BUILDING FROM THE BOTTOM UP

EMPLOYER PERSPECTIVES ON UPWARD MOBILITY

Introduction

In 2020, Harvard Business School's Project on Managing the Future of Work designed two surveys to understand the barriers and contributors to low-wage workers achieving upward mobility and the employer actions that would best help these workers. In the fall of 2020, a third-party firm administered the two surveys—one to a panel of employers and one to a panel of low-wage workers.

This survey instrument was administered as an online survey of 1,150 U.S. employers of low-wage workers conducted September–November 2020 by the Project on Managing the Future of Work at Harvard Business School.

The employer survey included questions about the respondent's company, their company's population of low-wage employees, their understanding of low-wage employees' opportunities for or barriers to upward mobility, their company's actions to support low-wage employees' upward mobility, and their perspectives on their company.

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Suggested Citation

"Upward Mobility Survey of Employers of Low-Wage Workers in the U.S.," September–November 2020, Project on Managing the Future of Work, Harvard Business School.

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BUILDING FROM THE BOTTOM UP

METHODOLOGY

The employer survey fielded to 1,150 employers in the U.S. from September 9, 2020, until November 1, 2020. Survey respondents included front-line managers, mid-level managers, or senior executives only.

To ensure the survey was representative of the population of employers of low-wage employees and to establish diversity of thought, quotas were set during survey collection for the following variables: firm size, executive level, human resources function, geography, and industry. (For a detailed picture of the survey demographics, see Appendix III in the main report.)

All respondents self-selected that their company employs low-wage employees, based on the definition provided: "For the purposes of this survey, we define low-wage employees as full-time or part-time employees who earn hourly wages that are 200% or below the federal poverty threshold. Depending on which part of the country they work in, these employees typically earn wages around $7 per hour (or approximately $14,000 per year) to $20 per hour (or approximately $40,000 per year)."

Due to the timing of the survey collection during the Covid-19 pandemic, respondents were asked to answer all questions in the survey from the perspective of their situation in January 2020 prior to the outbreak of Covid-19 in the United States, unless otherwise specified. Frequent reminders were provided to respondents throughout the online survey to ensure respondents were answering questions about their workforce pre-Covid. The final question of the survey asked respondents to rate the effect of Covid-19 on their company's willingness to implement upward mobility practices.

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Introduction

Through this survey, we seek to understand **low-wage employees** in your company and the actions your company is taking to increase the **upward mobility** of these employees.

Definitions

Throughout the survey, we have provided definitions of key terms. Anywhere a term is highlighted, you can hover over the term (or tap, if you are completing the survey using a mobile device) to view the definition. To hide the definition, move your cursor away (or tap elsewhere on the screen, for mobile devices).

DEFINING LOW-WAGE EMPLOYEES

For the purposes of this survey, we define **low-wage employees** as full-time or part-time employees who earn hourly wages that are 200% or below the federal poverty threshold. Depending on which part of the country they work in, these employees typically earn wages around $7 per hour (or approximately $14,000 per year) to $20 per hour (or approximately $40,000 per year).

DEFINING UPWARD MOBILITY

We define **upward mobility** as an improvement in skills that enhances a worker's productivity and results in an increase in the worker's pay, or a promotion, or both.

EXAMPLES OF UPWARD MOBILITY

One example of upward mobility is a Retail Sales Associate earning $13.50 per hour who becomes a Customer Service Representative earning $17.00 per hour and then a Warehouse Supervisor earning $25.75 per hour. Another example is a Hotel Desk Clerk earning $12.50 per hour who becomes a Hospitality Front Office Shift Lead earning $18.75 per hour and then an Operations Supervisor making $30.50 per hour.

NOTE ABOUT COVID-19

We understand that your business may have changed in response to the recent novel coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19). However, we want to understand how your company typically operates.
Therefore, please answer the survey questions from a perspective of how your company operated prior to the US outbreak of COVID-19 (i.e., answer from your perspective in January 2020).

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About Your Company

We'd first like to learn about you and your company. Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. This survey will take approximately 40 minutes to complete. We are very grateful for your time. If you are not a part of the target population that this survey was meant for, the survey will immediately end for you. You may stop the survey and return to it at any time.

A1. Prior to COVID-19, in January 2020, which of the following best described your employment status?

a. Full-time (35 or more hours per week)
b. Part-time TERMINATE
c. Contract, Freelance or Temporary Employee TERMINATE
d. Retired TERMINATE
e. Unemployed TERMINATE
f. None of the above TERMINATE

A2. Prior to COVID-19, in January 2020, what was your job title? (Pick the closest)

a. Senior executive (president, CEO, senior vice president, vice president)
b. Mid-level manager (director, senior manager)
c. Front-line manager (manager, supervisor)
d. Front-line employee / individual contributor (analyst, associate, clerk, engineer) TERMINATE

A3. Prior to COVID-19, in January 2020, how many employees did your company have? (Including corporate headquarters, subsidiaries, and any company branches)

a. 1 – it's a sole proprietorship / I'm self-employed TERMINATE
b. 2 – 9
c. 10 – 49
d. 50 – 99
e. 100 – 499
f. 500 – 999
g. 1,000 – 9,999
h. 10,000 or more

A4. Prior to COVID-19, in January 2020, did your company have employees in the United States?

a. Yes
b. No TERMINATE

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A5. Is your business a:

a. Public company
b. Private personally-owned company
c. Private family-led company
d. Private venture-backed startup
e. Private equity-backed company
f. Not-for-profit/philanthropy TERMINATE
g. Government entity TERMINATE
h. I don't know

DEFINING LOW-WAGE EMPLOYEES

As you answer the following questions, please remember:

For the purposes of this survey, we define **low-wage employees** as full-time or part-time employees who earn hourly wages that are 200% or below the federal poverty threshold. Depending on which part of the country they work in, these employees typically earn wages around $7 per hour (or approximately $14,000 per year) to $20 per hour (or approximately $40,000 per year).

