

Navigating the Labor Crisis

A 3-step plan for deskless organizations looking to overcome the labor and talent shortage.

Nudge



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As the uncertainty surrounding the pandemic lifts, organizations across the country have reopened. It's not business as usual – it might never be again – but a new normal has emerged that brings with it new safety and security concerns, as well as changing customer expectations. **This new normal has also brought another challenge: a labor shortage.**

Now more than ever, organizations need workers in place to keep operations running smoothly and effectively, but the labor crisis is making it difficult for businesses to boost their numbers. This challenge can lead to reduced productivity and performance, not to mention increased burnout and turnover among the staff you do have.

Worried? Don't be, because we're here to help. This guide will provide a 3-step strategy to hiring during the labor crisis – and give you an inside look at how Nudge can help.

The labor crisis: why now?

It's a frustrating time for organizations. They're trying to get their workforce back up to pre-pandemic numbers... but the new hires just aren't there. Why now? A few factors are at play.

Subsidies competing against minimum wage

One major reason for the labor crisis are the government subsidies providing relief to furloughed or unemployed individuals during COVID. Because minimum wage can be so low, these individuals are finding that it's financially better to stay on a subsidy for as long as possible versus going back to minimum-wage employment.



Return trepidation

There's also a trepidation around returning to work, due to both safety concerns, as well as a more vague uncertainty around what exactly that job will be like. Customer and guest expectations coming out of the pandemic are increasingly heightened, and we're seeing frontline workers unable, or unwilling, to re-enter the workplace under these conditions.

Increased employee expectations

And finally, coming out of the pandemic, we're also seeing employees having a stronger focus on finding a sense of purpose and "doing what you love" impacting the number of individuals interested in working minimum-wage frontline or deskless jobs. Until frontline and deskless organizations invest more into the employee experience (more on that later), these roles might not be as attractive to job-seekers as they once were.

Knowing the factors that are contributing to the labor crisis makes it much easier for organizations to combat and react to the talent shortages we're seeing across all our industries.

What organizations can do

*To address the factors contributing to the labor crisis,
we recommend a 3-step strategy to staff
your organization, while also making the most
of the employees you do have.*



Step 1: Become an employer of choice

As the competition for labor heats up, frontline and deskless organizations are regularly searching for ways to get sufficiently staffed. There are many ways to get your brand in front of candidates, but first, you'll need to review your employee experience.

There's a major link between employee experience and guest or customer experience. But there's also an added benefit: investing in your employee experience sets your brand apart from competitors also looking to hire. When you present yourself as an employer of choice, you entice more candidates to apply, which makes it easier for you to get closer to those pre-pandemic staff numbers (and, in turn, get your operations running smoothly).

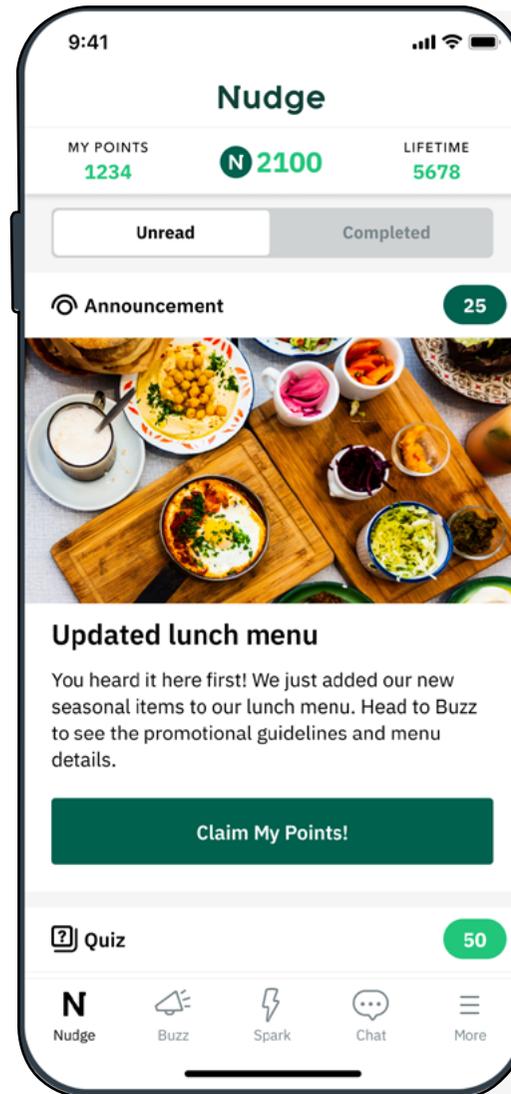
To review your employee experience, bring together stakeholders from your communications, operations, and HR teams. First, think about what deskless and frontline workers are looking for in an employer. A poll or survey could be used to tap into your existing workforce to learn about what is important to them. Here are some questions you could ask:

