

Guild

The new social contract with your workforce

A guide to creating a culture of opportunity



The relationship between employees and employers has fundamentally changed.

The future of work arrived seemingly overnight in March 2020. Workforce trends ranging from digital transformation to automation and skill shortages came to the forefront as the pandemic turned work (and the world) on its head.

The resulting war for talent has shifted the balance of power toward workers, many of whom are finding [a new perspective on life and work](#). With new perspectives come new priorities, which employers should account for if they want to be an employer of choice.

This is the new social contract: Employees have new expectations of their employers.

Companies are working hard to meet this moment, focusing on living wages, mental health, flexible work, and social responsibility. Yet, employers continue to struggle to attract and retain talent.

And here's why: **Deeper employee needs are not being met** — and workers are feeling a sense of transaction, rather than an investment in their long-term growth.



Here's what employees actually want and need.

Today, individuals across industries are broadly prioritizing three things:



Purposeful work



Pay for today



Pathways for tomorrow

Purposeful work is an increasingly motivating factor for workers: 70% of people say they [define their purpose through work](#). And HBR has found that [9 out of 10 people](#) are willing to earn less for more meaningful work.

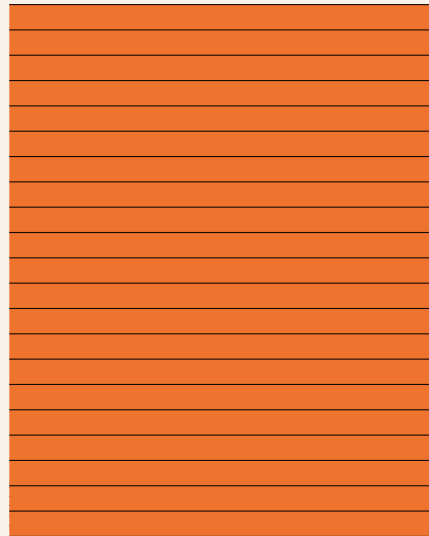
Pay for today is also a critical component of new employee expectations: BCG has reported 10% wage growth since 2020, a 40-year record. Major employers including Bank of America, Walmart, Costco, Chipotle, CVS Health, Target, Starbucks, and more are [raising wages](#), particularly for the lowest paid workers.

But new employee expectations go beyond pay. Creating **pathways for tomorrow** enables employees to think beyond a job and build a career that provides a better future: 48% of American workers would [switch to a new job if offered skills training opportunities](#). Technology and other forces are changing the nature and future of work, and companies must help employees build skills that will remain relevant and in demand.

The data

70%

of people define purpose through work



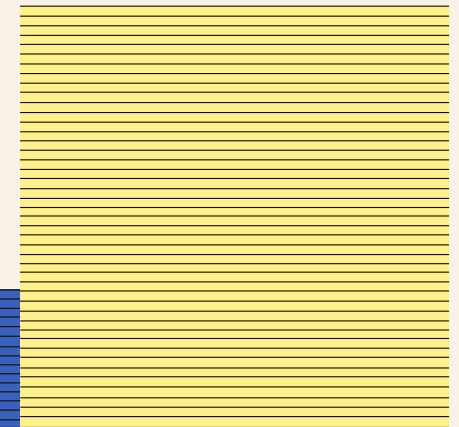
10%

wage growth in 2020, a 40-year record



48%

of American workers would switch to a new job if offered skills training opportunities





“It feels good because I was able to do it! I’m super excited because I’ve got something that I know I can be really good at.”

Iris Vasquez
Guild Student
Chipotle



Pathways in action.

Iris [started at Chipotle](#) as a crew member. She soon worked her way to kitchen manager, but knew she wanted a corporate position to ensure a more stable future for herself.

Through Chipotle’s debt-free education program and career pathways design, Iris became a General Manager, earned her bachelor’s degree in HR, and now works as a field recruiter through the corporate office at Chipotle.

Career pathways provide a unique opportunity for your employer value proposition.

While pay and purpose are critical, prioritizing pathways for tomorrow offers a distinct advantage and opportunity to elevate your employer value proposition. Investing in career mobility doesn't just create opportunity for employees – it feeds that opportunity back into the business in the form of improved talent attraction, retention, and development outcomes.

