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STAYING POWER

Are managers the *real* reason for people leaving?

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Introduction

The *Company Man* Era is OVER.

The era of the "Company Man" - a term used to describe a long-serving and loyal employee - has long passed. In fact, the Company Man has acquired quite a bad reputation for himself* in this modern business landscape in favour of shorter tenures.

Author's note: Pronouns chosen by the toss of a coin – DJP assures you, no gender bias intended.

"Every person for themselves,"

insists the TikTok influencer.

"Job-hopping guarantees you a 20% annual increment,"

the HR guru shares on LinkedIn.

Meanwhile, major tech companies are on their next retrenchment cycle, heartlessly terminating the services of employees who had just relocated across the country for that treasured job opportunity.

The Organisation VS Us.

Headlines like these get the eyeballs and the clicks. They're dramatic and play to our pessimism bias. They convince us that loyalty and commitment to organisations are a thing of the past and villainise "the organisation".

Tenures in Asia
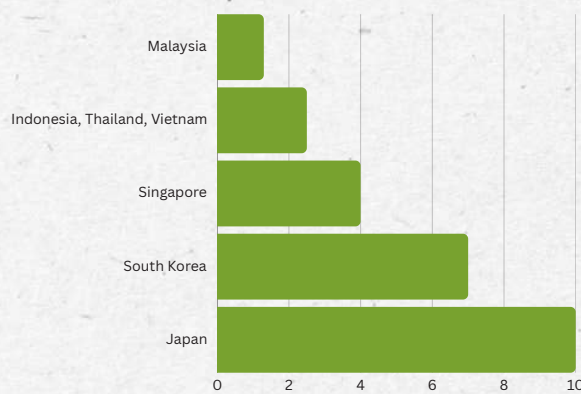
The data currently available in the market paints a scary preview of the future of Malaysian businesses.

The Result? 1.3 Years

According to a 2024 research conducted by **Robert Walters International**, the average tenure of a working professional in Malaysia is 1.3 years.

Now, tenures in emerging economies like Southeast Asia are traditionally shorter (2 – 3 years) compared to our compatriots in dynamic markets like the United States and United Kingdom (4 -5 years) and Scandinavian countries (6 – 8 years)3. In emerging markets, competition for talent is strong, employee protection is low, and opportunities are volatile, which contributes to the relatively shorter tenures in the market. But, how short is too short?

from an endless cycle

If this trend persists,
a *lose-lose future for all* awaits.

Talents in the market will miss out on opportunities to develop deep and high-value expertise that drives long-term career (and earnings) growth.

Managers remain trapped in a relentless cycle of hiring and onboarding, diverting their focus from leadership and development.

Organisations struggle with strategic and operational continuity, weakening their competitive edge. And, when businesses fail under the weight of constant turnover, the market loses employers who create job opportunities.

In light of these observations,
D Jungle People
delved into the intricacies of employee engagement to uncover what drives employee commitment in the workforce.

to committed employees.

Through typical Malaysian employees, we explored if there are untapped opportunities to **foster stability**. We want to **uncover actionable insights** that enable organisations (and Managers) to create a more sustainable and enriching working environment for everyone.

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Is this worth *your* time?

Before you venture any further, allow us at D Jungle People to help you decide if this 39-pager will add value to what you already know, and if it is worth your time.

Determine if each of the statements below is TRUE or FALSE.

01

"Most of Malaysia's workforce wants to be committed to their organisation for the long term."

Answer: True

02

"Employees with work-life balance concessions are more committed than those without."

Answer: False

03

"Gen Zs view meaningful work as the top criterion for building organisational commitment."

Answer: True

04

"Employee commitment peaks during the first year in the organisation."

Answer: True-ish

05

"Managers in Malaysia aren't confident they can build an engaged and loyal team."

Answer: False

Mostly correct?

If you got them all correct, then you have your finger right on the pulse! There may not be many new insights that you can gain from this paper, but perhaps you can recommend this to someone whom you think will derive value from it.

Recommend

Not quite right?

If you've missed out on some, then we've written this just for you. In this paper, we will explain how the insights were derived and how you can potentially capitalise on them to create a better working experience for the people you work with — whether you're a business owner, a Manager, HR or an employee at work. After all, we are each active participants in our workplace.

Read On

Thanks for playing, and now on to the real stuff.

At a glance,

what began as a survey driven by apprehension and concern quickly transformed into a journey of unexpected optimism.

Our findings revealed a far more promising and hopeful landscape than we had initially anticipated:

↗ **Commitment Level**

The Malaysian workforce is generally in a good place.

68%

rated themselves as committed or highly committed to their organisations.

"I am here for the long haul and am ready to add value through good and bad situations."

Mean Commitment Score: 3.91/5.00

Although the survey did not specify nor ask respondents to define "long haul", it is reasonable to infer, given the average tenures observed in Malaysia for the 2020 – 2024 period, that respondents likely anticipate a **duration exceeding two years.**

the most *critical* factor

↗ Meaning at Work

Meaningful Work drives commitment.

In terms of factors that build employees' commitment towards their organisations, meaningful work was rated as the most critical.

This finding is consistent across the various demographic segments analysed, from age groups to tenure.

It is overwhelmingly important that employees see the impact of their contributions at work in a manner that **aligns with their personal values, goals and aspirations**. This alignment not only fosters a deeper sense of purpose at work, but also **strengthens long-term loyalty** to the organisation.

↗ Gen Z's Struggle

Gen Zs struggle with commitment the most among all generations in the workforce.

The data revealed a clear age-commitment correlation. More specifically, commitment levels increased with age. Though represented only by a few, **Baby Boomers** boasted an impressive average of **4.37** / **5.00** commitment level. **Gen Z**, being the newest entrants to the market, reported a solid **3.67** / **5.00**, while the sandwiched **Millennials and Gen-X** averaged **3.78 and 4.20**, respectively.

The commitment curve trends upward with age, showing that as individuals mature, there is a higher level of commitment towards their jobs. This finding is unsurprising due to the various social, economic and psychological factors driving the need for **stability at an older age**.

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↗ Honeymoon Years

Commitment levels peak in the first year in the organisation, before a steep decline over the next 3 years.