- *What are your favourite things about working here?*
- *What sets this company apart from our competitors?*
- *What would you tell a friend who is considering applying to work here about the company?*
- *Do you have a clear sense of purpose coming to work each day?*
- *Do you feel challenged here?*
- *Do you feel valued here?*
- *What would you like to see the company do better?*
- *What about this company might make you consider leaving?*

Next, think about what you're looking to drive your workforce to achieve – higher sales, more efficient processes, better guest experience – and review the initiatives that you currently have in place to drive these outcomes, like rewards programs, feedback loops, and (of course!) your communication strategy.

Now, compare your findings. Is there alignment around what frontline workers want and what outcomes you want them to achieve? Is there alignment around what initiatives and processes are in place to support your workforce in achieving your desired outcomes?

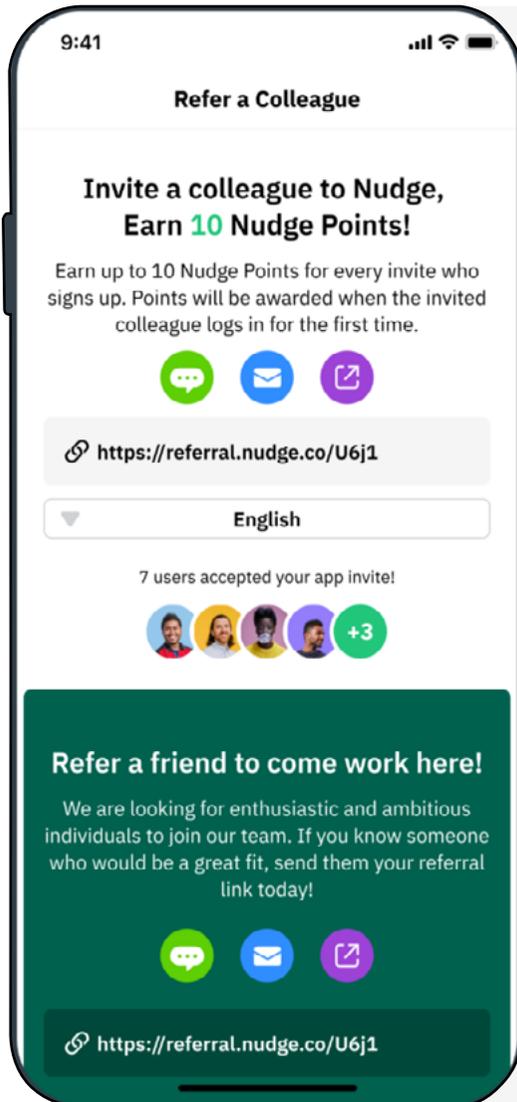
This is how you assess whether you're an employer of choice. Forget salaries and benefits; research shows that deskless and frontline workers want better **technology** and a strong **sense of purpose**, so making sure you're offering an employee experience that delivers these core needs is crucial to becoming an employer of choice.



A next-level employee experience is easy with Nudge

To be an employer of choice, you need the best-rated employee communication platform on the market.

Give your workforce the information and sense of purpose they want with Nudge's digital communication platform. With Nudge, you can share crucial real-time information, foster a healthy employee community, recognize your top performers, and encourage two-way feedback – all from one central place. Plus, your employees can access Nudge where they already spend their time: their phones.



Bring employee referrals to their smartphones

To get the most out of your referral program, you need to educate your workforce.

