



2023

Employee Engagement Risk Report

Today's labor market continues to be competitive, and rental housing leaders have identified employee retention as a top priority. Attracting, retaining, and promoting employees is now a common focus during strategic planning. With employee attrition as a key operational challenge, understanding the factors that drive employee decisions regarding their future with their employers is critical. While overall average tenure has increased 3% since Q4 2021, tenure for Regional Operations and On-Site Management has decreased by a minimum of 8% in just one year. Current and prospective talent is being recruited not only by competing rental housing operators, but other industries that may offer more generous wages and benefits, greater flexibility, and less stressful work environments. Read on to discover what matters most to rental housing employees regarding their workplace and where the greatest strengths and opportunities lie in recruiting, retaining, and promoting talent.

Overview

The intersection of high productivity and high satisfaction is what’s known as employee engagement. Swift Bunny’s analysis of confidential employee survey responses representing over 300,000 U.S. apartment units reveals high performing, highly satisfying company culture does not occur by accident. It is achieved when rental housing leaders intentionally define and nurture a work environment that meets team members’ needs and enables them to be successful in their roles.

Key Successes

Rental housing employees identify several aspects about their work and workplaces which they find widely satisfying. These are areas that recruiters and hiring supervisors should showcase when engaging with prospective employees.

According to Ingage by Swift Bunny™ survey respondents, here are the factors that make work highly rewarding:

- Each individual is treated with respect
- Employees feel confident and competent in their roles
- Supervisors show faith in their employees’ judgement
- Team members genuinely enjoy their current jobs
- Employees are able to take the paid time off they have earned
- The company values its employees

Key Risks

Employees are also forthcoming about aspects of their work experience that are less than satisfying and may lead to turnover.

According to Ingage by Swift Bunny™ survey respondents, here are the greatest opportunities for improvement for rental housing employers:

- Strengthening overall compensation packages
- Providing better internal communication
- Clearly defining career development opportunities
- Balancing employees’ workloads
- Prioritizing comprehensive onboarding

This report provides more detail on each of the key risks including overall topic scores, distribution of responses by position, recommended actions for leaders, and candid comments excerpted from employee surveys.

Rating Scale

Data was gathered through a two-dimensional approach, which included respondents' level of agreement with each of the topics, as well as how important each topic was to them. Respondents submitted answers based on the following 5-point rating scales:



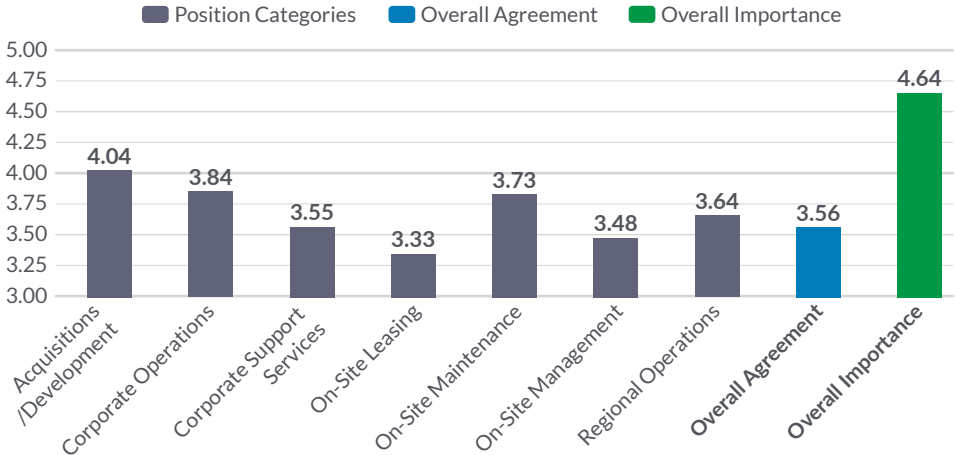
CATEGORY	AGREEMENT	IMPORTANCE	TOPIC
Compensation	3.56	4.64	Compensation for my job is fair
	3.67	4.43	Current performance incentives motivate me
	3.95	4.59	The benefits package matches my needs
Communication	3.88	4.51	Issues I raise are responded to within 24 hours by my supervisor, peers, or other departments
	3.91	4.46	I am satisfied with the amount of internal company communication
	4.05	4.43	I am encouraged to suggest new and better ways of doing things
Professional Development	3.91	4.52	Employees are notified of all advancement opportunities
	3.94	4.63	I have a clear understanding of my career and/or promotion path
	4.04	4.49	I receive timely feedback on my work performance
Workload	3.95	4.48	Policies and procedures are consistently enforced
	3.98	4.54	My work can typically be completed in the time allowed
	4.06	4.66	I have the necessary resources, tools, technology, and support to do my job well
Onboarding	3.93	4.53	I am given adequate time during office hours to participate in or complete required training
	3.93	4.71	The training provided has helped me become effective at doing my job
	4.13	4.70	I have access to the training and development needed to do my job well

Compensation

Topic

Compensation for my job is fair

Score By Position



Summary

The greatest risk to employee engagement and retention is that of compensation. Earning the lowest average Agreement and a gap of 1.09 points between overall Agreement and Importance, perceptions regarding the fairness of compensation for the job have the greatest variation among rental housing employees. 17% of employees disagree that compensation for their job is fair, which is an increase of two points over last year. On-Site Leasing and On-Site Management indicated the lowest average agreement, with 25% of Leasing and 19% of Management selecting Disagree or Totally Disagree. For reference, according to the National Apartment Association’s NAA Inflation Tracker, year-over-year average wages increased 4.6% in December 2022 which is nearly two points below the 2022 inflation rate of 6.5% as reported by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Common themes expressed by employees include not feeling they can afford to live in the communities where they work; a desire to be recognized and rewarded for covering additional responsibilities while short-staffed; and a sense of injustice when continuing to implement significant rent increases to residents but not receiving a corresponding raise or cost-of-living adjustment. The belief that new, inexperienced employees are offered higher wages than current, experienced team members is a concern that appeared in our 2022 report and persists.