1st Year ●

steep decline

3rd Year ●
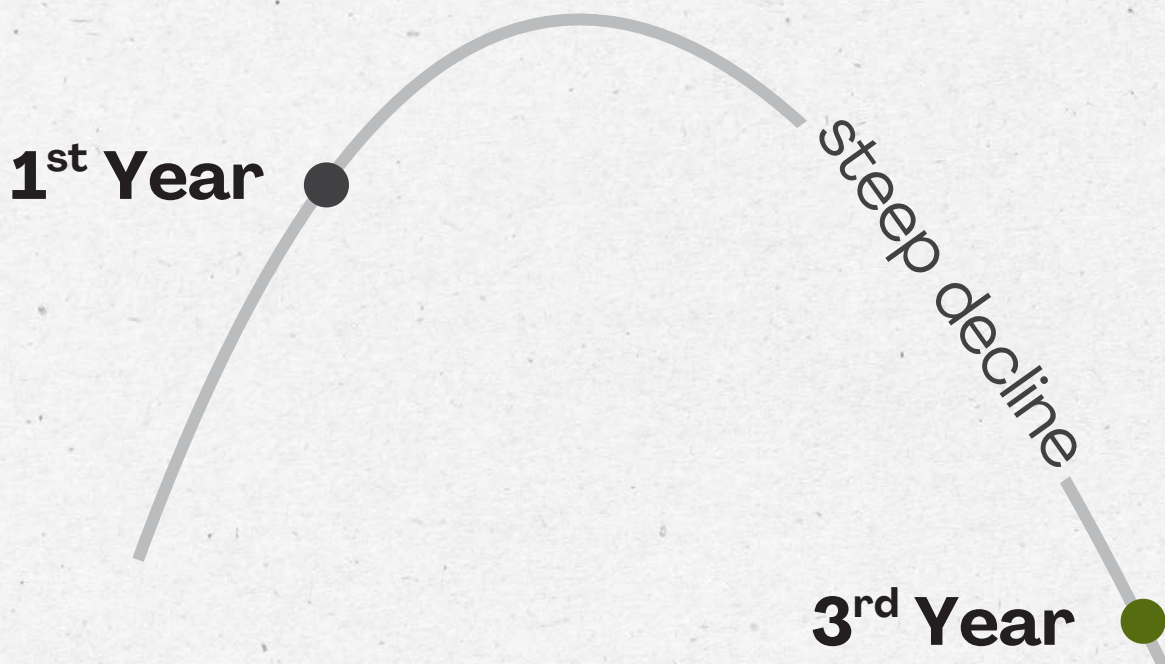
Besides bringing new perspectives and new energy into the organisation, new joiners also bring a **great sense of optimism and hope**. Commitment levels are at their highest among new joiners, compared to all cohorts within a 10-year range, *suggesting a key opportunity that organisations can leverage upon, but aren't*.

This is as commitment levels plummet after the first year and are at their lowest after individuals have completed two (2) years in the organisation. The attrition rate seems to be highest among those tenured **between 1-3 years, making this a critical cohort to focus on for engagement efforts**.

Managers' Confidence

Managers feel confident in building commitment, but this may not be reflected in their real performance.

CONFIDENCE
does not equal to
TRUE PERFORMANCE

The majority of managers in this study appear confident in their ability to build commitment. Despite high confidence levels,

30%
report ongoing struggles

citing challenges like;

"Managing multi-generational workforce dynamics."

"Resource availability."

The bigger finding is rooted in the strategies that Managers employ to create engagement and commitment. **Many rely on structured, social approaches such as team meetings and face-to-face interactions.**

However, these strategies often overlook the deeper drivers of commitment (**meaningful work, compensation & benefits, team climate & organisational culture**) that have been revealed by this study, hinting at a gap between perception and the broader science of driving engagement and building commitment.

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Behind The Data

1,200
respondents

This survey was organised fully by D Jungle People, a corporate training consultancy that specialises in driving growth in people and organisations. Conducted at the end of 2024, we collected over 1,200 responses through our professional networks via emails, social media and training programme participants.

Participants are required to be actively employed within the Malaysian workforce at the time of the survey. The dataset was filtered for these requirements, and from that, 815 responses were identified for further analysis.

While the dataset aligns with the current age distribution of Malaysia's corporate workforce, it exhibits a higher representation of female respondents.

Age Group

- >60 2.3%
- < 27 13.9%
- 44 - 59 32.3%
- 28 - 43 51.5%

Gender

- Male 44%
- Female 56%

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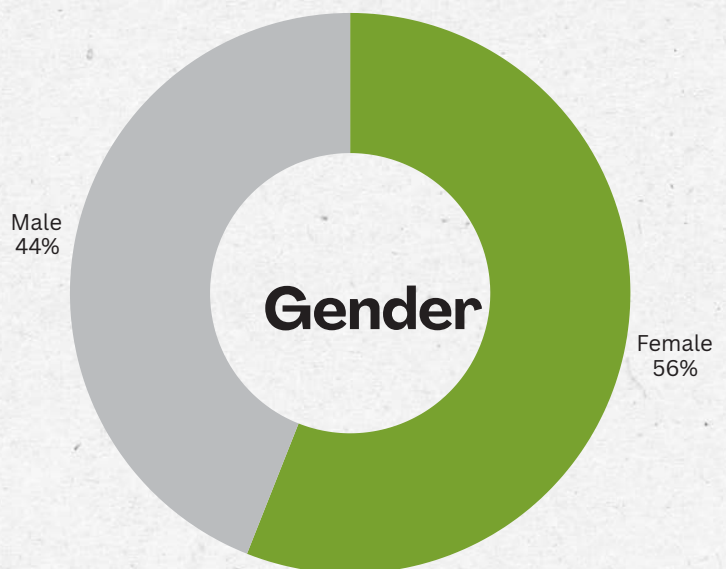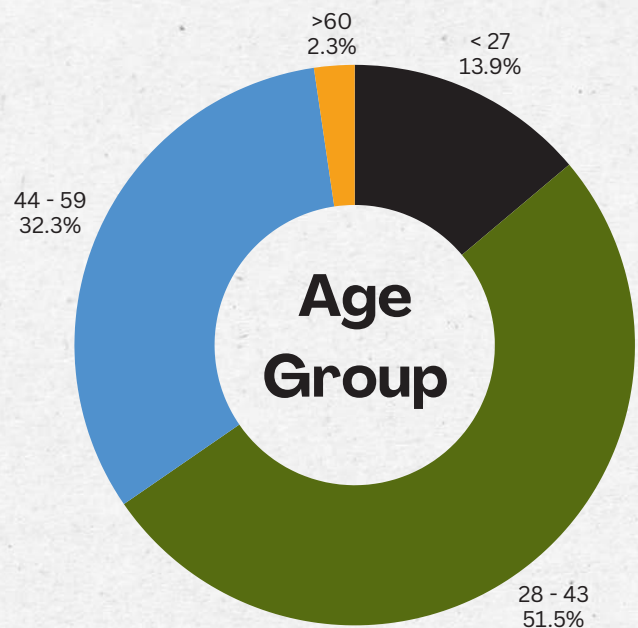
Behind The Data

