

# How organizations connect and engage with frontline workers



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# Foreword

Most companies are a combination of “office” and “frontline” workers. And decision-making tends to be directed by and focused on those in the office (the desked) with little to no involvement from the frontline.

Modern organizations recognize the need to include everyone and create a cohesive and engaging employee experience for the entire workforce. With a rising generation of tech-savvy workers, mounting external pressures, and enterprise-level computing advances, organizations have the proper motivation to realize the goal.

Industries including manufacturing, retail, construction, healthcare, transportation, agriculture, hospitality, and education sectors, urgently need to make this change, and they stand to gain the most from doing so. Traditionally, compared to other sectors like technology, telecommunications, and finance, these industries need to catch up regarding digital transformation and change management. However, conversations with industry players reveal a mass awakening.

It is estimated that these eight industries employ up to 2.7 billion workers, the bulk of the global workforce. And with 80% of the total workforce being frontline, it's a wonder that some of the companies have been so successful, as one industry professional put it.

As stewards of the fourth industrial revolution (Industry 4.0), these organizations must adopt, embrace, and evolve with the changing workforce and its needs.

Like Boomers, who long outgrew calling trees, voicemails, and PA systems, Millennials—increasingly forming the majority of frontline workers, don't understand or want to work with dated systems like cloud-based ERPs, which may seem quite advanced by the industries' traditional standards.

That said, solution providers have to understand the complex needs of these organizations by taking stock of existing pain points to address operational challenges and potential disruptions that new technology might bring.

Specifically, while they are keen on adopting advanced IT options to unify their communications, people, and workplace, they are looking for solutions that are easy to implement and maintain—things that do not add extra work to overburdened IT departments. We'll offer solutions here, but first, those pain points.



Agriculture  
858M



Manufacturing  
427M



Retail  
497M



Healthcare  
148M



Restaurants/  
Hospitality  
122M



Education  
226M



Construction/  
Real Estate  
265M



Transportation  
& Logistics  
189M

At least 80% of the global workforce is frontline, and here are the eight primary industries employing them. [Source](#)

# Understanding organization and employee pain points

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Some of the biggest challenges for organizations today include attracting and retaining their frontline workforce. People are, on average, 25% more likely to quit their jobs today than before 2019. Moreover, most of those who leave their jobs (65%) do not return to the same industry.

That means as organizations are more likely to lose their employees, the cost of replacing and reskilling them has also gone up as the learning curve continues to climb. So as they map their digital adoption, companies must contend with these challenges and design systems that address the root causes.

There are many reasons why workers leave their current jobs. One of the ongoing trends in the Great Resignation (also called the Great Reshuffle or Big Quit). Boomers, noticeably, participated in the Great Retirement and left their jobs during the pandemic to focus on other aspects of their lives, like their health and families.

This has left companies scrambling to fill big shoes as the seasoned workers often held skilled and senior positions that required planning, involving people nurtured and trained inside the company to overcome steep learning curves. But many of these people also left, and those that remained likely weren't interested in extra responsibilities in support of an unguaranteed future role, with "quiet quitting" plaguing the younger workforce—and the skills gap grew.

Quiet quitting is where people remain on the job but deliberately tank their productivity, offering the bare minimum to earn a paycheck. These workers may be poorly paid, for instance, and feel that the company doesn't deserve their best. But forget quiet quitting; many workers are ready to leave.

A BCG study found that 1 in 3 frontline workers will likely quit within the next six months. Lack of advancement, poor compensation, uninspiring leaders, lack of meaning in work, and unsupportive colleagues are some of the reasons cited in a Statista survey.

More recently, in its biannual Job Optimism survey, "of more than 2,500 professionals in the U.S., 46% of respondents are currently looking or plan to look for a new role in the first half of 2023, up from 41% just six months ago."



And although the main reasons they plan to seek new employment in 2023 include salary (61%), benefits (37%) and flexibility (36%) disconnects—what they're searching for in new roles revolves around company culture. 2023's candidate pool shared its top turn-offs that cause them to lose interest in roles they're applying for. These reasons include:

At the same time, we can't help but empathize with the organizations. For many, this is the first time they are thinking seriously about the employee experience—especially for the frontline worker.



