Recognition, employee connections driving retention risks for 2026: report - Benefits Canada.com

Source: gnews-employee-engagement-broad | **Published:** December 03, 2025 | **PMS Relevance:** PMS RELATED | **Type:** Industry Report | **Geography:** Global

Source URL: https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMitwFBVV95cUxQRGZZRDh5OEpzRXdYNDk1SEdERjF

Executive Summary

This article reports on findings from the Achievers Workforce Institute's 2025 workforce survey, addressing employee recognition, engagement, and retention risks projected into 2026. The central argument is that recognition gaps, weak peer and manager connections, and perceived pay inequity are driving significant retention risk globally. Evidence is drawn from approximately 2,500 employees and 1,500 HR professionals across eight countries. Key findings include that only 25 per cent of employees envisioned a long-term career with their employer, 34 per cent planned to seek new employment in 2026, and only 17 per cent felt fairly compensated. The report estimates that if 34 per cent of U.S. full-time workers changed jobs, turnover costs could reach between US$1.3 trillion and US$5.1 trillion. The article concludes that recognition, rewards, and connection — particularly through managers — are the strongest indicators of retention and performance, framing these levers as the primary organizational response to projected 2026 attrition.

Key Insights

1. Only 25 per cent of global employees surveyed felt appreciated at work in 2025, with most of the remainder reporting they felt neither appreciated nor engaged.

2. Peer and manager connection rates were critically low — only 21 per cent felt connected to peers and 19 per cent felt connected to their managers — and both metrics were associated with engagement and long-term career intent.

3. Only one per cent of employees who did not receive regular recognition from managers reported feeling connected to their work, and this group was more than twice as likely to plan to leave their employer.

Practical Takeaways

- Organizations with limited or restricted access to recognition and rewards programs may face disproportionately higher attrition risk based on the survey's association between reward accessibility and retention intent.

- Manager behavior — specifically frequency of recognition — is identified in this report as a key variable in employee connection and retention outcomes, suggesting manager-level practices warrant examination in retention diagnostics.

Critical Analysis

The primary limitation of this report is its source: the Achievers Workforce Institute is the research division of Achievers, a commercial employee recognition and rewards platform. The findings systematically highlight recognition and rewards as the dominant drivers of retention — precisely the category of solution Achievers sells — creating an undisclosed commercial bias. The article does not mention this conflict of interest. The sample of approximately 2,500 employees and 1,500 HR professionals across eight countries is reasonable in size but the methodology, sampling strategy, margin of error, and country breakdown are not disclosed in the article. The US$1.3 trillion to US$5.1 trillion turnover cost projection is a wide and speculative range that lacks sourcing in this article. The correlation-based framing throughout (e.g., employees who felt appreciated were more likely to stay) does not establish causality. The 34 per cent of HR professionals who felt unappreciated is an interesting parallel finding that is underexplored. On the positive side, the cross-country scope, dual employee-HR sampling, and consistency of directional findings across multiple variables (recognition, pay fairness, peer connection) lend some credibility to the broad pattern, even if the magnitude of effects is uncertain.

Organizational Practice

The article describes organizational practices including manager-led recognition programs, employee rewards and points distribution systems, and access controls on who can distribute recognition rewards. It notes that many organizations limit access to rewards programs or restrict which employees can distribute points, and that regular manager recognition is associated with stronger organizational connection.

Strategic Implications

The data, if taken at face value, points toward a potential widening of the recognition-retention gap entering 2026, with implications for how organizations structure manager accountability in performance systems. The low peer connection rates (21 per cent) suggest that performance management frameworks relying heavily on team-based accountability or collaborative goal-setting may face structural headwinds. The compensation fairness finding — only 17 per cent feeling fairly paid — indicates that recognition programs alone may be insufficient to address retention risk where pay equity perceptions are also low. The parallel disengagement reported by HR professionals themselves raises questions about internal program credibility and administration quality.

Validation Status: warning
