



VOICE OF THE

**Restaurant
Worker 2022**



A word from our CEO

It's been an uncertain two years for restaurants, as COVID-19 shutdowns nearly halted the entire industry. Not only have closures and social distancing affected operations, but staffing shortages, rising food costs, and supply chain disruptions have made resiliency the name of the game.

As guests return to food service locations to enjoy their dining experiences again – from sitting down to an elaborate five-course meal at a fine-dining restaurant to grabbing to-go tacos from a food truck – we have to ask: How are restaurant workers doing? After two years, are they more burnt out than ever? Or are they thrilled to welcome guests back?

In this report, we asked 970 front and back of house restaurant employees to tell us about their experiences, including insights into their engagement at work, the ways in which they provide quality service, and what they're lacking in order to do their jobs successfully.

We hope you find these insights helpful as you continue to grow and evolve employee and customer engagement strategies in your brick-and-mortar locations for 2022 and beyond.



Bobby Marhamat

CEO | RAYDIANT

Key Findings

Here are seven insights we learned from the restaurant workers we surveyed:

1 Engagement is high and increasing.

63% of respondents say they are “highly engaged” at work each day. Additionally, 69% say their engagement has increased over the past twelve months.

2 Service quality is high and increasing as well.

66% of respondents say their restaurant provides “very good service” to their guests. 69% say that their restaurant’s service quality has increased over the past year.

3 The biggest driver of service quality is a focus on customers.

Those who say their customer service quality has increased attribute it to making customer service a priority, investing in tools and technology, and investing in employee training.

4 Over half are witnessing high turnover.

55% of respondents are seeing “more turnover than ever,” and 62% say they will likely quit their job in the next twelve months.

5 They’re mostly using four to seven tools per day.

44% of respondents use four to seven tools per day at work, and 39% use only one to three tools. 17% use eight or more tools per day. 85% say they have the tools they need for success – but 15% are using tools that aren’t what they need.

6 Better tools would increase engagement.

Respondents say that in order to increase employee engagement, restaurant leadership should provide better tools for the job, improve communication, and build team morale.

7 83% believe their restaurant will be in business in five years.

Those who don’t believe their business will survive say it’s because leadership doesn’t make workers a priority. They also say their restaurant doesn’t invest in technology and tools for workers or to provide better customer service.

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Who Was Surveyed:

Methodology and Participant Demographics

To provide greater context around these findings, here are more details on who we surveyed and the methodology used. Starting on June 21, 2022, we surveyed 970 restaurant workers in the US. The survey was conducted online via Pollfish using organic sampling.

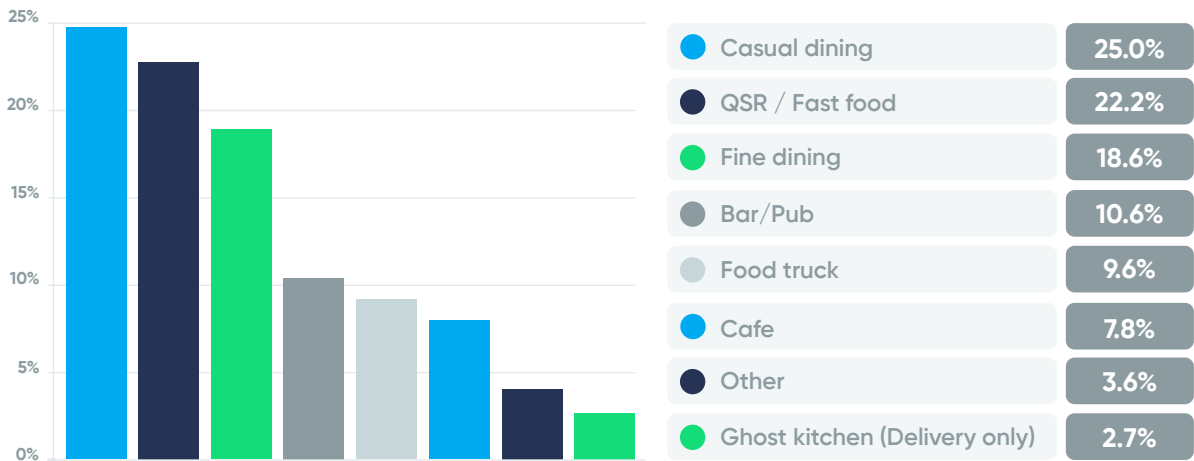
What best describes your employment status?



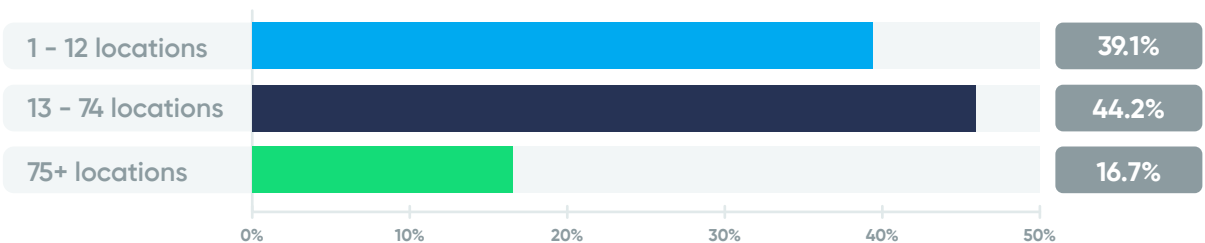
What best describes your position at the restaurant you work for?



What best describes the type of restaurant you work for?



Approximately how many locations does the restaurant you work for have in total?



Now, with context around who our respondents were, let's take a closer look at what we uncovered.

PART 1

Engagement & Turnover

Engaged employees create happy customers – which is especially important in a restaurant setting. An engaged worker looks forward to serving customers and creating amazing experiences for guests. They also understand the value they bring to the restaurant.

