

# 2021 Nonprofit Talent Retention Practices Survey Results Overview

WEBINAR TRANSCRIPT

# 2021 NONPROFIT TALENT RETENTION PRACTICES SURVEY RESULTS OVERVIEW

Keep your employees engaged by better understanding employee retention trends and how to calculate and benchmark your own. Register now for this webinar and be among the first to learn how sector-specific organizations are experiencing retention and the practices they're putting in place to maintain their highest performance and sustain their business objectives.

**Walk away from this webinar recording with a clear understanding on:**

- Employee segments organizations are most challenged with retaining
- Retention strategies most used by organizations
- Qualitative and quantitative metrics employed by organizations
- Voluntary and involuntary turnover rates plus key drivers
- How current events have impacted organization retention

## SPEAKER



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**Atokatha Ashmond Brew:** Thank you for joining us for Nonprofit HR's Virtual Learning Educational Event, today's session is entitled 2021 Nonprofit Talent Retention Practices Survey.

My name is Atokatha Ashmond Brew, and I'm Managing Director for Marketing & Strategic Communication for Nonprofit HR. I will be your moderator for today. We have a lot of great content to cover. You're going to walk away with a solid understanding of how nonprofits rated their retention practices and what they're planning for in this key area moving forward.

Before we get started, though, I would like to go over a few items so you know how to participate in today's event. You've joined the presentation listening using your computer's speaker system by default. If you would prefer to join over the telephone, just select telephone in the audio pane, and the dial-in information will be displayed. You will have the opportunity to submit text questions to today's presenter by typing your questions into the questions pane of the control panel. You may send in your questions at any time during the presentation. We will collect these and get to as many of them as we can today. This is a very popular topic, so we do apologize in advance if we can't get to all of the questions. But you can expect for us to follow up via email or in a future blog regarding any questions that are unanswered.

Today's event is being recorded, and you'll receive a follow-up email within the next few days with a link to view the recording. Along with those assets, live webinar attendees will also receive SHRM recertification and HRCI recertification codes.

Just a brief note about Nonprofit HR. Since 2000, Nonprofit HR remains the country's leading and oldest firm focused exclusively on the talent management needs of the social sector, including nonprofits, associations, social enterprises and other mission-driven organizations. We focus our consulting efforts on the following practice areas: Strategy & Advisory, HR Outsourcing, Total Rewards, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion and Search. We were founded with the one goal in mind and that's to strengthen the social impact sector's talent management capacity by strengthening its people. Today's presentation will be led by Lisa Brown Alexander, Founder and CEO for Nonprofit HR.

And now, a little about Lisa. Driven to serve the often-overlooked people management needs for the social impact sector, Lisa set out to build a market where one did not exist. She founded Nonprofit HR, the leading talent management firm in the country that works exclusively with the social sector. Lisa's goal is to ensure that every Nonprofit HR engagement inspires social sector leaders to strengthen their most important asset, their people. Over the course of her career, Lisa has presented to hundreds of organizations, staff and leadership teams covering all things talent management for the social sector.

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Today, fueled by the passion of more than 90 employees and consultants nationwide, her thriving company is helping many of the nation's impactful organizations get ahead through smart people management strategies. In the process, they are changing the way an entire sector thinks about talent and culture. Again, you will have an opportunity to ask questions throughout the webinar and during our formal Q&A at the end of the webinar as well. And now, over to you, Lisa.

**Lisa Brown Alexander:** Thank you, and good afternoon everyone. Welcome to today's webinar.

I look forward to engaging in this session with you today and wanted to just give you a quick caption of what we're going to cover today. We're going to talk about this thing called the Great Resignation, understand it a little bit better. What is it? What's driving it? We're going to spend some time talking about retention strategies that we've seen successfully employed at nonprofit organizations. We'll also talk about some of the metrics that we're seeing nonprofits track, and what the data are telling us about trends in the sector. Of course, we can't have the retention conversation without talking about turnover. And then finally, we want to leave you with some tools that you can use in your organization for improving employee retention.

Let's get started.

So, I think most of us have heard by now about the Great Resignation. And what that is, is an exodus of people leaving the workforce for a variety of reasons. And what we've learned from the data, Gallup in particular, is that 48% of the American workforce is actively looking to change jobs right now. This data comes from a snippet of information captured earlier this year, so this isn't old information. It's just a few months old. But 48% of the American workforce is considering new opportunities. That means that your organization is a microcosm of the greater workforce. There is a likelihood that half of your workforce might be considering new options, and that, my friends, is reason why we're here today.

So, when we talk about the Great Resignation, what is it?

It's this exodus, as I mentioned before, of people leaving the jobs that they have been connected to and associated with over years. As a matter of fact, in July of 2021, four million Americans, four million, not thousand but million Americans, quit their jobs in July of 2021. That includes both for-profits and nonprofits, but of course, nonprofits are not exempt. And this is what we're referring to as the Great Resignation. Why are we calling them in that? Well, we'll talk about that in a moment.

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So let's talk a little bit about what might be driving it and why this mass exodus is happening. Well, a lot of it is COVID driven, but what we're seeing is that more and more organizations are facing this departure of staff that they may have thought were connected and loyal to their organizations. Many organizations, managers, think that beating this phenomenon, this exodus, is all about being able to work from home.

And we know that in many cases, and particularly in the social services segment of our nonprofit sector, that working from home really isn't an option. But it's about more than working from home. Many organizations are not fully understanding the deep-seated concerns that employees are having when they have to come to the workplace, and a lot of those concerns have come to light as a result of COVID.

Let's talk about that a little bit more.

But let's look at some data, first of all. So, this is some comparative data from Gallup, looking at their 2019 survey and their March of 2021 survey. And what we learned is that back then, 69% of the people who were leaving organizations or contemplating looking for another job, 69% were actively disengaged. Well, if we look across the row in March of 2021, that number went up to 74%. That wasn't a huge difference, but it's big enough to be notable, right? The difference between actively engaged and not engaged is a technicality as defined by Gallup. But this is a spectrum of engagement that people are experiencing in the workplace. And so, it went from 69% in September to 74% actively disengaged, we also see the number moving up with the not engaged. Those who were engaged, however, were almost the same, right? So from 29% in September of 2019 to only 30%, what is this telling us? That engagement levels, in general, across the workforce, the American workforce, are not increasing. In fact, what is increasing is the extent to which individuals are actively disengaged, just there physically, but mentally and probably emotionally, they've exited the building.

Now we know that lost productivity is a derivative of disengagement, and we also know the cost of disengagement is roughly 18% of annual salary, at least per Gallup. The lost productivity of non-engaged and actively disengaged employees is equal to 18% of their salary. So, you can do the math. If half of your workforce is disengaged and of that percentage of people, 18% of their salary is what you're essentially paying and lost productivity, it's very easy to see the numbers climb and become unmanageable. So, we're going to talk about some strategies for improving retention, but we want you to have that data as well.