In addition to monitoring market conditions and ensuring employees are receiving competitive wages, leaders can take the step of ensuring employees have understanding of their entire compensation package. A Total Compensation Statement can be a useful tool for supervisors to showcase the company’s investment in each employee.

Compensation Compensation for my job is fair

Agreement Distribution

	Totally Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally Agree
Overall	5%	12%	29%	30%	24%
Acquisitions/Development	1%	3%	20%	43%	33%
Corporate Operations	2%	8%	24%	36%	30%
Corporate Support Services	5%	12%	29%	33%	21%
On-Site Leasing	9%	16%	28%	25%	22%
On-Site Maintenance	5%	10%	23%	31%	31%
On-Site Management	5%	14%	30%	29%	22%
Regional Operations	4%	12%	24%	36%	24%

What employees are saying:

“Annual raises don’t keep up with inflation. They are minimal and the percentage is even lower than what admins receive at schools. We are always told that the company is doing great, but our pay isn’t representative of that.”

“Compensation is great for new employees (but) very stagnant for employees that have worked for the company many years.”

“I am not able to make ends meet with the current pay that I am receiving. If I use the benefits package provided, I would not be able to use the provider I have established for the past five years.”

“I really enjoy working here, but with the rent increase, it’s no longer convenient enough to live and work here for the pay.”

“My workload has doubled and the price of living has really gone up but our pay increases don’t match cost of living. I really do enjoy this company and working for it. I just wish a couple of things could change to help us all out a little more. Times are hard right now, but we all have hung in there.”

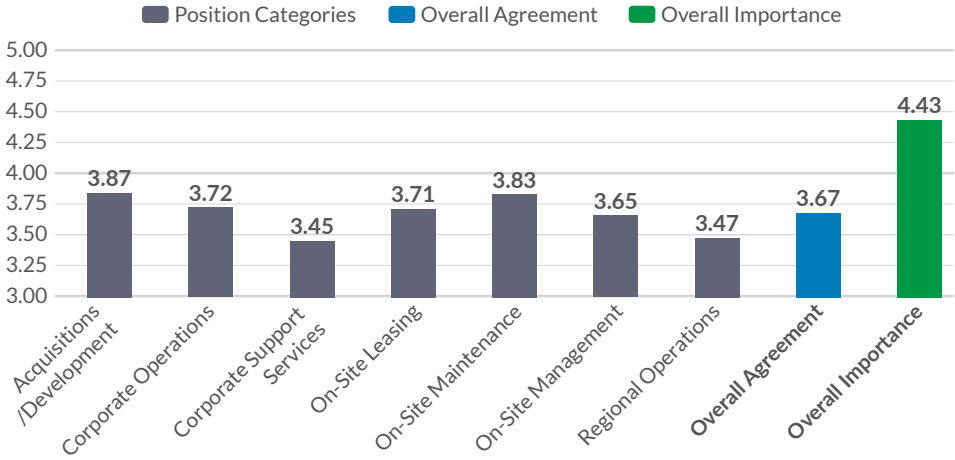
“People at Target make more than I do per hour as cashiers with less stress. My stress level is way too high.”

Compensation

Topic

Current performance incentives motivate me

Score By Position



Summary

Rental housing employee perceptions around incentives remain largely unchanged from the previous year, with 58% of employees agreeing that current incentives are motivating. In line with last year’s findings, Corporate Support Services and Regional Operations expressed the highest levels of disagreement with the topic, with 20% and 21% disagreement respectively.

Confirming that sentiment, 16% of rental housing companies indicate they do not provide performance incentives for On-Site team members, while 10% do not incentivize Regionals and 39% do not incentivize Corporate employees.

A contributor to the labor shortage challenging rental housing operators today is the competitive pay, benefits, and bonus structures that are widely available in other industries. In addition to monetary bonuses tied to individual, team, and company achievements, consider personalizing incentives, such as enhanced flexibility, additional paid time off (PTO), or experiences including sporting events, concerts, or travel. Use employee surveys to uncover specific sentiments and preferences. Be mindful and inclusive of all roles so no associate groups feel left out. Allowing the employee to choose their reward can be very motivating.

Compensation Current performance incentives motivate me

Agreement Distribution

	Totally Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally Agree
Overall	6%	10%	26%	27%	31%
Acquisitions/Development	4%	7%	21%	33%	35%
Corporate Operations	3%	10%	28%	29%	30%
Corporate Support Services	7%	13%	31%	26%	23%
On-Site Leasing	7%	10%	23%	25%	35%
On-Site Maintenance	6%	7%	22%	28%	37%
On-Site Management	5%	11%	27%	28%	29%
Regional Operations	7%	14%	28%	26%	25%

What employees are saying:

“Money is not the biggest motivation but when I realized that I was the only one who didn’t get a year-end bonus, it was a big disappointment that dragged me down a lot.”

“Staying motivated throughout the week can be challenging. I find that PTO incentives work really great for me, and if more incentives were to be implemented I would definitely be more focused at work.”

“I currently do not have performance incentives in my job.”

