

**DRAFT**



# *Thriving Workplace Manifesto*

*A shared covenant between leaders, managers, and employees  
for creating workplaces where humans thrive and businesses  
lead through how they operate, not just what they produce.*

# Why This Manifesto Was Drafted

We stand at an inflexion point in the history of work. Artificial intelligence is reshaping entire industries. Global talent expectations have fundamentally shifted. The social contract between employers and employees is being rewritten in real-time.

Organisations face a critical choice: adapt to create workplaces where humans genuinely thrive while achieving sustainable business excellence, or risk becoming irrelevant as both talent and customers gravitate toward competitors who master this integration.

This manifesto emerged from a comprehensive analysis of research spanning organisational psychology, economics, philosophy, and real-world implementation across hundreds of companies.

We examined meta-analyses covering over 100,000 employees, case studies from leading organisations, and the convergent thinking of philosophers, business leaders, and economists who are reshaping our understanding of what makes both humans and businesses flourish.

## The Evidence-Based Approach

Rather than idealistic platitudes, this document synthesises rigorous research to identify the specific conditions that consistently produce both human thriving and business excellence. We drew from:

- **Universal work values research** indicates that autonomy, competence, relatedness, fairness, security, and purpose are fundamental human needs that transcend cultural boundaries.
- **Large-scale performance studies** demonstrate that organisations in the top quartile for employee engagement achieve 17% higher productivity, 41% lower absenteeism, and 65% lower turnover.
- **AI transformation case studies** from companies like Microsoft and Salesforce demonstrate that human-centred technology integration creates competitive advantages while enhancing, rather than diminishing, human contribution.
- **Philosophical frameworks** from thinkers like Martha Nussbaum and Michael Sandel that provide ethical foundations for why human dignity and

meaningful contribution cannot be sacrificed for efficiency gains.

- **Economic modelling** shows that stakeholder-focused approaches generate superior long-term returns while creating more resilient business models.

## The Urgency of This Moment

Three converging forces make this manifesto not just useful, but essential:

- **The Great Recalibration:** Post-pandemic, 54% of workers report leaving jobs because they don't feel valued by managers, while 94% would stay longer with meaningful career development opportunities. The old transactional employment relationship is dying. Organisations that don't evolve will face permanent talent disadvantages.
- **The AI Revolution:** With 39% of workplace skills expected to change by 2030 and AI agents joining workforces in 2025, the companies that thrive will be those that enhance human capabilities rather than simply replace them. This requires intentional design of human-AI collaboration, not accidental displacement.
- **The Stakeholder Capitalism Shift:** Customers, investors, and regulators increasingly evaluate organisations on how they treat their people, not just their profit margins. Microsoft's ranking as America's most stakeholder-focused company correlates with its position as the world's most valuable company—demonstrating that doing right by people drives market leadership.

## The Commitment Imperative

This manifesto, or its equivalent, requires commitment because transformation demands sustained effort against short-term pressures. Creating conditions for human thriving often conflicts with quarterly earnings optimisation. Building psychological safety requires vulnerability from leaders accustomed to projecting certainty. Investing in widespread skill development costs money before it generates returns.

Yet the organisations that make and keep these commitments will possess insurmountable competitive advantages:

- **Talent magnetism:** Top performers will choose them and stay with them.
- **Innovation acceleration:** Psychologically safe, engaged employees generate breakthrough ideas at exponentially higher rates.
- **Customer advocacy:** Thriving employees create exceptional customer experiences that competitors cannot replicate through technology alone.
- **Resilience:** Organisations with high trust and adaptability navigate disruption more successfully.
- **Sustainable performance:** Rather than burning through people to achieve short-term results, they build organisational capacity for sustained excellence

## The Cost of Inaction

Organisations that fail to embrace this evolution face predictable consequences already visible across industries:

- **The Talent Exodus:** Companies with low engagement scores lose their top talent to competitors who offer not just better pay, but also better experiences. The cost of replacing a skilled employee ranges from 50% to 200% of their annual salary.
- **The Innovation Penalty:** Organisations with low psychological safety and rigid hierarchies lose the innovation race to more agile, collaborative competitors. In rapidly changing markets, this becomes an existential threat.
- **The Customer Defection:** Customers increasingly choose brands based on values alignment and experience quality. Disengaged employees create mediocre experiences that drive customer churn.
- **The Regulatory Risk:** As governments implement stakeholder-focused regulations and ESG requirements, organisations with poor people practices face compliance costs and reputational damage.
- **The AI Displacement Trap:** Companies that use AI solely for cost reduction by eliminating jobs create internal resistance, lose institutional knowledge, and miss opportunities for human-AI collaboration that can create new value.