Some of the key drivers to the Great Resignation, as it's being called, is that increasingly as we navigate our way through COVID, what is coming to bear is the fact that managers are increasingly inexperienced with facing the kinds of unprecedented challenges that have led to the disengagement of employees, right?

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More and more, we're seeing complex issues that managers have never faced before and that's bringing some challenges. It's also helping to drive disengagement among employees that need to focus on well-being. That's not something that many managers have been trained to do. As a matter of fact, if you think about classic management training, the focus is on numbers, on programs, on services. And what we're seeing is that, increasingly, that's not what folks are needing to focus on. What they're really needing to focus on, managers in particular...

Oh, my goodness, I lost my screen. I'm so sorry. I'm not sure what happened there. I hope you can see key drivers of the Great Resignation on your screens.

**Atokatha Ashmond Brew:** Yes, Lisa. That's what's showing.

**Lisa Brown Alexander:** Excellent. Thank you.

This need to focus on kind of the softer side of management, away from kind of P&Ls and financial statements and program objectives being met and relationships with funders, is this deeper need for people to find meaning and connection in their work. And employees themselves are weighing the value of work against their own personal, mental, emotional and physical health. And that is causing people to contemplate, "Hey, you know what, I don't want to do this anymore. Life is short. And so, I'm re-evaluating what's important to me." And in many instances, those individuals who found themselves kind of on the edges of being engaged or disengaged with their employer are really re-evaluating what's important and making decisions to move on.

One of the other contributing factors to the Great Resignation is this resistance that we continue to see among employers to workplace flexibility. Many nonprofits and for-profits alike were forced into a remote work environment, right? They were forced into incorporating more flexibility into the workplace as a result of COVID. And we've got an unexplained or a challenging relationship with that desire to see people, right? So, we know that they're working, we can see them.

And that is really part of the contribution to this Great Resignation in that people are no longer accepting of their employers telling them that they cannot afford to be flexible. And folks are saying, "You know what? You're not being flexible, I'm moving on." It's really coming down to just that.

Insights that we've seen, and we're going into the Nonprofit Retention Survey data in just a moment, but some of the insights that we've gleaned from both kind of publicly available data, through Gallup and other organizations, Harvard Business Review and other kinds of trending publications, as well as our own data, tells us that resignation rates are the highest among mid-career employees.

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So, not the Millennials, as we talked about a few years ago, them coming in and going back out and causing the revolving door to happen, but we're really seeing the greatest exodus among mid-career professionals. People who've been at work for a while and are really just re-evaluating their lives, right? They've had enough experience to know what they want, what they don't and are making different decisions. So resignation rates are the highest, both in the for-profit and the nonprofit space, among mid-career professionals.

Specifically with nonprofits, we have learned this year, as we've seen in past years because we've been doing this survey for a little bit, is that program staff remain the hardest to retain across the sector. So separate from marketing, separate from membership, separate from an administrative staff, it's that program staff that we continue to see being the hardest to retain across the sector.

Interestingly enough, 20%, so one-fifth of the nonprofit sector have reported to us that they're not facing any challenges with rotating staff, which kind of surprised us. It's an interesting fact. And, to those organizations, hats off to you. I would guess that some of those organizations may be facing retention challenges and may not realize it because it hasn't fully manifested. But we know, and it was noted, that 20% of organizations, nonprofits have noted, they're doing just fine.

We also noted that, fewer organizations actually have retention strategies now, comparable to when we measured this back in 2019. So it went from 16.8% of organizations having retention strategies down to 12.6%. Now the confluence of fewer organizations having retention strategies with the Great Resignation and COVID is really a bit of a Molotov cocktail, right? And so, we're going to talk a little bit more about that today, but it's concerning that we're kind of trending in the opposite direction.

We also noted that roughly one-third of the largest nonprofits have retention strategies versus only 12% of the smallest nonprofits. Now, what stands to reason is that larger nonprofits have the resources and the teams to invest more deeply in the development and the implementation of retention strategies, versus those organizations with budgets of less than five million probably not even having a dedicated talent management professional or someone whose job is to focus on retaining talent. So this is kind of an obvious one, but we wanted to just share the data nonetheless.

And then, finally, the data tell us that it takes more than 20, more than a 20% pay raise to lure someone away from their organization. So it's not money that's causing people to leave. It's usually the people who are the most disengaged that will leave first, right? Not the people who are necessarily looking for more money, but the people who are the most disengaged.

So, let's talk a little bit about strategy. Actually, before we do that, let me pause and see if we have any questions. Atokatha?

**Atokatha Ashmond Brew:** Hi Lisa, we do have a question.

So, it's, how are organizations keeping employees engaged, especially those that are part of community-driven organizations, and especially if those organizations are 100% remote?

**Lisa Brown Alexander:** Yeah, we're going to talk about that in a little bit, but one of the things that we've seen work really well is doubling down on employee communications, right? Active, intentional, frequent communication about as much as you can to communicate. The other thing that we're seeing work effectively with organizations is a deliberate effort to connect staff across programs and across geography by creating virtual spaces for them to connect with one another. Whether that is through ad hoc meetings or open spaces, like virtual happy hours and lunchtime chats, coffee chats, those kinds of things, an effort to really communicate and connect employees is one of the strategies that we're seeing work well with organizations that are fully virtual.

**Atokatha Ashmond Brew:** OK, and the second question is, how can managers make sure their direct reports are satisfied in their current role?

**Lisa Brown Alexander:** You know, I really appreciate that question. It's such a fundamental one. Two things. Listen and act. Right? One of the things we fail to do as leaders in organizations sometimes is actively listen to the people who work with us, who we are responsible for. And it's an underused skill but one that has the potential to really change how your organization shows up and operates.

And so, I would encourage you to invest in helping your leadership team listen better and then be sure to respond to what you hear. It's so simple but yet so underused, and so that would be my advice there. Really equip your leadership team to listen more effectively, to engage with staff, to respond in a timely fashion to the feedback they're providing and then, just press repeat. We're going to talk about some strategies for retaining staff later on in today's presentation.

But thanks for the questions.

**Lisa Brown Alexander:** So as always, we ask organizations how many of them actually have a formal retention strategy. This is a snapshot of what we heard from the over 500 organizations that participated in this survey.

Eighty percent of nonprofits have absolutely no formal employee retention strategy in place. Now keep in mind 50% of the workforce is disengaged. That's fact number one, roughly 48%. Second fact, we're in the middle of the Great Resignation, right? So disengagement, Great Resignation, no retention strategy for the vast majority of nonprofits. It's a little scary and we are not—well organizations, nonprofit organizations, I keep saying “we” because I'm still connected to the sector in so many ways.



