



# Frontline Employee Workplace Survey 2021

Top 5 Challenges Facing Frontline  
Employees and How to Fix Them



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# Introduction

**Business continuity and customer experience depend on frontline employees. And whether they work in retail or in healthcare, in restaurants or in warehouses, frontline employees need support now more than ever.**

How can employers give their frontline teams the support they need to be successful?

To answer that question, employers must consistently re-evaluate their understanding of the frontline employee experience. And that's why we've undertaken this survey.

Over the last year, organizations have had to completely change the way they operate with just days of notice. It's frontline employees who make these rapid strategy shifts possible.

But despite this truth, and despite making up 80% of the global workforce (over 2.7 billion people) frontline employees have been overlooked by investments in human capital.

These are disproportionately allocated to office-based employees with company computers, email addresses and desks — none of which frontline employees have regular access to. As a result, frontline employees aren't equipped with the tools they need to feel fully empowered in their roles.

It's time for that to change.

To fully understand the ins and outs of being a frontline employee, we surveyed 1,000 frontline employees in the US, UK and Canada.

What do your frontline employees need from you to be productive, motivated and empowered? What's holding them back from being at their best, and how can you remove these obstacles?

Keep reading to find out!



# 1,000

**Frontline employees in the US, UK and Canada surveyed across retail, hospitality, manufacturing, logistics and healthcare.**



**Fabrice Haiat**  
CEO & Co-founder of YOOBIC

# Executive Summary

In December 2020, we surveyed 1,000 frontline employees in the UK, US and Canada across industries including retail, hospitality, manufacturing and construction.

Our goal was to hear – directly from frontline employees – which challenges prevent them from performing their best on the job. Here's what those challenges are:



## Disconnect from HQ

34% of frontline employees feel this disconnect



## Insufficient training

40% of frontline employees are only trained once per year or less



## Unproductive task management

71% of frontline employees think digitized tasks would make them more productive



## Underutilized mobile devices

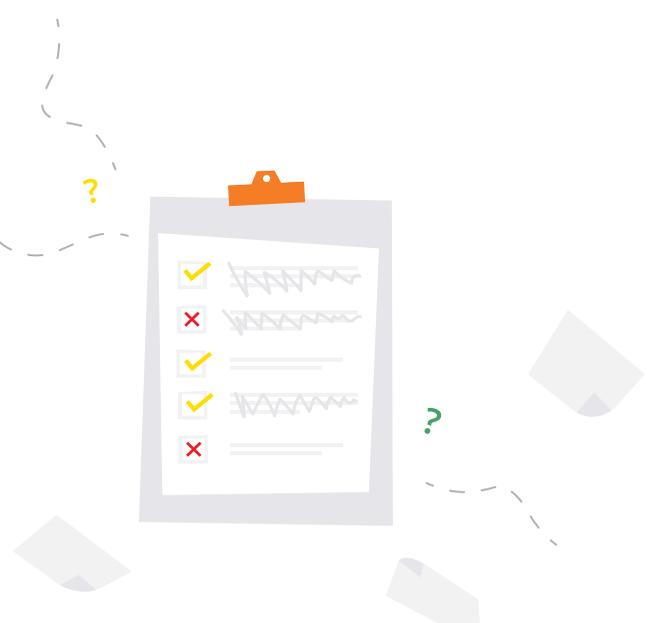
Only 59% of frontline employees use mobile devices on the job despite their potential to transform the frontline employee experience



## Unfulfilled millennials

34% of millennial frontline employees report a lack of career growth vs 17% for other age groups

**This survey shows that employers should better support their frontline teams by addressing each of these 5 challenges.**



# Challenge #1: Frontline employees feel disconnected from their company and peers

When done right, internal communications connects employees to the bigger picture, creates community and collaboration, and drives engagement.

But most organizations don't tailor their internal communications strategy for employees who spend the day on their feet or on the road, with infrequent or non-existent access to a computer. This survey shows the impact of insufficient company communications on frontline employees: disconnect and isolation.



**34%**  
of frontline employees  
feel disconnected  
from HQ



**54%**

**of frontline employees  
receive company  
communications  
via email**



**76%**

**would feel more  
connected if they  
could access company  
communications on a  
mobile device**

This disconnect isn't surprising when we take a deeper look at the outdated tools organizations use to communicate with – and get feedback from – their frontline teams.

Email and company intranet might work just fine when you're sitting at a desk – not so much when you're not. And when frontline employees feel disconnected from the rest of the organization, they also feel disconnected from customers – a recipe for disaster when frontline employees are delivering your brand's promise every day.

