

THE IGNITE PULSE REPORT

Two pictures of the same organisation

Leaders and the people closest to the work are no longer describing the same workplace. A monthly reading of the research shaping organisational capability and human experience.

SHARE WHO RATE THEIR ORGANISATION'S LEADERSHIP AS EFFECTIVE

Healthcare executives

 **58%**

Their frontline workers

 **28%**

A 30-POINT VISIBILITY GAP

AMN Healthcare, 2026 Workforce Outlook Survey

THE SIGNAL

Why leaders and the front line now see different organisations

THE FRACTURE

The managers who carry the signal are tiring fastest

THE HORIZON

AI is arriving faster than the support around it

AT A GLANCE

Four findings that define this edition

01 • THE GAP

58 vs 28

Healthcare executives and their frontline workers rate the same leadership 30 points apart.

AMN Healthcare, 2026

02 • THE DRIFT

42%

of frontline workers say their leaders understand their challenges, down from 62% in 2024.

Dayforce, 2026

03 • THE FRACTURE

22%

of managers worldwide are engaged, after the largest single-year fall since 2022.

Gallup, 2026

04 • THE HORIZON

51%

of workers have the learning they need, down from 59%, even as AI use climbs to 64%.

PwC, 2026

IN THIS EDITION

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A NOTE FROM THE FOUNDER

Reading the world of work, one signal at a time

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FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
IGNITE THE HUMAN SPARK SEZC

Every month, the world publishes a remarkable amount of research about work: how people feel about it, what they expect from it, and what it is quietly costing them. Most of it is read once, quoted once and set aside. I'd like to do something more useful with it.

The Ignite Pulse Report is my monthly reading of that research, gathered from credible sources around the world and read through one question I believe every leadership team should be asking: where is the pressure really building, and are we looking in the right place?

This first edition begins with a pattern that surfaced again and again this year, in hospitals, on shop floors, across service operations and in global surveys of tens of thousands of workers. Leaders and the people closest to the work are describing two different organisations. That distance has a name, and once you see it, you begin to notice it everywhere.

Every figure in these pages is sourced and credited. Where the evidence is limited, I'll say so. And when our own Pulse data is strong enough to stand beside the world's, I'll share it, with the sample size beside every number.

01 • THE SIGNAL OF THE MONTH

The visibility gap

When leaders and the front line stop seeing the same organisation.

Three studies released this year, from three very different corners of working life, point to the same widening distance. The starkest comes from healthcare, where leaders and the people carrying their decisions into every shift rate the same leadership a world apart.

SHARE WHO RATE THEIR ORGANISATION'S LEADERSHIP AS EFFECTIVE

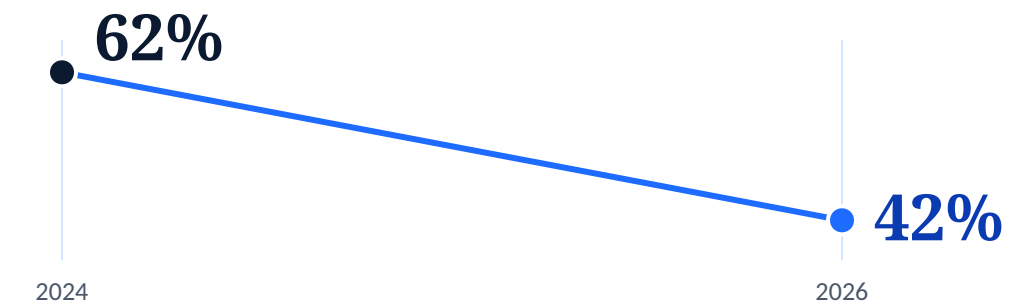


AMN Healthcare, 2026 Workforce Outlook Survey • 4,040 respondents, United States

01 • THE EVIDENCE

The distance is widening, and leaders can feel it

FRONTLINE WORKERS WHO SAY LEADERS UNDERSTAND THEIR CHALLENGES



A twenty-point fall in two years

In 2024, most frontline workers believed their leaders understood the challenges of their working day. By 2026, fewer than half did, and 89% of frontline workers and managers say shift-level problems affect their wellbeing.

Dayforce, 2026 • 5,600+ managers, executives and frontline workers

SENIOR LEADERS WHO FEEL DISCONNECTED FROM FRONT-LINE EMPLOYEES



Leaders sense it too

A quarter of senior leaders say they feel disconnected from the people on their front line, even as most say they prioritise engaging with them. The intention is there. The connection is not landing.