But this notion that we can continue, where the sector can continue to operate without intentional strategic plans in place to keep your most valuable asset is something that I really want to encourage us to reconsider. This number is scary. And nonprofits are not exempt from employee retention challenges. And so, the fact that so many organizations are operating without a plan to keep talent is a note of concern. But if you're in this 80%, you're in lots of company, right? Regrettably, only 13% of respondents that will apply to our survey had a retention strategy and unfortunately even more concerning is that 7% had no clue. They just didn't know whether or not their organization had a retention strategy.

Of those who didn't have a strategy, we asked them what strategies they employ the most as a way of keeping the talent that they have. As you'll note on-screen, 76% of those who said they had a retention strategy used compensation and benefits as their primary means for keeping people on board. So making sure that they were paying competitively, or at least as competitively as possible, and having rich benefits as a way of learning and keeping their staff, followed by 72% of those organizations with retention strategies really leaning in around professional and personal development. Which is important, because we are in a culture and a time where continuous learning is important for most employees in the workforce, regardless of level. And so, it's good that the sector continues to use these strategies as a way of keeping employees.

It's notable that fewer organizations leverage their culture as a strategy for retaining talent. I would argue that's right up there too, right? If you've got rich benefits but a lousy culture, that is going to have a negative impact on your ability to retain staff. So we don't want to disaggregate culture and leadership from our retention strategies that are used. But compensation, benefits and professional development lead the list.

In terms of qualitative retention tactics that we're seeing organizations use, the exit interview has remained at the top. I would argue, however, that exit interviews are good information, but oftentimes too late, right? By the time you conduct an exit interview, someone has already made an affirmative decision to leave your organization and therefore, in getting that information, while informative, doesn't give you the window and the opportunity to make changes and retain that person, right? So, it's kind of a post-decision activity. We encourage and practice with many of our clients the use of the stay interview, or the employee experience interview, to better understand not only from high performers, but generally anyone who you want to know, what causes you to come to work every day or get on Zoom and continue the work of the organization every day? And regrettably only 28% of organizations are using the stay interview as a qualitative retention tactic.

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It is good news that 61% of organizations are using effective onboarding, which is a key part of any good retention strategy, obviously. Because people tend to make a decision to leave an organization early in their stay, right? And so, the fact that so many organizations are using effective onboarding or trying to design effective onboarding programs as a strategy for keeping talent is encouraging.

Recognition of employees. We know it is not only important to millennials, but also Xers and boomers, and everyone up and down the line. And so, using recognition as a strategy openly, publicly, regularly recognizing your staff and the contributions that they make to your organization is also an effective tactic for retaining staff at your organization.

So these are just some of the data points that we collected from this year's survey.

In terms of the number of organizations that are tracking retention metrics, we were encouraged to see that that number is at 60%. So, even though some organizations are operating without a retention strategy, many more are actually still collecting retention metrics as a way of gauging movement in and out of the organization. So that is encouraging. Again, a little concern that 21% of organizations aren't really sure if they're tracking retention at any level in their organizations, and so that is a little bit concerning.

We thought it would be helpful to look at staff that are leaving organizations by a couple of different segments, as we fine tune and really intentionally improve our focus on being inclusive, diverse and equitable organizations. We wanted to see if there were any differences with how organizations were retaining staff by gender, by race, by level within the organization. And what we learned is that 30% of those that are leaving or within organizations are women. Thirty percent of organizations are having the most challenges, let me rephrase that, with retaining women.

Now, we know that in the last year and a half plus, many of those who have to leave the workforce are women caring for their families and their parents. And as a result of their children not being in school, they're having to leave, right? So, there's some influence of COVID and caregiving dynamics that are at play here, but we wanted to just report on that and share with you what we learned from survey respondents with women leading.

Now it's interesting to note that 44% of respondents said that they're not challenged with retaining employees in any segment. Again, in this particular case, it's interesting to note, but let's compare that against a couple of other segments.

What we heard from those respondents when we looked at staff segments that are the most challenged to retain by race, African American staff, or those who identify as Black, are the ones that organizations are having the most difficult time retaining. We could probably spend an entire session on that, talking about the new awareness that both employers and employees are having around race and how it shows up in the workplace, and the fatigue that many who identify as Black are feeling with carrying water, either for their organizations or just their own personal burdens and challenges that are associated with being Black in the workplace.

So, this did not come as a surprise to us. And, I would say to use this as an opportunity to think about your workforce and who you may have challenges retaining and understand how race and ethnicity can intersect with your retention challenges. That will require a conversation. It will require reflection and introspection at the leadership level. It will require a review of your policies and practices through an equity lens. There are so many things that that can be brought into that conversation, but this is what we learned.

In terms of career level, as I mentioned, the segment that many organizations are reporting the most challenge with retaining is, in this case, the entry-level staff. More broadly, so nationally, and without respect to for-profit versus nonprofit, the data tell us that mid-level staff are actually the ones that organizations are having the most challenge retaining. And in the context of nonprofits specifically, they're still having the most challenge with retaining entry-level staff. But the 35 and 45% is pretty close. As you can see on screen, only 5% of a nonprofit respondents said that they were having trouble retaining senior-level staff.

We also looked at the challenges that organizations were having around retaining staff by area of work. And as I mentioned earlier in today's presentation, 34% is the leading segment of organizations having trouble retaining their program staff. So there's a big difference between organizations retaining program staff followed by operations/administration/facilities staff. And then, all of the others make up a significantly less percentage of the challenging segment of staff by level. Thirty-four percent of the programs staff.

Now why might that be? Oftentimes, program staff are that—they have a direct front line with the community. And in light of the nature of work that many organizations are doing, particularly through COVID—think human services, social services, healthcare—they're really and probably in some of the most difficult times they've ever faced in recent history, right? And so, it's not a surprise that organizations are having challenges with program staff. They're exhausted, their burnt out, and in many instances, not even able to take care of their own personal needs, while being very much attuned to the needs of the communities that their organizations serve. So, this stands to reason. We wanted to just share this information, so you can see it for yourself.

In terms of quantitative, so those are kind of some of the qualitative metrics that we saw, quantitative retention metrics that we saw organizations tracking was turnover. Turnover was by far the strongest metric that most organizations are tracking when they are tracking metrics, followed by tenure. So understanding how long people stay, not just how many people come and go, but how long people are staying with the organization. Others are tracking the actual dollar cost of turnover, and we know, the data suggests that, it can cost thousands and thousands of dollars to manage turnover within an organization.

Thirty-eight percent are tracking turnover and retention metrics, excuse me, by first year resignation rates. So, typically when people are going to make a choice to leave, they'll do it within their first year. And so, roughly just under 40% of nonprofits are tracking that first-year resignation rate. And look at this list and compare it against what you're tracking in your organization as a way of engaging metrics for your organization and what might be important.