Nudge's Refer a Friend feature makes this process simple and easy by having an employee referral program embedded directly into its digital communications platform. Employees can share career opportunities through text, email, or direct link right from the Nudge app.

Mobilize recruitment through employees referrals

A tried-and-true recruitment tactic that all organizations should be leveraging is an employee referral program. An employee referral program encourages current employees to tap into their personal network to recommend candidates for open roles. These programs often offer incentives (cash or otherwise) when a referred hire stays with the organization for a set amount of time.

According to CareerBuilder, employee referrals are the number one source of hire, with 26% of external hires coming from this channel. The same report found that 88% of organizations rank employee referrals as the number one source for high-quality hires. And referred hires have **higher retention rates** – a metric all organizations are watching closely right now.

To put a strong employee referral program in place, you need to first ensure your current employees are strong advocates. That's where all the work you've done on your employer experience will come in handy. Your employees should be engaged and excited about working for your organization, but they should also be knowledgeable about all the initiatives and programs you have on offer.

One way to turn your employees into enthusiastic advocates is to leverage your existing communication tools to share key information about your employee experience. One tip: Don't share it all at once. A lengthy email about all the ways you're an employer of choice will be ignored or quickly forgotten. Instead, create a month-long campaign to share micro-communications to your workforce about all the ways you're investing in the employee experience. Not only will this remind your staff why your organization is a great place to work, it will arm them with the information they need to entice other top performers in their network to apply.

Once you've transformed your employees into company advocates, you need to ensure your referral program is easy to use and top-of-mind for your workforce. If possible, include an incentive that encourages staff to use the program. If a cash reward isn't feasible, get creative with other prizes or recognition.



Step 2: Develop your existing workforce

Employee development is a crucial step in navigating the current labor crisis.

First, properly onboarding any new hires you are able to find will help mitigate unnecessary turnover and foster engaged, high-performing team members from day one. At the same time, investing in employee development with your existing employees will help ensure you're making the most of the workforce you have. Let's take a look at each of these components of employee development separately.

Setting up new hires for success

The first 30, 60, and 90 days are crucial to a new hire's success. It's the organization's first and most impactful chance to create a real connection with the employee and set them up to be highly productive ambassadors of your brand. An effective employee onboarding program means better CX, higher sales, and more efficient processes and protocols. And, perhaps most importantly, it mitigates turnover, which is a huge issue right now as labor shortages are leaving organizations under-staffed and overworked.

We've talked before about the **cost of turnover**. At the best of times, high turnover rates are a huge financial burden. But in a labor crisis, losing the talent you do attract can decimate an organization. Enter employee onboarding. Up to **20% of employee turnover takes place in the first 45 days**, and that number is even higher among millennials and younger employees. "They define success differently than other generations. If a job isn't meaningful to them, they aren't afraid to leave," explains Michelle Smith, VP of Marketing at O.C. Tanner. In other words, you need to engage new hires with your brand purpose the minute they get their foot in the door. In fact, **research by Glassdoor** found that a strong onboarding process boosts new hire retention by a staggering 82% (it also, incidentally, increases productivity by over 70%).



The challenges of onboarding frontline and deskless employees

There's no arguing with the importance of a quality employee onboarding program, but implementing this type of program in frontline and deskless organizations presents a unique set of challenges. For one thing, there's the scale and speed of new hires. The high turnover rate of deskless industries means there's a constant stream of new employees that needs onboarding. And with some organizations employing tens or even hundreds of thousands of workers, onboarding at scale becomes a serious problem.

