

2016 GLOBAL REPORT

# PURPOSE AT WORK

The Largest Global Study on the  
Role of Purpose in the Workforce



IMPERATIVE.

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A modern office interior featuring a bright yellow chair in the foreground and a black sofa in the background. The scene is lit with natural light from a window on the left.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Think about your workplace. Are your employees and coworkers set up to achieve their highest potential? Are you?

Professionals spend a majority of their hours awake at work,<sup>1</sup> and yet 2 out of 3 are disengaged in their jobs. Only 30% of the U.S. workforce reports being actively involved, enthusiastic, and committed to their work.<sup>2</sup> There has never been a more crucial time to connect people with their purpose.

Imagine what would happen if every person was connected to purpose at work — to a job that mattered to them, their company, and the world. Imagine how much more productive and successful they'd be. Think of what we could collectively accomplish.

You have the power to make work more meaningful. You can create engagement and inspiration — by connecting purpose with work.

## The movement is already happening.

People are increasingly looking for jobs that give them personal fulfillment; and companies are seeing that purpose-oriented employees are more productive and successful.

As the economy evolves, purpose and recruiting purpose-oriented talent will be a competitive differentiator. Companies of all sizes and industries are realizing the power of inspiring employees with a strong social mission, and creating an environment that fosters purpose.

If you are in a position to influence hiring, talent management, or employee experience — the purpose movement cannot be ignored.

Need proof? We did an internal analysis on the role purpose plays in our workforce.<sup>6</sup> At LinkedIn, our purpose-oriented employees have higher levels of engagement and fulfillment with their work. They outperform their peers in every indicator, including expected tenure and leadership competencies like self-advocacy and comfort with senior leadership.<sup>7</sup>

Read on to get the facts you need to bring purpose to your company.

“Companies that understand the increasing emphasis of purpose in today’s professional landscape improve their ability to attract such employees and also their ability to retain them for longer periods of time.”<sup>6</sup>



Reid Hoffman

Executive Chairman and co-founder  
LinkedIn

# PURPOSE

**Finding work that matters to each person, and connecting those people to companies where they can drive meaningful impact.**



# Purpose brings profit.

Connecting employees with purpose brings measurable business impact. Research from the EY Beacon Institute and Harvard Business School shows that companies that lead with purpose are more likely to be profitable.

In the past three years:

**58%**

of companies with a clearly articulated and understood purpose experienced growth of +10%

**vs.**

**42%**

of companies not prioritizing purpose<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps even more strikingly:

% of non-purpose led companies that showed drop in revenue

**42%**

% of purpose-led companies that showed positive growth

**85%**

# Purpose, and how it drives your talent, has direct and tangible business results.



Driven by this momentum, we set out to gather the largest dataset on purpose in the world. Results show that purpose is an important factor in the workplace globally, with more and more employees putting a premium on jobs that allow them to connect with their purpose.

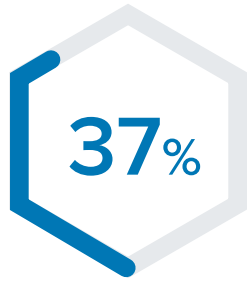
The findings in this report are essential for:

- 01** Understanding what role purpose plays in the workforce
- 02** Companies looking to use purpose to improve their business and talent outcomes
- 03** Recruiters looking to recruit high quality, purpose-oriented talent

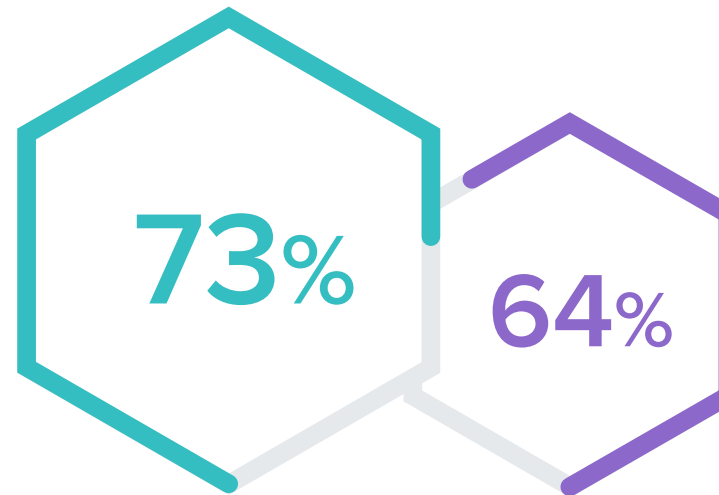
A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a white ceramic mug. The person is wearing a dark, textured sweater. The background is softly blurred, showing several potted plants on a wooden surface, suggesting a warm, indoor environment. The overall lighting is soft and natural, creating a calm and focused atmosphere.