We were encouraged to see that 21% of nonprofits are tracking their high-performer resignation, which is important because your highest performers are obviously those that you really want and need to keep within your organization. And so, understanding where they are, the extent to which they're engaged and enjoying their work and feel like they're making a valuable contribution, is important. And so, these are just, again, some of the quantitative retention metrics that we're seeing organizations track over the last year.

I'm going to pause to see if we have any questions. Atokatha, back to you.

**Atokatha Ashmond Brew:** Hi there, Lisa.

Yes, here's the question: What are the symptoms and consequences of disengagement as defined here, other than leaving the organization?

**Lisa Brown Alexander:** Yeah. Symptoms of disengagement include everything from silence, just not saying anything about anything, to work quality diminishing, frequent absences, discontent with the quality of the work that they're doing, poor relationships with colleagues and supervisors. Those are some of those symptoms.

The consequences are what we're talking about today. High turnover or stagnant turnover but low disengagement, the quality of work being impacted, the quality of services that are delivered to the community that you serve being impacted, loss of revenue, really, right? So, when you have poor performance either at the individual level or the organizational level, that can impact your ability to get grants renewed, your ability to meet the goals and objectives as an organization, loss of donor dollars.

So those are just some of the consequences of low engagement or disengagement, it's costly and then we talk about the reputational damage that can happen when individual is disengaged and chooses to openly or publicly share their disengagement with others, particularly via social media. That is hard to put a dollar number on, but it really can have a detrimental effect on an organization, particularly if there are large or growing segments of the employee population that are disengaged and getting vocal about it, right? Because then, it becomes visible for all to see, including those who might be contemplating joining the organization. And that kind of feedback can absolutely influence whether or not they choose your organization as their next employer.

**Atokatha Ashmond Brew:** OK, Lisa, here's another question.

**Lisa Brown Alexander:** All right.

**Atokatha Ashmond Brew:** How would you define effective onboarding, and who determines if onboarding is effective or not?

**Lisa Brown Alexander:** Good question. Effective onboarding is really designed to give your new hire a solid footing and entry into your organization. So, everything from understanding policies and benefits to understanding how people move and operate within the organization. And so, you don't want to only focus on, here are the benefits and policies that we have, but you also want to help them establish relationships with colleagues, understand the programs and services that your organization offers, understand the culture, what reflects expected behavior and supportive behavior within the organization and allowing them to have a sense of belonging early within the organization, because we know that when people feel a sense of belonging, they also tend to feel a greater sense of engagement.

And so, that's what an effective onboarding program should do, really—to drive knowledge, understanding and belonging early in the employment relationship. And the folks who will help you gauge whether or not your onboarding program is working are your new hires. So, as a strategy or as a tactic that you can employ, interview and bring together your new hires after they've been with you for three to six months, and hear from them whether or not your onboarding program as it currently exists allowed them to get up to speed and be successful quickly. If that's the response that you get from your new hires, then you know that your onboarding program is effective. But if the back that they share was, "I didn't get the information that I needed. I didn't feel connected to the work. I was not able to build relationships with colleagues in person or virtually," then you know that you've got some work to do with your onboarding program.

All right, let's keep going.

In terms of internal stakeholders, so some of you might be wondering, “OK, well, we collect retention metrics. Who should we share those with?” And what we learned was that 44% of survey respondents were sharing their retention metrics with the senior leadership team and HR, primarily. Other organizations, about 31%, were going beyond just the senior leadership team and HR, but also going to share retention metrics with team and people managers, which we think is important. So, we're hoping to see that number grow over the years, as organizations understand that knowledge is power and information can be really helpful to shaping the employee experience. So 31% are going beyond just the leadership team. Again, 11% have no clue what's going on. And then, we've got a smaller segment of organizations that are sharing it with others, including board members, which you can choose to or not to do.

In terms of organizations—what they're doing with the retention data that they are collecting, we're seeing that 79% of survey respondents were using it to improve organizational and talent management strategy, which is good because that's exactly what they should do: Inform your talent management practices and cause you to continually improve and evolve those practices.

We also know that some organizations that don't have a talent management strategy are using their retention data to develop a strategy, which is good because it is based in data, at least to some extent, so that's encouraging to see. And then of course, we've got a segment of people who really don't know how they're using their metrics and in some cases, whether or not they're using them at all. So good information, but there's always opportunity for improvement in this particular space.

So for those of you who are collecting retention data, we encourage you to use it actively to assess and review your talent management strategies and practices.

Let's shift to talk a little bit about turnover, which is something that most of us who are involved in talent management and human resources and people management understand. And so, we asked a question of organizations, how they expected their turnover rates to change from 2020 to 2021. And what we heard was that 42% of organizations were expecting an increase in turnover between those two years and in many instances, that's played out exactly as predicted. Other organizations, 16% predicted that their turnover would decrease. We don't know what the actual trajectory was for those organizations, but they were anticipating a decrease in turnover. And then, 28%, of course, expected that their turnover rates would stay about the same.

And then, we had a smaller segment of organizations that just could not predict what was going to happen. And in those organizations, what we see more often than not is big swings between years in which they're able to retain staff and years in which they're not. And it makes it just very difficult to predict the why and the what and the how much.

So just good data here. Think about your own organization, when you look at this year and you think about next year, what are you predicting? Are you predicting that your turnover will continue to increase or are you predicting that it will decrease? And if you are predicting that it will increase, what are you doing to mitigate that, to reduce the likelihood of your turnover increasing? Again, this is just data that you can use to evaluate your organization's strategies.

When we asked organizations the primary reason for voluntary turnover in their organization, what we heard back was that 49% of organizations said that people are leaving them for better opportunities, followed by a lack of upward mobility. Now, what we do know is that this issue of limited upward mobility really plays out significantly with the smallest of nonprofits, so those organizations that have budgets of five million or less. Those are the organizations that oftentimes have very small staff, sometimes fewer than five and there's just nowhere to go. There's an ED, an executive director, there's some program staff, there may or may not be administrative staff and that's it. And so, it stands to reason that employees in those types of organizations, in order for them to grow and have some career mobility, they have to leave the nonprofits that they're working with.

In other cases, people are dissatisfied. Regardless of size, they are not satisfied, they feel disengaged from the current organization and culture and they're leaving for that reason. You'll note that compensation and benefits is not the top of the list. People don't generally leave employers because of pay. They leave because of their relationships with their supervisors, of culture and those two things are, oftentimes, the drivers for people making decisions.

Now, we note here that only 20% of voluntary turnover as reported by survey respondents was because of family situations. When we do this survey again, and we look back at what happened in 2021 and 2022, I'm guessing that this number will change because family situations were significantly altered as a result of COVID, as a result of school happening on a virtual basis, and so, we're expecting to see this number change. We're also expecting to see voluntary turnover being impacted by people relocating, so more to come on that.