Survey

3 Sections, 13 Questions:
- Demographics
- Current level of job commitment
- Managerial experience

The survey was designed with a clear focus on understanding the **state of employee commitment and the factors driving it**. It was split into three (3) main sections:

1. **First section** (**six questions**)
- Required respondents to share their demographic information.

2. **Second section** (**three questions**)
- Invited respondents to reflect on their current level of job commitment, specifically regarding their intention to remain in their roles and the effort required to fulfil this intention. Subsequent open-ended questions prompted respondents to evaluate their work environment and articulate the influences shaping their decisions. This section employed an open-response format, which aims to minimise the potential effects of priming and allows participants to reflect more deeply and authentically on their own experiences.

3. **Third section** (**four questions**)
- Explored the managerial experience in building engagement that drives commitment. This section was reserved exclusively for respondents in People Manager roles.

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Finding #1

The Majority of Malaysians are committed to their organisations.

Good news, first.

When you do a general search about employee sentiment on the internet, you will likely be inundated with bleak news - "Employees are unhappy", "60% of employees are seeking new employment", "77% of employees report feeling disengaged at work" and so on.

However, our survey has shown otherwise.

It appears that the majority of respondents in our survey (68% or 561 pax) rated themselves as committed or highly committed to their organisations at the time of the survey. Data points in this survey establish that high commitment refers to the sustained intention to remain in the organisation over the long term.

This is positive news for organisations across Malaysia, as it indicates relatively more stability in their workforce in the coming months (and hopefully, years).

Overall Commitment Levels

Level	Value
1	4.91
2	4.29
3	21.96
4	32.70
5	36.56
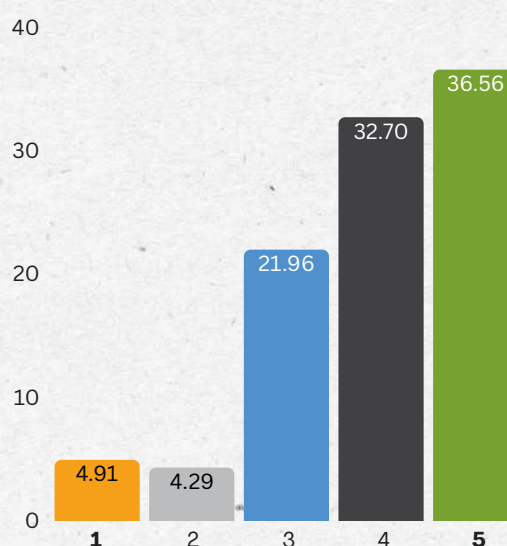
● I am actively searching for a way out.

● I am here for the long haul and ready to add value through good and bad situations.

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Breaking the Pattern:
Why Our Findings Differ from the Norm

D Jungle People's findings are **drastically different from the various studies** that have been completed by our industry colleagues within the same period, as indicated by the statistics returned by a web search on employee sentiments. Data from **Gallup's 2024 State of the Global Workplace** and **AON PLC's Human Capital Employee Sentiment Survey** report that an overwhelming majority of employees appear to be disengaged and are looking for their next career move.

What gives?

One possibility lies in the difference between the data size and the region being studied. DJP's survey was derived from a relatively humble sample size (815 respondents) and focused mainly on respondents in West Malaysia.

The second possibility, and something that we find more compelling, is the link between learning opportunities provided in organisations and tenure. Data from DJP's survey was collected from our partners who champion learning within their respective organisations. Notably, a significant portion of respondents were DJP's participants who were engaged in a learning initiative at the time of the survey, suggesting that their experiences may reflect the positive impact of development opportunities on their commitment to stay.

This context raises an important question:
Could the access to learning have influenced the responses in our dataset?

78%
of employees view **opportunities to learn** as a *critical factor* in the **decision to switch jobs**.

Quite possibly.
In fact, **PWC's Asia Pacific Hopes and Fears Survey 2024** corroborates this hypothesis.

Employees want to develop their skills in a manner that will support their career growth. Viewed through this lens, the optimism reflected in our findings may well be attributed to the strong correlation between learning opportunities and retention.

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Optimism in Context

In any organisation, having 68% of your employees declare their commitment to stay for the long term is great news. This also means that the earlier prediction that tenures will fall below 2 years seems unlikely (fingers crossed!).

While organisations can expect some stability in 2025 from their workforce, they must nonetheless brace for

30%
turnover rate in 2025

Realistically, this means that a five-member team can expect departures from at least one team member this year, a disruption that becomes especially acute when this involves a high performer.

