UKG

The Life-work Journey

Why the story of your people should
be the heart of your business

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Introduction: Connecting the Personal and the Professional

One of your top employees, Carmen, is having a rough week. When she comes into work in the morning, she seems distracted and less expressive than usual. It's clear by the end of the day that she isn't performing at her normal level, and in passing, a coworker notes this to her manager.

Her manager sets up an impromptu one-on-one before she leaves for the day. Carmen gets a sinking feeling that one day of lowered performance is already reflecting poorly on her and she's about to be penalized.

But what if that's not how the story ends?

What if rather than giving a reprimand, Carmen's manager leads with empathy and asks what she's going through? She explains to her manager that a change in her child care situation is making her schedule tougher to keep up with. Immediately, her manager aims to help her tackle the problem both on and off the job. For starters, Carmen can immediately request to switch a couple of her upcoming shifts, while still in the meeting, on her phone to get a little breathing room while she adjusts. Then, thinking longer term, her manager suggests training resources that could help her qualify for a potential role change that offers a more flexible schedule.

Carmen leaves reenergized and reassured that her employer cares about her wellbeing. That's the difference seeing both the personal and the professional makes.

If this isn't a priority for your organization right now, it should be.

To the average employee, the personal is just as important as the professional, if not more so. Traditional approaches to HR and people management technology have only looked at the professional side, meaning that an enormous portion of the workforce experience is completely invisible to the organization. Employers that fail to address this with their cultural and tech strategies are at massive risk of losing talent to competitors that care.

The answer is to stop seeing things in terms of tasks or budgets or shifts on a schedule — it's time to see the whole person and understand them to help them thrive in the right ways at the right times. This holistic view of employee needs and experiences is what we call the **Life-work Journey**.

Employees have more choices today than they've ever had before. We have to understand exactly where they're coming from and what's being thrown at them, from the external to the internal.

— **Rose Grande,**
Chief Human Resources Officer, Flex Technology Group

68%

of employees now say that improving their wellbeing is more important than advancing their career.[1]

The Life-work Journey

Every employee goes through different stages as they progress through their lives and careers, affecting how they approach their work and relationships at your organization. Employers cannot afford to pretend that work experiences only impact the "work side" — it all forms one combined set of circumstances as the current reality for each individual in your workforce.

Let's stay with Carmen and take a look at the six phases of the Life-work Journey using her personal experiences as examples.

Insecurity

Carmen is worried about her basic needs: food, clothing, shelter, health, and safety. She is counting on her employer to provide information and pay her accurately and on time. **With these, Carmen is able to budget for her family's groceries each month and set up an affordable healthcare plan that covers a nearby doctor.**

Stability

No longer concerned for her basic safety and security, Carmen wants to build a stable foundation for the future. Now she needs transparency from her employer about career opportunities. **This transparency empowers her to consider various roles within the organization, and Carmen realizes she wants to become a manager one day.**

Growth

Carmen and her partner have added a baby to the family, and now she envisions her role growing on the job as well. She wants streamlined benefits, job flexibility, and a concrete career development plan. **Carmen begins working from home often to help with child care, and she sets performance goals with her manager to aim for as she progresses.**

Fulfillment

Carmen has achieved her desired goal of becoming a people leader. She feels fulfilled on the job and at home. Now she needs the resources to get the most from her employees, some of whom live in other countries. **Carmen uses tech that empowers her team to communicate and collaborate from any device, and verify global payroll accuracy.**

Influence

Carmen is a confident manager and happy in her community. She now wants to contribute more strategically, and she demands tools to understand her team compared to the workforce at large. **By using sentiment analysis regularly, she identifies a feedback trend that points to a process roadblock impacting the entire organization.**
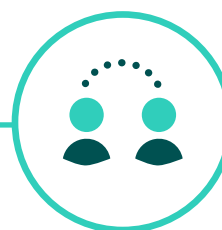
Legacy

Carmen begins to look to the future after employment. Besides planning her top five travel destinations, she wants to ensure a robust succession plan so that her team will be in good hands long after she's gone. **With the right tools, she documents key standards for anyone in her role, while helping find the top talent available to fill her shoes.**

Employers have the opportunity to uniquely support people at these different Life-work Journey stages, promoting growth and trust instead of allowing uncertainty to take root. Focusing on this is critical to success and survival in the modern work landscape, and this is not an uncommon opinion in the workforce.