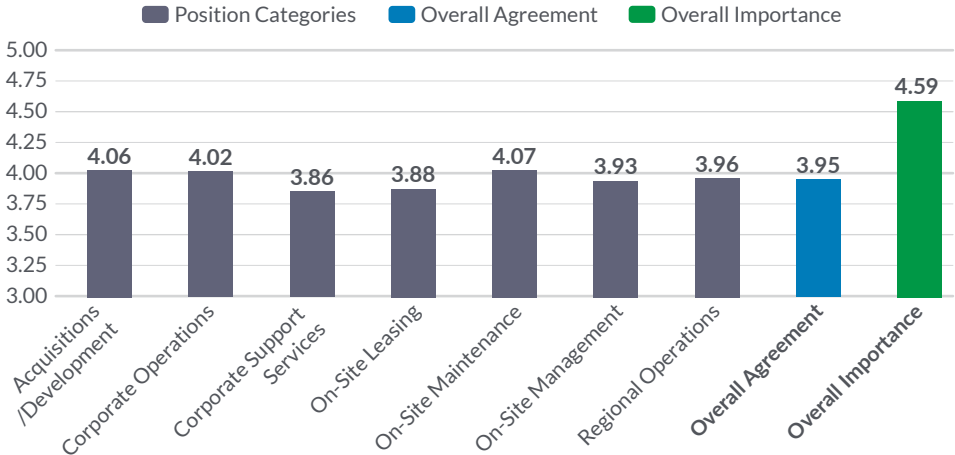
“There are very limited performance incentives for doing well but there are abundant threats for everything that is not completed to the personal standard of your regional.”

Compensation

Topic

The benefits package matches my needs

Score By Position



Summary

With a gap of 0.64 points between Agreement and Importance, this is a topic that continues to be a significant risk factor to employee retention. While 70% of employees agree that the benefits offered by their employers meet their needs, 11% express some level of disagreement. Of note, only Corporate Acquisition and Development and On-Site Maintenance had less than 10% disagree that benefits meet their needs. Every other position category indicated a minimum of 10% of employees disagreeing. An additional one in five are unsure or unwilling to express their opinion.

Rental housing employees have a wide range of needs, making it a challenge for employers to provide benefits that work well for every individual. However, in today's competitive labor environment, an attractive, comprehensive, and most importantly affordable benefits package can make or break an employment offer and improve employee tenure. For example, while 93% of rental housing companies report they pay some portion of health insurance costs, only 30% offer any kind of maternity leave and a mere 18% offer paternity leave. This lack of support for parents can create significant hardships.

A first step to strengthening your offering is to evaluate the level of participation of employees in each of your benefit offerings. Take note of programs that management-level employees may participate in, but few On-Site employees do. Benefits such as health insurance and mental health coverage that are financially out of reach for the majority of employees are no longer a benefit; instead, they become a source of dissatisfaction, and in some cases may cause employees to look for employment and coverage elsewhere.

Compensation The benefits package matches my needs

Agreement Distribution

	Totally Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally Agree
Overall	3%	8%	19%	30%	40%
Acquisitions/Development	1%	6%	19%	34%	40%
Corporate Operations	3%	8%	14%	33%	42%
Corporate Support Services	3%	9%	20%	32%	34%
On-Site Leasing	5%	8%	21%	26%	40%
On-Site Maintenance	3%	5%	17%	30%	45%
On-Site Management	3%	8%	20%	30%	39%
Regional Operations	2%	8%	20%	27%	41%

What employees are saying:

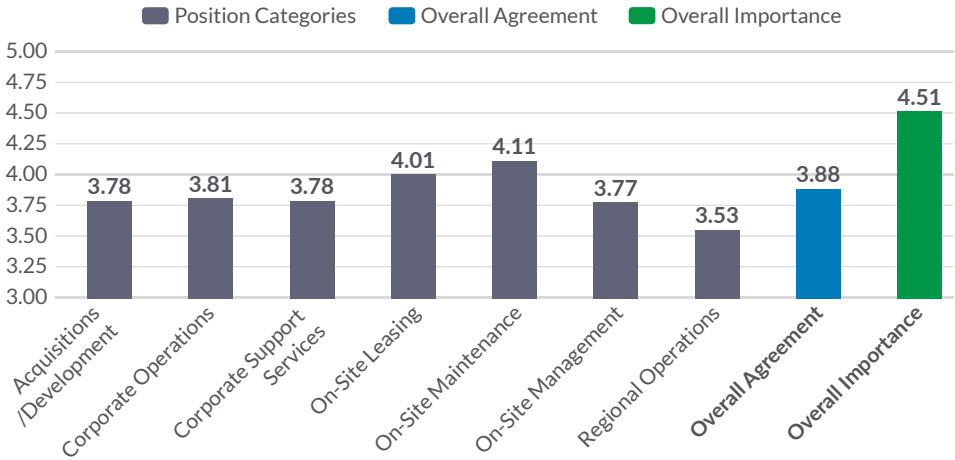
- “Benefits are so expensive that I had to decline them. To add a spouse or children you are basically working just to pay for benefits. Especially when I have a child with type one diabetes and having good insurance that is not an arm and a leg is so critical to me and his life.”
- “Medical insurance is too expensive. I am a family of four and I couldn’t even cover everyone without feeling like all my money is gone.”
- “Sometimes vacation time is requested, and a response is not given for quite some time. Lot of blackout dates for vacation.”
- “When requesting time off, we are required to give a 30-day notice. Sometimes we need to take a day off and are unable to give a 30-day notice.”
- “Cost of living is crazy here now. Maybe managers should receive a bigger rent concession.”
- “Health insurance and maternity/paternity leave needs great improvement.”
- “I feel like we should have kept the extra COVID sick hours for this year as well since it is coming back so strong in so many states.”

Communication

Topic

Issues I raise are responded to within 24 hours by my supervisor, peers, or other departments

Score By Position



Summary

With a two point decrease over the previous year, only two-thirds of employees agree they receive a response from supervisors, peers, or other departments within 24 hours. Overall, 12% of employees say they do not receive a response within 24 hours. Those most affected are the people leaders, with 22% of Regionals and 14% of On-Site Managers reporting they do not receive a response within 24 hours.

