



2024

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

LEADERSHIP PERSPECTIVES ON ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

TRANSEARCH

EXECUTIVE SEARCH & LEADERSHIP CONSULTING

/ KEY RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

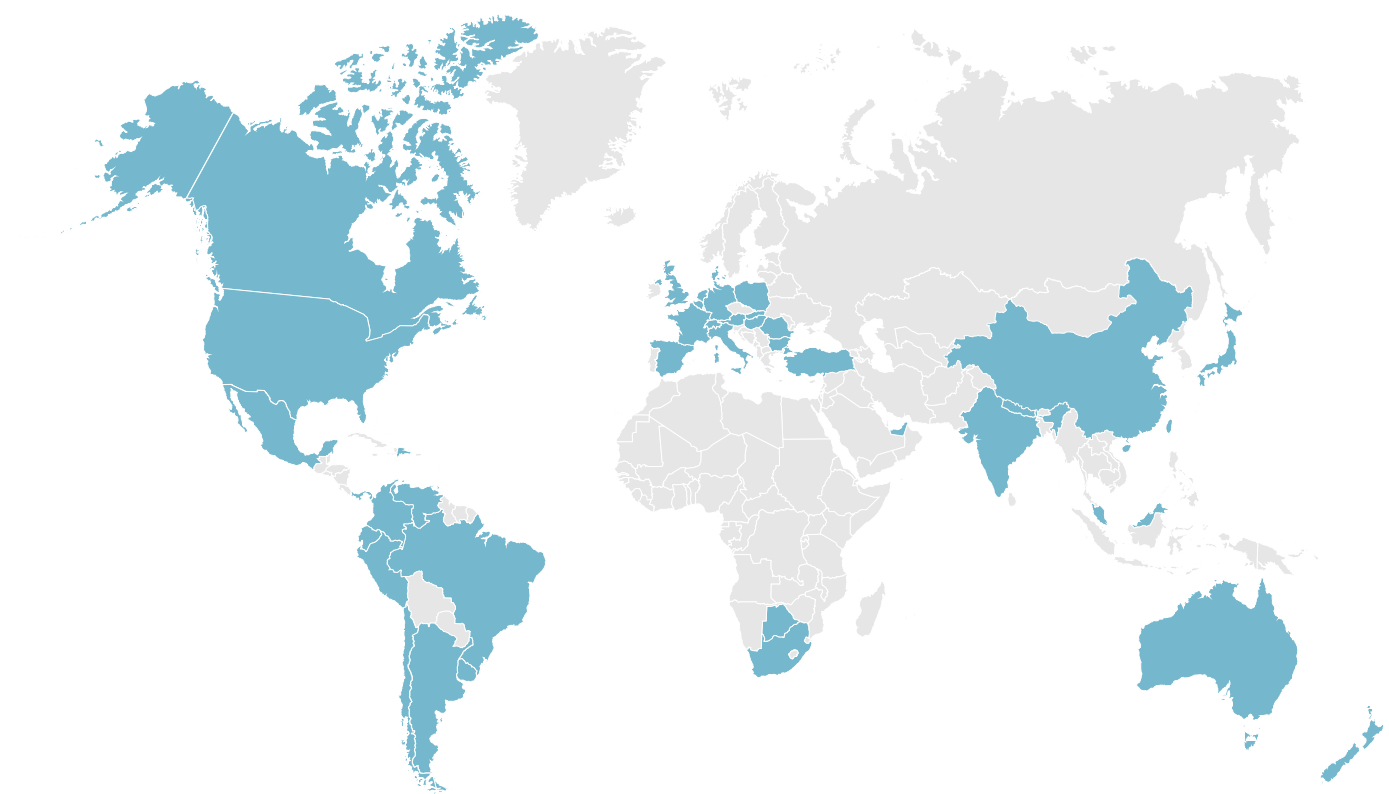
What follows are the key results from our 2024 survey, organized under the key headings of:

1. 2025 Business Outlook
2. Culture and Wellbeing
3. Purpose & Values
4. Employee Engagement
5. Organizational Design
6. Talent Acquisition
7. The Way We Work

The survey received **775 responses** from HR professionals across a variety of different industries, spread across multiple continents.