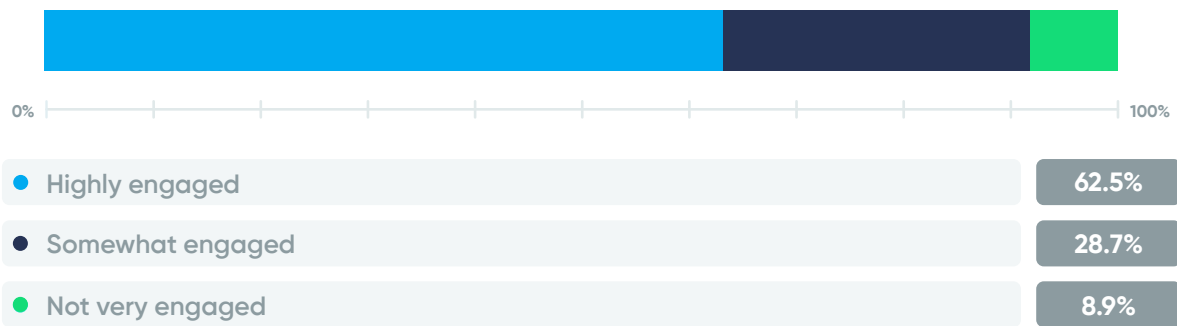
The past two years posed a big challenge for restaurants around the country – are workers still feeling engaged today?

63% of workers are “highly engaged”

62.5% of our respondents say they’re highly engaged at work and enjoy serving customers and contributing to the restaurant. 28.7% are somewhat engaged, and only 8.9% say they’re not very engaged at all.

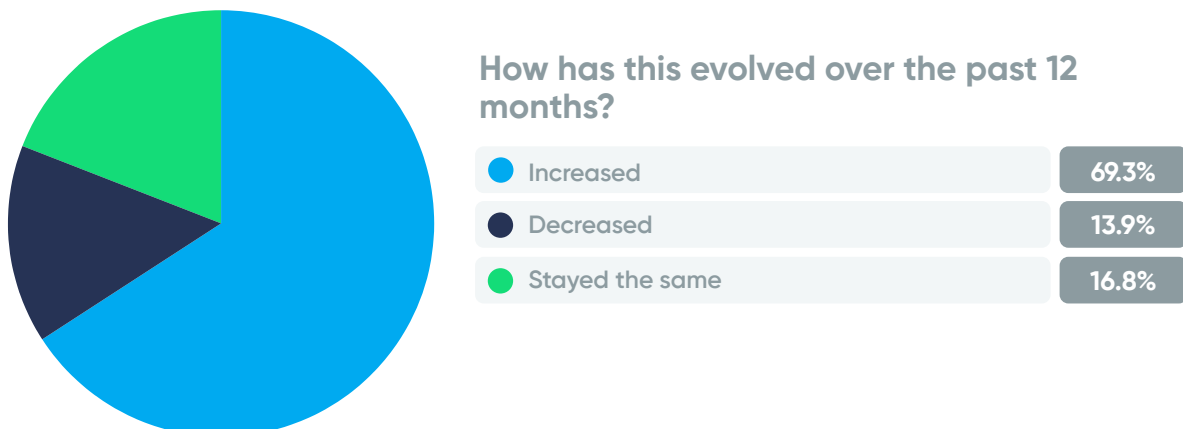
Compared to results from our survey last year, engagement has indeed gone up amongst restaurant workers. Last year, only 40.5% reported being highly engaged, with 33.3% being somewhat engaged. 26.2% said that they were not engaged at all.

How engaged would you say you personally are at work today?



69% say their engagement has increased

For 69.3%, their engagement has increased over the past twelve months. 16.8% say it’s stayed the same, and 13.9% say their engagement has decreased.





Top Five Reasons for Decreasing Engagement

For those who say their engagement has decreased, there were no stand-out reasons as to why. However, top reasons included:

13.3%

Poor management

Employee engagement is nearly always connected to the quality of management, and the workers surveyed say their engagement is negatively impacted by bad management.

13.3%

No room for promotions or raises

Not having a path for promotion or getting a raise is causing workers to become disengaged from their work as well, as they have no room to grow.

11.9%

Changes in the company culture or business model

Workers say they're not as engaged because of changes in their workplace culture or a change in the mission or values, causing them to feel less connected to it.

11.9%

Morale is low

Workers can very easily become disengaged when morale is low amongst the staff – especially during high-stress times, during staffing shortages, and more.

11.9%

Stagnant work, including lack of progress, innovation, or challenges

Going to work each day and finding the same menu, processes, and approaches is also causing disengagement.

Other reasons include being overworked due to staff shortage (11.1%), COVID-19 related restrictions (11.1%), and loss of coworkers, including people leaving or getting fired (10.4%). It should be noted that after two years of a pandemic, stress due to COVID-19 (5.2%) came in last – signaling that pandemic-related pressure is lifting.



If decreased, outside of changes in pay, what would you say is the primary reason you become less engaged at work?



Top Five Reasons for Decreasing Engagement

Even the most engaged employees have suggestions for how to improve engagement. Respondents suggest that their employers could do the following to improve engagement:

19.1%

Provide better tools for doing my job

The best way to improve engagement is to provide workers with better tools to better serve customers.

13.1%

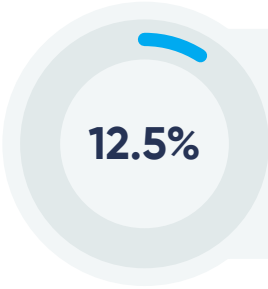
Build team morale

Considering that low morale was a reason for disengagement, workers want leadership to build up morale to increase their connection to their work and to others around them.

12.1%

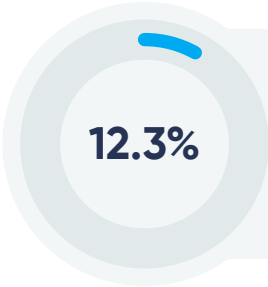
Communicate better

They also say that better communication, from everyday changes to the company mission, can increase their engagement.



