

2026 REPORT

State of the Frontline Worker.

Insights from 52,971 frontline workers, the latest market benchmark, and what the data says you should do next.

52,971 RESPONSES 7 INDUSTRIES 12 DIMENSIONS



in partnership with



What's inside.

01	Executive Summary	03
02	Understanding the Engagement Gap	06
03	Year-Over-Year Progress	13
04	Turnover — The Business Case	16
05	Industry Patterns and Variability	19
06	The Dimensions That Drive Outcomes	25
07	What the Data Tells Employers to Do	30
08	Conclusion & Call to Action	34

Three data sets, one frontline picture.

PRIMARY DATA • GOHAPPY 2025

52,971 RESPONSES

Survey responses from frontline workers across goHappy customer organizations.

YEAR-OVER-YEAR BASELINE • GOHAPPY 2024

46,250 RESPONSES

Same methodology, prior year, like-for-like.

MARKET BENCHMARK • LHRA 2025

2,000 RESPONSES

Independent survey of US frontline workers by Lighthouse Research & Advisory in the same year.

Favorability = % responding 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale • LHRA questions mapped to goHappy dimensions for like-for-like comparison.

THREE SIGNALS FROM THE 2025 DATA —

Engagement moved. Turnover followed. And the gap is widening.

01 ENGAGEMENT

Engagement is moving.

+8.5pp

YEAR-OVER-YEAR GAIN

Overall engagement rose from 63.7% in 2024 to 72.2% in 2025.

02 TURNOVER

Turnover is following.

-9.9pp

YEAR-OVER-YEAR REDUCTION

Overall turnover fell from 99.0% to 89.1%.

03 THE GAP

The market gap is clear.

+27%

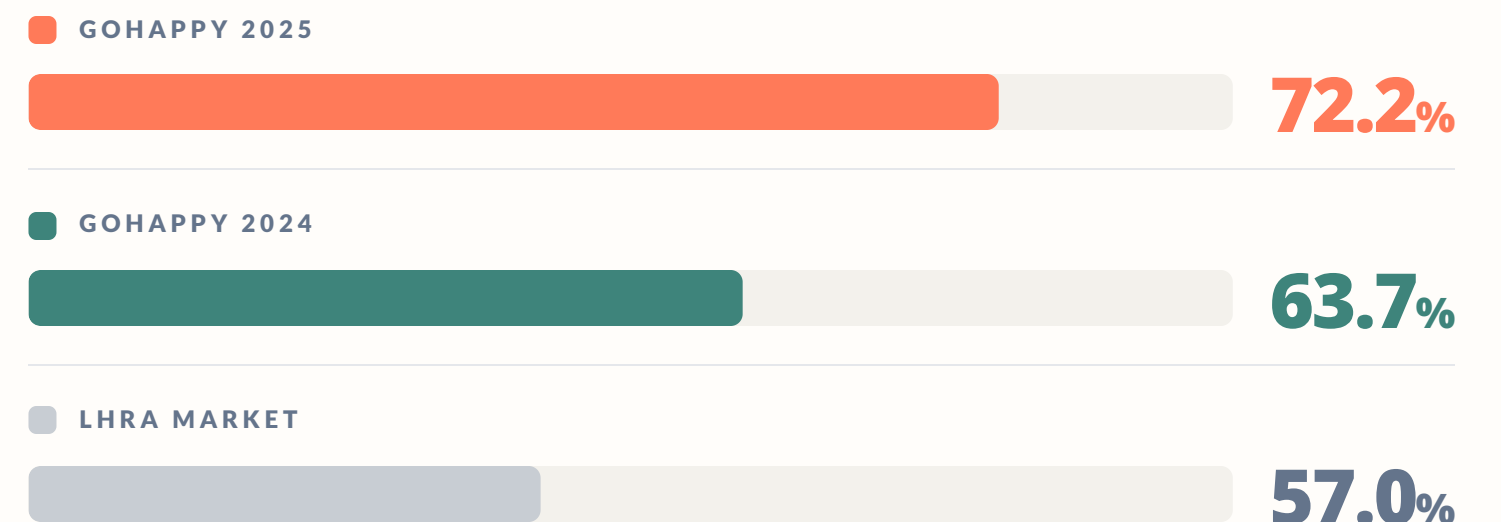
ABOVE THE MARKET BENCHMARK

The LHRA 2025 study is a cross-section of the broader market — a single point in time.

CENTRAL FINDING

goHappy customers are operating at a different level than the broader market — and that gap is widening.

- goHappy customers score **27% higher than the market** for Employee Engagement.
- Engagement improved meaningfully year over year, with overall scores increasing by **8.5 percentage points**.
- These organizations did not just start ahead. They **extended their lead** over time.



01 — Executive Summary

What if frontline engagement and turnover didn't have to be a foregone conclusion?

Frontline engagement has been a known challenge for years. Some teams at frontline organizations assume that this specific challenge is just how things are. For some, it's a foregone conclusion: frontline employers will struggle with engagement and face higher turnover.

But what if it doesn't have to be that way?

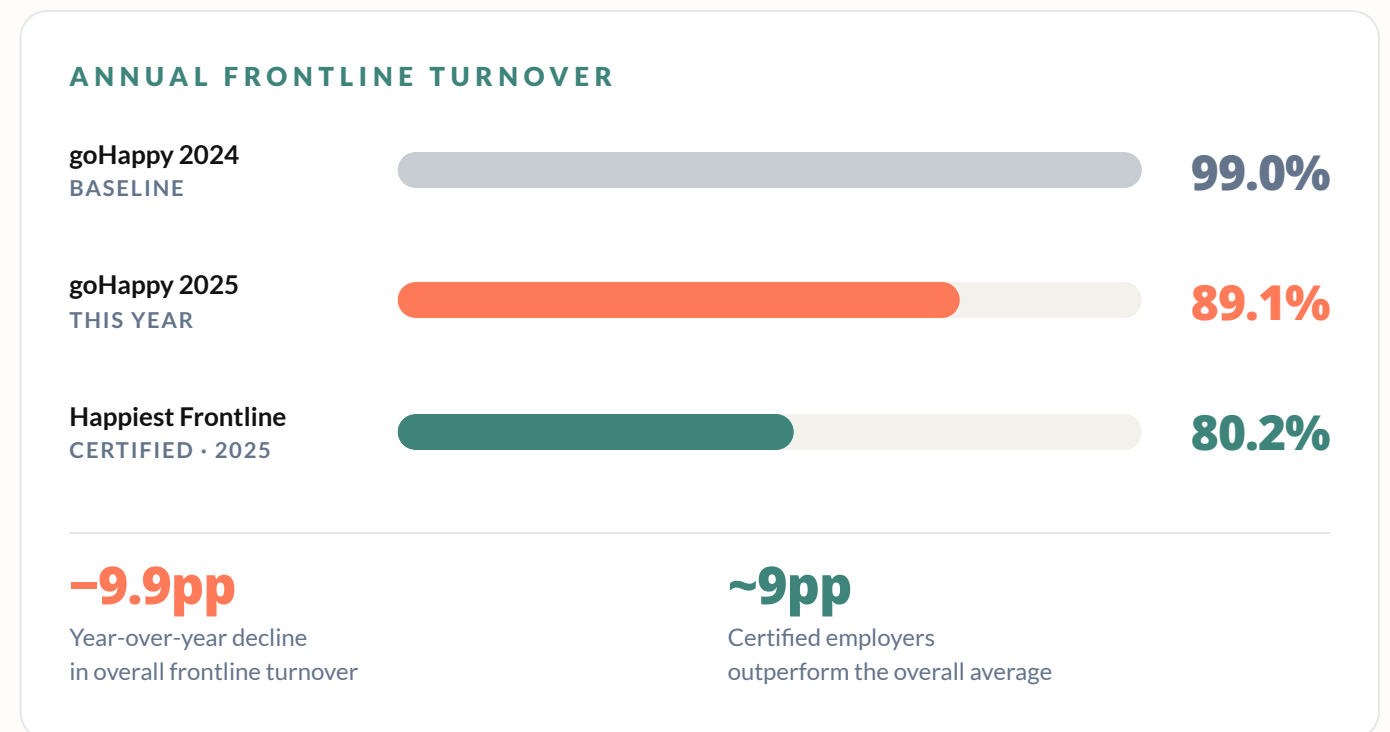
This report brings together three distinct data sets to answer that question. The 2025 goHappy customer data provides a current-state view across more than 50,000 frontline workers. The 2024 data shows how those organizations have progressed over time. The Lighthouse Research & Advisory (LHRA) market benchmark provides a comparison point for what engagement looks like across the broader workforce.

Viewed together, they show a consistent pattern. Higher engagement aligns with lower turnover. Lower turnover reduces cost, improves stability, and increases productivity. The relationship is visible across the data, particularly in the frontline roles where retention has historically been the most difficult.



FROM HR METRIC TO BUSINESS METRIC

Turnover, at a glance.



This is where engagement moves from an HR metric to a business metric.

- goHappy 2025 (primary) · 52,971 responses
- goHappy 2024 (baseline) · 46,250 responses
- LHRA 2025 market benchmark · 2,000 US frontline workers

Engagement favorability reflects the % of respondents selecting a 4 or 5 on a five-point scale.

A GUIDED TOUR

What this report covers.

01 Understanding the Engagement Gap

Where engagement breaks down across the frontline workforce.

02 Year-Over-Year Progress

How engagement shifted from 2024 to 2025.

03 Turnover — The Business Case

Engagement changes tied to retention and cost.

04 Industry Patterns

How engagement differs across sectors.

05 Dimensions That Drive Outcomes

Behaviors that separate leaders from the market.

06 What the Data Tells Employers to Do

Practical actions from the findings.

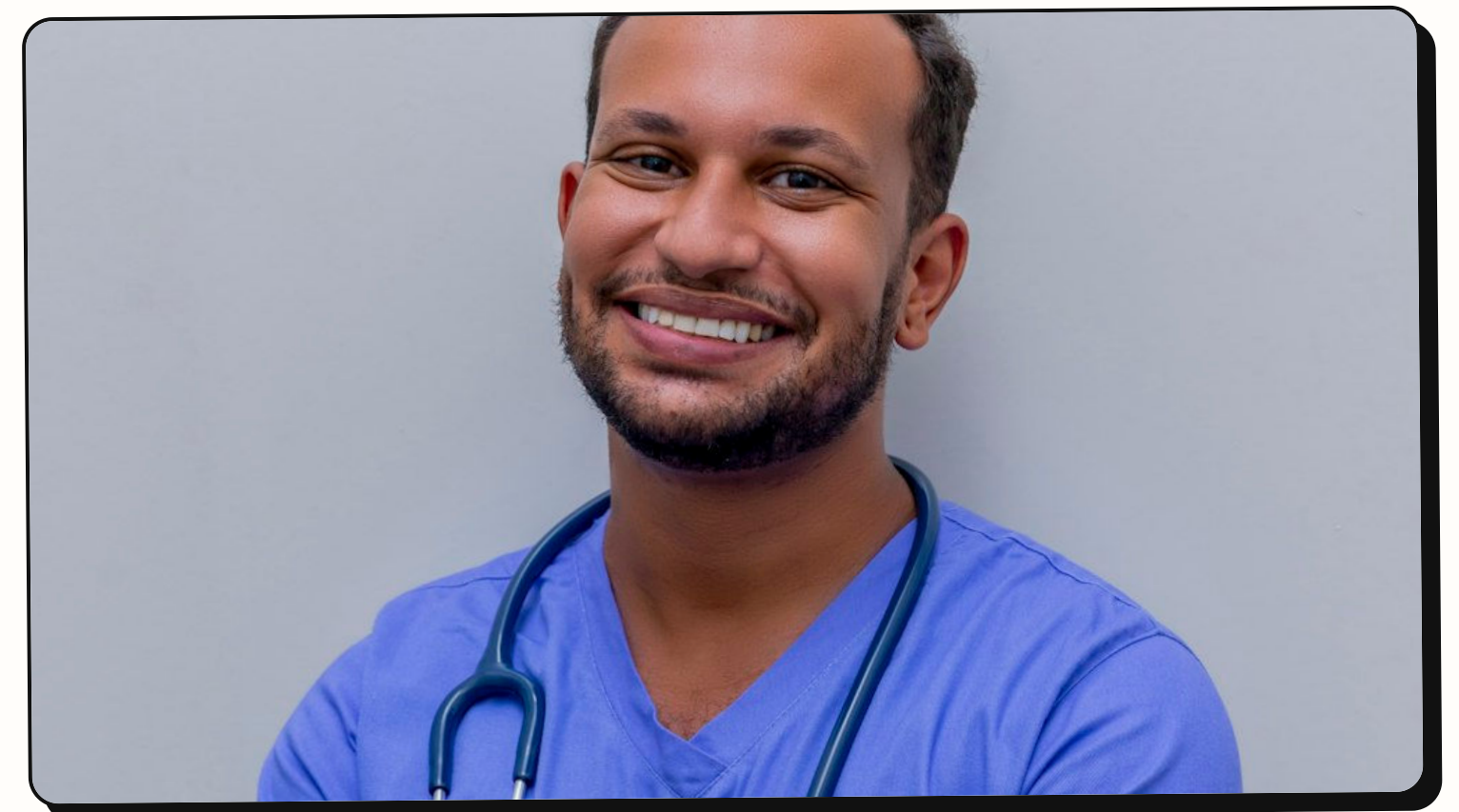
07 Conclusion & Call to Action

Where to focus next.



