



**EMPLOYER MENTAL HEALTH
REPORT CARD
2023**

Summary

Mental health today has a greater meaning for employees. And while employers have made some improvement in overall sentiment, we see some alarming decreases in how the workforce perceives support of mental health in the workplace.



In a study of 1,000 employers and 1,000 workers, we asked each group to grade their employer in terms of support for mental health and wellbeing. The results were concerning in some cases, and alarming in others. But the bottom line is that support for mental health is no longer optional in today's competitive talent environment.

While talent leaders are working to make an impact, the gaps between employer and employee perceptions for key metrics took a step in the wrong direction over the last year.



Employees were **49% less likely** to say that their employer made significant positive changes to support mental health and wellbeing in the last 18 months.



Workers were **25% more likely** to say that their company doesn't have a true culture that prioritizes health and wellbeing.



Employees were **23% more likely** to be uncomfortable or simply unsure about talking about mental health at work.

WHY THIS MATTERS



Employees who said they don't feel consistent mental health support from their employer were **5.5x more likely** to have plans to quit their job.

DEMOGRAPHIC INSIGHTS



REMOTE WORKERS

7 in 10 have thought about quitting their job due to mental health and stress.



WORKING PARENTS

3x more likely to say that their company doesn't provide adequate health and wellbeing resources.



PEOPLE OF COLOR

More likely to say their employer's mental health support is based on tools, but lacks culture and leadership advocacy.



WOMEN

Less than 1% of women believe their company has a strong culture of mental health if they don't perceive personal support for their own mental wellbeing needs.

Key Takeaway

While these data points paint a challenging picture, there are some positive elements that deserve mention. For instance, workers who use mental health benefits were much less likely to have plans to quit their jobs, and more likely to rate their personal mental health favorably. This report will examine the key aspects of how employers can create a more viable and supportive culture of mental health and wellbeing.

The New Era of Mental Wellbeing at Work

3

A recent survey showed that the most-hated new buzzword or phrase is “the new normal.” Virtually every person in the workforce has faced struggles, challenges, and stress beyond their expectations in recent history, and we don’t particularly like being reminded that this level of change is going to persist over time.

But it will.

For this edition of the Mental Health Report Card, LifeSpeak Inc. and Lighthouse Research & Advisory surveyed 1,000 employers and 1,000 workers across North America to understand their sentiments and priorities around mental health and wellbeing in the workplace. While overall scores and ratings are improving to some degree, scores in other areas are stagnant or declining. For instance, employees said that the pace of improvements in mental health support slowed over the last year, and that they were more likely to be unsure of or uncomfortable discussing their personal mental health in the workplace.

That said, it’s possible to support the mental health of employees regardless of their job, skin color, gender, parental status, work location, or other factors. Ultimately, employees are people first and foremost, and organizations that remember this will see better outcomes and results from their mental

health investments and initiatives.

That’s why, to help employers and business leaders understand the importance of supporting workplace mental health, we have broken out the data to look at specific segments and demographics within the workforce population. We know that mental health is a deeply personal experience, and a benefit that may appeal to one person holds less interest for another, and everyone is in a different stage of their journey.

Within the 2023 Mental Health Report Card, we will explore:

- **Year-over-year changes and trends, including areas where mental health sentiment improved and worsened.**
- **The varying mental health priorities and challenges of remote workers, people of color, and women talent segments.**
- **The impact on employee retention and job satisfaction when there is a true feeling of support from a mental health perspective.**

If your organization is seeking to create a workplace where every single employee can bring their best and most healthy self to work, the insights in the following pages can serve as the foundation for a mental wellbeing strategy with true impact.

Less Comfort, More Uncertainty Appear in Year-Over-Year Changes and Trends



The line that separates work and life is increasingly blurred, which means employers can no longer look at their people solely in terms of their work or position. Each person in the workforce is more than their job title: They are parents, friends, caregivers, volunteers, and so much more. And each of these responsibilities affects their job performance differently.

