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Rewards Competitiveness Checkup

Competing for Talent with What You Have

Use this checkup to evaluate how well your pay, benefits, employee programs, communication, and organizational readiness support attraction and retention.

PURPOSE

This is a starting point, not a comprehensive audit. Your scores are meant to reveal where better information, a focused improvement, or a leadership conversation may create the most value.

How to complete the checkup

- Rate each statement from 1 to 5 based on how your organization operates today.
- Choose the response that is most consistently true, not the best example or the intended practice.
- If you do not have enough information to answer, select 1. A lack of reliable information is itself a useful finding.
- Add the four ratings in each area and divide by 4 to calculate the area score.
- Transfer all five area scores to the summary page and identify the lowest score.

Rating scale

Score	Meaning	Description
1	**Not in place**	We do not have a consistent approach or enough information.
2	**Significant gaps**	Some practices exist, but they are inconsistent, outdated, or unclear.
3	**Partially working**	The basics are present, but important gaps remain.
4	**Generally effective**	The approach is mostly consistent and supports current talent needs.
5	**Competitive strength**	The approach is intentional, understood, and helps us compete.

AREA 1 OF 5

Pay foundations

Can we make and explain pay decisions that feel fair, consistent, and credible?

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
Job responsibilities and expectations are current and clear enough to support pay decisions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Starting pay, promotions, and increases follow consistent guidelines rather than individual manager preference.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
We can identify and investigate compression or unusual pay relationships before they become larger problems.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
HR and managers can explain how pay decisions are made without relying on vague or conflicting answers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Area 1 total: _________ ÷ 4 = _________ *area score*

WHAT A LOW SCORE MAY SIGNAL

A low score may point to inconsistent decisions, outdated job information, compression, or a lack of confidence in how pay is determined.

If this is one of your lowest areas, consider starting here

- Review the most common, difficult to fill, or high turnover roles first.
- Compare pay for employees performing similar work and flag unusual relationships.
- Document how starting pay, promotions, and increases are currently determined.

NOTES:

AREA 2 OF 5

Employee needs

Do our pay, benefits, and employee programs reflect what the people we need actually value?

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
We regularly gather useful feedback about what different employee groups value and need.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Our current programs reflect today's workforce rather than decisions made several years ago.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Employee departures, declined offers, and recruiting feedback influence our rewards decisions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
We can identify at least one aspect of the employee experience that helps us compete differently from larger employers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Area 2 total: ________ ÷ 4 = ________ *area score*

WHAT A LOW SCORE MAY SIGNAL

A low score may mean the organization is relying on assumptions, using outdated offerings, or overlooking ways it can compete beyond salary.

If this is one of your lowest areas, consider starting here

- Review themes from exit interviews, stay conversations, and recruiting feedback.
- Ask employees which current offerings they value and which are difficult to use.
- Choose one workforce group or talent challenge to investigate first.

NOTES:

AREA 3 OF 5

Program value

Are we getting enough attraction, retention, and employee value from what we currently spend?

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
We understand the cost, participation, and use of our major benefits and employee programs.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
We review high cost or low use programs instead of automatically renewing them year after year.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Our rewards spending is connected to a clear workforce need such as hiring, retention, wellbeing, or skill development.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
We make intentional use of lower cost strengths such as flexibility, development, recognition, purpose, or access to leadership.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Area 3 total: ________ ÷ 4 = ________ *area score*

WHAT A LOW SCORE MAY SIGNAL

A low score may mean resources are spread too thin, programs continue without a clear purpose, or valuable offerings are being overlooked.

If this is one of your lowest areas, consider starting here

- Review participation and utilization information already available.
- Determine whether low use reflects poor value, poor communication, or difficulty accessing the program.
- Consider whether current spending can be redirected toward a more important talent need.

NOTES:

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AREA 4 OF 5

Employee and candidate understanding

Can employees and candidates recognize the full value of what we offer?

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
Employees can easily understand what they receive beyond base pay.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Candidates hear a clear and credible story about why someone would choose our organization.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Managers have simple talking points and know where to direct questions about pay and benefits.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
We communicate rewards throughout the year, not only during hiring, onboarding, or enrollment.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Area 4 total: ________ ÷ 4 = ________ *area score*

WHAT A LOW SCORE MAY SIGNAL

A low score may indicate that employees and candidates are comparing the organization primarily on salary because other value is unclear or invisible.

If this is one of your lowest areas, consider starting here

- Create a complete inventory of what employees receive beyond base pay.
- Identify the programs employees misunderstand most often.
- Translate the package into clear reasons an employee or candidate might choose to join or stay.

NOTES:

AREA 5 OF 5

Organizational readiness

Can HR build enough evidence and support to improve how the organization competes for talent?