When we talk about primary reasons for involuntary turnover, what we heard from survey respondents was that 58% of involuntary turnover was driven by poor performance. People were let go as a result of their performance, and that's kind of to be expected, not coming as a surprise. Followed by 23% of organizations reporting that the primary reasons for involuntary trauma in their organizations was because of layoffs or position eliminations. Now, we know that a number of nonprofits have to close their doors during COVID, but we also know that as a result of COVID many nonprofits have grown and expanded and the demand for their services has gone up exponentially, causing them to have to bring on new staff and not layoff. So it's an interesting kind of confluence of circumstances that are hitting organizations, but this is what we heard from those who responded to our survey.

And then of course, there were other reasons. Roughly 80% of organizations said that there were other reasons for involuntary turnover in their organizations.

Again, talking about turnover rate, the number of organizations that are tracking turnover, 61% are tracking turnover at a minimum, with 31% saying no, and 7% saying, I'm not really sure. So we applaud those organizations that are tracking turnover, encourage those who are not to begin doing so, so you can better understand what's happening in your organization, the movement in and out of it and then what you can do about it.

In terms of the impact of turnover on survey respondents, what we heard was that the greatest impact that we're seeing on organizations as a result of turnover was decreased morale. Right? Oftentimes, what happens when people start seeing people walk out the door, they look around, they say, "What's going on? Where is everyone going? Why is everyone leaving?" And then it starts to have a cumulative effect on the staff. And so, this mirrors that. This data tells us that morale just continues to dwindle, particularly as voluntary turnover increases.

Following the decrease morale was the impact of COVID on turnover. That has obviously a significant impact on many organizations and so that's what we heard from organizations that responded to our survey.

I'll talk a little bit more about COVID. And I thought this particular quote was particularly poignant, "Workers are making decisions to leave based on how their employers treated them—or didn't treat them—during the pandemic. Ultimately, workers stay at companies or organizations that offered support and darted from those that didn't."

It's a very straightforward statement, but I thought it was really clear and kind of drew the line between those organizations that survived COVID or are surviving COVID and those that are not. If people are making any kind of a decision about what they're going to do with their lives, they're doing it now. And this statement supports that.

We asked a couple of very specific COVID-19-related questions of survey respondents, and one of them was whether or not they thought the COVID-19 pandemic impacted their retention strategies and tactics. And 51% said absolutely. Interestingly enough, 40% said no. So, it's an interesting mix there. We're not exactly sure why that is, but we do recognize those organizations that saw an impact on their strategies and tactics as it relates to retention as a result of COVID.

We also asked organizations whether or not the renewed calls for social justice and racial justice that we saw come to a head last summer impacted their retention practices and strategies. And only 28% said yes, that renewed calls for racial justice in America impacted their ability to retain talent.



Now, when you juxtapose that against the percentage of employees by race that are the hardest to retain, and if you recall earlier in our presentation, we talked about the fact that African American staff are the ones hardest to retain, I would encourage you to dig below the surface at your organization to understand that dynamic and how it plays out in your nonprofit a little bit more. But the majority of organizations said no, their organizations were not being impacted by renewed calls for social justice.

Before we continue, I'll pause again because I know COVID is kind of front and center for us all and wondered if we have any questions related to COVID at this time, Atokatha?

**Atokatha Ashmond Brew:** Not specifically related to COVID, Lisa. Not yet.

**Lisa Brown Alexander:** All right, well, let's keep going.

So another really poignant quote that I came across as I was preparing for today's presentation and the one that really is not COVID specific, but one that I thought was still important nonetheless is, "Workers aren't just looking for higher pay, more time off, or more days at home (thought those things surely would help in the short term)."

We know that because we've heard that from staff through this experience and we've all gone through. But what we're seeing one of the drivers for, going back to, this Great Resignation phenomenon is that people have experienced financial loss, family loss, all kinds of loss, emotional loss, social loss, and they're really starting to question like, what is the meaning of life? Why do I put so much into my career when maybe I'm not getting the same level of commitment back? And so, if you were to ask this question of the staff in your organization, what would they say? And if you don't know the answer, I would encourage you to engage in conversation around the meaning of work at your nonprofit, and whether or not they are being positively or negatively...

Sorry for losing my train of thought there.

People are examining why they're putting so much effort and focus and the fact is that we're encouraging organizations to engage in these conversations and understand what the value proposition is for the employees in your organization.

So, as we wrap up today's session, we wanted to leave you with some hope and some strategies for getting your arms around retention in your organization. And one of the things that we'd like to do is just kind of lay out some recommendations for doing so.

The first is to know your numbers. As we've noted several times through today's presentation, there are many organizations that responded to the survey who really are not sure of their turnover rates, their ability to retain, whether or not they have a strategy or whether or not they're engaging tactics.

I would encourage you if you're in that situation, to get a handle on your numbers, understand your turnover waves, understand the extent to which employees are engaged and satisfied. You can do that through surveys, through focus groups, through one-on-one conversations, but get the data any way you can, so you can have a good sense and a real sense for what's going on on the ground in your organization.

Once you have your numbers, then you want to dig deep below the surface and understand what might be driving some of the reasons for turnover and poor retention within your organization. And I would encourage you to look across the spectrum, right? Understand what turnover is looking like by age, by race, by level in your organization, by area of work. Are you are disproportionately impacted, for example, in your organization with people leaving in operations versus programs or fundraising versus finance? Understand that.

I also encourage you to understand better who's leaving who? Are people leaving certain leaders in your organization? And if so, why? Right? We know that people leave leaders, they don't leave organizations. Understanding if you've got some toxic leadership within your organization that's driving premature turnover and driving point retention levels is critically important.

So look, not just at your numbers but also look at it how those numbers are playing out across the various dimensions of diversity that exist within your organization.

We also encourage you to quantify the costs of turnover. Why? Because doing so helps you understand the financial impact on your organization, but it also helps you tell a compelling story to your board if you need their support in terms of resources to turn the tide on turnover within your organization. Quantify those costs and the impact of turnover on mission and goals, program service delivery. Are your clients, those who you're serving in the community, are they satisfied with the services that they're receiving from you? And if they're not, is there a connection between your turnover rates, the level and extent to which staff are engaged and satisfied and the quality of service that you're delivering? And then, of course, understanding the impact on surviving staff, which we cannot minimize, that's really, really important.

Be intentional about understanding those intersections of culture, rewards, autonomy and leadership because they really do run together. How are those things impacting your ability to keep staff? Is your culture toxic? Do you have contemporary benefits? And are you paying at market? If you don't know, try to get your arms and legs around that and understand what's happening in your organization because there's definitely a relationship between cultural health within an organization, your rewards practices, the extent to which people feel a sense of autonomy and control over their work and the quality of leadership at your organization. Those four things contribute to turnover and retention.

And then finally, at least for these first five, seek to understand and leverage the power of flexibility and trust. I know at Nonprofit HR we have, at least for the last 21 years, really focused on being a results-oriented, trust-based environment. We write our policies from that perspective. We expect people are going to do the right thing and have set up our culture in a way that assumes trust.