The global engagement crisis, with only 21% of workers worldwide engaged, represents a \$9.6 trillion economic opportunity. Organisations that capture even a fraction of this through human-centred practices will dominate their sectors.

## A Living Commitment

This manifesto is not a static document but a framework for continuous evolution. It acknowledges that creating workplaces where humans thrive while achieving business excellence requires ongoing learning, adaptation, and renewal.

The specific practices will evolve, but the fundamental commitment remains constant: we choose to prove that human flourishing and business success strengthen each other.

The question is not whether this transformation will happen; market forces and human expectations make it inevitable. The question is whether your organisation will lead this change or be forced to follow it.

# **[COMPANY NAME]**

## **Manifesto**

### **Our Foundational Belief**

*We believe that human thriving and business excellence are not competing forces but mutually reinforcing outcomes.*

*The highest-performing organisations distinguish themselves not merely through products or services, but through how they unleash human potential while achieving sustainable success.*

*We reject the false choice between caring for people and winning in the marketplace. Instead, we commit to a path where exceptional business results emerge from extraordinary human experiences.*

# Part I

## Our Commitment to Human Thriving

### We Honour the Whole Person

- **We see each person as complete:** Not just roles and skills, but dreams, struggles, growth potential, and the full complexity of human experience.
- **We design for life integration:** Work enhances rather than diminishes one's capacity to be present for family, community, health, and personal growth.
- **We celebrate diverse paths to contribution:** Recognising that people thrive through different work styles, career trajectories, and definitions of success.

### We Create Conditions for Flourishing

- **Psychological safety is non-negotiable:** Every person can express ideas, admit mistakes, ask questions, and disagree without fear of retribution or judgment.
- **Autonomy fuels engagement:** People have meaningful choice in how they accomplish their work, develop their skills, and shape their contributions.
- **Growth is continuous:** Learning, development, and expanding capabilities are embedded in daily work, not relegated to annual training events.



## We Practice Distributive and Contributive Justice

- **Fair rewards for value created:** Compensation, recognition, and advancement opportunities reflect actual contribution and potential, not politics or bias.
- **Everyone has a voice in what matters:** Decisions affecting people's work and lives include their input, especially those most impacted by the outcomes.
- **Meaningful work is a right:** Every role connects to a purpose larger than immediate tasks, contributing to something worth the investment of one's precious time and energy.

## Part II

# Our Commitment to Business Excellence

### We Lead Through How We Operate

- **Our culture is our competitive advantage:** The way we treat each other, solve problems, and make decisions becomes our distinctive strength in the marketplace.
- **We optimise for long-term value creation:** Today's decisions strengthen our ability to serve customers, communities, and stakeholders for decades, not just quarters.
- **We measure what matters:** Business metrics include human flourishing indicators, engagement, growth, belonging, and well-being, as leading indicators of sustainable performance.

### We Embrace Intelligent Technology Integration

- **Technology amplifies human capability:** AI and automation handle routine tasks, freeing people to focus on creativity, relationships, complex problem-solving, and strategic thinking.
- **We invest in human-tech collaboration:** People develop skills to work alongside intelligent systems while maintaining agency, judgment, and final accountability.
- **No one is left behind:** Technology transitions include retraining, reskilling, and role evolution opportunities for every affected person.

## We Build Stakeholder Value Through People Value

- **Customer obsession through employee empowerment:** Thriving employees create exceptional customer experiences that drive loyalty and growth.
- **Innovation emerges from inclusion:** Diverse perspectives, psychological safety, and creative freedom generate breakthrough ideas and solutions.
- **Sustainable profits through sustainable practices:** Financial performance strengthens through practices that renew rather than deplete human and natural resources.

## Part III

# Specific Commitments by Role

### Leaders Commit To

1. **Model vulnerability and learning:** Publicly acknowledge mistakes, ask for feedback, and demonstrate that the growth mindset applies at every level.
2. **Invest in people before processes:** Allocate meaningful resources — time, budget, attention — to human development and well-being initiatives.
3. **Make tough decisions transparently:** When difficult choices are necessary, explain the reasoning, involve affected parties in solution-finding, and take responsibility for outcomes.
4. **Measure and report on human metrics:** Include employee flourishing data in business reviews with the same rigour applied to financial metrics.
5. **Design work for human thriving:** Structure roles, teams, and systems to enhance rather than diminish human dignity, autonomy, and growth.

### Managers Commit To

1. **Know each person as an individual:** Understand career aspirations, strengths, development areas, and personal circumstances that affect work performance.
2. **Coach rather than control:** Provide guidance, remove obstacles, and create conditions for success rather than micromanaging activities.
3. **Advocate upward:** Represent team members' needs, ideas, and concerns to senior leadership with the same energy devoted to representing the company's needs downward.
4. **Foster team connection:** Create opportunities for collaboration, mutual support, and shared success that build relationships beyond work tasks.
5. **Practice fair and transparent decision-making:** Explain decisions, seek input before finalising when possible, and ensure consistent application of standards.

