THE GREAT VALUE EXODUS: OVER HALF OF UNDERVALUED UK WORKERS PLAN TO QUIT IN 2026. NEW RESEARCH FROM PERKBOX ON EMPLOYEE VALUE WARNS OF LOOMING RETENTION CRISIS

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The UK is on the brink of a workplace *Value Exodus*, with new research revealing that 54% of undervalued employees are planning to seek new opportunities in 2026. This crisis of undervaluation is sweeping through UK workplaces; with devastating consequences for retention, productivity and wellbeing according to the report commissioned by global employee benefits platform Perkbox.

The study of 4,000 UK employees for the Perkonomics Report found that 42% feel undervalued at work, driving a dramatic dip in productivity and retention. Among the general workforce, 34% are considering leaving their jobs next year, a figure that spikes sharply among those who feel overlooked. This Value Exodus highlights the widening gap between employee expectations and the Employee Value Proposition (EVP) employers provide.

“Employees' perception of how they are valued by their employers understandably impacts their morale and, in turn engagement and retention,” said Doug Butler, CEO of Perkbox.

“Focused strategies and tools that foster cultures where all employees feel valued are worthwhile investments of time and resources for businesses in our current social and economic environment.”

The Value Gap and why it matters

The research also exposes a critical action gap; while employers and employees are broadly aligned in recognising the importance of feeling valued, execution is lagging. This gap is especially pressing now, as cost-of-living pressures, ongoing skills shortages and the 2026 outlook make retention and engagement more vital than ever. Many employees are also staying put in roles despite feeling overlooked, largely due to financial pressures and fears over job security. But far from solving the problem, this trend risks compounding it:

- Public sector staff feel less valued than private sector peers (6.40 vs 6.92 out of 10).
- Large companies (1,000+ staff) score lowest on employee value (6.21), suggesting recognition gets diluted at scale.
- 40% say their employer isn’t doing enough to make them feel valued.
- Motivation drops by 57% among undervalued employees, alongside a 50% drop in morale and 47% in enthusiasm.

Employers agree on the stakes: 64% link undervaluation to lower productivity and 53% blame it for retention issues.

“The cost of living crisis is dramatically affecting how people live and progress in their careers,” comments Pippa Van Praagh, Vice President of Operations at Perkbox. “At the same time, AI is changing the way we work and reshaping what job security looks like, while constant media coverage about economic and workplace pressures has a huge psychological impact. It’s not surprising that many people feel they’ve ‘lost the point’ of working beyond the need for a paycheque. This crisis of meaning is being reflected in conversations up and down the UK and it’s why showing value and recognition to employees has never been more critical.”

Recognition and benefits: a possible solution

The research shows a clear path to closing the value gap:

- Recognition is the top driver of feeling valued, cited by 53% of employees and 60% of employers, yet only 30% of workplaces currently offer recognition programmes.
- 79% of employees would feel more valued with a tailored benefits package.
- 68% say better benefits would boost productivity, rising to 84% among 25–34-year-olds.

Employees are calling for financial wellbeing support (35%), recognition and reward programmes (30%),

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health and wellbeing initiatives (29%). Employers echo these priorities, though many say they lack the resources to deliver them.

“Employees want to be recognised first and foremost – but it’s clear that there’s a key place for benefits too. Our data suggests they can be an effective lever for productivity and wellbeing and could be a key tool in the fight against the value exodus,” said Butler.

Despite the crisis, there’s still hope as most employees report a strong sense of belonging. The problem isn’t whether they want to be part of their organisation, it’s whether their organisation shows it values them.

“The message is loud and clear,” added Butler. “Employees want to stay and thrive. But without recognition and tailored benefits, they won’t. Employers who close the value gap now will keep their people and future-proof their businesses.”

Company Contact:

Perkbox

E. janelle@beyond-comms.com
W. https://www.perkbox.com

Additional Contact(s):
Please contact Janelle@beyond-comms.com

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