

# State of Recognition

The recognition reset workplaces can't afford to miss

2025

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# Introduction

Recognition isn't just a feel-good moment — it's a core driver of performance, loyalty, and culture. But in 2025, recognition runs the risk of disappearing from the workplace. Only 19% of employees say they're recognized weekly, down significantly from 29% last year. Recognition from managers — the most impactful source — also dropped from 20% to just 15%.

These numbers might seem small, but their effects are anything but. As recognition declines, so does everything it supports. Only 26% of employees feel engaged at work. Just 22% plan to stay in their role next year. Productivity is slipping, trust in leadership is eroding, and fewer employees feel connected to their company's purpose. The connection is clear: when recognition fades, so does retention, performance, and morale.

The good news? The fix is simple — and backed by data. Employees who receive meaningful recognition on a weekly basis are 9x more likely to feel a strong sense of belonging, 6x more likely to see a long-term career at their company, and 2.6x more likely to be their most productive selves. Monthly recognition also yields meaningful gains in engagement, clarity, and collaboration. Recognition doesn't have to be elaborate. It just has to be consistent, authentic, and specific.

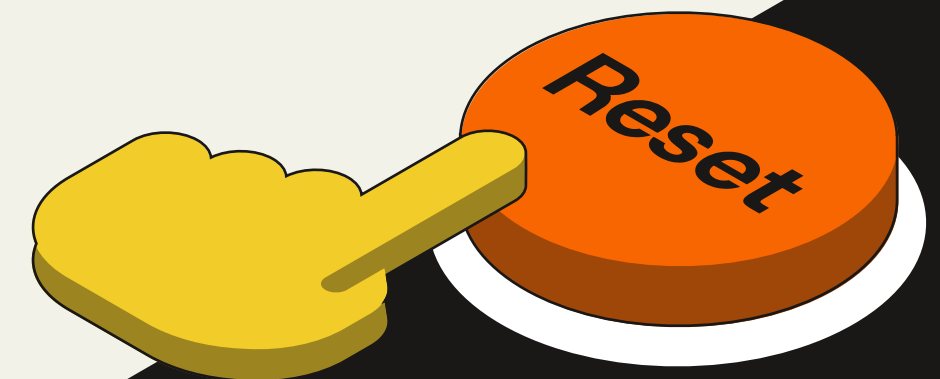
Manager recognition in particular drives some of the most powerful results. Employees recognized by their managers are 19x more likely to trust them, 16.5x more likely to recommend their company, and 11.7x more likely to feel like they belong.

This year's State of Recognition report looks across industries, roles, and regions — highlighting both the gaps and the gains.

It's clear that organizations can't afford to treat recognition as a side project or occasional gesture of goodwill. Recognition is a business imperative. And it starts with managers.

The theme of this year's report is clear: recognition needs a reset. Organizations must shift from ad hoc appreciation to an intentional culture of recognition that is frequent, meaningful, and manager led. When they do, they don't just boost morale — they drive clarity, belonging, and long-term success.

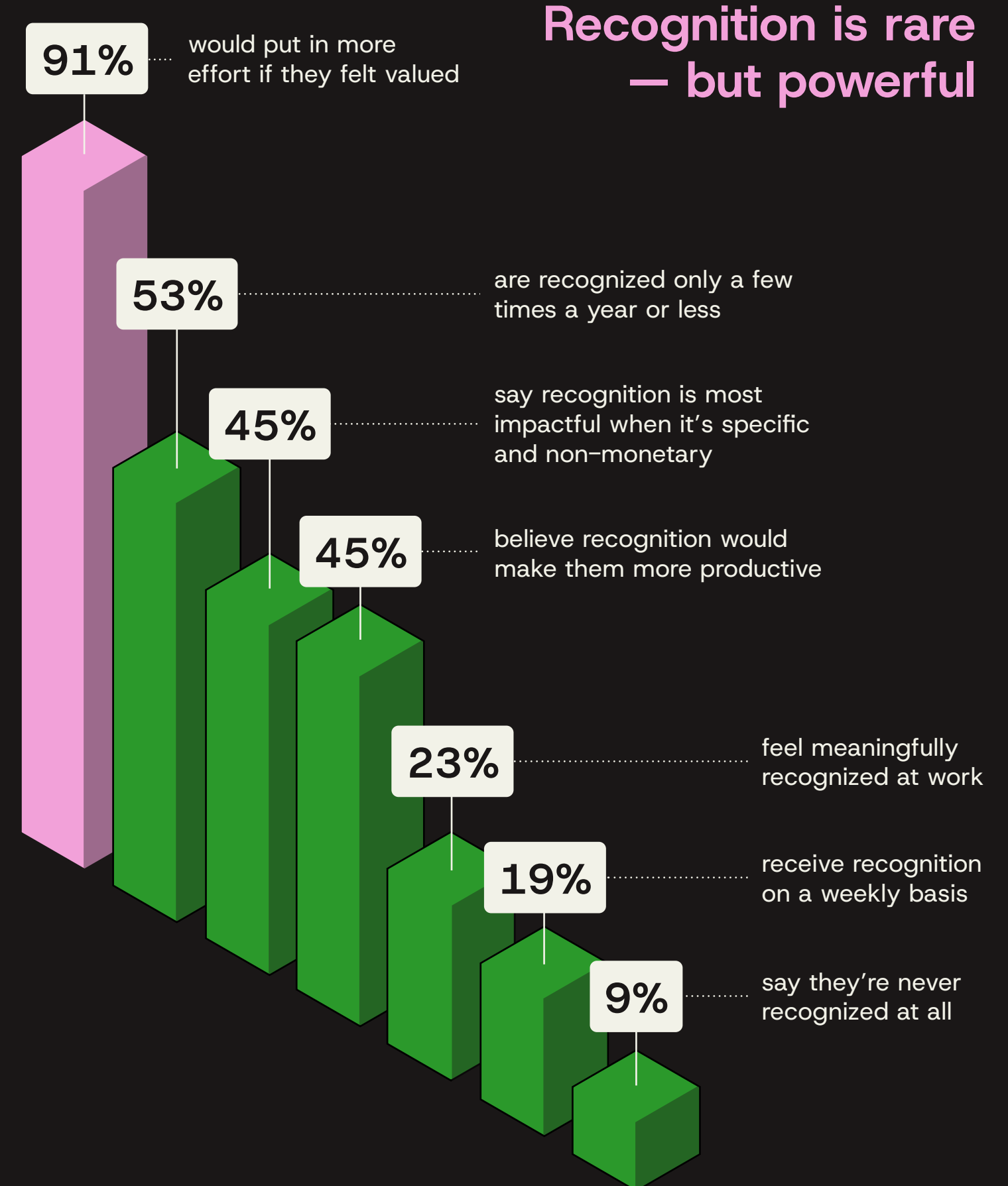
**Now is the time to get recognition right.**



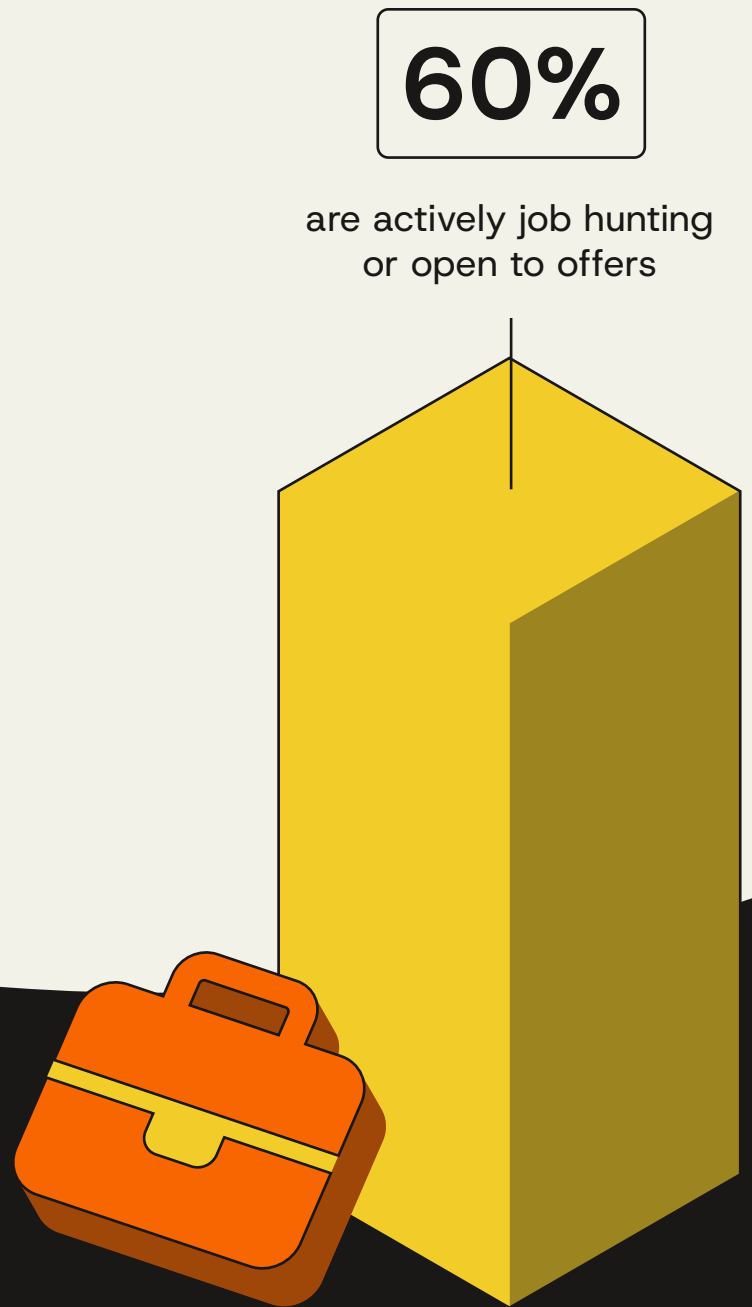
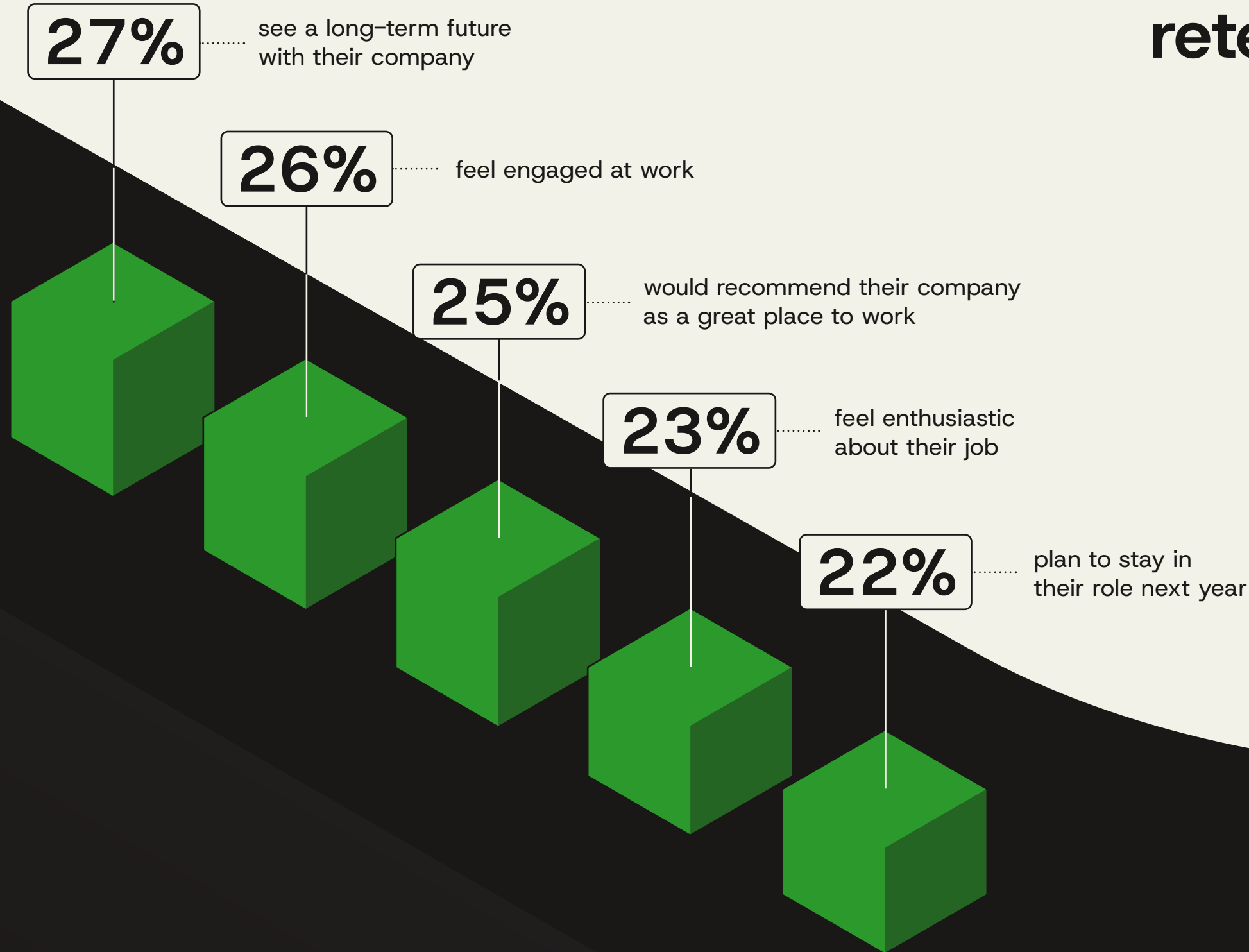
# The recognition gap