Once the People team leaned into the data and began to see what regions, roles, and tenure levels had the highest turnover, they were ready to start taking action. They moved from talking about turnover as a general problem to working on specific changes.

— CHRO, 24/7 CARE ORGANIZATION • LHRA INTERVIEW



**BOTTOM
LINE**

Put simply, frontline employers don't have to assume higher turnover, lower engagement, and stalled productivity. They can win — and this report will demonstrate how.

02 — Understanding the Engagement Gap

The way you care for your people is how your people care for your customer.

In a recent research interview the LHRA team conducted with the COO of a hospitality group, an important theme emerged from the conversation: *The way you care for your people is how your people care for your customer.* This leader realized the importance of taking care of his organization's staff so they could take care of the customer, knowing that would ultimately take care of the bottom line.

Frontline engagement is something that nearly every organization struggles with, because it's not as straightforward as supporting workers in an office, at a desk, or in more predictable work environments. Many frontline workers operate in harsh environments, face safety concerns, or deal with irate customers on a regular basis.

But if organizations are able to reach those workers and help them feel engaged, they will outperform their peers in productivity, retention, and other business-critical outcomes.

THE MARKET REALITY

57% of frontline workers can be considered engaged.

Translation: **nearly half of the frontline workforce** is showing up without a strong connection to the work, the team, or the organization.

And this isn't a new problem. It's a persistent one.

SECTION 02 • WHERE IT BREAKS DOWN

The issue isn't motivation. It's the **environment** workers are operating in.

Frontline workers have always carried a heavier burden when it comes to disengagement. They are closer to the customer, more exposed to operational pressure, and often have fewer resources or less consistent communication than corporate teams.

When engagement breaks down here, the effects show up quickly. Turnover, inconsistency, customer experience issues, quality concerns, and other problems are correlated with low engagement for frontline teams.

What stands out in the 2025 LHRA Frontline Workforce Trends study of 2,000 workers is not just the *level* of engagement, but where it breaks down.

FOUR RECURRING FAILURE POINTS

- 01 Feedback is inconsistent or absent
- 02 Coaching is limited or reactive
- 03 Recognition is infrequent
- 04 Communication from managers is uneven

None of those are surprising on their own. But together, they create a pattern.



5x

Workers who feel accepted, respected, and appreciated are **five times more likely** to report that their overall wellbeing has improved. Not incremental. Not marginal. A completely different experience of work.

And yet, **fewer than half** of workers in the market say they feel appreciated on a regular basis. That gap matters — because appreciation is not a complex system to build. It is a behavior. And right now, it is missing more often than it should be.

The goHappy engagement model.

The goHappy model does not treat engagement as a single outcome to measure once or twice a year. It breaks it into three layers that can be observed and improved over time.

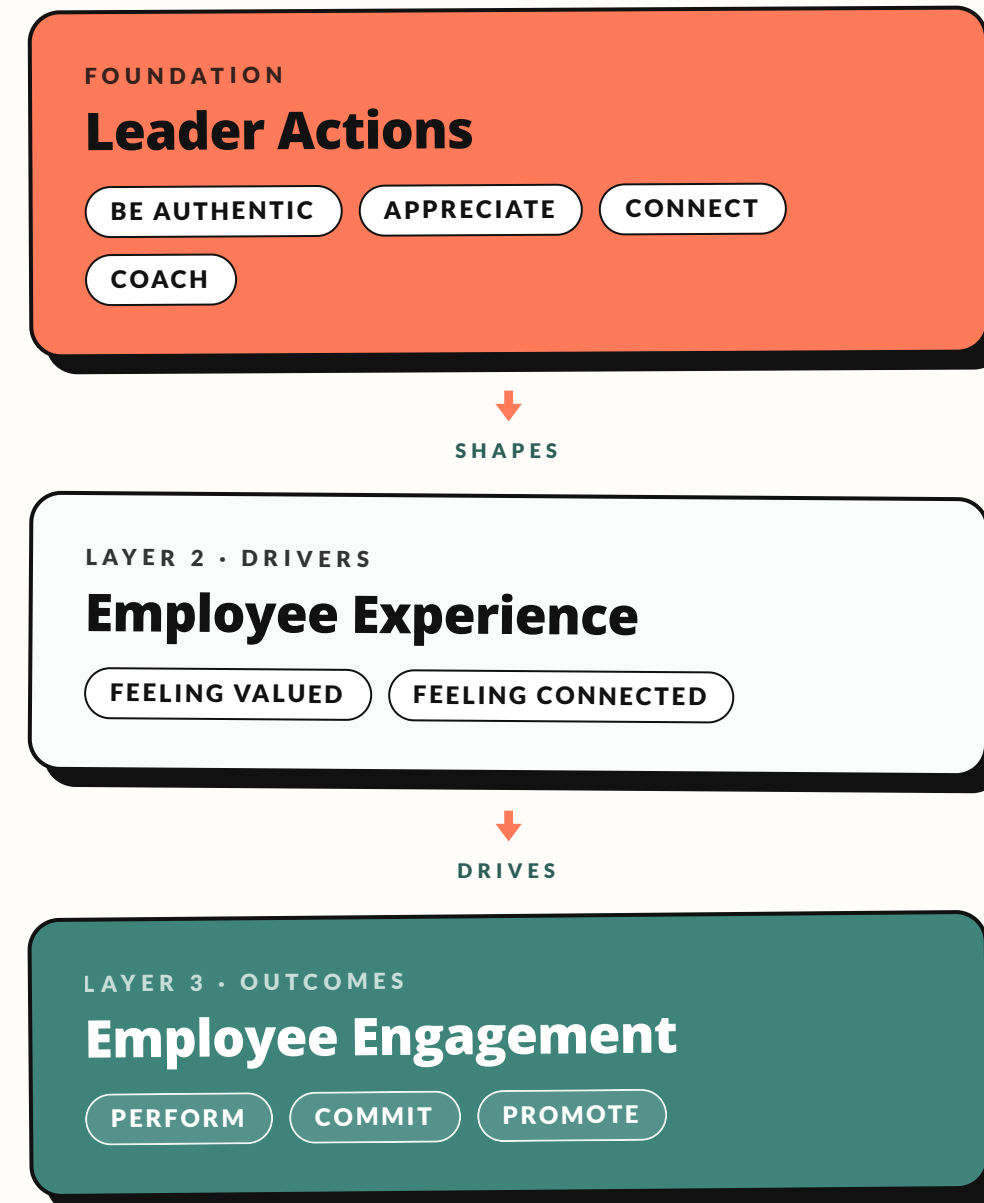
Leader behavior shapes the day-to-day experience of work. That experience shapes how people feel about their role, their team, and their future with the organization. And those perceptions show up in engagement outcomes.

All three layers are measurable. Instead of asking why engagement is low, organizations can start asking what is happening at the leader level that is driving that outcome.

70%

of the variance in engagement scores between the highest- and lowest-performing organizations is **tied to the leader**. When leader actions are consistent, experience improves. When experience improves, engagement follows.

GALLUP · LONG-RUNNING ENGAGEMENT RESEARCH



goHappy customer benchmarks vs. frontline benchmarks.

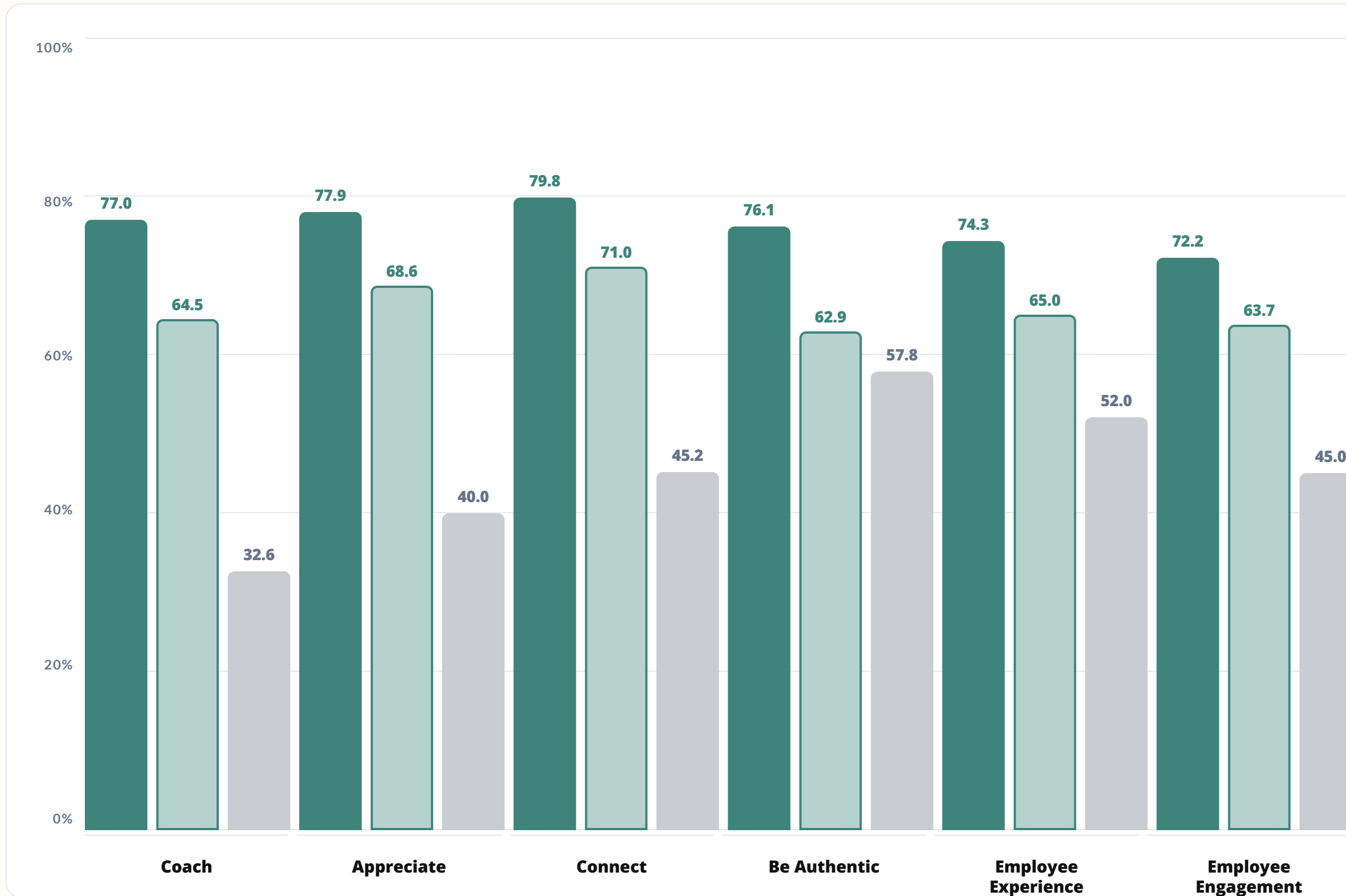
The table below brings together three perspectives on frontline engagement: the 2024 figures from goHappy customers, the 2025 year-over-year changes, and the overall frontline benchmarks from the team at Lighthouse Research & Advisory.