/ SURVEY RESPONDENTS



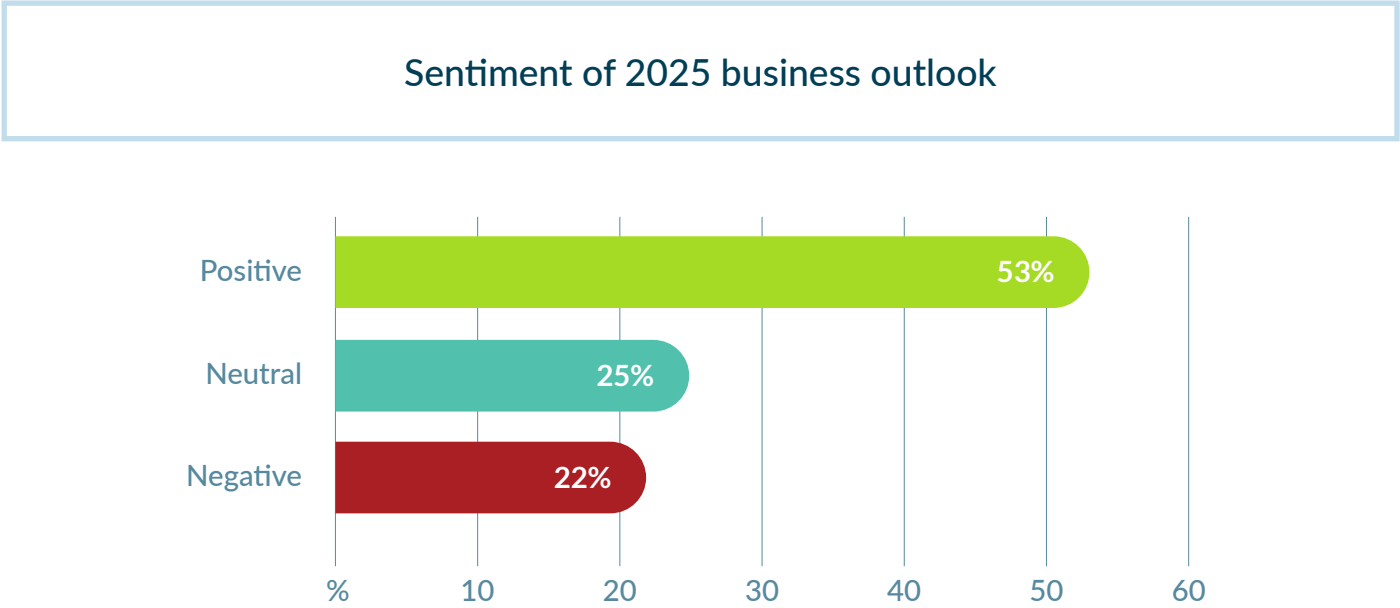
/ RESPONDENT INDUSTRY



/ 2025 BUSINESS OUTLOOK

The business outlook for 2025 is mostly positive, with 53% of respondents indicating that they feel positive about 2025. Businesses anticipate a mix of moderate to significant growth, often driven by new clients, technological advancements, cost efficiency, and a focus on sustainability.

The outlook in Germany is generally a bit more negative, with many respondents anticipating continued challenges due to a difficult economic environment, high costs, and market volatility, while India and Chile are expecting growth despite geopolitical risks.



THE CHALLENGE MOVING FORWARD

In turbulent times, it's essential to regularly revisit a make-or-break question: "What do tomorrow's customers want to buy and how do they want to buy it?" If you can't clearly differentiate how you create value, you are in the wrong business.

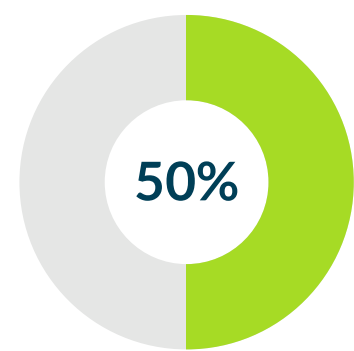
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The only truly sustainable competitive advantage is how quickly the organization learns.