# KEY FINDINGS

Given the right role and environment, LinkedIn members are ready to tap into their purpose and reach a higher potential at work.



**of LinkedIn members  
globally are  
purpose-oriented**



**of purpose-oriented  
people are satisfied  
in their jobs** vs. **who are not  
purpose-oriented.**

This correlation of satisfaction at work and purpose orientation was consistent in virtually every country and industry studied. Purpose is a motivator regardless of differences in region, culture, language, and occupation.

There are some key differences when it comes to purpose-oriented professionals and their approach to work and opportunities. This impacts how employers should approach recruiting and retaining them.



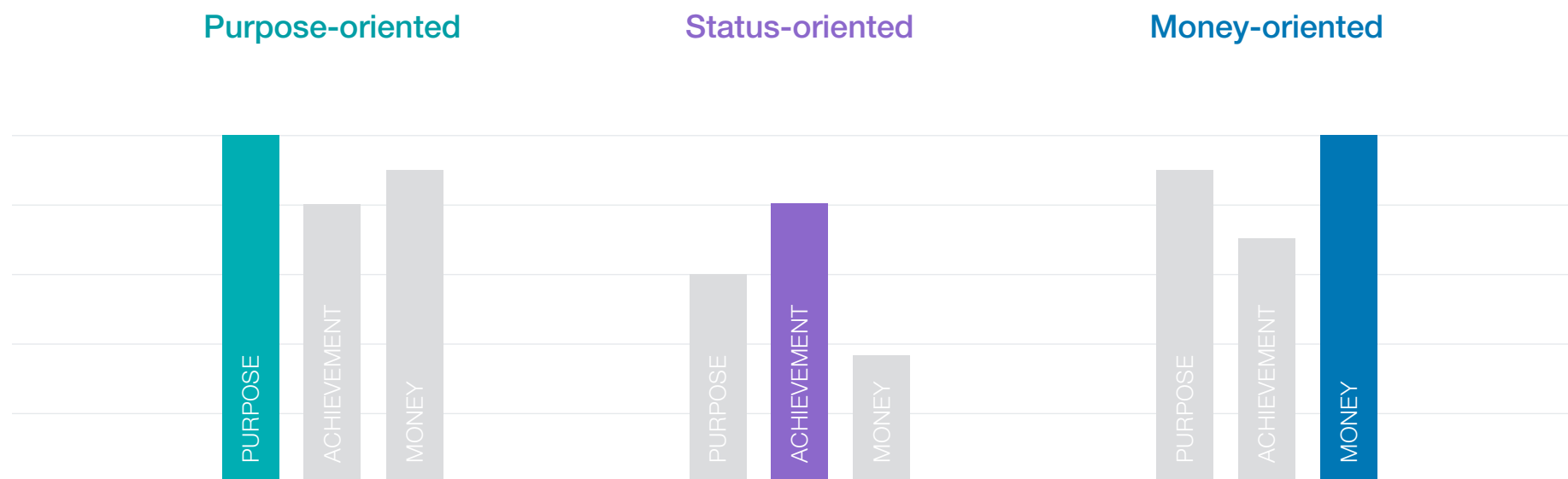


# DEFINING PURPOSE

## Purpose is directly tied to a person's motivations for working.

There are many reasons why people work. By using a set of questions, we can determine a person's *primary* reason for working — money, status, or purpose. A purpose-oriented professional prioritizes work that matters to them, their company, and the world — over money or advancement.