HIGH PERFORMER

AT LEAST 1 OUT OF 5
employees may leave
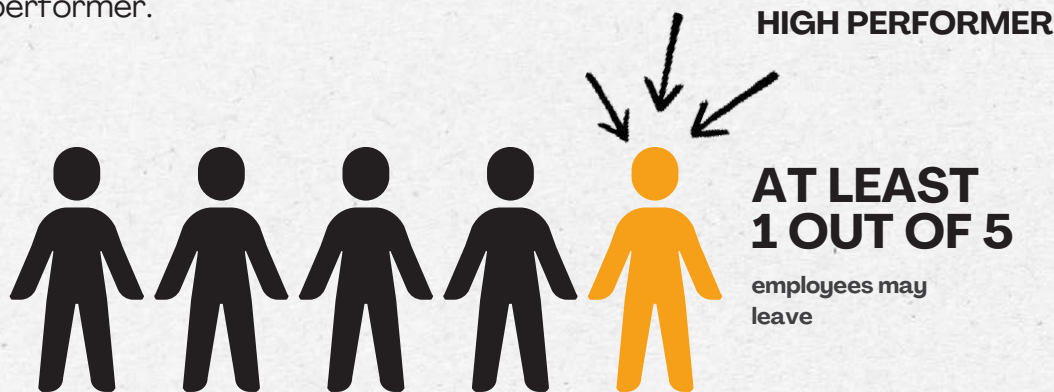
Due to the limitations of this survey, we are unable to look at the commitment trends from the high-performers cohort, but experience tells us that losing your top performers is not a stretch. They possess skills and experience that are highly sought after, making them prime targets for recruitment efforts.

Are you sure that your high performers are not <u>one of the five</u> that you may

lose this year?

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Insights to Actions:

What can *you* do?

01 INVEST IN YOUR PEOPLE

Employees want development that supports their long-term career ambitions.

By formalising and providing structured learning programmes with clear milestones, targeted skill-building workshops, and personalised career pathways - organisations will have a stronger anchor towards embedding themselves into the employees' long-term plans, which will significantly boost retention.

02 MENTOR & COACH TOP TALENTS

Your high performers are valuable contributors.

To protect them, combine comprehensive engagement strategies with targeted retention efforts towards high performers that address the unique needs and aspirations of a top talent. This includes mentorship and coaching initiatives that help create personalised and accelerated pathways for growth and strengthen their social connections in the organisation.
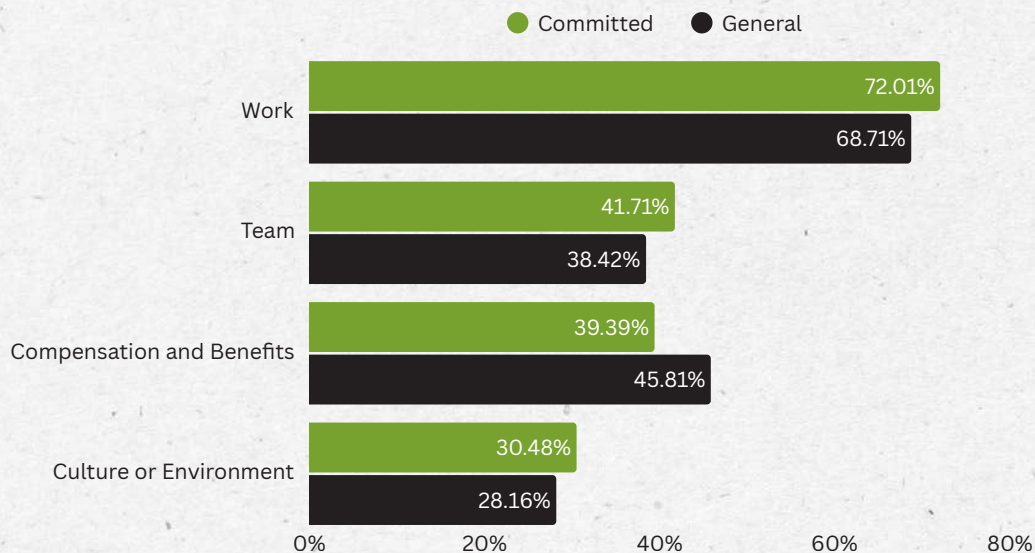
*D Jungle People offers a suite of solutions for **succession planning** and **change management**. Not ready for big moves? Click here to know more of our HRDC-Claimable programmes.*

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Finding #2

Meaningful Work Drives Commitment

Comparison of Commitment Drivers Between General & Committed Population

● Committed ● General

Driver	Committed	General
Work	72.01%	68.71%
Team	41.71%	38.42%
Compensation and Benefits	39.39%	45.81%
Culture or Environment	30.48%	28.16%

Note: Numbers reflect the % of respondents who listed each respective driver as their three factors.

"Remote work."

"4-day work weeks."

"Flexi hours."

Media narratives today (yes — we're once again referring to the social media influencers who often fight for our attention) portray today's employees as primarily driven by surface-level perks.

Besides being highly skewed, those perceptions are also wrong as our findings suggest a more encouraging reality.

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Most Popular Commitment Drivers

Respondents in our survey, regardless of gender, age group or tenure ranked:

01
Meaningful Work

02
Positive Team Climate

03
Compensation & Benefits

Author's note: Rather than chasing bougie benefits which gig workers can tell you are often - over glorified.

Mentions of Meaningful Work outweigh the next most popular commitment drivers in most populations analysed by at least

20%

These findings suggest a strong need for organisations to go back to the basics in crafting their engagement-related policies.

This involves **embedding meaningful work into job design**, ensuring compensation aligns with performance standards and cultivating managers who can effectively build and maintain teams to reduce disruptive turnover.

Except for Compensation and Benefits, the importance of Work, Teams, and Culture becomes even more pronounced in the Committed Population (respondents who reported commitment levels of 4s and 5s), suggesting that these factors will be **key components in building employee commitment**.

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Commitment, In Their Own Words

In our survey, respondents were asked to identify the top three (3) factors that helped them build their commitment at work. The questions were open-ended, which allowed respondents to express their thoughts freely without the influence of pre-determined choices.

The categorisation of factors that help build commitment, which we will call "Commitment Drivers," was established post-survey by looking at the trends and commonalities between responses.

The following are the major trends around Commitment Drivers, ranked from most popular to least popular, regardless of the respondent's level of commitment.

"I like the work that I do here. It is interesting and fun and continues to help me learn new things when I encounter challenges at work."

68.7% Meaningful Work

This refers to the alignment of work that employees are doing to what they deem as personally significant to them.