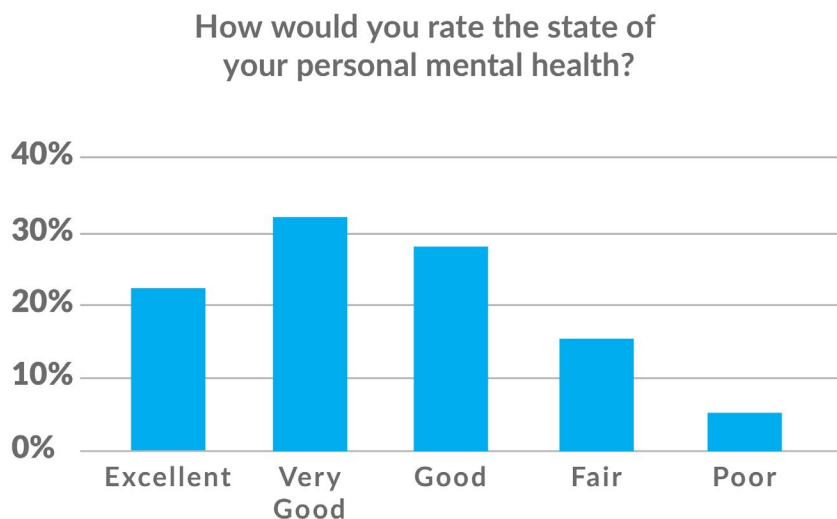
In this reality, employers may not be responsible for all of the stress and challenges people face, but they feel the weight of those challenges in how people present themselves at work.

For example, numerous studies have shown that stress and poor mental health have a negative effect on workplace productivity. Employers may not be the only contributor to this dynamic, but employer-sponsored mental health and wellbeing benefits offer a critical lever to turn the situation around for the better.

However, before employers and benefits leaders can take steps to influence productivity and performance, they must first understand where employees are at on their mental health journey and how their workplace and benefits support or detract from this journey.

Our data shows that there is a broad spectrum in how people rate their personal mental health today. For example, while 28% of workers rate their personal mental health as “Good” or better, **one in five workers rated their mental health as “Fair” or “Poor.”** The inconsistency of the results and the difficulty in administering benefits that are tailored to each individual creates challenges for understaffed employers who are trying to realize the most value from each member of the workforce.

Figure 1: Personal Mental Health Ratings



Source: 2022 Lighthouse Research & Advisory Workplace Wellbeing Study (n=1,000)

While there has historically been a gap between how employers rate their support for employee mental wellbeing and how employees perceive this same organizational benefit, this survey revealed that the gap may be closing. More specifically, since our last measurement period in late 2021, we saw virtually no change in how employers scored themselves on the Mental Health Report Card (7.5 out of 10)¹. However, the workforce ranked their support more highly than the previous year, scoring their employers at 6.6 out of 10, a relatively significant jump from the 4.4 score of the previous year.

¹ <https://lifespeak.com/doc/2021-employer-mental-health-report-card/>



This finding is intriguing because it comes at a time of higher workforce expectations, an inequitable distribution of satisfaction across demographic groups, and negative trends in certain areas. In particular, the data revealed the following trend changes from 2021 to 2022:

- **Fewer program improvements:** Workers were 49% less likely to say that their employer made significant positive changes to support mental wellbeing in the last 18 months.
- **Culture gaps:** Employees were 25% more likely to say that their company doesn't have a true culture that prioritizes health and wellbeing.
- **Stigma continues:** Employees were 23% more likely to be uncomfortable or simply unsure about talking about mental health at work.

While these findings indicate that employers still have much work to do when it comes to culture, programs, and efforts to nurture acceptance for mental wellbeing, there are also bright spots in these findings. For example, among respondents who rated their mental health as “Excellent” or “Very Good:”

- **They have more faith in the support their employer provides overall. In fact, workers in this group were 50% less likely to be uncertain about employer changes to mental health support at work.**
- **Nearly two-thirds rated their employer's support of mental health as an 8 or above on a 10-point scale, indicating a link between the benefits of an employer's investment in mental health resources and someone's overall perceptions of mental wellbeing.**
- **These individuals were 3 times more likely to say they “definitely feel supported” by their employer when it comes to mental health.**

One of our key findings in last year's study was that employer support for employee mental wellbeing could not be all talk—it had to be backed up by transparent action. That includes the adoption of tools and solutions for employee support, as well as leadership advocacy, clear communications, and connections to culture. As the data points make clear, a critical tenet for success isn't taking a “one-size-fits-all” approach to mental health and wellbeing at work.

Is Remote Work Good for Employee Mental Health?



A variety of studies in recent years have uncovered varying aspects of what remote work means for mental health, examining loneliness, stress, and other factors. However, this research focused on the specific transitions of employees and the mismatch between their perception of the experience and any associated plans to quit a job.

Within this research, the findings are clear: Alternative arrangements like onsite, hybrid, and remote work have a definite, measurable impact on employee levels of work-related stress.