This delay in response is not limited to simple emails requesting information or asking for an update. Increasingly, the response needed is an authorization or approval for processes that have been centralized or consolidated during COVID and have not been revisited for effectiveness. As a result, processes, purchases, and resolutions are delayed, creating additional challenges to serving both internal and external customers.

While one tool can be an established standard of 24-hour response time, which only 22% of property management companies currently have in place, the greater opportunity is to evaluate authorization and approval levels. Ensure managers have the authority to conduct standard, daily business tasks. In addition, be aware of the flow of requests. A common theme expressed is On-Site team members' perception that Corporate requests to community teams are treated with more importance and urgency than On-Site team members' requests to Corporate teams.

Company leaders must be willing to evaluate how and when requests are sent, received, and responded to in order to ensure every employee has what they need to successfully complete their work within a reasonable amount of time.

Communication Issues I raise are responded to within 24 hours by my supervisor, peers, or other departments

Agreement Distribution

	Totally Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally Agree
Overall	4%	8%	21%	29%	38%
Acquisitions/Development	2%	8%	27%	37%	26%
Corporate Operations	3%	9%	23%	36%	29%
Corporate Support Services	4%	9%	24%	31%	32%
On-Site Leasing	5%	7%	17%	25%	46%
On-Site Maintenance	4%	6%	14%	29%	47%
On-Site Management	5%	9%	23%	30%	33%
Regional Operations	6%	16%	24%	26%	28%

What employees are saying:

“When needing answers to questions it feels as though nothing is urgent to corporate employees but if I am asked something I am expected to answer quickly. There is no appreciation for how many things we are attempting to complete in the day on top of being short staffed.”

“Decisions I have been able to make in similar roles with other companies require too many levels of approval often from people who have never been in this role, and take too long to get responses. If on-site teams had a little more freedom it would lessen the strain on the number of tickets entered as well as the time it takes to get a response.”

“A lot of tasks should be/could be handled by on-site staff instead of requiring approvals/changes/reversals to be completed by the resolution department or regional managers.”

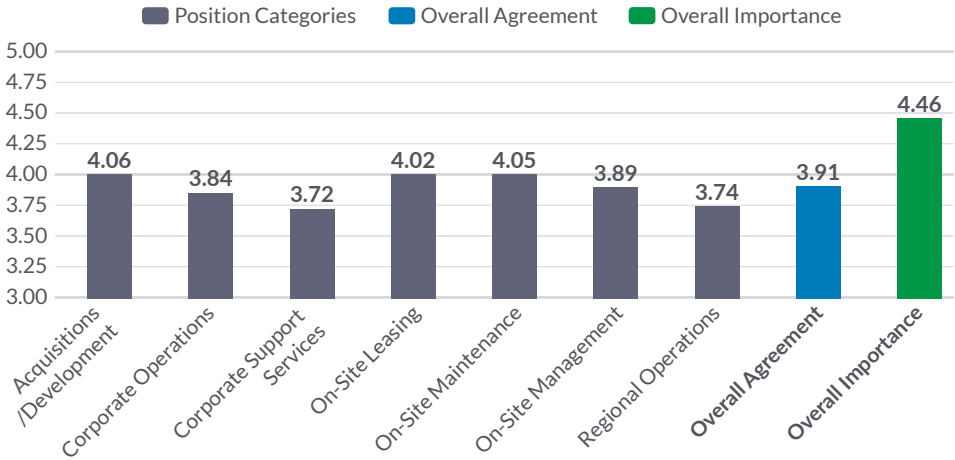
“Our support departments still leave something to be desired. And if I do reach out to the wrong help desk (seriously, what is the difference between the accounting and vendor help desks?), they could be a bit less snippy in their ‘you have the wrong help desk’ response.”

Communication

Topic

I am satisfied with the amount of internal company communication

Score By Position



Summary

According to Swift Bunny’s observation, one of the quickest and most effective ways companies increase employee engagement is by increasing the quality and frequency of communication from executive leadership to employees at all levels of the organization. Although many companies increased their communication during the height of the COVID pandemic, some are now decreasing these efforts, and it shows.

While overall disagreement with this topic increased by one point over the previous year, employees who are often in the closest proximity to leadership are experiencing the greatest decrease in satisfaction regarding internal communication. Corporate Operations, Corporate Support Services, and Regional Operations expressed the lowest levels of Agreement that they are satisfied with the amount of internal company communication. In addition, the gap between Agreement and Importance is 0.54 points, showcasing a significant disparity in what employees want and what they are actually experiencing.

Regardless of title or position, all employees are eager to hear from executive leadership regarding the direction of the company, policy or benefit changes, sales, developments, or acquisitions of properties, job openings or career growth opportunities, as well as employee anniversary announcements and other personnel news. The positive impact of frequent all-employee town hall meetings cannot be overstated.