ENGAGEMENT DIMENSION	GOHAPPY 2025 % FAVORABLE	GOHAPPY 2024 % FAVORABLE	YOY CHANGE PERCENTAGE POINTS	LHRA MARKET 2025 % FAVORABLE	VS. MARKET DELTA
Employee Engagement	72.2%	63.7%	+8.5	57.0%	+26.7%
Employee Experience	77.8%	68.5%	+9.3	57.0%	+36.5%
Feeling Connected	77.3%	67.7%	+9.6	55.7%	+38.9%
Feeling Valued	78.3%	69.2%	+9.1	58.3%	+34.2%
● Appreciate	77.9%	68.6%	+9.4	40.0%	+94.9% ▲
Be Authentic	76.1%	62.9%	+13.2	57.8%	+31.7%
● Coach	77.0%	68.9%	+8.0	32.6%	+136.2% ▲
Commit	71.1%	63.4%	+7.8	63.0%	+12.9%
Connect	79.8%	72.1%	+7.7	45.2%	+76.7% ▲
Leader Actions	77.8%	68.5%	+9.4	43.9%	+77.3% ▲
Perform	70.4%	61.8%	+8.5	—	—
Promote	75.1%	66.0%	+9.1	51.0%	+47.3%

Data note: LHRA 2025 scores are from an independent survey of 2,000 US frontline workers conducted in the same calendar year as the goHappy 2025 data collection. YoY Change reflects the shift in goHappy customer scores from 2024 to 2025. Coach and Appreciate rows highlighted — they represent the two largest gaps versus the broader market.

SIX DIMENSIONS AT A GLANCE

goHappy customers vs. the market.



LEGEND

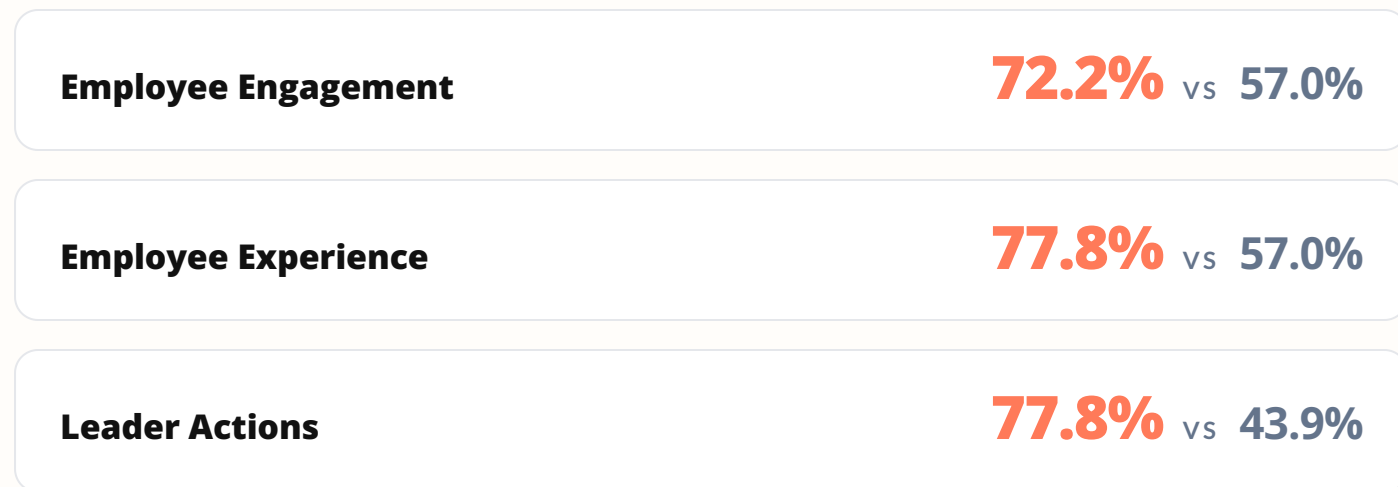
- goHappy 2025**
52,971 frontline workers across goHappy customer organizations.
- goHappy 2024**
46,250 frontline workers – same methodology, prior year.
- LHRA 2025 Market**
2,000-respondent independent cross-section of US frontline workers.

Year-over-year change is measured within the goHappy dataset. LHRA is a single-year market cross-section.

• WHERE THE GAPS ARE BIGGEST

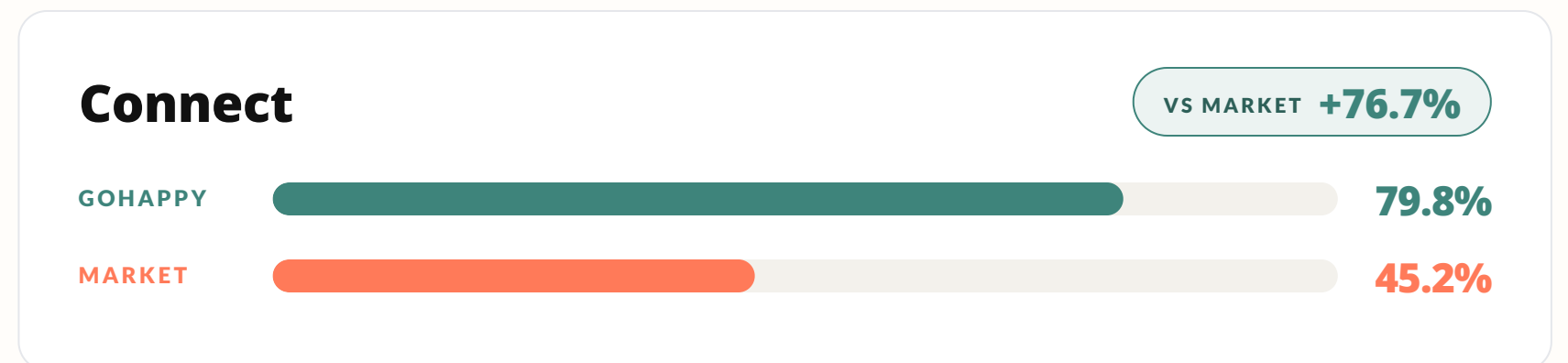
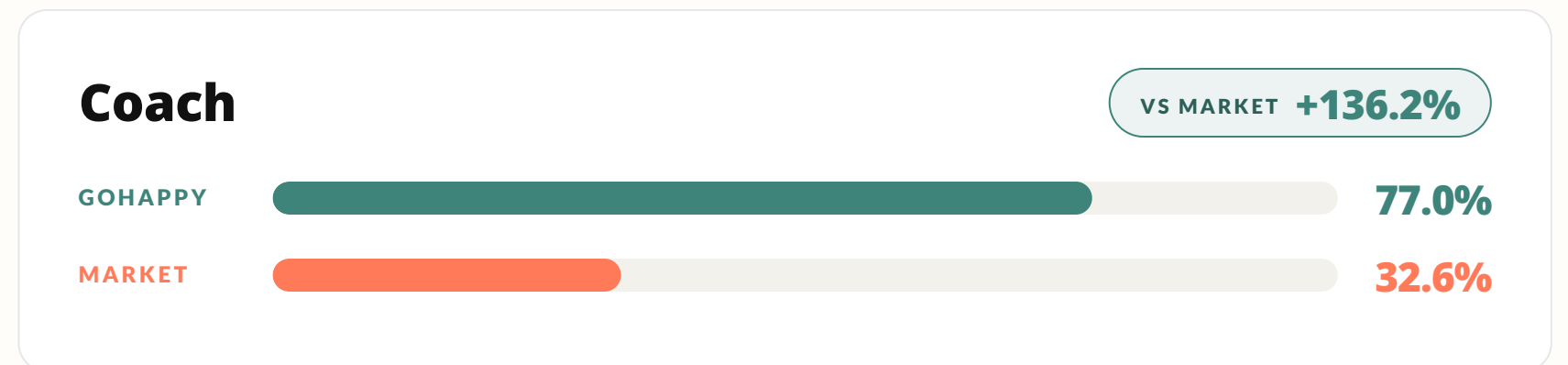
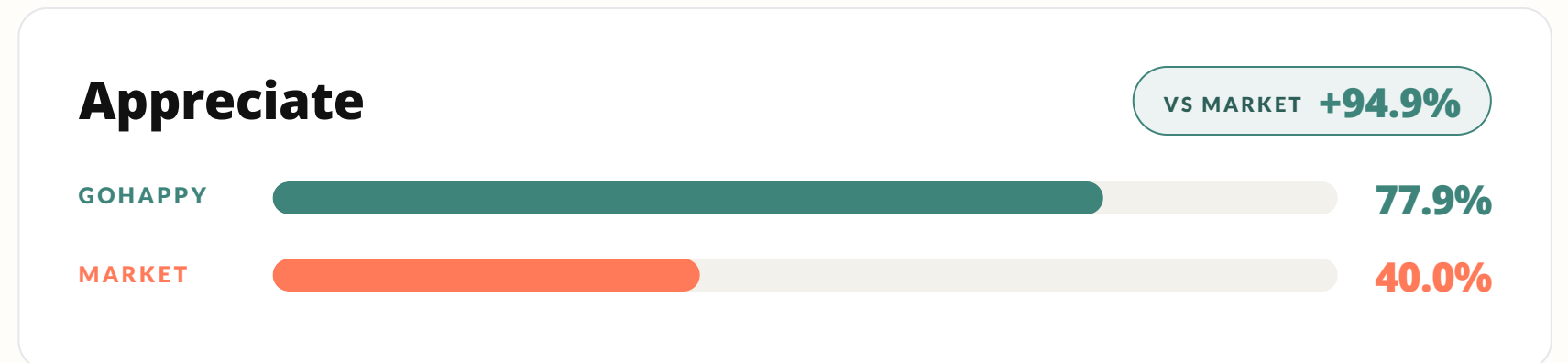
The gaps are consistent — and difficult to ignore.

Across every comparable dimension, the 2025 goHappy results exceed the market baseline.



These gaps reflect a fundamentally different employee experience.

The underlying drivers of those differences are more revealing than the headline numbers. The largest gaps appear in areas tied directly to **day-to-day leadership behavior**.



These are not abstract — especially to the frontline workers living this out every day. They are observable actions that affect them in the daily flow of work.

SECTION 03 • THE YOY PATTERN

Year-over-year movement reinforces the pattern.

THE HEADLINE

From 2024 to 2025, goHappy customers show improvement across nearly every dimension measured.

Employee engagement increased by 8.5 percentage points. Employee experience rose by 9.3 points. Leader actions improved by 9.4 points. Gains of this size within a single year indicate **sustained effort** rather than isolated initiatives.

The LHRA benchmark provides a useful contrast. It reflects what engagement looks like in the "wild" — absent a consistent focus on these specific engagement-driving behaviors. Lower levels of appreciation, weaker coaching, and less connection between employees and leaders correspond with lower engagement outcomes overall.

Taken together, the three data sets point to a clear relationship. Organizations that are deliberate about how leaders show up for their frontline team members create stronger employee experiences — and those experiences translate into higher engagement.

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

+8.5pp

From **63.7%** in 2024 to **72.2%** in 2025.

EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE

+9.3pp

From **68.5%** in 2024 to **77.8%** in 2025.

LEADER ACTIONS

+9.4pp

From **68.5%** in 2024 to **77.8%** in 2025.

BE AUTHENTIC

+13.2pp

Largest single-category move. From **62.9%** to **76.1%**.