## Employees Commit To

1. **Bring full engagement:** Offer best effort, creative thinking, and proactive contribution while maintaining healthy boundaries.
2. **Support colleague success:** Share knowledge, assist, and celebrate others' achievements as part of a collective thriving effort.
3. **Communicate openly and constructively:** Share honest feedback, express needs clearly, and engage in difficult conversations with respect and good faith.
4. **Embrace continuous learning:** Stay curious, develop new capabilities, and adapt to changing requirements while maintaining core values.
5. **Take ownership of outcomes:** Accept accountability for commitments, seek support when needed, and learn from setbacks.

## **Part IV**

# **Our Shared Operating Principles**

### **Transparency Over Politics**

Information flows openly. Decisions are explained. Performance feedback is direct and kind. Hidden agendas and behind-the-scenes manoeuvring have no place in our workplace.

### **Growth Over Perfection**

We celebrate learning from failures, reward intelligent risk-taking, and normalise the iteration process. Perfectionism kills innovation and human development.

### **Collaboration Over Competition**

Internal competition focuses on enhancing team performance, not undermining colleagues. We compete externally by cooperating internally.

### **Impact Over Activity**

Results matter more than hours worked, meetings attended, or emails sent. We measure contribution to meaningful outcomes, not adherence to arbitrary processes.

### **Humanity Over Efficiency**

When efficiency gains come at the cost of human dignity, well-being, or development, we choose humanity. Sustainable performance requires sustainable people.

# Part V

## How We Measure Success

### Human Thriving Indicators

- **Engagement:** People are energised by their work and feel a genuine connection to organisational purpose.
- **Growth:** Skills, responsibilities, and capabilities expand over time for every person.
- **Belonging:** All individuals feel valued, included, and able to contribute their authentic selves.
- **Well-being:** Work enhances rather than detracts from physical, mental, and emotional health.
- **Voice:** People feel heard, influential, and able to shape their work experience.

### Business Excellence Indicators

- **Customer advocacy:** Customers actively recommend us because of how we operate, not just what we sell.
- **Market differentiation:** We win business because competitors cannot replicate our human-centred approach.
- **Innovation velocity:** New ideas, solutions, and improvements emerge consistently from all levels.
- **Talent magnetism:** Top performers choose us and stay with us because of our culture and growth opportunities.
- **Sustainable performance:** Financial results strengthen year over year through practices that build rather than burn organisational capacity

## **Part VI**

### **Our Renewal Process**

#### **Monthly Check-ins**

Teams assess progress on both human thriving and business metrics, identifying wins to celebrate and gaps to address.

#### **Quarterly Reflection**

Departments evaluate alignment between stated commitments and actual practices, making necessary adjustments to policies, processes, and behaviours.

#### **Annual Renewal**

The entire organisation reviews and updates this manifesto based on learning, changing conditions, and evolving understanding of what drives both human flourishing and business success.

[END]



# About ZOKRI

ZOKRI is a consultancy that helps companies bridge strategy and execution, with a specific focus on building compound advantages that strengthen with success, acting as a flywheel for growth.

## The Integration Advantage

Traditional approaches treat strategy and execution as separate phases. This is why they fail. Our approach integrates them from day one:

- **Strategy informs OKRs:** Your compound advantage becomes the foundation for measurable objectives.
- **OKRs drive management development:** Leaders learn to coach the behaviours that build advantages.
- **Management capabilities create team performance:** High-performing teams deliver compound value consistently.

This creates "Strategy to Value and Advantage in a single thread", ensuring your strategic insights become competitive advantages that compound over time. Projects range in scope, but they typically involve:

- Situational assessments - artefact review
- One-on-ones with leadership teams to understand 'what's going on'
- Workshop facilitation to reveal or hone winning strategies
- Metric identification to ensure measurements-that-matter are tracked
- Training of frameworks like OKRs (Objectives and Key Results)
- High-performing ritual and habit building
- Strategic communications for enhanced awareness and recall
- Performance Management optimisation
- Manager development and mentoring
- Management system enhancements
- AI enablement for core functions

## What ZOKRI Clients Experience

Organisations working with ZOKRI typically see:

- Clearer strategic direction based on compound advantage thinking rather than generic positioning.
- Better execution through OKRs that measure advantage-building, not just outcomes.
- Stronger management capabilities that coach compound value creation
- Higher team performance that consistently delivers strategic value to customers
- Measurable competitive advantages that strengthen with success rather than erode over time

