

Bold Acts of Leadership

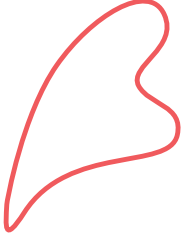
A Spotlight on the Best Workplaces™
in Retail and Hospitality.





“We deployed a One Modern Workplace initiative to equip our employees with tools and knowledge to work remotely effectively.”

Lindt & Sprungli (Canada) Inc.




“Leadership maintained a continuous flow of information – what was happening, what we were doing, what we were considering.”

Sleep Country



“Recognizing the uncertainty due to COVID-19, the leadership team kept in regular communication with employees through multiple touchpoints.”

Beam Suntory



“We decided to move to a fully remote work setting as of March to put the health and well-being of our employees first.”

Endy Canada



“Our goal was to create a solution for all - our team, our customers and all other stakeholders - that kept safety and service in mind”

Michaels of Canada ULC

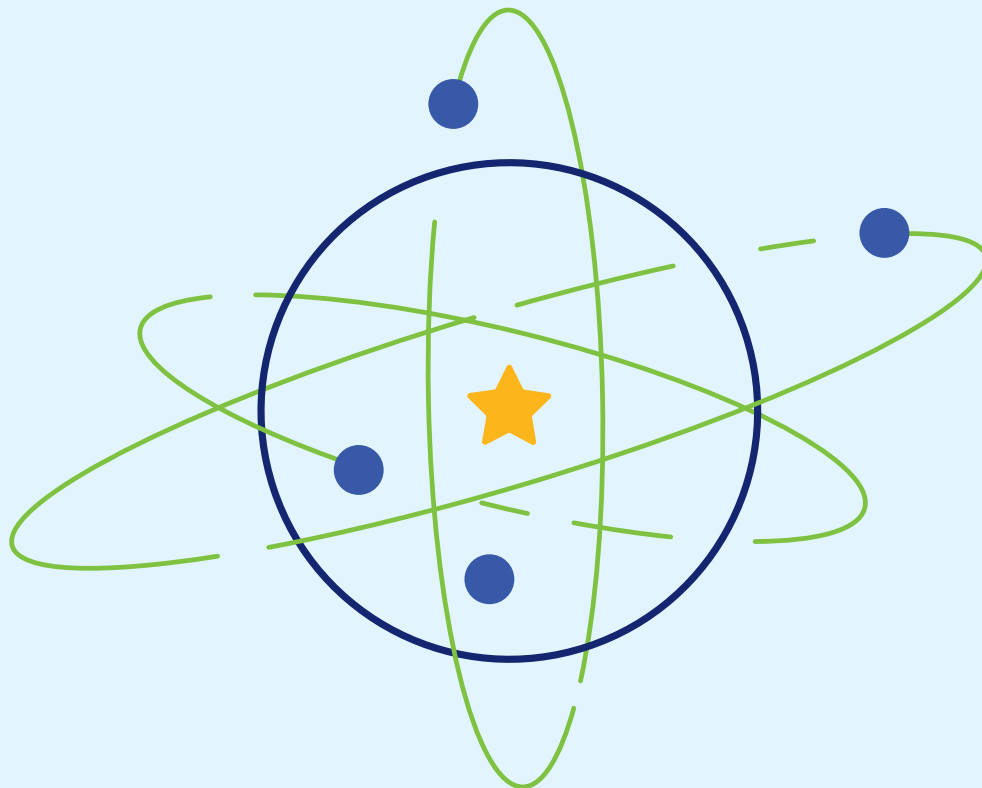


“To give back, we donated 30K+ medical masks to local shelters, small businesses and medical centers.”

Luxy Hair

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Leading with Culture Through Crisis

In March 2020, WHO (World Health Organization) declared COVID-19 a global pandemic. The world has been living in this pandemic for a year as this goes to print, and the virus continues to spread and change life as we know it. In fact, very little feels “normal” in our way of living anymore, and the guidance which we are offered by leaders seems to change daily.