Communication I am satisfied with the amount of internal company communication

Agreement Distribution

	Totally Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally Agree
Overall	4%	7%	22%	30%	37%
Acquisitions/Development	0%	3%	20%	45%	32%
Corporate Operations	3%	8%	19%	41%	29%
Corporate Support Services	5%	9%	24%	32%	30%
On-Site Leasing	4%	7%	18%	25%	46%
On-Site Maintenance	3%	5%	20%	28%	44%
On-Site Management	3%	6%	25%	32%	34%
Regional Operations	4%	9%	26%	31%	30%

What employees are saying:

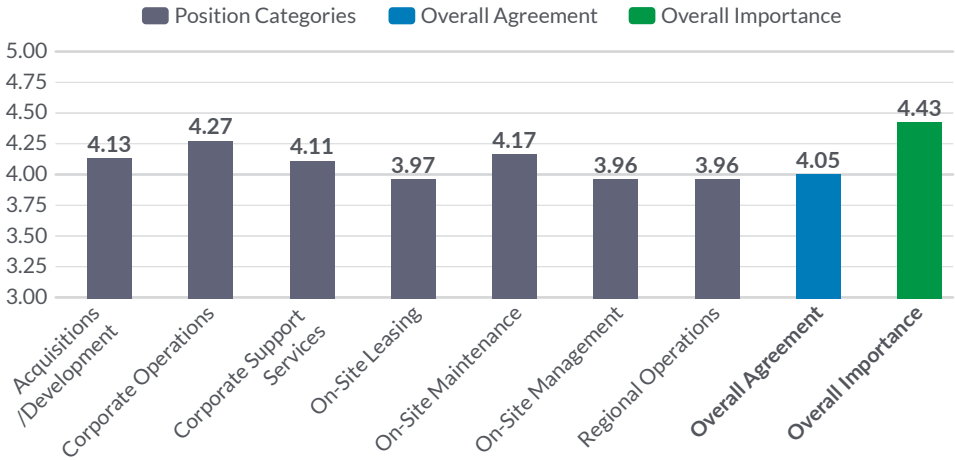
- “I feel like we get communicated about things that don’t matter, but not things that do. Like when someone leaves, some of us don’t know about it for weeks, and we are emailing that person and have no idea why they haven’t responded. Or a major change happens, and no one really announces it until after it happens.”
- “I rated internal communication low because I feel the company has moved away from being involved with each individual site. We rarely receive responses to daily reports anymore. The amount of praise, communication, and support our team received in my earlier days with the company was a big reason that I fell in love with my job. I know the company is growing, but I hope those in charge don’t forget where it started and get back to the original values that have kept me here so long.”
- “The upstairs office is executive leadership, and they have a representative that gives the news to us downstairs. It is weird because I feel like executive leadership should be able to let us know themselves. Feels disingenuous.”
- “We all know that things are going to change but have no idea what and when. I’m sure it’s being ironed out, but someone has loose lips and so it causes minor fears and panics when rumors are similar across the country. We’re all in a ‘what does that mean for us’ stage of the rumors. Once the future of the company is ironed out, we hope clear communication is presented to the teams.”

Communication

Topic

I am encouraged to suggest new and better ways of doing things

Score By Position



Summary

The experience of On-Site Management, Leasing, and Regional rental housing employees is notably different than that of Corporate and On-Site Maintenance employees regarding their perception of being encouraged to suggest new and better ways of doing things. On average, 9% of employees disagree with this statement, with an additional 18% unsure or unwilling to share their opinion. On-Site Leasing and Regional employees report a higher rate of dissatisfaction with 12% disagreeing with this statement.

Company programs reinforce this perception, with only 31% of rental housing companies providing an employee suggestion program or process. A common theme expressed through employee comments is the frustration of Corporate-based employees making policy or process decisions without any input from On-Site team members, who could provide valuable input on feasibility, potential obstacles, or pitfalls of the decision.

Employee feedback programs offer an opportunity to collect input and opinions on operations, processes, and protocols that are creating obstacles to productivity or performance. Collecting feedback and forming cross-functional teams to solve company-wide challenges can make employees feel like valued contributors, and help to identify the most efficient, effective solutions and initiatives from those who work most closely with the issue at hand.

Communication I am encouraged to suggest new and better ways of doing things

Agreement Distribution

	Totally Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally Agree
Overall	3%	6%	18%	28%	45%
Acquisitions/Development	3%	3%	19%	29%	46%
Corporate Operations	1%	4%	16%	26%	53%
Corporate Support Services	3%	7%	15%	26%	49%
On-Site Leasing	4%	8%	18%	26%	44%
On-Site Maintenance	3%	5%	14%	29%	49%
On-Site Management	4%	6%	21%	29%	40%
Regional Operations	5%	7%	16%	32%	40%

What employees are saying:

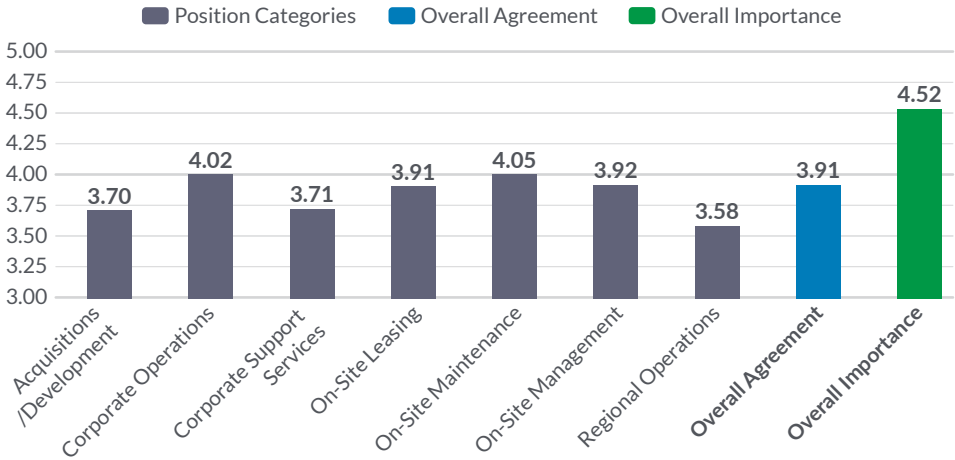
- “I feel that every time I have an idea, I am shut down even if it’s not going to cost a dime. I do not feel like I am involved with any decision making even though I am going to be the one receiving the push back. I feel that I bring a lot to the table given my background, but I am not allowed to engage and use these skills in my current position.”
- “In our company, the word ‘roundtable’ means my concerns or suggestion will not be discussed and no answers will be provided.”
- “We should always strive to improve over previous efforts but management tends to have a ‘this is how we’ve always done it’ approach on several things.”
- “I am directed to never communicate directly with anyone above my manager, even if I feel the issue needs very specific attention.”
- “More involvement in decisions that are made for my communities, please.”