Recognize my performance

Everyone wants to be recognized for good work, and our respondents believe more recognition will boost their buy-in.



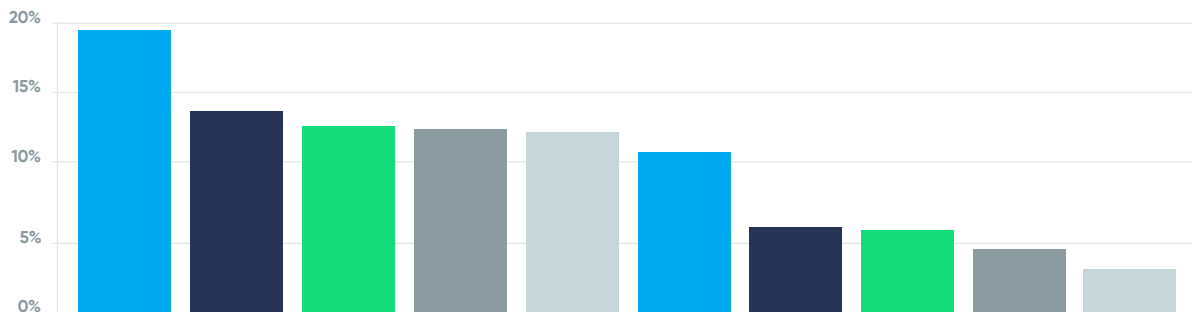
Offer incentives and rewards

Respondents want more incentives and rewards to recognize their work and provide some fun competition between other staff.

Other suggestions include:

- Providing more opportunities for education or training (10.4%).
- Providing opportunities for career growth or promotion (6.3%).
- Improved management (6.2%).
- Improved company culture (4.4%).
- Improved physical location layout (3.7%).

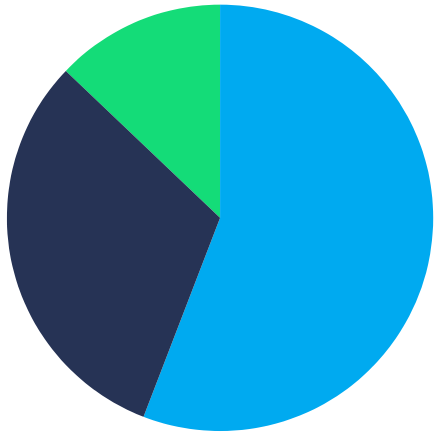
Outside of increasing pay, what's the #1 thing your employer could do that would increase your engagement at work?



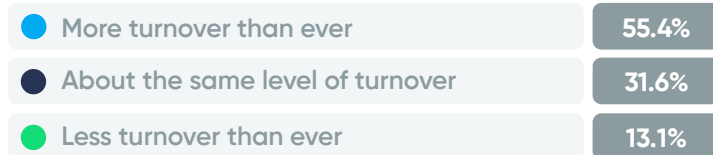
• Provide better tools for doing my job	19.1%
• Build team morale	13.1%
• Recognize my performance	12.5%
• Offer incentives and rewards	12.3%
• Communicate better	12.1%
• Provide more opportunities for education or training	10.4%
• Provide opportunities for career growth/promotion	6.3%
• Improve management	6.2%
• Improve company culture	4.4%
• Improve our physical location layout	3.7%

55% are seeing "more turnover than ever"

When it comes to turnover at their restaurants, 55.4% say they're seeing more turnover than ever, with 31.6% seeing about the same level of turnover. Only 13.1% are seeing less turnover than ever.



How would you describe turnover (people quitting, furloughed or getting fired) at your company?



Summary

After a turbulent few years, restaurant worker engagement is on the rise. Nearly two-thirds (63%) say they're highly engaged in their daily work, and 69% say their engagement has improved over the past year. The likely cause has been the emergence from the pandemic: restaurants are open again and people are coming back, COVID-related stress is easing, and instead of simply surviving day-to-day, restaurants can focus on serving great food and great experiences to their guests.

If restaurant management wants to improve employee engagement, our respondents suggest that providing better tools is the priority. They believe engagement could benefit from better communication, building team morale, and more recognition for their work through incentives and rewards. Ultimately, excellent management and leadership on a day-to-day basis will be the key to keeping employees engaged and customers happy – and poor management will dishearten workers from their job.

PART 2

**Customer
Service Quality**

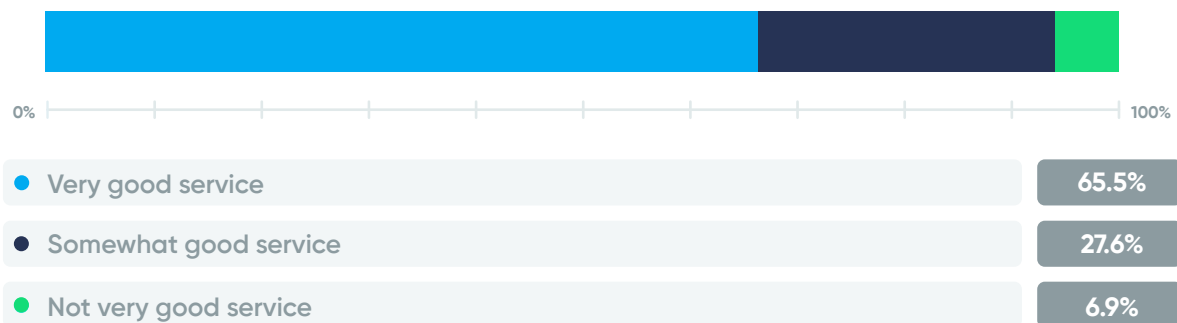
From the food to the speed of service to the atmosphere, providing quality service is one of the hallmarks of having a great restaurant experience. Guests grabbing a quick bite or making an event out of a night out have high expectations, and a lousy visit can keep them from ever returning to your restaurant.