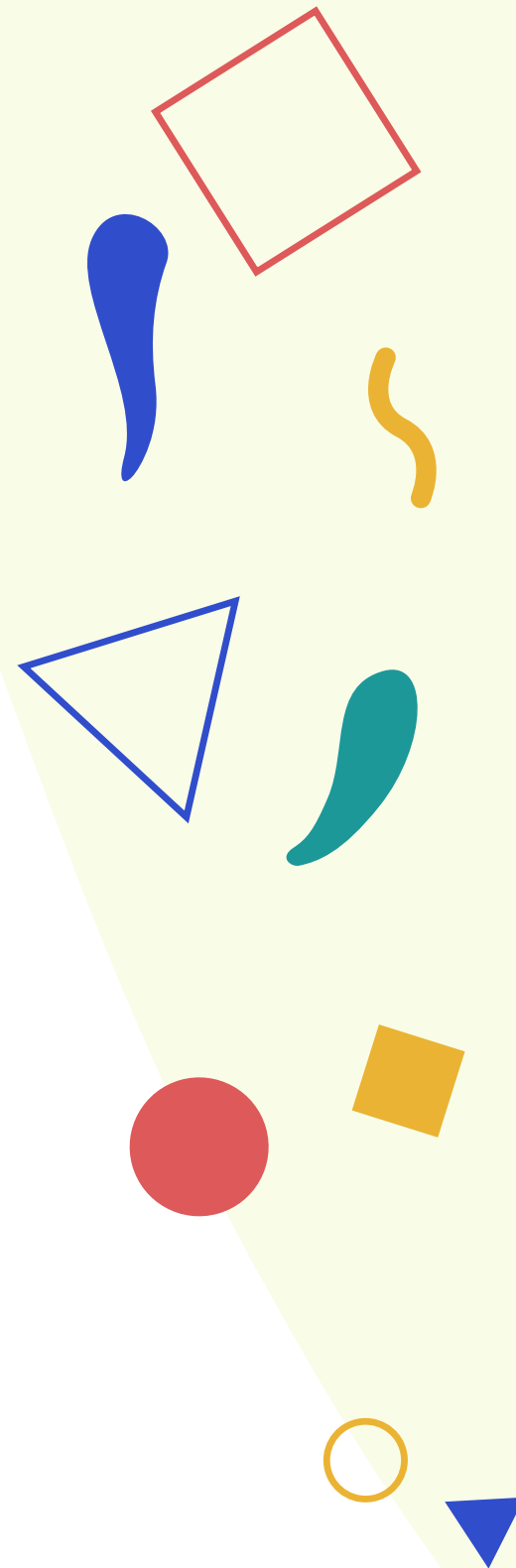
Currently, we are witness to a multitude of challenges, from business closures, to a global finance crisis, astronomically high unemployment rates and the relentless discomfort formed from not being able to see our family, friends, and colleagues.

Today, this global emergency has amplified un-comfortable facts on racial and income disparities that taint our view of the world. But along with these challenges we also bear witness to outstanding and swift bold acts of leadership, which enable organizations and employees to step up to the challenge before us.

The retail and hospitality industries in particular were amongst the hardest hit, and have been struggling to recover the deficits endured as a result of the pandemic.

However, despite this uncertainty, new research from Great Place to Work® reveals that workplaces consistently focused on building trust with their employees actually saw an increase in staff morale, communication and overall satisfaction in the past year, despite the numerous challenges presented by the pandemic.

This research highlights the important role that workplace culture plays in helping companies navigate both good times and bad.



Understanding the Employee Experience and the Importance of Workplace Trust

As the global authority on workplace culture, Great Place to Work® embarked on a research study to better understand how the global pandemic has affected employees' perceptions of the workplace and trust in their leaders. Using the Trust Index® Employee Survey, we were able to assess employee perceptions of workplace trust and compare these with the organization's historical data to study the evolution. This research is based on feedback from over 50,000 employees in 227 organizations, 25 of which were in the Retail and Hospitality sectors.