## A snapshot of what's missing — and what's possible

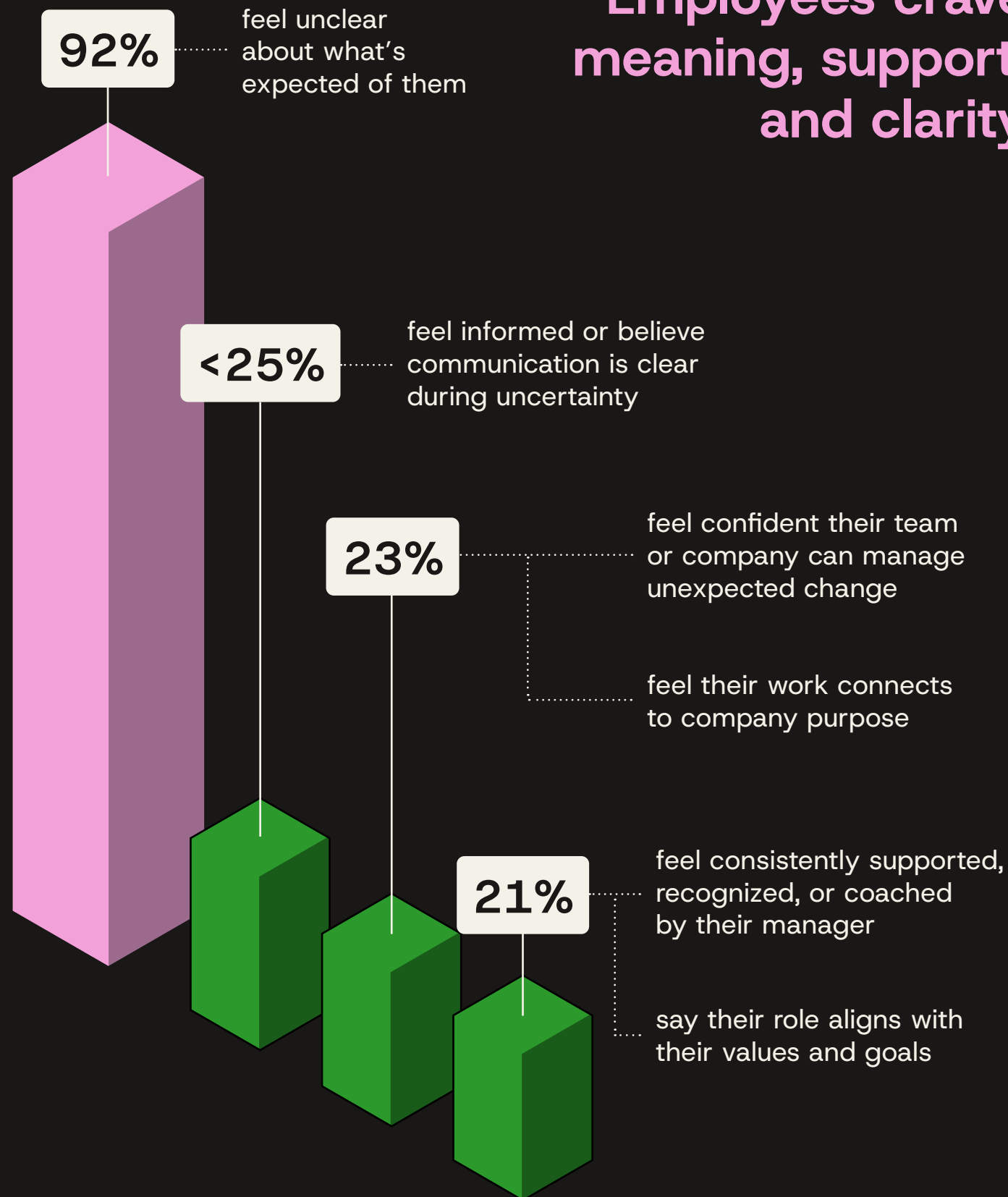
This snapshot offers a high-level overview of the key findings explored throughout the report. It highlights where recognition, engagement, and connection are falling short — and where the biggest opportunities lie. From manager habits to employee motivation, these numbers tell a clear story: recognition isn't just nice to have — it's essential.



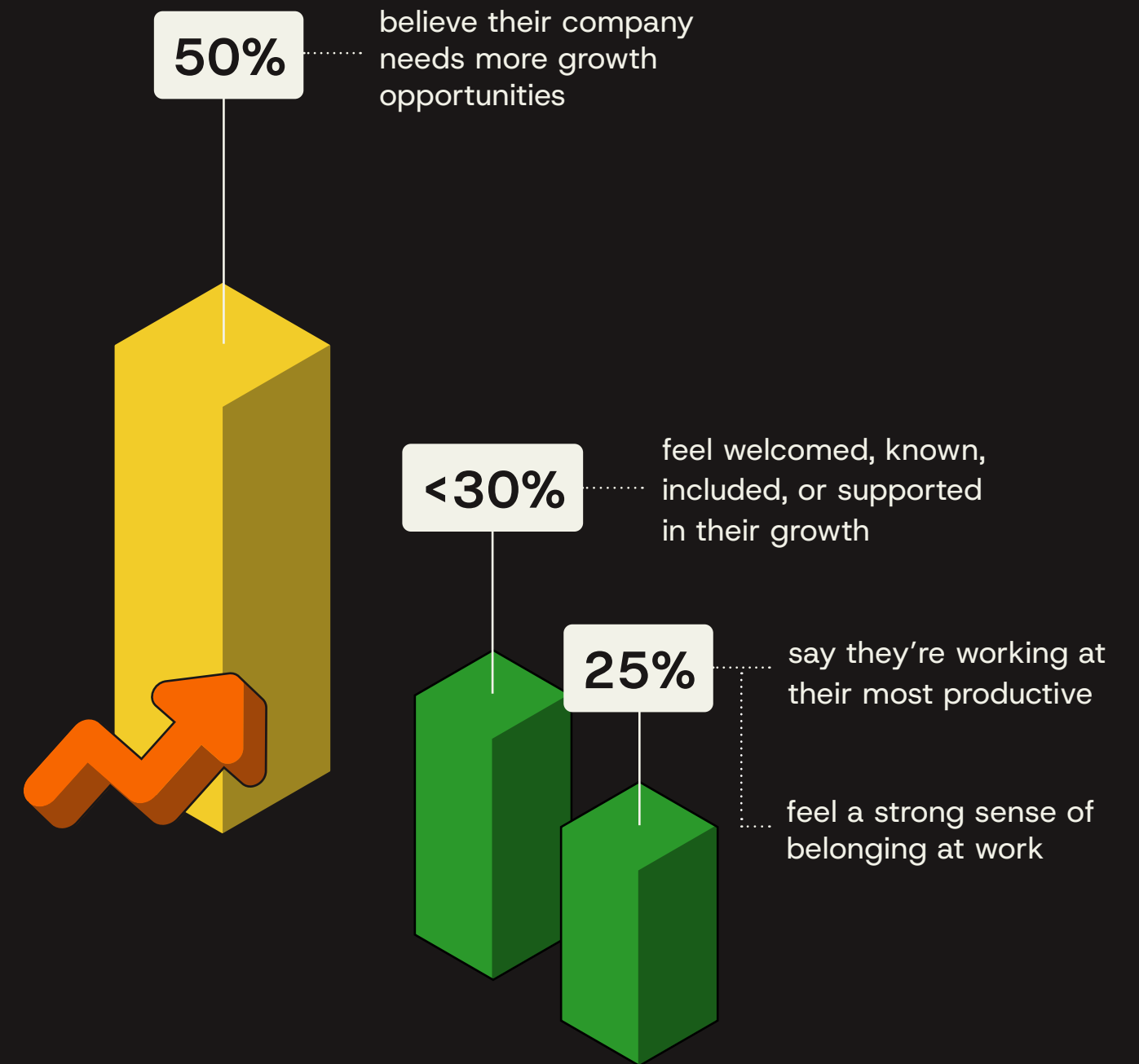
# Engagement and retention are struggling



## Employees crave meaning, support, and clarity



## Connection, belonging, and development are still lacking



Research finding

# 2024 vs. 2025

## An analysis of recognition's fading frequency

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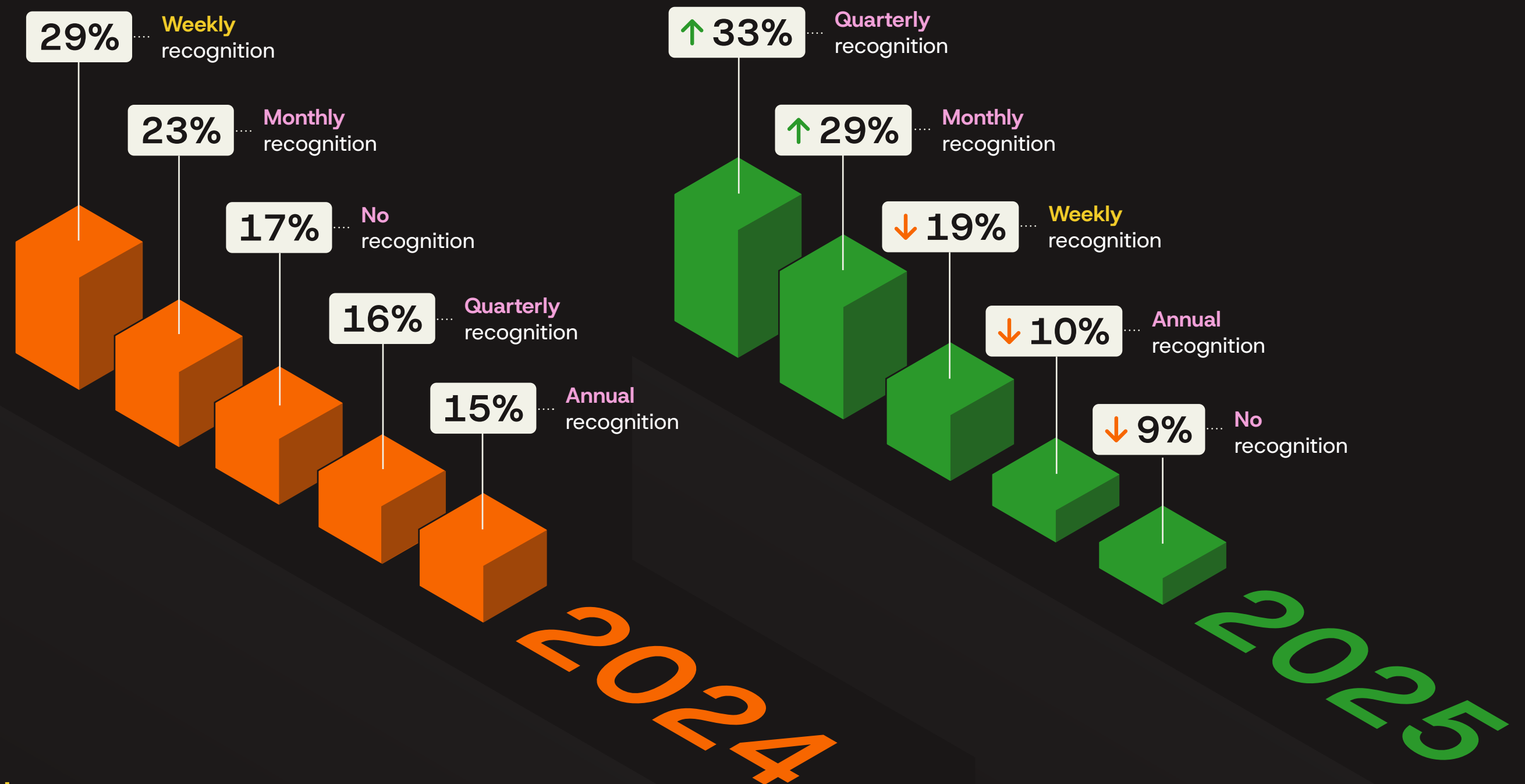
### → Key takeaway

When recognition — especially from managers — becomes infrequent or delayed, it doesn't just lose its impact; it quietly erodes engagement, trust, and the will to stay.