WHAT THE LHRA MARKET SHOWS

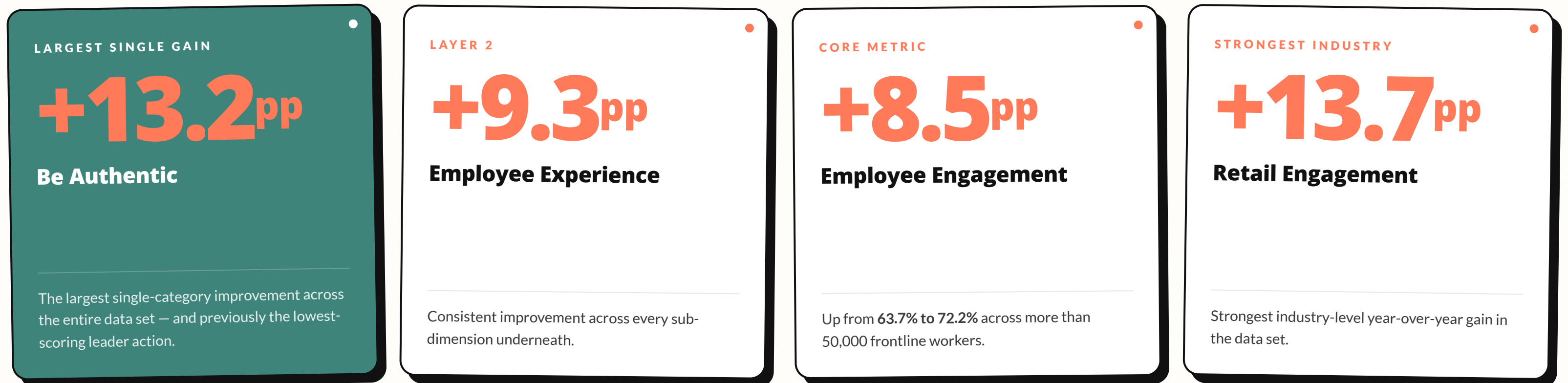
The 2025 LHRA benchmark of 2,000 US frontline workers reflects engagement in the absence of a deliberate, leader-led practice — and the underlying drivers of **appreciation, coaching, and connection** sit at half the level seen across goHappy customers.



03 — Year-Over-Year Progress · goHappy 2024 → 2025

One of the advantages of this data set is that it does not rely on a single snapshot in time. With two consecutive years of responses across a growing goHappy customer base, it is possible to see how engagement shifts as organizations continue to invest in it. That longitudinal view matters — it lets us move beyond comparison and start looking at change.

All twelve measured dimensions improved. *Not one declined.*



BOTTOM LINE ↑ Sustained focus on frontline employee engagement **compounds.**

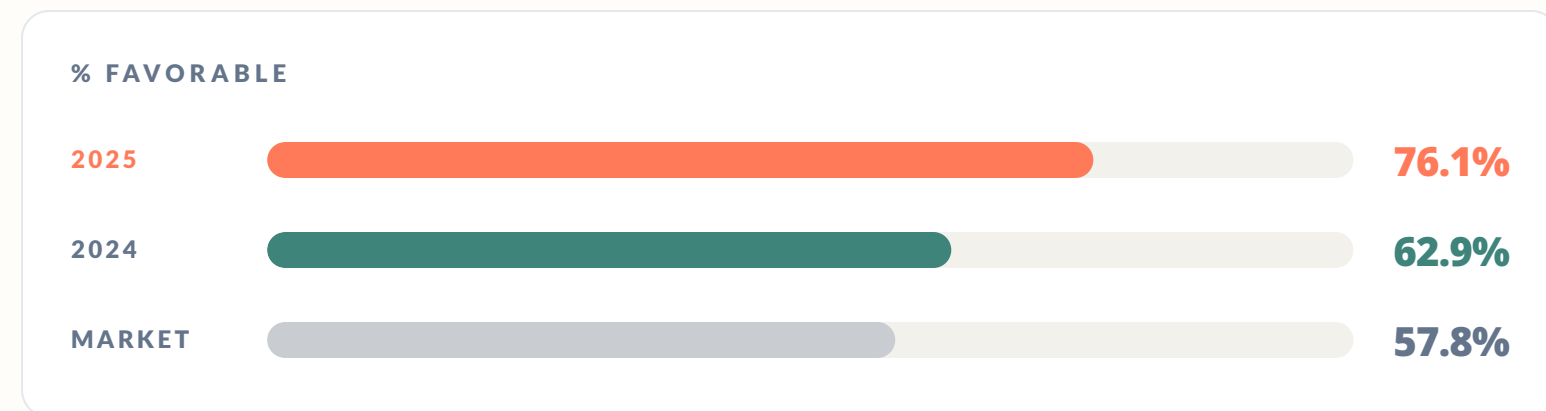
• BEHIND THE HEADLINE GAINS

The dimensions behind the gains.

SUB-DIMENSION • LEADER ACTIONS

Be Authentic.

The largest single-category improvement observed in the data.



In 2024, Be Authentic was the lowest-scoring leader action at 62.9%. By 2025, it had risen to 76.1%, a 13.2 point increase — the largest single-category improvement observed across the data set.

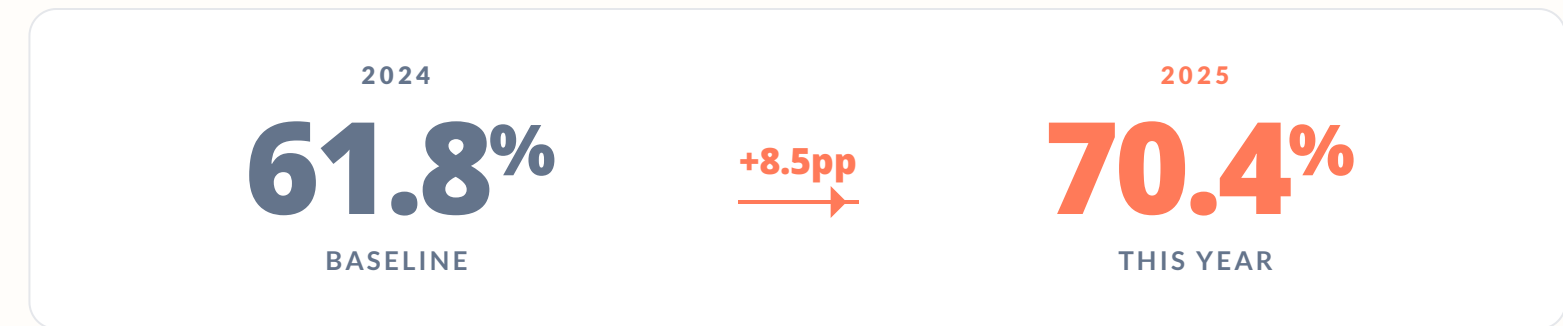
Authenticity reflects how leaders communicate, how transparent they are with their teams, and whether employees feel that interactions are consistent and genuine. Movement of this size suggests these behaviors became more visible and more consistent over time.

If there's fear or concern, people won't be as honest about their sentiment. If there's trust, frontline workers can speak truthfully about their experiences and how they feel.

SUB-DIMENSION • ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES

Perform.

Historically one of the lowest-scoring dimensions — now realigned with the rest.



Perform reflects challenges in clarity, expectations, and the ability to execute work effectively. In 2024, it stood at 61.8%. By 2025, it reached 70.4%, an 8.5 point increase that brings it closer in line with other engagement components.

ALL TWELVE DIMENSIONS, EVERY DIRECTION UP

This was not an isolated improvement. **All twelve measured dimensions increased** from 2024 to 2025 — no declines in any category. That consistency suggests the changes were occurring across multiple aspects of the employee experience, not within a single initiative or narrow focus area.

EVEN THE FLOOR OUTPERFORMS THE MARKET

The lowest dimension still outperforms the market.



This isn't about raising the ceiling on performance. It's about raising the floor of what's possible when it comes to frontline workforce engagement.

A CONSISTENT SHIFT

This pattern holds in other areas as well. Perform, which reached 70.4% in 2025, does not have a direct LHRA comparison — but its improvement from a 61.8% baseline provides important context. What was previously one of the weaker areas has moved into a range that aligns more closely with the overall engagement profile.

Looking at the bottom-end benchmarks this way helps frame the overall consistency of the results.

NOT A ONE-TIME SPIKE

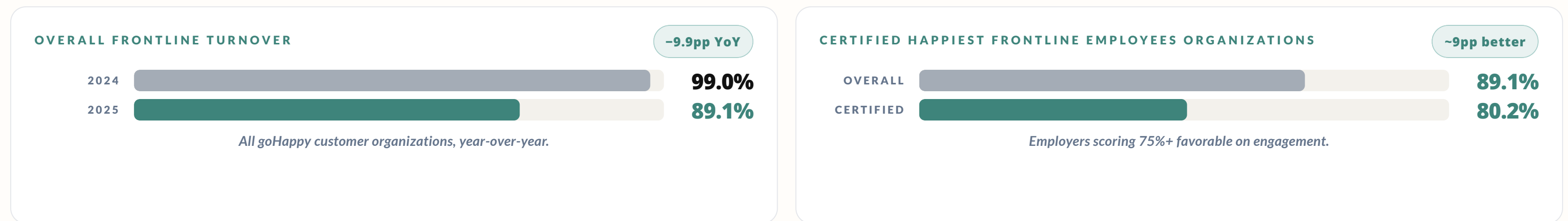
Taken together, the year-over-year data points to a steady shift rather than a one-time spike. Engagement levels increased, underlying behaviors improved, and those gains held even as the population expanded.

That combination is difficult to produce without sustained attention to how employees experience their work and how leaders interact with their teams on a daily basis.

04 — Turnover — The Business Case

Engagement scores are useful, but they are not the metric most teams focus on first. Turnover often gets the spotlight as the operational stat that teams watch closely. This section connects the movement in engagement directly to changes in workforce stability and operating performance. When engagement improves, the impact shows up in cost, productivity, and consistency.

Turnover benchmarks: 2024 vs. 2025.



SEGMENT	2025 TURNOVER	2024 TURNOVER	YOY CHANGE	NOTES
Overall	89.1%	99.0%	-9.9 pp	All goHappy customer organizations
Happiest Frontline Certified	80.2%	85.0%	-4.8 pp	Employers scoring 75%+ favorable
Food Service	99.9%	98.8%	+1.1 pp	High-volume, customer-facing roles
General Services	73.7%	73.7%	Flat	Mature, process-stable environment
Manufacturing	33.0%	37.2%	-4.2 pp	Lowest turnover baseline in the data
Retail	102.8%	119.4%	-16.6 pp	Largest single-sector reduction
Health Care	68.3%	—	N/A	2025 only; first year of reporting

Employers with the highest engagement scores (75%+ favorable — earning goHappy's **Happiest Frontline Employees Certification**) had turnover rates roughly **10 points lower** than the overall average. That change carries direct cost implications: replacing a frontline employee typically costs between **one-third and one-half** of their annual salary (McKinsey), and SHRM estimates the average cost at **\$4,700** per hire.

• THE MATH OF A 10PP SHIFT

The cost of turnover — and the value of reducing it.

A **10 percentage point improvement** in turnover (the gap Happiest Frontline Certified employers maintain over the overall average) translates directly into retained headcount — and into the cost avoided from not having to rehire and onboard those replacements.

WORKFORCE SIZE	LOST TO TURNOVER AT 99% BASELINE	RETAINED WITH 10PP IMPROVEMENT	ANNUAL COST SAVINGS
500 EMPLOYEES	~495 lost	50 employees retained +10PP RETENTION	\$235,000 PER YEAR
1,000 EMPLOYEES	~990 lost	100 employees retained +10PP RETENTION	\$470,000 PER YEAR
5,000 EMPLOYEES	~4,950 lost	500 employees retained +10PP RETENTION	\$2,350,000 PER YEAR
10,000 EMPLOYEES	~9,900 lost	1,000 employees retained +10PP RETENTION	\$4,700,000 PER YEAR

Methodology: Savings calculated at \$4,700 per replacement hire (SHRM estimate for hourly non-exempt roles). Assumes a 10pp turnover improvement applied to a 99% baseline. Actual savings vary by role, market, and replacement method.

\$4.7M

EVERY YEAR, RECURRING

For an organization of **10,000 frontline workers**, a **10pp engagement-led retention gain** is worth roughly this much — every year, recurring, not one-time.