Littler, 2026 Labor Survey, as reported by Law360

01 · WHY IT MATTERS

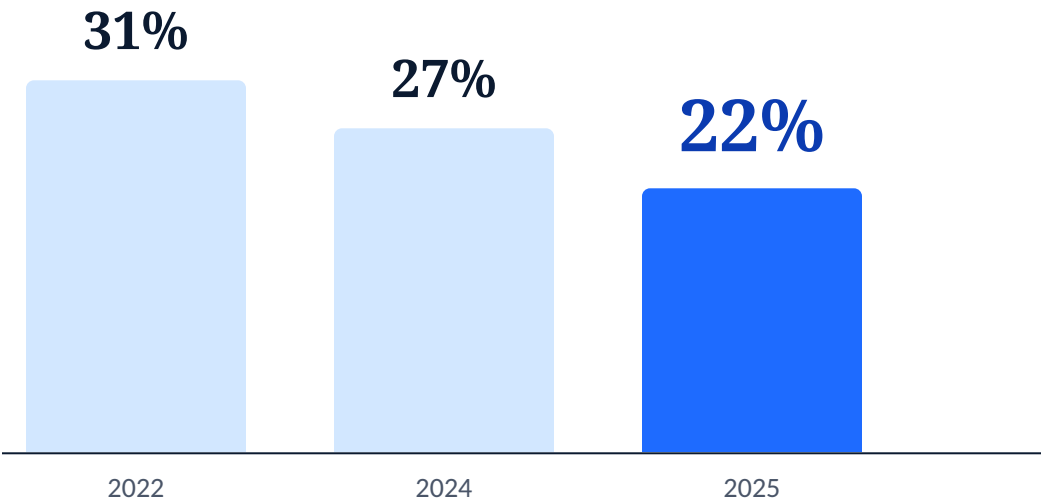
What makes this signal so consequential is that none of these organisations is short of information. They run surveys, dashboards and town halls. Yet the knowledge that matters most still struggles to travel far enough, quickly enough or safely enough to change a decision. The visibility gap opens in exactly that space, between what an organisation senses and what it is able to act upon, and its roots can lie in decision rights, hierarchy, incentives, capacity or the design of the operating system itself.

What an organisation cannot see, it cannot intentionally improve.

02 • WHERE THE SIGNAL BREAKS

The people who carry the signal are tiring first

GLOBAL MANAGER ENGAGEMENT



A nine-point fall since 2022, and five points from 2024 to 2025, the largest single-year drop. 2023 is not shown.

20%

of employees worldwide are engaged, the lowest level since 2020, after the first two-year decline Gallup has recorded

\$10tn

estimated cost of low engagement in lost global productivity
Gallup, State of the Global Workplace: 2026 Report

02 · WHERE THE SIGNAL BREAKS

When the bridge is stretched

Gallup's State of the Global Workplace 2026 adds the piece that, for me, explains why the visibility gap is widening rather than closing: the decline in engagement is driven almost entirely by managers.

Think about what a manager is in the life of an organisation. They hear what the front line knows and carry it to where decisions are made, then carry those decisions back in a form people can act on. When that bridge is stretched, the information still exists. It simply stops travelling.

A front line that feels less understood and a management layer that is less engaged belong to the same story: two ends of one weakened connection, and they will respond to the same repair.

THE DECLINE IS NOT INEVITABLE

79%

of managers are engaged in Gallup's best-practice organisations, nearly four times the global average.

Gallup, State of the Global Workplace: 2026 Report

03 • SYMPTOM IS NOT LOCATION

The same problem can begin in very different places

FIVE CAPABILITIES OF AN INTELLIGENT ORGANISATION			Sense	Decide	Organise	Enable	Execute
WHAT LEADERS SEE		WHAT MAY SIT BENEATH IT				WHERE TO LOOK	
Problems that keep coming back		Each is handled as an isolated incident, so the pattern is never seen				Sense	
Slow execution		Unclear decision rights, overloaded approval paths, too little capacity				Decide • Enable • Execute	
Inconsistent service		Broken handovers, standards that aren't reinforced, competing local priorities				Organise • Execute	
Low initiative		Authority too far from knowledge, or a high personal cost to speaking up				Decide	
Change fatigue		New initiatives layered onto an operating system that hasn't changed				Enable	
Customer complaints		Process, coordination or expectation failures that began long before the customer saw them				Sense • Organise	
High performers exhausted		Results depend on discretionary effort rather than designed capacity				Enable • Organise	
Leaders hearing about it late		Signals travel slowly or feel unsafe to raise, so they arrive after trust has already fallen				Sense • Decide	

A table cannot diagnose an organisation. Its purpose is to slow the reflex that assumes the visible problem tells you where the work belongs.