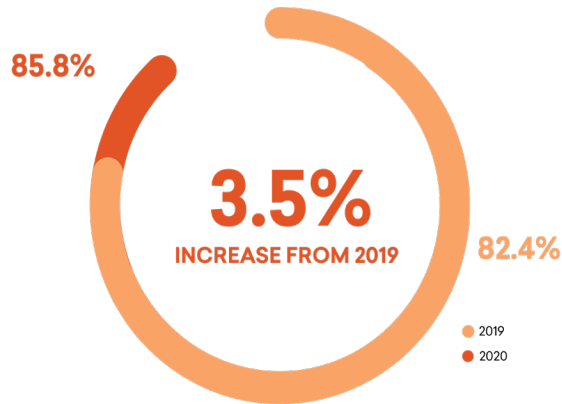
Contrary to initial expectations the majority of organizations surveyed (59%) had higher overall results during the pandemic than they did in 2019, on average by +4.1 percentage points. A smaller, but still substantial 41% of organizations, declined in 2020 by -4.2% on average from 2019.

In particular, organizations in this sector saw increases specifically related to the speed with which they adapted to the crisis, the transparency of communication from leadership and the way they fostered feelings of camaraderie, even as they had less face-to-face time together as a team. These intentional leader actions helped employees feel safe, heard and that their contributions matter.

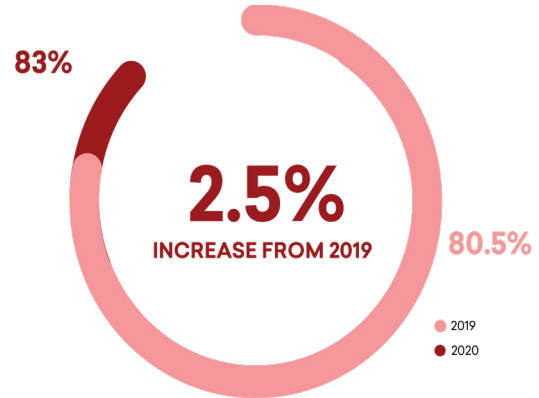


Greatest Improvements Over Last Year (% Positive)

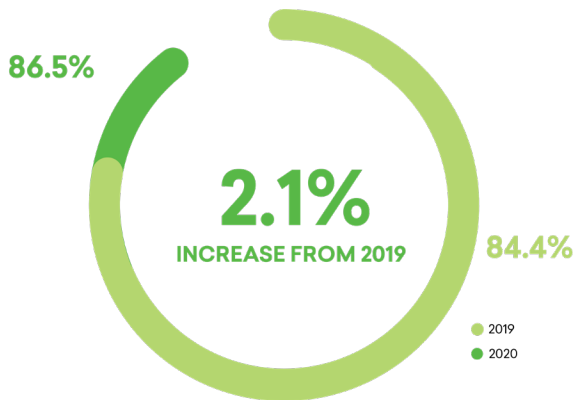
People promptly adapt to adjustments needed for our organization's success.



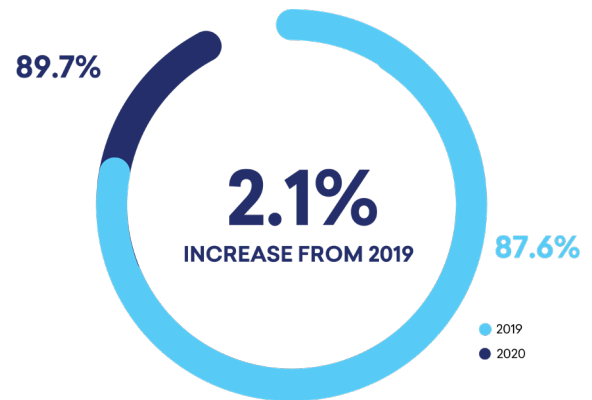
Leadership keeps me well-versed about important issues and changes.



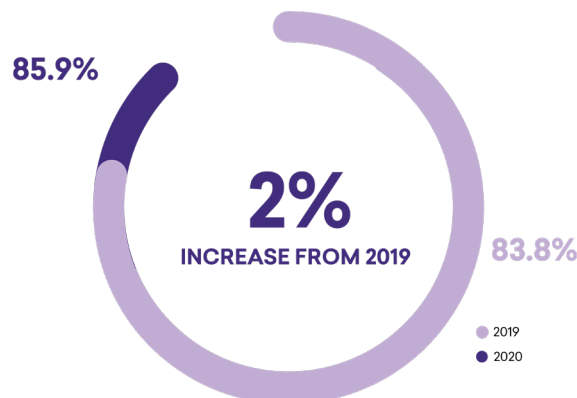
We're all in this collectively.