78%
of workers strongly believe their employer is responsible for helping them become overall better off across both life and work.[2]

Key Moments in the Life-work Journey

The major phases described above are made up of many individual milestones in the lives of your people. As any employee progresses along their unique Life-work Journey, they interact with your organization at each of these moments — for better or worse.

Some people have ego needs. Some have income needs. Some have learning and development needs. If I understand your needs and you understand our goals, it's a joint effort to meet them.

— **Evan Wood, Ph.D.,**
Vice President of People & Strategy,
Ft. Wayne Metals

To illustrate how each person making up your workforce is living their own story, let's follow another employee, Yusuf, along key moments in his Life-work Journey, and discover the role his employer plays within each.

Choose a job
Yusuf browses open positions and finds one matching his skill set, and he applies through the same system.

Choose benefits
Plans are summarized simply and clearly, enabling Yusuf to focus on his specific needs due to chronic illness.

Manage my schedule
Yusuf — a night owl — sets his preferences for evening shifts.

Get paid fairly
When an unexpected car repair disrupts his week, Yusuf can access his accrued wages before payday.

Grow my family
After getting married and adopting a child, Yusuf easily adds new dependents to his HR profile.

Grow my career
Yusuf is ready for a promotion, and he chronicles his goals alongside his training accomplishments.

Become a caregiver
Because his mother requires full-time care and moves in with him and his family, Yusuf transitions to remote work.

Support a team
Yusuf now manages a small team and guides them to internal training resources.

A Story Your People Will Tell

By now, you've probably guessed that focusing on your people's stories and putting the Life-work Journey front and center isn't just the right thing to do. It yields bottom-line business benefits as well, cementing the story your employees tell about your organization and building a positive employer brand that helps you stand out from competitors in a crowded job market.

- Being in tune with people's needs across both life and work helps you establish **cultural standards of trust and belonging** that are personalized for and relevant to your employees. And this pays off — organizations with strong cultures saw a **fourfold increase in revenue growth** compared to their competitors.[3]

- Employer brands are forged more quickly than ever, with word of mouth and public perception holding enormous weight. A staggering **90% of people believe brand recommendations from friends**, dramatically beating out advertising and corporate websites,[4] while **92% of employees would consider changing jobs if offered a role at a company with an excellent reputation**.[5]

- Ultimately, standards and promises aren't enough – you need operational processes that make principles like **diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEI&B), transparency, trust**, and **listening** the foundations of how your organization functions so that your employees feel them in their day-to-day lives. Organizations with HR teams delivering a positive employee experience are **1.3 times more likely to outperform their competitors** and **2.7 times more likely to report effective talent management**.[6]

When your employees feel supported across the entire Life-work Journey, they become your best form of marketing — telling the story of your employer brand when it matters most.

The key thing for me when you think about driving culture with diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging is it can't be the side thing — it has to be who you are in your culture.