# Challenge #1: Frontline employees feel disconnected from their company and peers



## YOOBIC Tip

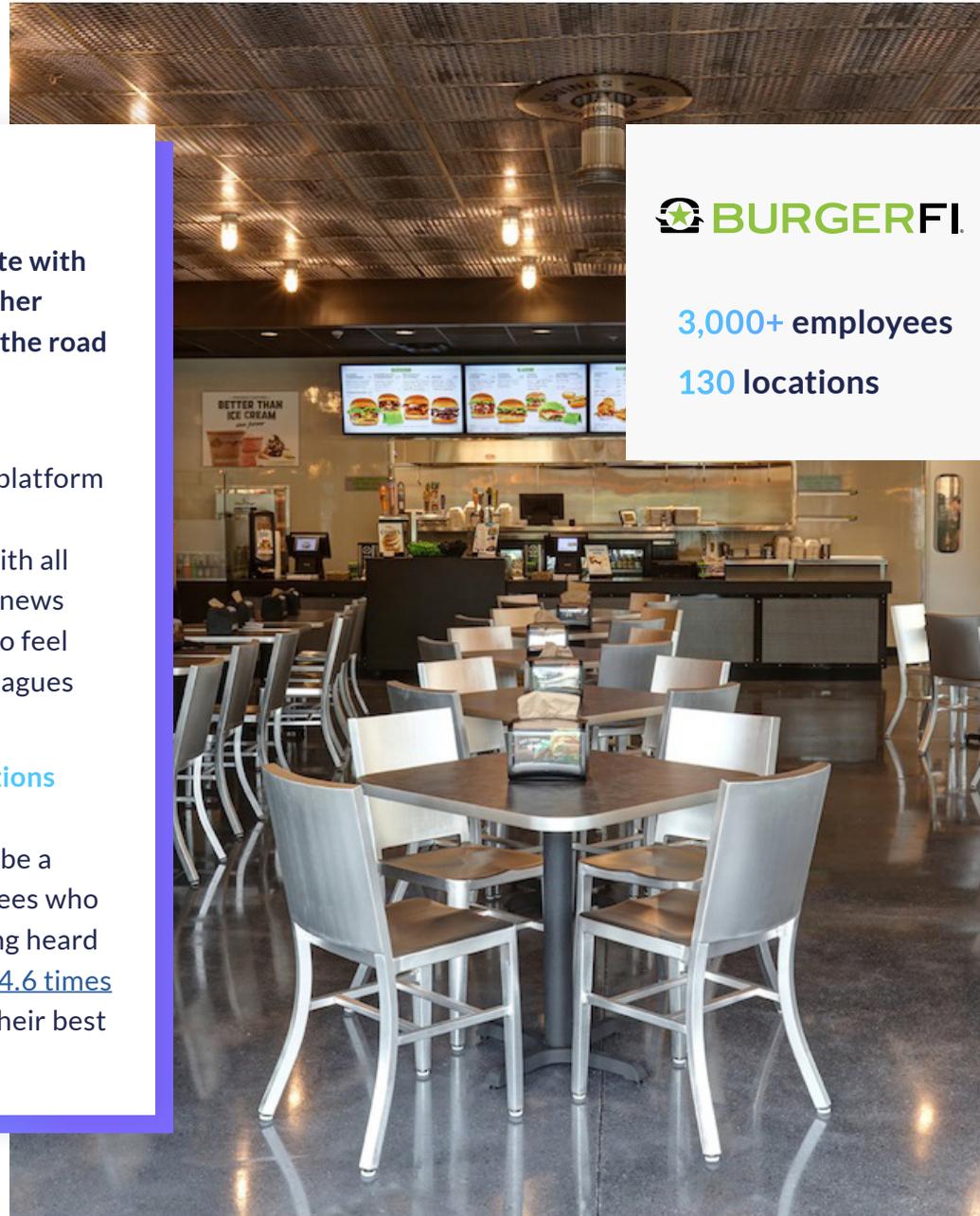
The best way to communicate with frontline employees – whether they're in stores, sites or on the road – is mobile devices.

✓ **Use mobile devices**

Use a dedicated mobile platform or app to keep frontline employees in the loop with all the important company news and updates they need to feel connected, even to colleagues they'll never meet.

✓ **Streamline communications**

Don't forget, company communications should be a two-way street. Employees who feel their voices are being heard within the company are 4.6 times more likely to perform their best work.



 **BURGERFI.**

3,000+ employees

130 locations

*“YOOBIC is a major resource of BurgerFi. We found out how important it truly is during COVID-19. It allows us to reach our 3,000 BurgerFi team members all over the country in real-time.”*

Charles Guzetta  
President of BurgerFi

For fast-growing restaurant chain BurgerFi, their 3,000+ frontline employees spread across 130 locations are at the heart of their success. But when the pandemic hit, this success became entirely dependent on keeping employees informed, motivated and mobilized.

BurgerFi centralized all communications in YOOBIC's mobile platform. Company news, updates, photos, videos and success stories now live in an interactive company newsfeed – perfect for busy restaurant teams on their feet all day. BurgerFi can instantly reach all frontline employees, which has been critical in a time when restaurants have had to completely change the way they operate with days or even hours' notice. 100% of corporate-owned and franchised locations are now using the platform.

## Challenge #2: Frontline employees feel undervalued and insufficiently trained

Workplace training improves performance and makes employees more autonomous.

Training also boosts job satisfaction, career progression and employee retention. However, the survey results show that training isn't keeping up with frontline employee needs, many of which have changed drastically over the last year in response to the pandemic. Almost half of employees are trained only once a year, which simply isn't sufficient considering the rapidly expanding responsibilities of frontline teams.



**40%**  
of frontline employees  
report being trained only  
once a year or less

 **48%**

**of those trained once a year or less report a lack of recognition, vs 32% overall**

 **58%**

**of frontline employees think the most important thing about training is that it's engaging and fun**

**Training is how employers invest in their employees.**

When that investment happens only once, it's no surprise employees feel unrecognized and undervalued. And since frontline staff have far less time for training than office-based staff, over half prefer training that's enjoyable to complete.