Our facilities provide a good working environment.



I trust that management would lay people off only as a last resource.



The best Retail and Hospitality organizations that have historically focused on driving trust in the workplace as a foundational value, were in general able to capitalize on this foundation.

Employees recognized and reward-ed the efforts made by these organizations over the challenging year that was 2020, by returning survey results that demonstrate increased levels of trust, both in their leaders and the organization, over the previ-ous year.

Some have succeeded in rebuilding by switching business models and developing innovative strategies.

Bold Acts of Leadership



Typically, during times of crisis, people seek leaders they can place their faith in and trust to steer them through a period which seems ambiguous.

During these times, when we are incessantly watching the news and collectively discussing events relating to the pandemic, an unchanging theme has become apparent: Trust or sometimes the lack thereof rather.

Trust between leadership and employees is often seen as pivotal to maintain good governance and direction; as confidence in governments is challenged, people are increasingly looking to their employers to instil reassurance and leadership.



Act Quickly

Simply Group's boldest act of leadership through the Covid-19 pandemic was to lead their team to persevere.

They re-tooled to be fully remote, in their day to day work and in their on-boarding and training.

Employees were re-trained, and they moved their largest event, the Green Living Show with more than 20,000 visitors annually, to an online forum. Initiatives all driven by CEO Lawrence Krimker.

Stay Safe

At the very beginning of March when so many businesses were closing their doors, Mister Safety Shoes felt a lot of pressure to do the same.

They remained open and have continued to do so throughout the pandemic, serving essential businesses such as grocery stores, police and fire departments, and transit.

At times staying open was questioned, however in the months to follow it became apparent that customers and businesses, including front-line workers were grateful that they were one of the few safety footwear retailers to have remained open.

Managing Director John Colantonio himself went out sourcing cleaning supplies and also took it upon himself to design and build "shield barriers" for stores and trucks until they were in receipt of plexiglass ones.

Communicating Openly

So, in times of such turmoil how have some retail and hospitality organizations managed to see a significant increase in their employee's trust?

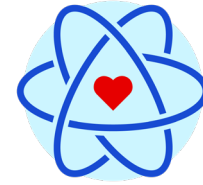
Well, the Best Workplaces demonstrated bold acts of leadership and put their resources and energy to good use by honing in on employee's needs. This year, Restaurant Brands International made a remarkable effort to communicate with employees and shift from quarterly to weekly all employee townhalls.

As did Connect Hearing, one of the largest worldwide providers of hearing care services and products, vowed to retain all staff during COVID-19 and continuously communicate to team members using digital means and the creation of a robust intranet communication platform.

And, the CEO at Sleep Country, alongside other leaders communicated with employees immediately, maintaining full transparency and a continuous flow of information.



Demonstrate Care for Employees



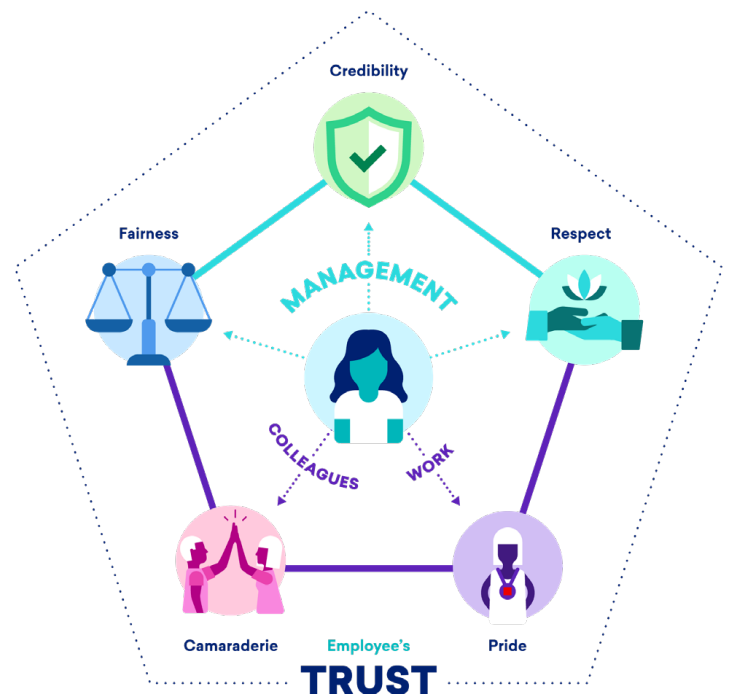
The leadership at the JOEY Restaurant Group focused on treating their people with care and respect. While the onset of the pandemic brought about confusion and uncertainty, the commitment to treating people as valued team members was not forgotten.