Two-thirds say they provide "very good service"

When it comes to rating the service they provide to guests in their restaurants, 65.5% say they provide very good service. 27.6% say they provide somewhat good service. Only 6.9% say their service is not very good.

This year's respondents have seen a vast uptick in customer service quality compared to respondents from last year, where only 46% said their service was very good, 28.6% said their service was somewhat good, and 25.4% said their service was not good at all. The dramatic improvement in service this year is due to a greater focus on customer service and greater investment in technology to improve service, as we'll see in the question below. Compared to last year's staffing shortage, pandemic shifts, and other impacts that caused restaurants to be in survival mode, respondents this year seem to be in a much more stable place to be able to focus on service improvements.

How would you rate the service you provide to customers who are visiting your physical restaurant locations?



Service quality has increased for 69% of respondents

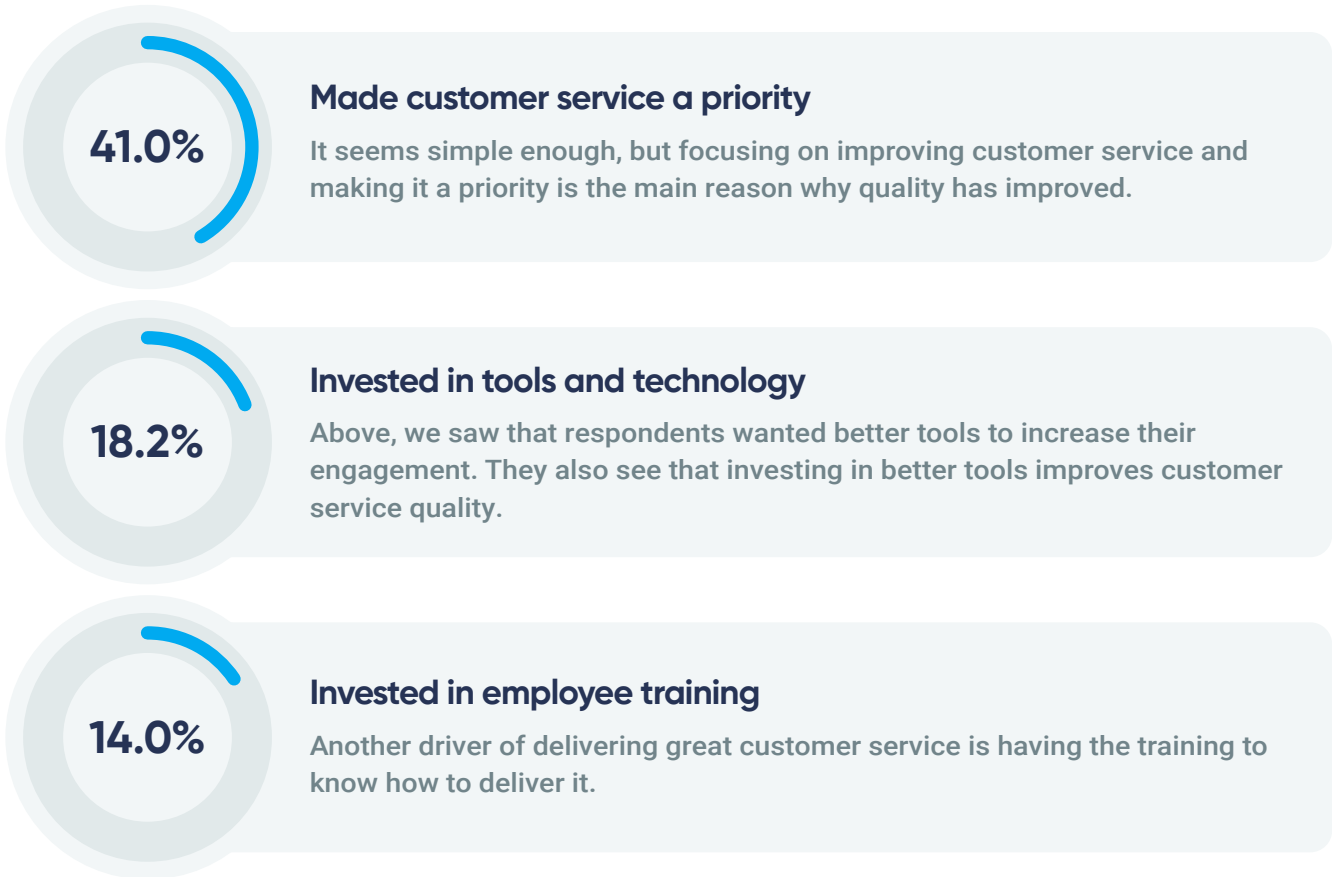
69.2% say that their service quality has increased over the past year. 16.1% say their quality has stayed the same, and 14.7% say their quality has decreased.





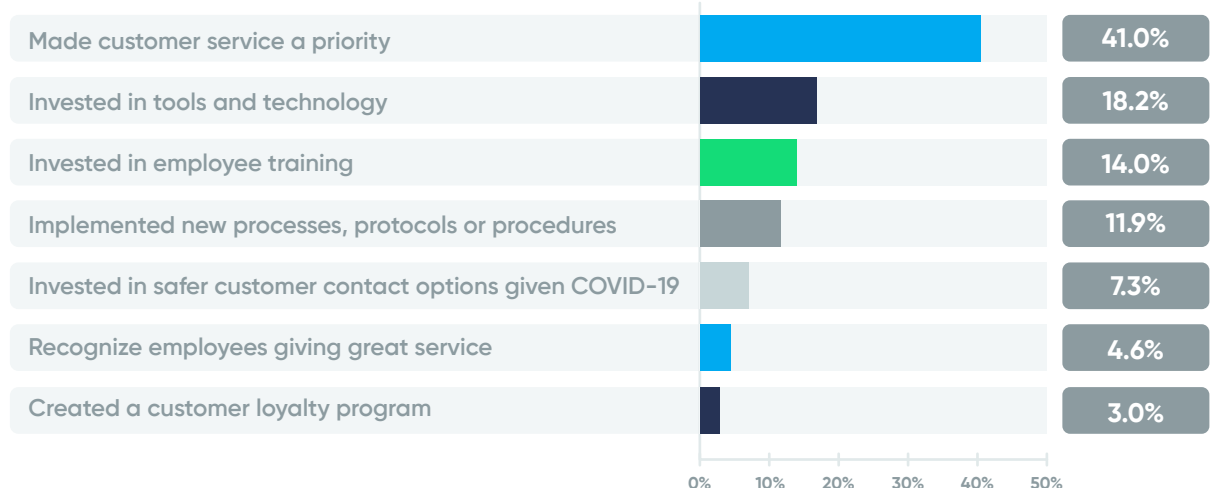
Three Drivers of Improved Service Quality