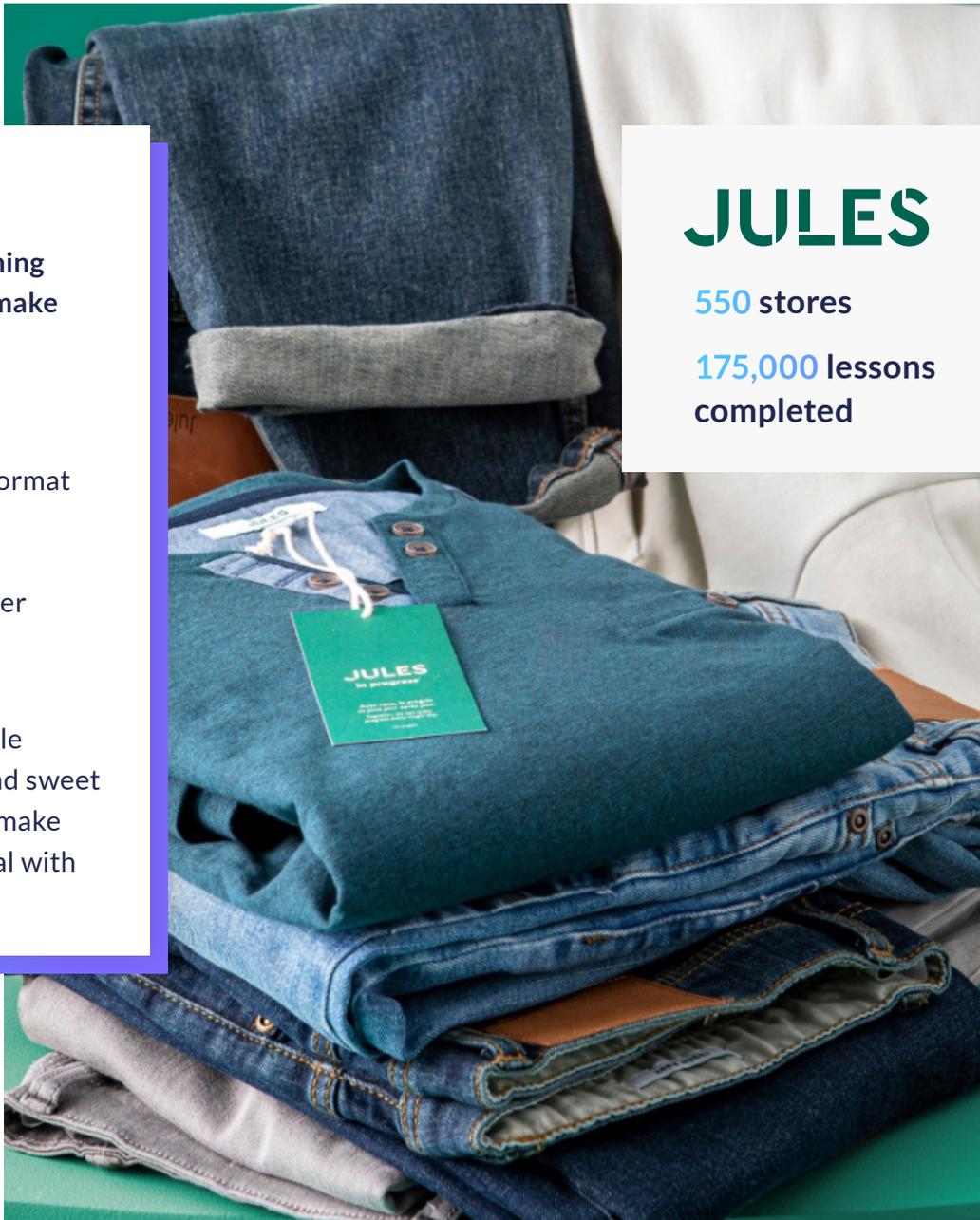
## Challenge #2: Frontline employees feel undervalued and insufficiently trained



### YOOBIC Tip

Successful training is something employees actually *want* to make time for.

- ✓ **Reformat training**  
To make this happen, organizations should reformat training so it's frequent, engaging and accessible – whenever and wherever employees need it.
- ✓ **Make it mobile**  
Deliver training via mobile learning, keep it short and sweet with microlearning, and make it fun, engaging and social with gamification.



## JULES

550 stores

175,000 lessons completed

*“We really wanted to make training available to everyone. When we closed our stores during the lockdown, we noticed the first thing our frontline teams did was to go and complete their training courses while they had more time. This shows that our store teams wanted more training.”*

Christophe Pinçon  
Retail Director Europe, Jules

In 2020, men's fashion retailer Jules revamped their brand image. A key tenet of this revamp was reshaping the in-store experience across 550 stores in 4 countries.

To make the transformation a success, 3,000 store associates and managers had to be thoroughly, consistently and continuously trained on the new strategy. But reaching thousands of frontline employees – and adapting training to the constraints of working in a store – was impossible without the right tool.

By moving to a mobile learning platform with short, interactive and fun courses, Jules has molded workplace learning around the frontline employee experience. As of February 2021, Jules' store teams have completed 7,500 hours of training and 175,000 lessons.

## Challenge #3: Frontline employees need digitized tasks to be more productive

Frontline employee work is typically task and process-driven.

Many of these involve a significant amount of administrative work that, while important, detracts from higher-value activities. Productive employees have more time for impactful work like helping customers, improving quality and managing projects. Frontline employees are completely aware that the outdated, non-digital task management tools their employers provide are damaging their productivity.



**71%**  
of frontline employees  
think digitized processes  
and tasks would make  
them more productive



**73%**

of frontline employees  
are still using paper  
forms

While the rest of the world has gone digital, most frontline employees' task management tools are stuck in the nineties.

Almost  $\frac{3}{4}$  of frontline employees are still using time-consuming and error-prone paper forms to complete tasks and processes.



