



**STEVEN
GAFFNEY
COMPANY**

CONSISTENTLY HIGH ACHIEVING TEAMS (CHAT)[®]

NATIONAL RESEARCH INSIGHTS INTO THE BEHAVIORS, MINDSET, AND
PRACTICES THAT DRIVE HIGH-IMPACT RESULTS FOR TEAMS AND LEADERS
2024/2025



WELCOME!

Every growing organization and its leaders rely on teams to operate, fuel innovation, deliver results, and drive growth. Teams are involved in every aspect of an organization, from senior leadership to first-time managers and IT to front-line customer service. Teams determine quality, consistency, trust, innovation, culture, alignment, and so much more. Given the incredible importance of teams to organizations of every size and industry, we led a national study that focused on an area often overlooked yet essential for organizational results: consistently high-achieving teams.

This national study is both a strategic initiative to elevate the global understanding of consistently high achieving teams in today's fast-changing work and operational environment as well as a personal passion project for our team at Steven Gaffney Company. For nearly 30 years, we have been focused on understanding, building, shaping, growing, educating, and amplifying the importance and expertise of teams and team leaders around the world. This first-of-its-kind national study explores the questions we've been inspired to ask ourselves as well as questions from our clients. As we are deeply focused on service, our goal was to fill in the key knowledge gaps leaders want answered right away but couldn't find anywhere else.

Why did we choose to lead such robust research now? What motivated us to embark on this research journey today?

The answer to both questions is the same: teams have never been more important, more critical, and more urgently needed to deliver results, yet teams have never before faced the change and challenges brought about by remote, hybrid, and in-person work environments along with the emergence of AI, and countless other workforce and societal trends. Teams are the one place where every one of these factors and influences converge around humanity and **we have to get it right** for employees, leaders, stakeholders, clients, and our shared future!

The National Study on Consistently High-Achieving Teams focused on key strategic areas where leaders and team members want actionable data and insights to inform decisions, strategies, tactics, and plans. Each of these areas of exploration adds immediate value to teams of all sizes and complexity for faster results and more consistent impact.

The areas the study explored include:

- » Accountability and teams
- » Distractions and their impact
- » Unexpected challenges affecting teams
- » Influence of mindset on teams
- » Communication as the key to team connection
- » In-person, hybrid, and remote work's impact on teams
- » Impact of being on consistently high-achieving teams
- » And more!

In addition, each Insight Section contains an Executive Question and Strategic Resource for fast implementation of the research and solutions.



This custom national research study included a bespoke methodology with 1,000 participants weighted to the 2020 U.S. Census for age, gender, region, and ethnicity. Most importantly, every study participant is currently employed full time or part time and on at least one team at work. This “working America” sample provides the exact, missing perspective that leaders and organizations need to know but can’t find anywhere. In addition, in alignment with our commitment to data and discovery, the margin of error for the study is +/-3.1%, which is essential and ideal for great research that leaders can rely on and use immediately.

At Steven Gaffney Company, we are committed to advancing the understanding, achievement, and results of teams and organizations around the world. We are excited to provide these study findings to you for your benefit—and those you lead! Reach out to us directly to explore the research further and see how we can work with you to drive results that create consistently high-achieving teams.

Sincerely,

Steven Gaffney, CEO
Steven Gaffney Company
Steven Gaffney Worldwide





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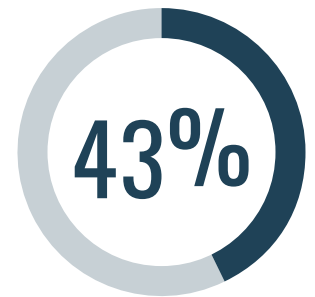




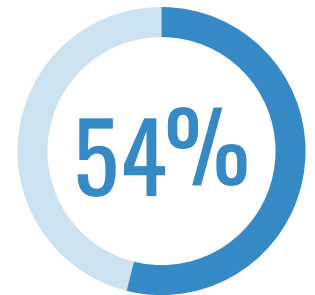
INSIGHT 1: THERE IS AN URGENT ACCOUNTABILITY CHALLENGE FACING TEAMS

The roles of individuals on teams can vary widely. However, the elements and factors that support creating, maintaining, and leading a consistently high-achieving team can be built on year after year. One factor that is consistently important is accountability. What do people on teams across working America think about accountability? Are they seeing and benefiting from *accountability* or is there an accountability gap that needs to be addressed? The national study dove deep into accountability and the results were eye-opening.

The national study found that a whopping **43% of working Americans describe the typical teams they are involved in at work as *not accountable to the overall mission and not accountable to each other, whether company leadership is there or not.*** That means more than 4 out of 10 people who are on a team at work today are not experiencing the accountability that is so often a prerequisite for trust, collaboration, teamwork, and results.



Going even further into the data, the national study found that **54% of working Americans have mentally checked out during a team meeting because a team member was not stepping up or was ineffective.** That means a majority of working Americans on teams state they have been present physically but absent mentally because of the lack of a team member stepping up and being a valuable and effective part of the team!



The combination of a lack of accountability and the prevalence of team members mentally checking out during meetings speaks to the challenge facing teams and team leaders as well as the tremendous opportunity for addressing these challenges through education, leadership, and more. This is critical because good teams are accountable to their leader and great teams are accountable to each other, whether or not the leader is around.