For example, three in four workers who moved to remote work status said that the change was a

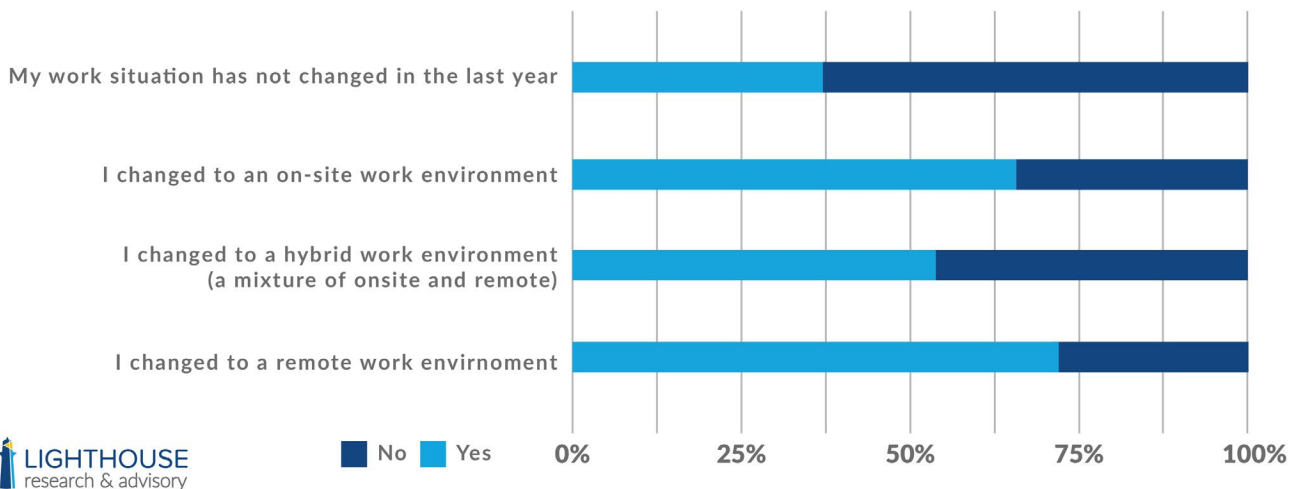
positive one. However, those workers were also more likely than any other group to say they have thought about quitting their job due to mental health and stress.

So, the question remains: Is remote good for worker mental health or not?

The reality is that even changes we perceive as positive come with their own demands and stresses—those two feelings aren't mutually exclusive. Ask any new parent and they will tell you that it's a positive change and a situation full of stress, especially in the early days of the transition. It's not surprising then that employees who did not have a change in work setting had the lowest incidence of intent to quit.

Figure 2: Job Situation Change Affects Mental Health

Have you thought about quitting your job due to mental health reasons?



Source: 2022 Lighthouse Research & Advisory Workplace Wellbeing Study (n=1,000)

In addition, while fewer employees said that a transition to hybrid was a positive one, they also indicated a lower likelihood to consider quitting due to job stress.

With this in mind, organizations that are making a shift or adjusting work arrangements should keep this in mind and provide additional leadership guidance, especially in the critical early days of a transition.



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Workplace Mental Health Trends for Women, People of Color, and Working Parents



Today, the workplace is more diverse than ever. As employers are celebrating the differences that each individual brings through a variety of DEI efforts, they should also consider the impact of mental health support on all groups within their population. As this research indicates, a successful mental health and wellbeing approach is multifaceted, offering more than education or counseling support alone so that everyone has the necessary resources when and where they need it most.

Working Parents

For working parents, the attempts to balance work and life create a fairly consistent level of difficulty from day to day. In this study, working parents showed some concerning signs that they aren't receiving the levels of support they need to maintain their mental health.

- **Approximately 70% said their company made no positive changes to support their mental health.**
- **This group was 2.5 times more likely to have plans to quit their job sometime in the next six months.**
- **Working parents were 3 times more likely to say their company does not provide adequate wellbeing resources.**



Working parents that have the necessary parental/caregiving support at work were 4 times more likely to access mental wellbeing resources than those who don't have the proper support.

While these findings illustrate the challenges for working parents, respondents also indicated a strong willingness to utilize mental health benefits when available.