My question to you is, have you done the same? Has your organization set itself up to assume that people can be trusted and have you found a way to weave flexibility, however it looks in your organization, into your people and talent management practices? Because that, my friends, is what people are looking for, they want to be trusted. And they want to have the flexibility and the autonomy to do the work in a way that works for them. Now, that doesn't mean you don't have policies. It doesn't mean you don't have rules. But being able to communicate and practice trust and flexibility is essential in today's work environment.

A couple of other things that we'd like to recommend that you consider as you work toward having a successful employee retention practice within your organization is to really look across the dimensions of diversity—again, age, race, area of work, organizational level—and tailoring retention programs based on the data that you collect. Right? Even if you just look at your turnover data as a single metric point, look at the data with those slices in mind. And then modify and design your retention programs in a way that addresses each of those areas because we find that a tailored approach to retention program design is really a more effective approach.

If you've not already defined and communicated your organization's employee value proposition, do so and then communicate that regularly. Why should people not only come to work for your nonprofit, but stay at your nonprofit? Sell yourself as an employer, not just to prospective employees, but in those who've chosen to be there. Remind them. Sell yourself as an employer, and do what you can to remind staff why working at ABC nonprofit, your nonprofit, was a good decision. Right?

Don't take for granted that your mission is enough. It used to be that "I'm passionate about animal welfare, so I'm going to go work for an animal welfare organization. And regardless of how they treat me, regardless of how they pay me, I'm in it for the mission." Well, people are making different employment decisions. And they're approaching work in a very different way. And so, as compelling as your mission may be, it's not enough anymore. You also need to look at your reward systems, your culture practices and the quality of leadership because that will be a determinant in how you are able to retain staff.

Understand that money matters sometimes, and sometimes it doesn't. So we can't always pay our way out of a retention problem by just throwing more money at people. And in most cases, most organizations, for-profit and nonprofit, cannot leverage money alone or use money alone as a strategy for keeping staff. If you pay them really well, if you're the 75th percentile as a nonprofit organization, that's great. But if your culture is toxic or your leadership is consistently ineffective, no matter how much you pay, you won't be able to keep folks. So know that money can matter, but it doesn't always matter and understanding your staff's relationship with money and their perception and the value that they place on money is an important thing to do. And you can get that information through conversations, again, through surveys, through focus groups, ask the questions that you want answers to.

Finally, do not neglect your highest performers. As I mentioned before, some organizations are doing employee experience interviews or stay interviews with their highest performers. I would encourage you to do the same. Engage those highest performers, not only to understand what's working, but to get their brain power and their contributions to solutions that will help drive employee retention. And then, once you hear from them, take action. Don't just ask for information and do nothing with it, but take action and repeat that process on an ongoing, continuous basis. Doing so will really help to inform your retention strategy and give you the tools and information that you need to make employee retention front and center of your talent management practices.

With that, I would like to just share a quick snapshot of our survey respondents. We had over 500 organizations respond, representing 30 mission types and areas of focus. The budget ranges range from 5 million to 500 million. So, chances are that there was a nonprofit that responded to the survey that's very much like the organization that you represent. We had a very strong representation with 38 states being represented in the survey, and we found that the majority of the organizations that responded to the survey were in the mature or growth-level phase of their organizational development. So they were not startups, but organizations that have been around for quite some time.

And so, I'd like to turn it back over to talk about Atokatha to answer any remaining questions. But on behalf of Nonprofit HR, I certainly want to thank you for joining us today. I hope you got some valuable information and some strategies and tactics that you can use to improve retention at your organization. Certainly, we're available to assist at the organizational level. If you have questions or concerns or need some thought partnership, we're here for you. But for today, let's take the questions that are coming from you. I'm here to listen and hopefully can answer as many questions as possible at the time we have remaining. Atokatha?

**Atokatha Ashmond Brew:** Great, thank you so much Lisa for your presentation. It's very timely and we do have lots of questions that are coming in, so we'll get through as many of them as we can.

**Lisa Brown Alexander:** OK.

**Atokatha Ashmond Brew:** What are some of the best practices for retention given the pandemic we are still experiencing and the Great Resignation that you shared information about earlier? Ideally, if they can understand the top three things that HR can do to retain their key talent, that would be great.

**Lisa Brown Alexander:** Yeah, I would say there are three things. A focus on well-being, right? Really understanding the humanity of the employees that work for you. Leaning in more on flexibility and autonomy to the extent that you can look at your policies through the lens of, why are we doing this? And does it support the flexibility that employees are demanding right now? And three, understanding the relationship that employees have with their supervisors. Those will be three things that I would encourage you to really focus in on right now through these COVID streets that we're all finding ourselves on. So, a focus on autonomy and flexibility, understanding the relationship with supervisors. Those are things that we're seeing as being really, really critical —and giving people a sense that you care about their humanity because we're all facing our humanity in ways that we never thought we would before. And, first and foremost, we are people coming to this work environment. And we need to acknowledge and celebrate and recognize that as employers.

**Atokatha Ashmond Brew:** Hey, here's another question. How are you defining high performer?

**Lisa Brown Alexander:** Well, that depends on each organization. But if you had to look across the landscape of people who are making the most impact in your organization, based on the performance standards that you've defined as an organization, every organization will have a top tier, right? When you think about who's kind of knocking it out of the park on a consistent basis in your organization, those are your, those tend to be your highest performers. And so that's how many organizations gauge.

Others will do it in a very quantitative way, looking at performance management scores and identifying high performers that way. I would argue that it's probably a combination of both qualitative and quantitative measures, but your highest performers tend to be the top 10% to 15% of people who you can't live without. And if they walked out the door tomorrow, you would be devastated.

**Atokatha Ashmond Brew:** OK, how do you measure cost of turnover other than time and cost of recruiting? How do you put a dollar figure on the learning curve cost of others covering open positions, opportunity costs, et cetera?

**Lisa Brown Alexander:** No, really good question. Opportunity costs are harder to measure in dollars. It's really measured in opportunities lost and won, right? So, for example, if, as a result of having high turnover in your fundraising department, you lose the opportunity to get a grant or contract with the state or the city, that's an opportunity cost lost. Now, you can, in many cases, attach a dollar amount to that, but for high turnover, you would have received a grant of \$100,000. That's very tangible, right?

So that's one way that you can measure understanding how long it takes you to onboard someone fully in terms of time and then, attaching that time or measuring it and by salary, right? So if it takes 100 hours to get someone fully acclimated to your environment and up and running under normal circumstances, but it is taking you 200 hours then you know that there's an opportunity cost there. There's a dollar amount that you're spending over and above what you would normally do. The cost of recruiting is another way to manage or measure costs that you're spending. How much money are you spending in recruitment advertising, in recruitment time, in reshaping your brand and your reputation publicly? Those are some other ways that you can measure the costs are turnover in your organization and the cost of poor retention.