A6. Using this definition of low-wage employees, did your company have any low-wage employees prior to COVID-19, in January 2020?

a. Yes
b. No TERMINATE
c. I don't know TERMINATE

A7. What percentage of your full-time employees are low-wage employees?

a. 0% TERMINATE
b. 1% – 24%
c. 25% – 49%
d. 50% – 74%
e. 75% – 99%
f. 100%
g. I don't know

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A8. What percentage of your company's low-wage workforce and total workforce consist of part-time employees? (According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, a part-time employee is one who works fewer than 35 hours per week.) Select one from each column:

Percentage of employees that are part-time	0%	1% – 24%	25% – 49%	50% – 74%	75% – 99%	100%	I don't know
Low-wage employees only						TERMINATE	
All employees (including low-wage)						TERMINATE	

A9. What is the average hourly wage of your low-wage employees?

a. $7/hour or less
b. $7.01/hour – $10.00/hour
c. 10.01/hour – $15.00/hour
d. $15.01/hour – $20.00/hour
e. $20.01/hour and above TERMINATE
f. I don't know TERMINATE

A10. Prior to COVID-19, in January 2020, were you primarily employed in a human resources function?

a. Yes
b. No

A11. Prior to COVID-19, in January 2020, was your company's headquarters located within the US or outside the US?

a. Within the US
b. Outside the US
c. I don't know

A12. Prior to COVID-19, in January 2020, were the majority of your company's employees located within the US or outside the US?

a. Within the US
b. Outside the US
c. I don't know

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ALERT

For all remaining questions, please answer from the perspective of your US-based workforce.

A13. Please indicate all the regions where your company had low-wage employees prior to COVID-19, in January 2020:

a. New England (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont)
b. Middle Atlantic (New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania)
c. East North Central (Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin)
d. West North Central (Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota)
e. South Atlantic (Delaware, Washington, D.C., Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia)
f. East South Central (Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee)
g. West South Central (Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas)
h. Mountain (Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, New Mexico, Montana, Utah, Nevada, Wyoming)
i. Pacific (Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon, Washington)

A14. [ONLY SHOW IF RESPONDENT ANSWERED A11 – "Within the US"] Please indicate the region where your company was headquartered prior to COVID-19, in January 2020:

a. New England (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont)
b. Middle Atlantic (New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania)
c. East North Central (Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin)
d. West North Central (Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota)
e. South Atlantic (Delaware, Washington, D.C., Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia)
f. East South Central (Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee)
g. West South Central (Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas)
h. Mountain (Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, New Mexico, Montana, Utah, Nevada, Wyoming)
i. Pacific (Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon, Washington)

A15. What percentage of your full-time employees report the following as their gender?

a. Female (__fill in % out of 100)
b. Male (__fill in % out of 100)
c. Prefer to self-describe (__fill in % out of 100)
d. I don't know

A16. What percentage of your full-time employees describe themselves as the following?

a. Black or African American (__fill in % out of 100)

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b. Middle Eastern or North African (__fill in % out of 100)
c. Asian or Asian American (__fill in % out of 100)
d. American Indian, Alaska Native or Other Indigenous (__fill in % out of 100)
e. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (__fill in % out of 100)
f. Hispanic or Latinx (__fill in % out of 100)
g. White (__fill in % out of 100)
h. Prefer to self-describe (__fill in % out of 100)
i. I don't know

A17. In order to understand the personal challenges low-wage employees face which can inhibit upward mobility, please tell us the percentage of your full-time low-wage employees that you believe:

1	2	3	4	5	6
0% – 9%	10% – 29%	30% – 49%	50% – 69%	70% – 100%	I don't know

a. Are US immigrants
b. Have a disability
c. Are subject to wage garnishment
d. Have a criminal background issue
e. Have a drug abuse issue

A18. What best describes your primary industry?
a. Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting
b. Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction
c. Utilities
d. Construction
e. Manufacturing
f. Wholesale Trade
g. Retail Trade
h. Transportation and Warehousing
i. Information
j. Finance and Insurance
k. Real Estate and Rental and Leasing
l. Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services
m. Management of Companies and Enterprises
n. Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services
o. Educational Services
p. Health Care and Social Assistance
q. Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation
r. Accommodation and Food Services
s. Other Services (except Public Administration)
t. Public Administration

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A19. Does your company use a franchise model?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. I don't know

A20. [If "yes" on prior question] Is your company the parent company or the franchisee?
   a. Parent company
   b. Franchisee
   c. I don't know

A21. For managers/supervisors who supervise low-wage employees, what is the average number of low-wage employees that each manager/supervisor supervises?
   a. 0 – 5 employees per manager/supervisor
   b. 6 – 10 employees per manager/supervisor
   c. 11 – 15 employees per manager/supervisor
   d. 16 – 20 employees per manager/supervisor
   e. 21 or more employees per manager/supervisor
   f. I don't know

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Awareness and Attitudes

The following questions will ask you to share details about low-wage employees in your company. As you answer the following questions, please remember:

Answer the following questions so that they describe how your company operated prior to the outbreak of COVID-19 in the United States (i.e., answer from your perspective in January 2020).