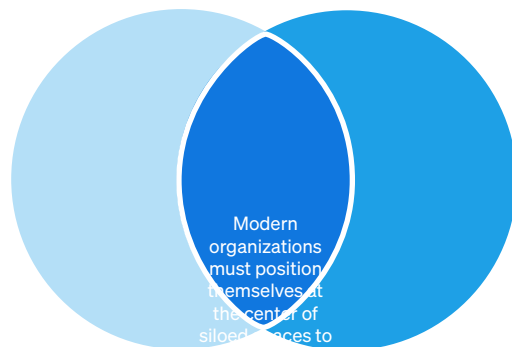
They are dealing with thousands of employees across multiple locations. The workforce is disparate, and diverse, with varying language capabilities and tech-savviness. Additionally, the leaders must eliminate any privacy and compliance issues before implementing any communications systems.

Yet, the modern organization needs to position itself at the very center of that Venn diagram. The traditional view that accepted siloed spaces needs to shift to see that the physical separation of plants or locations doesn't affect performance, well-being, and sense of belonging. That they all share the same common mission and goals.

As a company seeking to attract and retain talent, it is essential to understand that digital transformation is not the end, but the beginning—and technological upkeep can prove more laborious than manual processes when not appropriately vetted ahead of implementation.

As a result of underestimating this need to map out ongoing upkeep ahead of time, many companies acquire digital systems that quickly prove inefficient. They either do not keep pace with changes, become a dumping ground, or create a bottleneck and are abandoned. The failure rate is staggering. According to Gartner, 90% of all intranets fail. But they don't have to.

So, what are these companies missing, and what's at stake for failing to implement effective employee experience programs for their frontline workers, specifically?







# 1

## Diminished productivity and increased risks to safety

The employee of the past demanded very little, and in turn, the company only required a small piece of their day. The worker clocked in, worked their shift, and clocked out. Unless it wasn't a typical day and emergencies occurred, schedules had to be changed, and unnecessary costs were incurred.

So, even back then, their communications were relatively inefficient; there just wasn't enough attention drawn to the issue. But, communication has always been an integral part of organizational productivity, and now it plays a more significant role in engaging workers and making them feel connected. And this connection is crucial. A Gallup study found that engaged teams have 21% greater profitability and 17% higher productivity than disengaged teams.

Beyond that, poor communication increases worker safety risks, opening the company up to lawsuits. Word of mouth and printed fliers are not great methods for sharing critical information, yet many locations with frontline workers depend on these methods. And what happens when you can't reach the worker on time to inform them that their shift has been changed or to avoid specific routes due to bad weather? Again, unnecessary risks are taken, and damage can result.



## 2

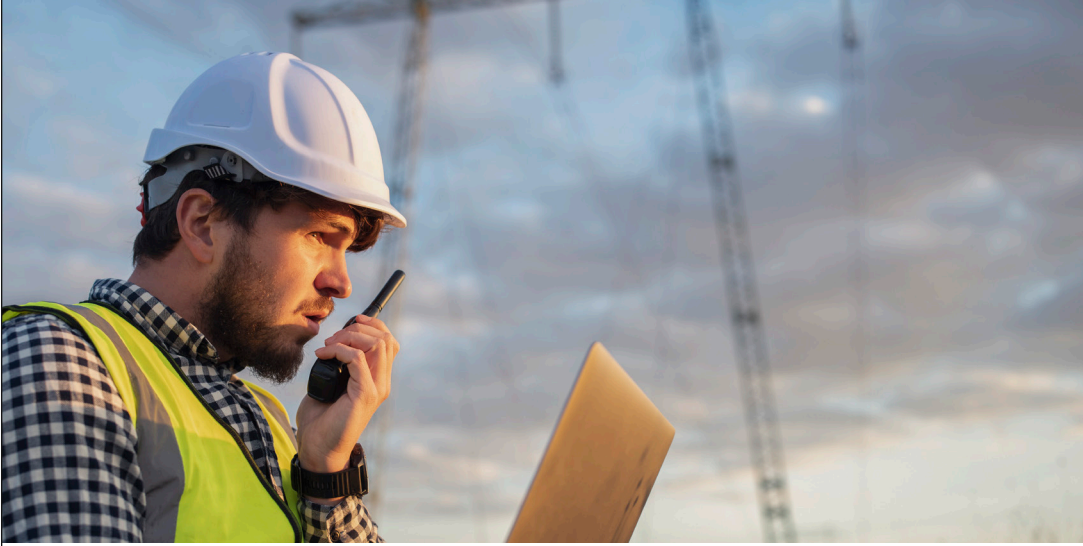
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### Change management failure without internal alignment

When the company is undergoing a change, initial implementation and long-term success hinge on internal alignment. The difference could be as slight as promoting one of the colleagues to supervise others or something bigger like a company-wide shake-up, and perhaps a merger or acquisition.

