

A PEOPLECENTRIX FRAMEWORK · SEPTEMBER 2026

People Expectations Framework™

Ten expectations. Three currencies. No ranking.

10

terms of the deal

3

currencies

20

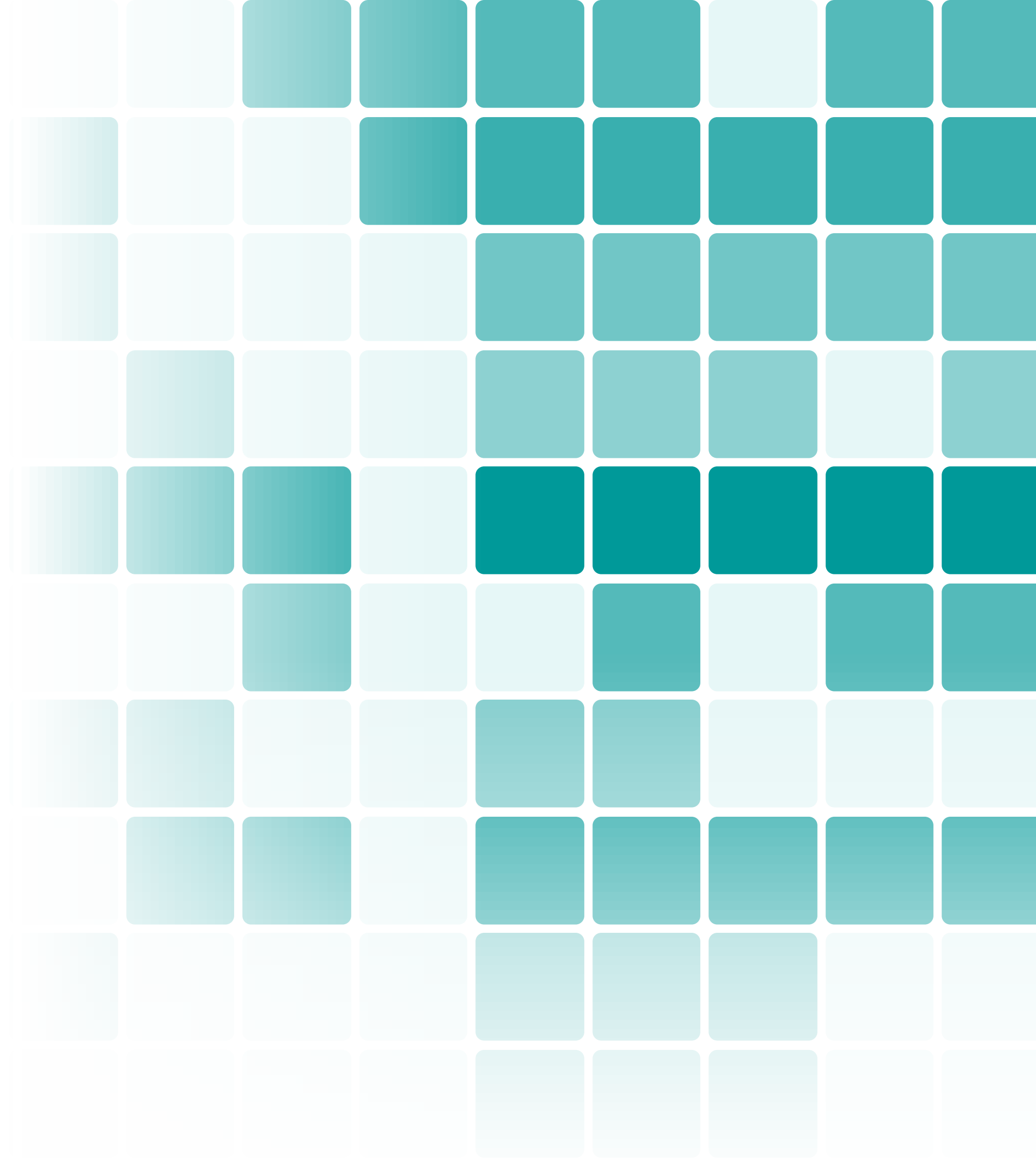
reports read

35

years of instruments



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THE CLAIM

There is no such thing as what employees want.

Only what one sample said, from one list, to one publisher, in one month.

1

No ranking survives a change of sample.

