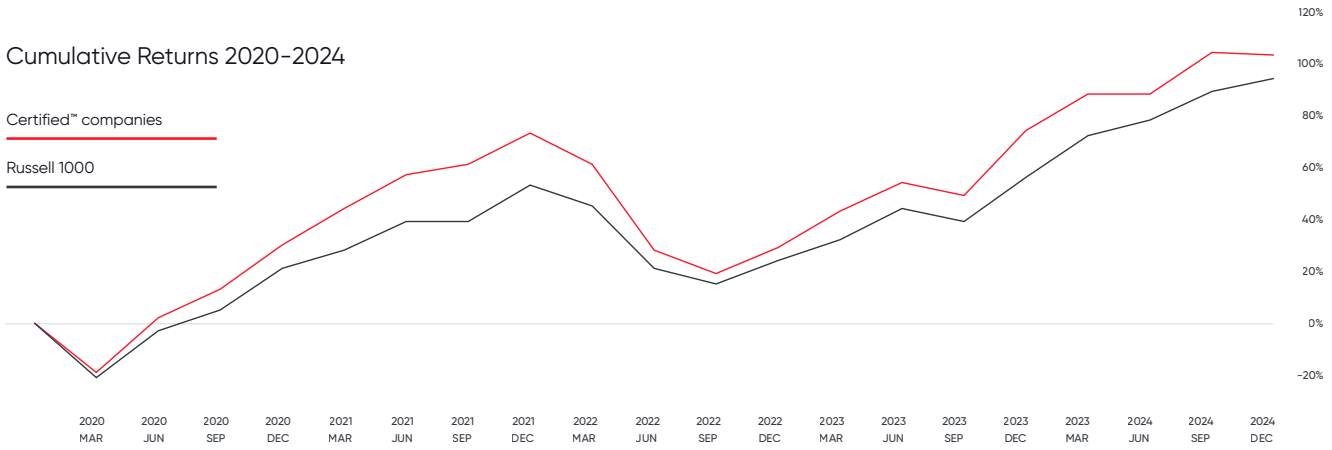
01 Stronger financial performance

According to independent investment firm FTSE Russell, the cumulative return on investments in Great Place To Work Certified™ companies has outperformed the market average by 19 percentage points since 2020. This means that if you had invested in publicly traded Certified companies since 2020, you would have earned 35% more than your return on the same investment in the Russell 1000 — an index of the biggest U.S. stocks.

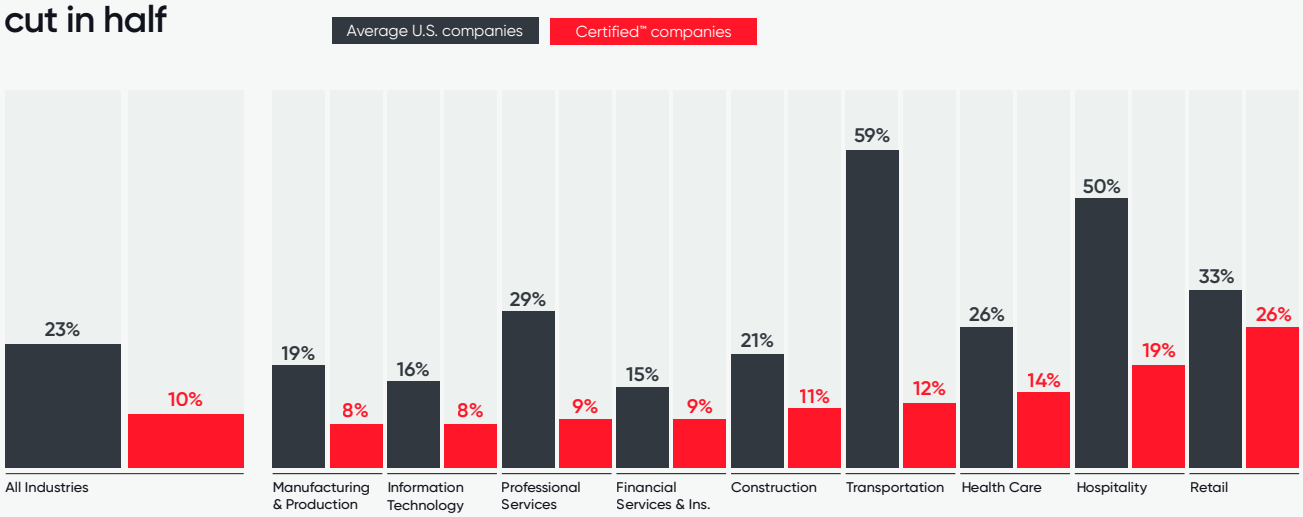
Great Place To Work Certified™ companies outperform the market by 11%