Recognition is still happening — but it's showing up late, less often, and with less impact. Weekly recognition dropped from 29% to just 19%, while quarterly recognition more than doubled. That shift may seem harmless on paper, but it means employees are waiting longer to feel valued — and when recognition is delayed, its power dims. A compliment months after the fact doesn't motivate much.

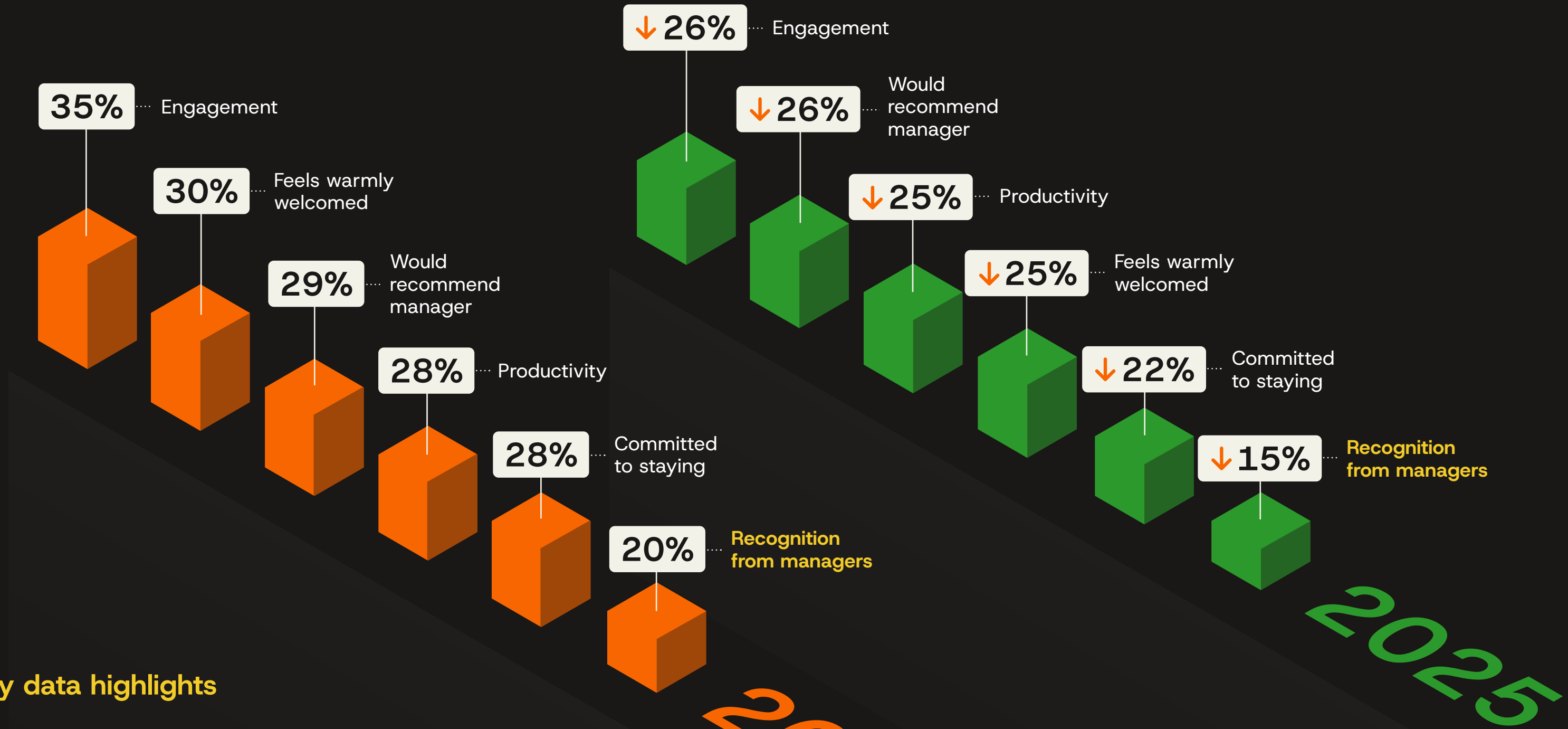
The drop is especially steep when it comes from managers. Only 15% of employees say their manager regularly recognizes them — and when that goes, everything else takes a hit. Engagement has fallen. Productivity has dipped. Fewer employees feel committed to staying, and fewer would recommend their manager. Recognition isn't just a morale boost — it's the undercurrent of trust, connection, and culture.

The good news? Employees aren't asking for grand gestures. They want frequent, authentic recognition that feels personal — not just points or perks. And as barriers to giving recognition fall, the opportunity is clear: give meaningful thanks more often, and you'll gain back engagement, productivity, and loyalty in return.



→ Key data highlights

Recognition is shifting  
— but losing its spark



→ Key data highlights

When manager recognition fades, everything else follows

→ Checklist

# 2025 recognition reset



## Revitalize recognition platform engagement

Promote daily platform use and streamline mobile experiences.

## Train managers to lead recognition culture

Focus on recognition coaching and accountability.

## Recommit to frequent recognition

Encourage weekly recognition touchpoints — especially from managers.

## Monitor employee engagement and retention signals

Use recognition data to identify and support at-risk teams.

## Audit your platform offering

Ensure it's fully featured, intuitive, and accessible across devices.

## Close the awareness gap

Run internal campaigns to normalize and encourage recognition behaviors.

## Make recognition more personal

Prioritize authentic, specific messages over catalog rewards.

## Promote peer-to-peer recognition

Foster a culture where everyone feels empowered to recognize.

## Make recognition inescapable and accessible to all

Enable every employee to recognize and be recognized in the flow of work.

## Research finding

# The power of frequent, meaningful recognition

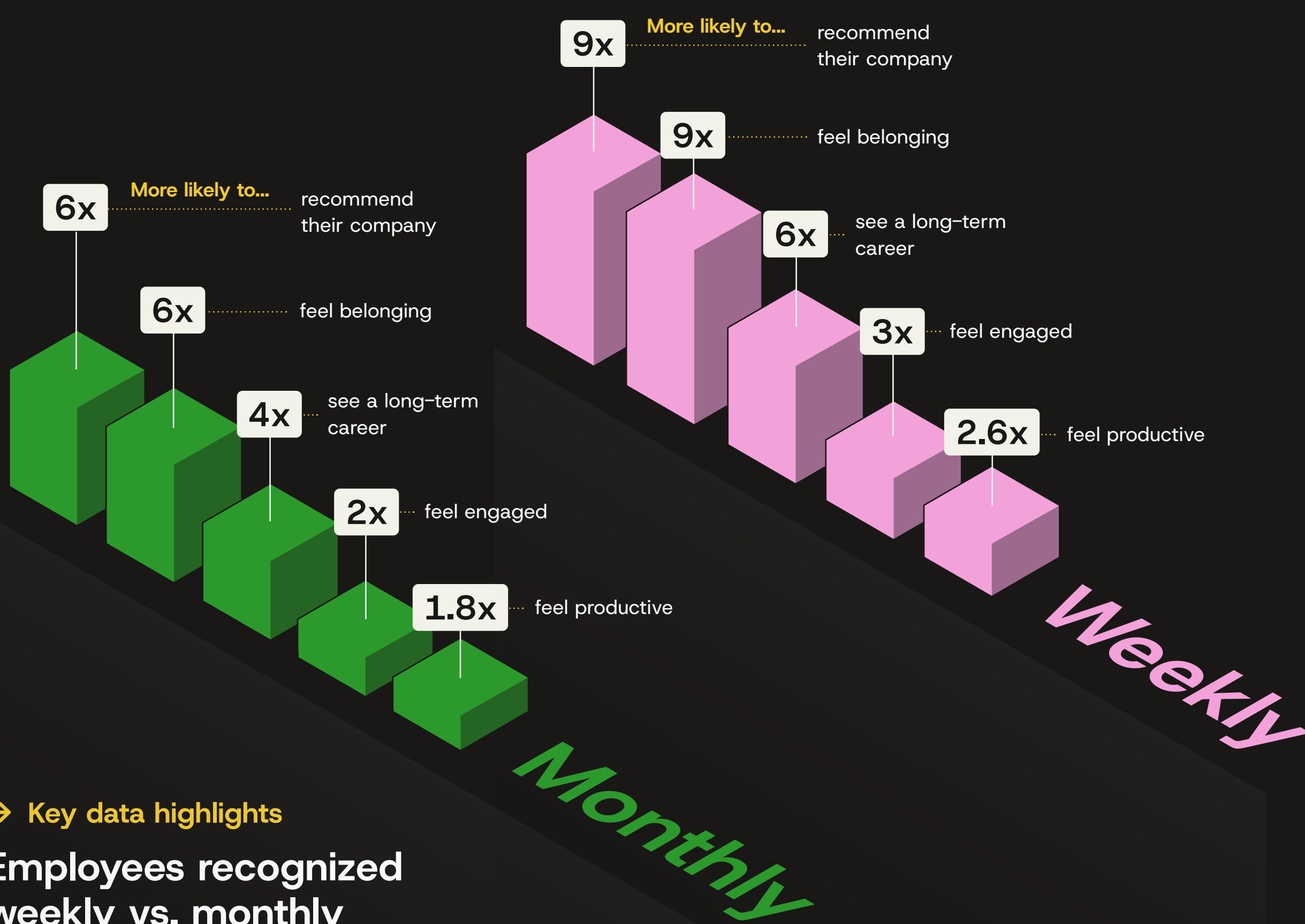
### → Key takeaway

Frequency matters. So does delivery. Recognition, when done well and often, becomes more than a thank-you — it becomes a business strategy that fuels loyalty, performance, and purpose.

Frequent, meaningful recognition isn't just a feel-good moment — it's one of the most powerful drivers of performance, engagement, and loyalty in the workplace. Employees who are recognized weekly are 9x more likely to feel a strong sense of belonging and to recommend their company, 6x more likely to see a long-term career where they are, and 2.6x more likely to be their most productive selves. Even monthly recognition yields big returns, doubling engagement and significantly increasing employees' sense of purpose, productivity, and connection.

And the effects don't stop there. A staggering 91% of employees say they'd put in more effort if their contributions were noticed and valued — and 67% say that recognition would inspire 20–50% more effort. In other words, the ROI on appreciation is massive.

Recognition, when given frequently and with intention, becomes more than a morale booster. It connects employees to purpose, inspires action, aligns culture and shapes the behaviors that drive performance for your people and the teams they work on. If you want people to go above and beyond — start by showing them they've already made an impact.



→ Key data highlights

# Employees recognized weekly vs. monthly

## General recognition impact

90%

90% say recognition would boost their productivity

91%

91% say they'd put in more effort if their efforts were valued

67%

67% would give 20–50% more effort if recognized

→ Checklist

# Frequent & meaningful recognition

## Build a weekly recognition rhythm

Make recognition a habit, not an afterthought. Use team meetings, digital platforms, or quick one-on-ones to give shoutouts every week.

## Connect recognition to values

Anchor praise in company purpose or team goals. This helps employees understand how their work contributes to the bigger picture.

## Be specific and sincere

Don't just say "great job." Call out what was done, why it mattered, and the impact it had. Meaningful recognition is detailed and personal.

## Celebrate small wins, not just big milestones

Frequent praise reinforces progress and motivates ongoing effort. Don't wait for end-of-year reviews to show appreciation.

## Normalize recognition across levels

Empower all employees — not just managers — to give meaningful recognition often. Everyone plays a role in creating a recognition-rich culture.

## Use data to track frequency

Monitor how often recognition is given. If weekly touchpoints are rare, it's time to course correct.

## Make recognition visible

Use public channels — like town halls or recognition platforms — to amplify praise and set cultural expectations.

## Expand who gives recognition

Encourage peers to recognize one another. Widening the circle helps build belonging and boosts overall engagement.

## Research finding

# When managers recognize, everything rises

### → Key takeaway

When managers give consistent, meaningful recognition, it transforms trust, boosts engagement, and drives better performance across every corner of the workplace.