INSIDE THE RELATIONSHIP

The engagement-turnover relationship.

The connection between engagement and retention becomes clearer when comparing groups within the data.

Happiest Frontline Certified employers report turnover at 80.2%, compared to 89.1% overall. That 8.9 percentage point difference reflects the impact of sustained engagement on workforce stability across the organization.

The LHRA data helps explain why these shifts occur.

2.6x

Workers with **flexible schedules** are 2.6x more likely to plan to stay.

LHRA 2025

6x

Workers who feel **appreciated** are nearly 6x more likely to describe their culture as functional.

LHRA 2025

Retention reflects the day-to-day experience of work. When that experience improves, fewer employees choose to leave.

-18%

Business units in the bottom quartile of engagement see an **18% drop in productivity** compared to those in the top quartile.

GALLUP · Q12 META-ANALYSIS

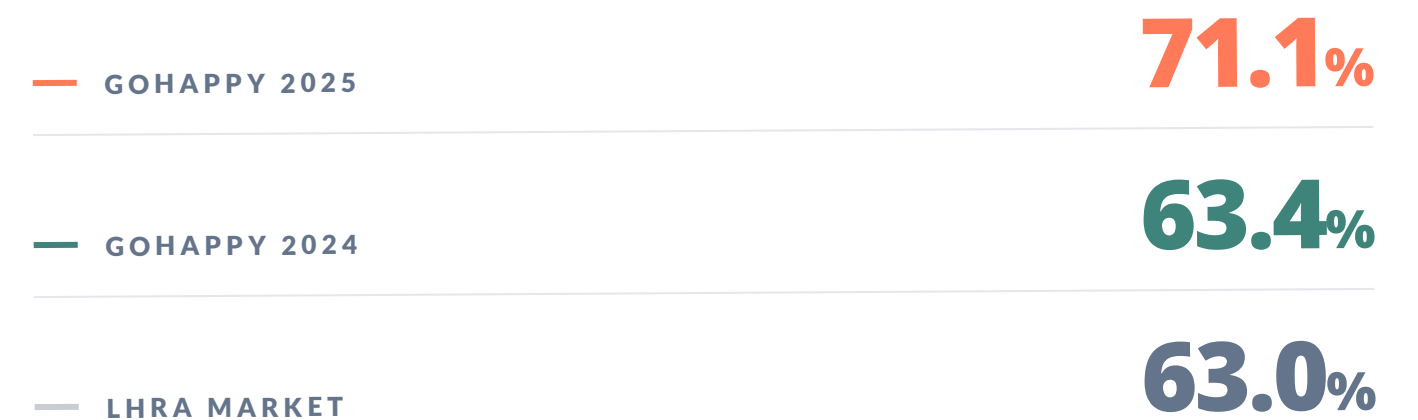
THE CHAIN

Where engagement improves, **intent to stay** improves. Where intent improves, **turnover declines**. And as turnover declines, the organization sees gains in both cost control and productivity.

SUB-DIMENSION · COMMIT

Commit.

In 2024, goHappy customers were aligned with the broader market. By 2025, they pulled **8.1 points ahead**.



That shift reflects a change in how employees view their future with the organization.

+7.9%

Reducing the instability created by turnover increases labor **productivity by 7.9%**.
UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO RESEARCH

05 — Industry Patterns and Variability

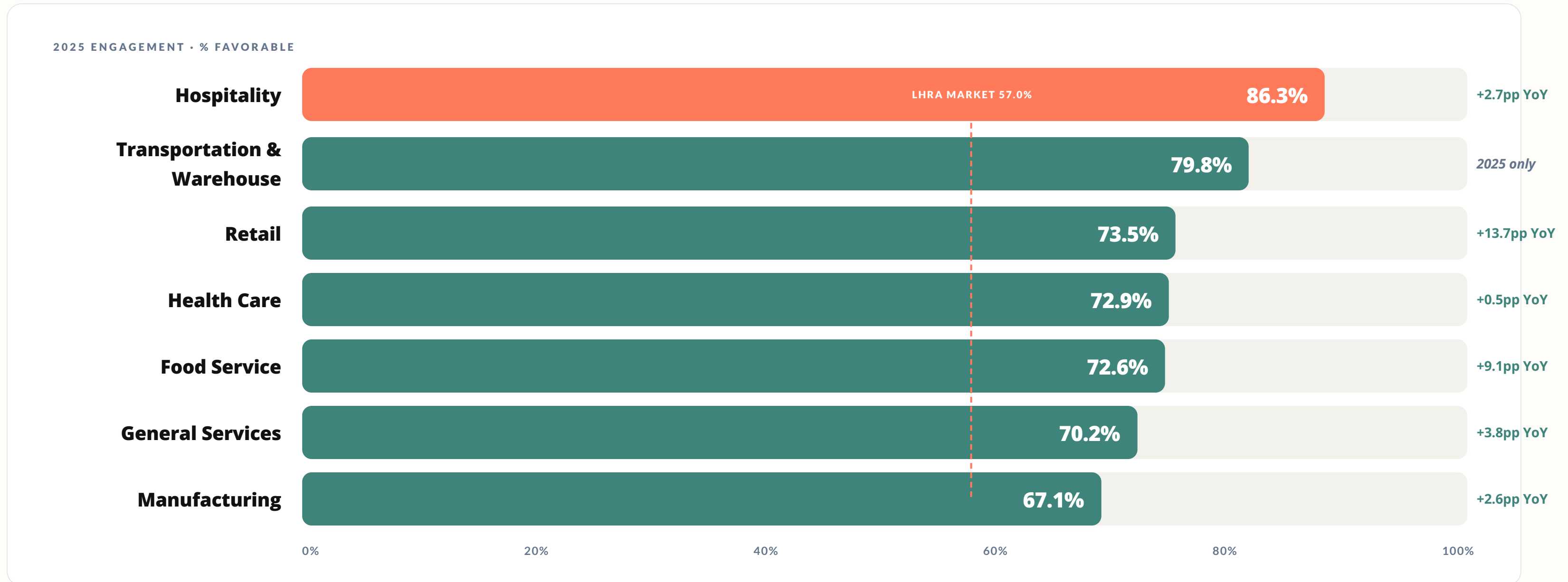
Engagement does not show up the same way across industries. The operating environment matters — so do workforce composition, scheduling models, and the level of day-to-day interaction between employees and managers. With the 2025 data set, there is now sufficient scale to look at these patterns across multiple sectors. The table below sorts industries by 2025 engagement, highest to lowest.

INDUSTRY	2025 ENGAGEMENT	2024 ENGAGEMENT	YOY (PP)	2025 TURNOVER	2024 TURNOVER	NOTABLE TREND
Retail	73.5%	59.8%	+13.7	102.8%	119.4%	<i>Largest YoY improvement in the data set</i>
Health Care	72.9%	72.3%	+0.5	68.3%	—	<i>Stable; broader labor-market effects in play</i>
Food Service	72.6%	63.6%	+9.1	99.9%	98.8%	<i>Be Authentic is the biggest sector gap</i>
General Services	70.2%	66.4%	+3.8	73.7%	73.7%	<i>Stable engagement, turnover unchanged</i>
Manufacturing	67.1%	64.5%	+2.6	33.0%	37.2%	<i>Lowest engagement; turnover still improving</i>
Hospitality	86.3%	83.6%	+2.7	—	—	<i>Highest engagement across all sectors</i>
Transportation & Warehouse	79.8%	—	—	—	—	<i>2025 only; strong scores across dimensions</i>

Data note: Engagement = % responding 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale. Turnover for Health Care reported for 2025 only. Hospitality and Transportation & Warehouse turnover not yet broken out at sector level in the 2025 cut. YoY change is measured within the goHappy dataset.

SECTION 05 • INDUSTRIES AT A GLANCE

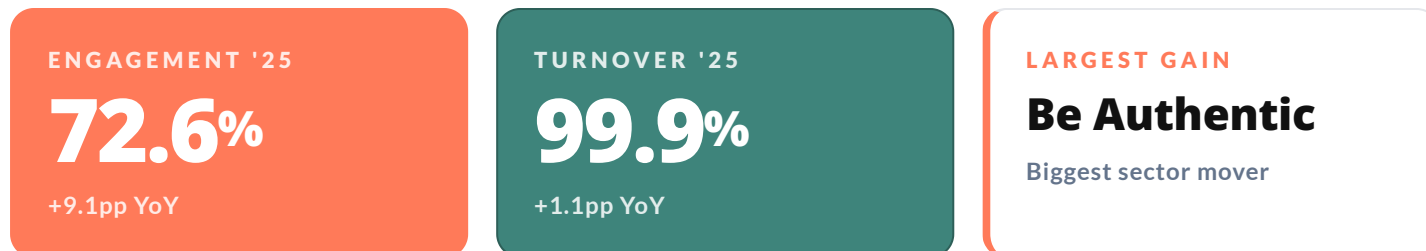
Engagement across industries, sorted high to low.



Frontline work is not the same across each of these environments, and the engagement patterns reflect that. **Every sector clears the 57% market benchmark** — even Manufacturing, the lowest goHappy sector at 67.1%, sits 10+ points above the market average. The snapshots that follow examine what frontline work looks like on the ground in each industry.

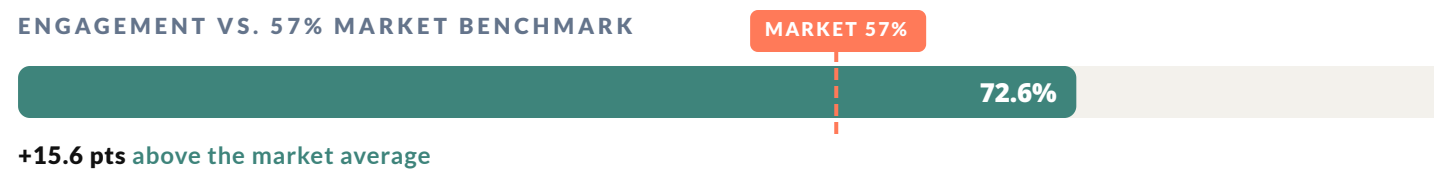
Food Service & Health Care — two pressure tests.

Food Service



Frontline roles in food service are fast-paced, customer-facing, and often unpredictable. Scheduling variability, peak-hour pressure, and high employee churn create an environment where **consistency is difficult to maintain**.

The improvement in authenticity suggests that manager behavior is shifting in visible ways. Employees are noticing more consistent communication and interaction. However, the structural nature of turnover in this sector means that **retention gains may lag behind engagement improvements**.



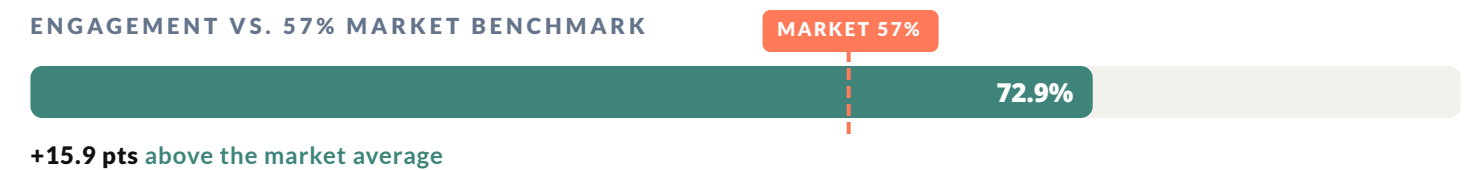
Health Care



Healthcare frontline roles operate under sustained pressure. Staffing shortages, long shifts, and emotionally demanding work shape the daily experience. Employees are balancing patient care responsibilities with operational constraints that **are difficult to control**.