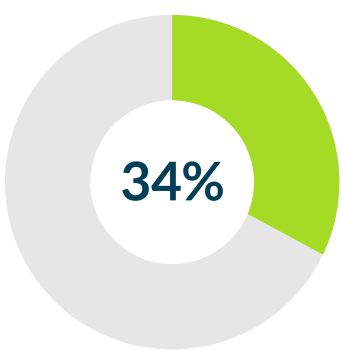
– John O. Burdett

/ CULTURE & WELLBEING

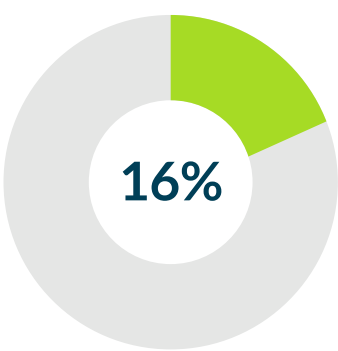
Half of the survey respondents believe that they have a vibrant and agile culture that gives them a distinct competitive advantage.



We have a vibrant and agile culture that contributes to a distinct competitive advantage.



We know our culture has to change, but for various reasons we have not made the necessary investment of time and resources.



We have a "me too" culture. That is, we think and act similarly to our major competitors.

Despite this, many of the leaders surveyed emphasized the need for greater agility, openness to change, and innovation, with a focus on speeding up decision-making processes, fostering risk-taking, and embracing new technologies such as AI.

Accurate culture measurement seems to be an area in which many organizations fall short, with only **22%** of respondents indicating that they have robust, business-oriented culture measurement in place. Organizations are learning that measuring culture is a complex, ongoing process that requires adaptability, employee involvement, and leadership alignment.



THE CHALLENGE MOVING FORWARD

Failure to measure the culture you have and the culture you need (especially the latter) and succession, hiring top talent, coaching, and leadership development are overly influenced by what worked in the past.

“Management without measurement is called ‘guesswork’.”
– John O. Burdett

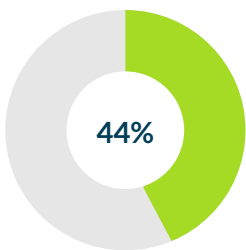
/ PURPOSE & VALUES

Employees generally seem to identify with their organization’s purpose, with **48%** of respondents indicating that employees mostly identify with the organizational purpose, and **20%** stating that their employees fully identify with the purpose.

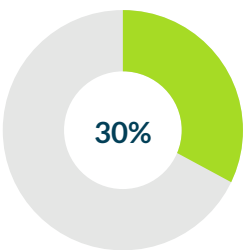
Organizations are employing a variety of strategies to communicate and reinforce their purpose internally and externally. Internally, many emphasize regular communication through town hall meetings, newsletters, and intranet platforms to keep employees informed and aligned with organizational goals. Activities like workshops, reflection sessions, leadership updates, and structured appraisals are common, alongside efforts to embed purpose in daily operations through values-driven engagement, training, and feedback systems. Externally, organizations use social media campaigns, community events, and corporate branding to share their mission.

Buy-in to organizational values differs across generational cohorts: **44%** of respondents indicated that Gen X is more likely to fully buy into organizational values, while only **6%** feel that Gen Z fully buys into organizational values. Additionally, **56%** of respondents are concerned about Gen Z’s commitment to organizational values.

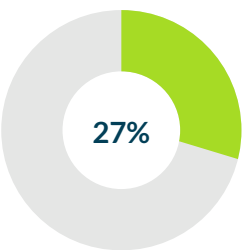
Which one or more of the following generational cohorts fully buy in to the organization’s values at present?



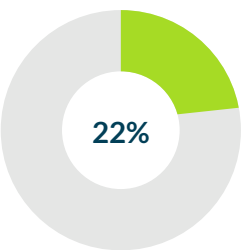
Gen X (1965–1980) more than other groups



Full buy-in from each of the different generational cohorts



Gen Y (1980–2000) more than other groups



The retiring “boomers” (1946–1964) more than other groups



THE CHALLENGE MOVING FORWARD

Culture is a system, and like any system, change one element (e.g., the organization’s values) and everything else is impacted. Lack of systems thinking – addressing culture piecemeal – and unintended consequences are inevitable.