Manager recognition isn't just a feel-good gesture — it's one of the clearest signals of effectiveness. In our [Foundations of Manager Effectiveness](#) report, we identified four key behaviors that drive better performance and retention: consistent contact, meaningful recognition, ongoing coaching, and career development. Recognition isn't just one piece of the puzzle — it's the cornerstone.

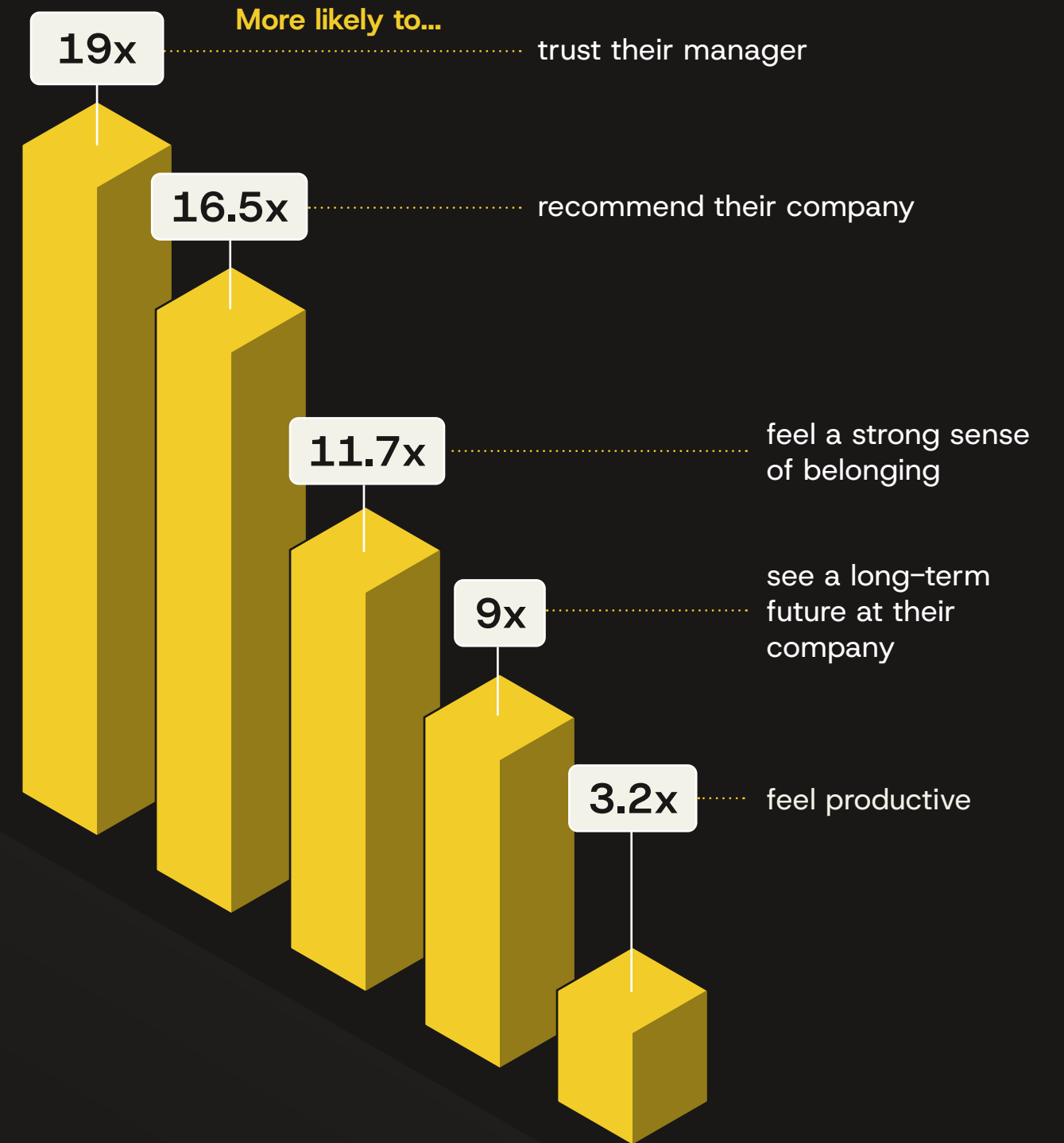
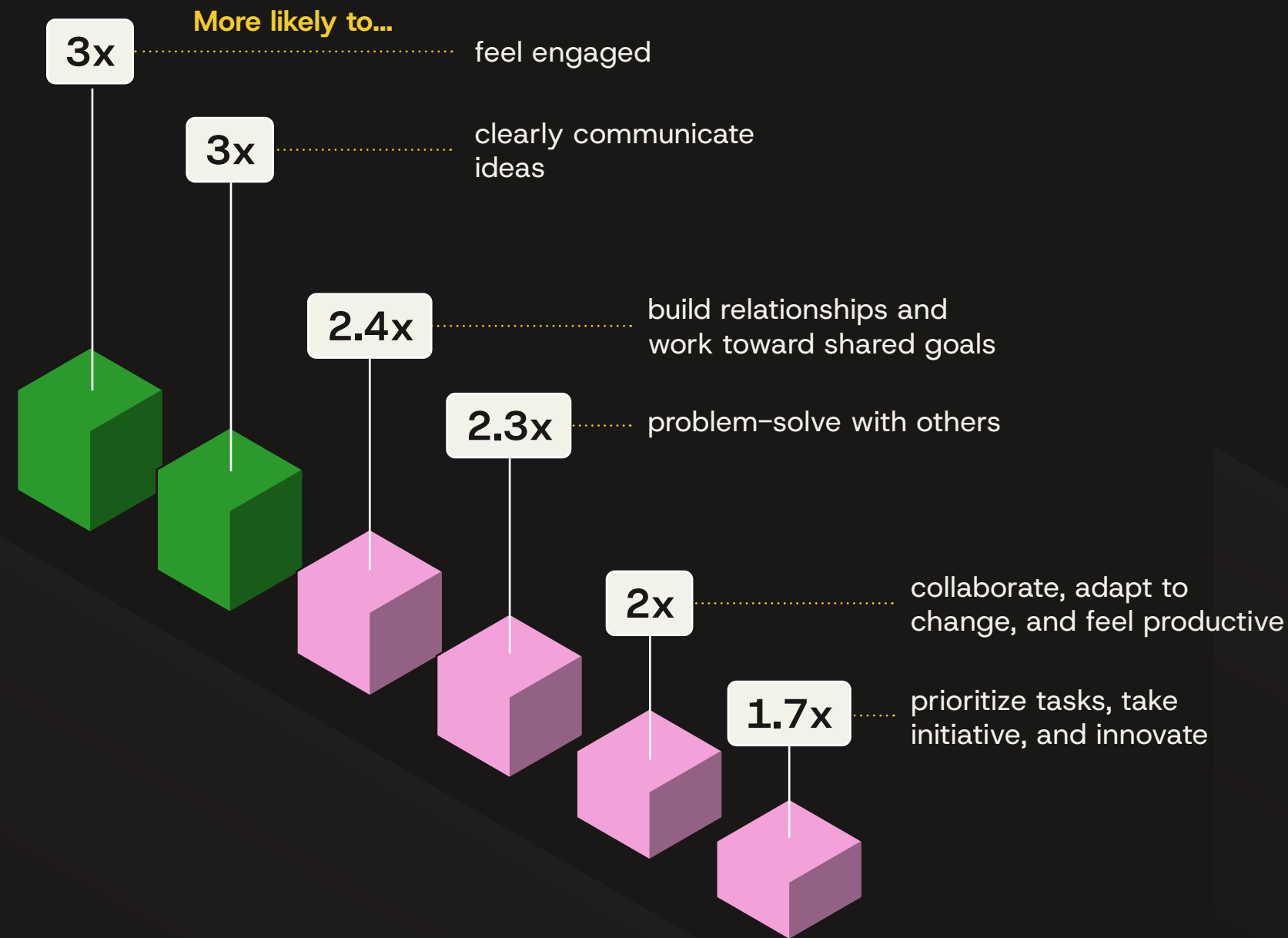
When managers recognize regularly and meaningfully, everything improves. Employees are not only more likely to feel valued and productive, but also report stronger relationships, clearer communication, and a deeper sense of purpose. In fact, employees who feel recognized by their manager are up to 19x more likely to trust them, and 16.5x more likely to recommend their company as a great place to work. They're also 2–3x more likely to feel engaged, productive, and connected.

This isn't optional — it's foundational. The most effective managers make recognition a habit, not an afterthought. And the most resilient organizations empower them to do it consistently.

If you want stronger outcomes, better retention, and a more connected culture — start by strengthening manager recognition.

→ Key data highlights

# Employees regularly recognized by their manager are:



→ Checklist

# Manager recognition

## Make recognition a leadership habit

Incorporate it into weekly check-ins, team meetings, and 1:1s. Frequency matters.

## Tie recognition to retention

Help managers understand that recognition isn't just about morale — it's a proven way to keep people engaged and loyal.

## Monitor manager recognition activity

Use data to identify gaps in recognition and coach managers who are falling behind.

## Train managers to give meaningful, specific recognition

Generic praise won't cut it — help managers recognize effort tied to values, goals, or impact.

## Use AI to support better recognition writing

AI helps write recognitions that are personalized, meaningful, and tied to impact.

## Recognize a variety of contributions

Encourage managers to praise not just results, but collaboration, creativity, and progress.

## Create accountability for recognition

Build recognition metrics into leadership KPIs and performance reviews.



## Research finding

# Peers build culture, managers build commitment

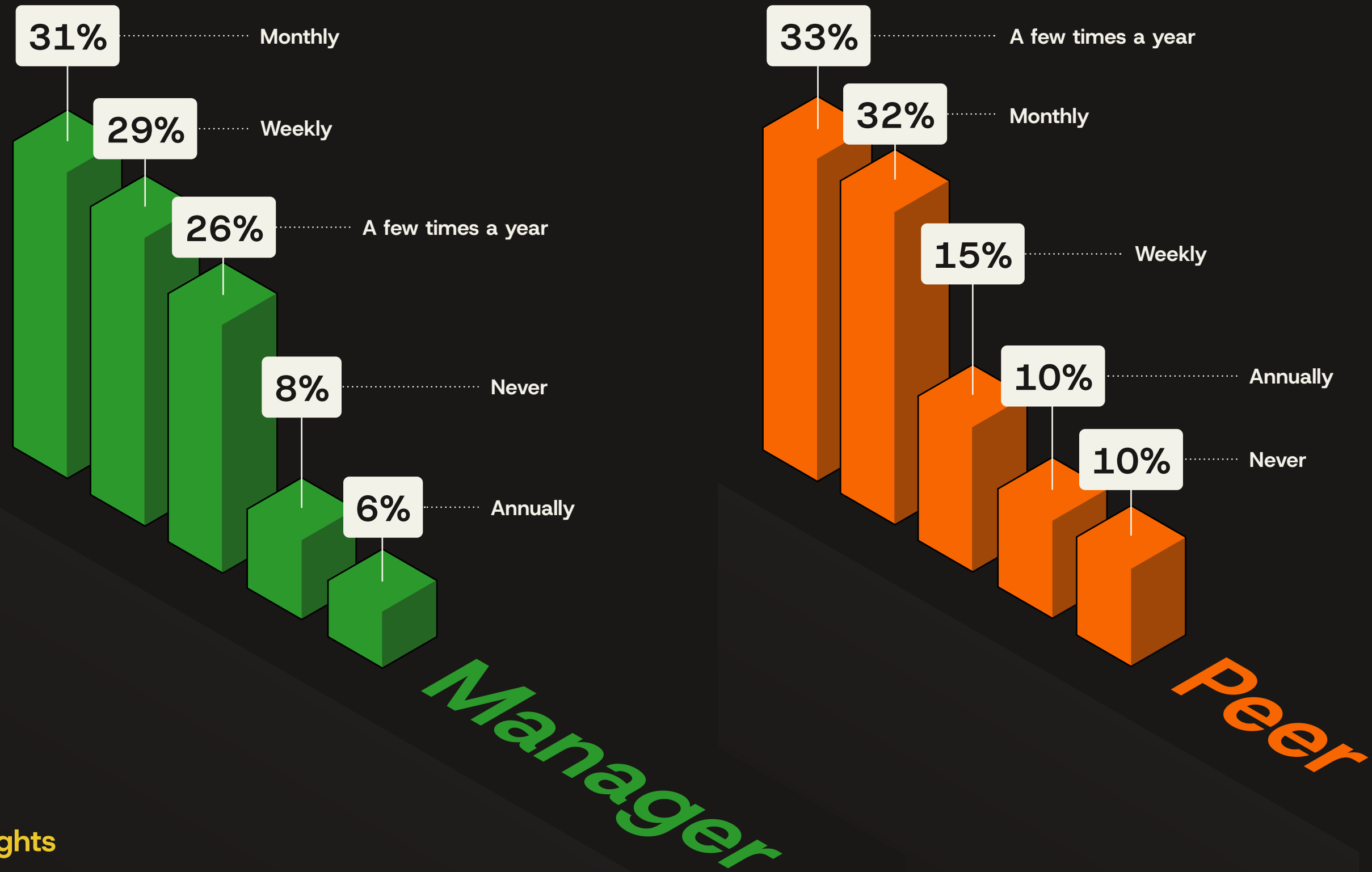
### → Key takeaway

Recognition from peers builds culture — but recognition from managers builds commitment, performance, and long-term loyalty.