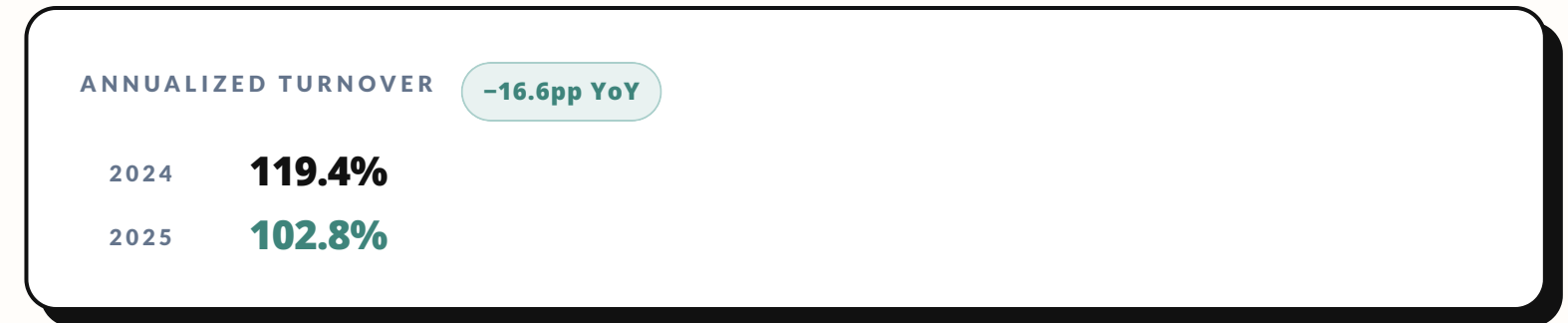
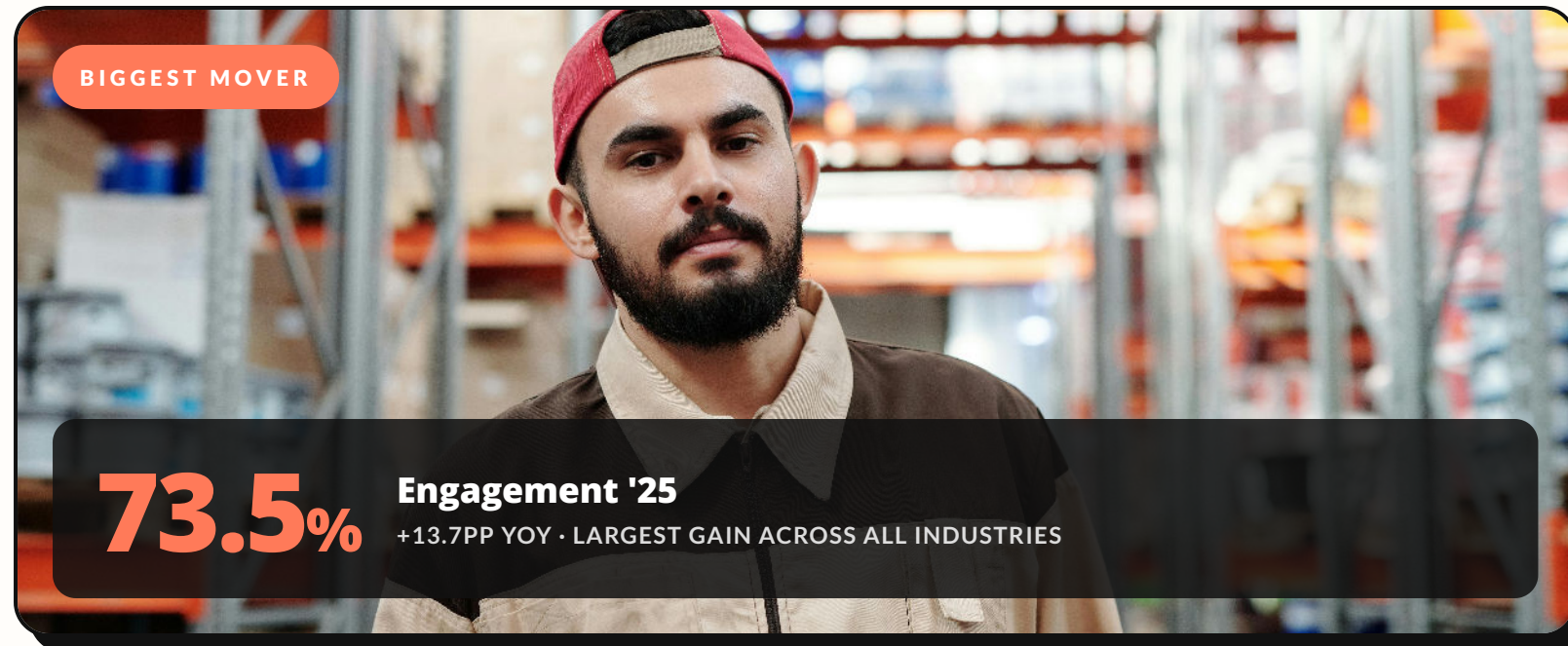
Broader market data show that healthcare hiring has continued at a steady pace. One healthcare talent-acquisition leader the LHRA team recently interviewed mentioned increased difficulty in staffing key roles, many facing shortages of **key talent pipelines and skills**.

This factors into the engagement equation as healthcare leaders work to retain their best and most capable staff. After all, **the easiest job to fill is the one where staff stick around instead of leaving**.

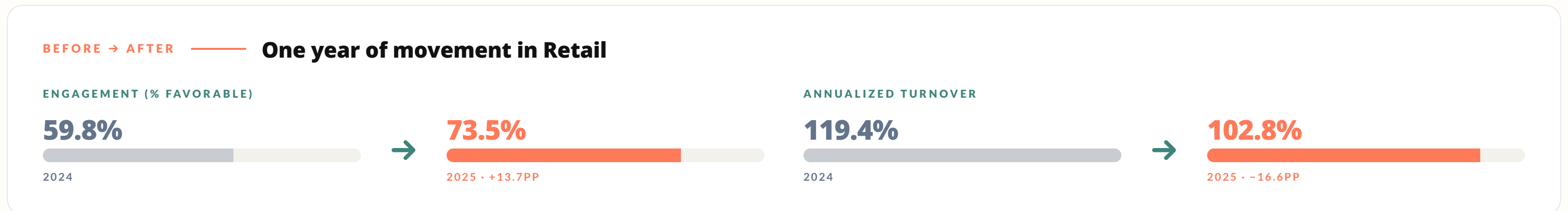


• SECTION 05 • BIGGEST MOVER

Retail — the strongest mover in the data.



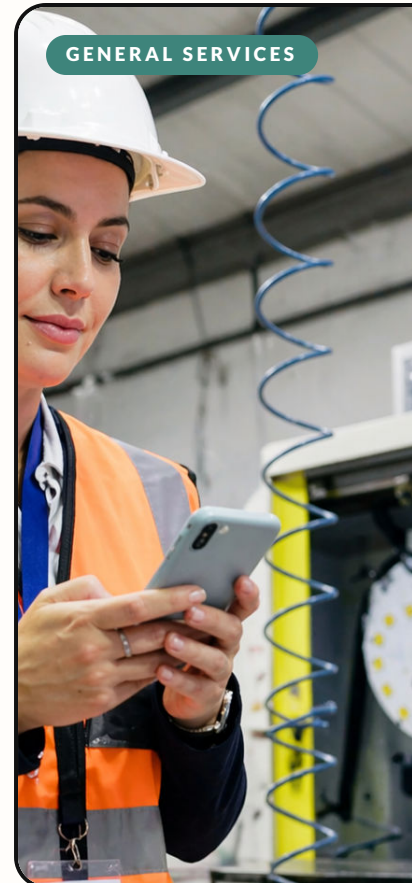
TOP DIMENSION
Perform improved by 16+ points.
Clarity and execution moved together — and retention followed.



Retail environments are highly dynamic, with demand fluctuating based on seasonality, promotions, and customer traffic. As clarity and execution improved, **retention followed** — turnover remains elevated, but the 16-point drop is the largest single-sector improvement in the data.

• SECTION 05 • ADDITIONAL SECTORS

Four more environments.



GENERAL SERVICES

General Services

MATURE • STABLE

ENGAGEMENT

70.2%

+3.8PP YOY

TURNOVER

73.7%

UNCHANGED

Predictable workflows. No sharp movement in either direction — a relatively **mature environment** where incremental improvements are more common than large shifts.



MANUFACTURING

Manufacturing

PROCESS-DRIVEN

ENGAGEMENT

67.1%

+2.6PP YOY

TURNOVER

33.0%

-4.2PP

Structured, process-driven, physically demanding. Even modest engagement gains translate into retention improvements — the **lower turnover baseline** means small shifts have noticeable impact.



HIGHEST SECTOR

Hospitality

HIGHEST SECTOR

ENGAGEMENT

86.3%

+2.7PP YOY

STATUS

Highest of any sector

NEW 2025 COHORT

As a new data set in 2025, hospitality stands out immediately. The engagement level suggests **strong alignment** between employee experience and service expectations.



TRANSPORTATION • WAREHOUSE

Transportation & Warehouse

FIRST YEAR

ENGAGEMENT

79.8%

FIRST-YEAR BASELINE

PROFILE

Strong across dimensions

2025 ONLY

In its first year of reporting. Without prior data, change is hard to assess, but the **current level indicates a relatively strong experience.**

What connects these environments.

— THE COMMON THREAD

Despite the differences across industries, a common thread runs through the data. The environments that show better engagement are *not necessarily easier places to work*. The difference is how employees experience that work day to day.



Every associate, regardless of role, has a regular touchpoint with their leader every two weeks, covering both tactical work and personal growth. The expectation is simple. Employees want to feel invested in, not just reviewed once a year.

— MANUFACTURING EXECUTIVE

Engagement is shaped in **small, repeated interactions**. A conversation. A check-in. A moment where the employee feels seen beyond the task in front of them.



Beyond pay and benefits, people are looking for a company where they can do life and work well at the same time.

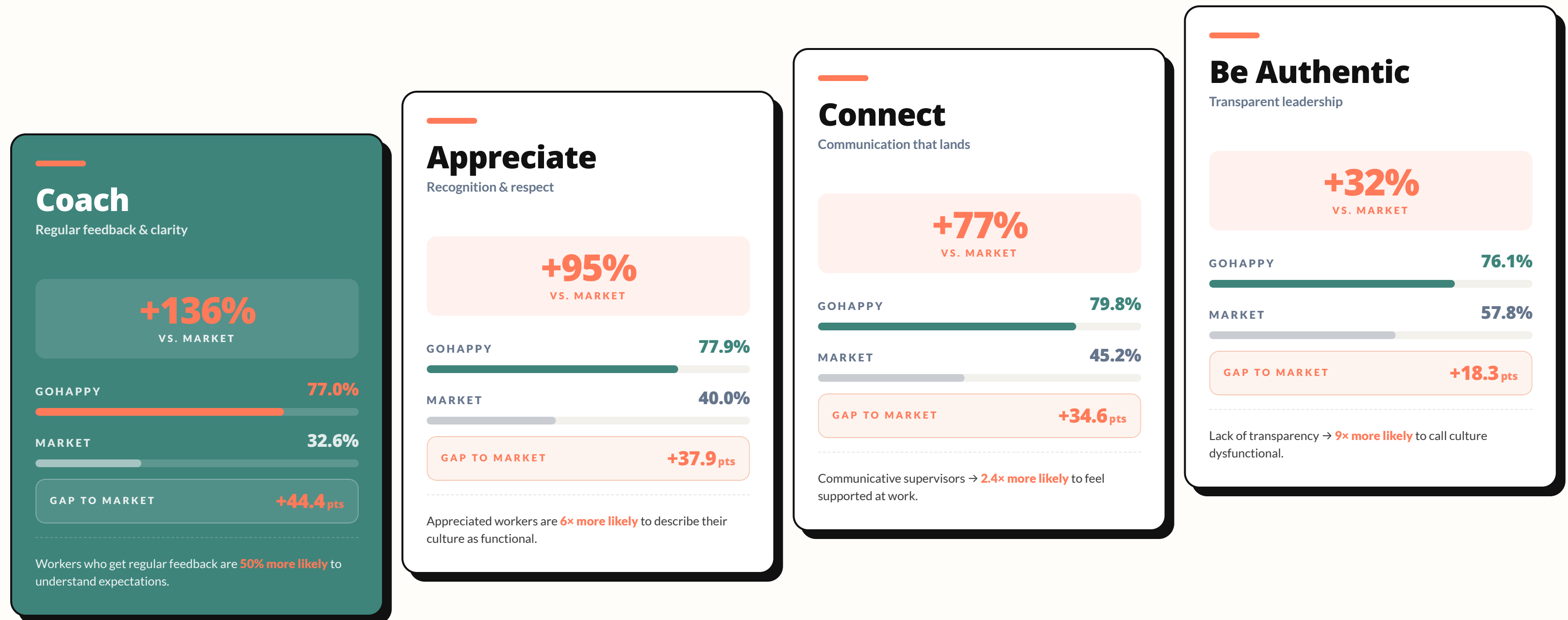
— FRONTLINE WORKFORCE STUDY, LHRA

In the LHRA frontline workforce study, there's statistically a **zero percent chance** that employees will feel supported by their manager if they don't first feel like that manager knows them for who they are — not just what they do for their job.