DEFINING LOW-WAGE EMPLOYEES

As you answer the following questions, please remember:
For the purposes of this survey, we define **low-wage employees** as full-time or part-time employees who earn hourly wages that are 200% or below the federal poverty threshold. Depending on which part of the country they work in, these employees typically earn wages around $7 per hour (or approximately $14,000 per year) to $20 per hour (or approximately $40,000 per year).

PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

B1. Please tell us how strongly you agree or disagree that each of the following conditions is a barrier to the upward mobility of low-wage employees at your company.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	I don't know

a. Low-wage employees don't have reliable transportation to and from work
b. Low-wage employees don't have reliable caregiving options for looking after family
c. Low-wage employees don't feel comfortable asking their manager/supervisor for assistance when they have personal circumstances preventing them from moving up (e.g., cannot afford training costs, cannot make their shift due to sick family member)
d. Low-wage employees cannot afford the upfront costs for actions they need to take to move up (e.g., training fees, relocation costs)
e. Low-wage employees don't have the time needed to invest in obtaining the training, certifications, and/or skills needed to move up
f. Low-wage employees can't stay in their job long enough to move up
g. Other (please specify) [free text]

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DEFINING SOFT SKILLS

In the next section, we define **soft skills** as interpersonal behaviors and attributes necessary for success at work, such as the ability to communicate well with other people, teamwork, professionalism, and on-time attendance.

EDUCATION AND SKILLS

B2. Please tell us how strongly you agree or disagree that each of the following conditions is a barrier to the upward mobility of low-wage employees at your company.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	I don't know

a. Low-wage employees don't have the English language fluency needed to move up
b. Low-wage employees don't have the literacy skills to move up
c. Low-wage employees don't have the numeracy skills to move up
d. Low-wage employees don't have a secondary diploma or a GED
e. Low-wage employees don't have soft skills needed to move up
f. Low-wage employees don't have technical skills (e.g., knowledge of certain equipment, systems, or tools) needed to move up
g. Other (please specify) [free text]

JOB STRUCTURE

B3. Please tell us how strongly you agree or disagree that each of the following conditions is a barrier to the upward mobility of low-wage employees at your company.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	I don't know

a. My company does not give autonomy at work to low-wage employees
b. My company does not provide stable enough work schedules to low-wage employees
c. My company does not provide flexible enough work schedules to low-wage employees
d. Other (please specify) [free text]

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COMPANY AND INDUSTRY OPPORTUNITIES

B6. Please tell us how strongly you agree or disagree that each of the following conditions is a barrier to the upward mobility of low-wage employees at your company.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	I don't know

a. My industry doesn't have many opportunities for low-wage employees to move to a job with higher pay, skills, and productivity
b. My company doesn't have many opportunities for low-wage employees to move to a job with higher pay, skills, and productivity
c. Other (please specify) [free text]

MENTORSHIP

B7. Please tell us how strongly you agree or disagree that each of the following conditions is a barrier to the upward mobility of low-wage employees at your company.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	I don't know

a. Low-wage employees don't have a role model or mentor at work
b. Low-wage employees don't have anyone at work to turn to for advice about how to move up
c. Low-wage employees don't have anyone at work who they trust
d. Low-wage employees don't have a sense of belonging at work
e. Low-wage employees don't have anyone at work who cares about their advancement
f. Other (please specify) [free text]

DEFINING CAREER PATHWAYS

In the section below, we use the term **career pathways** to describe the opportunities for progression for low-wage employees to upgrade their skills such that it results in a pay increase or promotion, or both.

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EMPLOYEE AWARENESS ABOUT CAREER PATHWAYS

B8. Please tell us how strongly you agree or disagree that each of the following conditions is a barrier to the upward mobility of low-wage employees at your company.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	I don't know

a. Low-wage employees are not aware of career pathways **in their current area of work** (i.e., function or department) within my company
b. Low-wage employees are not aware of career pathways **outside their area of work** (i.e., function or department) within my company
c. Low-wage employees don't know what training, certifications, and/or skills are needed to move up within my company
d. Low-wage employees don't know how to get the training, certifications, and/or skills needed to move up within my company
e. Low-wage employees don't know what they need to do to move to a job with higher pay, skills, and productivity within my company
f. My company doesn't provide the training and/or certifications low-wage employees need to move up

g. Other (please specify) [free text]

EMPLOYEE ATTITUDES TO UPWARD MOBILITY

B9. Please tell us how strongly you agree or disagree that each of the following conditions is a barrier to the upward mobility of low-wage employees at your company.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	I don't know

a. Low-wage employees don't have interest in moving up
b. Low-wage employees don't want to take on the additional responsibility that would be required if they were to move up
c. Low-wage employees don't believe moving up is possible
d. Low-wage employees' family and/or peers are not supportive of them trying to move up
e. Low-wage employees don't want to be rejected for a promotion
f. Low-wage employees worry if they apply to a higher-level job and their application is not accepted there will be negative consequences for their job
g. Other (please specify) [free text]

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DEFINING LOW-WAGE EMPLOYEES

As you answer the following questions, please remember:
For the purposes of this survey, we define **low-wage employees** as full-time or part-time employees who earn hourly wages that are 200% or below the federal poverty threshold. Depending on which part of the country they work in, these employees typically earn wages around $7 per hour (or approximately $14,000 per year) to $20 per hour (or approximately $40,000 per year).

DEFINING UPWARD MOBILITY

As you answer the following questions, please remember:
We define **upward mobility** as an improvement in skills that enhances a worker's productivity and results in an increase in the worker's pay, or a promotion, or both.