Recognition is powerful — but who gives it matters. While peer recognition builds connection and community, manager recognition has a stronger influence on how employees perceive their performance, purpose, and future. Weekly recognition from peers is reported by just 15% of employees, compared to 29% for managers. And while monthly recognition is slightly higher from peers (32%) than managers (31%), the quality of impact differs.

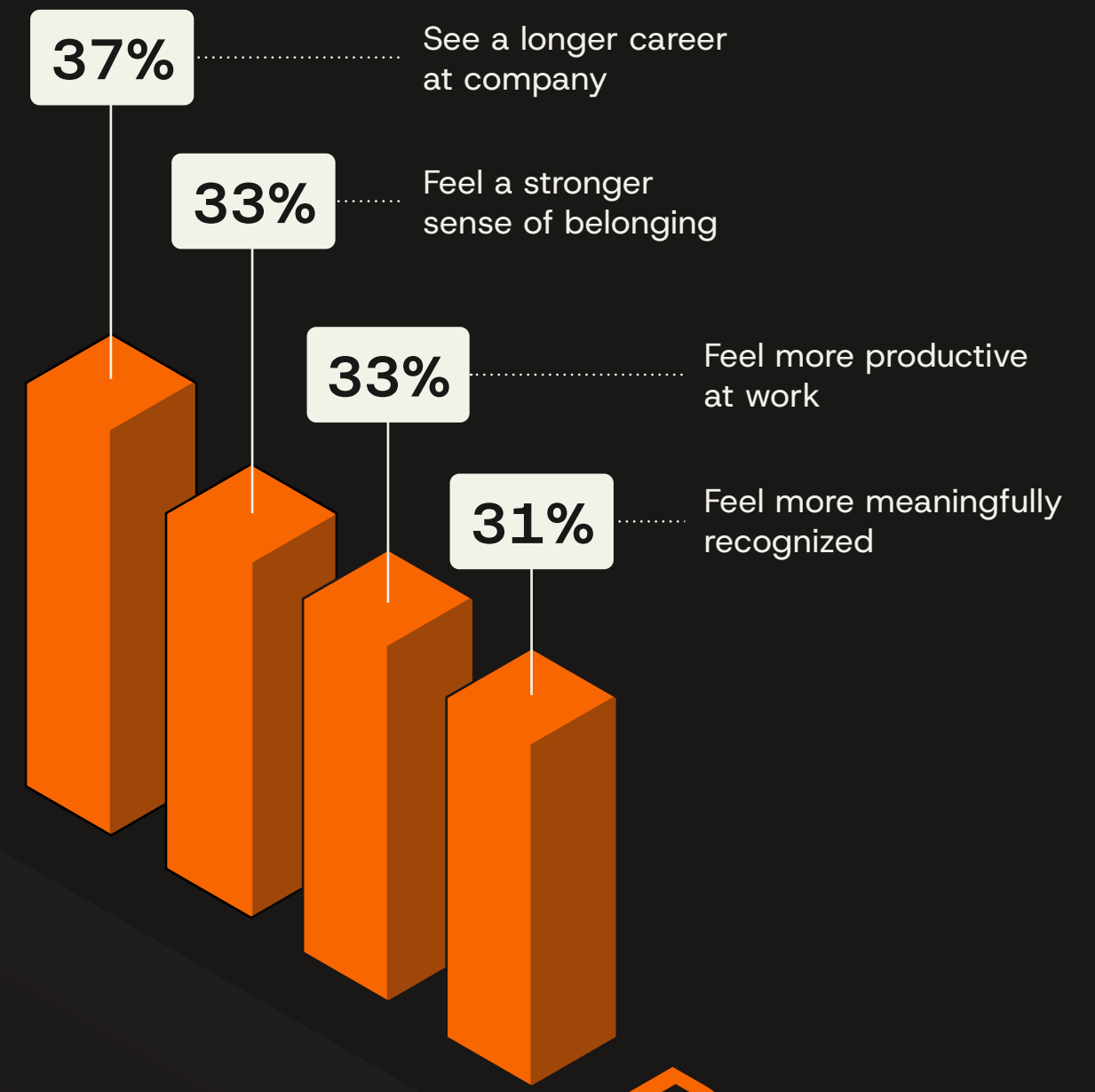
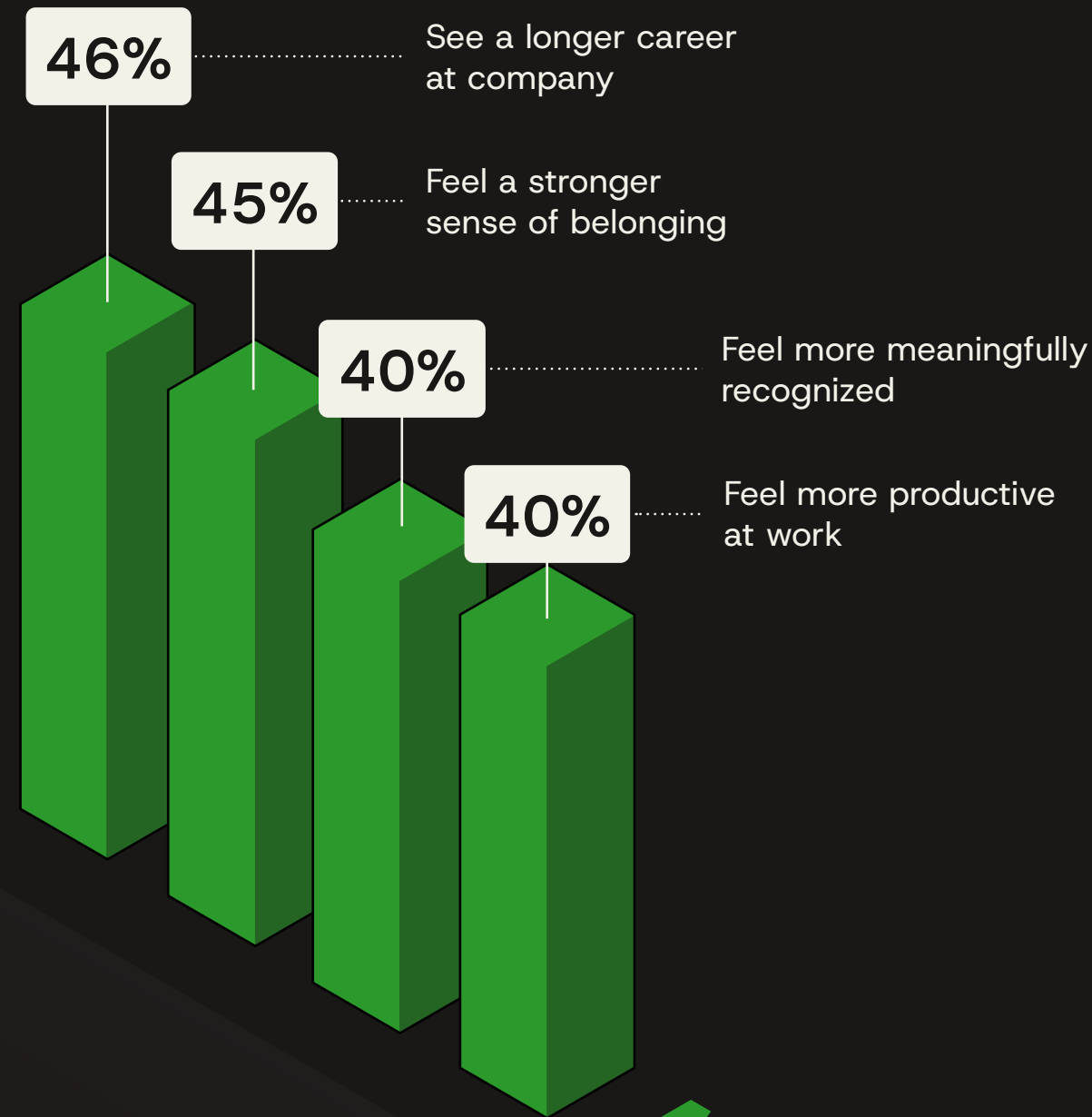
Recognition from a manager has a stronger influence across almost every key metric. Employees recognized regularly by managers vs those who are not are more likely to feel productive (40% vs. 33%), meaningfully recognized (40% vs. 31%), and experience a greater sense of belonging (45% vs. 33%). They're also more likely to envision a longer career at their company (46% vs. 37%).

This doesn't mean peer recognition isn't valuable — it absolutely is. But if you're looking to boost engagement, retention, and purpose, manager recognition carries more weight. The most effective cultures do both: they empower peers to recognize one another often, and they train managers to do it consistently and meaningfully.



→ Key data highlights

# Recognition frequency



Manager

Peer

→ Key data highlights

# Recognition frequency: outcomes

→ Checklist

# Peer vs. manager recognition

## Train managers to recognize regularly and meaningfully

Help leaders understand the impact of timely, specific recognition — and how to deliver it authentically.

## Set expectations for weekly manager recognition touchpoints

Make frequent recognition a non-negotiable part of every manager's routine.

## Normalize peer recognition as part of everyday culture

Encourage team-wide appreciation to build connections and shared ownership.

## Track who is recognizing and how often — both manager and peer

Use data to spotlight strong recognition habits and uncover gaps.

## Reinforce the connection between recognition and retention in leadership training

Show managers how consistent recognition boosts engagement and reduces turnover risk.

## Use platform data to monitor recognition gaps and follow up with coaching

Equip HR and leaders with insights to support under-recognized teams.

## Celebrate recognition moments publicly — especially when managers lead the way

Model strong recognition behaviors by highlighting them in team or company-wide forums.

Research finding

# Clarity in chaos

## The role of recognition in uncertain times

### → Key takeaway

Recognition isn't just a reward — it's a critical tool for clarity and confidence during change.

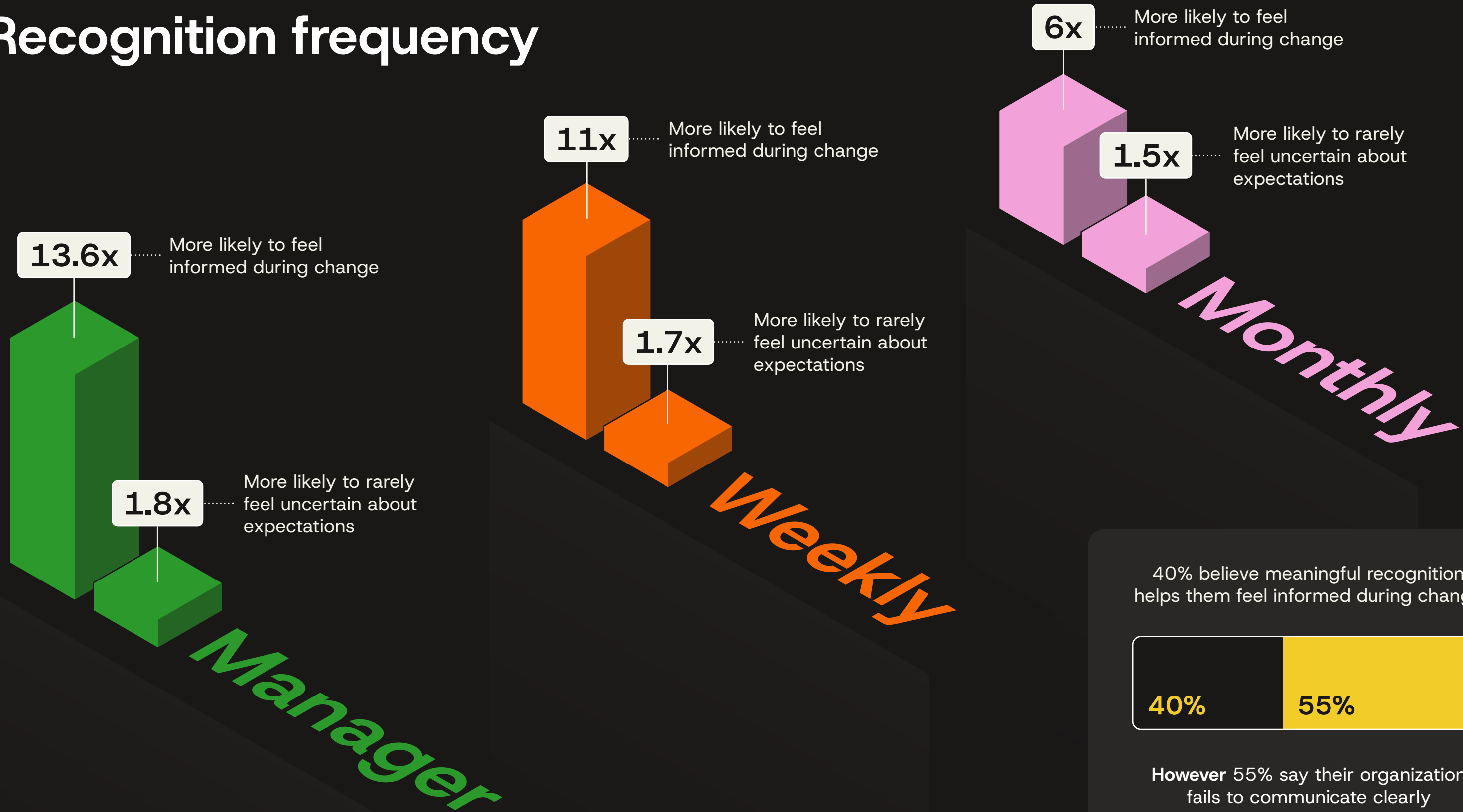
Recognition isn't just a cultural benefit — it's a strategic lever for managers navigating times of change. When uncertainty hits, your employees are looking for clarity, direction, and reassurance. And those who feel meaningfully recognized are far more likely to stay informed, confident, and clear on what's expected of them. In fact, 40% of recognized employees strongly agree they feel informed during change. On the flip side, those who feel uninformed are more likely to report communication breakdowns — with 55% saying their organization fails to communicate clearly.