For those who said service quality improved over the past twelve months, they attribute that change to the following reasons:



Other reasons include implementing new processes, protocols, or procedures (11.9%), investing in safer customer contact options given COVID-19, like contactless checkout (7.3%), recognizing employees giving great service (4.6%), and creating a customer loyalty program (3%).

If decreased, outside of changes in pay, what would you say is the primary reason you become less engaged at work?





Three Reasons Why Service Has Gotten Worse

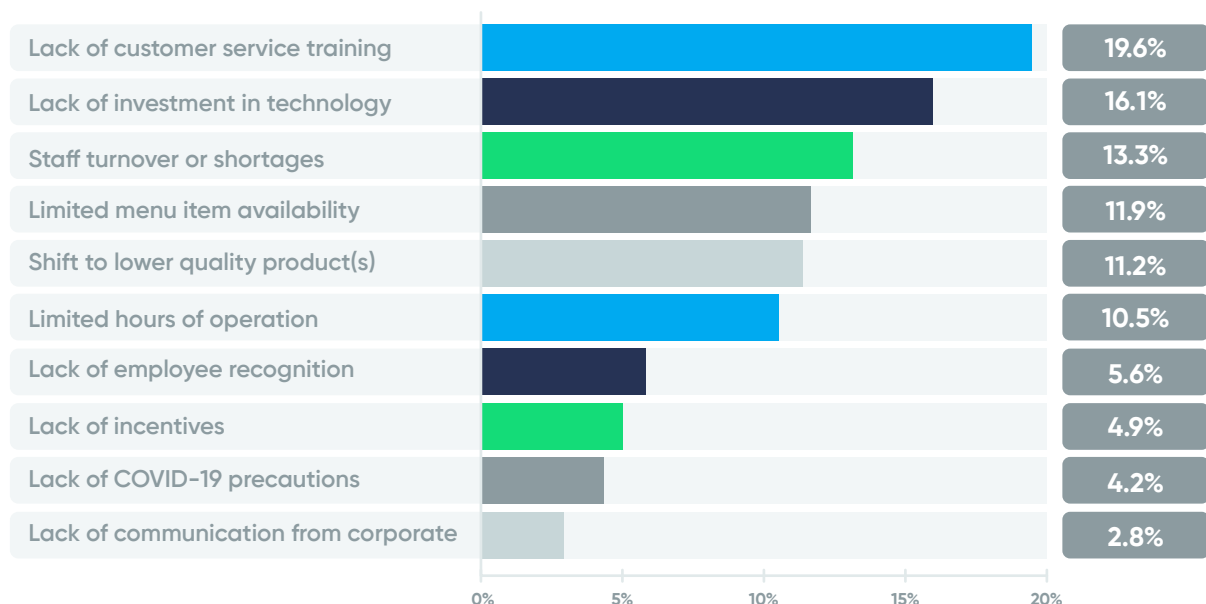
For those who say their service quality has decreased, they say it's due to the following reasons:



Other suggestions include:

- Limited menu item availability (11.9%)
- A shift to lower quality product(s) (11.2%)
- Limited hours of operation (10.5%)
- Lack of employee recognition (5.6%)
- Lack of incentives (4.9%)
- Lack of COVID-19 precautions (4.2%)
- Lack of communication from corporate (2.8%).

If decreased, why?





Summary

In addition to increased engagement among restaurant workers, we're also seeing an increase in customer service quality. 66% say that service at their restaurant is "very good." Overall, quality has increased for 69% of respondents. An increase in employee engagement seems like it's certainly contributing to the rise in quality.

Reasons for improved quality can be traced back to one thing: ensuring that workers know how to provide a satisfying, enjoyable, and streamlined experience for their guests. This includes prioritizing customer service, investing in tools and technology like POS systems and inventory management, and ensuring that workers are trained to deliver great service.