04 · FOR THE LEADERSHIP ROOM

Three questions worth putting on the table

Questions that can change what the room is able to see.

01

Where does information arrive but fail to become a decision?

Trace one example from the moment someone notices something important to the moment action is taken. Where does it slow, disappear or lose its meaning along the way?

02

Which recurring problem are we treating as a people problem when it may be a system problem?

Look for the issues that survive changes in personnel. When the people change and the problem stays, the design around them is telling you something.

03

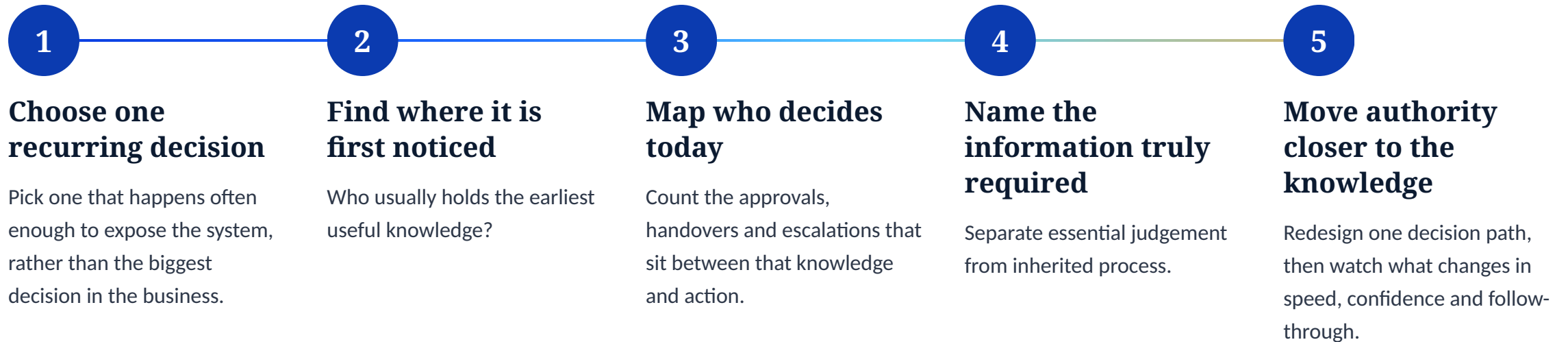
Where are people waiting for permission they should already have?

Find the decisions pushed upward by habit rather than necessity. The distance between knowledge and authority is very often where speed, and confidence, are lost.

05 • ONE THING TO REDESIGN THIS MONTH

Follow one decision

A 30-minute exercise for closing the visibility gap, one decision at a time.