Professional Development

Topic

Employees are notified of all advancement opportunities

Score By Position



Summary

Rental housing companies made significant improvements regarding notifying employees of advancement opportunities with an increase in average overall Agreement from 3.73 in the previous year to 3.91. Two-thirds of employees indicate they Agree or Totally Agree with this statement, which is an increase of seven points. In addition, those who were unsure decreased by five points down to 20%.

While the positive momentum is gaining regarding better communication of advancement opportunities, a significant gap of 0.61 exists between overall average Agreement and Importance. With only 66% of rental housing companies indicating all open positions are promoted to all existing team members, there is an opportunity to prioritize this type of internal communication. Often these efforts are limited to a list of open positions on the company career page rather than opportunities being shared more directly with employees on a regular basis.

Utilize regularly scheduled emails, monthly town hall meetings, social media postings, and the employee Intranet to post and promote every open position. Celebrate when openings are filled internally. To support positive morale and employee tenure, companies must demonstrate that growth within the organization is possible. Even if an internal candidate is not selected, fostering transparency around the promotion process creates opportunities for employees and supervisors to have valuable development conversations.

Professional Development Employees are notified of all advancement opportunities

Agreement Distribution

	Totally Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally Agree
Overall	5%	8%	20%	26%	41%
Acquisitions/Development	0%	12%	34%	27%	27%
Corporate Operations	2%	4%	23%	33%	38%
Corporate Support Services	5%	10%	25%	29%	31%
On-Site Leasing	7%	9%	17%	21%	46%
On-Site Maintenance	3%	6%	18%	27%	46%
On-Site Management	5%	8%	19%	25%	43%
Regional Operations	8%	13%	24%	23%	32%

What employees are saying:

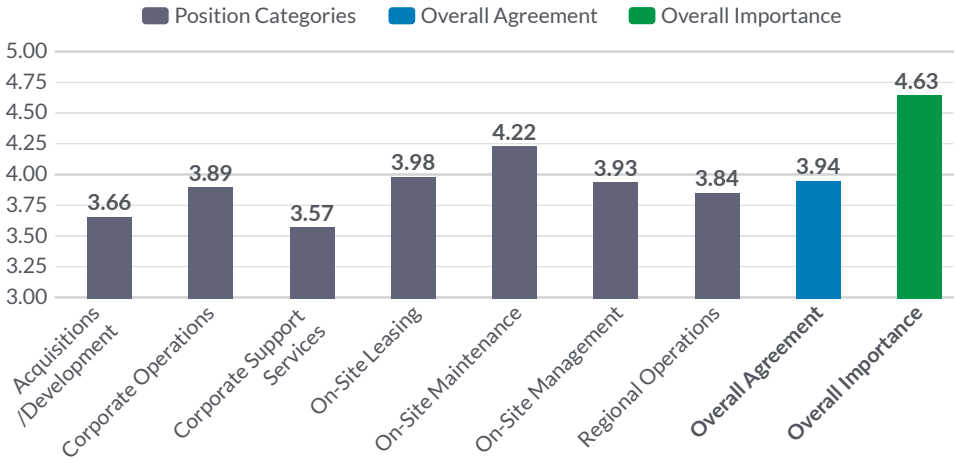
- “We’re always told that the company is now going to notify us of job openings and advancement opportunities, but we’re not notified. If we are, I don’t know where to locate that in-house. The only way I know of new openings is looking through the Indeed job board.”
- “It feels as though ‘favorites’ are picked for new opportunities that were never made available to all to apply for, particularly in the training department and other corporate spots. Some of the marketing jobs and on-site jobs have been announced, but where was the announcement for all the new training spots that people got? How can people know their path forward if they don’t know what positions are available? It’s not a good look.”
- “Promotion opportunities should be opened to anyone who is interested before a promotion is announced.”
- “Recently, there was a role change, which I could and would have applied for, but was not given the opportunity to even apply or interview for the position. It is very disappointing, especially since it is my employment background and experience of 10+ years. But to not even get the opportunity and to be shut away from it, is very disappointing and unsettling.”

Professional Development

Topic

I have a clear understanding of my career and/or promotion path

Score By Position



Summary

Having a clear understanding of one’s career or promotion path experienced a moderate increase in Agreement over the previous year with overall average Agreement shifting from 3.88 to 3.94. Overall, 12% of Corporate Operations, On-Site Leasing, and On-Site Management team members disagree that they understand their career path, and Corporate Support Service employees expressed the highest level of disagreement at 18%. With only 34% of rental housing companies indicating they have defined career paths to advance within company, the uncertainty employees feel regarding their professional development is understandable. Behind compensation and incentives, this topic has the greatest gap between Agreement and Importance.

Because this is a top priority for employees, supervisors cannot afford to avoid or discourage discussions regarding career advancement and professional development. If an employee is not able to see an opportunity to increase their own skill set or pursue advancement within the organization, they may be more likely to look for opportunities elsewhere.

Detailed job descriptions should be made available to all team members. Furthermore, companies should define the skills needed for each position in the organization. Supervisors can then guide and support their direct reports to gain needed skills to prepare for future opportunities.