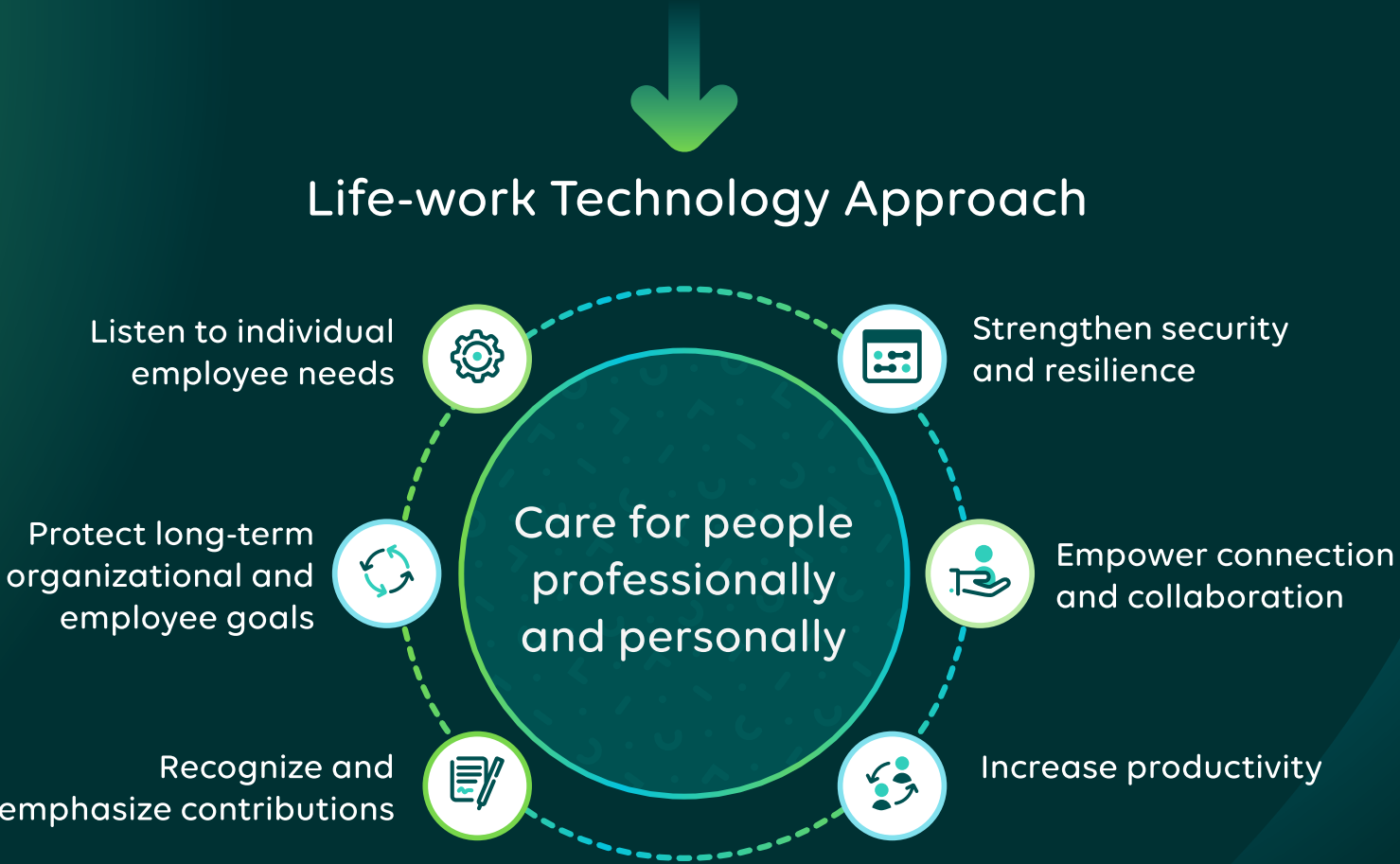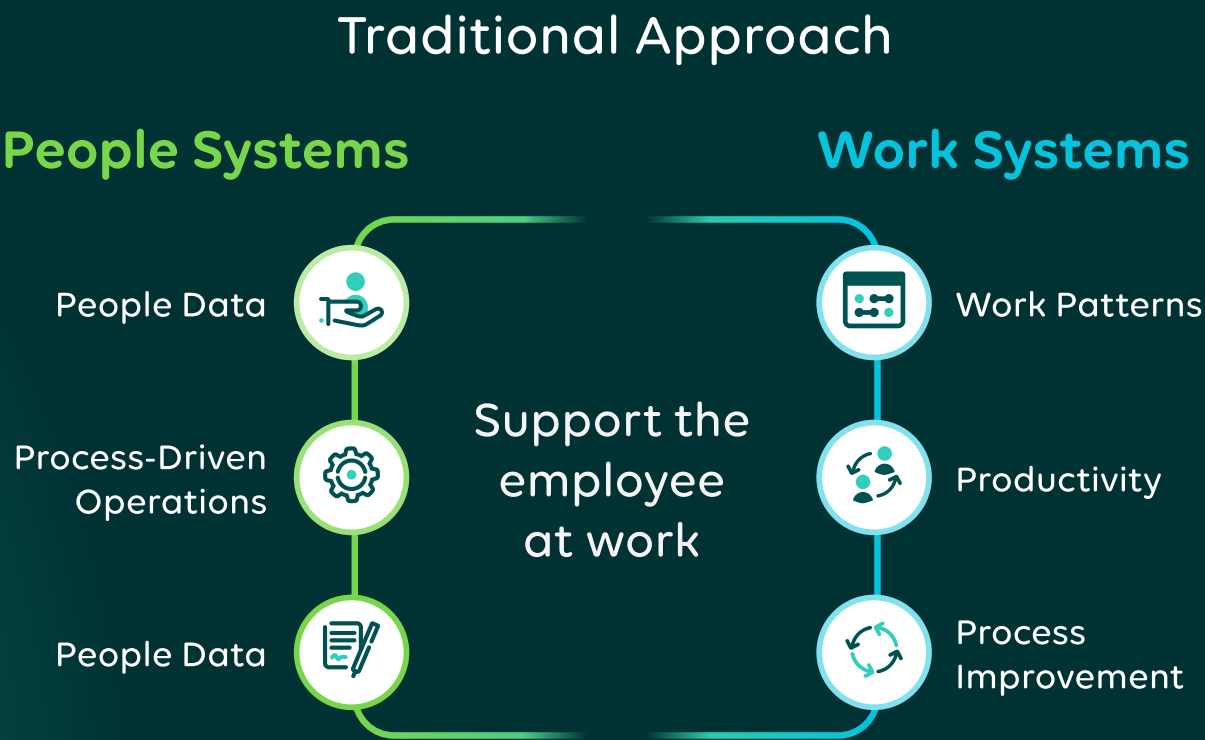— **Brian K. Reaves,**
Chief Belonging, Diversity, and Equity Officer, UKG