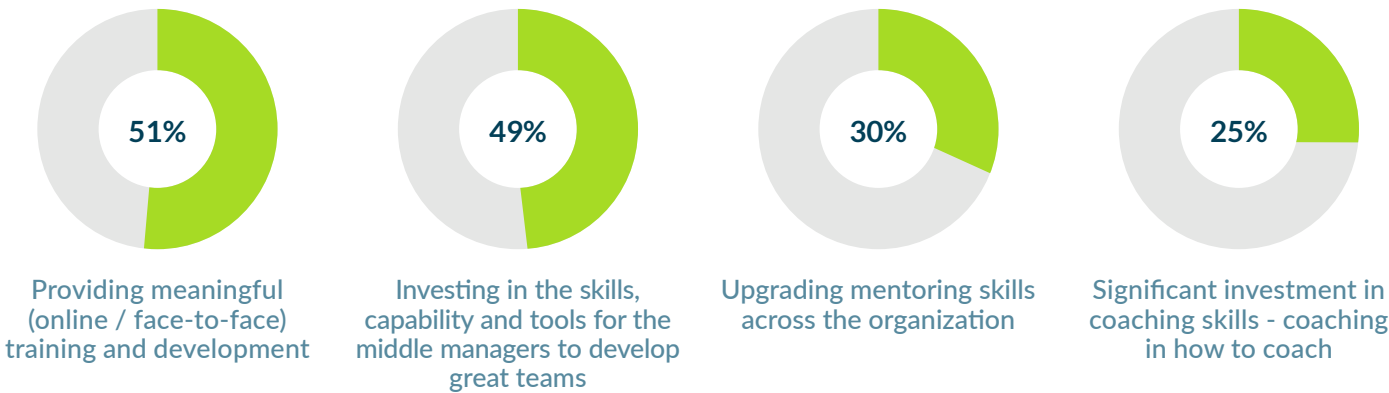
“Values give people permission to act.”
– John O. Burdett

/ EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

1 in 3 organizations have above average employee engagement. Factors driving higher engagement include alignment with organizational purpose and values, where employees feel their work contributes to a meaningful mission, fostering a sense of pride and belonging. Many organizations leverage strong leadership and open communication, ensuring employees understand strategic objectives and feel empowered to contribute.

Half of leaders surveyed indicated that providing meaningful training and development has proven key to ensure that middle managers are fully aligned and leading by example.

Of the following actions to ensure that middle managers are fully aligned and leading by example, which one/s have you taken that have made a lasting difference?



Other factors driving meaningful difference include developing middle management and fostering leadership capabilities, as well as mentoring, coaching, and training programs aimed at empowering managers to lead effectively, align with organizational values, and address challenges with confidence.



THE CHALLENGE MOVING FORWARD

Engagement surveys often make the mistake of rolling “somewhat engaged” and “highly engaged” into a single “engaged” metric. In that, it stretches language to the point of reinforcing false and dangerous assumptions; “somewhat engaged” employees should be defined as “not engaged.”

“At the very heart of what we call ‘engagement’ is work that matches capability with opportunity. That is to say, engagement is ultimately and always about the nature of the work.

– John O. Burdett

/ ORGANIZATIONAL DESIGN

Business leaders are taking active steps to meaningfully evolve their organization’s design, with 42% of respondents indicating that they have a deliberate strategy to push decision-making deeper into the organization.

Which one or more of the following steps have you taken or are you taking to meaningfully evolve the organization’s design?



Organizations are adopting a diverse range of strategies to address emerging business and societal challenges. Many focus on decentralizing decision-making, flattening hierarchies, and fostering cross-functional collaboration to increase agility and empower employees.

48% of leaders surveyed indicated that collaboration is key to innovation, while 34% recognize that the organization’s purpose is at the center of every successful team.



THE CHALLENGE MOVING FORWARD

It will be impossible to take advantage of Artificial Intelligence without retooling the organization’s design accordingly. The success criteria that define the structure you need meet the challenge of the seven Fs: Forged from the outside-in, Focused, Flat, Fast, Flexible, Facilitates great teams, and Fertile to new ideas.

“Taken it as a given, the organization that got you here won’t get you to where you need to be.