### A new segmentation of talent, based on why we work



Example determinations of work orientation. Orientation is calculated by the factor rated the highest based on responses to survey questions

## Companies can lead with purpose.

A company can embody purpose in a number of ways. Purpose-driven companies have a stated and measured reason for being, a mission that all employees know.

They have a culture and jobs that deliver employees the three core elements of experiencing purpose:

**01** Positive impact on others

**02** Personal development

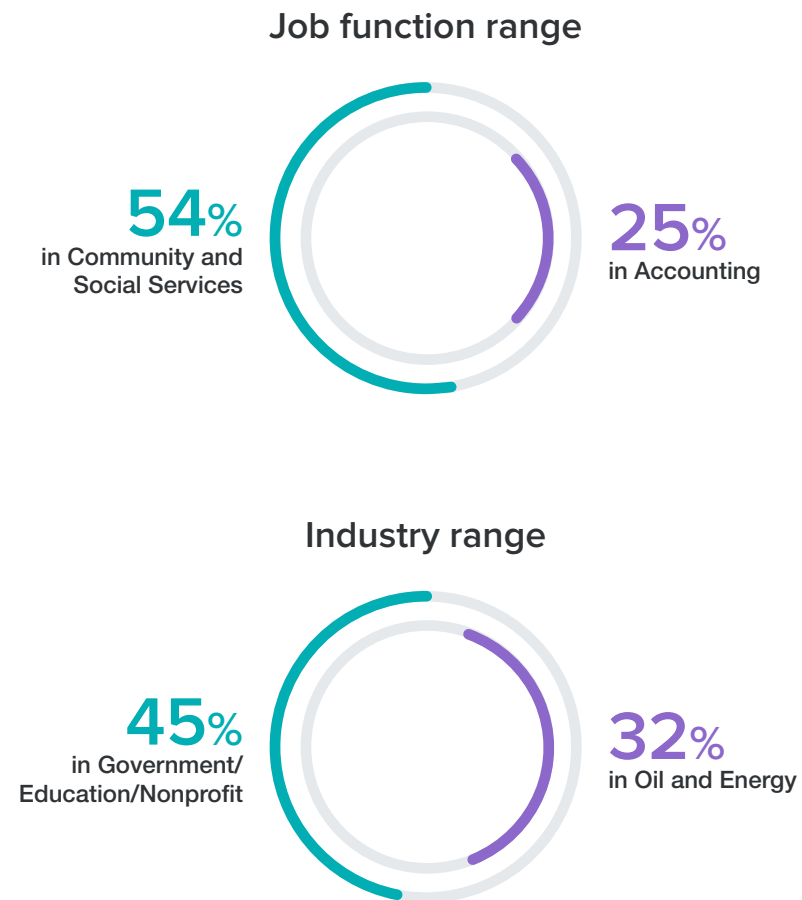
**03** Delivery of work through strong relationships

## Global breakdown

37% of LinkedIn members globally are purpose-oriented, which means that they optimize their job to align with work that matters to them. And, another 38% considered purpose to be equally weighted with either money or status.

At the country level, there are people who are purpose-oriented in every country and language sampled. The U.S. workforce showed up near the middle of the pack at 40%, just over the global average of 37%.

There is purpose across every job and industry.





**40%**

of U.S. workforce are purpose-oriented



**Top 5 most purpose-oriented countries:**

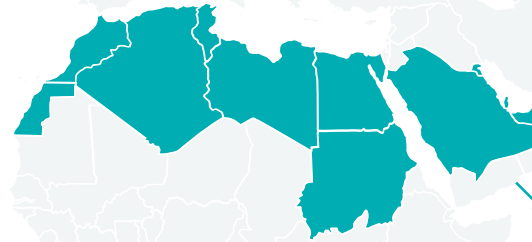
Sweden: 53%

Germany: 50%

Netherlands: 50%

Belgium: 49%

Poland: 48%



**5 regions with the least  
purpose-oriented workforce:**

United Arab Emirates: 28%

Qatar: 28%

North Africa: 28%

Kuwait: 26%

Saudi Arabia: 23%

**37%**

Global average

A high-angle photograph of a person with dark hair, wearing a black short-sleeved shirt, sitting at a dark wooden desk. The person is looking down at a silver keyboard. They are wearing several bracelets on their left wrist and a ring on their left hand. The background shows a patterned rug and a white wall with a light fixture.