How You Get There

Once you've committed to recognizing and supporting the Life-work Journey, the question becomes: what solutions will help your organization toward this goal? The answer lies in what we call Life-work Technology™. Workplace processes need to go beyond operational requirements, taking into account their impact on the lives of employees both on and off the job. To the right, we compare a traditional approach to people management to one that embraces Life-work Technology. Note how the traditional approach keeps people systems clearly divided from work systems, while Life-work Technology fully integrates the two.

We started going into each department individually and spending a couple of weeks becoming part of that department. That's when you really start to understand and really have them open up.

— Cecilia Aviles,
Executive Director of Workforce Operations,
Venetian Las Vegas

Traditional Approach

People Systems

People Data

Process-Driven Operations

People Data

Support the employee at work

Work Systems

Work Patterns

Productivity

Process Improvement

Life-work Technology Approach

Listen to individual employee needs

Strengthen security and resilience

Protect long-term organizational and employee goals

Care for people professionally and personally

Empower connection and collaboration

Recognize and emphasize contributions

Increase productivity

Checklist: What to Look For

When you begin the task of evaluating how human capital management (HCM) tech solutions live up to the promise of Life-work Technology, keep the checklists below handy to be able to compare vendors in the areas that are most important to your organization. You can check off these boxes as you go through your discussions to keep track.

Belonging

- Accessible solutions
- DEI&B benchmarks
- Employee resource group (ERG) support
- Employee community building
- Nudges for managers to assist in coaching
- Artificial intelligence (AI) to reduce bias

Listening

- Variety of survey options
- Sentiment analysis for employee feedback
- Personalized development opportunities
- Recommended actions based on feedback

Flexibility

- Self-scheduling from any device
- Time donations between employees
- Proactive leave eligibility
- Hybrid work support
- Employee shift preferences

Wellbeing

- Benefits beyond healthcare
- Charitable giving/environmental and social governance (ESG) support
- Safety standards
- Flight risk and burnout prediction
- Earned wage access

Transparency

- Feedback opportunities
- Clear communication channels
- One place for standards
- Unbiased process and job role requirements

Development

- Career goals and path tracking
- Succession planning
- Easy access to learning
- Internal mobility
- Mentorship support
- New-hire support

Guidance

- Opportunities for growth
- Proactive recommendations to address critical trends such as flight risk or burnout
- Manager coaching

The mandate is clear:
embrace the Life-work Journey or get left behind.

Seeing the whole person behind every employee ID — the needs, preferences, expertise, desires, passions, creative instincts, and more — isn't just a popular idea. It's a business imperative.

No matter what challenges your people are facing, listening to their story is the best way to ensure that they'll want to tell others about yours … and that it's one worth telling.

Just like each individual employee, your organization is on its own journey. The only way to attain this valuable transformation is to make purposeful choices about the kind of technology you adopt and the partners you trust. The first step on this path is to find solutions built for each moment with the journey in mind. Discover what Life-work Technology can do for your people.

Discover Life-work Technology

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Our purpose is people