B10. What is the most common occupation among low-wage employees at your company?

a. Maintenance and Repair Employees, General
b. Nursing Assistants
c. Medical Assistants
d. Combined Food Preparation and Serving Employees, Including Fast Food
e. Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners
f. Pharmacy Technicians
g. Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners
h. Cooks, Restaurant
i. Teacher Assistants
j. Driver/Sales Employees
k. Waiters and Waitresses
l. (This list is much longer, but only including first few in order to avoid clutter.)

B11. You selected [pipe in occupation from Q9] as the most common low-wage occupation in your company. What percentage of your overall workforce is in this occupation?

a. 1% – 24%
b. 25% – 49%
c. 50% – 74%
d. 75% – 99%
e. 100%
f. I don't know

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B12. From January 2019 to January 2020 (the year prior to COVID-19), what percentage of your company's low-wage workforce and total workforce experienced upward mobility?

Percentage of workers who experienced upward mobility	0%	1% – 5%	6% – 10%	11% – 15%	16% – 20%	More than 20%	I don't know
Low-wage employees only							
All employees (including low-wage employees)							

B13. From January 2019 to January 2020 (the year prior to COVID-19), in your company, what would you estimate were the turnover rates of:

Turnover rate	0% – 24%	25% – 49%	50% – 74%	75% – 99%	More than 99%	I don't know
Low-wage employees only						
All employees (including low-wage employees)						

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B14. Prior to COVID-19, in January 2020, what would you estimate was the average tenure employed at your company of:

Average tenure	Less than a year	1 – 2 years	3 – 5 years	6 – 10 years	More than 10 years	I don't know
Low-wage employees only						
All employees (including low-wage employees)						

B15. You previously said the average tenure of low-wage employees at your company was [Pipe in tenure from Q14]. In your experience, is this:

a. Significantly higher than your industry's average
b. Somewhat higher than your industry's average
c. About the same as your industry's average
d. Somewhat lower than your industry's average
e. Significantly lower than your industry's average
f. I don't know

B4. Finding qualified applicants for low-wage jobs in my company is:

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very easy	Somewhat easy	Neither easy nor hard	Somewhat hard	Very hard	I don't know

B5. Finding qualified applicants for all other jobs is:

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very easy	Somewhat easy	Neither easy nor hard	Somewhat hard	Very hard	I don't know

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Actions

Actions

This survey section seeks to understand the actions employers are taking to increase upward mobility for low-wage employees. It is divided into two parts: Culture and Employer Practices.

DEFINING UPWARD MOBILITY

As you answer the following questions, please remember:

We define **upward mobility** as an improvement in skills that enhances a worker's productivity and results in an increase in the worker's pay, or a promotion, or both.

NOTE ON COVID-19

As you answer the following questions, please remember:

Answer the following questions so that they describe how your company operated prior to the outbreak of COVID-19 in the United States (i.e., answer from your perspective in January 2020).

CULTURE

This set of questions will ask you to reflect on how your company supports a **culture** that recognizes the importance of retention and the value of low-wage employees to the competitiveness of your company.

Company Values

C1. For the following questions, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following set of statements.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	I don't know

a. My company values low-wage employees
b. My company is a great place to work for low-wage employees
c. My company's culture inspires low-wage employees to try to move up
d. I am skeptical of the benefits of investing in the upward mobility of low-wage employees
e. Low-wage employees are crucial to my company's success
f. It is essential to my company's success for low-wage employees to have upward mobility

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g. My company has a culture that prioritizes "hiring from within" over "hiring from outside"
h. I am open to learning about how increasing the upward mobility of low-wage employees might benefit my company
i. I am proud of how my company invests in the upward mobility of low-wage employees

Staffing

C2. For the following questions, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following set of statements.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	I don't know

a. My company works to maintain headcount through economic downturns
b. My company typically fills higher-level jobs by hiring experienced employees from the job market
c. My company views low-wage employees as easily replaceable
d. My company doesn't invest in training low-wage employees because they will leave
e. Low-wage employees don't require additional upskilling to serve my company better

C3. How important do you think the following benefits are to people applying to low-wage positions at your company?

1	2	3	4	5	6
Unimportant	Somewhat unimportant	Neither unimportant nor important	Somewhat important	Important	I don't know

a. Location
b. Control over work location
c. Convenient to get to work location
d. Opportunities for upward mobility
e. Clear communication about opportunities for upward mobility
f. Level of pay
g. Stable and predictable pay
h. Caregiving assistance benefit
i. Flexible sick time policy
j. Transportation assistance benefit
k. Tuition benefits
l. Other company benefits (e.g., healthcare benefits)
m. Worker stock options program or other worker ownership structure
n. Control over hours
o. Stable and predictable hours
p. Skill development opportunities (e.g., training programs)

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q. Supportive team members
r. Supportive supervisors
s. Job security
t. Type of work fits my interest and goals
u. Other (please specify) [free text]

EMPLOYER PRACTICES

This set of questions will ask whether you are familiar with **employer practices** for boosting the upward mobility of low-wage employees.

We have curated a list of best practices below. They are separated according to stages in the employment cycle: pre-employment, hiring, onboarding, on-the-job support, pathways for advancement, learning and development, and offboarding and post-exit.

DEFINING LOW-WAGE EMPLOYEES

As you answer the following questions, please remember:
For the purposes of this survey, we define **low-wage employees** as full-time or part-time employees who earn hourly wages that are 200% or below the federal poverty threshold. Depending on which part of the country they work in, these employees typically earn wages around $7 per hour (or approximately $14,000 per year) to $20 per hour (or approximately $40,000 per year).