– John O. Burdett

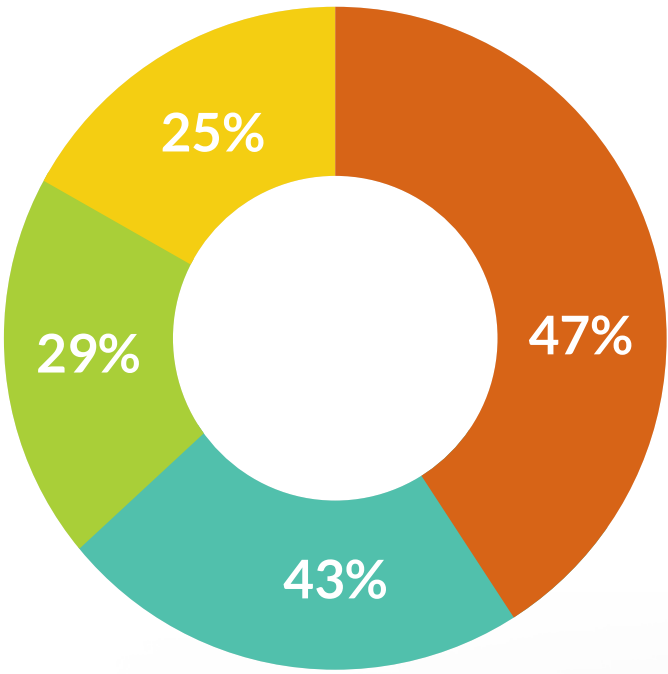
/ TALENT ACQUISITION

When asked how they've had success addressing retention and quiet quitting, 59% of business leaders indicated that ensuring employees have a sense of belonging was the most effective strategy.

Almost half of respondents indicated that talent scouting is a succession imperative, while 43% focus only on mission-critical succession planning.

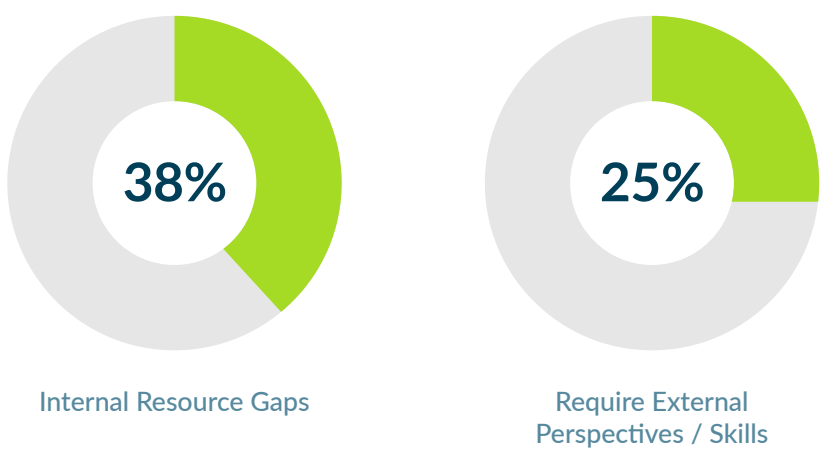
The following statements represent the central characteristics of an outstanding succession process. Which one/s best describe where your own organization excels?

- Ongoing talent scouting is seen as a succession imperative.
- We focus exclusively on mission-critical roles.
- We go out of our way to stretch succession candidates. Moreover, if they start to struggle, we don't come to the rescue too early.
- Coaching mastery is deemed to be an essential building block.



Sourcing of key leadership seems to come more from existing staff than external hires. 56% of organizations are sourcing more than half of key leadership roles internally. Those who choose external recruitment do so because of challenges in finding suitable internal candidates.

Why did you choose to recruit externally? Were internal candidates considered as part of the process?



Leaders surveyed indicated that the most important steps that should form the basis of hires include supporting the integration process (51%) and developing specific competencies for the role (45%).

To elevate their talent acquisition processes, respondents identified several key areas to improve, including employer branding, candidate fit, and speed of recruitment.