**Atokatha Ashmond Brew:** I think you just touched on it, Lisa, regarding retention metrics, but that is one specific question. What should be included in the retention metrics?

**Lisa Brown Alexander:** That's really driven by what's important to you as an organization. We reflected on that earlier in today's session, and each of you will get a copy of today's presentation, and can then reflect on the retention metrics that organizations are using and tracking. And so, we will send that along to you shortly.

**Atokatha Ashmond Brew:** Should you ask employees about their personal intent to leave the organization?

**Lisa Brown Alexander:** If you suspect that there on the edge, if you suspect, or have evidence, that they are disengaging, I would absolutely ask that question.

Have a direct conversation with the employee to say, “How are you feeling? Are you contemplating leaving?” At least you will be prepared. Nothing is worse than learning or someone has resigned and you're blindsided. So if you suspect that someone in your organization is teetering on the edge, their performance has diminished or they're just not showing up emotionally for their work, have a conversation. Don't be surprised. Ask them for their feedback. Because in so doing, you may actually be able to save that person from leaving, right? You may be able to engage them in an employee experience conversation that gives you the kind of insight that you need to adjust, course correct and retain.

**Atokatha Ashmond Brew:** I love the idea of a stay interview and a retention survey. How do you accomplish this in a small organization of five employees without singling out any one employee?

**Lisa Brown Alexander:** Well, interview everyone.

Ask everyone. Come up with a set of questions, and we've got a couple of templates at [nonprofithr.com](http://nonprofithr.com) you can access, but ask a couple of very basic but poignant questions. What causes you to come back to work every day? What element of our environment or the work is bringing you challenges? And then, what's bringing you joy? If you can focus on just those three questions and ask that of everyone, you will get some insight into what's working and what's causing people to stay and what's not working and causing them to contemplate a career move.

**Atokatha Ashmond Brew:** Do you have a recommendation for how often organizations should do market comparisons for salaries?

**Lisa Brown Alexander:** Absolutely. Best practice is that happen to every two to three years, because the market does change frequently. It's not recommended to do it every year, it can be costly. But certainly, every couple of years, getting your finger on the pulse of where you are vis-à-vis the market is a good thing to do. And the market can change quickly and significantly. We know, for example, that as a result of COVID and high turnover, we're seeing salaries move quite quickly. And so, the last time you did a compensation analysis or a benchmarking analysis at your nonprofit was 5 or 10 years ago, chances are you're off market. That's a pretty good chance you're off market, because so much has changed in the last few years in particular.

**Atokatha Ashmond Brew:** What strategies can be employed by organizations with limited budgets?

**Lisa Brown Alexander:** It doesn't cost any money to engage employees in conversation.

When you engage in conversation, you can also be transparent about your limitations from a resource perspective. But oftentimes, people want to be heard more than anything else. Now, that said, don't listen and fail to act, because if you listen, there is an assumption on the part of most employees that you're going to do something with what you heard. And so, gather the information, identify what you can respond to, identify what you can't and then, come back to your staff and communicate that. Even if you have no money, many of the things that the staff will share feedback with you on may not require a dime, but it may require a different mindset, an adjustment. And leadership's understanding, perception and comfort with things like autonomy, flexibility, revised schedules, shifts in work—some of those things don't actually take money, but a change in mindset. So it's not impossible, even if you're a resource-constrained organization.

**Atokatha Ashmond Brew:** This is another resource-constrained question, Lisa, and this one is: How can organizations address the dilemma of raising pay to hire in a tough market and manage pay for current employees within a limited budget?

**Lisa Brown Alexander:** That's a tough one, because salaries are inflating at a higher rate than we've ever seen before.

And so, this is where you engage your board in helping them understand that maybe your organization has lost or kind of fallen behind—you'll need to do the benchmarking data to prove that—but if that's the case, helping them understand that if we don't retain staff, our ability to carry out our mission will be significantly impacted.

And getting the board's partnership to identify new resources, ideally unrestricted funds. Identifying resources that will help you be able to invest in a way that will stem the tide of involuntary departures and to slow your turnover down. But it is important. Money does matter, right? And so, if you know that your organization is significantly behind the eight ball when it comes to compensation, that will absolutely have an impact on your ability not only to keep staff, but to attract new ones.

And so, in the spirit of equity, you want to be sure that there is not a huge difference between what you're paying new incoming staff and what you're paying former staff, and that may mean closing that gap. And if you're a resource constrained, you're going to need to partner and engage your board and your leadership to help you identify new resources to close that gap. Failing to do so will ultimately have an impact on your ability to carry out your mission.

**Atokatha Ashmond Brew:** OK, Lisa, we do have a few more questions coming in, and here's one. How can you address the issue of retention through change, especially, about how to avoid brain drain and the loss of historical knowledge?



**Lisa Brown Alexander:** I'm going to need you to read that one more time.

**Atokatha Ashmond Brew:** Can you address the issue of retention through change, especially how to avoid brain drain and the loss of historical knowledge?

**Lisa Brown Alexander:** Yeah, so brain drain happens when your highest, most impactful employees leave your organization at a rate higher than you can manage, right? It is to be expected that eventually some of your higher performers will leave. But if you have an exodus of high performers and an exodus of high impact performers, then you will experience that brain drain. And so, in order to keep those people, you need to understand what's important to them, and what in your environment is working for them and what's not.

Once you have that information, you've got to do something with it, because once you're able to retain your high performers, you're not going to experience that brain drain. It is also important to have some mechanism within your organization for knowledge transfer, so that knowledge doesn't just live and rest with one or two people who've been there for 20 or 30 years. But that knowledge that sits in the heads of those people is being imparted and transferred to other staff who can carry on the legacy that those individuals have held, right? So it's really important to be open in the sharing of information, in the sharing of strategies and best practices, as a way of ensuring sustainability within your organization. So, being an open knowledge, open information sharing environment, really can help do that.

And then, of course, getting that information out of the heads of your long timers and people who may be carrying a lot of data, getting that quantified and documented and put somewhere where others can reference it is really critical as well.

**Atokatha Ashmond Brew:** OK, here's another.

When you say understanding the relationships between supervisors and supervisees, what are some tools for exploring those relationships if you're in HR or leadership and needing visibility into other people's supervising relationships?

**Lisa Brown Alexander:** Well, if you're in leadership, you have the privilege of asking for that information, right? And so, you can do that by way of surveys. You can do that by way of focus groups. I would recommend surveys, because that provides a level of anonymity that most people will find safe. But understanding, asking staff to rate their relationships with their supervisors, asking them to share elements of the relationship that are really working for them and those that aren't. And then taking that data and understanding where you have opportunities to help strengthen the leadership skills of those who are in position of your organization or even making some changes to transition people out.