Walmart makes tuition-free education accessible to 1.5 million employees nationwide. They've found program participants are 2x more likely to receive a promotion.¹

Pathways give organizations the chance to adapt their talent strategy and meet the moment while creating a market advantage.

It all boils down to opportunity.

We talk about pathways that create opportunity for employees. But what do we mean by opportunity?

For workers, opportunity is the **freedom to pursue better circumstances and achieve their goals with the guidance of a support system that helps them discover and maximize their innate talent.** It's a critical element of the new social contract — and of a culture of opportunity more broadly.

Organizations can unlock this opportunity for employees by making it possible for them to **connect the skills they have today with the jobs they want tomorrow**, and **illuminating a pathway to get there.**



How to be an opportunity employer.

Chipotle provides a useful example of a company that has created a culture of opportunity across many dimensions — and has seen outcomes.

For example, they responded to meet new expectations around pay. In May of 2021, Chipotle **raised wages** to an average of \$15 an hour with a roughly three-year path to six-figure compensation.

The company has also famously built its brand on sustainability and a mission to “cultivate a better world.” In a **webinar from last year**, Chipotle’s VP of Talent and Culture, Tawanda Storms, discussed how engagement surveys have confirmed that their company purpose and values were competitive differentiators for their employer brand. As she puts it, “Employees are going to want to work for organizations that can get behind a purpose and not just talk about it, but actually live it.”

And Chipotle does just that. In 2016, they partnered with Guild to create opportunity for employees — redesigning a legacy tuition reimbursement benefit to make education more accessible for its diverse frontline workforce. The outcomes followed: Chipotle saw a significant increase in retention rates — **90% for those engaged in education**.

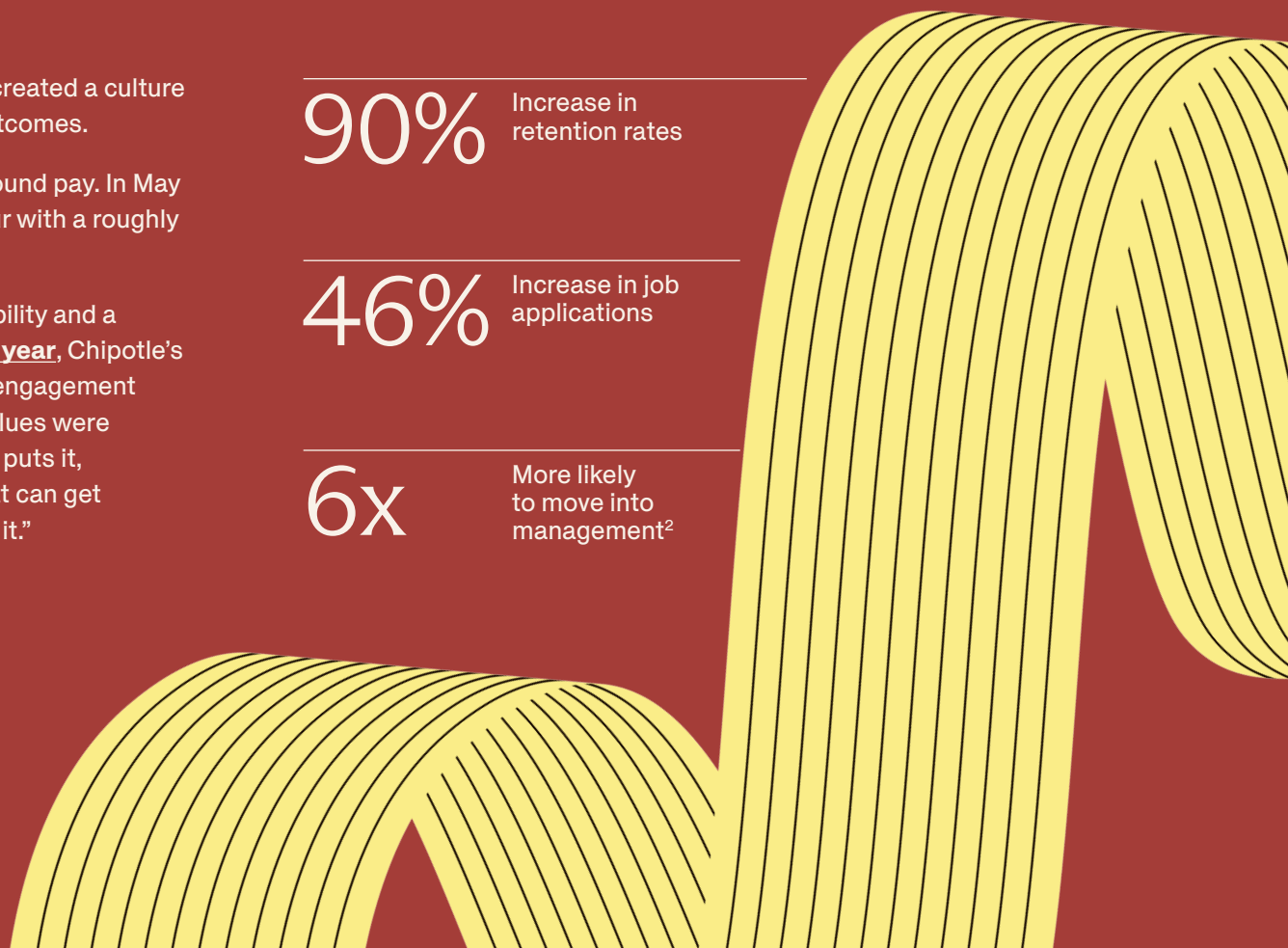
But they didn’t stop there. Chipotle later expanded the program to offer more skills-based learning. They also found that **job applications increased by 46%** when they highlighted the education program in marketing.