PART 3

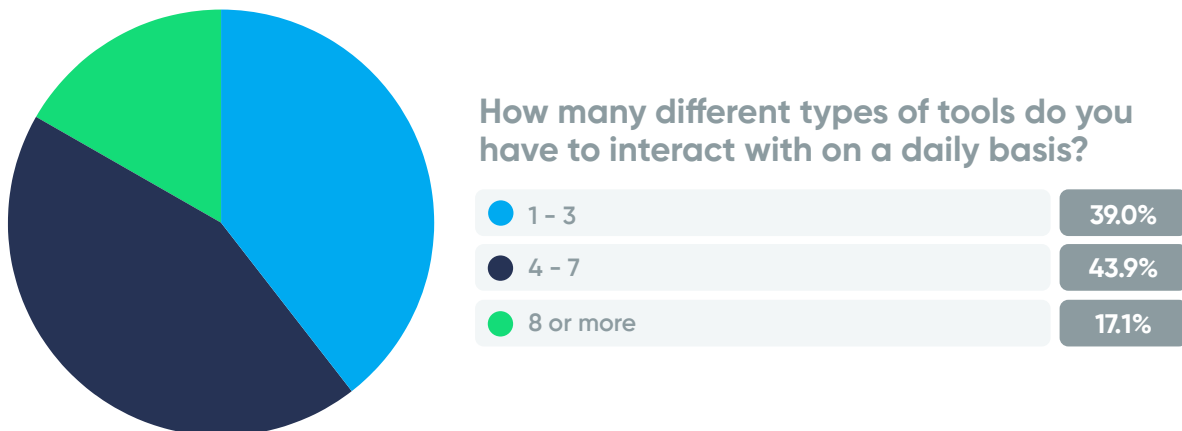
Tools

Restaurant workers need the right tools to do their jobs successfully and provide excellent service to their customers. They're using updated POS systems that take orders and allow for inventory tracking, analytics, accounting integration, and more. They need a robust real-time inventory management system to report on stock, costs, and orders. Other tech can include an online reservation system, a mobile ordering system, digital menu boards, self-service kiosks, and more.

But do workers have the right tools, or is their lack of access putting their customer service in danger?

44% use four to seven tools per day

The largest segment of respondents (43.9%) say they use four to seven tools per day at work, including software like the POS system or hardware like digital signage or tablets. 39% use only one to three tools during the day. 17.1% are using eight or more tools daily.



85% have the tools they need for success

85.1% said their employer provides them with the tools they need to succeed.

Do you feel your employer provides the tools you need to be successful?



Summary

Respondents want the right tools and technology at their disposal to provide the best experience possible to customers. 85% say they have the tools they need to be successful, yet 15% feel they lack the right tools. Of those 15%, 50.7% use one to three tools per day, 30.6% use four to seven tools, and 18.8% use eight or more tools per day – but ultimately, they're not the right tools.

PART 4

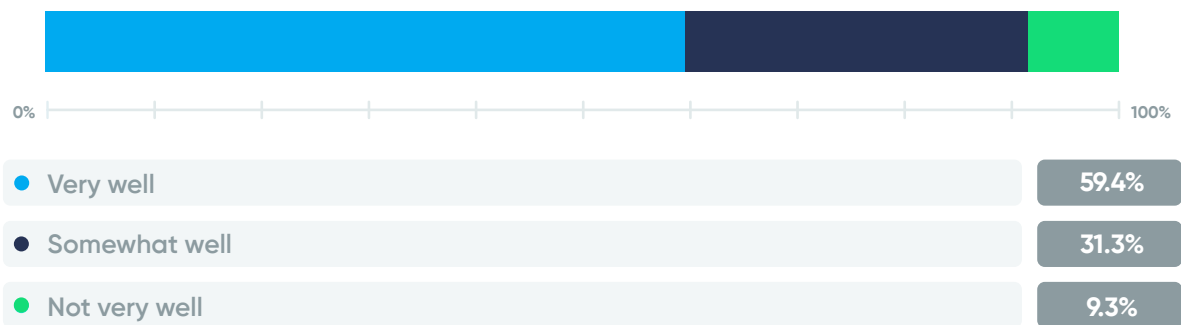
**Company
Communication**

Communication is not only key between workers during service but crucial from a leadership standpoint, so everyone is aware of and engaged with the company’s mission and initiatives. Good communication from managers to their employees can help increase engagement as well. So how are restaurants doing with their communication strategies?

59% find that their employer does “very well” at communication

Regarding communication, 59.4% of respondents say their employer does very well at communicating with them in the restaurant. 31.3% say their employer communicates somewhat well, and 9.3% say their employer doesn’t communicate very well.

How would you say your employer does at communicating with staff like yourself working in physical locations?



Nearly three-quarters have a company email address

73.7% replied that their company does provide them with an email address. However, 26.3% do not have a company email address. In the next questions, we find that email is the third most used way companies communicate with employees – and it’s our respondents’ fourth most preferred method of communication. If employees want to be communicated with in a different way, then companies might want to reevaluate their use of email addresses.

Does your employer provide you with a company email address? (Example: John.Smith@company.com).



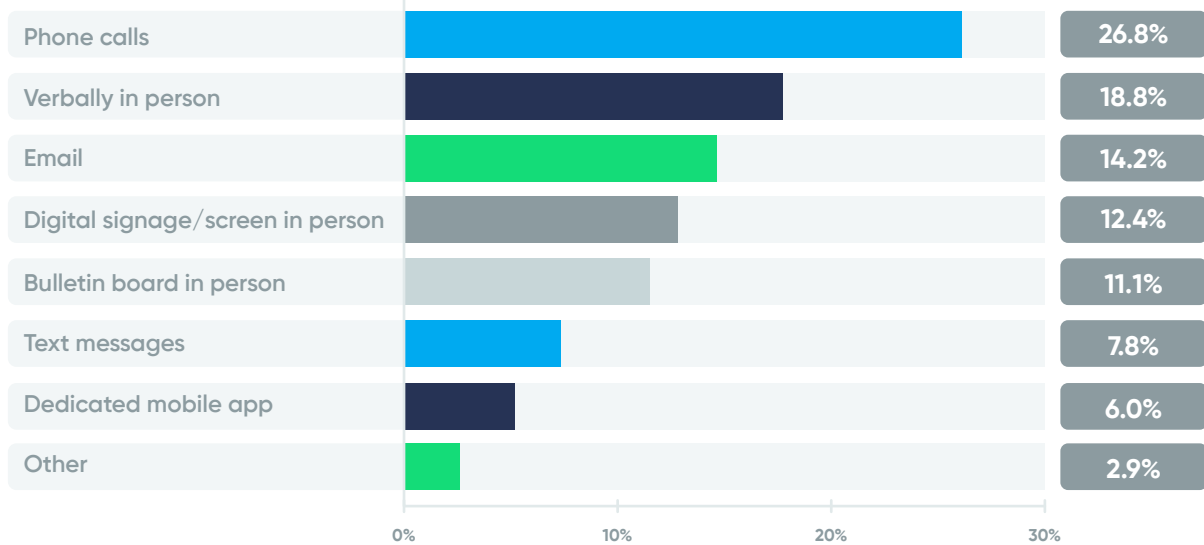
Top Five Ways Companies Communicate with Employees

The top five ways that respondents say their companies communicate with them are by phone calls (26.8%), verbally in person (18.8%), by email (14.2%), digital signage or screen in person (12.4%), or by bulletin board in person (11.1%).