How often you recognize your team matters. Employees who are recognized weekly are 11x more likely to feel informed during change and 1.7x more likely to rarely feel unclear about expectations. And when that recognition comes from you — their manager — the impact is even stronger: employees are 13.6x more likely to feel informed and 1.8x more likely to feel confident in what's expected of them.

Recognition doesn't just boost morale — it builds operational stability. As a manager, embedding consistent, meaningful recognition into your routine isn't just nice to have during disruption — it's one of the most effective ways to reduce confusion, strengthen alignment, and help your team move forward with clarity and resilience.

→ Key data highlights

# Recognition frequency



40% believe meaningful recognition helps them feel informed during change

40% 55%

However 55% say their organization fails to communicate clearly

→ Checklist

# Navigating change and uncertainty

## Make recognition part of your change management strategy

Use consistent, meaningful praise to help employees stay anchored during transitions.

## Coach managers to lead with recognition during uncertainty

Manager-led appreciation creates clarity and trust when communication matters most.

## Increase recognition during times of change

Routines may shift, but recognition should be frequent and visible to reduce confusion.

## Link recognition to clear expectations

Recognize behaviors that align with new priorities to reinforce understanding.

## Track employee confidence through recognition data

Use recognition metrics to spot gaps in clarity and engagement across the organization.

## Research finding

# The recognition – belonging connection

### → Key takeaway

Recognition is one of the most effective ways to build belonging – especially when it's frequent, meaningful, and comes from a direct manager.

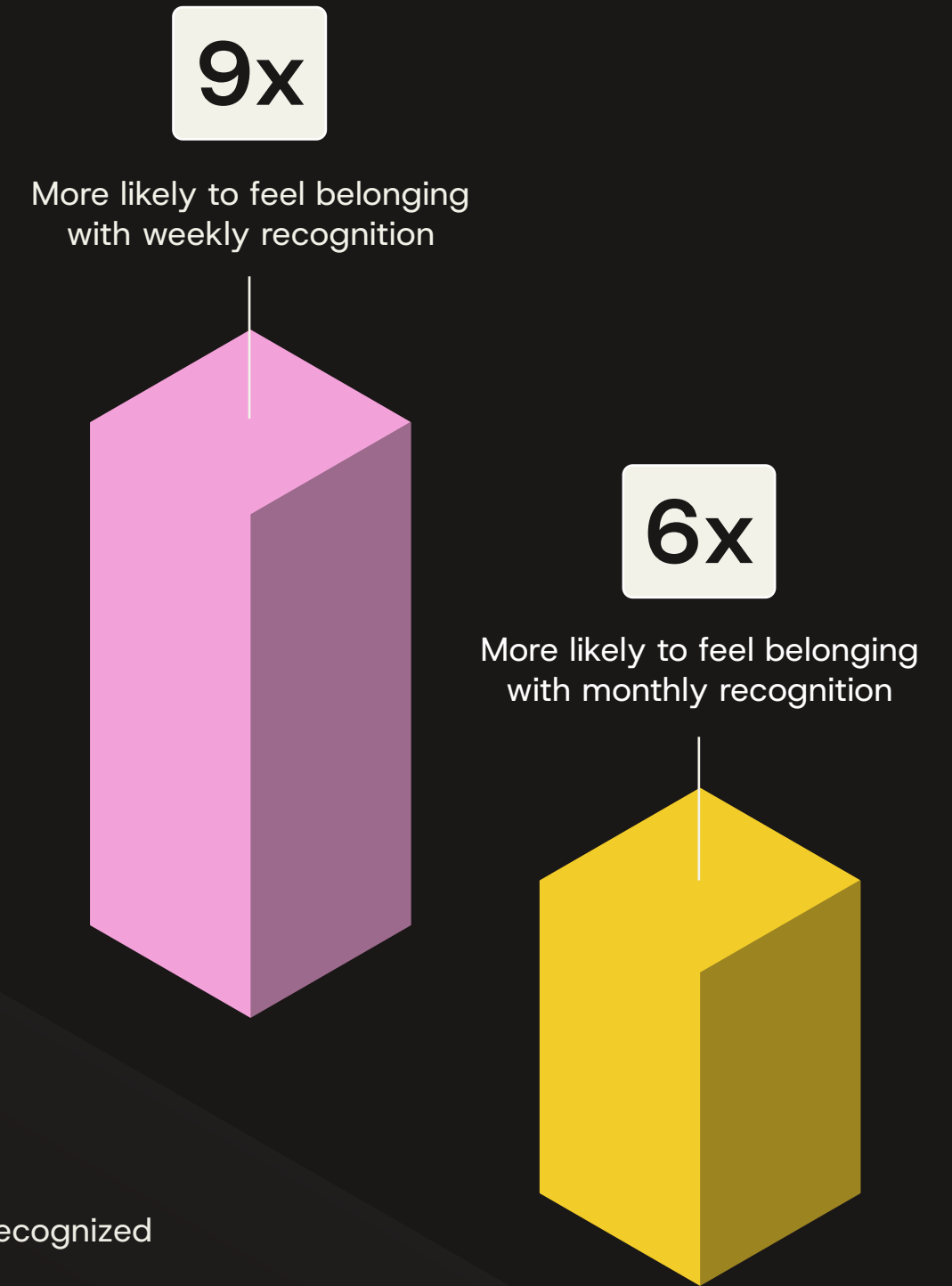
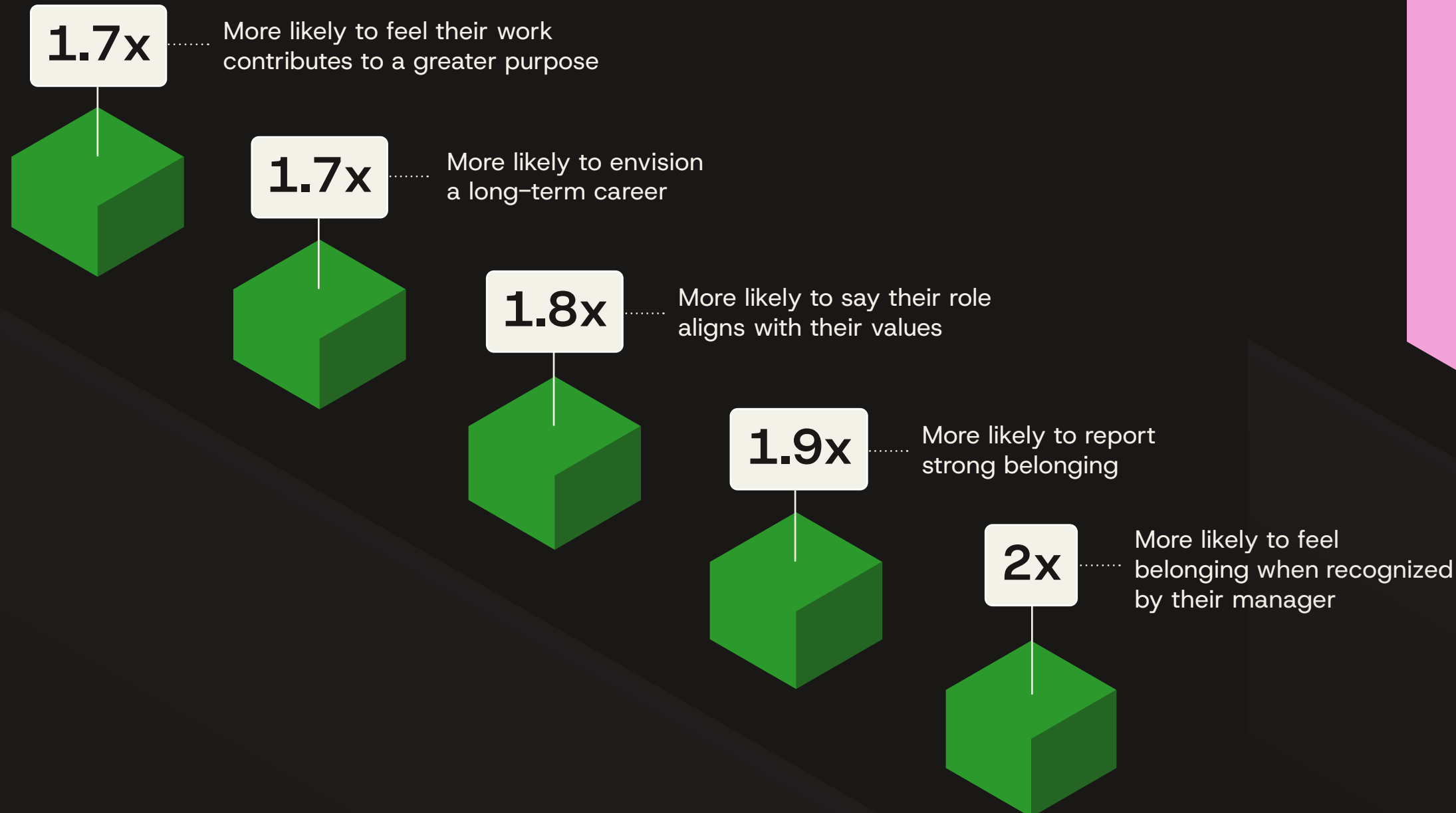
Belonging is one of the strongest indicators of employee engagement – and recognition plays a powerful role in creating it. When employees feel recognized, they're nearly 2x as likely to report a strong sense of belonging at work. This sense of connection doesn't just boost morale – it shapes how people see their work, their purpose, and their future with the company.

Recognition acts as a signal: you're valued, seen, and included. Employees who feel recognized are also 1.8x more likely to say their role aligns with their personal values, and 1.7x more likely to feel their work contributes to a greater purpose. That sense of meaning becomes the foundation for long-term commitment – in fact, they're 1.7x more likely to envision a long-term career where they are.

Frequency and source matter. Weekly recognition makes employees 9x more likely to feel a strong sense of belonging. Even monthly recognition has a powerful effect, increasing belonging by 6x. Manager recognition is especially impactful – employees recognized regularly by their manager are up to 2x more likely to report strong belonging.

→ Key data highlights

# Employees who feel meaningfully recognized are:



→ Checklist

# Belonging at work

## Train managers to give recognition that's timely and authentic

Help leaders connect recognition to team values, efforts, and outcomes.

## Encourage weekly recognition moments

Make frequent appreciation a standard, not a surprise.

## Tie recognition to personal and organizational purpose

Highlight how individual efforts contribute to something bigger.

## Promote peer and manager recognition together

Recognize behaviors that align with new priorities to reinforce understanding.

## Track recognition and belonging across teams

Use data to identify gaps and target interventions where connection is low.

## Celebrate belonging wins

Spotlight teams or managers who foster strong cultures of inclusion and appreciation.