EXECUTIVE QUESTION: *Where do you think you have the biggest accountability challenge in your organization?*

STRATEGIC RESOURCE: *Email us for our All-in Accountability Blueprint at Info@StevenGaffney.com.*



INSIGHT 2: DISTRACTIONS ARE HARMING TEAM ACHIEVEMENT

As we further explore the dynamics and experiences of team members across the U.S., it is prudent to dive into distractions and standards that affect team and team member achievement in diverse roles. This is increasingly important as the number and magnitude of distractions confronting all workers increases every day through new technology, social and global events, and changes in the workforce and work environment.

The study uncovered that distractions in meetings are much more prevalent than leaders may recognize and are creating both a challenge *and an opportunity* for team leaders. The study revealed that **39% of working Americans say distractions in meetings at work (phone, texting, laptop, etc.) often prevent them from focusing or make meetings go longer.**



By uncovering the impact of distractions during meetings it is clear to see that distractions both prevent participant focus *and* extend meetings, which can decrease effectiveness, increase cost, waste company time, and negatively impact not only the team's achievement but all the other people relying on the team and its responsibilities. In fact, the study also found that **37% of working Americans say their company has no standards or best practices for preventing distractions in meetings** (for example: no phones, laptops closed, etc.). This means that more than 1 in 3 working Americans are on teams without clear, agreed upon, and proven standards or best practices to increase the likelihood of alignment, success, efficiency, and positive outcomes.



Without established standards or best practices to address distractions, the challenge of leading consistently high-achieving teams grows significantly, underscoring the need for improved training, alignment, and effective practices. Interestingly, the challenge of being on and leading teams today is not only limited to the workplace, but extends into team members' personal lives as well, such as the teams they are on in their local community and even hybrid and remote teams. This is another reason we are so passionate about helping leaders lead teams for high achievement.

EXECUTIVE QUESTION: *What are the top three distractions you believe impact meetings across your organization? Does your organization have clear best practices and measurements for conducting high-achieving meetings?*

STRATEGIC RESOURCE: *Email our team for our 6 Types of Meetings to have a Consistent Communication Business Rhythm.*



INSIGHT 3: HIDDEN AND UNEXPECTED COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES LIMIT TEAM ACHIEVEMENT

Leaders of teams report that they face a variety of challenges on their teams today. Exploring these challenges helps leaders to know that 1) they are not alone and 2) they are likely facing similar challenges to others in a similar role across industries, size of company, and area of expertise. The national study uncovered several key challenges facing teams today as well as how these challenges rank against one another.

When it comes to teams today, working America reports that the top four challenges they are facing when it comes to their biggest frustrations about communication at work are a **lack of consistency (32%)**, **not enough communication (31%)**, **not being clear (30%)**, and **wasting time (30%)**. Each of these presents its own challenge and needs its own solution, but one important theme jumps out that also aligns with a priority focus of the Steven Gaffney Company’s work—“Get the Unsaid Said™.” This concept and area of expertise enables team members to more boldly, effectively, and clearly communicate to drive the consistently high achievement that is necessary for consistently strong results.

WHAT ARE YOUR BIGGEST FRUSTRATIONS WITH COMMUNICATION AT WORK?

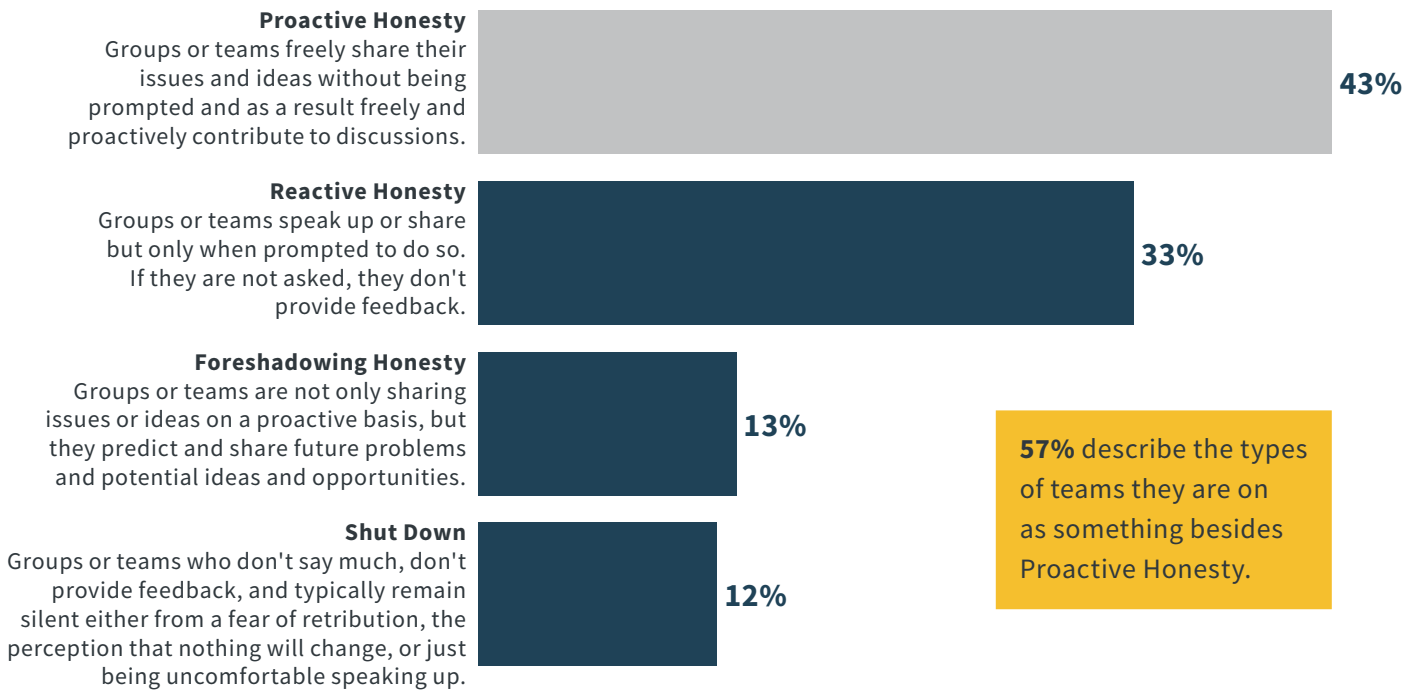
(BY TOTAL; RANKED #1/#2/#3; TOP 4 OF 14)