Other methods include text messages (7.8%), dedicated mobile app (6%), and other ways not listed here (2.9%).

What's the primary way that your company communicates with you?

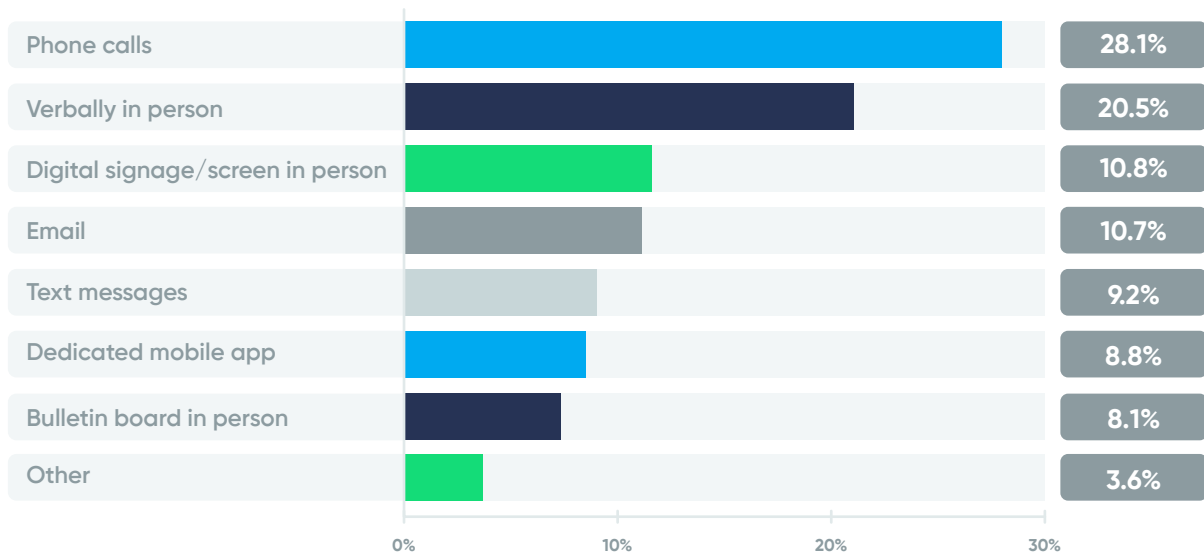


Top Five Ways Employees Want to Be Communicated with

We know how companies communicate with their employees – but how do employees want to be communicated with? The top methods are similar and include phone calls (28.1%), verbally in person (20.5%), digital signage/screen in person (10.8%), email (10.7%), and text messages (9.28%).

Other methods include a dedicated mobile app (8.8%) and bulletin board (8.1%).

If you had to choose one, what would be your preferred way to communicate with your employer?





Summary

Effective communication is always a crucial driver of engagement, from keeping employees informed about new initiatives or promotions to reiterating the company mission and vision. 59% of respondents say that their employer does very well at communication, and 31% say they communicate somewhat well with them.

The fact that much of the communication is done via phone call should be a flag in this digital age. Wouldn't it be better to have ways to communicate to employees all at once, like through digital signage or other tech, instead of through one-off phone calls?

PART 5

Future Engagement & Commitment

It's been a tumultuous few years for food service workers as they adapted to shutdowns, shifts in operations, worker shortages, supply chain issues, rising food costs, and more. What does the future hold for the restaurant workers we surveyed? And what does the future look like for their places of business?

62% will likely quit their job in the next year

When asked if they're likely to quit their job in the next twelve months, 61.6% said yes. 38.4% said no, they're not likely to leave.

Are you likely to quit your current job in the next 12 months?



83% believe their company will be here in five years

Do they believe the company they work for will be around in five years? 83.1% replied yes, they do. 16.9% said they do not believe their company will stick around.

Do you believe your current company will be in business 5 years from now?



Top Five Reasons Why Their Restaurant May Not Survive

For those who don't believe their company will be in business in five years, here are the top reasons why:

12.2%

Not making workers a priority

Employees need tools and training to provide quality service, as seen above. So restaurants that don't support and prioritize workers will also likely lose their customers.

9.8%

Not investing in the technology and tools workers need

As we saw above, having the right tools and technology can increase engagement and the quality of service. Restaurants that don't invest in new technologies will be left behind.

9.8%

Not investing in technology for better customer service

Similarly, not investing in tools that can help streamline a customer's experience will lose those customers to competitors who do.

9.2%

Lack of demand for the type of food we serve

Respondents also see their restaurant on the path to closure because what they serve isn't in high demand – or management won't update the menu to reflect customer demand.