More than just the nature of the job that they play, respondents frequently cite factors that are highly intrinsic to them. Key terminologies that co-occur frequently with the words "my job" / "my work" include "passion", "satisfaction", "interest", "purpose/meaning" and "responsibility".

"What I do now is my passion and I have the opportunity to contribute to the nation."

It is overwhelmingly critical that employees can see the impact of their contributions at work in a manner that aligns with their personal values and aspirations. This finding is consistent despite variations in the individuals' age and tenure in the organisation.

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45.8% Compensation & Benefits

This category encompasses all forms of financial and non-financial rewards received by employees under their current employment. It includes various mentions of "benefits", "salary", "compensation", "remuneration", and "reward", in both English and Bahasa Malaysia.

While our natural tendency is to emphasise direct monetary distribution as a factor in employee commitment, this survey highlights;

Indirect financial benefits are *equally* significant.

"Medical coverage"

for employees and their families

"Allowances and other reward packages."

"Annual leave."

Notably, references to "benefits" appeared just as frequently as mentions of "salary", **underscoring the importance of a holistic rewards strategy in retaining talent**.

Team Climate captures the immediate relationships and interpersonal dynamics that shape an employee's experience at work.

38.4% Team Climate

Distinct from the broader organisational culture, team climate represents the **micro-ecosystem within which employees work**. Responses in this category commonly include terms that are most often associated with relationships, such as "team/teamwork", "people", "belongingness" and "support", and they are often positioned positively in the context of work performance.

With work becoming increasingly digitised and decentralised, the importance of cohesive team units may be underestimated. However, our findings show that **employees continue to derive significant value from their team environment**, and this is **particularly true amongst the committed respondents at 41.7%**

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In the context of this survey, Organisational Culture is about the **overall ways of working within the organisation that foster a supportive and productive work environment**.

Whereas Team Climate refers to immediate interpersonal relationships, Organisational Culture was referred to in broader and less specific terms.

28.2%
Organisational Culture

Terminologies like "Environment" and "Culture" feature more presently supported by explanations which include "inclusion", "openness", "less bureaucracy" and "lack of politics".

"The working environment is not toxic and political."

It is believed that when respondents cite "Culture" and "Environment", they were made in reference to the accumulation of a series of practices deemed to enable work activities.

"...the environment is more comfortable and there's greater amount of freedom to get things done."

"People in the organisation show respect and inclusion in communication and activity."

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The Compensation Paradox – When Pay Matters Most.

In today's competitive labour market, money talks.

Organisations have been using that philosophy for years to lure top talent away from their competitors. However, is that enough to keep talents in your organisation?

Our survey finds that this is true, IF the employee finds nothing else compelling in their jobs.

In the committed population, Compensation & Benefits were mentioned by 39.9% of the respondents as Commitment Drivers, but increased significantly to 68.0% in the uncommitted population (those who are actively looking for other job opportunities). This disparity underscores a critical insight into how we should view compensation packages - they function more as a safeguard than a source of commitment.

In the short term, competitive pay brings you the headcount and prevents turnover. If it becomes the primary motivation for employees, it may signal underlying disengagement and unmet needs in areas that are intrinsically more meaningful, such as purpose, relationships and growth. Money may keep people from leaving, but it likely will not inspire them to give you the best of themselves.

Note: *This is not to say that organisations shouldn't compensate fairly. D Jungle People is an advocate for paying people what they're worth!*

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The Hidden Engine of Commitment

The most frequently cited Commitment Drivers among our respondents; Meaningful Work, Compensation & Benefits, Positive Team Climate and Organisational Culture – are outcomes that rarely happen by chance.

They require purposeful and concentrated effort.

As we studied these factors in-depth, we found a common denominator that influences every single one of our commitment drivers. They are all the byproducts of deliberate managerial influence - a result of the Manager's interactions with their employees.

"**byproducts of deliberate managerial influence**"

Consider this:

Meaningful Work

A manager determines the work that the employee does.

Compensation & Benefits

A manager evaluates the employee's performance, shaping perceptions of fairness and reward that the employee does.

Positive Team Climate

A manager determines the team's communication style, how they work together and how they treat one another.

Organisation Culture

A manager role models and supervises general behaviours.

While employees may not consciously associate their perceived positive workplace outcomes with the efforts of their manager (in fact, analysis of DJP's data sets show that "Managers" are only called out specifically by 28.4% of the population), our expertise tells us that this deserves a fair bit of attention.

Indeed, a Gallup study conducted in 2020 found that

70%

of the variance in team engagement is **determined solely by the manager.**

This means that managerial attributes, such as their leadership style, communication style and decision-making greatly influence a team's engagement level.

The gap between the perception of employees and actual influence is what makes the managerial impact a "hidden engine", as they remain central to delivering things that employees actually value.

Managers matter.

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Insights to Actions:

What can *you* do?

01 FULFIL INTRINSIC NEEDS

The respondents in our survey have made it clear - they value a fulfilling and enjoyable day-to-day experience at work **as much as** they value the compensation and benefits package.

In fact, employees are likely to show greater tolerance towards less attractive financial incentives if organisations can align towards their intrinsic search for meaning, authentic relationships and a supportive environment.

Go beyond crafting a strong compensation package, and *focus on building systems that support the workforce's need to fulfil their intrinsic needs*.

02 INVEST IN YOUR MANAGERS

The common denominator among our Commitment Drivers are managers. *Great managers create the conditions for employees to thrive.*

Invest in your managers and your managerial pipeline by equipping them with the skills required to link your organisational ecosystem together. This capability is the single most powerful lever in building employee (and Managerial) commitment.

D Jungle People offers a Learning Journeys for Managerial Development. Not ready for big moves? Click here to know more of our HRDC-Claimable programmes.

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Finding #3

Are Gen Z's struggling with commitment?

Among all the survey findings, the insight in this section was the least surprising. Gen Z employees (those who are below 27 years of age), being the youngest and least experienced in life in the workforce, consistently reported lower levels of commitment compared to their older counterparts.

The trend that the older age groups report higher levels of commitment than their younger counterpart persists with every generation that we analysed, revealing a clear **age-commitment correlation**.