**Research finding**

# The productivity payoff of being seen

**→ Key takeaway**

Recognition is a powerful productivity driver — and the more frequent and personalized it is, the stronger the results.

Recognition isn't just about feeling good — it's about performing well. Employees who feel meaningfully recognized are significantly more likely to report being productive and consistently operating at their best. In fact, they're 1.8x more likely to say they're productive and 1.6x more likely to feel they're consistently meeting high standards. Even moderate boosts in recognition lead to measurable gains in performance and alignment with goals.

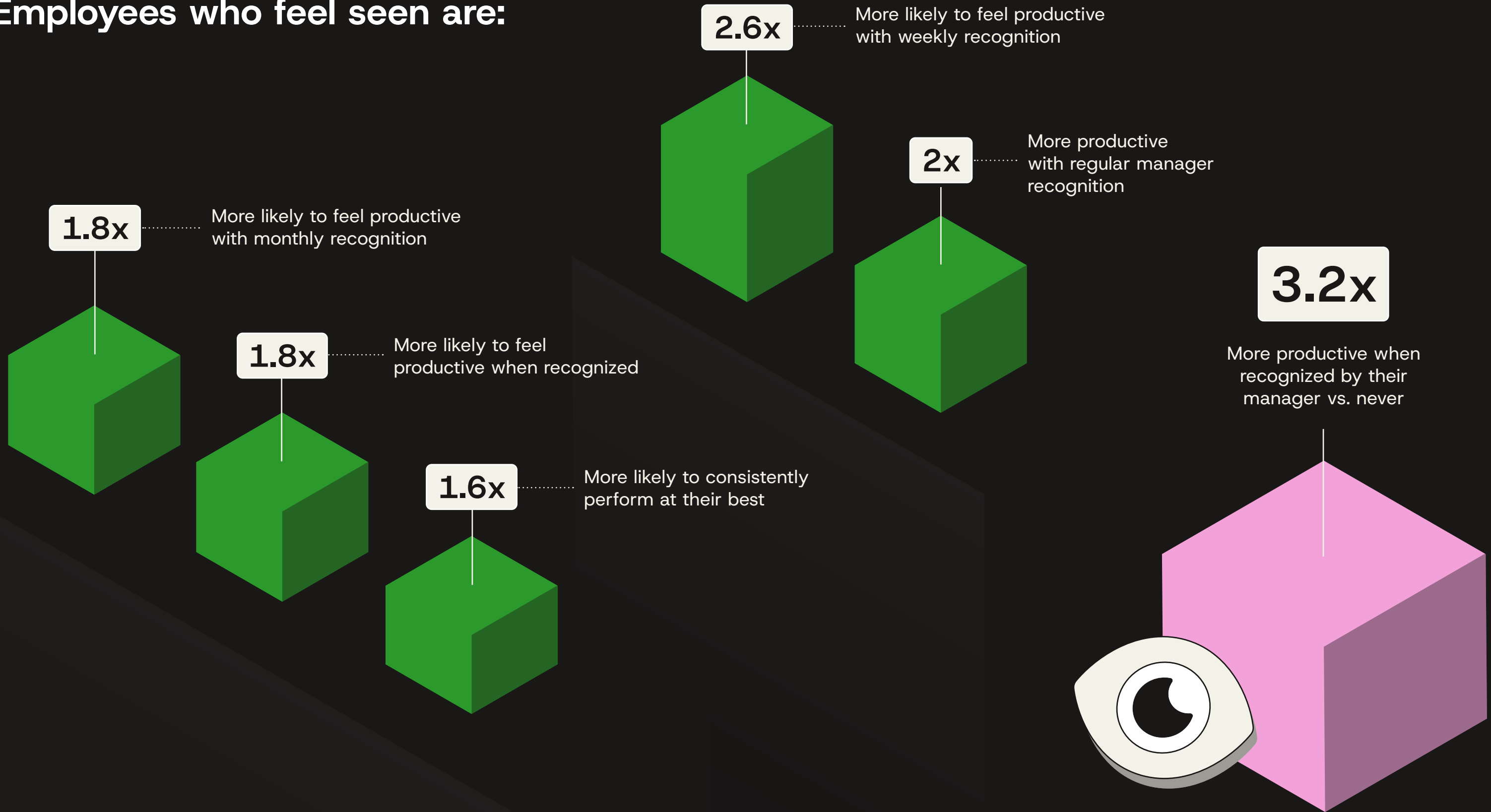
The frequency of recognition matters, too. Employees recognized weekly are 2.6x more likely to report peak productivity, while those recognized monthly are 1.8x more likely to do the same compared to those who never receive it.

Recognition from managers also carries notable weight. Compared to the average, employees who are meaningfully recognized by their manager are 2x more likely to be their most productive selves — and 3.2x more likely when compared to those who receive no recognition from managers at all.

These findings make one thing clear: recognition is more than a morale booster. It's a powerful lever for unlocking productivity, and a simple, scalable way to keep performance high even during uncertain times.

→ Key data highlights

Employees who feel seen are:



→ Checklist

# Work productivity

## Encourage weekly recognition touchpoints

Make recognition part of the weekly workflow to consistently fuel performance.

## Coach managers on recognition that boosts productivity

Help leaders connect praise to output, effort, and outcomes to reinforce results.

## Monitor productivity through recognition data

Use engagement and platform metrics to track where recognition is driving impact.

## Tie recognition to goals and performance reviews

Show how recognition supports individual and company-wide success.

## Celebrate consistent performance — not just big wins

Highlight sustained effort and improvement, not just outcomes.

## Make recognition timely and specific

Call out actions and behaviors that directly contribute to productivity.

## Research finding

# Points are popular — but so is the purpose behind them

### → Key takeaway

Points are a great bonus — but meaning comes from the message, not just the marketplace.

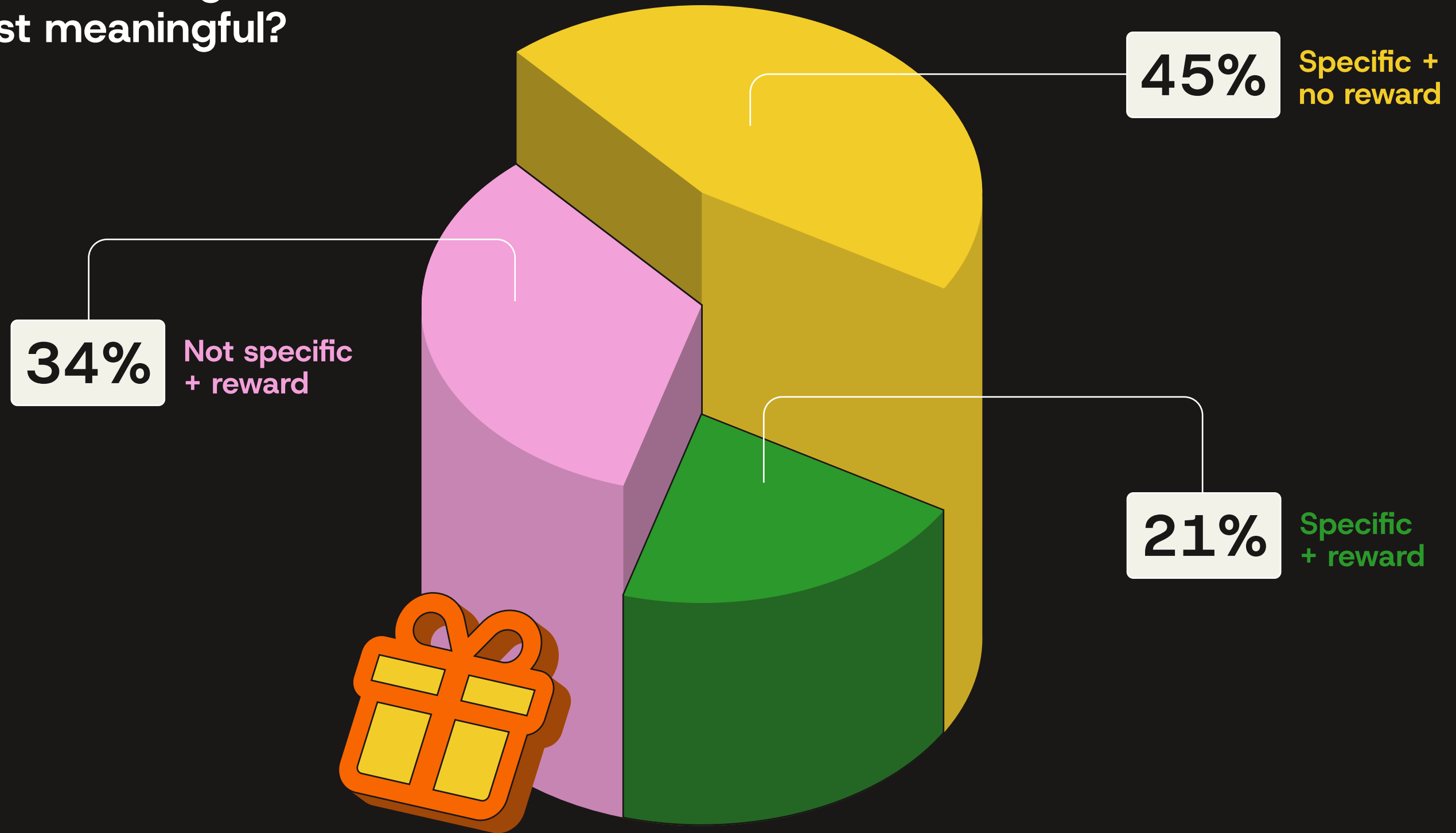
Rewards programs can spark motivation, but they're not a shortcut to real recognition. Only 21% of employees say the most meaningful recognition is both specific and tied to a monetary reward. And though 34% say vague recognition with a reward lands well, nearly half (45%) say they feel most valued when recognition is specific, personal — and not tied to any reward at all.

But when rewards are done right, they matter. Over 40% of employees say redeeming points makes them feel appreciated, and nearly 70% say rewards are a motivating factor at work. The key? Make sure recognition comes first — and feels human.

What do people do with their points? Most use them for everyday essentials like gift cards, household items, and apparel — choices that mirror how they spend in their lives outside of work. That alignment reinforces how rewards can meet real needs. But don't mistake spending behavior for emotional impact. People remember praise — not points.