Finally, to boost career mobility, they worked with Guild to reimagine programs for career discovery and alignment — and found that program participants **6x more** likely to move into management.²

90% Increase in retention rates

46% Increase in job applications

6x More likely to move into management²



Education, skills, and career mobility are at the heart of opportunity.

There are many elements that foster a true culture of opportunity within an organization. Think about these examples:



Accountability of management



Meaningful work



Leadership support



Stretch projects



Visibility of career growth



Wages that provide stability
and the chance to increase wages over time



Mindset of your teammates



Ability to give feedback
(and have it be heard)

And many companies have done great work here, and are rightfully investing more deeply in these areas of culture.



But where companies are falling behind is **career pathways** that lead to new opportunities. It's often because existing programs aren't built to serve the entire workforce — and they don't always encompass the full range of options needed to drive mobility.

To prioritize opportunity as part of culture and to create pathways for tomorrow, employers need to invest in:



Education

that's financially and logistically accessible to all



Skills

that align to an individual's interests and in-demand jobs of the future



Career mobility

that's intentionally designed at every level so employees can see their options and the steps needed to get there

Aligning these three elements is what creates opportunity: Education that builds skills, skills that build a career, and the investment in mapping those skills to careers at your organization, which creates mobility at every level.

3 steps to foster a culture of opportunity through education, skills, and mobility.

Investing in career mobility to create opportunity takes an intentional strategy. Your program should align with business priorities as well as the jobs of the future — while enabling a personalized experience for employees to pursue their own desired career pathways.

Here are three steps to help you design and implement a strategic education program that drives opportunity through career mobility.

Step 1 Strategic assessment and planning

Step 2 Personalized career development that accounts for each learning journey

Step 3 Support and dedicated coaching



Strategic assessment and planning.

Your strategy should start with an evaluation of your current learning programs to ensure they're both measurable and aligned to business priorities.

Ultimately, leaders need to:



Understand existing skills in the workforce



Identify future needs



Create relevant talent pipelines

From there, you can work to create a mobility strategy that creates a culture of opportunity within the unique constraints of your business. This initial assessment is critical to identify talent gaps or internal barriers that might be prohibiting career mobility within your workforce.

Personalized career development that accounts for each learning journey.

Once you've set your strategy, you can curate high-quality, skills-aligned learning programs that align to the talent gaps and needs within your organization.

Keep in mind that these learning programs should not only map to your strategy, they should also meet employees where they are. You want individuals to find the path that's best suited for them. For some, that might mean starting with high school completion or language learning. For others, it could mean a leadership certificate, finishing a degree, or exploring new technical skills. Either way, employees can choose the career pathway that's right for them.