NOTE ON COVID-19

Answer the following questions so that they describe how your company operated prior to the outbreak of COVID-19 in the United States (i.e., answer from your perspective in January 2020).

DEFINING CAREER PATHWAYS

As you answer the following questions, please remember:
In the section below, we use the term **career pathways** to describe the opportunities for progression for low-wage employees to upgrade their skills such that it results in a pay increase or promotion, or both.

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Pre-employment

C4. How often does your company:

1	2	3	4	5	6
My company always uses this practice	My company often uses this practice	My company sometimes uses this practice	My company rarely uses this practice	My company never uses this practice	I don't know

a. Internally communicate success stories of my company's employees who start as low-wage employees and then go on to achieve career progression within the company
b. Externally communicate success stories of my company's employees who start as low-wage employees and then go on to achieve career progression within the company
c. Describe the job expectations (e.g., daily responsibilities and the expectations beyond that, such as food servers being expected to clean the restrooms) *during the hiring process*
d. Describe career pathways *on the company website*
e. Describe career pathways *in job postings*
f. Describe career pathways *in job interviews*
g. Describe total compensation (i.e., pay ranges and benefits) for different roles on the career pathways *on the company website*
h. Describe total compensation (i.e., pay ranges and benefits) for different roles on the career pathways *in job postings*
i. Describe total compensation (i.e., pay ranges and benefits) for different roles on the career pathways *in job interviews*
j. Use any other practices not listed here. Please describe: [free text]

Pre-employment

C5. Please rate how you feel about the value each of the following actions has to the competitiveness of your company.

1	2	3	4	5	6
I am very optimistic this practice will benefit my company's competitiveness	I am somewhat optimistic this practice will benefit my company's competitiveness	I am neither optimistic nor pessimistic this practice will benefit my company's competitiveness	I am somewhat pessimistic this practice will benefit my company's competitiveness	I am very pessimistic this practice will benefit my company's competitiveness	I don't know

a. Internally communicate success stories of my company's employees who start as low-wage employees and then go on to achieve career progression within the company

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b. Externally communicate success stories of my company's employees who start as low-wage employees and then go on to achieve career progression within the company
c. Describe the job expectations (e.g., daily responsibilities and the expectations beyond that, such as food servers may also be expected to clean the restrooms) *during the hiring process*
d. Describe career pathways *on the company website*
e. Describe career pathways *in job postings*
f. Describe career pathways *in job interviews*
g. Describe total compensation (i.e., pay ranges and benefits) for different roles on the career pathways *on the company website*
h. Describe total compensation (i.e., pay ranges and benefits) for different roles on the career pathways *in job postings*
i. Describe total compensation (i.e., pay ranges and benefits) for different roles on the career pathways *in job interviews*
j. Use any other practices not listed here. Please describe: [free text]

Hiring

C6. How often does your company:

1	2	3	4	5	6
My company always uses this practice	My company often uses this practice	My company sometimes uses this practice	My company rarely uses this practice	My company never uses this practice	I don't know

a. Relax degree requirements
b. Relax criminal background checks
c. Relax English language fluency requirements
d. Practice skills-based (i.e., using skills and competencies as the requirements for the job rather than a degree or credential) job descriptions
e. Practice name-blind resume review
f. Work with trusted community organizations to recruit candidates
g. Use any other practices not listed here. Please describe: [free text]

C7. Please rate how you feel about the value each of the following actions has to the competitiveness of your company.

1	2	3	4	5	6
I am very optimistic this practice will benefit my company's competitiveness	I am somewhat optimistic this practice will benefit my company's competitiveness	I am neither optimistic nor skeptical this practice will benefit my company's competitiveness	I am somewhat skeptical this practice will benefit my company's competitiveness	I am very skeptical this practice will benefit my company's competitiveness	I don't know

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a. Relax degree requirements
b. Relax criminal background checks
c. Relax English language fluency requirements
d. Practice skills-based job descriptions
e. Practice name-blind resume review
f. Work with trusted community organizations to recruit candidates
g. Use any other practices not listed here. Please describe: [free text]

DEFINING SOFT SKILLS

As you answer the following questions, please remember:
In the section below, we define **soft skills** as interpersonal behaviors and attributes necessary for success at work, such as the ability to communicate well with other people, teamwork, professionalism, and on-time attendance.

Onboarding

C8. How often does your company:

1	2	3	4	5	6
My company always uses this practice	My company often uses this practice	My company sometimes uses this practice	My company rarely uses this practice	My company never uses this practice	I don't know

a. Communicate upward mobility opportunities and pathways during onboarding
b. Communicate to low-wage employees the pay ranges at different levels of progression
c. Communicate expectations for soft skills required to move up
d. Communicate expectations for technical skills (e.g., knowledge of certain equipment, systems, or tools) required to move up
e. Communicate expectations for qualifications or credentials (e.g., a certain certificate or diploma) required to move up
f. Communicate how low-wage employees can obtain the skills, training, certifications, and experience required for progression
g. Communicate how low-wage employees can request help when needed (e.g., providing a method to swap shifts in the event of an emergency)
h. Pair new low-wage employees with a buddy or mentor in the initial phase of employment
i. Speak with new low-wage employees to understand what personal circumstances might affect the employee's ability to perform as required for success at work (e.g., reliable transportation to work, reliable childcare, household's financial circumstances)
j. Discuss challenges that low-wage employees may have in moving up (e.g., skill deficiencies, care responsibilities, transportation needs, schedule concerns)
k. Use any other practices not listed here. Please describe: [free text]

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C9. Please rate how you feel about the value each of the following actions has to the competitiveness of your company.