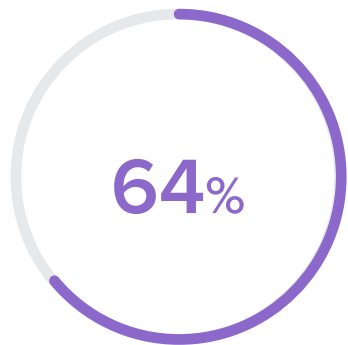
# PURPOSE IN THE WORKFORCE

## Purpose orientation directly impacts performance at work.

In 2015, Imperative, a platform that helps connect people to purpose, worked with New York University to conduct research on purpose-oriented talent in the U.S. They defined purpose-oriented employees as people who see work as about personal fulfillment and helping other people. They compared this group to non purpose-oriented people, who see work as solely a source of income or status.

They found that purpose-oriented employees scored higher than the non purpose-oriented employees on every measure studied.

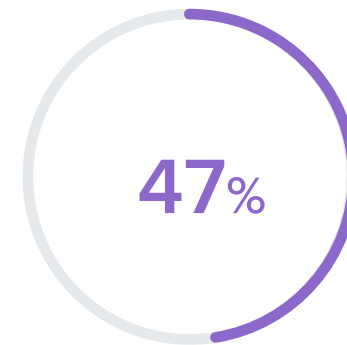
### Highlights from the 2015 U.S. Purpose Index study:



higher levels of fulfillment in their work



more likely to be in leadership positions



more likely to be promoters of their employers

Plus, results didn't find any meaningful differences in purpose orientation by race, ethnicity, or income. Companies prioritizing diversity initiatives, take note!

## LinkedIn members continue to validate the value of purpose-oriented talent.

In response to Imperative's 2015 Workforce Purpose Index, leaders wanted answers to these critical questions:

- How does purpose manifest globally?
- Are the benefits still experienced across different cultures?
- How do you recruit this exceptional talent?

This 2016 global study found the answers. You've already seen that purpose at work is universal. We'll cover the other two questions next.

"I enjoy helping people fulfill their dreams, personally and professionally. My work as a recruiter gives me purpose, and I meet — and often become friends with — interesting and intelligent people."

– Staffing Director, New Zealand

"[What I like most about my job is] that I get to choose which projects to work on. I get to lecture and conduct scientific research in the field I'm interested in. And I enjoy being around colleagues who are amazing professionals at what they do."

– Senior Manager of Operations, Norway

**In response to the question: "You mentioned that you were not interested in a new job opportunity. What do you like most about your current job?"**