Digging deeper into the discoveries, the study revealed that 57% of working Americans say their teams do not freely share issues and ideas without being prompted, what is often referred to as “proactive honesty.” Along the same lines, the study also found that 33% of working Americans describe their teams as speaking up only when prompted, what is often referred to as “reactive honesty.” And, in one of the more concerning discoveries, 12% of working America, or 1 out of every 8 team members, describe their teams as not providing feedback and typically remaining silent even when asked to speak up. This is what we term as “shut down.”

WHICH PERSPECTIVE BEST DESCRIBES THE TYPES OF TEAMS THAT YOU ARE INVOLVED WITH AT WORK?

(BY TOTAL)



All three of these discoveries into the experiences and behaviors of teams today paint a complicated, challenging picture that teams and leaders must address if they are to consistently bring out the best in their people.

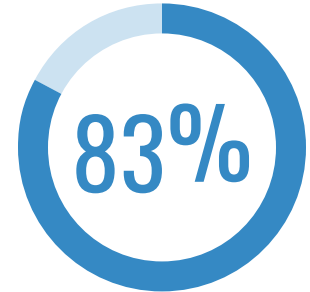
EXECUTIVE QUESTION: *How are you ensuring that everyone is getting the real "unsaid, said" to eliminate being surprised and blindsided?*

STRATEGIC RESOURCE: *Email our team to receive **4 Levels of Getting the Unsaid Said and What to Do About it.***

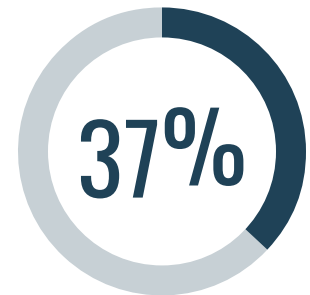


INSIGHT 4: PRIORITIZING COMMUNICATION AS A CRITICAL TEAM ACHIEVEMENT STRATEGY

Teams are connected, aligned, and held together through communication. This includes communication from leaders to team members as well as communication that is spread across the entire team and then back to its team leaders. To lead teams effectively, great communication must be a priority as well as a skill consistently evaluated, developed, and systematized. In fact, the study found that **83% of working Americans say managers should be evaluated on their ability to lead a team.**