1	2	3	4	5	6
I am very optimistic this practice will benefit my company's competitiveness	I am somewhat optimistic this practice will benefit my company's competitiveness	I am neither optimistic nor skeptical this practice will benefit my company's competitiveness	I am somewhat skeptical this practice will benefit my company's competitiveness	I am very skeptical this practice will benefit my company's competitiveness	I don't know

a. Communicate upward mobility opportunities and pathways during onboarding
b. Communicate to low-wage employees the pay ranges at different levels of progression
c. Communicate expectations for soft skills
d. Communicate expectations for technical skills (e.g., knowledge of certain equipment, systems, or tools) required to move up
e. Communicate expectations for qualifications or credentials (e.g., a certain certificate or diploma) required to move up
f. Communicate how low-wage employees can obtain the skills, training, certifications, and experience required for progression
g. Communicate how low-wage employees can request help when needed (e.g., providing a method to swap shifts in the event of an emergency)
h. Pair new low-wage employees with a buddy or mentor in the initial phase of employment
i. Speak with new low-wage employees to understand what personal circumstances might affect the employee's ability to perform as required for success at work (e.g., reliable transportation to work, reliable childcare, household's financial circumstances)
j. Discuss challenges that low-wage employees may have in moving up (e.g., skill deficiencies, care responsibilities, transportation needs, schedule concerns)
k. Use any other practices not listed here. Please describe: [free text]

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On-the-job Support: Benefits

C10. How often does your company:

1	2	3	4	5	6
My company always uses this practice	My company often uses this practice	My company sometimes uses this practice	My company rarely uses this practice	My company never uses this practice	I don't know

a. Provide adequate notice of upcoming shifts
b. Provide stability in scheduling (e.g., consistent start time for shifts, consistent hours week-to-week, and advance notice of working days)
c. Provide caregiving assistance (e.g., time off for appointments, Employee Assistance Program or care concierge access) to low-wage employees for looking after family
d. Provide a flexible sick time policy for personal sick time (e.g., low-wage employees allowed to take advances on sick leave that would be accrued in later months)
e. Provide a flexible sick time policy for caring for a sick family member (e.g., low-wage employees permitted to stay home to take care of sick family member)
f. Provide transportation assistance
g. Provide tuition benefits
h. Provide employee stock options program or other employee ownership structure
i. Use any other practices not listed here. Please describe: [free text]

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C11. Please rate how you feel about the value each of the following actions has to the competitiveness of your company.

1	2	3	4	5	6
I am very optimistic this practice will benefit my company's competitiveness	I am somewhat optimistic this practice will benefit my company's competitiveness	I am neither optimistic nor skeptical this practice will benefit my company's competitiveness	I am somewhat skeptical this practice will benefit my company's competitiveness	I am very skeptical this practice will benefit my company's competitiveness	I don't know

a. Provide adequate notice of upcoming shifts
b. Provide stability in scheduling (e.g., consistent start time for shifts, consistent hours week-to-week, and advance notice of working days)
c. Provide caregiving assistance (e.g., time off for appointments, Employee Assistance Program or care concierge access) to low-wage employees for looking after family
d. Provide a flexible sick time policy for personal sick time (e.g., low-wage employees allowed to take advances on sick leave that would be accrued in later months)
e. Provide a flexible sick time policy for caring for a sick family member (e.g., low-wage employees permitted to stay home to take care of sick family member)
f. Provide transportation assistance
g. Provide tuition benefits
h. Provide employee stock options program or other employee ownership structure
I. Use any other practices not listed here. Please describe: [free text]

ON-THE-JOB SUPPORT: MENTOR AND SUPERVISOR SUPPORT

C12. How often does your company:

1	2	3	4	5	6
My company always uses this practice	My company often uses this practice	My company sometimes uses this practice	My company rarely uses this practice	My company never uses this practice	I don't know

a. Provide a mentorship program for low-wage employees
b. Hold supervisors and/or mentors accountable for low-wage employees' upward mobility
c. Empower supervisors or mentors to make judgment calls to help low-wage employees balance life demands outside of work (e.g., giving the afternoon off for a care appointment)
d. Use any other practices not listed here. Please describe: [free text]

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C13. How often do supervisors and/or mentors at your company:

1	2	3	4	5	6
Supervisors/mentors at my company always use this practice	Supervisors/mentors at my company often use this practice	Supervisors/mentors at my company sometimes use this practice	Supervisors/mentors at my company rarely use this practice	Supervisors/mentors at my company never use this practice	I don't know

a. Communicate the impact of low-wage employees' work on the company's success
b. Communicate benefits and how low-wage employees can access them
c. Coach low-wage employees to on how to move up
d. Hold performance review conversations with low-wage employees at regular intervals
e. Use any other practices not listed here. Please describe: [free text]

C14. Please rate how you feel about the value each of the following actions has to the competitiveness of your company.