Sometimes the biggest problems are with leaders themselves, and sometimes they need to go. Sometimes they are the cause of brain drain and premature resignation. And so, you have to weigh the cost benefit. Does it make sense to hold onto a toxic leader at the expense of employees? Or do you say, "You know what, this person is no longer serving the interests of the organization and our staff, and we need to transition them out." And so, that would be my answer to that.

**Atokatha Ashmond Brew:** This is one that's current, Lisa, that I thought you might want to respond to.

I'm very much interested in learning more about building an inclusive culture as a strategy for employee retention.

**Lisa Brown Alexander:** Mhmm, no it's essential. I mean, so many organizations are more attuned than they've ever been to the importance of inclusion and equity and diversity. And so, I applaud that person for wanting to get on a journey to be more inclusive. We do have a DEI practice at Nonprofit HR that can help you think that's true, but there's also a ton of publicly available literature that talks about and shares practices that organizations are engaging in to become more inclusive.

One of the hallmarks of inclusive organizations is ensuring that there's a strong sense of belonging, that people have a voice and that they feel heard, right? That's a hallmark of being an inclusive organization. And in order for folks to have a voice, you need to create a safe space for them to speak up and create the psychological safety that employees need to be able to be open. Encourage a feedback-rich environment by expecting that of your leaders and ensuring that there is safety when people do share. It doesn't mean you may or will agree, but creating an environment where you actively promote that you're seeking feedback from staff is a really good way of fostering an inclusive workplace.

And then, being intentional about helping people feel a sense of belonging. And if you're not sure if they feel like they belong, then ask. It's so amazing we fail to ask, in many instances, for the information that we want. Nine times out of ten employees want to provide that, but they're never asked and so, ask the questions. Be honest about your failures and your challenges as an organization, and make yourself vulnerable because in so doing, you will put people at ease and they'll understand that they can be part of the solution, and that it's not an us versus them kind of dynamic. It takes time, it takes effort, it takes intention, but it absolutely can be done.

**Atokatha Ashmond Brew:** Great, Lisa, I know you shared some feedback on feedback. Here's another question related to it.

Do you recommend 360 performance reviews as a way for employer employees to share feedback about their supervisors and peers? If so, are there any resources to help organizations implement this?

**Lisa Brown Alexander:** Absolutely, 360 [feedback] came about probably 15 years ago, at least that amount of time, in the talent management space, the HR space. And they really can be effective in helping you get a broad brush understanding of how leaders are showing up at an organization.

So, I certainly encourage the use of them. I think they can be very informative. More often than not, they are used not as a performance management tool, but as a developmental tool to help you understand where you can help to strengthen the skills and competencies of your leadership. And so, I absolutely encourage the use of them as a way of better understanding the environment. And then, it's critical that you use that data to help strengthen those leaders to be even better than they may be.

**Atokatha Ashmond Brew:** All right, we're coming down to the tail end. I think we've got time for two quick questions. Just two more. Here's the one.

We received feedback that our exit survey was biased toward positive responses, which inhibit truth that needs to be heard. Do you have a recommended exit survey script? Also, do you have a recommended question for stay surveys?

**Lisa Brown Alexander:** We do have some recommended samples for stay interviews, or an employee experience interview. We also have some suggested questions for exit interviews. I will say that I think there's much more power in the stay interview than there is in an exit interview. And, perhaps engaging the staff, and this is where we draw on inclusion and giving people voice is, rally together a representative sample of your workforce and get them to help you produce something that may be more effective in terms of an employee experience interview, or engage the services as a consultant who's experienced in the space and can lend the best practices from other industries and other organizations.

I would always lean more toward a stay interview. It gives you the data earlier on in the employee relationship as opposed to when they are departing and out the door. But, if you're asking questions in a way that folks feel are biased then get those folks to help you craft something better. Yeah, I'm a strong proponent of employee engagement through participation and solution making, and I think that you tend to get the best results and the best products when you engage a broad stroke and diverse stroke of your staff.

**Atokatha Ashmond Brew:** Thank you, Lisa, and we'll share the link to that stay interview questionnaire that Nonprofit HR has created in the chat feature. The last question has to do with your prediction, and the request is if you would share your prediction about the future of talent retention.

**Lisa Brown Alexander:** Good question, great way to end.

I would say my prediction is that remote work and hybrid workplaces are here to stay. This is not a phenomenon that will end when we are in a post-COVID world. I think it will be very difficult for us to go back to requiring people to come into the workplace when many, many organizations have been able to exist without people physically coming in, particularly those who thought it was absolutely impossible. They're going to be very hard-pressed to make a case to their staff that they've got to come back. So virtual, remote work is a long-term trend that I see happening going forward.

I would also say a greater emphasis on employee autonomy and understanding the power of giving people space and place to determine how they move in your organization is going to be incredibly important. Employees are in the driver's seat right now, and if your organization fails to recognize that, you will end up on the short end of the stick. And so, we know that employees are looking for flexibility, they're looking for autonomy, and it's important to engage them in conversation about how that shows up for your particular nonprofit.

So, I would say long-term remote work is at play, greater flexibility and autonomy being woven into policies and practices and work design and then a greater focus on well-being. COVID taught us to be dialed in to our health, our mental health, our physical health, our emotional health and our spiritual health. And those nonprofits that will thrive and survive through and after COVID will be those that recognize, celebrate, embrace and encourage employees to bring their humanity to work, and ensure that humanity is anchored in a place of wellness, not just the physical but the mental, the emotional, the spiritual.

And so, those are just for trends that I see having an impact on organizations' ability to retain. Those organizations that fail to understand the importance of autonomy and flexibility, those organizations that demand everybody come back in the physical workplace five or seven days a week, those organizations that fail to recognize the humanity of their staff, those are the nonprofits that will eventually go by the wayside. That is not anyone's fate. And so, I would encourage all who are on this call to really think about that. Think about the power of flexibility, plus trust, plus autonomy. I'm a living witness to the value that it can bring to an organization and encourage you to really explore how those things show up in your employee experience in your nonprofit.

Those are my predictions. We'll see if I'm right. Check in again a year from now, and let's see what actually happens.

**Atokatha Ashmond Brew:** Thank you again, Lisa. Well, that's all the time we have today for Q&A. Thank you to everyone who attended today's webinar. We hope you found it to be valuable.

There are more webinars coming your way in 2021. Be sure to check out our events calendar and [nonprofithr.com/events](https://nonprofithr.com/events).

Also, be sure to complete the survey that will pop up once the webinar has ended. Your comments help us with our planning and can inform topics we cover as well. If you'd like more information about available services or support from Nonprofit HR, please email [info@nonprofithr.com](mailto:info@nonprofithr.com), or visit us online at [nonprofithr.com](https://nonprofithr.com).

Again, thank you so much, Lisa, for this presentation today. Thank you all for attending, and have a wonderful rest of your afternoon.