Employees of Color

In multiple studies across learning, hiring, and other talent areas, we see a strong desire from employers to create inclusive work environments. However, if a company isn't visibly and consistently supporting the mental health of employees of color, then other talent investments will likely fall flat. This survey

showed that employers still have work to do when it comes to supporting mental wellbeing for people of color at work. When compared to 2021 responses, employees of color were:

- **17% more likely to say their company has not made positive changes to support mental health and twice as likely to say they aren't sure about what changes were made.**
- **38% more likely to say that mental health support is based on tools and services but lacks culture and leadership advocacy/buy-in.**

In addition, half of workers of color have thought about quitting their jobs due to mental health and stress in the last 18 months, and that number increases to 61% for employees who have had a work location change (returning to office, hybrid schedule, or going remote).

Women

Support for women in the workplace has become a renewed focus in recent years, with many organizations developing initiatives to increase the representation of women at all levels of leadership. Consider the case study involving a North American aerospace company that wished to re-engage critical women leaders who had taken a step back from work for personal reasons in 2020 and 2021. A key element of this “boomerang” hiring campaign and the transition for women back to work was addressing their concerns around balancing work, family, and other social responsibilities.

In a similar vein, the current survey shows that mental health can be a critical path for performance and retention, especially when it comes to women in the workplace.

- **Women who say their mental health is consistently supported at work were 2.25 times less likely to have plans to quit their job.**
- **Statistically, women who say their company doesn't support their mental health have virtually no chance of saying their company has a strong culture of mental health and wellbeing. By comparison, 42% of those who feel supported agree that their employer has the right leadership, resources, and culture to support employee mental health.**



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Women were 50% more likely than men to say that they would take fewer sick days if their employer supported their mental health and wellbeing.

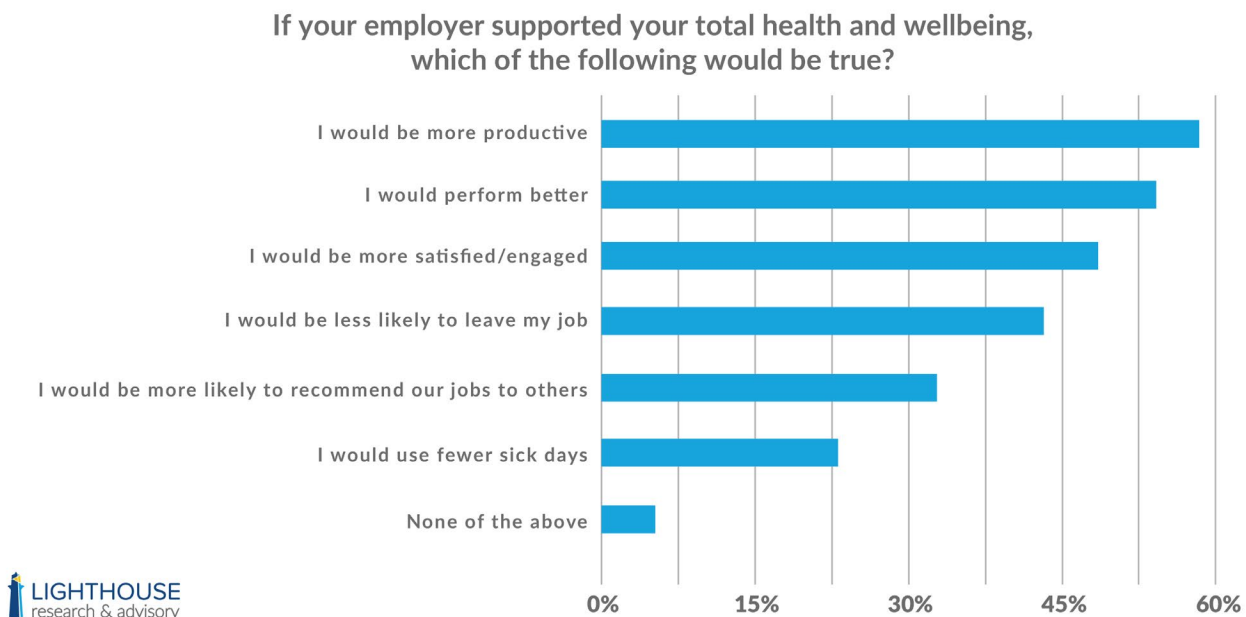
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Demonstrated Evidence: Lack of Mental Health Support Tied to Quitting



Providing support for mental wellbeing is the right thing to do for employers, but this strategy and investment also delivers several tangible business benefits, such as increased productivity and performance, improved engagement and job satisfaction, lower attrition, less absenteeism and presenteeism.