Faced with the challenge of restaurant closures, management worked tirelessly to reach out and attempt to communicate with every employee or “Part-ner” directly. It was important in the time of uncertainty to hear directly from their leader and not simply from an email or a notice on the door. The company’s mantra of “genuine warmth and care” resonated within their own team. The leadership team also researched and created support mechanisms to enable simplified access to government programs; to internal fo-rums where questions and concerns could be asked confidentially 24/7, and to recommended resources to help cope with the uncertainties.

Premium Retail Services Inc. was forced to respond very quickly to the 2020 pandemic in early March 2020. Their teams were deemed ‘essential employees’ and Premium Retail Services were needed to help consumers get the essentials they needed in grocery stores, electronics stores. Owners, Executives, Vice Presidents, and Directors took pay reductions, so most front-line workers could still receive remuneration. To date, Premium Retail Services have set up a fund and extended time off programs to help any employee diagnosed with Covid-19, or an immediate family member diagnosed with Covid-19.

Bold leaders such as leadership at Regional Recreation Corporation of Wood Buffalo who made an effort to keep employees in employment for as long as possible and intentionally constructed a work environment founded on a pillar of trust, thus creating a culture of confidence and commitment within their team, and cultivating employees who are willing to be led and ready to in turn, support the organization in challenging times.

Clearly, became aware of this early on and opted to conduct bi-weekly check-ins with employ-ees in a hope to continue building trusting relationships. They adopted a business model which presented a series of components that were required to work together to earn trust among their employees.



The Path Forward

It isn't an overstatement to suggest that the pandemic has affected almost all parts of our lives, not only as individuals but for the most part as organizations also. We have been pushed into thinking how to complete everyday tasks, such as grocery shopping, visiting loved ones and of course put a plan in place for future financial stability. Still, COVID 19 has created an unforeseen, dramatic change in the workplace and in reality, most organizations are still trying to figure out many aspects of what the future holds, however those that started the hard work of building strong relationships with employees long before COVID 19, are miles ahead because they have the advantage of working with employees and leaders that trust each other and are ready to step up to meet the much needed change.

Ready, Set, Go! Embracing Change

As Simply Group so accurately says:
'... success in adversity is possible.'
– Simply Group

Change is inevitable and the majority of organizations recognize this. Some investing in permanent changes and most importantly adopting sincerity and open communication as a strategy for success. Now, more than ever is the time for bold leaders to stay communicative, to drive success not only for themselves, but for their organizations and the individuals who depend on them to make informed and balanced decisions.

Although unprecedented times have led to unique reworkings of strategies and the way we work, bold leaders have used this time to really outline and leverage their organizations' workplace culture and fortitude to spin crisis into opportunity. Inspiration at its finest, and we at Great Place to Work® are happy to be working with exceptional leaders who promote trust and commitment throughout their organizations.

Be bold, be strategic and most importantly, authentic!

A Special Thanks To All Our Retail and Hospitality Clients and their Bold Leaders!

While circumstances beyond our control create unfamiliar and unpre-dictable encounters, essential workers and their organizations have stepped up consistently to help ease the transition into new methods of working. Below, we recognize these organizations for just some of the bold acts of leadership they have exhibited during this time.

Bacardi Canada Inc.

The leadership team instituted a number of initiatives to try and lessen the impact, committing to ensuring all Bacardi employees, remained actively employed. Employees were supplied the necessary equipment and support to work from home.

Beam Suntory

The Leadership team announced policy changes such as flexible work arrangements and not mandating regular hours to lighten the burden for employees that struggled to juggle family commitments alongside work deadlines. The Leadership team encouraged employees regularly.

COBS Bread

Created a COVID Task Force in March 2020. The main purpose was to review the changing work environment, keep up to date with legislation and health updates.