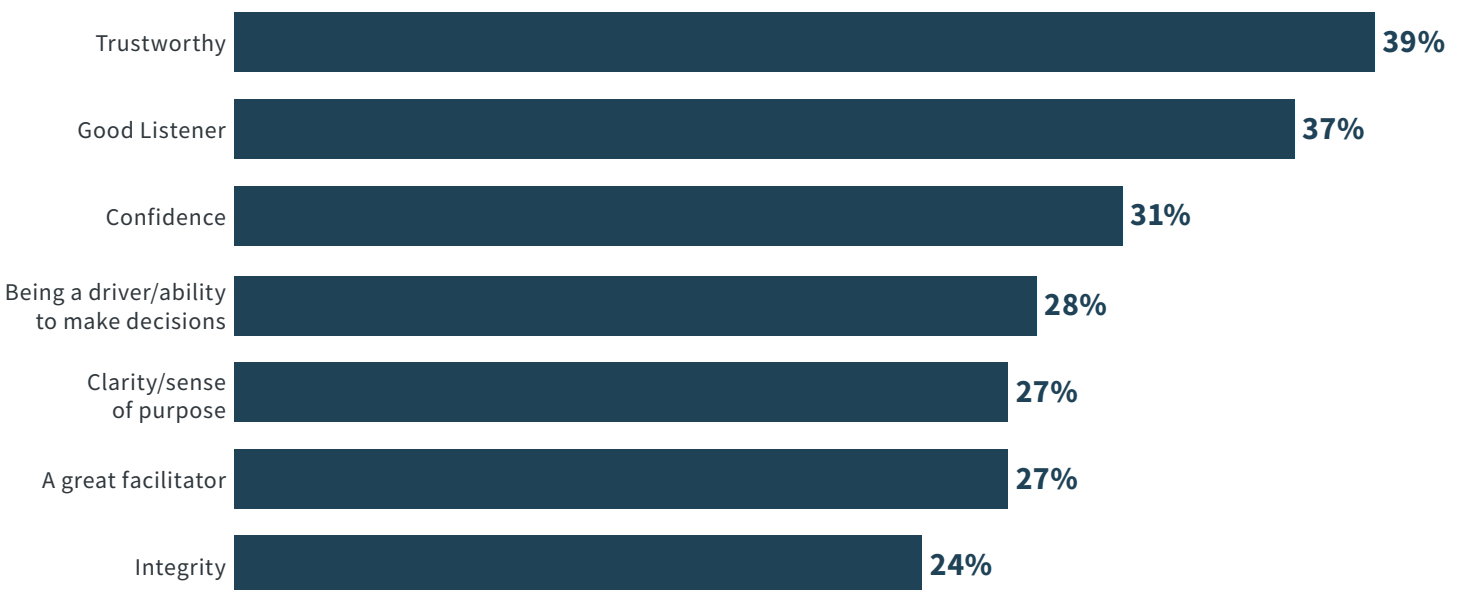


The national study explored communication on teams from a variety of angles and revealed several very surprising insights. The study found that 39% of working Americans feel out of the loop on the teams they are involved in at work. And **37% of working Americans have stopped reading team communications because they felt it was just too much information!**

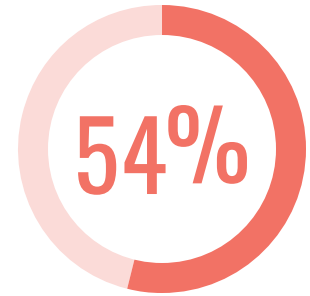


What else stands out from the study? What did not make the top three list for making a good team leader? You'll notice in the chart that Clarity/Sense of purpose, being a great facilitator, and even Integrity scored lower than Trustworthy, Good Listener, and Confidence!

IN YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH TEAMS YOU HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN AT WORK, WHAT MAKES A GOOD TEAM LEADER?
(BY TOTAL; RANKED #1/#2/#3; TOP 7 OF 14)



What is the solution? A clear communication strategy and framework are needed to best create a foundation for effective, consistent communication across teams at all levels. In fact, the national study found that **54% of working Americans believe communication with their team is more difficult if they don't meet on a regular, predictable schedule.**



Going deeper, when the study asked working America, “In your experience with teams you have been involved in at work, what makes a good team leader?” The number two answer (37%) was the team leader being a “good listener!”

EXECUTIVE QUESTION: *How would you rate the communication on the teams in your organization? Do you feel there is general agreement about what great communication should look like on teams in your organization?*

STRATEGIC RESOURCE: *Email our team to receive our **Guide to Increasing Communication Flow Up, Down, and Across Your Organization.***





INSIGHT 5: REVEALING “UNCONDITIONAL POWER” VERSUS “CONDITIONAL POWER” AND “POWERLESSNESS” ON TEAMS

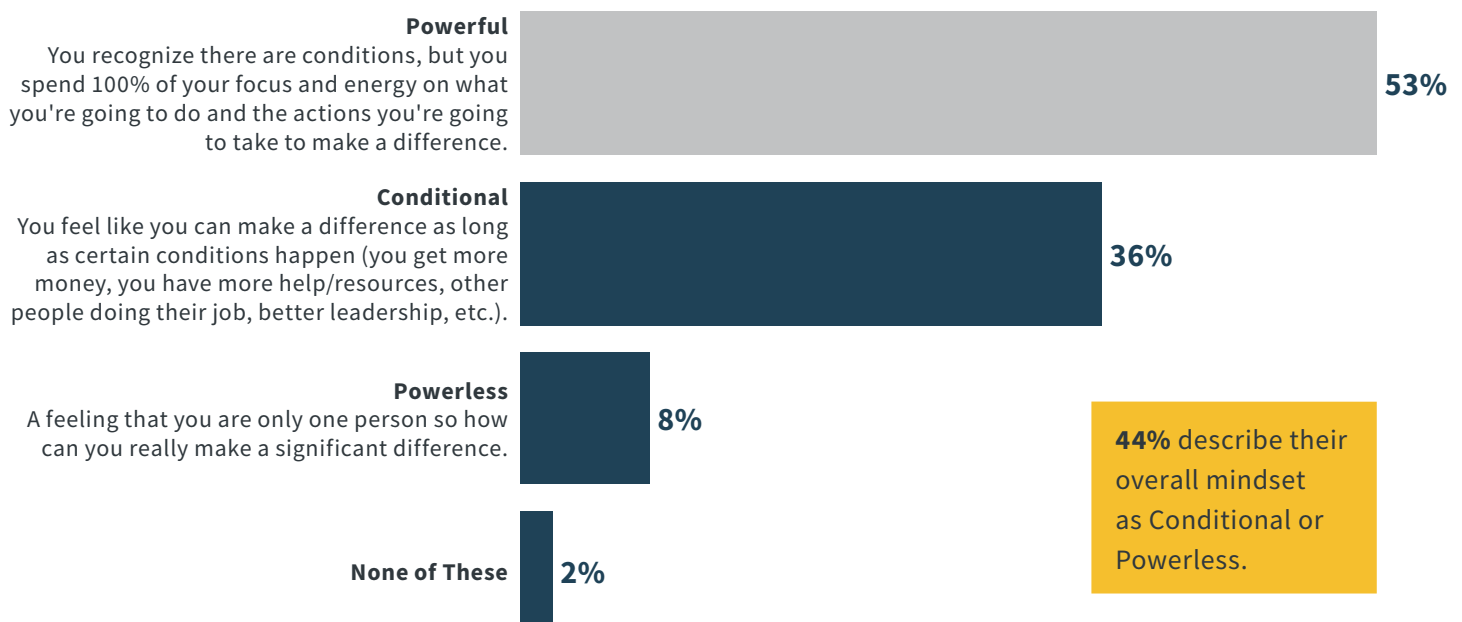
For leaders at every level, it is important to understand the mindset, role, and influence of *power* on teams. Specifically, exploring the roles of the power mindsets, including Powerless, Conditional, and Powerful. Bringing this viewpoint enables team leaders and members to better understand, engage, and unlock the achievement of different team members. This is critically important because almost half (44%) of all working Americans on teams said they felt either conditional power or powerless on their teams at work!