# Purpose at work benefits are consistent globally.

**Purpose-oriented professionals** vs. **Non purpose-oriented professionals**

**39%** Are likely to stay at their company for 3+ years

**35%**

**73%** Are satisfied with their job

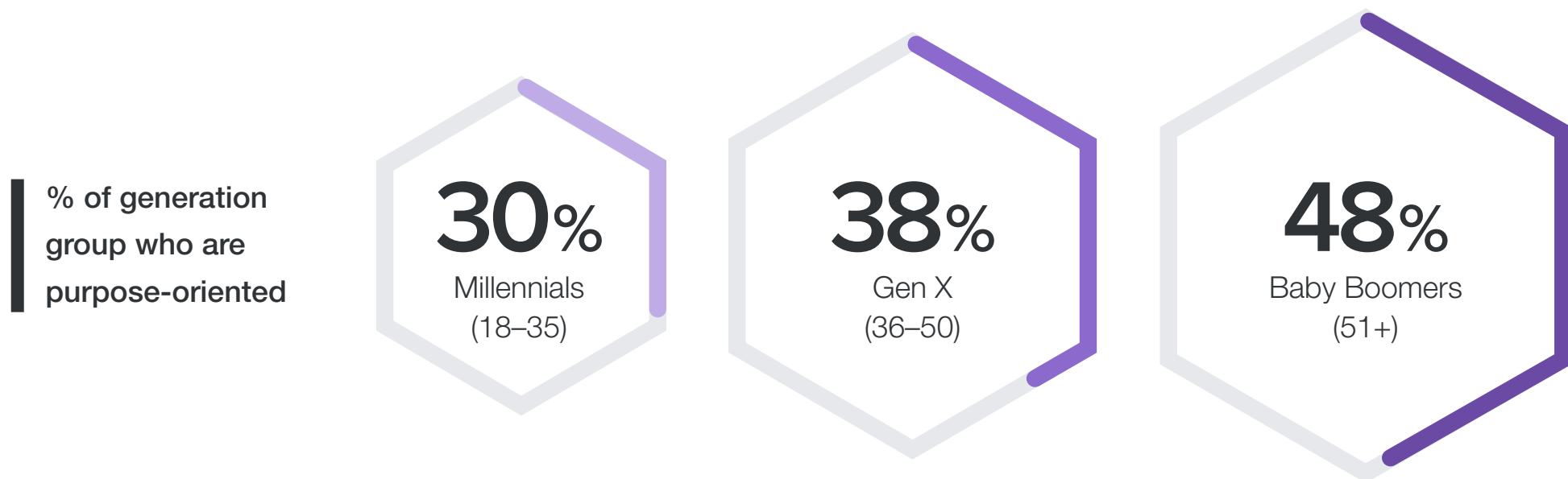
**64%**



# WHERE TO FIND PURPOSE- ORIENTED TALENT

## Generational differences

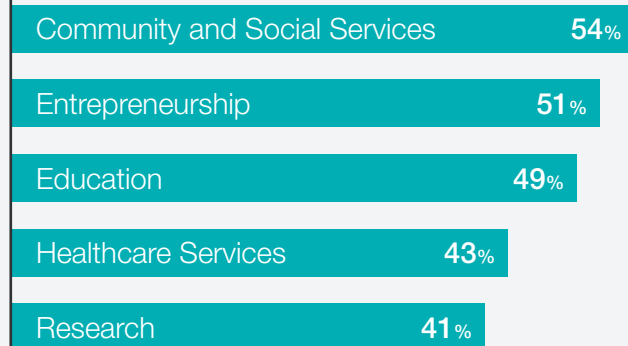
Purpose is not only owned by millennials. Our results actually show that percentages of purpose-orientation increased across generation groups, with baby boomers leading the way. This could potentially be connected to broader developmental psychology theories. Erik Erikson, a German psychoanalyst, identified an eight-stage theory of development and identity. A shift in identity changes between the ages of 18-35 and 35-65. Erickson theorized that young adults (millennials) are focused on building relationships. When they reach middle age, there's a shift to associate identity with what one is contributing to society.<sup>4</sup>



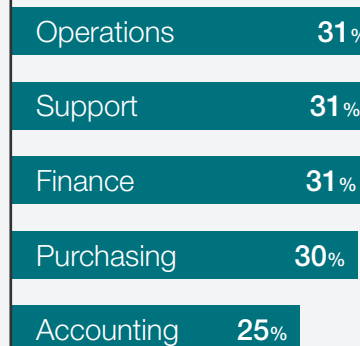
## Job types

Some job functions naturally attract more purpose-oriented people than others. It's no surprise that community and social services, entrepreneurship, education, and healthcare services attract the most purpose-oriented talent. However, it's important to note that there are purpose-oriented people across all functions. 25-30% of people in finance, purchasing, and accounting consider themselves purpose-oriented.

### Top 5 most purpose-oriented job functions



### The 5 least purpose-oriented job functions



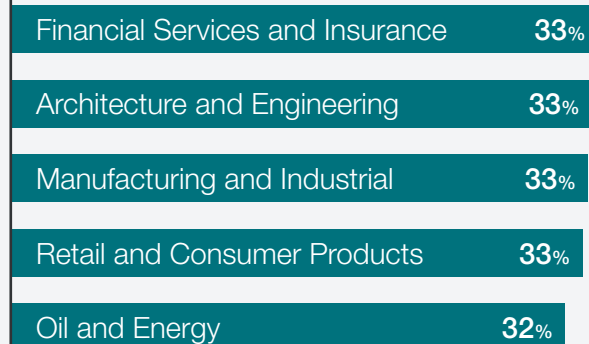
## Industries

Nonprofit, education, and social service organizations have the most purpose-oriented staff. Many other companies and industries are also competing in the space. Media, entertainment, consulting, healthcare, staffing, and technology (not shown) industries have high percentages of purpose-oriented talent. If your company is in one of these industries, paying attention to retaining and continuing to hire purpose-oriented employees is critical.