Every top-five is a real finding about one population, one question wording, one month. None of them generalises. Four things move the order: who was asked, what they were offered to choose from, when, and what the publisher sells. Not fraud. Method.

2

The categories replicate.

Twenty reports, twenty publishers, no two lists alike — and every one of the ten rows appears somewhere in the corpus. Different instruments found the same ten over thirty-five years. Labels change. Categories do not.

3

Priority is a state, not a trait.

The order inside the ten rows belongs to the person, and it moves when their circumstances move. A segment built on age cannot see it move. A segment built on circumstance can.

4

Coverage is not importance.

The grid shows what the industry asks about, not what people weigh. Flexibility is reported by nine of twenty reports and ranks top-three wherever it is asked. Purpose and values is asked by eight — the fewest.



THE FRAMEWORK

People Expectations Framework™ — three currencies, ten dimensions

Each term is read twice: the expectation (what I believe I am owed) and the experience (what I judge I am getting). The distance between them is where the deal is honoured or broken.

Currency	Dimension and sub-elements	The expectation — what I believe I am owed	The experience — what I judge I am getting
Transactional what I'm given	1 Compensation & benefits Fair pay, competitive package, priced benefits, recognition, pay transparency	To be paid fairly for what I contribute, on terms I can see	Whether pay keeps pace, the package is competitive, the process is fair, contribution is recognised
	2 Security Job continuity, income security, cost-of-living adequacy	That my job and income will hold	Whether continuity is credible, whether income covers the cost of living
	3 Employability Skills currency, external marketability, portable credentials	To be kept marketable outside, not only useful inside	Whether skills stay current, whether another job is findable
	4 Flexibility Where, when and how much; honouring the arrangement promised	The arrangement I was promised, on the terms I was promised	Whether it is honoured in practice, or withdrawn by mandate, manager or surveillance
Relational how I'm treated	5 Well-being Sustainable workload, boundaries, psychological safety, real support	That the organisation will protect my health and not consume me to deliver the work	Whether demands stay within bounds, boundaries are honoured, support is real rather than a poster
	6 Fairness, inclusion and voice Honest dealing, procedural fairness, inclusion, being heard	To be treated honestly, included, and heard on decisions affecting me	Whether promises hold, inclusion is real, voice changes anything
	7 Belonging Connection, colleagues to rely on, social atmosphere	That I will be part of something, with people I can rely on	Whether connection is real across hybrid work, whether anyone would notice if I left
	8 Development Skills investment, progression, internal mobility	To be invested in — skills, progression, mobility	Whether opportunities exist, whether progression tracks skill rather than tenure
Ideological what it's for	9 Meaningful work Work that matters, skill use, autonomy over how it is done	That my work matters, uses what I am good at, and is mine to shape	Whether contribution is visible, skills are used, judgement is trusted
	10 Purpose & values Worthwhile contribution, values acted on, conduct matching claims	That the organisation contributes something worthwhile and acts on its stated values	Whether conduct matches claims

Dulac, T. (2026, September). People Expectations Framework™. PeopleCentriX. peoplecentrix.eu/people-expectations-framework — free to use with attribution.



Twenty reports ask the same ten questions — unevenly.

Twenty reports, twenty publishers, published since January 2025. A tick means the report asks about the expectation and publishes a figure. Read the totals as coverage — how many reports ask — never as importance.

		ADP	Aon	AXA	Deloitte	EY	Gallup	Gensler	Glassdoor	ILO	Indeed	LinkedIn	ManpowerGroup	Mercer	Michael Page	Microsoft	PwC	Qualtrics	Randstad	Universon	WorldatWork	reports
TRANSACTIONAL — what I'm given																						
1	Compensation & benefits	✓	✓			✓			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	13
2	Security	✓	✓			✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		15
3	Employability	✓					✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		11
4	Flexibility		✓					✓			✓	✓	✓		✓				✓	✓	✓	9
RELATIONAL — how I'm treated																						
5	Well-being	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	19
6	Fairness, inclusion & voice	✓	✓		✓				✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	13
7	Belonging	✓			✓		✓	✓			✓	✓					✓	✓	✓		✓	10
8	Development	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	17
IDEOLOGICAL — what it's for																						
9	Meaningful work	✓			✓		✓				✓	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓		✓	10
10	Purpose & values		✓		✓						✓	✓	✓				✓	✓			✓	8

Engagement, thriving, satisfaction, trust and eNPS are outcomes, not terms of the deal, and are never coded to a row. Worklife balance is split by lever: control over where and when → flexibility; room in the load → well-being. Every cell traces to the source document.