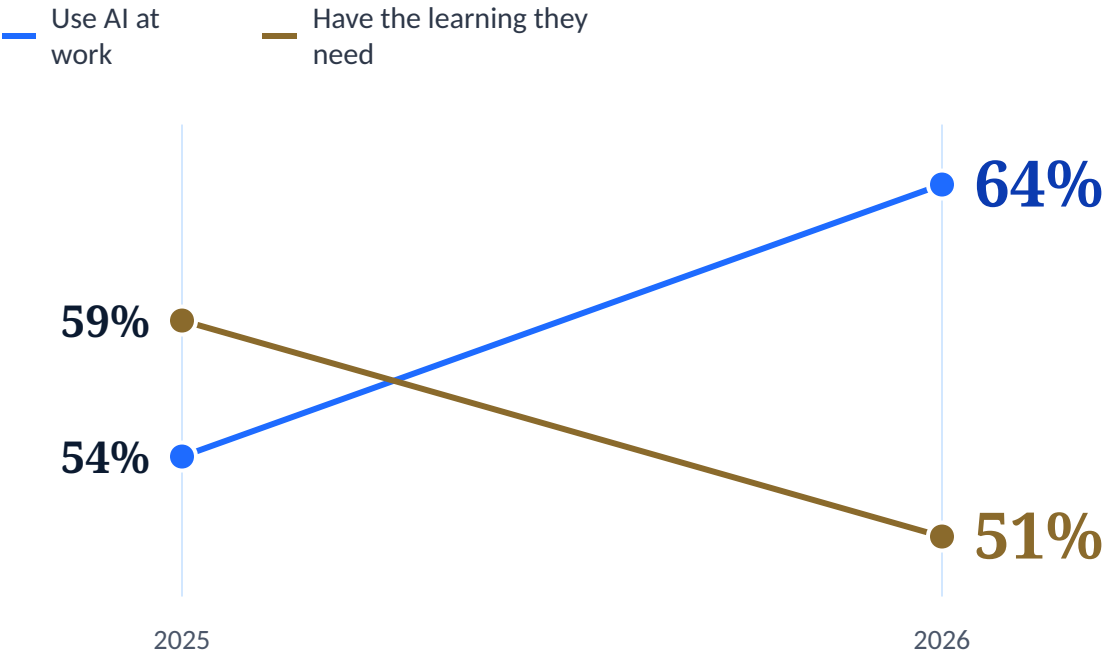


Fix one decision path well, and it will teach you a great deal about the rest.

06 • WHAT WE ARE WATCHING

AI is arriving faster than the support around it

A WORKFORCE MOVING AT TWO SPEEDS



PwC, Global Workforce Hopes and Fears Survey 2026 • 49,364 workers, 48 countries and regions

63%

of UK workers sometimes choose not to use AI tools, even when they are available

Henley Business School, 2026 • 2,900 UK workers

27% VS 17%

of US employees describe disruptive change, where AI has been adopted against where it has not

Gallup, April 2026 • 23,717 US employees

06 • WHAT WE ARE WATCHING

AI will accelerate whatever an organisation already does with its information.

PwC's survey, published at the end of September, describes a workforce beginning to move at two speeds: AI use climbing sharply while access to the learning people need to use it well is falling. Read beside this month's signal, the implication is plain. Where signals travel well, AI will help them travel faster. Where the visibility gap is wide, it risks widening it further, producing more output while leaders see less of what people are living.

THREE AREAS WE WILL BE WATCHING CLOSELY

Decision architecture

Who decides, with what information, and at what level.

Human judgement

Where context, ethics and relationships change the answer.

Experience coherence

Whether faster systems make the lived experience clearer or more fragmented.

07 · THE SERIES BEGINS HERE

A monthly reading, built carefully

OUR DATA RULE

Every figure in this report comes from published, credible research, credited on the final page. Our own Pulse findings will appear only when the response base is large enough to support them: always anonymised, always aggregate, always shown with the sample size.

EACH EDITION BRINGS

- 01 The signal of the month
- 02 Where the signal breaks
- 03 Symptom and location
- 04 Three questions for the leadership room
- 05 One thing to redesign
- 06 What we are watching next

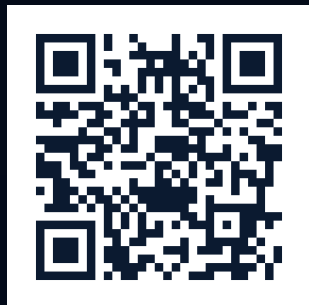
TAKE THE IGNITE PULSE

Where should your organisation be looking?

About 3 minutes · 12 adaptive prompts · immediate direction

ignitethehumanspark.com/pulse/

Next edition: *The Decision Gap*



SOURCES AND METHOD

Where every figure comes from

1

AMN Healthcare, 2026 Workforce Outlook Survey. 4,040 healthcare executives and frontline workers, February to March 2026. Reported by Staffing Industry Analysts, 25 September 2026. staffingindustry.com

2

Dayforce, frontline operations research. More than 5,600 managers, executives and frontline workers; conducted by Hanover Research, 26 March to 13 April 2026. dayforce.com • hrdive.com

3

Littler, 2026 Labor Survey. As reported by Law360 Employment Authority. littler.com

4

Gallup, State of the Global Workplace: 2026 Report. Published April 2026; data collected January to December 2025. gallup.com

5

Gallup, U.S. workforce survey. 23,717 employees, April 2026. Reported by the Wisconsin Institute of CPAs. wicpa.org

6

PwC, Global Workforce Hopes and Fears Survey 2026. 49,364 workers across 48 countries and regions and 29 sectors, May to June 2026; published 29 September 2026. pwc.com

7

Henley Business School, World of Work Institute. AI attitudes: a 12-month pulse check, 2026. 2,900 full-time UK workers across 29 sectors. henley.ac.uk

More than 85,000 respondents is the sum of the published sample sizes of studies 1, 2, 5, 6 and 7.

Manager engagement in 2022 is calculated from Gallup's reported nine-point fall to 22% in 2025.

Read side by side. These studies cover different populations and countries, and are never combined into one measure.

Framework. Sense, Decide, Organise, Enable, Execute, from organisationalintelligence.ai.