*Across industries, the specific challenges differ. The underlying drivers do not. Employees respond to environments where the work is clear, the expectations are consistent, and the relationship with their leader **feels real**. And that response is higher engagement, better output, higher retention, and lower safety risks — the metrics leadership cares most about.*

06 — The Dimensions That Drive Outcomes

The earlier sections establish the gap and show how it changes over time. This section focuses on the specific dimensions most closely tied to those shifts. They stand out for three reasons: **clear separation from the market**, meaningful year-over-year improvement, and direct connection to outcomes like retention, clarity, and perceived support.



• DIMENSION 01 • COACH

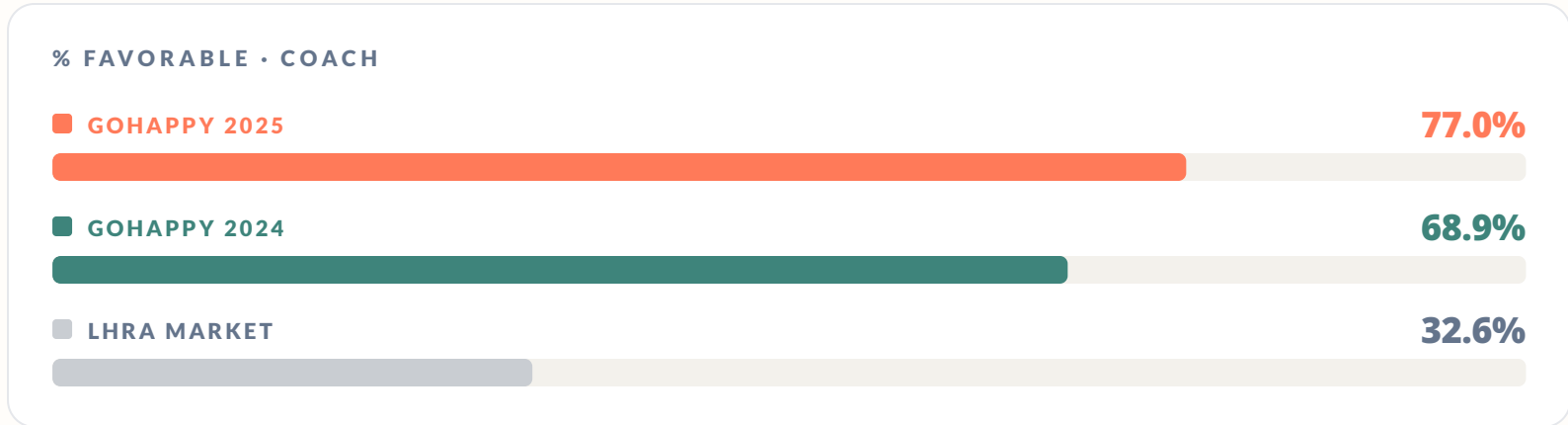
Coach — the largest gap in the market.

67% In the LHRA data, **nearly two-thirds of frontline workers** do not feel they receive adequate coaching or feedback.

Coaching represents the **largest gap** between goHappy customers and the broader market. That gap shows up in how clearly employees understand their role and what is expected of them.

77.0%
goHappy 2025 favorable on Coach

+8.0pp
YoY improvement • +136% above the LHRA market



LIGHTHOUSE RESEARCH & ADVISORY

What the broader market shows.

50% Workers who receive **regular performance feedback** are 50% more likely to understand their job expectations.

>50% Over **half of workers who feel unappreciated** report receiving feedback annually — or "never."

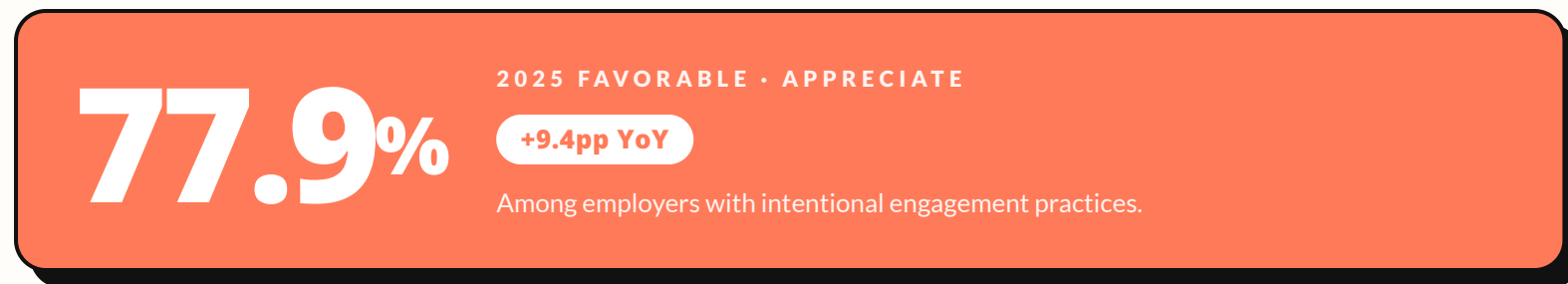
Coaching is not a periodic event. It is a repeated interaction. When it becomes part of the routine, other parts of the experience begin to stabilize.



• DIMENSION 02 • APPRECIATE

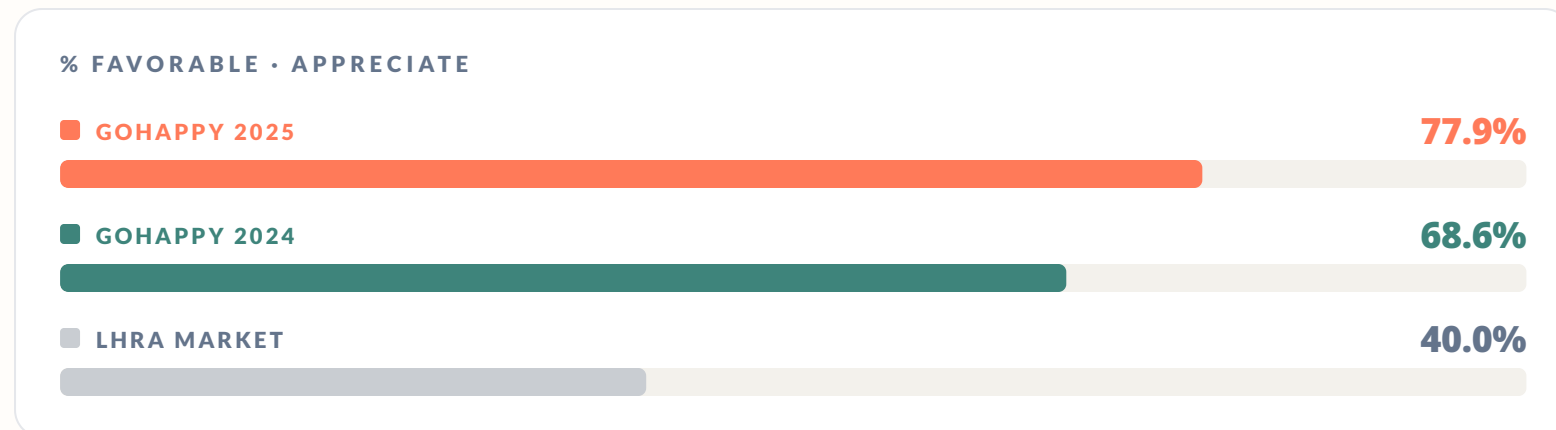
Appreciate — the most visible behavior gap.

Workers who feel appreciated regularly say their organizations operate differently — culture, feedback, and wellbeing all move together.



Appreciation is the most visible signal of how leaders treat the people doing the work. Where it is consistent, employees see their employer differently — and stay longer.

It is also a leading indicator. The +9.4pp jump in a single year suggests **manager behavior is changing**, and employees are registering that change in their day-to-day experience.



WHY IT MATTERS

Appreciation reinforces every other lever you have.

6x Workers who feel appreciated regularly are nearly **6x more likely** to describe their culture as functional and supportive.

87% Of appreciated workers report receiving **feedback on a regular, consistent basis** — appreciation and coaching reinforce each other.

5x Workers who feel accepted, respected, and appreciated are **5x more likely** to say their overall wellbeing has improved.

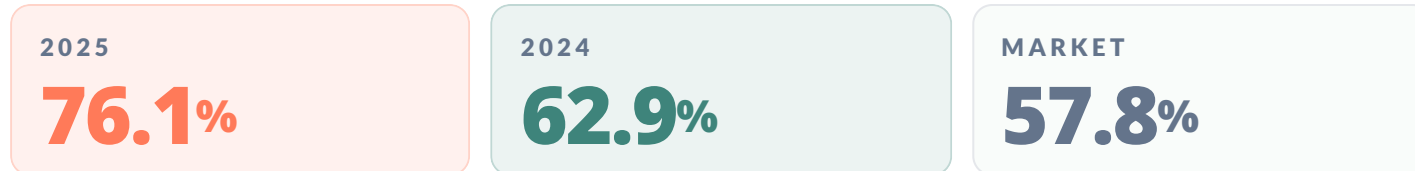
SOURCE • LHRA 2025 FRONTLINE WORKFORCE TRENDS STUDY

Transparency and communication — two trust drivers.

Be Authentic

+13.2PP • FASTEST MOVER

The fastest-improving leadership behavior — and a core trust driver.



In 2024, Be Authentic was the lowest-scoring leader action. By 2025, it improved by **13.2 percentage points** — a noticeable shift in how employees interpret communication from their leaders.

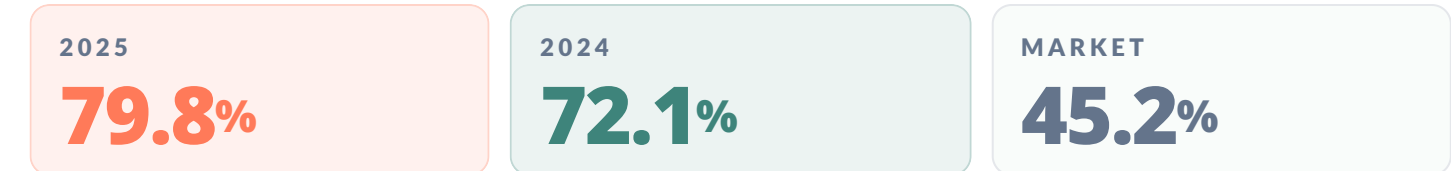
Authenticity reflects consistency and credibility: whether employees believe what they're hearing, whether communication aligns with actions, whether leaders are perceived as **direct and reliable**.

9x Workers who feel their employer is **not transparent** are 9x more likely to describe their culture as dysfunctional.

Connect

+7.7PP • +77% VS. MARKET

Manager communication — one of the most controllable retention levers.



In the broader market, fewer than half of frontline workers report their managers communicate effectively. Among goHappy customers, the score is **more than 30 percentage points higher**.