Age & Average Commitment to Organisation

Age	Average Commitment
<27	3.67
28 - 43	3.78
44- 59	4.20
>60	4.37
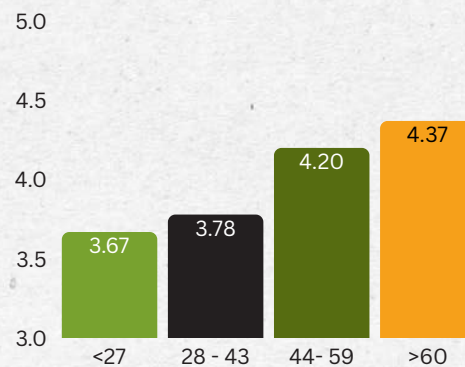
35%

intend to change employment **despite** being very satisfied with their organisation

This is aligned with data derived from **Qualtrics' 2025 Employee Experience Trends** paper which found that younger employees (in the 18 – 24 years age bracket) do not see a long-term future with their current employers.

This trend, however, should not be viewed as a deficiency as much as it is **a developmental reality**. Younger employees are often less committed as they are still exploring their careers and their goals in life. Expectations may evolve rapidly as they gain more perspectives and clarity through the experience that they gain in your respective organisation, **resulting in higher commitment as people grow**.

Keeping Gen Zs engaged: So, how do we build Gen Z's commitment?

To explore this, we examined the perspectives of respondents who reported higher levels of commitment. After all, who better to shed light on this issue than those who have found the conditions that enable and support engagement?

Understanding what works for them can help us shape the conditions where more Gen Z employees feel empowered to commit and give their best.

Most Popular Commitment Drivers Ranking by Age Groups

Age Group	#1	#2	#3
< 27 N = 67	Meaningful Work	Team Climate	Organisational Culture
28 – 43 N = 270	Meaningful Work	Compensation & Benefits	Team Climate
44 – 59 N = 208	Meaningful Work	Team Climate	Manager / Compensation & Benefits

Based on the pattern of responses, it appears that the youngest cohort in the workforce demonstrate the highest intrinsic drive, compared to their older colleagues. They prioritise meaningful work first, followed by team climate and organisational culture. This aligns with recent research indicating that the younger employees are more attracted to roles that offer personal fulfilment and opportunities for growth rather than transactional rewards.

There is a noticeable **shift towards more tangible rewards and stability as individuals age**, which is rational given the growth of skills, life responsibilities and financial commitments that typically come with career progression.

Insights to Actions:

What can *you* do?

01 Welcome ONBOARD Gen Zs!

Given Gen Z's preference for the more social aspects of their jobs such as Team Climate, Organisational Culture, it would serve this generation well if organisations could establish deliberate onboarding programmes that involve more than just HR and their managers.

Establish **formal peer mentoring and buddy systems with selected role models** to **immerse your young employees into the company's social ecosystems**. This structured approach not only accelerates their integration into your organisation, but it also reinforces a sense of belonging and community that are critical to nurturing Gen Z's commitment.

02 CONVERSATIONS THAT MATTER

Rather than leaving Gen Zs search for meaning and purpose to chance, fostering regular, meaningful conversations between managers and their younger employees about career and life aspirations as well as the alignment between these two will accelerate Gen Zs growth.

To support Managers, also known as the hidden engine of commitment, organisations should invest in leadership development initiatives that build their managers' capability to engage in these conversations.

Lower investment, long-term returns.
Click here to know more of D Jungle People's HRDC-Claimable programmes.

03 CAREER TRAJECTORY

Beyond Gen Zs, older cohorts value tangible rewards, stability and quality leadership, very likely due to more established life plans.

As such, organisations should **design robust career pathways** that **articulate the opportunity for advancement and role diversification** that adds value to their older employee's stage in life. This will reinforce loyalty among seasoned employees and **enable the retention of their deep institutional knowledge**.

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Finding #4

The steep death of commitment after enthusiasm dies.

Commitment levels peak in the first year in the organisation, before a steep decline over the next 3 years.

Average Commitment Levels by Tenure

Tenure	Value
< 1	3.94
1 - 3	3.58
3.1 - 5	3.88
5.1 - 9	3.84
10 - 14	4.04
15 - 20	4.31
> 20	4.63
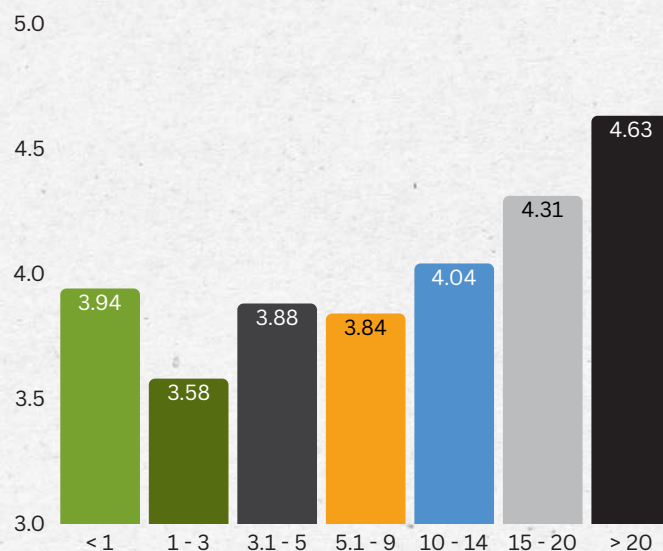
An employee's **tenure in an organisation is shown to consistently correlate with commitment levels**. Except for the second and third year of service, commitment steadily increases with each year that the employee serves within the same organisation.