Leadership certificate



Finishing a degree



Exploring new technical skills

Changing or growing a career doesn't happen overnight. **You can build opportunity over time through a stackable learning marketplace.** Pathways are made up of new skills and possibilities — but it's not compelling if it takes years and years to achieve. Through these career development and program recommendations, strive to open doors to opportunity today while also building over time to a higher degree or credential. This can be done through a linked combination of short- and long-form certificates and courses.



Pathways in action.

Robert [started his journey](#) at Waste Management (WM) in the dispatch department. He knew he wanted to pursue his interest in data, but before the company launched their debt-free education program with Guild, he didn't know how to access the training he needed. Then the company [announced the Your Tomorrow](#) program.

“It was nice to have this package basically given by WM....it felt like they had carefully considered options the students have. The certificate I went for was the Data Analytics Professional Certificate. The day that my course was over with was the day I had my interview for the pricing analyst position. Then three days later I was told I was getting an offer...Guild and WM helped me see what else was out there and feel confident that I had the skills to be a valid candidate.”

Robert G.
Guild Student
Waste Management



Support and dedicated coaching.

Underpinning each part of the employee's journey to opportunity should be intuitive **and innovative** technology paired with human-to-human coaching. Having dedicated support throughout program selection, enrollment, persistence, and transition can be a differentiator that doesn't just practically and logistically help each individual employee — it also psychologically fosters a feeling of opportunity.

You want to invest in your people so they can invest in themselves, but you'll be better able to unlock career mobility and opportunity by empowering employees with the support to chart their own unique path. Going back to school is a big decision, as is taking the next step in your career. Having a coach to help employees find clarity and confidence is critical to success.

Another way to support employees and create a great experience is to work with a partner that facilitates credit for prior training. Employees at all levels have valuable skills and learning experiences — they just might not have received any kind of credential for those experiences. You can change that. It's possible to work with educational partners to give employees a head start by recognizing corporate or on-the-job training as credentialed learning that counts towards a certificate or degree.



When you unlock opportunity for workers, transformative — and measurable — business outcomes follow.

If we all get this right, it will transform how companies compete for, inspire, and invest in talent to fill the jobs of today and shape the workforce of tomorrow.

We know that because we've already seen it happen. When you successfully create career mobility that fosters a culture of opportunity, you also see measurable outcomes for the business. Our research at Guild has borne this out:

86%

Recruiting: 86% of surveyed employees say they are more likely to refer others to work for their employer because of education³

2.1x

Retention: 2.1x less likely to leave their employer in the last 12 months relative to non-engaged employees⁴

2.2x

Talent development: 2.2x higher likelihood of internal mobility for Learning Marketplace learners compared to non-engaged employees⁴



Creating a culture of opportunity for America's workforce starts with you.

In this era of change, employee education, skilling and career mobility are no longer nice-to-haves – corporate investment in employee opportunity is now table stakes to stay competitive.

The new social contract demands a journey to opportunity that employers and employees must make together. The more career mobility you provide, the more skills you build in your workforce, the more prepared your business is to adapt and thrive — while also attracting and retaining individuals that are interested in what you're bringing to the table.

To meet the future of work, companies must invest in opportunity for the future of workers.

About Guild

Guild helps companies build the workforce of tomorrow through education, skilling, and career mobility.

Our learning marketplace enables career pathways for every employee, increasing retention and driving talent acquisition and development while supporting critical DE&I efforts.

→ [Our solution](#)

→ [Our platform](#)

Get in touch

Ready to talk about creating a culture of opportunity at your organization?

Fill out the form and our experts will be in touch shortly.

→ [Talk to a career mobility expert](#)

Citations

- 1 Addressing the Cost Barrier: \$333 Million in Tuition Costs Saved Since Walmart Launched the Live Better U Education Program, 10/13/2022
- 2 As of June 2022
- 3 Guild Membership Research Survey conducted in September of 2019
- 4 Guild's internal data over the last 12 months as of 01/01/2023 from employers who have provided the required data for at least 13 months post launch

Guild

Guild helps Fortune 1000 employers align their workforces with the economy of the future through thoughtful education benefits programs designed to attract, retain, and advance talent. To learn more, visit guild.com.