To understand the mindset of teams across the U.S., the study defined and explored all three types of power mindsets: Powerless, Conditional, and Powerful.

Powerless was defined as “a feeling that you are only one person so how can you really make a significant difference.” Conditional was defined as “you feel like you can make a difference as long as certain conditions happen (you get more money, you have more help/resources, other people doing their job, better leadership, etc.).” Powerful was defined as “you recognize there are conditions, but you spend 100% of your focus and energy on what you’re going to do and the actions you’re going to take to make a difference.”

Diving into the almost half of Americans on teams who do not feel fully Powerful, the study found that more than a third (36%) feel their power is Conditional—which is a big warning light for teams today—and that 8% felt Powerless. That is more than 1 in 12 people working on teams feeling Powerless! Going deeper into the data, the study also found that Executives (58%) and Managers (59%) were significantly more likely to describe their overall mindset as Powerful which is likely a reflection of their roles, responsibilities, and experience. At the same time, 11% of Gen Z describe their overall mindset as powerless, the most of any generation.

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING BEST DESCRIBES YOUR OVERALL MINDSET? (BY TOTAL)



Two other discoveries stand out in the data. Of those who describe their overall mindset as powerless, almost half (49%) describe feeling this way daily!

HOW OFTEN DO YOU FEEL THE POWERFUL/CONDITIONAL/POWERLESS MINDSET WHEN AT WORK?
(BY TOTAL; ONLY INCLUDES THOSE WHO DESCRIBE THEIR OVERALL MINDSET AT WORK AS POWERLESS; TOP 4 OF 10)



All these discoveries point to the complexity and challenge of leading teams today, but also to the tremendous opportunity to move almost half of all team members into a mindset where they feel Powerful!

EXECUTIVE QUESTION: *What perceived limits and conditions do team members in your organization impose that they may not be aware of and what are you doing to help overcome them?*

STRATEGIC RESOURCE: *For more information and help, besides our book **Unconditional Power**, contact us for a web link with recommendations on what to do.*

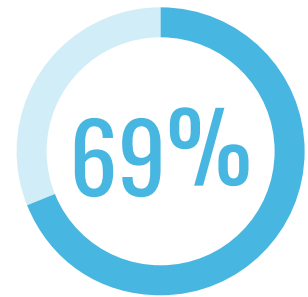


INSIGHT 6: CONFRONTING THE CHANGING REALITY OF IN-PERSON, HYBRID, AND REMOTE TEAMS

One of the most unexpected challenges confronting teams, leaders, and organizations today is the changing workforce environment driven by the Covid pandemic. Companies that were fully in person suddenly had to navigate to a hybrid or fully virtual work environment. Employees had to learn to work together across physical locations, and time zones, and use different technologies. While it has now been several years since the pandemic initially upended many workplaces, leaders, employees, and teams are still trying to find their way forward.

The national study explored this important area of research by asking team members about their experiences and preferences in teams and differing work environments. The answers highlight the difficulty of addressing differences in workplace preferences while also revealing different strategies that can inform future solutions. In addition, the answers highlight that what people say they want doesn't necessarily match what actually works best in the workforce! More on that after the charts and analysis at the end of this Insight...

The study asked, "What type of team interaction do you find to be the most effective for you at work?" In a very surprising discovery, **69% of working America say they find working "in person at your work office" to be the most effective type of team interaction.** Second was email (45%). Third was online video conference (Zoom, Google Meet, etc.) (44%), and fourth was instant messaging and chat tools (43%).



WHAT TYPE OF TEAM INTERACTION DO YOU FIND TO BE THE MOST EFFECTIVE FOR YOU AT WORK?