1	2	3	4	5	6
I am very optimistic this practice will benefit my company's competitiveness	I am somewhat optimistic this practice will benefit my company's competitiveness	I am neither optimistic nor skeptical this practice will benefit my company's competitiveness	I am somewhat skeptical this practice will benefit my company's competitiveness	I am very skeptical this practice will benefit my company's competitiveness	I don't know

a. Provide a mentorship program for low-wage employees
b. Hold supervisors and/or mentors accountable for low-wage employees' upward mobility
c. Empower supervisors or mentors to make judgment calls to help low-wage employees balance life demands outside of work (e.g., giving the afternoon off for a care appointment)
d. Supervisors and/or mentors communicate the impact of low-wage employees' work on the company's success
e. Supervisors and/or mentors communicate benefits and how low-wage employees can access them
f. Supervisors and/or mentors coach low-wage employees to on how to move up
g. Supervisors and/or mentors hold performance review conversations with low-wage employees at regular intervals
h. Use any other practices not listed here. Please describe: [free text]

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DEFINING SOFT SKILLS

As you answer the following questions, please remember:
In the section below, we define **soft skills** as interpersonal behaviors and attributes necessary for success at work, such as the ability to communicate well with other people, teamwork, professionalism, and on-time attendance.

ON-THE-JOB SUPPORT: LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

C15. How often does your company:

1	2	3	4	5	6
My company always uses this practice	My company often uses this practice	My company sometimes uses this practice	My company rarely uses this practice	My company never uses this practice	I don't know

a. Offer training programs that teach English language skills
b. Offer training programs that teach basic adult education or GED
c. Offer training programs that teach soft skills required to move up
d. Offer training programs that teach technical skills (e.g., knowledge of certain equipment, systems, or tools) required to move up
e. Offer training programs that teach digital literacy
f. Offer training programs for qualifications or credentials (e.g., a certain certificate or diploma) required to move up
g. Offer training programs that teach financial literacy (e.g., how to save money, how to avoid debt)
h. Use any other practices not listed here. Please describe: [free text]

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C16. Please rate how you feel about the value each of the following actions has to the competitiveness of your company.

1	2	3	4	5	6
I am very optimistic this practice will benefit my company's competitiveness	I am somewhat optimistic this practice will benefit my company's competitiveness	I am neither optimistic nor skeptical this practice will benefit my company's competitiveness	I am somewhat skeptical this practice will benefit my company's competitiveness	I am very skeptical this practice will benefit my company's competitiveness	I don't know

a. Offer training programs that teach English language skills
b. Offer training programs that teach basic adult education or GED
c. Offer training programs that teach soft skills required to move up
d. Offer training programs that teach technical skills (e.g., knowledge of certain equipment, systems, or tools) required to move up
e. Offer training programs that teach digital literacy
f. Offer training programs for qualifications or credentials (e.g., a certain certificate or diploma) required to move up
g. Offer training programs that teach financial literacy (e.g., how to save money, how to avoid debt)
h. Use any other practices not listed here. Please describe: [free text]

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DEFINING CAREER PATHWAYS

As you answer the following questions, please remember:
In the section below, we use the term **career pathways** to describe the opportunities for progression for low-wage employees to upgrade their skills such that it results in a pay increase or promotion, or both.

Pathways for Advancement

C17. How often does your company:

1	2	3	4	5	6
My company always uses this practice	My company often uses this practice	My company sometimes uses this practice	My company rarely uses this practice	My company never uses this practice	I don't know

a. Create career pathways for low-wage employees
b. Describe career pathways and skills progression on an ongoing basis in company communications
c. Describe how total compensation (i.e., pay ranges and benefits) will change for the next role level in performance reviews
d. Describe the skills, training, certifications, and experience needed to get to the next role level in performance reviews
e. Describe how to obtain the skills, training, and certifications needed to get to the next role level in performance reviews
f. Reward (i.e., increase wages of, change job title of, or offer a bonus to) low-wage employees for reaching milestones of skills, training, credentials, or experience
g. Publicly recognize low-wage employees for reaching milestones of skills, training. credentials, or experience
h. Communicate examples of worker success stories to current low-wage employees
i. Provide opportunities for low-wage employees to interact with successful role models who progressed from the low-wage job
j. Use any other practices not listed here. Please describe: [free text]

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C18. Please rate how you feel about the value each of the following actions has to the competitiveness of your company.

1	2	3	4	5	6
I am very optimistic this practice will benefit my company's competitiveness	I am somewhat optimistic this practice will benefit my company's competitiveness	I am neither optimistic nor skeptical this practice will benefit my company's competitiveness	I am somewhat skeptical this practice will benefit my company's competitiveness	I am very skeptical this practice will benefit my company's competitiveness	I don't know

a. Create career pathways for low-wage employees
b. Describe career pathways and skills progression on an ongoing basis in company communications
c. Describe how total compensation (i.e., pay ranges and benefits) will change for the next role level in performance reviews
d. Describe the skills, training, certifications, and experience needed to get to the next role level in performance reviews
e. Describe how to obtain the skills, training, and certifications needed to get to the next role level in performance reviews
f. Reward (i.e., increase wages of, change job title of, or offer a bonus to) low-wage employees for reaching milestones of skills, training, credentials, or experience
g. Publicly recognize low-wage employees for reaching milestones of skills, training. credentials, or experience
h. Communicate examples of worker success stories to current low-wage employees
i. Provide opportunities for low-wage employees to interact with successful role models who progressed from the low-wage job
j. Use any other practices not listed here. Please describe: [free text]

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Offboarding and Post-exit

C19. How often does your company:

1	2	3	4	5	6
My company always uses this practice	My company often uses this practice	My company sometimes uses this practice	My company rarely uses this practice	My company never uses this practice	I don't know

a. Track why low-wage employees quit or take jobs with other employers
b. Track which companies or industries your low-wage employees move to when they quit your company
c. Ask low-wage employees leaving the company if they felt valued while in their jobs
d. Hold exit interviews when low-wage employees leave
e. Identify and track root causes of turnover for low-wage employees
f. Create a plan to address root causes of turnover for low-wage employees
g. Use any other practices not listed here. Please describe: [free text]

C20. Please rate how you feel about the value each of the following actions has to the competitiveness of your company.