Source: FTSE Russell

02 Voluntary turnover cut in half

Overall, voluntary turnover for Great Place To Work Certified companies is less than half of the U.S. rate, as reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics: BLS Total Non-Farm 2024 (A subsector of the total economy that excludes general government, private households, nonprofit institutions, and the farm sector.) *Certified company percentages are medians of companies certified as of January 2025.

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03 Resilience during market volatility

When more employees are having a great experience at work, companies are also more resilient during economic downturns.

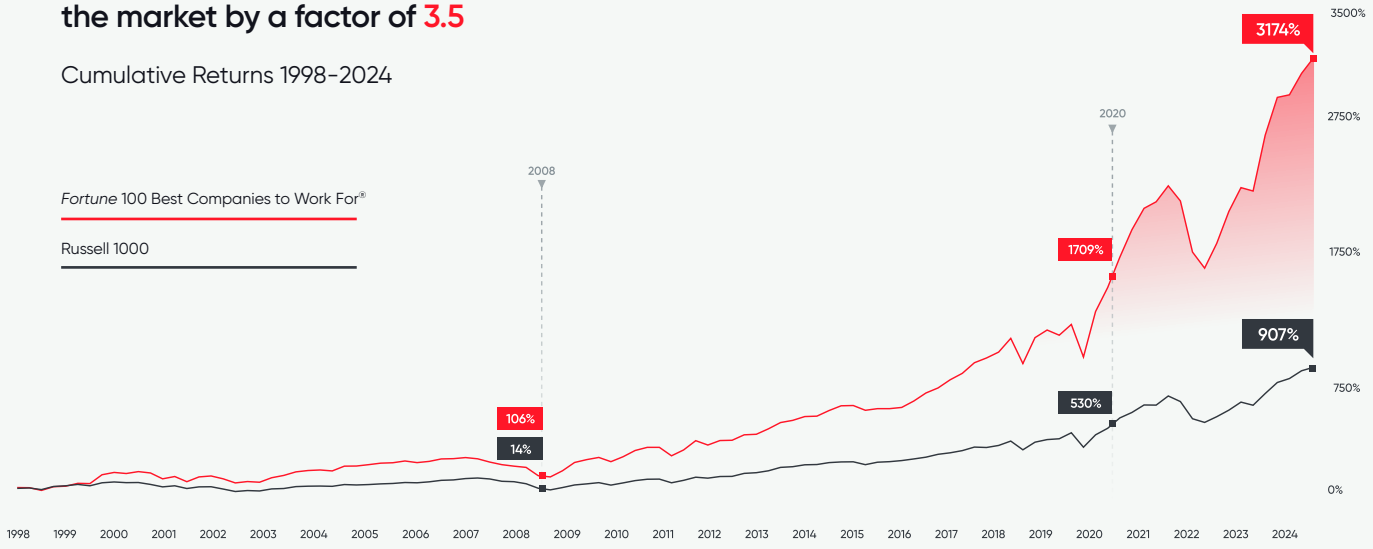
When markets crashed during the COVID-19 pandemic, high-trust workplaces rebounded faster than their competitors. Companies on the Fortune 100 Best Companies to Work For List, the strongest performers on the Great Place To Work Model™, outperformed the broader market by 16.5% in 2020[2].

We also analyzed a group of 69 companies during the Great Recession of 2008 and found that higher levels of trust among key employee groups, such as front-line workers, women, and people of color, resulted in impressive stock market performance that didn't just avoid the collapse of S&P 500, but actually posted an increase of 14.4%[3].

Financial Performance

The 100 Best Companies' beat the market by a factor of 3.5

Cumulative Returns 1998-2024



Source: FTSE Russell

[2] Erb, M. et al. "Innovation By All." Great Place To Work, (n.d.). https://www.greatplacetowork.com/resources/reports/innovation-by-all
[3] https://www.greatplacetowork.com/resources/blog/5-ways-workplace-culture-drives-business-profitability

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04 More agility and innovation

Agility and innovation are hallmarks of the most successful companies in today's rapidly changing business environment.