Professional Development I have a clear understanding of my career and/or promotion path

Agreement Distribution

	Totally Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally Agree
Overall	4%	8%	20%	27%	41%
Acquisitions/Development	4%	9%	29%	33%	25%
Corporate Operations	2%	10%	22%	30%	36%
Corporate Support Services	6%	12%	28%	26%	28%
On-Site Leasing	5%	7%	19%	23%	46%
On-Site Maintenance	3%	4%	14%	26%	53%
On-Site Management	4%	8%	19%	29%	40%
Regional Operations	2%	7%	27%	32%	32%

What employees are saying:

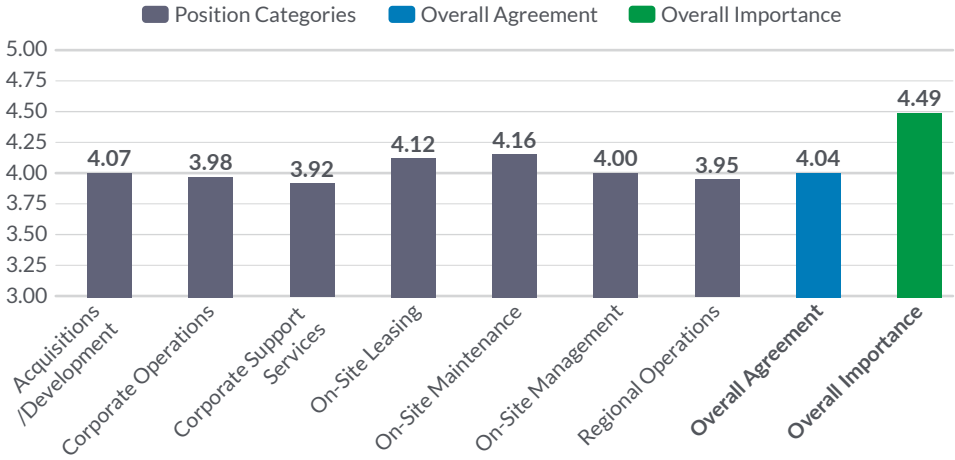
- “I would like to see more opportunities for people on-site (community staff) to be promoted to corporate positions when possible, vs. hiring from outside of the company.”
- “I am looking to be with the company for a very long time. I am interested in moving up, but I hear the company does not always promote from within, and instead hires outside people and trains them for the job.”
- “Provide additional training as I grow. When I was promoted this year, I didn’t receive much guidance on how to perform well in my new role. Instead, I effectively functioned in the same role I had prior to promotion so didn’t really get to learn new skills until the end of the year. I still feel I have much to learn in this role.”

Professional Development

Topic

I receive timely feedback on my work performance

Score By Position



Summary

The topic of receiving timely feedback on work performance is appearing for the first time as a significant employee engagement risk factor. Although the overall average Agreement is 4.04 on a 5-point scale and 75% of rental housing employees agree they receive timely feedback, nearly 1 in 10 disagree.

Attention is most commonly drawn to younger, newer On-Site team members regarding the need for feedback, however Swift Bunny’s research indicates the employees with the lowest level of Agreement are the Corporate, Regional, and Management employees. Common themes in employee comments were frustration that the only feedback received is when a mistake is made or a goal is not reached; a desire for affirmation that work being done is meeting or exceeding expectations; and a general sense that employees do not feel it matters if they put forward their best effort since no one seems to notice.

Many rental housing employers are finding improved employee engagement and productive conversations resulting from the use of stay interviews, which provide a supervisor with the opportunity to discover what an employee enjoys or appreciates most about their current role or responsibilities. Understanding what motivates an employee allows the supervisor to provide positive reinforcement in those areas, and offer additional support or guidance in areas that cause frustration for the team member. These conversations are designed to occur periodically throughout the year so that all employees—whether they are high performers, low performers, or somewhere in between—feel seen, heard, and appreciated.

Professional Development I receive timely feedback on my work performance

Agreement Distribution

	Totally Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally Agree
Overall	3%	6%	18%	30%	43%
Acquisitions/Development	0%	3%	25%	34%	38%
Corporate Operations	1%	8%	21%	32%	38%
Corporate Support Services	3%	8%	19%	32%	38%
On-Site Leasing	3%	7%	15%	25%	50%
On-Site Maintenance	3%	4%	15%	30%	48%
On-Site Management	3%	6%	20%	31%	40%
Regional Operations	4%	6%	21%	28%	41%

What employees are saying:

“My direct supervisor has always shown me support and given direction when needed. She builds me up and gives solicited and unsolicited feedback. Beyond that, I am discouraged to even ask anyone else for feedback. I have directly asked for feedback on my performance and been told that everything is not always about me. Discouraging to say the least.”

“I am not currently motivated to do my best work as I do not feel like anyone even notices.”

“I work very hard and take pride in what I do, exceed sales goals, (get) 5 star reviews. I am flexible, responsible, on time. However, (my) manager NEVER says good job! Only looks at the negative in me.”

“More check-ins from supervisors, please. I would like to know that I am on the right track with the work I’ve been assigned.”