8.5%

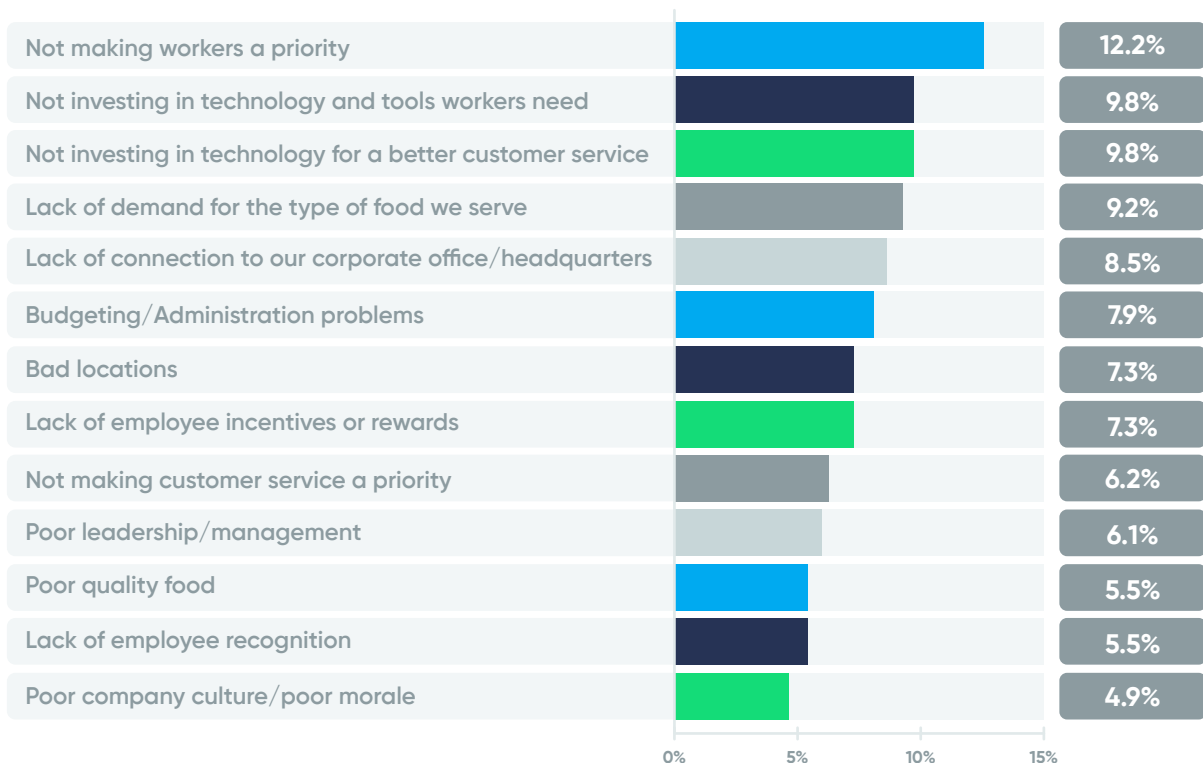
Lack of connection to our corporate office or headquarters

Those in large chain restaurants see weak management from the home office and poor execution of brand standards as threatening the business's longevity.

Other reasons for going out of business include:

- Budgeting or administration problems (7.9%).
- Lack of employee incentives or rewards (7.3%).
- Bad locations (7.3%).
- Not making customer service a priority (6.1%).
- Poor leadership or management (6.1%).
- Poor quality food (5.5%).
- Lack of employee recognition (5.5%).
- Poor company culture or poor morale (4.9%).

If decreased, why?





Summary

In addition to increased engagement among restaurant workers, we're also seeing an increase in customer service quality. 66% say that service at their restaurant is "very good." Overall, quality has increased for 69% of respondents. An increase in employee engagement seems like it's certainly contributing to the rise in quality.

Reasons for improved quality can be traced back to one thing: ensuring that workers know how to provide a satisfying, enjoyable, and streamlined experience for their guests. This includes prioritizing customer service, investing in tools and technology like POS systems and inventory management, and ensuring that workers are trained to deliver great service.

PART 6
Takeaways

As the restaurant industry sees more and more customers return to dine in-person, and as they move from a day-to-day struggle to stay open to actively planning for the future, restaurants have the opportunity now to evaluate what's going well and make changes where needed. The core of any great restaurant visit is great food, service, and a great experience – which comes from engaged employees with the right mindset, training, and tools.

Restaurant managers, owners, and leaders who want to improve their operations and keep their customers coming back for a great experience can do the following based on the above findings.

1. Provide the right tools and technology

Over and over again, our respondents mentioned that in order to be successful in their positions, whether front of the house or back of the house, they need the right tools and technology to do so — cutting edge POS systems, inventory management, handheld tablets, digital signage, self-service kiosks, and more.

Not only do the right tools allow workers to do their jobs to the fullest, but they also allow customers to have a frictionless, enjoyable experience. There's nothing more frustrating than going into a busy café only to see that the self-service kiosks are down or waiting endlessly for a meal because the ticketing system is antiquated and inefficient.

2. Make customer service a priority

Respondents attributed their service quality increase because restaurants made customer service a priority. In other words, workers focused on greeting the customer, ensuring they're taken care of during the visit, attending to their requests, having pleasant exchanges, and more. But more than that, good customer service extends to a clean dining room, comfy chairs, a mouth-watering menu, an appealing atmosphere, and more — and pleasant waitstaff can't necessarily salvage a poor atmosphere. Ensuring that the entire experience is focused on giving customers a great experience likely increases customer engagement and their willingness to come back and bring friends.

3. Increase engagement through communication, building morale, and recognition

While engagement is high and increasing, there's always room to improve it. Respondents above say they'd be more engaged if their in-house managers or corporate leaders communicated better. Workers who feel "in the know" about what's going on feel more engaged with what they're doing and their company's mission.

Additionally, workers wanted their leadership to continue building their morale. Having high morale in a workplace is always a good thing, but restaurant workers are coming off two years of frequent closures, staffing shortages, and general stress related to COVID-19. One could see their desire for increased morale stemming from the difficult past two years.

Finally, every worker wants to be recognized for what they do. Respondents above said their engagement would increase if leadership recognized their performance — as simple as a "good job" to being an Employee of the Month. They would also like their leaders to offer incentives and rewards for excellent service, recognizing their contributions and gamifying the experience to create friendly competition between staff.

At the end of a successful day, workers in fast food and fast casual restaurants, food trucks, bars, cafés, and other kitchens and services want their customers to be happy and satisfied. By building upon a foundation of engaged employees, the right tools and technology, and quality customer service, restaurant leaders can be sure that they're constructing an amazing experience for their guests.



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