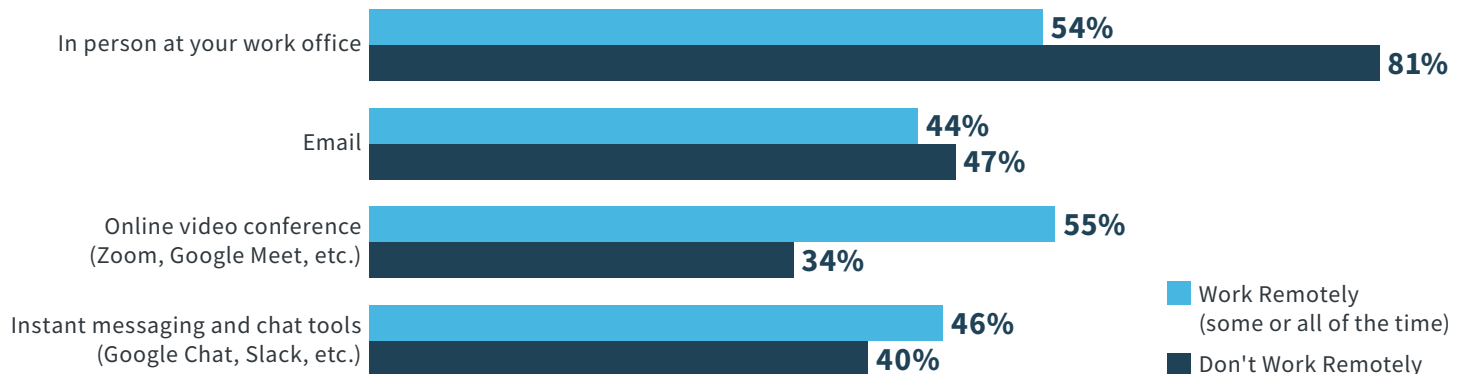
(BY TOTAL; RANKED #1/#2/#3; TOP 4 OF 9)



However, and this was a big surprise, the answers shifted dramatically when analyzed based on where the person currently works. In two stand-out discoveries, the number one overall answer of "in person at your work office" looks very different with 81% of those who don't work remotely saying that is their top preference, but that number drops to 54% for those who currently work remotely all or some of the time! In addition, the answer for "video conference" looks very different, too, when analyzed by where a person currently works. For those who currently work remotely, video conference was actually the number one choice (55%) while for those who don't work remotely, it was only 34%!

WHAT TYPE OF TEAM INTERACTION DO YOU FIND TO BE THE MOST EFFECTIVE FOR YOU AT WORK?

(BY WORK REMOTELY/DON'T WORK REMOTELY; RANKED #1/#2/#3; TOP 4 OF 9)



This discovery highlights the different perspectives and preferences team members bring to being on teams and what would make them most effective at work today. This also highlights the often *huge* divide in expectations between those who work in person and those who work remotely all or part of the time. What does this mean for leaders? In general, it means a one-size-fits-all approach will receive a lot of pushback from team members regardless of the path selected, so taking the time to understand team members' preferences and their intersection with culture, work location, and achievement is absolutely critical.

And now back to the discovery previewed earlier in this insight...that what people say they want doesn't necessarily match what experience tells us works best in practice. While people frequently say they want email, video chat, or messaging tools, what our experience and diverse clients around the world reveal to us is that what people often say they want as most effective too often means *easiest*. For example, in our work with leaders and organizations trying to resolve differences, conflict, or more emotional conversations through text, email, or chat doesn't work nearly as well in most cases as a face-to-face conversation. Meeting in person provides dramatically more nonverbal cues and body language than video chat and certainly electronic-only communication. While the logistics of meeting in person can be more cumbersome, in-person conversations seem to consistently be the best approach for most organizations to navigate important conversations, disagreements, emotional discussions, and delicate conversations that both parties want to get right.

EXECUTIVE QUESTION: *How could your organization apply the insight that effective teams have an in-person element across your organization?*

STRATEGIC RESOURCE: *If moving to more in-person teams and team meetings is a culture shift at your organization, email us for **The 9-Step Formula for Having an Honest Effective Conversation with Anyone** resource.*

INSIGHT 7: CONSISTENTLY HIGH-ACHIEVING TEAMS ARE SOUGHT AFTER BY TODAY'S WORKFORCE

The national study has explored a variety of behavioral drivers, trends, expectations, and work styles affecting the experience and achievement of team members across the U.S. today. So, where should a leader focus to build and lead the type of team that unlocks consistently high-achievement and results? The study explored that, too.

The answers are essential for every team leader, manager, and executive to know. The national study found that a huge 75% of working Americans say being on a consistently high-achieving team would be a significant improvement to their work experience! That is three-quarters of all employees on at least one team at work!

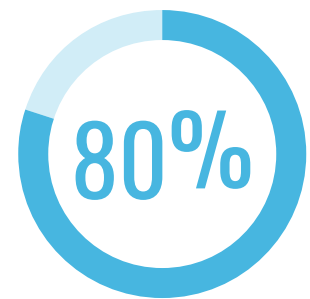
Going deeper into the data, the insights continue to tell a powerful story. When analyzed by generation, the *impact* of being on a consistently high-achieving team is very high for every generation, with 71% of Gen Z, 74% of Younger Millennials, 77% of Older Millennials, and 78% of Generation X saying that being on a consistently high-achieving team would be a significant improvement to their work experience.