Between those in their first ten years in the organisation, **commitment level peaks** among employees who are serving their **first 12 months**, giving credence to why the first year has earned the nickname of the "honeymoon period", before it **plummets over the next 2 years**.
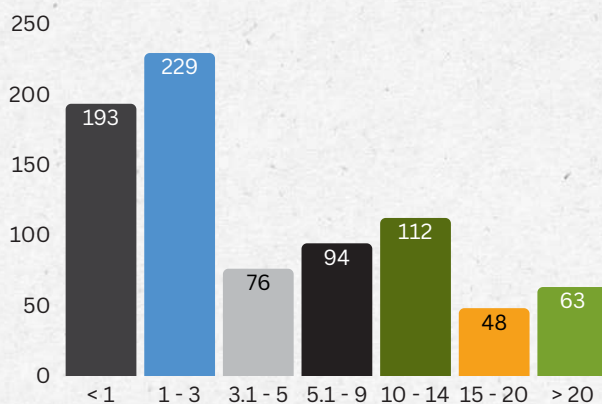
Further analysis of those tenured 1-3 years provided more insights. Commitment levels generally drop deeply after the first year, and **are at their lowest after individuals have completed two (2) years in the organisation**.

The average commitment level reported was 3.55 / 5.00 among those cohorts. If attrition rates follow the same patterns as the volume of responses received in this survey (and they do), this means that organisations can expect attrition to be highest among individuals who are in their 3rd year in the organisation. This is very much in line with older economic data (those projected before 2024) that Malaysian professionals switch jobs every 2-3 years.

"Malaysian professionals switch jobs every 2 to 3 years."

This data underlines one key strategy for organisations looking to improve their retention rates - **pay attention to your employees who are serving their first three (3) years in the organisation**.

Distribution of Respondents' Tenure

Tenure	Respondents
< 1	193
1 - 3	229
3.1 - 5	76
5.1 - 9	94
10 - 14	112
15 - 20	48
> 20	63

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Starting Strong but Falling Short.

Looking at the response patterns for the at-risk cohort (those currently 1-3 years in the organisation), the building blocks for commitment remains the same. However, closer analysis of those with low commitment levels (self-reported commitment scores of 1, 2 and 3) reveals a clear outlier.

Dissatisfaction with their Compensation & Benefits was cited in

50%

of the responses (N = 100).

More than any other tenured cohort, individuals in the 1st to 3rd year in their organisations usually do not believe that they are fairly compensated in relation to their performance and abilities. This trend aligns with broader research findings.
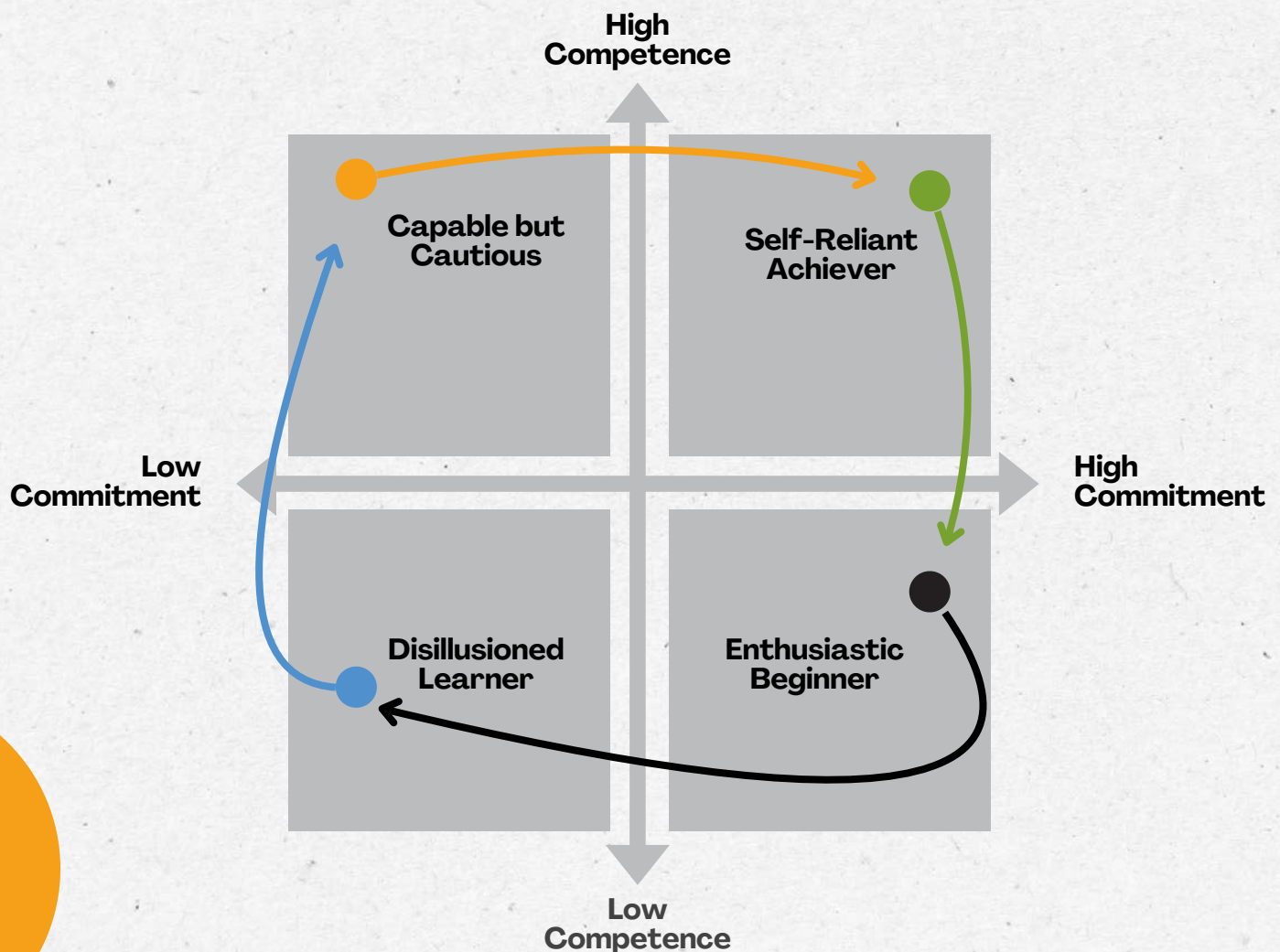
Gallup's 2023 study indicates that among employees who voluntarily left their jobs and believed their departure was preventable, the **most common suggestion for retention** was **"improved compensation or benefits."**

We believe that employees in their initial years in the organisation are typically still learning about the organisation and experimenting with their role within it. This may result in lower performance evaluations and, consequently more modest reward outcomes. **This performance gap may also contribute to more negative perceptions of other organisational elements, such as managerial quality and culture.**

The Hidden Curves of Commitment

We found the trends in our survey to be explained overwhelmingly well by **Ken Blanchard's Learning Experience Model** that is outlined as part of the Situational Leadership Model.