It's hard to maintain a stable work environment amidst such changes when employees are not aware of and aligned with what is happening and why. In addition, transparency cultivates a culture of trust, whereas sudden changes lead to rumors, discord, and employee exits. Therefore, it's essential to communicate the change to frontline workers early and often and to measure employee sentiment around fundamental changes with real-time mobile surveys so you can act quickly on misalignment to prevent loss of productivity and other avoidable challenges.

Everyone should feel included and connected and never learn of company updates from news media or with little time to process the change, as is often the case for frontline workers.



### 3

## Increase in the number of disengaged, detached, and dissatisfied employees

Engaging the employees is the first step to creating a satisfying employee experience. Unfortunately, in the opposite direction, it leads to detachment and dissatisfaction with the work. When an employee says they don't find meaning in their work, this is where it originates.

When the only information an employee receives is company news via in-person team meetings and it feels irrelevant, they tune it out. The absence of two-way communication between leadership and frontline workers is palpable and destructive. If there are no connections to leadership or other colleagues, nothing personalized for them, they feel like a number and become detached.

Being connected to other employees, having regular communication with their leaders, and expressing themselves, are all hallmarks of a satisfying employee experience. This requires a streamlined two-way system that is not simply a way to pass instructions but, more importantly, an avenue for interpersonal engagement and shared understanding.





# 4

## Exclusion of frontline workers from the company culture

The company culture needs to be reflected in all employees. Unifying the workforce to the same ideals demands connectivity on all fronts.

Company culture is vital to employee experience, with almost half of all employees saying it is more important than their workspace or the technology they use. Feeling like they don't fit in is also a primary reason why employees leave their current organizations. They want to be part of a broader community, one where they understand the impact of their work across the organization, and feel like they're a part of something bigger.



# 5

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## Decrease in the talent pool as skilled labor retires

As older workers retire, companies need to make sure that there is a ready talent pool to take their places. And the transition needs to be streamlined so that there will be no dips in productivity and performance.

This is both good for the bottom line as well as for improving morale for new hires and existing workers who want career advancement or to level up their skills. An effective communications system can enhance this by highlighting employees' contributions and training and grooming tomorrow's skilled workers and future leaders to take over.

# Creating a mobile “link” for the frontline workforce

Realizing the importance of engaging their frontline workforces, early adopters of employee experience platforms are already reaping the benefits. They provide an excellent opportunity for other companies to learn and implement similar systems designed to handle their unique internal needs.

We'll draw some insights from two customers to illustrate how companies can create cohesion regardless of the number of employees and with minimal disruption to the day-to-day business operations—and, best of all? There are virtually no additional demands for IT.

The companies are [Lozier Corporation](#), a leading store fixtures manufacturer, and [Renewal by Andersen](#), a full-service window and door replacement company. At 66 and 27 years, respectively, these companies are old enough to know that change is inevitable and have reacted swiftly to shifting market environments over the last few years.

With about 2,100 employees spread across ten manufacturing facilities in five states, Lozier understands the need for an integrated workforce. And this became even more abundantly clear in 2021 when the company launched its intranet, LozierLink. But, before then, there was no way of connecting or engaging all their employees and measuring the impact of this omission.

And then we have Renewal by Andersen. They have a network of about 100 locations across North America comprising 10 Renewal company locations; the rest are affiliates. So all these locations total up to more than 2,500 members of the One Network alliance united under “The Link” intranet.

LozierLink and The Link are each configured to provide visibility throughout the entire company, across all employees, who are all offered a personalized view of the organization they work for. But, more importantly, these intranets take advantage of the technology they already use: Mobile apps.

Using a mobile app to connect and engage with frontline workers is beneficial for several reasons. First, most frontline employees don't have corporate-issued devices or the time to sit at a computer. Second, mobile is convenient as it is with them all the time. Third, they get notifications and alerts just like they'd get phone calls.