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
We can define the specific talent or business problem a rewards change would address.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
We have credible evidence such as turnover, vacancies, offer declines, compression, employee feedback, or manager concerns.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Leadership understands how pay, benefits, and employee programs affect workforce outcomes.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
We can propose a focused first step or pilot that is realistic for our available time, budget, and capacity.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Area 5 total: ________ ÷ 4 = ________ *area score*

WHAT A LOW SCORE MAY SIGNAL

A low score may mean the first need is better evidence, a more focused recommendation, or a clearer connection to a business problem leadership already cares about.

If this is one of your lowest areas, consider starting here

- Define one specific workforce or business problem.
- Gather evidence that shows the cost or risk of doing nothing.
- Recommend a small first step and identify who needs to be involved.

NOTES:

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YOUR RESULTS

Where Can You Compete More Effectively?

Transfer each area score below. Your lowest score is the first place to investigate, not necessarily the first place to spend money.

Area	Score	What this area affects	Priority
1. Pay foundations	________	Fairness, trust, hiring, retention	☐ Now ☐ Later
2. Employee needs	________	Relevance and differentiation	☐ Now ☐ Later
3. Program value	________	Return on current investment	☐ Now ☐ Later
4. Understanding	________	Visibility and perceived value	☐ Now ☐ Later
5. Readiness	________	Leadership support and execution	☐ Now ☐ Later

How to read your score

1.0 TO 2.0 | IMMEDIATE ATTENTION

The foundation may be missing, inconsistent, or unclear. Investigate before adding a new program or making a broad promise.

2.1 TO 3.4 | OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN

Some useful practices exist, but gaps may be reducing their impact. A focused improvement could create meaningful value.

3.5 TO 5.0 | RELATIVE STRENGTH

This area may help the organization compete. Protect it, communicate it clearly, and confirm that employees value it as much as leadership assumes.

REMEMBER

A score does not prove that your organization is competitive or uncompetitive. It identifies where a better question, stronger evidence, clearer communication, or focused change may improve your position.

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ACTION GUIDE

Use Your Lowest Score to Choose a Starting Point

Choose one area. You do not need to pursue every recommendation at once.

Area 1: Pay foundations

A low score may point to inconsistent decisions, outdated job information, compression, or a lack of confidence in how pay is determined.

- Review the most common, difficult to fill, or high turnover roles first.
- Compare pay for employees performing similar work and flag unusual relationships.
- Document how starting pay, promotions, and increases are currently determined.

Area 2: Employee needs

A low score may mean the organization is relying on assumptions, using outdated offerings, or overlooking ways it can compete beyond salary.

- Review themes from exit interviews, stay conversations, and recruiting feedback.
- Ask employees which current offerings they value and which are difficult to use.
- Choose one workforce group or talent challenge to investigate first.

Area 3: Program value

A low score may mean resources are spread too thin, programs continue without a clear purpose, or valuable offerings are being overlooked.

- Review participation and utilization information already available.
- Determine whether low use reflects poor value, poor communication, or difficulty accessing the program.
- Consider whether current spending can be redirected toward a more important talent need.

Area 4: Employee and candidate understanding

A low score may indicate that employees and candidates are comparing the organization primarily on salary because other value is unclear or invisible.

- Create a complete inventory of what employees receive beyond base pay.
- Identify the programs employees misunderstand most often.
- Translate the package into clear reasons an employee or candidate might choose to join or stay.

Area 5: Organizational readiness

A low score may mean the first need is better evidence, a more focused recommendation, or a clearer connection to a business problem leadership already cares about.

- Define one specific workforce or business problem.
- Gather evidence that shows the cost or risk of doing nothing.
- Recommend a small first step and identify who needs to be involved.

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Before you recommend a solution

- What specific attraction, retention, employee trust, or business problem are we trying to solve?
- What evidence do we have, and what information is still missing?
- Could the problem be caused by inconsistent execution or poor communication rather than the program itself?
- What is the smallest credible step that would help us learn or improve?

YOUR NEXT MOVE

Turn the Checkup Into Action

Use this page to prepare a conversation with your team or leadership.

My lowest scoring area

____

The talent or business challenge this may be contributing to

____

____

The evidence I already have

____

____

The information I still need

____

____

The first improvement or question I will pursue

____

____

The people I need to involve

____

30 DAY COMMITMENT

Within the next 30 days, I will gather, review, or discuss: ____

A simple way to frame the leadership conversation

We are seeing ____________________. It is affecting ____________________. Before recommending a larger change, I would like to ____________________. This will help us determine ____________________.

Your best next step may be gathering better information. Progress does not always begin with a new program or a larger budget.