The Learning Experience model highlights four key stages individuals will go through, and the accompanying emotional journey, as they develop competence and commitment in a new role.

High Competence

Low Commitment — **High Commitment**

Capable but Cautious

Self-Reliant Achiever

Disillusioned Learner

Enthusiastic Beginner

Low Competence

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In the beginning of any learning experience, people often start out as **Enthusiastic Beginners**, where they're not necessarily very skilled, but highly motivated and energised by the novelty of the experience. That is how employees will feel in the first year in their roles and explains how they responded in our survey.

However, the easy wins are quickly accomplished and the demands for complexity increases. This is the **Disillusioned Learner** stage, where the confidence dips without much growth in skills. What follows is the **Capable but Cautious** and the **Self-Reliant Achiever** stage, where a sense of achievement grows the individual's confidence.

What is most difficult is the transition from Disillusioned Learner to Capable but Cautious. This stage is often marked by a mix of trial and error, where growth is accompanied by frustration, criticism, self-doubt and the occasional anxiety. It is no surprise then, that employees in their second and third year report the lowest levels of commitment.

Those who persevere through this phase typically emerge with both increased competence and confidence, which also explains the increase in commitment levels by individuals in their fourth year of service.

Unfortunately, many individuals struggle to see this process through and opt to exit the organisation before reaching that turning point.

This explains why job-hopping is so attractive to some (besides the promise of a 20% salary increase) as it provides a "psychological reset" - it allows them to leave behind the negative experience of a Disillusioned Learner and re-enter the cycle as an Enthusiastic Beginner in a new environment.

Psychological reset & new beginnings.

But it's a *vicious cycle*, isn't it?

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Insights to Actions:

What can *you* do?

01

First 90 DAYS?
More like the first 730 days.

With the key attrition happening between those tenured 1-3 years, there is a critical need to rethink the onboarding process in organisations. Rather than front-loading the experience, which puts a lot of emphasis on the first 90 days when enthusiasm is already high, organisations may stand to benefit through **a more balanced and phased approach that provides support throughout an employee's first two years in an organisation**. This may mean providing the tools and access to support systems at critical points and enforcing them when employees may need them the most.

02

THE HARD & SOFT SIDES

Beyond the conventional training and development frameworks, organisations must embed commitment building initiatives into their broader frameworks.

This integrated approach combines the **hard side** of commitment building – technical training, leadership development, performance management – with the **soft side**, which includes initiatives aimed at enhancing employee engagement, emotional connection and cultural alignment.

Addressing both dimensions holistically ensures that commitment is created in a manner that is valuable to the employee.

D Jungle People's team engagement philosophy anchors on creating strong teams through trust. _Click here_ to co-create a unique experience.

03

MEET IN THE MIDDLE

Like most things in life, commitment is a two-way street. Just as organisations need to ramp up efforts to help employees overcome the Disillusioned Learner stage, **individuals must also take ownership of their growth by voicing their challenges at work**.

In high power distance cultures like Malaysia, employees tend to self-censor and organisations (and Managers) are deprived of the very insights they need to improve work conditions. Commitment multiples when both parties are actively invested in building it.

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Finding #5

Managers feel confident in building commitment, but this may not be reflected in their real performance.

94%

of the **414 Malaysian managers** express strong confidence in their ability to build commitment in their teams.

What is stopping them?

"Complexities of managing a multigenerational workforce."

35.8%

"Reducing resources and increasing workload"

30.6%

"Own perceived lack of managerial competency."

15.8%

Many shared that a clear, structured approach - through regular meetings, monthly activities and face-to-face interactions are practices that they have implemented. While the large majority of managers express confidence in their ability to drive team engagement,

but 28.6%

reported that they are **facing challenges** in achieving their desired outcomes.

Note: Interpret this data point with caution, as it is based on a smaller subset of respondents (n=95) who chose to elaborate on the specific challenges they faced in their managerial roles.

The limited data volunteered in this section sheds some light on the **potential mismatch between the engagement strategies that are employed by managers and the actual challenges** that they face in terms of building commitment.

While the methods used suggest a reliance on socially-driven tactics, the issues that they have reported **required a more nuanced approach that takes into consideration the deeper drivers of commitment that we have discovered in this study**.

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Congratulations, *you made it.*

That was a lot. The irony is not lost on us as we applaud you for **staying committed to the mission of building commitment.**

What began for us at **D Jungle People** as a desire to create more stability in the workforce turned into an exploration of the human experience at work – one that is driven by purpose, growth and belonging. As we look ahead, the challenge isn't just in retaining talent and arresting attrition, it is about **reshaping the workplace**.

The kind of *workplace* that people want to *bring their best* to, day after day.

It was never just *a survey.*

01

What are your Commitment Drivers? What are you doing to fulfil them?

Remember: It is a two-way street.

02

What are your team members' Commitment Drivers and how are you fulfilling them?

Remember: Managers are the hidden engines of Commitment.

It's all about intentionality.

We will end this paper exactly with how we started - by inviting you to answer some questions to help you further draw significance to the data that we have shared

03

What are the systems and policies that you can build in your organisation to drive employee commitment?

Remember: Intrinsic drivers are just as important as financial drivers.

Whether you are struggling with the questions above, need help with building commitment in your team, or have strong opinions that you want to share, please reach out! We are always happy to talk. **After all, solving people-problems are what D Jungle People does best.**

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We're Architects of Learning

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT
Build competencies to drive individual, managerial and organisational results.

TEAM ENGAGEMENT
Challenge teams to pivot into higher performance zones.

CULTURE TRANSFORMATION
Facilitate demonstration of core behaviours that shapes an organisation's identity.

With over **25 years of expertise**, D Jungle People is a trusted leader in Human Capital Management and **Learning & Development**.

We design bespoke programmes to upskill individuals, align teams, and drive organisational success.

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