## Challenge #3: Frontline employees need digitized tasks to be more productive



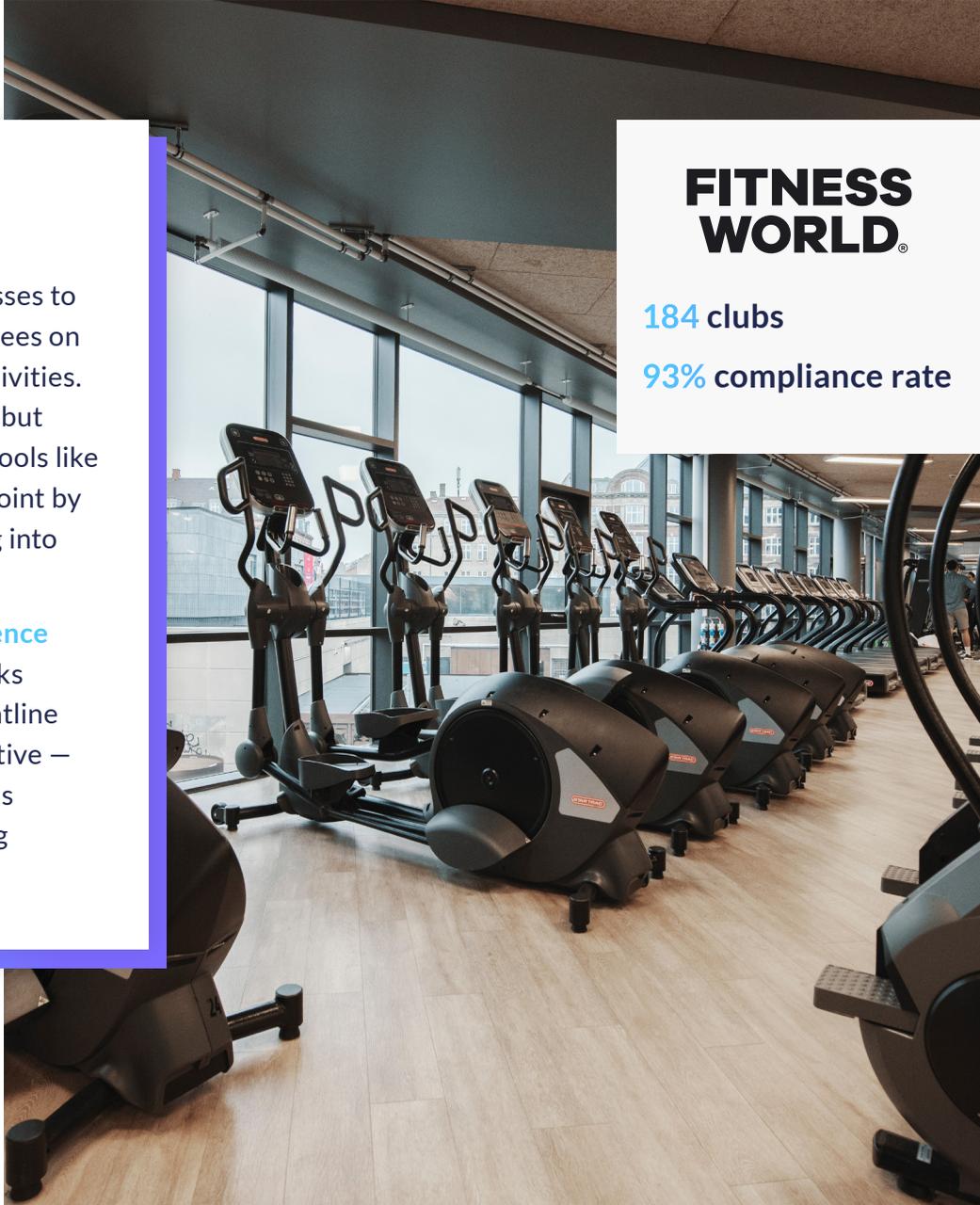
### YOOBIC Tip

#### ✓ Digitize tasks

Digitize tasks and processes to refocus frontline employees on core revenue-driving activities. Eliminate not just paper, but also the use of multiple tools like email, Excel and Powerpoint by consolidating everything into one mobile platform.

#### ✓ Boost employee experience

Not only do digitized tasks and processes make frontline employees more productive – they also make their roles more fulfilling, increasing job satisfaction.



### FITNESS WORLD®

184 clubs

93% compliance rate

*“Tasks are much easier to manage with the YOOBIC platform. Everyone is now aligned with what needs to be done.”*

Daniella Katic

Project Coordinator, Fitness World

**For gym chain Fitness World, maintaining a consistent, high-quality member experience across their 184 clubs was dependent on the quality of task execution.**

But since tasks like equipment and changing room sanitation were managed with paper forms and multiple platforms, each club had a different way of doing things. That made it difficult for head office to verify club compliance with operational standards, which became exponentially more important during the pandemic.

Fitness World digitized all club tasks in a mobile app to give frontline staff the clarity they need to execute processes perfectly. Within the first month, completion of daily and weekly tasks increased by 63%. Clubs are now 93% compliant with operational standards.

## Challenge #4: Mobile devices: underused tools for frontline employee empowerment

Frontline employees might not have regular access to a computer, but they're more than likely to have a mobile device with them or nearby.

Smartphones and tablets are the closest thing frontline employees have to a company computer — whether they're personal or company devices. But just a little over half of frontline staff use them at work. Mobile devices aren't being used to their full potential.



**59%**  
of frontline employees  
use a mobile device  
at work



**70%**

of frontline employees  
think app-based training  
would be easier



**76%**

would feel more  
connected if they  
could access company  
communications on a  
mobile device

Frontline employees are already using apps that make virtually every other area of their lives faster and easier.

It's time organizations harness the full potential of mobile tech and give their teams the power to work in the way the overwhelming majority of employees want to.