1	2	3	4	5	6
I am very optimistic this practice will benefit my company's competitiveness	I am somewhat optimistic this practice will benefit my company's competitiveness	I am neither optimistic nor skeptical this practice will benefit my company's competitiveness	I am somewhat skeptical this practice will benefit my company's competitiveness	I am very skeptical this practice will benefit my company's competitiveness	I don't know

a. Track why low-wage employees quit or take jobs with other employers
b. Track which company or industry your low-wage employees move to when they quit your company
c. Ask low-wage employees leaving the company if they felt valued while in the job
d. Hold exit interviews when low-wage employees leave
e. Identify and track root causes of turnover for low-wage employees
f. Create a plan to address root causes of turnover for low-wage employees
g. Use any other practices not listed here. Please describe: [free text]

C21. Typically, when a low-wage employee leaves your company, where do they go?

a. A company in the same industry
b. A company in a different industry
c. School
d. Other (please specify) [free text]
e. I don't know

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Final Thoughts

D1. Who is responsible for the overall upward mobility of low-wage employees? Please rank the following options from most responsible to least responsible:

a. The employees are responsible
b. My company is responsible
c. Education institutions (e.g., high schools, colleges) are responsible
d. The government is responsible
e. I don't know

D2. How would you grade your company's performance in increasing the upward mobility of your company's low-wage employees?

1	2	3	4	5	6
Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Very poor	I don't know

D3. How important is it for your company's future success and competitiveness to invest time and effort in the upward mobility of your low-wage employees in the future (e.g., through implementing more actions like those listed above)?

1	2	3	4	5	6
Important	Somewhat important	Neither important nor unimportant	Somewhat unimportant	Unimportant	I don't know

D4. Please tell us how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	I don't know

a. My company has no need to invest in the upward mobility of low-wage employees because of our business model
b. My company seeks input from low-wage employees when developing programs to increase their upward mobility
c. My company tracks whether low-wage employees are participating in benefits (e.g., care assistance, tuition assistance)

D5. Think about the upward mobility practices your company has already implemented. Rate the impact of these practices on the following contributors to your company's competitiveness:

1	2	3	4	5	6
High impact	Somewhat high impact	Neither high nor low impact	Somewhat low impact	Low impact	I don't know

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a. Increased retention
b. Reduced cost of recruitment
c. Reduced cost of training new employee
d. Reduced loss of institutional/process knowledge
e. Reduced expense of hiring temporary employees
f. Reduced overtime costs
g. Reduced loss of revenue
h. Increased customer goodwill
i. Increased reputation with job seekers
j. Increased attendance
k. Reduced absenteeism (e.g., employees don't attend a scheduled shift)
l. Increased overall company profitability
m. Reduced presenteeism (e.g., employees show up, but are not productive)
n. Increased morale
o. Increased productivity
p. Improved safety record
q. Other sources [free text]

D6. There are many influencers from whom you might learn best practices for upward mobility. Please rank your choices from most trusted to least trusted.
   a. Other business leaders in my region
   b. Industry associations and industry experts
   c. Membership organizations who instruct in best practices (e.g., U.S. Chambers of Commerce, Society for Human Resources Management [SHRM], etc.)
   d. The large (e.g., Fortune 500) companies whose supply chain my company is a part of
   e. Business journalism (e.g., Wall Street Journal) and business schools (e.g., Harvard Business Review)
   f. Vendors and providers of company employment benefits to my employees
   g. Vendors and providers of IT tools that shape employment (e.g., Applicant Tracking Systems [ATS] like Taleo, Human Capital Management [HCM] like Workday)
   h. None of the above
   i. Other sources of insight [free text]

D7. What is the one action **low-wage employees** can take that would be most helpful to their upward mobility? [Free text]

D8. What is the one action **your company** can take that would be most helpful to low-wage employees' upward mobility? [Free text]

D9. What is the one action **society** can take that would be most helpful to low-wage employees' upward mobility? [Free text]

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D10. Please rate your company's willingness to implement practices for increased upward mobility.

1	2	3	4	5	6
It is highly unlikely my company will implement practices to increase upward mobility.	It is somewhat unlikely my company will implement practices to increase upward mobility.	It is neither unlikely nor likely that my company will implement practices to increase upward mobility.	It is somewhat likely my company will implement practices to increase upward mobility.	It is highly likely my company will implement practices to increase upward mobility.	I don't know

Throughout this survey, we have asked about your company's decisions prior to COVID-19. However, this final question asks about your company's decisions now.

D11. Please rate the effect of COVID-19 on your company's willingness to implement practices for increased upward mobility.

1	2	3	4	5	6
COVID-19 makes it less likely my company will implement practices to increase upward mobility.	COVID-19 makes it somewhat less likely my company will implement practices to increase upward mobility.	COVID-19 makes it neither less likely nor more likely that my company will implement practices to increase upward mobility.	COVID-19 makes it somewhat more likely my company will implement practices to increase upward mobility.	COVID-19 makes it more likely my company will implement practices to increase upward mobility.	I don't know

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your responses will be used to help understand the actions employers can take to increase upward mobility for their low-wage employees. We are grateful for your participation in this important work.

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