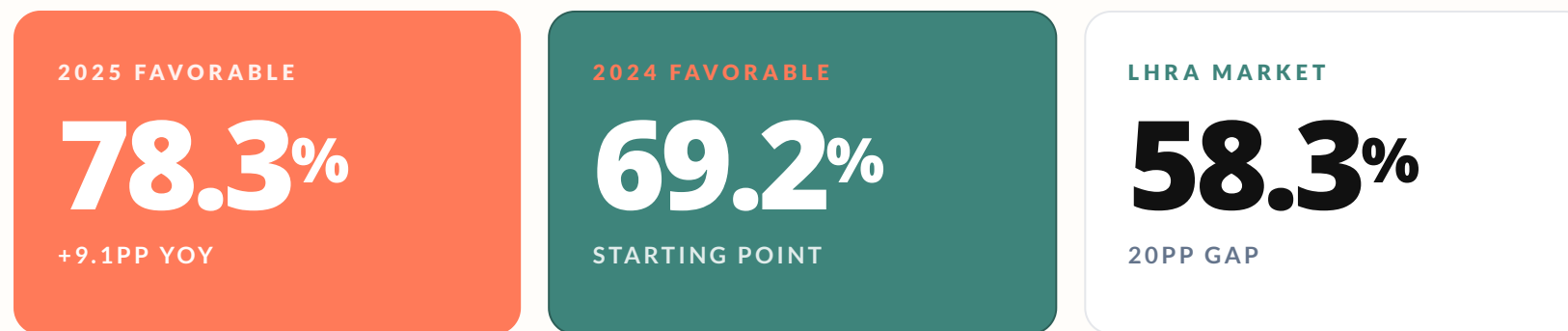
The increase from 72.1% to 79.8% suggests communication is becoming **more consistent and more predictable** — which translates directly to whether employees feel supported.

2.4x Workers whose supervisor communicates well are 2.4x more likely to feel supported by their direct leader.

• DIMENSION 05 • FEELING VALUED

Feeling Valued — where tools, support, and fairness shape the experience.

Feeling Valued reflects both relational and structural aspects of the employee experience — the things leaders say and the things they put in employees' hands.



The goHappy data shows a **9.1 point increase** year over year, reaching 78.3% — well above the market baseline of 58.3%.

One of the contributing factors is access to the **tools and resources** needed to perform the job effectively. The perception of fairness is closely tied to how employees interpret their role within the organization.

3× Workers provided the right tools are **3× more likely** to believe frontline workers are treated fairly compared to non-frontline staff.
LIGHTHOUSE RESEARCH & ADVISORY • 2025

When frontline workers feel under-resourced, it affects both performance and engagement. Providing the right tools is not only an operational decision but a **values decision** — it demonstrates a commitment to enabling performance by giving workers the resources they need to accomplish whatever their workday throws at them.

*Each of these elements is important in its own right, but combined they describe an environment where **frontline workers can thrive** and perform their best work.*

07 — What the Data Tells Employers to Do

The leadership team looked at the head of HR expectantly. It was his first time presenting engagement survey results — and it was a nerve-wracking moment.

He thought he had it all together but quickly learned he was underprepared in an unexpected way.

He walked in ready to go. Slides were clean. Data was organized. The leader talked through the findings, scores, and trends.

And it didn't land.

Not because the metrics were wrong, but because they weren't **useful** to them in that moment. They weren't asking for a recap of the numbers. They were trying to figure out what to do next. What to change. What to ask of their managers.

THAT WAS THE GAP.

The data in this report points to a set of practices that move the needle. **Not in theory** — in observable ways across organizations and industries.

▮▮ ***The goal is not to teach managers about engagement; the goal is to teach them to **be engaging**.***

The pages that follow translate the data into **practical moves** — six leverage practices, the technology that makes them work at scale, and the business case to take into your next leadership meeting.

What the data tells you to do.

01

Make feedback a habit, not a calendar event.

Coaching remains one of the largest gaps in the market. Regular feedback reduces uncertainty, clarifies expectations, and reinforces appreciation. The frequency matters as much as the content.

02

Prioritize frontline leader development.

70% of engagement variance ties directly to the leader. The four dimensions with the widest market gaps – Coach, Appreciate, Connect, and Be Authentic – are all behaviors that can be taught, measured, and improved.

03

Be transparent, consistently.

Be Authentic shows one of the strongest relationships to overall culture. Low transparency ties directly to perceptions of dysfunction. Make communication predictable and credible.

04

Communicate proactively, not reactively.

The gap in the Connect dimension is driven by inconsistent communication. This sits almost entirely within manager control. When communication becomes regular and expected, it removes friction.

05

Design for flexibility where possible.

Flexibility continues to emerge as a primary driver of retention – schedule control, autonomy, and visibility into growth opportunities. Even small increases can influence whether employees see a path forward.

06

Benchmark over time.

Year-over-year data provides a way to measure progress and hold the organization accountable. Without that comparison, it is difficult to determine whether changes are producing results.


These practices aren't flashy new concepts; the data just show that consistent application helps to separate higher-performing organizations from the rest.

SECTION 07 • SCALE WHAT WORKS

Using technology to scale what works.


The challenge is in consistently performing these activities across a dispersed, often deskless workforce. Frontline employees are not sitting at desks checking email throughout the day. Traditional engagement tools were not built with this reality in mind.

01




Frontline communication needs to be **mobile and immediate.**

02



Feedback needs to be easy to give and receive **in the flow of work.**

03



Data needs to be accessible to managers **without delay.**

BEST PRACTICES

Collecting & acting on *feedback.*

The employers with the highest frontline engagement follow a simple **ADAPT** process for continuous improvement.

- A** ASK FOR FEEDBACK
- D** DISTILL THE RESULTS
- A** ANNOUNCE FOCUS ITEMS
- P** PUT PLAN INTO ACTION
- T** TELL YOUR TEAM WHAT YOU DID



Building the internal business case.

For many organizations, the biggest barrier is prioritization, not a lack of belief in engagement. Engagement competes with other operational demands, and it is often framed as a longer-term investment. The data in this report provides a more immediate lens.

Turnover is a cost. Engagement heavily influences turnover.

Even modest improvements in engagement can shift retention outcomes, particularly in frontline roles where turnover is highest. A five-point increase in favorability may not seem dramatic on its own, but **at scale**, it can translate into tremendous cost savings — greater consistency in operations, fewer recruitment costs, and reduced burnout on teams juggling the workload created by vacancies.

For business leaders, "turnover" may or may not be a phrase that gets their attention. It's up to talent and People leaders to translate turnover into meaningful business impact. Does turnover connect to **lower customer satisfaction, increased safety risk, or issues with service quality?**

*By aligning turnover to specific business metrics leaders **already care about**, the conversation can quickly go from insight to action — because the business case for those related metrics is already in place.*

01

LHRA MARKET

Shows what the market looks like **without sustained focus.**

02

GOHAPPY 2024

Reflects a **starting point for the customer base.**

03

GOHAPPY 2025

Shows **what changes when practices are applied consistently.**

KEY METRICS TO TRACK

- **Employee Engagement** — percentage favorable, measured at sufficient frequency.
- **Rolling 12-month turnover** — overall and by segment.
- **Commit & Promote** — leading indicators of retention likelihood.

08 — Conclusion & Call to Action

The bottom line.

Across the data sets, the pattern is consistent.

The gap between goHappy customers and the broader market is a stark comparison. It reflects a difference in how organizations approach frontline engagement. Where there is **sustained attention** on manager behavior, communication, and employee experience, the outcomes shift.

The year-over-year data reinforces that point. Scores improved across nearly every dimension, across industries, and across different segments of the workforce. This is not a single-area improvement or a short-term spike. It reflects **steady movement over time**.

Turnover follows that movement. In areas where engagement increased, retention improved — not perfectly and not in every case, but enough to show a clear relationship. The connection between engagement and workforce stability is **visible in the data, not inferred from it**.

THE EQUITY MULTIPLIER

2^x

Frontline workers are **twice as likely** to recommend their employer as a great place to work if frontline staff are treated equitably with non-frontline staff across the organization.

*At this point, the business case is no longer theoretical. The question is not whether engagement matters — it is **whether organizations are willing to treat it as an operational priority.***

What employers can do today.

01
OF FIVE

Start measuring.

Engagement cannot improve without visibility. Organizations need a way to track how employees are experiencing their work – not once a year, but with enough **frequency to identify patterns** and respond to them.

02
OF FIVE

Invest in manager development.

A large portion of engagement variance sits at the manager level. Manager capability is not a secondary factor – it is essential to the employee experience.

4x MORE LIKELY TO QUIT WITHOUT A SUPPORTIVE MANAGER

03
OF FIVE

Make appreciation and coaching daily behaviors.

The largest gaps in the market appear in areas that depend on consistent, repeated interaction. Coaching and appreciation are not events. When they are treated that way, the impact is limited. When they become part of the routine, **the experience changes.**

04
OF FIVE

Design for the frontline reality.

Frontline work is structured differently than corporate work. Schedules are variable. Access to technology is limited. Expectations shift quickly. Engagement efforts need to reflect that environment – **flexible scheduling, mobile-first communication, and clarity around roles.**

05
OF FIVE

Benchmark over time.

Year-over-year data provides a way to measure progress and hold the organization accountable. Without that comparison, it is difficult to determine whether changes are **producing results or simply maintaining the status quo.**

SECTION 08 • ENGAGEMENT IN ACTION

Real turnover reductions from certified employers.

Two examples from the Happiest Frontline Certified cohort — employers whose engagement scores place them among the strongest in the goHappy customer base.



HOSPITALITY • MAINSAIL LODGING & DEVELOPMENT

Mainsail Lodging & Development

-21pp TURNOVER REDUCTION
2024 → 2025

2024 BASELINE 63% → 42%

"In an industry where high turnover has been a standard, this is pretty amazing. In 2025 we focused on the importance of leaders taking accountability on engagement and rolled out an employee well-being program across the company."

JEANETTE • MAINSAIL LODGING



RESTAURANTS • SNOOZE, AN A.M. EATERY

Snooze, an A.M. Eatery

-17pp TURNOVER REDUCTION
2024 → 2025

2024 BASELINE 89% → 72%

Snooze recorded an **engagement score exceeding 75%**, with turnover well below food service industry averages — a meaningful achievement in a sector that has historically struggled with retention.

RESTAURANTS • OUTPERFORMER

80.2%

CERTIFIED AVG. TURNOVER

89.1%

GOHAPPY CUSTOMER AVG.

Both **Mainsail** and **Snooze** outperform the certified average and the overall goHappy customer base — what happens when manager behavior, communication, and the employee experience receive sustained focus.



IN CLOSING

The findings in this report demonstrate **what is possible** when these practices are applied with **consistency and at scale.**

What's most exciting is that as managers and their teams become more aligned, organizational outcomes and success will ultimately follow.



• ABOUT THE PRODUCERS

About the producers of this report.



About goHappy.

goHappy is transforming how employers communicate and engage with their frontline workers by providing the most simple, powerful, and inclusive app-free technology to frontline brands.

The team at goHappy has been operating in the frontline employee space for **over 25 years** and its mission is to help **ALL frontline workers** feel more valued and connected so they can reach their full potential. In turn, employers not only improve communication to maximize engagement and happiness within their frontline employees, but also benefit from the bottom-line impact that those improvements deliver.

For more information on goHappy and its suite of frontline employee engagement solutions, visit www.gohappyhub.com.

1M+

frontline workers **reached and engaged every day** through the goHappy platform.

- **Reach** — mobile-first, app-free communication
- **Engage** — surveys, recognition, and feedback in the flow of work
- **Measure** — engagement and turnover analytics in one place

NOW YOU'RE REALLY GETTING THROUGH.™



About Lighthouse Research & Advisory.

Lighthouse Research & Advisory is a modern analyst firm that sets the standard for excellence in talent, learning, and HR. Our team surveys thousands of workers and leaders every year to bring practical insights to employers trying to solve the biggest talent and workplace challenges of today.

Our team's mission is to provide **actionable intelligence** for employers so they can make data-informed decisions. Our advisory, research, content, events, awards programs, and other offerings serve **tens of thousands of employers** across the globe every year.

Learn more at lhra.io.

2,000

U.S. frontline workers surveyed in the **2025 Frontline Workforce Trends Study** that anchors the market benchmark used in this report.

- **Independent research** on the frontline and deskless workforce
- **Original frameworks** for engagement, retention, and management
- **Advisory work** with HR, talent, and operations leaders

INDEPENDENT • PRACTITIONER-LED