Clearly

Clearly brought in an Industrial Organizational Psychologist to lead an interactive mental wellness webinar with the entire team, discussing common stress reactions that people may be experiencing throughout the pandemic, as well as a variety of ways to cope and build resilience.

Compass Group Canada

Compass Group Canada realized that the mental health and well-being of our associates and their families would be impacted. This led to enhancing a 'just now' mental wellness platform: the 'just now' website became public facing.

Connect Hearing

Connect Hearing supported employees with a 75% wage stipend regardless of the outcome of CEWS. Lilika Beck, MD, and Rebecca Killian Director of HR, made the call to retain ALL staff during Covid-19.

Endy Canada

Endy Canada decided to move to a fully remote work setting as of March to put the health and well-being of our employees first. Their focus was to make sure that everyone felt safe and as comfortable as possible during this time.

Grand River Raceway

GRAS invested \$25,000 into launching Helping Hungry Hero's – and through additional community donations this increased to \$32,000. Gift cards were purchased from over 40 local restaurants, fast food locations and food trucks, and passed forward.

Guillevin International

Guillevin International continued to pay all employees without exception. Employees were equipped with laptops and deployed Office 365 to deliver the Teams platform for meetings.

Hilton

At the height of the pandemic, the Hilton Toronto Airport also provided more than 50 boxed breakfasts to healthcare workers at St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto as a thank you for

all their effort on the front line.

HI-FLYER FOOD (CANADA), INC

HI-FLYER FOOD Released COVID appreciation bonus to their teams to thank them for keeping restaurants open during the crisis to serve valued guests. JOEY Restaurant Group Each partner who was laid-off with a week's worth of pay as a gratuitous payment. Once each partner was contacted and spoken to, an internal company communication was sent, informing our Partners of the temporary lay-off so there were no surprises.

Lindt & Sprungli (Canada) Inc.

Implemented weekly all company calls. Continues to donate chocolate products to front line workers, and those in need based on requests and recommendations from staff.

Luxy Hair

Luxy Hair made the decision to move their entire 20-person team from the downtown Toronto office to work from home. To give back, they donated 30K+ medical masks. To give back, they donated 30K+ medical masks to

local shelters, small businesses and medical centres.

Michaels of Canada ULC

Michaels CARES team funded "fill the fridge" efforts in stores. With these funds, local managers were able to purchase meals or snacks to meet the needs of their teams.

Mister Safety Shoes

Mister Safety Shoes decided to reduce working hours for hourly wage earners but keep their compensation the same as it would have been if they were working their regular hours.

New Castle Hotels & Resorts

Extended health benefits were offered to full time associates while working part time hours.

Premium Retail Services (Canada) Inc.

A customized website was used for employee and client communications, including travel documentation for essential workers and access to counselling services for employees and their families.

Regional Recreation Corporation of Wood Buffalo

RRC leadership took strong steps to protect team members from the financial impacts of the shutdown. This included keeping staff on as long as possible, finding tasks to complete that were outside their traditional duties and keep them gainfully employed.

Restaurant Brands International

Restaurant owners and franchisees stepped up

donating to local food-banks, sharing meals with charities and essential service workers, and contributing to our three foundations in a big way.

Sleep County

Sleep Country committed \$1.5 million in product donations to support local communities across Canada impacted by the COVID-19 health crisis.

Toyotoshi Group Canada

Toyotoshi Group Canada held a sales promotion that

gave back to the community for every vehicle sold that raised \$15,000.00. They continued to support community initiatives Start to Finish and as Lead Sponsor of the Pink Fire Truck Tour.

UPGC

UPGC have enhanced their Fitness Policy this year to allow their team members to buy Fitness Equipment, as many could not get out to the gym due to COVID.





Want to become a Best Workplace?

About Us

For 30 years, Great Place to Work® has worked with leading companies from around the world to identify and build high-trust, high-performance workplace cultures. Our research has proven that building great workplaces for all isn't just the right thing to do, it's better for business.

Great Place to Work® conducts the world's largest workplace study with 60 offices, globally. We've surveyed over eight thousand organizations annually and heard what over twelve million employees had to say.

Get in touch today to begin your journey to a better workplace.

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