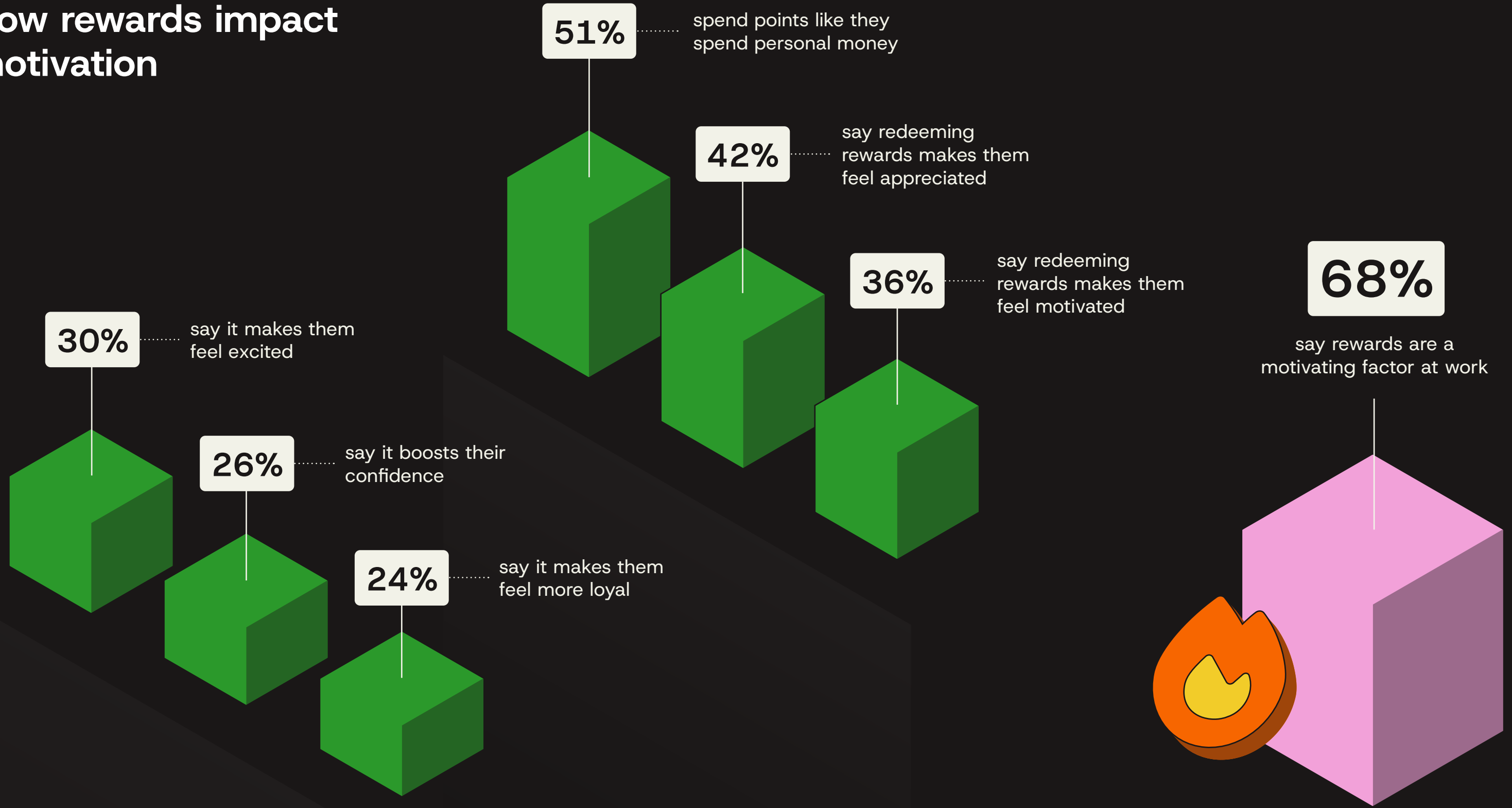
→ Key data highlights

# What makes recognition feel most meaningful?



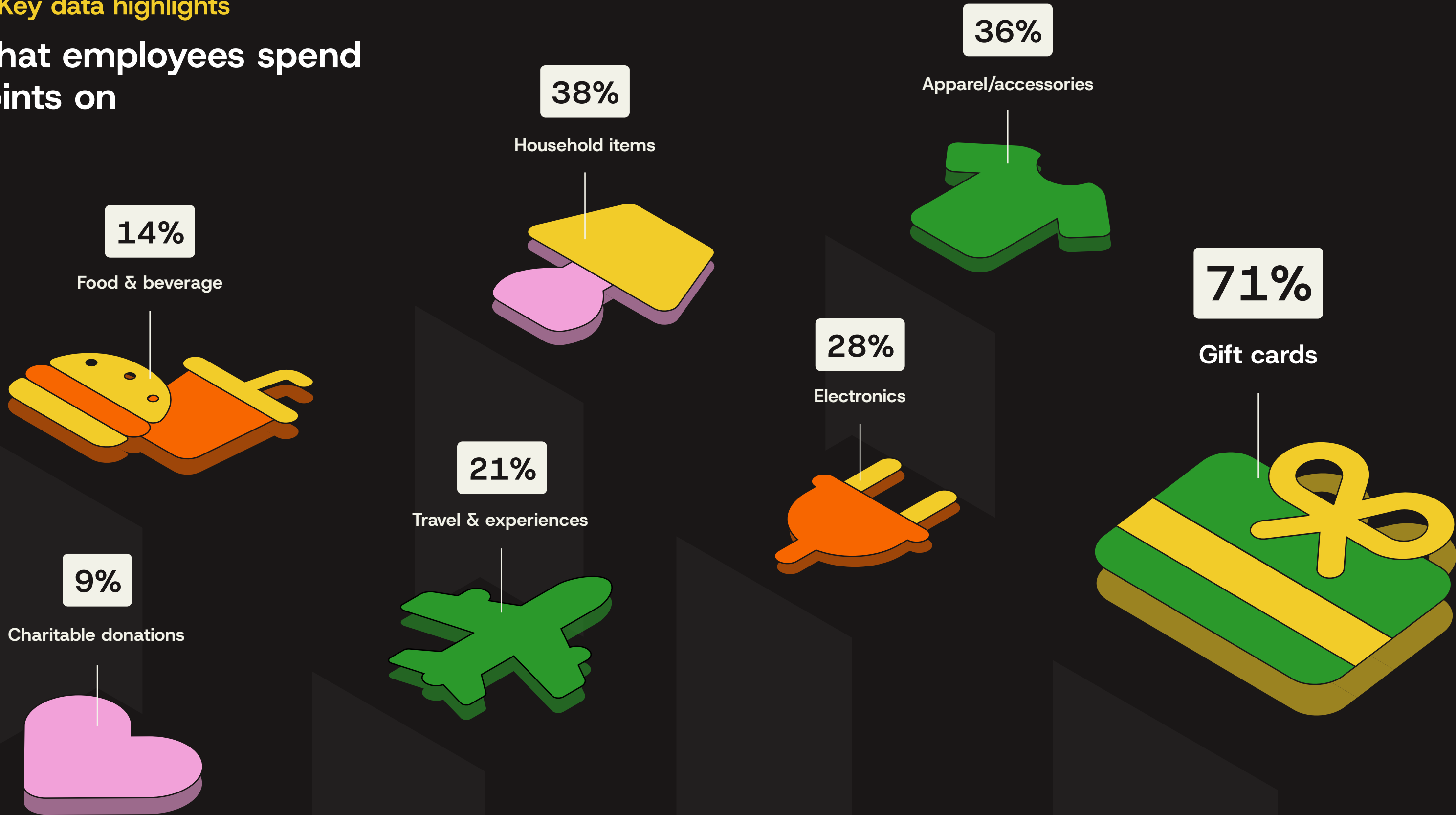
→ Key data highlights

# How rewards impact motivation



→ Key data highlights

# What employees spend points on



→ Checklist

# Powering recognition with points

## Don't confuse rewards with recognition

A gift card won't land if the message behind it is missing — lead with appreciation, not transaction.

## Make it specific, not generic

Tie every reward to a clear reason — the what, the why, and the impact.

## Use rewards to meet real needs

Offer items that reflect how people actually live and spend — from essentials to experiences.

## Train managers to recognize without relying on points

Not every great moment needs a marketplace code. Equip leaders to recognize meaningfully in the moment.

## Track emotional impact, not just redemption rates

Measure how people feel when they're recognized — not just what they buy.

## Pair rewards with purpose

Reinforce company values and goals when issuing rewards to make them more meaningful.

## Let employees choose their own value

A flexible, well-stocked marketplace lets employees spend on what matters to them — which makes the moment stick longer.

## Research finding

# Recognition is your best retention strategy

### → Key takeaway

Recognition plays a critical role in career longevity at a company — and the more frequent and personalized it is, the stronger the retention impact.

Recognition doesn't just improve morale — it helps people envision their future. Employees who feel meaningfully recognized are 1.7x more likely to see a long-term career at their company compared to those who aren't meaningfully recognized. This clear gap highlights how recognition isn't just about the present — it's a powerful investment in long-term retention.

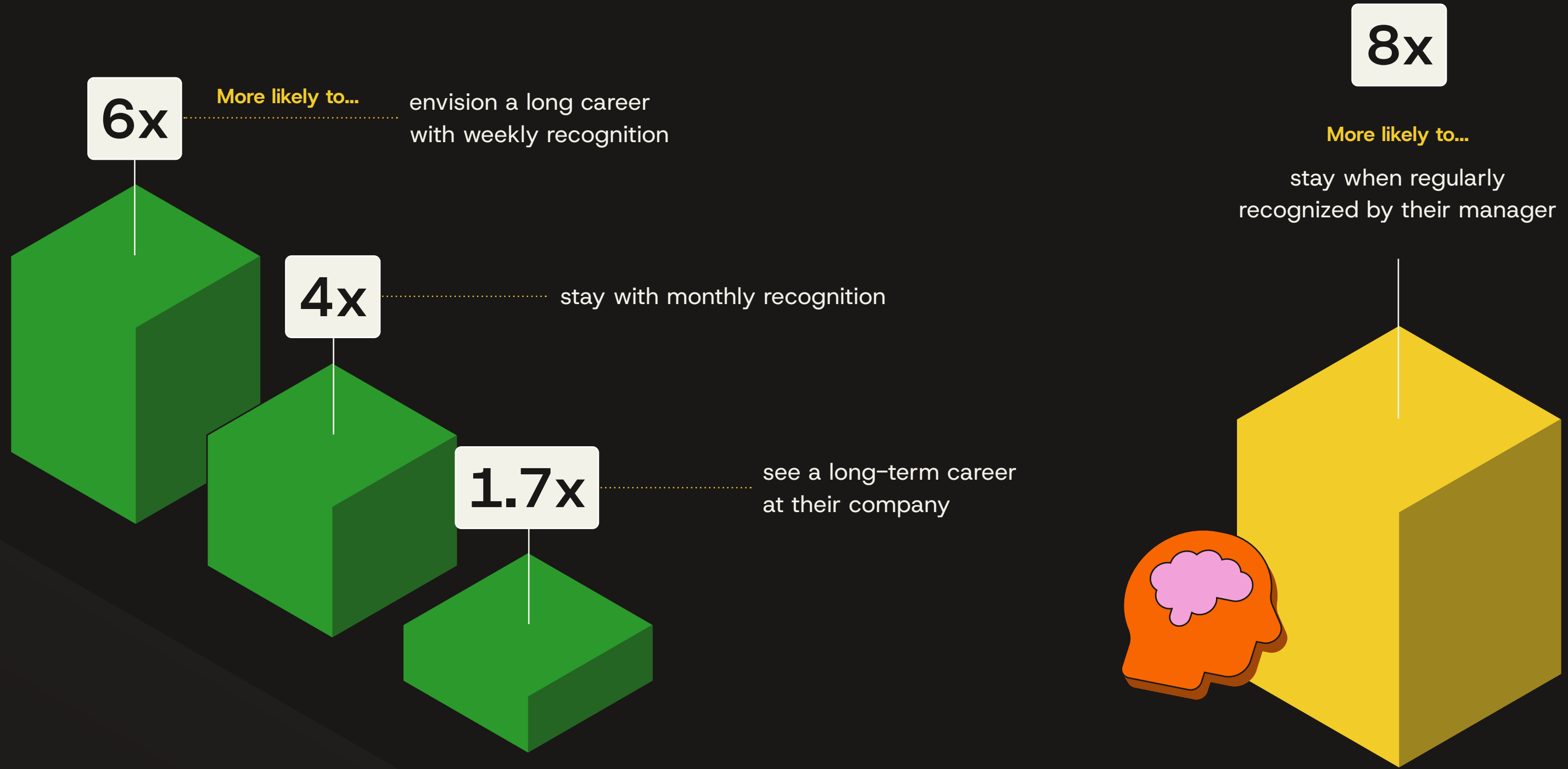
The frequency and source of recognition both matter. Employees who receive meaningful recognition weekly are 6x more likely to see a long-term future with their company. Even monthly recognition creates a significant shift, making employees 4x more likely to envision staying.

Manager-led recognition is especially impactful. Employees who regularly feel recognized by their manager are 8x more likely to imagine a long career at their organization compared to those who aren't.

In a competitive talent market, recognition isn't just a feel-good perk. It's a proven way to build loyalty, reduce turnover, and help employees see not just where they are — but where they could grow.

→ Key data highlights

# Recognition impact



→ Checklist

# Career growth and retention

## Train managers to link recognition to career growth

Help employees connect their current efforts to a future with the organization.

## Make recognition a retention tool

Use appreciation to reinforce loyalty, not just performance.

## Include long-term impact in recognition moments

Celebrate contributions with language that highlights ongoing value and future potential.

## Track recognition alongside turnover risk

Use data to identify which teams or individuals need more recognition to feel committed.

## Celebrate tenure early and often

Don't wait for anniversaries — acknowledge progress and growth regularly.

## Make recognition a cultural constant

Ensure appreciation is baked into everyday interactions, not just formal reviews.

# About the report

Data in this report is based on a survey conducted in May 2025, completed by 3,600 employees across the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Singapore.



## About the Achievers Workforce Institute

The Achievers Workforce Institute (AWI) is the research and advisory arm of Achievers, dedicated to advancing the science of employee experience. Through global research, expert insights, and community collaboration, AWI empowers business leaders with the data and practices needed to elevate recognition and rewards — turning appreciation into action and impact across the employee experience.

## About Achievers

Achievers empowers organizations to shape their workforce through meaningful recognition and motivating rewards. Our platform connects people to purpose, inspires high-impact behaviors, and drives real business results. With unmatched recognition frequency, global scalability, and seamless integrations, Achievers transforms culture, boosts engagement, and delivers the outcomes modern workplaces need.

### Ready to turn insights into impact?

Explore more findings from the Achievers Workforce Institute and see what recognition can do for your organization.

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