Lack of trust has big implications for whether new products and tools will be adopted or rejected. In a recent global survey by Edelman, people who said innovation was managed poorly were ready to reject innovation like AI (43%) and gene-based medicine (41%). Only 26% rejected AI when they said innovation was well-managed[4].

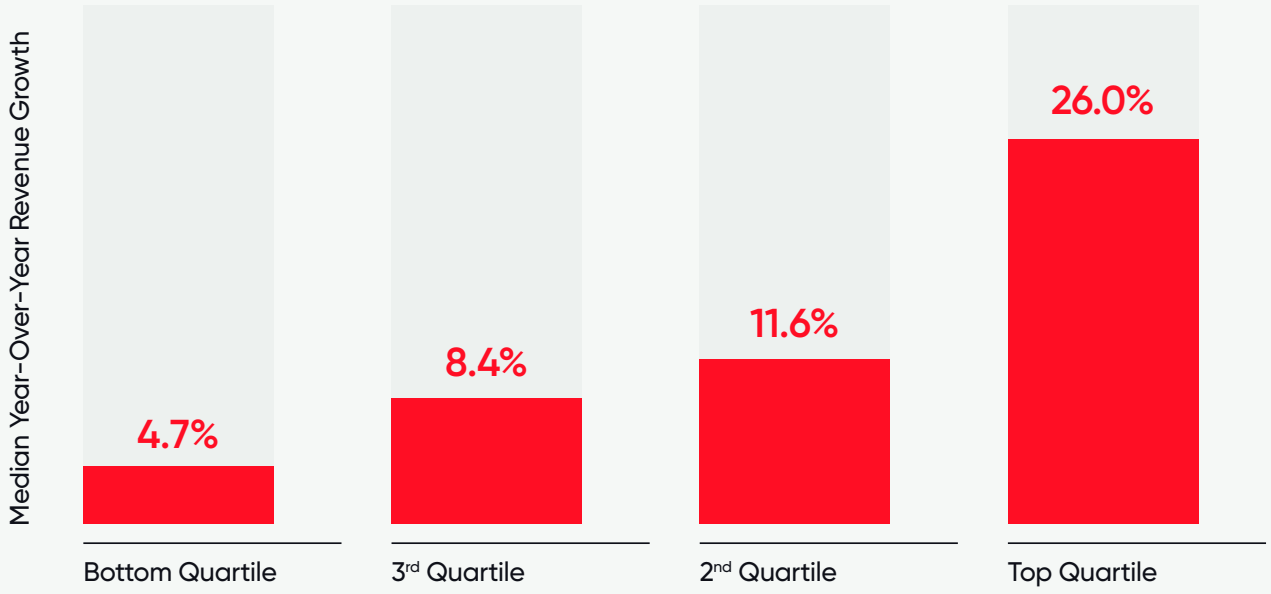
According to Great Place To Work research, higher levels of trust remove barriers and reduce friction, enabling companies to generate more high-quality ideas, speed up adoption, and move quickly to reinvent systems and products[5]. Companies with the best performance on key measures of trust have five times higher revenue growth than companies with the fewest employees who can participate.

An "Innovation By All" Culture Fuels Revenue Growth

Companies grow much faster when more of their employees experience a climate that encourages innovation. For example, consider our past research on the 2018 Certified companies: those organizations in the top quartile for an inclusive innovation experience achieved 5.5 times the median year-over-year revenue growth compared to those in the lowest quartile, as measured by the Trust Index.™

Innovation

2018 Certified companies ranked by innovation experience results



[4] https://www.greatplacetowork.com/resources/blog/without-trust-your-company-will-resist-rapid-innovation
[5] Erb, M. et al. "Innovation By All." Great Place To Work, (n.d.). https://www.greatplacetowork.com/resources/reports/innovation-by-all

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05 Trust is serious business