THE CHALLENGE MOVING FORWARD

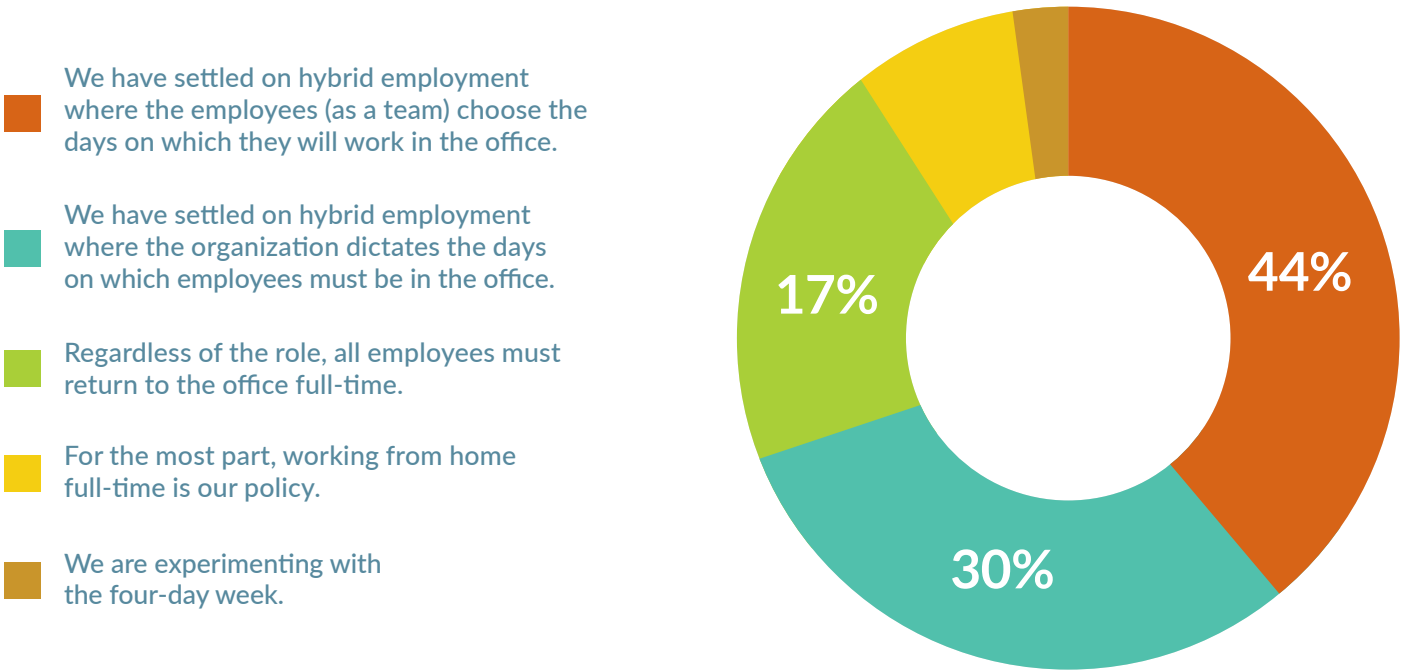
Talent acquisition is an exacting discipline, a disciple that builds on six critical anchors of “fit”: (i) attraction; (ii) culture measurement; (ii) a robust scorecard for the role; (iv) future oriented, role-specific, leadership competencies; (v) team assessment; and (vi) meaningful and candidate-driven integration. Drop, shortchange, or overlook any of the critical elements of fit and the cumulative effect passes competitive advantage to the competitor who does understand fit.

“ Who you hire today, dictates what’s possible, tomorrow. – John O. Burdett

/ THE WAY WE WORK

With the rise of the work-from-home phenomenon, three quarters of respondents have settled on a hybrid model, which skews towards having employees choose when they'll be in office – as opposed to this being dictated by the organization. Only 17% of organizations have returned to full time in office.

Which one of the following best describes your current practice?



Companies are employing a variety of strategies focused on communication, inclusion, and recognition. Regular virtual check-ins, team huddles, and town halls are commonly used to keep everyone informed, celebrate achievements, and maintain a sense of connection, regardless of location. In addition, many companies hold in-person team-building events, such as annual offsites, monthly gatherings, or occasional in-office meetings, to reinforce the company's culture and strengthen interpersonal bonds.



THE CHALLENGE MOVING FORWARD

The straw that stirs the drink we loosely refer to as “work-from-home” is the ongoing shift in power from the employer to the employee. Sweeping change, shifts that have historically reframed the social order, invariably reframe how power is distributed. More pointedly, today’s technological advances, the drive to reinvent the organization, Artificial Intelligence, and the needed upskilling are ushering in a new era where the employees you need most hold unprecedented bargaining power.

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Moving forward, the employees you need most will demand a degree of ‘choice’.

– John O. Burdett



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