### Top 5 most purpose-oriented industries



### The 5 least purpose-oriented industries



# BEHAVIOR AND INTERESTS

Purpose-oriented people are still the minority. As their value becomes better known, there will be more and more competition for this segment of the workforce.

What you need to know about recruiting purpose-oriented people:

- **Engage in recruiting passive candidates.** Purpose-oriented employees are more likely to be passive: 69% vs. 61% who are not purpose-oriented.
- **Focus more on your organization's mission, vision, products, and services** — less on perks and benefits.

**Top 3 factors that entice purpose-oriented people to accept a new job:**

- 01** Culture and values
- 02** Mission and vision
- 03** Products and services





# **PURPOSE**

**AT YOUR**

# **ORGANIZATION**

**Purpose taps a universal need. It serves as a motivator despite cultural differences – uniting everyone to contribute to something bigger.<sup>3</sup>**

## Purpose-driven companies get more engagement on LinkedIn.



Beyond that, LinkedIn members want jobs that offer a sense of purpose. 74% of members place a high value on finding work that delivers on a sense of purpose.



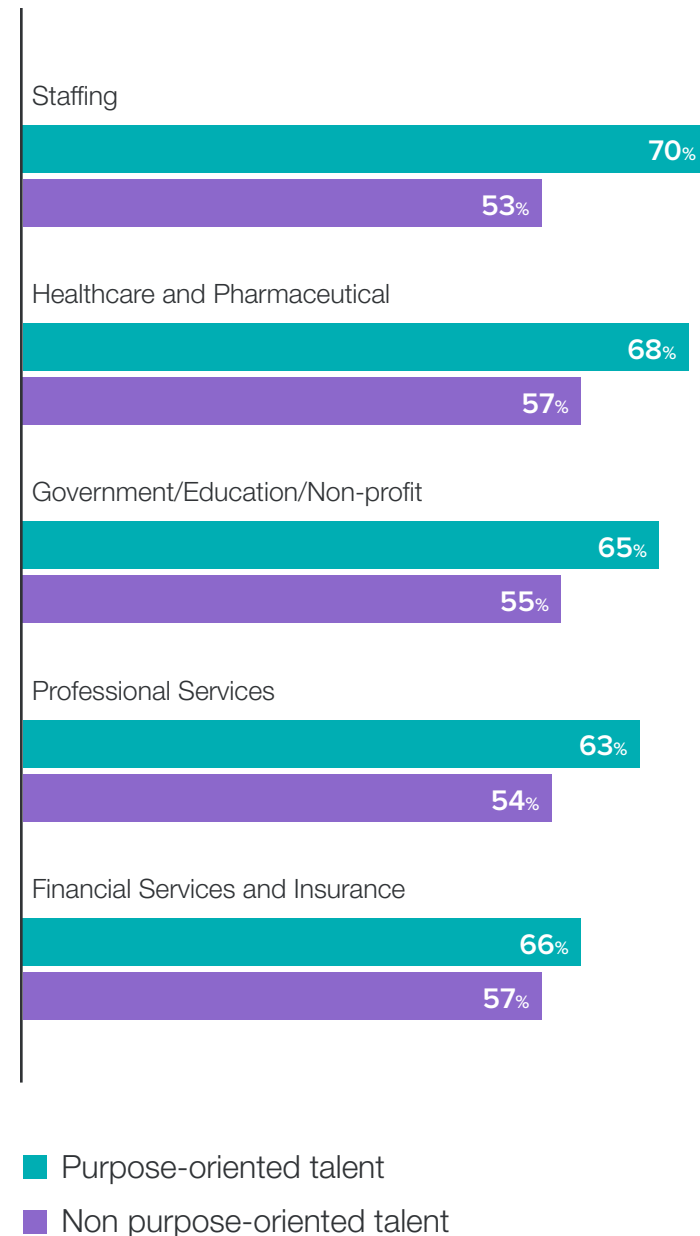
## Make purpose work for you.