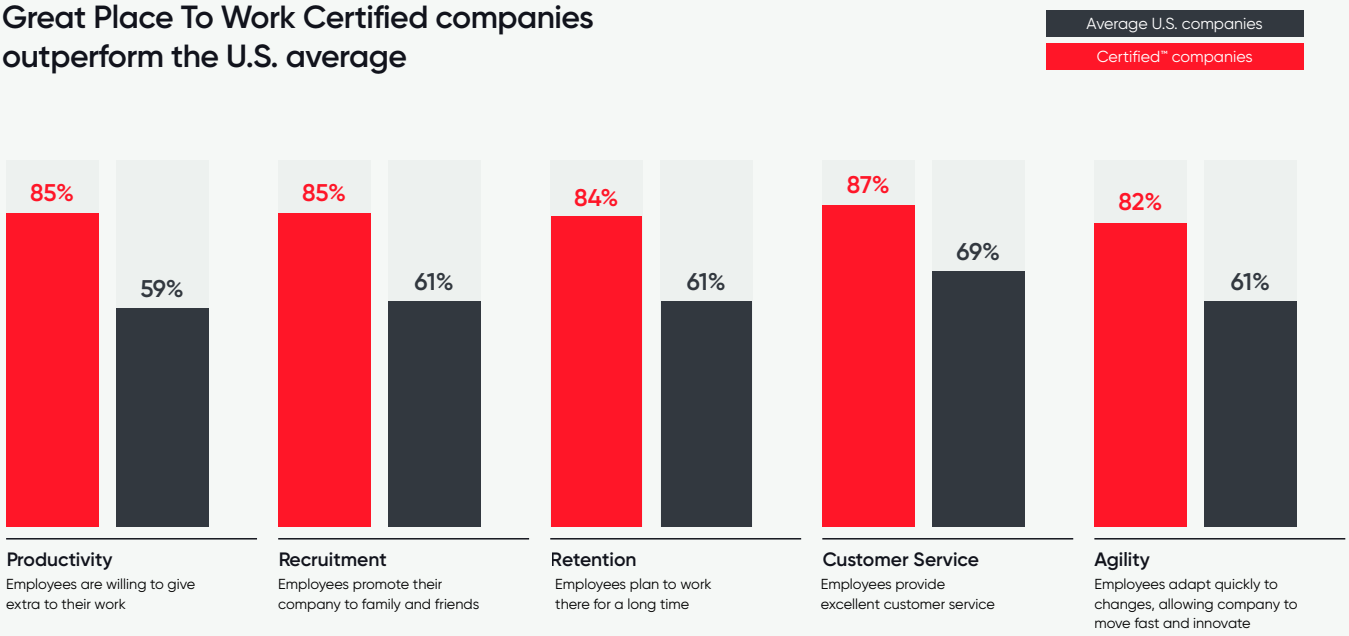
Companies of every size and every industry can benefit from measuring trust.

Trust is the ingredient that unlocks performance. That's why Great Place To Work Certified companies outperform the U.S. average across metrics that measure productivity, employee retention, operational agility, and more.

We help our customers create great workplaces that outpace peers on key business metrics. Building a high-trust, high performance culture for all employees is a journey, and at Great Place To Work, we know the path that organizations of all sizes must navigate.

Performance

Great Place To Work Certified companies outperform the U.S. average



Source: 2024 Certified Companies — Over 1.3 million employee survey responses from companies in the US who earned Certification between Jan 1 2023 and Dec 31 2023. Average US Companies — Over 4,400 employee survey responses from a July 2023 US workforce market study GPTW conducted.

We offer a thoughtful, data-driven, and systematic approach, designed to accelerate change among leaders and across the entire organization. No matter where you are on your culture journey, we know that when you build a high-trust workplace that is better for people, your business will profit.

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Transform culture into business success

Start your journey with Great Place To Work Today

https://www.greatplacetowork.com/get-certified-webinar
Watch this video to learn more about Certification

About Us

As the global authority on workplace culture, Great Place To Work has brought groundbreaking research and data to help every place become a great place to work for all. Our proprietary platform and Great Place to Work Model help companies evaluate the experience of every employee, with exemplary workplaces becoming Great Place To Work Certified or receiving recognition on a coveted Best Workplaces™ List. Follow Great Place To Work on LinkedIn, X, and Instagram or visit greatplacetowork.com and sign up for the newsletter to learn more.

Contact Us

Get help transforming your culture into a high-trust, high-performance powerhouse by contacting us today.

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