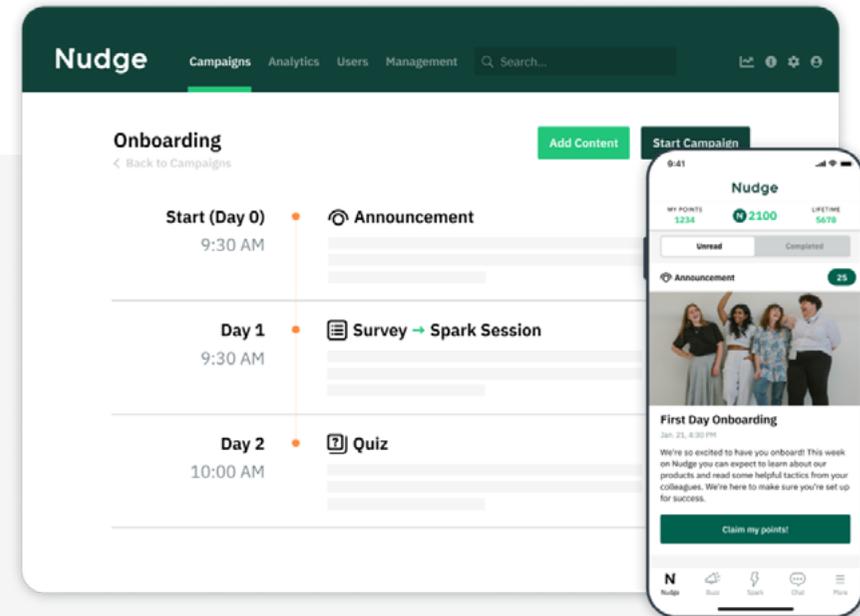
Another issue is the distributed nature of deskless workforces. In retail, foodservice, and hospitality organizations, employees are often in small teams spread out in locations across the country or globe, making communication fractured. And in supply chain and logistics organizations, employees might be even more distributed and isolated, with even less connection to coworkers or teams.



Scaling onboarding with communication tech

Perhaps the biggest challenge of onboarding deskless and frontline workers is technology. Traditionally, organizations lean on the same communication tools used for deskbound employees, such as email, or an intranet site that employees don't even have access to at work. Or employees might receive communication through posters and bulletin boards, and verbally through floor managers. None of these communication channels lend themselves to a robust onboarding program at scale.

On the other hand, leveraging a dedicated deskless employee communication platform means that organizations can create an automated system that sends the right information to new hires at the right time. An all-in-one platform also makes it easy for organizations to inform new hires about your feedback channels, peer-recognition program, and other initiatives. Weaving these communication features into your onboarding program is a great way to engage new hires from their very first day and begin fostering a connection that will keep them loyal for the long term.



Trigger-based onboarding makes the most of those first 90 days

Nudge makes it easy for organizations to implement a consistent onboarding program at scale.

Organizations can use Nudge's Trigger-Based Onboarding to send the right information at the right time. Our in-app triggers can automatically send your new employees content on key milestones, such as start date, 30-, 60-, and 90-day check-ins, and other important events.

Building agile teams

With new safety protocols, sudden closures, unprecedented consumer behavior, and countless more challenges, it has never been more crucial for organizations to stay agile and adaptive to the continually changing world. Your workforce is a critical part of that process. In order to lift your organization up through times of uncertainty, your workforce needs strong leadership – and, unfortunately, they might not be getting it. This 3-phase plan gives you everything you need to support your deskless workforce through uncertain times.

Download the playbook to get:

- 6 foolproof ways to cultivate employee engagement
- Understanding preparedness, and what prioritizing preparedness looks like
- 3 workforce success metrics every organization should be tracking



Developing existing employees at scale

An important part of the labor crisis to consider is that organizations may not be operating at full capacity any time soon. It's time to flip the script and focus on making the most of the talent (or potential talent) you do have.

Traditionally, employee development is not often seen as a priority for frontline and deskless organizations. Development is usually equated with mentorship, one-on-one training, and hands-on leadership, all of which can be difficult to scale for larger frontline organizations. But there are many other ways that organizations can develop their workforce at scale:

Create a robust feedback loop

A huge component of employee development is feedback, both top-down and upward. Implementing top-down feedback means you're addressing performance issues at an employee, location, or regional level – and you're doing it fast. Those annual or twice-a-year performance reviews that are still surprisingly prevalent in deskbound organizations have no place in deskless organizations, where change often needs to happen at a rapid pace. Instead, ongoing feedback (ideally, **delivered right to employees' phones**) will keep your organization agile and responsive.