We found that all industries and functions had purpose-oriented employees. However, some are able to attract and empower them more effectively than others. This underscores the need to attract and support purpose-oriented workers.

### Other contributing variables that affect how employees experience purpose:

- 01** Autonomy
- 02** Power and influence
- 03** Income and recognition<sup>8</sup>

### Industries where connecting employees to purpose at work makes the biggest impact on job satisfaction:



# 3 ways to apply these findings to your talent strategy:

**01**

## **Talent Brand**

Incorporate purpose into your branding efforts to drive continual candidate awareness, and attract the candidates you want.

**02**

## **Recruitment**

Infuse your organization's purpose throughout the recruitment process. Seek out purpose-oriented talent, start conversations with your organization's mission and values, and ask questions like "what motivates you?" in your interview process. Look beyond skill match, and hire candidates to jobs that connect with their sense of purpose.

**03**

## **Employee retention**

Understand what drives your employees, and how they experience purpose. Make sure they have autonomy, influence, fair compensation, and the resources needed to do their job. Clearly define and communicate company values, culture, and mission.

A hiker with a backpack is walking on a mountain trail at sunset. The sky is filled with soft, colorful clouds in shades of blue, orange, and pink. The hiker is seen from behind, walking away from the viewer towards the horizon.

# CONCLUSION

Purpose isn't genetic — we aren't born with a predetermined work orientation. The variation in purpose orientation by country and culture show that nurture and upbringing may be factors. Given the right environment and coaching, managers, mentors, and talent acquisition leaders can help foster a sense of purpose in employees.

Connecting your employees and applicants to jobs that bring out their sense of purpose will only benefit your company. Employees that are more satisfied and fulfilled are higher performers, more productive, and likely to stay longer.

# METHODOLOGY

**LinkedIn and Imperative partnered to answer these questions in a global survey of 26,151 LinkedIn members in 40 different countries and 16 different languages between January and February of 2016.**

The majority were employed full-time or part-time when they took the survey. We asked about their attitudes, opinions, and behaviors about various aspects of job seeking. The theoretical margin of error for this survey +/- 0.61% at the 95% confidence interval and is higher for subgroups.

The results of this analysis represent the world as seen through the lens of LinkedIn data. As such, it is influenced by how members choose to use the site, which can vary based on professional, social, and regional culture.

**To identify purpose orientation in the sample, we asked respondents to rate how similar they were to three paragraphs describing people with different work orientations: Money, Status, or Purpose.**

Respondents who clearly identified with the purpose-orientation paragraph the strongest were deemed to be purpose-oriented. They are considered Purpose-Inclined if they have a high score tied between purpose and another orientation. These categories have been developed and refined based on previous academic research conducted by Amy Wrzesniewski, Barry Schwartz and Adam Grant, among others, and has reliably produced distinct categories in which people can easily see themselves.

**MONEY**

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A believes that work is an unavoidable necessity. His main reason for working is to have enough money to support himself and his life outside of work. If A won the lottery, he would stop working and enjoy life. He lives for the weekends and is annoyed when his work intrudes on his personal life. He does not like to talk about work with others and most of his social relationships are not connected to work. A doesn't have very much control over his work life and would probably choose to do something else if given the opportunity.

**STATUS**

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B believes that work gives B the chance to be successful and prove himself. B is strategic and works hard to perform well in ways that will advance B's career. B is willing to invest his time on tasks that B finds boring in order to move ahead more quickly. B hopes to be in a higher level position in the next few years.

**PURPOSE**

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C believes that work has the potential to be a valuable and meaningful part of C's life, even if it is occasionally stressful or difficult. C enjoys talking and thinking about C's work, as well as building relationships with C's coworkers. C feels like C's work life is mostly of C's own making. C has made sacrifices in order to do the work C loves while having a positive impact on others and the world.

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## IMPERATIVE.

Imperative is a social benefit corporation driven to empower people to realize their potential by convening and empowering the next generation of leaders. Our purpose assessment platform includes the first set of tools and resources to uncover, express and connect people around purpose in their work each day.