Looking at the data by the number of teams a person is currently on, 74% of those who are on one to two teams and **80% of those on three to five teams currently say being on a consistently high-achieving team would be a significant improvement in their work experience.**

In this time of workplace change, complexity, hybrid, virtual, in person, endless competition, and so much more, being on a consistently high-achieving team would be a significant improvement to the vast majority of working Americans' work experience. The data indisputably demonstrates that creating highly effective teams is a key solution to overcoming challenges that leaders face today in their mission to create great cultures, drive results, and lead teams for achievement.

WOW STAT!

75% of working Americans say being on a **consistently high-achieving team** would be a **significant improvement** in their work experience.



EXECUTIVE QUESTION: *What are you and your organization doing to ensure your teams are consistently high achieving? Do you think people on your team or in your organization sometimes confuse hard work and performing versus achieving results?*

STRATEGIC RESOURCE: *To ensure that your organization's teams are the best possible, email us for our **5 Characteristics of a Consistently High Achieving Team (CHAT)**.*

RESEARCH STUDY CONCLUSIONS AND ACTIONS TO TAKE NOW

Leading consistently high-achieving teams has never been more urgent for leaders, organizations, and all stakeholders. Teams determine overall performance, shape culture, drive growth, and deliver results—or not. Getting it right with teams requires more than experience, it requires a deeper understanding of the dynamics, behaviors, and experiences shaping teams through the lens of working America today.

In the National Study of Consistently High-Achieving Teams, the research uncovered a variety of discoveries and insights that team members and leaders need to know and act on now. These discoveries are valuable for teams of all sizes, across industries, and for both tenured and brand-new team members.

Here is a quick summary of seven key discoveries:

1. There is an urgent accountability challenge facing teams across the U.S.
2. Distractions are harming team achievement across the U.S. workforce
3. A divide exists between those on teams who feel powerful and those who don't
4. Hidden communication challenges limit team achievement
5. A majority of team members prefer face-to-face communication
6. Changing workplace realities have a huge impact on team member expectations
7. Being part of consistently high-achieving teams would be a significant improvement in the work experience across generations, work roles, industries, and size of companies

The research underscores the new reality and situations facing teams in the workforce today, as well as providing clues and data-driven guidance on the actions to take to change the trajectory of teams right away. The key is taking an honest look at teams through the lens of statistically accurate data to inform new ideas, strategies, best practices, standards, professional development, and more.

Taking on the challenge and opportunity that teams present in organizations today does not have to be a solo journey. At Steven Gaffney Company, we are deeply committed to developing leaders, sharing best practices, providing valuable resources, and creating proven strategies and tools that take teams from where they are now to being consistently high-achieving teams.

We bring nearly 30 years of frontline team experience to our work. We are thrilled to provide this research to you and are eager to be your trusted resource and partner on your journey to unlock the potential of teams and team leaders. We are here for you at every stage of the journey with our tested, research-backed framework so you can benefit from our expertise and knowledge in combination with your strengths, culture, and vision. Together we can build teams that deliver results.

ACTIONS TO TAKE NOW

1. Schedule a team strategy call with Steven Gaffney
2. Explore our services and solutions on [StevenGaffney.com](https://www.stevengaffney.com)
3. Invite Steven to speak about his latest discoveries and solutions

ABOUT STEVEN GAFFNEY



Steven Gaffney, CEO of the Steven Gaffney Company, is widely recognized as the leading expert on creating Consistently High Achieving Teams (CHAT)[®]. As the author of *Unconditional Power* and a sought-after keynote speaker on leadership teams, Steven has made significant contributions to some of the world's most influential organizations, including Fortune 500 companies, U.S. government and military agencies, and industry leaders such as Amazon, Marriott, Lockheed Martin, and American Express.

With a unique approach rooted in a scientific and engineering ethos, Steven ventured into entrepreneurship to tackle the most challenging aspects of human relationships and team dynamics. His engineering-inspired methodology is the cornerstone of the Steven Gaffney Company, which is dedicated to fostering high-achieving teams and organizations through honest communication and effective leadership strategies.



ABOUT THE STEVEN GAFFNEY COMPANY

The Steven Gaffney Company, under the leadership of Steven Gaffney, is committed to resolving the intricate challenges of human relationships and organizational dynamics. Built on an engineering-inspired approach, the company has a clear mission: to create and sustain Consistently High Achieving Teams (CHAT)[®] across diverse industries. The company's innovative tools, such as the Powerful Culture[®], 2-hour and 18-minute Strategy[™], and the course *The Fish Isn't Sick...The Water is Dirty*, empower leaders to foster open, honest communication and address issues head-on.

Steven Gaffney's impactful strategies have been credited with driving immediate and lasting changes in organizations and individual lives, reinforcing the company's reputation as a trusted partner in the pursuit of organizational excellence.