## Challenge #4: Mobile devices: underused tools for frontline employee empowerment



### YOOBIC Tip

#### ✓ Stay Connected

Make it even easier for your frontline teams to stay connected, well trained and productive by combining each of these three functions in the same mobile digital workplace. Not only does this cut down on productivity that gets lost when switching between different tools, but it also drives high adoption rates.



*“YOOBIC is our main tool for communicating with stores. We centralized and digitized everything in a single platform: task management, operational processes, communication with stores, training, and sharing best practices. This has helped us be much more agile, because we have instant visibility across our entire network.”*

Corinne Pomonti-Laniez

Commercial & Innovation Project Manager, Petit Bateau

**Children’s clothing retailer Petit Bateau was looking for a way to modernize their processes. But with 200+ stores across Europe, HQ was allocating a disproportionate amount of time to making sure information shared between employees, teams and locations was standardized.**

Since information was stored in different places and on multiple platforms, frontline employees didn’t have easy access to the information they needed to work effectively.

Petit Bateau deployed mobile devices in every store and centralized task management, store communications, and training in a dedicated app for frontline teams. Frontline employees now have a single source of truth, right in the palm of their hand.

## Challenge #5: Millennial frontline employees are the most dissatisfied

It's estimated that millennials will make up 75% of the global workforce by 2025.

That's not far off. Millennials value progression, recognition and growth most highly in their careers, and the survey results show that millennial *frontline* employees are not different. Employers, however, are falling behind expectations on providing fulfilling career paths.



**34%**  
of millennial frontline employees report a lack of career growth, vs 17% for other age groups

 **28%**

**of millennial frontline employees don't feel empowered on the job, vs 17% for other age groups**

 **28%**

**Only 28% of millennials find it easy to understand whether their work meets company expectations, vs. 41% of workers over 54**

Millennials are digital natives. They have the same expectations for the tech they use in the workplace as the tech they use in their personal lives.

Workplace tools should provide clarity and give frontline staff everything they need to perform their best on the job. They should be modern and user-friendly. And as more and more of the global frontline workforce is comprised of millennials and even Gen Z, organizations who don't think it's necessary to provide the right tech will see motivation levels plummet and turnover skyrocket.

## Challenge #5: Millennial frontline employees are the most dissatisfied

### YOOBIC Tip

#### ✓ Ease of use

Ease of use is everything when it comes to mobile tech. Choose a digital workplace that's as easy to use and engaging as a social media platform. That means presenting information in a way that's highly visual, easy to digest and interactive.



**TOMLINSON'S**

150 store associates

*"If you have an employee base that's used to swiping and scrolling and that's how they gather their information, and then you pull them into a classroom and sit them down and hand them a pencil and paper, that may not be the way that that generation learns fast, and they may not feel heard, understood and engaged. You have to meet them on their terms."*

Kate Knecht

Brand Director, Tomlinson's

Frontline employee knowledge and skills set healthy pet food retailer Tomlinson's Feed apart from their competitors.

However, training wasn't adapted to Tomlinson's largely Gen Z and millennial workforce, since it was done in-person using paper or PDF materials.

Tomlinson's centralized all training in a mobile platform. Since the platform is engaging, fun and easy for everyone to use, it's been a hit. "We've never rolled out a platform or new tech/system that's been met with such high praise."

# Frontline Employee Challenges: Leaders and Laggards

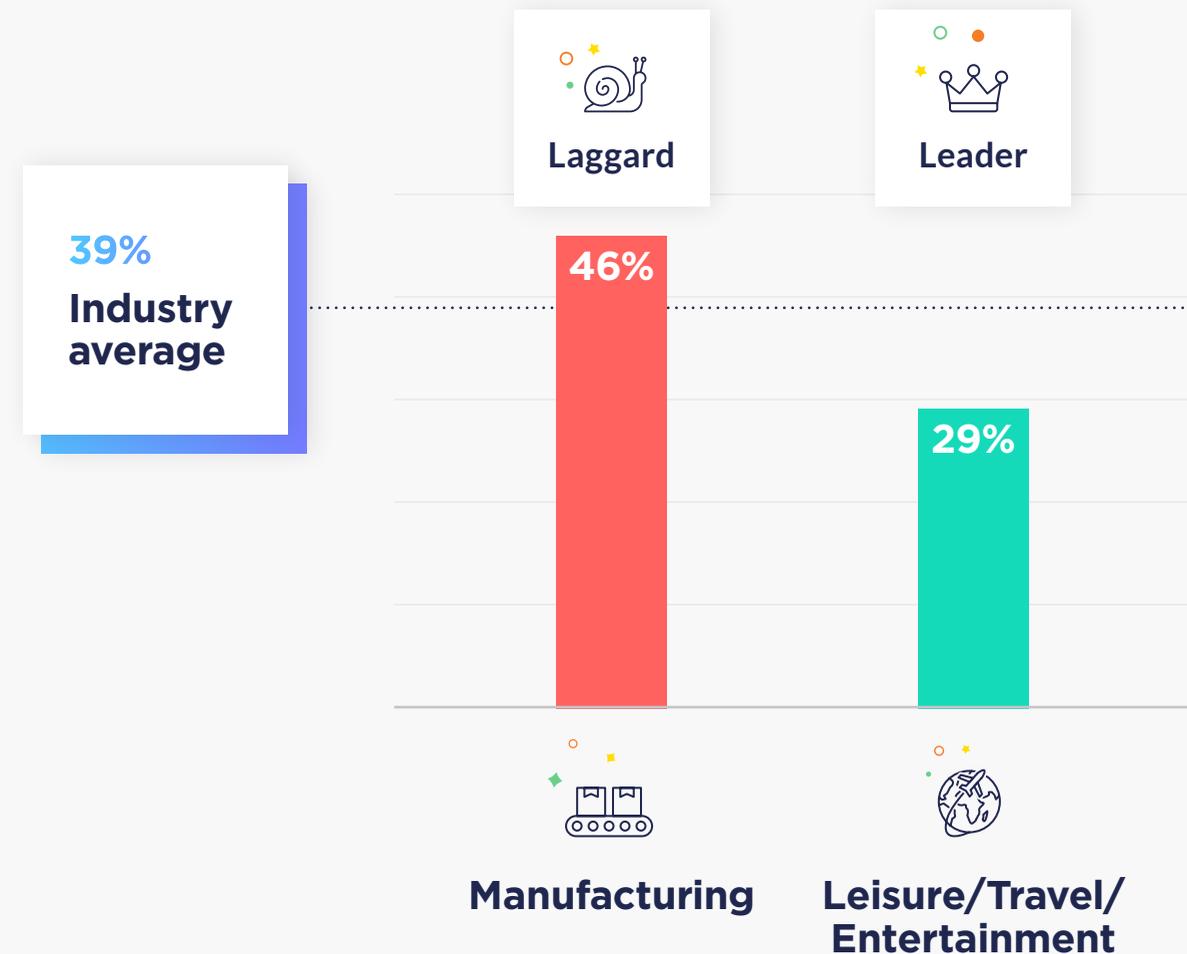
We've seen so far that feeling disconnected, undervalued and unproductive are all everyday realities for most frontline employees.