Build a sense of purpose and meaning

In the first section of this guide, we talked about the importance of fine-tuning your employee experience. Once you've built out an experience that resonates with your frontline, you'll want to bake this into your ongoing communication strategy, and find ways to connect everything back to your purpose: your updates, forums, AMAs, protocol changes – everything. Help your employees see why their work is meaningful and impactful every single day, and you'll develop productive, engaged workers.

Use quizzes and surveys to identify knowledge gaps and issues

There will always be knowledge gaps that emerge in your workforce. After all, each employee processes and retains information a little differently. When it comes to sharing information, protocol updates, product promotions, and other crucial intel, the goal isn't a 100% retention rate – the goal is to have a process in place to identify those gaps quickly and effectively and fill them at scale. Quizzes and surveys are a great option here, so you can **mitigate any uncertainty before it leads to disengagement** or mistakes.

Leverage trickle-down manager coaching

You've invested in professional development programs for your salaried managers – great! Now boost knowledge retention (and program ROI) by encouraging your managers to then share their learnings with their teams. This approach can be limited to shorter, micro-communications, something as simple as sharing a new communication technique or a common interpersonal pitfall, but it means that your middle managers will be engaging their teams with professional development material at scale.

Check your metrics to keep a close eye on disengagement

When it comes to doing more with fewer employees, it's important for organizations to keep a close eye on their engagement metrics to watch out for burnout, hits to morale, and overall disengagement. If you have a communication platform or tool in place, tracking these metrics is easy. But if you're taking a slightly more analog approach, you can monitor disengagement through such metrics as email open/read rates, survey completion, and turnover rates.

Step 3: Retain your staff

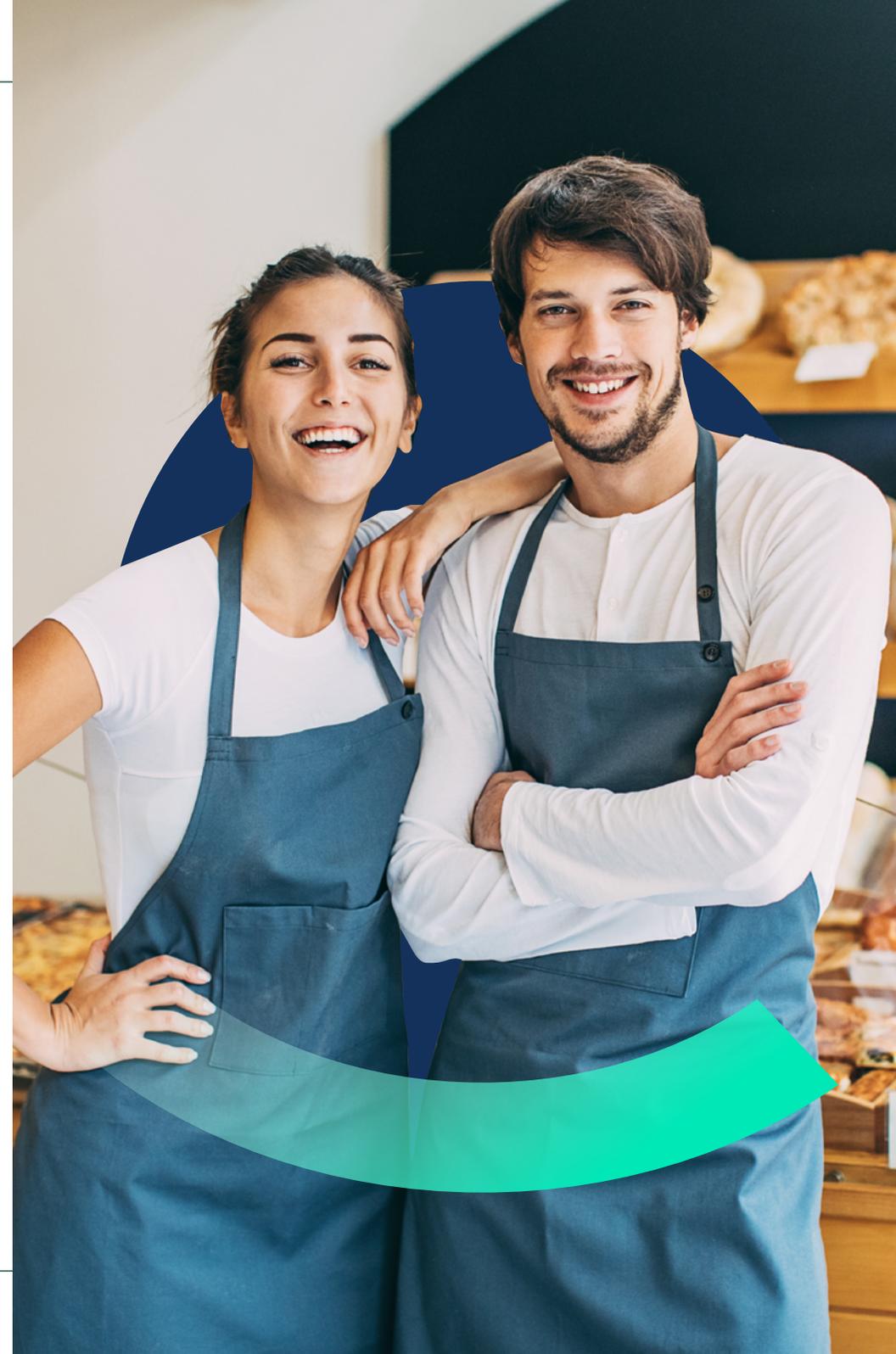
Whether you're actively recruiting top talent or focusing your energy on developing your existing workforce (ideally, both!), the last thing you need derailing your progress is employee turnover. Here are a few tips to help you retain your workforce through the labor crisis:

Redefine business as usual

The easiest way to lose your employees? Trying to go back to a pre-pandemic normal with a smaller staff. You'll just end up overworking the employees you do have and that will derail your productivity even further. Instead, review your goals and protocols for the coming months to adjust to this new reality, making sure you have processes in place to address burnout and employee wellness.

Give employees what they want (hint: it's not money)

Frontline and deskless organizations that have the best retention rates recognize the importance of a quality employee experience that gives employees a sense of purpose, clearly defined tasks, and plenty of communication. If there's one thing COVID has taught us, it's that employees hate uncertainty. They want real-time updates to stay up-to-date and in-the-know at all times. That's an easy win.

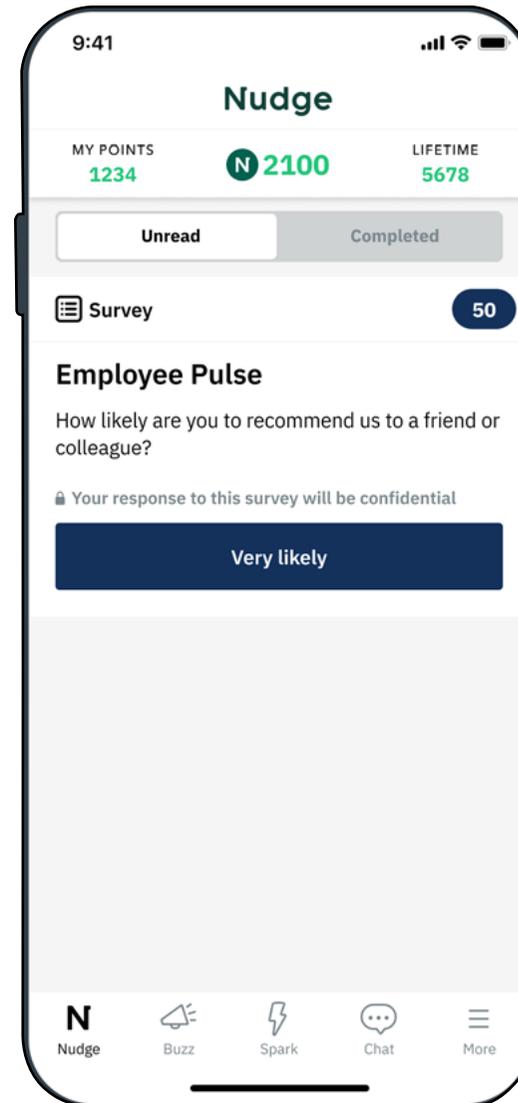


Don't forget about feedback

Around **68% of employees** that receive accurate and consistent feedback feel fulfilled in their job (and that number is even higher for millennials). But it's not just receiving feedback that matters to employees, it's giving feedback as well. A study by Qualtrics found that more **employees feel more engaged at work** when they're asked for feedback compared to those that aren't. Make sure you have easy-to-use channels in place to harvest feedback easily and a way to close the loop on ideas to show employees how they positively impact the company.