ABOUT THE CENTER FOR GENERATIONAL KINETICS

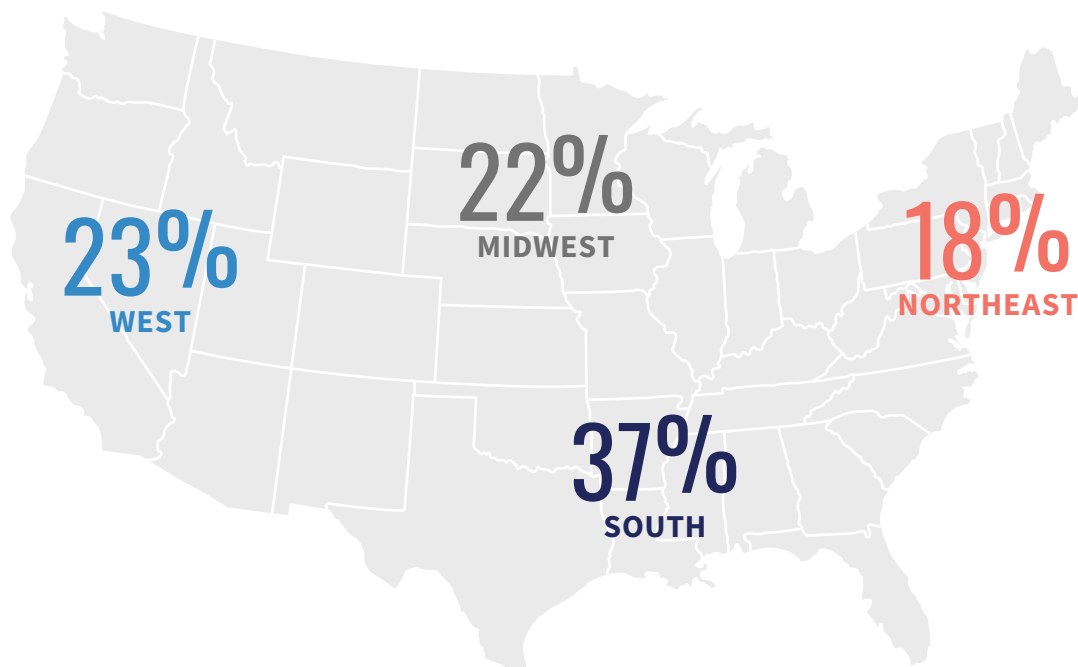
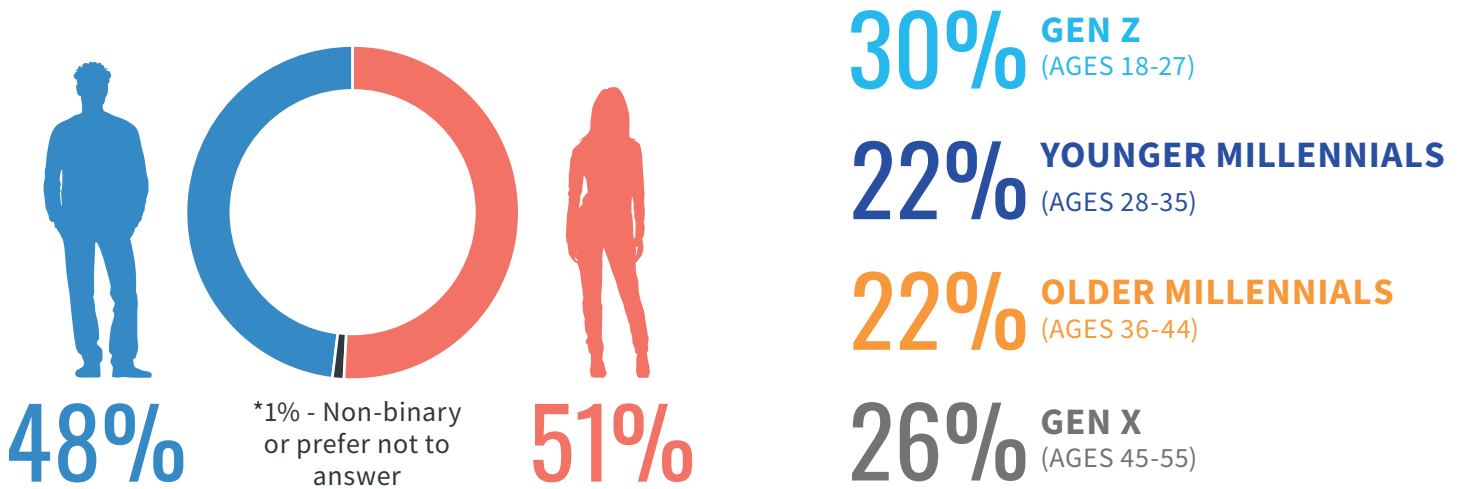
Research | Insights

The Center for Generational Kinetics, LLC (CGK) is the premier thought leadership research firm focused on must-know trends, hidden drivers of change, and actionable insights. CGK has led more than 140 custom research studies for clients around the world. CGK's team has worked with over 700 organizations, from technology companies to financial services, retailers, hospitality, and private equity. The firm's latest bestselling book is *Zconomy: How Gen Z Will Change the Future of Business*. Learn more about CGK's pioneering research at GenHQ.com.

NATIONAL STUDY METHODOLOGY

The research study included a total of 1,000 U.S. participants ages 18 to 55 weighted to the 2020 U.S. Census for age, region, gender, and ethnicity. All participants were currently employed full time or part time and currently involved in one or more teams at work. The research study was conducted online from April 19, 2024, to May 10, 2024. The margin of error is +/-3.1 percentage points.

CUSTOM 25-QUESTION SURVEY COMPLETED BY **1,000** U.S. PARTICIPANTS (AGES 18-55)
CURRENTLY EMPLOYED FULL-TIME OR PART-TIME
CURRENTLY INVOLVED IN ONE OR MORE TEAMS AT WORK





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