But although they have many challenges in common that stem from deskless work across multiple sites and locations, frontline employee responsibilities and work environments are just as diverse as the industries they work in.

Breaking down the results by industry, we can see that some industries are ahead of the pack with addressing frontline employee challenges, while others are lagging behind.

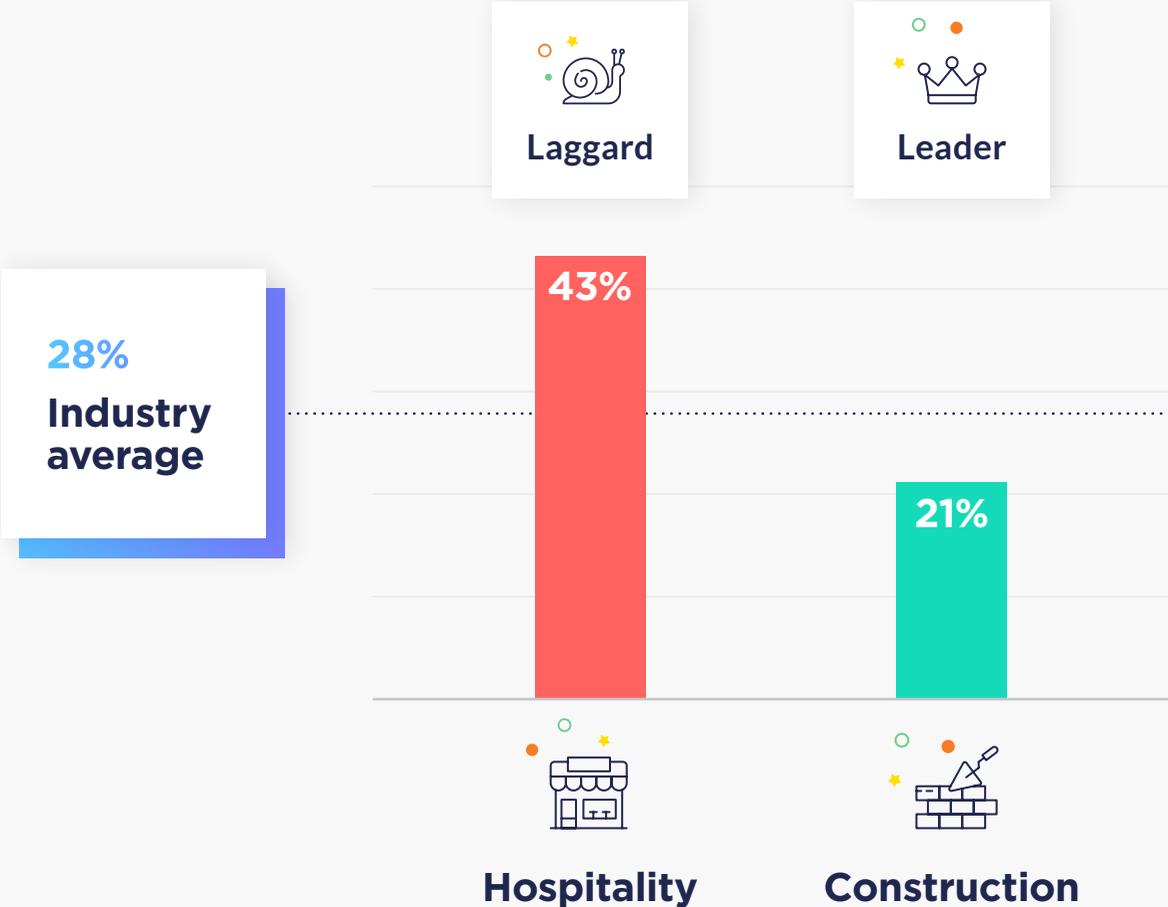


## Isolated work environment

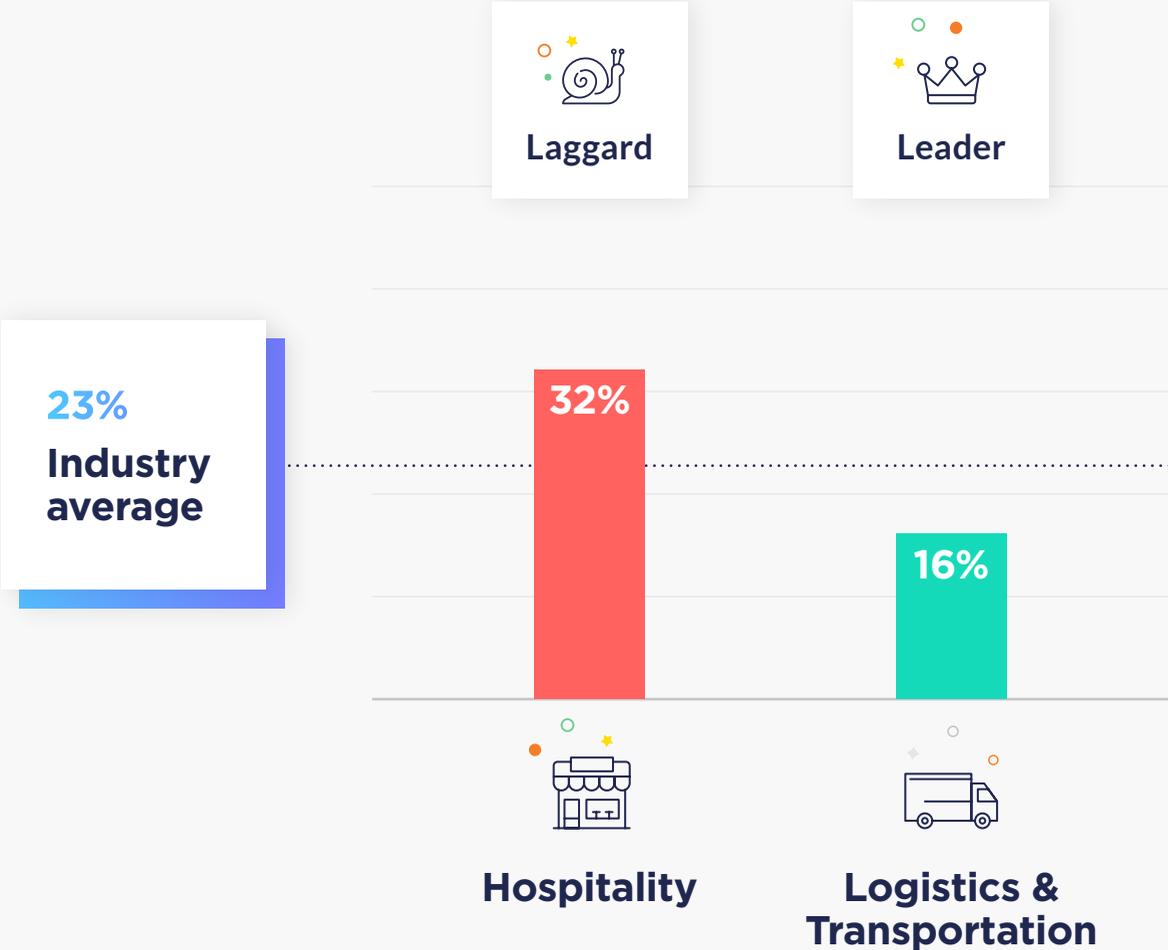


# Frontline Employee Challenges: Leaders and Laggards

## Lack of Career Growth



## Lack of Training

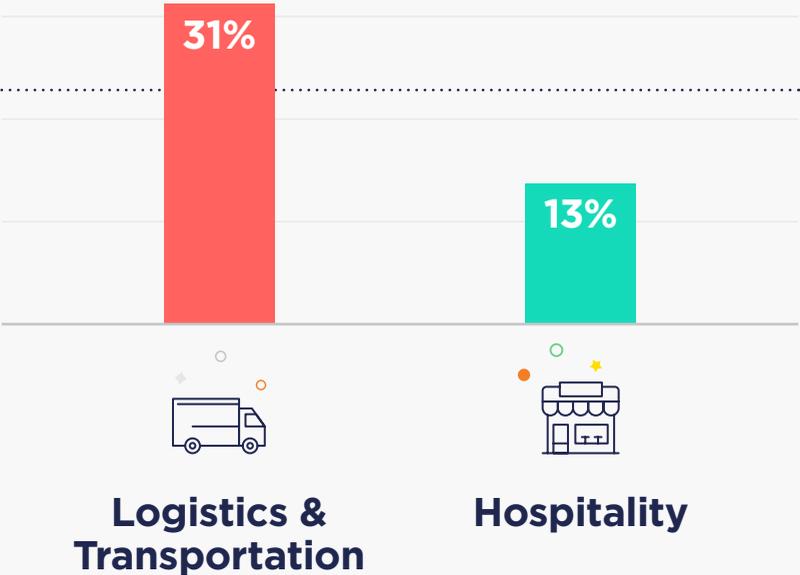


# Frontline Employee Challenges: Leaders and Laggards

## Outdated Software Tools



**23%**  
Industry  
average



# Key Takeaways

The lion's share of investments in human capital still go to desk-based workers. It's time for organizations to overhaul this old paradox and empower frontline staff to do their best work by giving them the right tools and tech to make that happen.

Organizations have a lot to gain by investing in frontline employees, including:

- + Increased engagement and job satisfaction
- + Increased customer satisfaction
- + Increased productivity and efficiency
- + Fewer errors and incidents on the job
- + Higher quality products and services

How can organizations start empowering their frontline employees?