# Research Foundation

This manifesto is grounded in extensive research from leading academic institutions, global surveys, and real-world implementation studies:

## Universal Work Values Research

- **Van den Broeck, A., Ferris, D. L., Chang, C. H., & Rosen, C. C. (2016).** "A Review of Self-Determination Theory's Basic Psychological Needs at Work." *Academy of Management Annals*, 10(1), 761-796. Meta-analysis of 119 samples demonstrating autonomy, competence, and relatedness as universal psychological needs.
- **Gallup (2025).** "State of the Global Workplace Report." Analysis of 128,000 employees across 160+ countries shows that manager behaviour accounts for 70% of team engagement variance.
- **Martela, F., & Riekkari, T. J. J. (2018).** "Autonomy, Competence, Relatedness, and Beneficence: A Multicultural Comparison of the Four Pathways to Meaningful Work." *Frontiers in Psychology*, 9:1157. Cross-cultural study (Finland N=594, India N=342, US N=373) confirming universal work values.
- **McKinsey & Company (2022).** "Great Attrition or Great Attraction? The Choice is Yours." A survey of 13,382 employees across six countries revealed that 54% leave jobs due to not feeling valued by managers.

## Psychological Safety and Performance

- **Edmondson, A. (1999).** "Psychological Safety and Learning Behaviour in Work Teams." *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 44(2), 350-383. Foundational research showing psychological safety correlates with learning behaviours at  $p = .62$  and work engagement at  $p = .45$ .
- **Frazier, M. L., Fainshmidt, S., Klinger, R. L., Pezeshkan, A., & Vacheva, V. (2017).** "Psychological Safety: A Meta-Analytic Review and Extension." *Personnel Psychology*, 70(1), 113-165. Meta-analysis of 22,000+ individuals confirming psychological safety's impact on performance.

## Business Performance Through People

- **BetterUp (2019).** "The Value of Belonging at Work." Experimental research with 3,000 US workers showed 56% increase in job performance when workplace belonging is high, with 50% reduction in turnover risk.
- **Ipsos (2022).** "Belonging Boosts Productivity." Survey findings show that workers with a high sense of belonging demonstrate 42% reduction in sick days and 139% improvement in performance metrics.

## Technology and Human-Centred

- **MIT Sloan Management Review (2024).** "Winning With AI." Research findings only 10% of companies achieve significant AI benefits, distinguished by a human-machine collaboration focus.
- **Microsoft & LinkedIn (2024).** "Work Trend Index." Analysis showing 30% of company code now written by AI while developers focus on strategic work, with no reported job displacement.
- **Salesforce (2025).** "AI for Employee Experience." Internal data showing 51% of Q1 hiring was internal redeployment rather than external hiring, with 80% of workforce targeted for AI skills by 2025.

## Economic Impact of Human-Centred Practices

- **Gallup (2024).** "World's Largest Ongoing Study of Employee Experience." Data quantifying \$9.6 trillion global productivity gap from disengagement, with top-quartile engagement companies showing 17% higher productivity and 41% lower absenteeism.
- **Harvard Business Review (2023).** Analysis showing companies with engaged, purpose-driven employees demonstrate 17% productivity increases and 50% revenue growth.

## Stakeholder Capitalism Research

- **JUST Capital (2024).** "Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella Shares Leadership Lessons on Stakeholder Capitalism." Documentation of stakeholder-focused approach at America's highest-ranked company for stakeholder performance.

- **Business Roundtable (2024).** "The Business Roundtable's Stakeholder Pledge, Five Years Later." Harvard Business School analysis of progress on stakeholder capitalism commitments since 2019.

## Capabilities Approach and Human Dignity

- **Nussbaum, M. (2011).** *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach*. University of Chicago Press. A framework for ten fundamental human capabilities that work should enhance.
- **Sen, A. (1999).** *Development as Freedom*. Oxford University Press. Foundational work on the capabilities approach emphasises freedom and agency in human development.

## Future of Work Research

- **World Economic Forum (2025).** "The Future of Jobs Report 2025." Analysis shows that 39% of workplace skills are expected to change by 2030, with 78% of organisations now using AI tools.
- **OECD (2024).** "The Future of Work." Working group findings on AI's impact show that most workers need coordination, social, and emotional capabilities rather than specialised AI skills.
- **Brookings Institution (2024).** "The Effects of AI on Firms and Workers." Research reveals that over 30% of workers could see at least half their tasks affected by generative AI.

## Implementation Case Studies

- **IBM (2024).** "How IBM Replaced 200 HR Jobs With AI." Case study showing 94% automation of routine HR tasks while maintaining headcount through role evolution.
- **International Labour Organisation (2024).** "How Reskilling for AI Could Unlock New and Better Jobs." Analysis of successful retraining programs across industries.