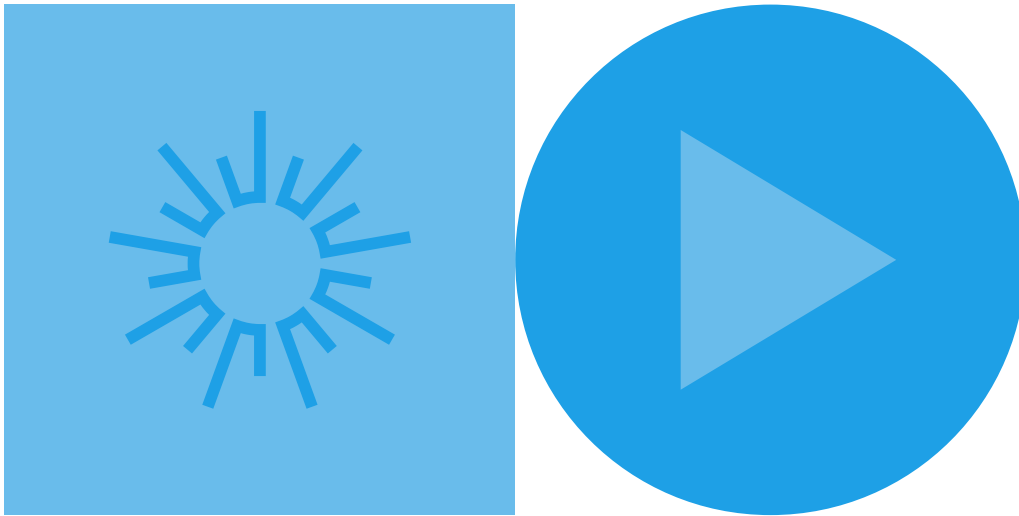
The messaging is curated for each employee so they can't miss important information but are also not inundated. For instance, emergency alerts are indicated, and they can't opt out of them, while news that can wait may be sent as an SMS with a link to follow for more information.

The intranet is a repository for all the organization's information that can be quickly found. So whether it's a [new hire](#) reviewing their benefits package or a employee catching up on upcoming events, colleagues' activities, etc., it's all there.

The companies also use their platforms to conduct conferences and events, solicit and answer questions through various channels, and encourage employees to share personal stories. This makes frontline employees feel a sense of belonging that would have been unachievable without interactive and engaging connectivity.



# Engaging employees with their own stories



With the capabilities of an intranet, companies can engage their frontline employees in concrete ways. In particular, they can share information from various sources or step out of the way and let people tell their own stories, which is even more impactful.



## Spotlight: Loziers' internal newsroom

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Lozier Corporation created an internal newsroom with real-time news and information that's shared all day, every day. It's now at a point where more than 90% of the content is generated by workers rather than leaders.

There were more than 925 articles published within the last year about what's happening in and around the company. For example, they share news about various locations and how they have been affected by ongoing weather phenomena or updates to the corporate strategy and new business ventures.

The rest is about the workers themselves: A new hire getting introduced to the team, someone sharing an exciting story they heard, or a worker sharing a meaningful event or personal achievement.

LozierLink has been so successful as a communications tool that the company has worked it into its collective bargaining agreements—and it's a selling point that workers appreciate.



## Spotlight: Renewal by Andersen's community works

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Similarly, The Link gets all members of One Network at Renewal by Andersen rallying behind common goals. To start, the intranet allows the creation of other sites within the network. These sites can be publicly available to all members or restricted by specific criteria.

For instance, there are sites created by different departments, such as operations, sales, marketing, and IT, with content targeted to specific groups of people. This helps workers have a personalized experience with information that's relevant to them.

Additionally, they have sites for councils where they share best practices, again tailored to the specific crowds or shared with everyone when they apply.

Beyond that, The Link is a place to share and celebrate each other as well as give back to the community. This builds a strong sense of connection to coworkers and the organization, proving that good deeds are a priority. It feels good to work for a place that prioritizes caring acts.

For instance, when marking Women's History Month and Women in Construction Week in March, the company published content to raise awareness around the events and encourage participants. And they also partnered with USA Cares for a fundraising drive for 9/11 veterans and worked with the American Cancer Society to raise awareness and support research programs.



# Creating a successful program that engages everyone



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Bringing your frontline workforce into the fold is a purpose-led initiative. It is more complex than merely adopting digital technologies and practices. It requires you to go the extra step of ensuring that you're using those tools and techniques to create a work environment that facilitates your goal.

This might sound vague in theory, but in practice, it's a matter of creating a sound plan and following it step by step. First, think about how you will get buy-in from your employees. Show them that this new system is designed for their benefit.