Figure 3: Outcomes of a Mentally Well Workforce



Source: 2022 Lighthouse Research & Advisory Workplace Wellbeing Study (n=1,000)

The Workplace Wellbeing Study revealed that **workers were two and a half times more likely to say they had thought about quitting their job if they didn't feel supported by the company's mental wellbeing efforts.**

That statistic alone demonstrates a business case that employers should take to heart, but that's not all. The data also showed unique differences in employees who use employer-sponsored mental health benefits compared to those who do

not. **For example, employees who use company-provided mental health benefits are 2 times more likely to say they feel consistent support for their mental health compared to those who don't have access to those benefits.**

Meanwhile, lack of support contributes to attrition, as workers who do not have access to employer-sponsored mental health benefits are 52% more likely to say they plan to quit their job than those who have used workplace mental health benefits in the last year.

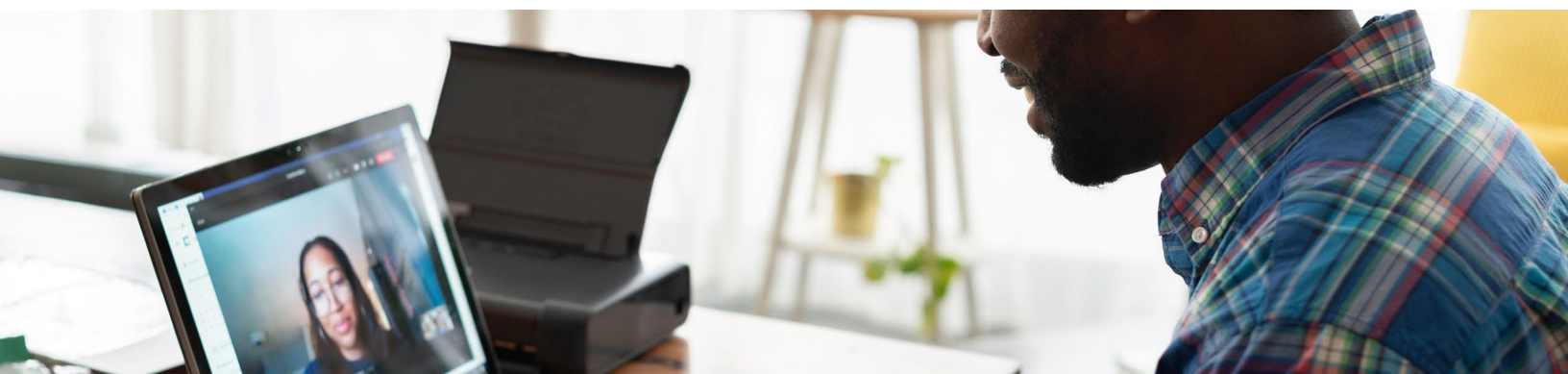
But not all mental health support is created equal. For instance, companies have long offered tools like Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) as a way to give employees direct, easy access to virtual support options.

While EAPs have a valuable role to play, the research shows that the ideal solution is a digital mental health offering that complements the components of a typical EAP with personalized, robust support for the workforce. Those personalized resources include:

- **Mental health and wellbeing education/training on critical topics**
- **Personalized live counselor support on demand**
- **Employee resource groups to support mental health**

Each of these types of benefits aligns with what employees are asking for in mental health solutions: **confidentiality, ease of access, and personalized support.**

Ultimately, business leaders that want to see better employee retention and performance must make employee mental health a critical priority, necessitating investment in personalized mental health benefits to help elicit the best performance and retention from the workforce.



Key Takeaways



Work isn't the only thing that causes stress for any employees, but employer-sponsored mental health benefits offer a critical path toward wellness, decreased stress, and improved mental wellbeing. **Employees who rated their personal mental health highly were three times more likely to say they feel like their mental wellbeing is supported by their employer.**



Mental health is a very personal journey for each employee in the workplace. Overall, **83% of workers that gave a high score to their employer's support of their mental health have no plans to quit their job** any time soon. Tapping into the specific needs of each employee group can carry that retention benefit farther than a "one-size-fits-all" approach to workplace mental health.