Recognize and celebrate

Nothing makes a worker want to stay put like a little employee recognition. According to **research by Survey Monkey**, 82% of employees are happier when they're recognized at work and 63% of people who are consistently recognized at work say they're unlikely to look elsewhere for a job. Encourage recognition at the peer-to-peer and manager-to-employee levels to create strong connections across the organization. And at the head office level, find ways to celebrate milestones and anniversaries to make workers feel seen and appreciated. A little goes a long way.



Feedback made easy

Nudge makes it simple and easy to harvest and act on feedback from your frontline.

Give your workforce a voice with structured channels for sharing their feedback, ideas, and best-practices through topic-based forums, surveys, chats, and more. Plus, Nudge's analytics allow organizations to easily track ideas, identify common themes, and identify disengaged locations or teams.

How Nudge can help you through the labor crisis

The best way for your organization to navigate the labor shortage is to focus on developing your existing workforce, while striving to become an employer of choice. That's where Nudge comes in. Nudge is a digital communications platform that enables your organization to improve workforce productivity and reach your organizational goals through better communications, faster feedback, and actionable workforce insights.



Centralized communication



Scalable employee onboarding



Embedded employee referral program



Engaging feedback channels



Insightful user analytics

Loved by our customers and their employees

“In times of uncertainty and rapid change, we couldn't have asked for a more reliable partner.”

- Mick McCormick, CEO at Jefferson Dental & Orthodontics

“Great reads on everything that is going on within the company. Very helpful and to-the-point easy access. I find that very refreshing”

- Patricia C., User



Apple Store



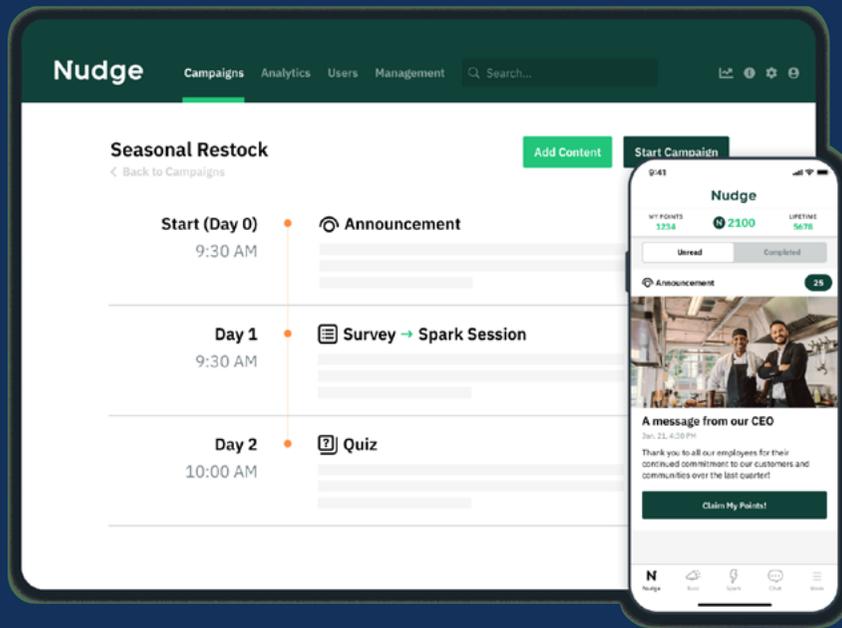
4.6 Stars
+6.3k Reviews



Google Play



4.6 Stars
+8.3k Reviews



**Get the communication
platform your workforce
wants to use.**

*Want to see how Nudge can help your organization?
[Book a demo](#) today or get in touch at hello@nudge.co*