Transactional

what I'm given

Compensation & benefits

Security

Employability

Flexibility

Economic and bounded. Break it and people recalculate: hours, effort and discretionary contribution are quietly repriced.

Calculative withdrawal.

Relational

how I'm treated

Well-being

Fairness, inclusion & voice

Belonging

Development

Open-ended, built on trust. Break it and people feel betrayed — the response the literature calls violation.

Emotional withdrawal.

Ideological

what it's for

Meaningful work

Purpose & values

A shared cause. Break it, and people who were never personally harmed protest, speak up or leave on principle; those who stay withdraw their belief rather than their effort.

Principled withdrawal.

The order is the order of visibility, not importance: transactional terms are written down; relational terms are implied; ideological terms are almost never written anywhere.

20

reports

20

publishers

8

foundational sources

1

test

Method

- 1

Read every global workforce report published since January 2025 that reports what employees expect, want or value.
- 2

Lay each report's labels over the foundational instruments that have measured the employment deal since 1990.
- 3

Strike the duplicates.
- 4

Apply the provision test to every remaining candidate — can the employer change this directly, by changing what it provides? If yes, a term of the deal; if no, an outcome for the dashboard.

What the gap predicts

−0.75

correlation of breach with engagement

0.11

correlation of breach with actual turnover

A correlation runs from −1 to +1; the further from zero, the tighter the link. Across 517 samples, breach and engagement move together at −0.75: the wider the gap, the lower the engagement. Breach and actually leaving: 0.11. A broken deal empties engagement long before it shows up in exit (Rees, Brownell & Kickul, 2026).

Which foundational source each row descends from

Rows	Source
Rows 1–4 Transactional	Rousseau (1990, 1995, 2000); Herriot, Manning & Kidd (1997)
Rows 5–8 Relational	Rousseau (1995, 2000); Herriot et al. (1997); Freese & Schalk (2008)
Row 9 Meaningful work	Hackman & Oldham (1976)
Row 10 Purpose & values	Thompson & Bunderson (2003)
What the gap predicts	Rees, Brownell & Kickul (2026)

Practitioner literature

Publisher	Report	Year
ADP	Today at Work: People at Work	2026
Aon	Employee Sentiment Study	2025
AXA	Mind Health Report	2026
Deloitte	Global Human Capital Trends	2026
EY	Work Reimagined Survey	2025
Gallup	State of the Global Workplace	2026
Gensler	Global Workplace Survey	2026
Glassdoor	Worklife Trends	2025
ILO	World of Work Trends	2026
Indeed Hiring Lab	Workforce Insights Survey	2025
LinkedIn	What Candidates Want	2025
ManpowerGroup	Global Talent Barometer	2026
Mercer	Global Talent Trends	2026
Michael Page	Talent Trends	2026
Microsoft	Work Trend Index	2026
PwC	Global Workforce Hopes and Fears Survey	2025
Qualtrics	Employee Experience Trends	2026
Randstad	Workmonitor	2026
Universum	Talent Outlook	2026
WorldatWork	State of Rewards	2026

Academic literature — the foundational sources

Rousseau (1990). Journal of Organizational Behavior, 11, 389–400.

Rousseau (1995). Psychological Contracts in Organizations. Sage.

Rousseau (2000). Psychological Contract Inventory. Carnegie Mellon.

Herriot, Manning & Kidd (1997). British Journal of Management, 8, 151–162.

Thompson & Bunderson (2003). Academy of Management Review, 28, 571–586.

Freese & Schalk (2008). South African Journal of Psychology, 38, 269–286.

Hackman & Oldham (1976). Organizational Behavior and Human Performance, 16, 250–279.

Rees, Brownell & Kickul (2026). Journal of Business and Psychology. doi 10.1007/s10869-026-10123-1



WHERE THIS LEAVES YOU

Your EVP is written once, in pillars. *It is scored every day, in terms — and not by you.*

Put your EVP against the ten rows. Which terms does it write down, which does it imply, and which does it never mention? Then read the framework one row at a time this autumn in WeAreHuman@Work, the weekly newsletter on sustainable work. The method for building an EVP you can keep follows in December.

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