Coming from a norm of being barely recognized, never mind appreciated, most employees crave a sense of belonging. But most frontline employees have become accustomed to the exact opposite, which accounts for the massive resurgence of quiet quitting and career changes.

So, how do you prove to them that things will be different once they adapt to a new and inclusive employee experience? You do this by degrees.

You recognize them individually and set goals to help them achieve those targets. Then, you give them the needed resources, connect them to other colleagues, and inspire them through regular and direct communication. And you closely monitor how it all goes as you learn and improve. And as they see your commitment to them and their development as a member of your team and as an individual, their commitment to your company will also grow.

Implementing successfully will require a long-term commitment, but success is inevitable with the right drive and tools.



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## Success best practices

When it comes to the day-to-day running of the program, some tips to keep in mind are:

- ▶▶ Map out the messaging. Decide from the start what content will be shared through the program. This will also help you design a suitable platform with all the features you need and without unnecessary add-ons.
- ▶▶ Give leaders a channel to communicate with employees, as two-way communication fuels engagement and belonging.
- ▶▶ Limit alerts. The frequency and timing of alerts are essential. Refrain from over communicating or over-alerting and note the timing of alerts. For example, avoid making people feel like they are on overtime by sending messages in the middle of the night or during the holidays.
- ▶▶ Personalize communications. Segment the messaging to provide a personalized employee experience for everyone.
- ▶▶ Tell people their own stories. Employees are connected to the company when they are connected to each other. Be flexible and reactionary; some of the best content comes from stories you didn't plan by monitoring feeds where employees share stories.



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## Success outcomes

The effort to engage your frontline employees will pay off quickly and in many ways:

- ▶ All employees have an easy-to-access platform that centralizes company communications, knowledge, and people
- ▶ Internal communications (IC) can target and personalize communications to respective audiences, leading to further engagement.
- ▶ Management, office staff, and production workers are connected and engaging on the same platform, heading off disconnects.
- ▶ Through a mobile-first approach, all employees are alerted via SMS and can respond and react swiftly as one unit, boosting overall productivity.
- ▶ With a platform designed to be operated by clicks, not code, IC can govern and manage employee experience platforms without IT dependencies.
- ▶ The employee experience is personalized and frictionless to improve engagement and collaboration.
- ▶ Greater agility, faster employee reaction times, and better decision-making from open lines of communication.
- ▶ It improved worker productivity by accessing company resources, updates, and critical communications.
- ▶ We have increased employee attraction and retention by aligning workplace culture, employee recognition, and providing better support.
- ▶ Digital adoption is purpose-led to drive organizational transformation and change initiatives toward success.

# Conclusion: Getting ahead—connect and develop engagement with all your employees



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The call to engage the frontline employees is a call for organizations to engage all their employees, whether at the office, in the field, in the plant, or elsewhere. You can gain inspiration and be better prepared to roll out your employee experience program by studying what others are doing through webinars, events, podcasts, and other resources.

Then when you finally launch, you can learn from your platform through sentiment analysis, [employee engagement surveys](#), and other feedback channels.

Simplr is constantly learning from how companies are using their intranets. So, we stay curious, watch for employees' adoption of our program, and use the insights to bridge the remaining gaps, ever innovating as we keep customers ahead of the technology curve!

There's always more work to do, and Simplr keeps customers on the cutting edge. Connect for a demo if you want to learn more about how we can help you transition.

# About Simpplr

## Who we are

Simpplr is the modern intranet that transforms the work experience for all employees — wherever and however they work. Simpplr is the only platform that unifies employee engagement, enablement and services, leveraging state-of-the-art AI models to deliver a seamless, cohesive and personalized employee experience.

Trusted by over 700 global brands, including Moderna, Snowflake, Splunk, Penske, Eurostar and AAA, Simpplr customers achieve significant improvement in their employees' productivity, retention and overall satisfaction. Headquartered in Silicon Valley, CA, Simpplr is backed by Norwest Venture Partners, Sapphire Ventures, Salesforce Ventures, Tola Capital and Still Venture Capital. Learn more at [simpplr.com](https://simpplr.com)

## Benefits

- ↘ Designed for the way you work
- ↘ Ready to use in weeks, not months
- ↘ Built for business users
- ↘ Unified, engaging experience across mobile and the web
- ↘ Powerful integration
- ↘ Secure and scalable platform

## Trusted By