By harnessing the full potential of mobile devices to:

- ✓ Connect and engage with employees by making company communications accessible to everyone
- ✓ Develop and empower employees with knowledge by reformatting training
- ✓ Support and liberate employees to focus on empowering work by digitizing tasks and processes



# Survey Methodology

### Timeframe

Survey conducted in December 2020



### Geography



66%  
United States



26%  
United Kingdom

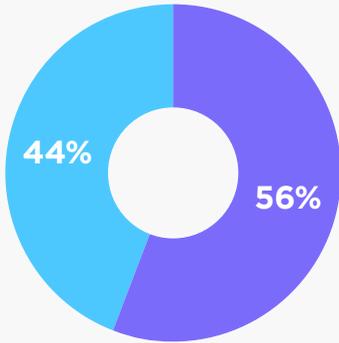


8%  
Canada

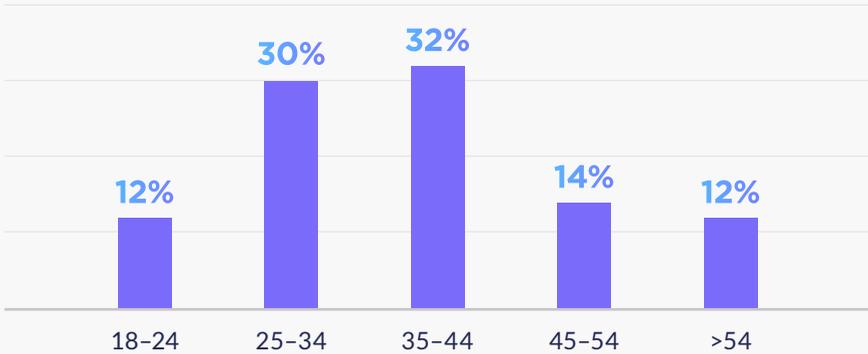
Conducted by Pollfish

### Survey Participant Profile

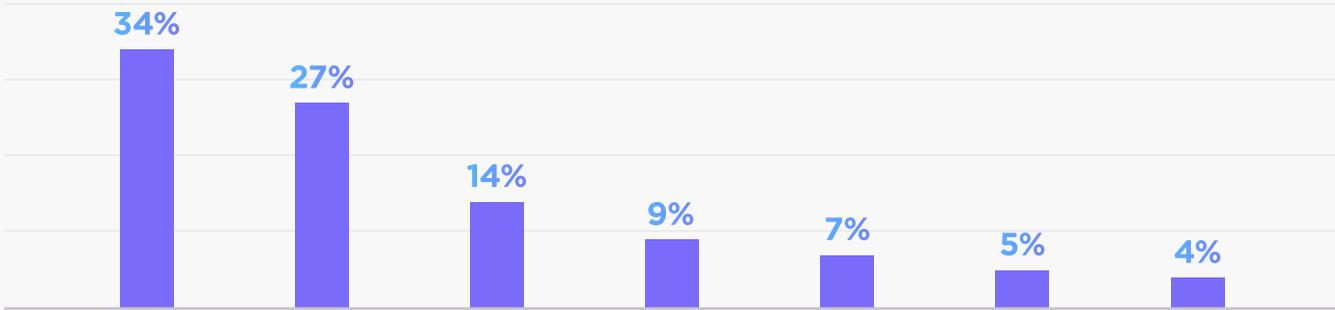
1,000 survey participants



■ Women ■ Men



■ % of participants



■ % of participants

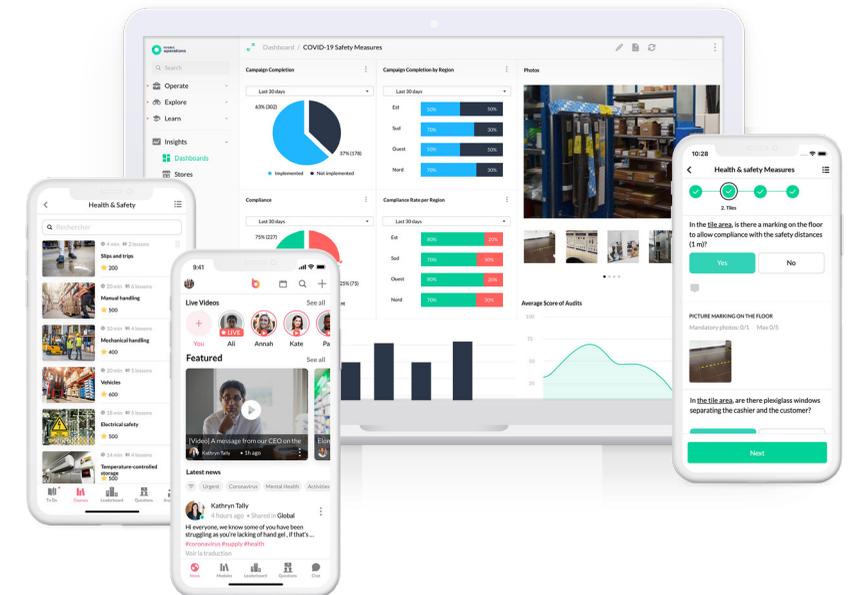
# About YOOBIC



200+ organizations including Boots, Lidl, Domino's, Carrefour, Lacoste, Peloton, Sanofi and Mazda are using YOOBIC's digital workplace to improve the frontline employee experience and empower their teams.

- Interactive company communications connects frontline teams and builds community across locations.
- Digitized, streamlined task management gives staff exactly what they need to be at their most productive.
- Fun, engaging microlearning courses make retaining knowledge and career growth effortless.

See for yourself how YOOBIC can help you empower your frontline employees – whatever 2021 has in store.



LEARN MORE