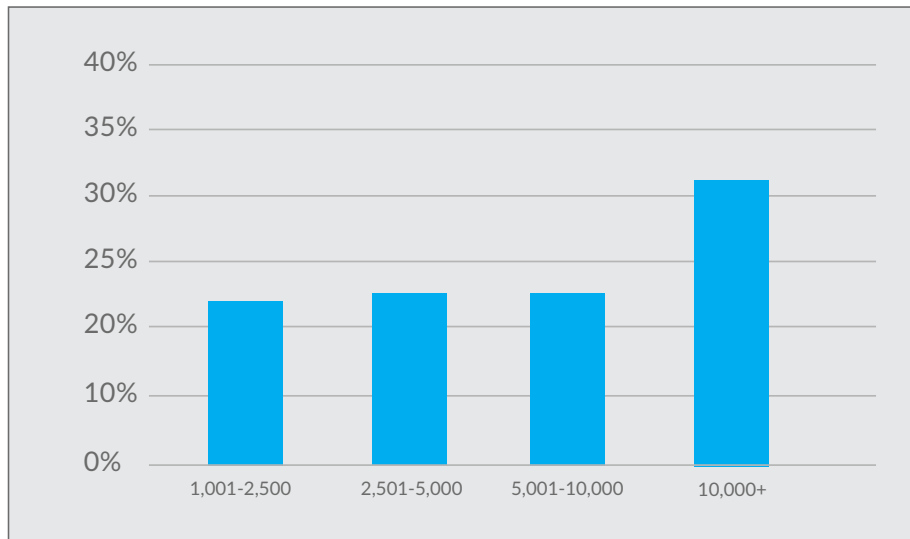
The evidence is clear. Employers who offer a more strategic, personalized set of mental health benefits will experience the rewards of a mentally well workforce. **Workers who access relevant, engaging mental health benefits at work are 51% more likely to rate their mental health as "Excellent" or "Very Good."**

About the Study

This research was conducted in fall 2022 and is based on survey responses from the workforce (n=1,000) and business decision makers (n=1,000) with responsibility for HR, benefits, and wellbeing initiatives. Survey respondents in both cases were based in North America. Employer responses represent companies with a minimum of 1,000 employees from every industry and span the following company sizes:

- 1,000-2,500 employees: 22%
- 2,501-5,000 employees: 23%
- 5,000-10,000 employees: 23%
- 10,001+ employees: 32%

Companies Represented by Size



Statement of Ethics: *as an independent analyst firm, our research and reporting provide unbiased, neutral views of the HR trends and technologies impacting work today. While this specific research was vendor-funded, it does not impact how we share the data with employers and practitioners. If you have any questions, please contact us.*

About LifeSpeak Inc.

15

LifeSpeak Inc. is the leading whole-person wellbeing solution for employers, health plans, and other organizations. LifeSpeak Inc.'s suite of digital solutions allows organizations to provide best-in-class content and expertise at scale, empowering individuals to live their healthiest lives. With a flexible portfolio of solutions including LifeSpeak *Mental Health & Resilience*, LIFT session *Fitness*, ALAViDA *Substance Use*, Torchlight *Parenting & Caregiving*, and Wellbeats *Wellness*, LifeSpeak Inc. offers support across every pillar of wellbeing. LifeSpeak Inc. has more than 30 years of collective experience working with Fortune 500 companies, government agencies, insurance providers, and others across the globe. Insights from LifeSpeak Inc.'s digital and data-driven solutions uncover gaps in wellbeing at the individual and organizational levels, ultimately enhancing workplace performance outcomes. To learn more, follow LifeSpeak Inc. on LinkedIn (<http://www.linkedin.com/company/lifespeak-inc>), or visit www.LifeSpeak.com.

LifeSpeak Inc.



About Us

Lighthouse Research & Advisory is a modern analyst firm dedicated to setting the standard for excellence in talent, learning, and HR. By providing compelling research and actionable insights for business leaders, our team's mission is to navigate the rapidly changing field of human capital management to support today's talent and learning functions. From establishing frameworks and defining competitive practices to illuminating the ROI of the employee experience, our goal is to chart a new course for talent. Ben Eubanks is the Chief Research Officer at Lighthouse, providing insights for today's talent leaders and vendor partners.

Prior to joining Lighthouse, Ben worked as a research analyst for Brandon Hall Group, focusing on learning, talent acquisition, and talent management. During his tenure, he published more than 100 pieces of research and provided advisory services to executives from some of the largest and most respected organizations in the world. He also has hands-on experience working as an HR executive, leading both strategic and tactical talent practices. Ben is the host of *We're Only Human*, a podcast focused on the intersection of people, technology, and the workplace. In addition, he runs upstartHR.com, a website serving HR leaders that has reached more than 1,000,000 readers since its inception.