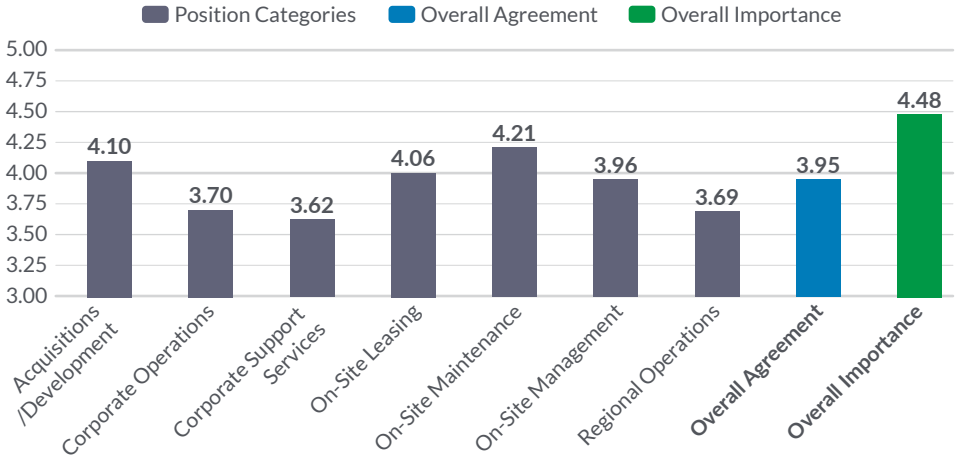
“I receive feedback on a specific task if it was incorrect. I rarely receive feedback on how I am performing overall.”

Workload

Topic

Policies and procedures are consistently enforced

Score By Position



Summary

With a gap of 0.52 points between overall Agreement and Importance and only 70% of rental housing employees agreeing policies and procedures are consistently enforced, this topic continues to be a high risk to employee engagement. Additionally, nearly 1 in 5 is unsure or unwilling to indicate their perception. Corporate Support Services expressed the lowest level of Agreement with only 57% agreeing policies and procedures are enforced consistently.

While COVID-related mandates resulted in rapidly changing requirements in the previous years, the expiration of those mandates and a more familiar business environment have not appeared to have brought more stability or consistency to policy and procedure adherence.

Executive leadership can take this opportunity to review and update policies and procedures to align with current business practices and take time to communicate them to all employees. Consistent and frequent reinforcement will aid in ensuring all employees understand the expectations and protocols.

Workload Policies and procedures are consistently enforced

Agreement Distribution

	Totally Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally Agree
Overall	4%	7%	19%	30%	40%
Acquisitions/Development	0%	1%	26%	34%	39%
Corporate Operations	5%	11%	20%	39%	25%
Corporate Support Services	6%	12%	25%	29%	28%
On-Site Leasing	5%	7%	14%	24%	50%
On-Site Maintenance	2%	4%	15%	30%	49%
On-Site Management	3%	7%	20%	31%	39%
Regional Operations	4%	9%	27%	33%	27%

What employees are saying:

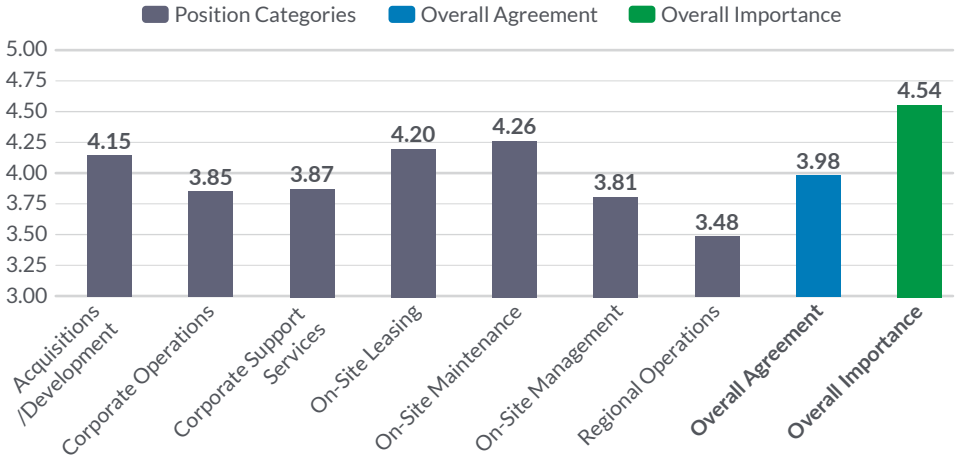
- “I would like some adjustments in policies that get us screamed at and cursed out.”
- “I work for a tax credit property and there seems to be no consistency in our compliance department/officers. We need policies with better structure.”
- “Procedures/policies change frequently, sometimes from one week to the other.”
- “Policies should be enforced equally nationwide.”
- “It can be discouraging to strive to do the right thing according to the rules set forth and to see others break those rules or not enforce them with little to no repercussions. I’m not saying I want to see people punished willy-nilly, I just would like consistency.”

Workload

Topic

My work can typically be completed in the time allowed

Score By Position



Summary

Although still a top risk for employee engagement and retention, and with a gap of 0.56 points between Agreement and Importance, the average overall level of Agreement that work can be completed in the time allowed increased 0.05 points over the previous year. While still concerning, this topic is moving in a positive direction.

The strain of being short-staffed continues to impact rental housing employees in all positions, most notably the 23% of Regional Operations team members who disagree that work can be completed in the time allowed.

Regionals and Corporate Support teams will benefit from executive leadership re-evaluating the roles, responsibilities, and needs that have evolved during the COVID era. In an effort to support On-Site teams, these employees often took on more responsibilities such as performing more frequent one-on-one check-ins with their associates, managing additional centralized tasks, or overseeing larger jurisdictions. These emergency measures must be reviewed, de-escalated, and re-focused to reduce the level of burnout among these historically tenured roles.

Workload My work can typically be completed in the time allowed

Agreement Distribution

	Totally Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally Agree
Overall	3%	8%	17%	31%	41%
Acquisitions/Development	0%	4%	16%	40%	40%
Corporate Operations	5%	10%	20%	27%	38%
Corporate Support Services	3%	11%	17%	34%	35%
On-Site Leasing	3%	6%	10%	30%	51%
On-Site Maintenance	2%	3%	13%	32%	50%
On-Site Management	4%	10%	20%	30%	34%
Regional Operations	6%	17%	23%	31%	23%

What employees are saying:

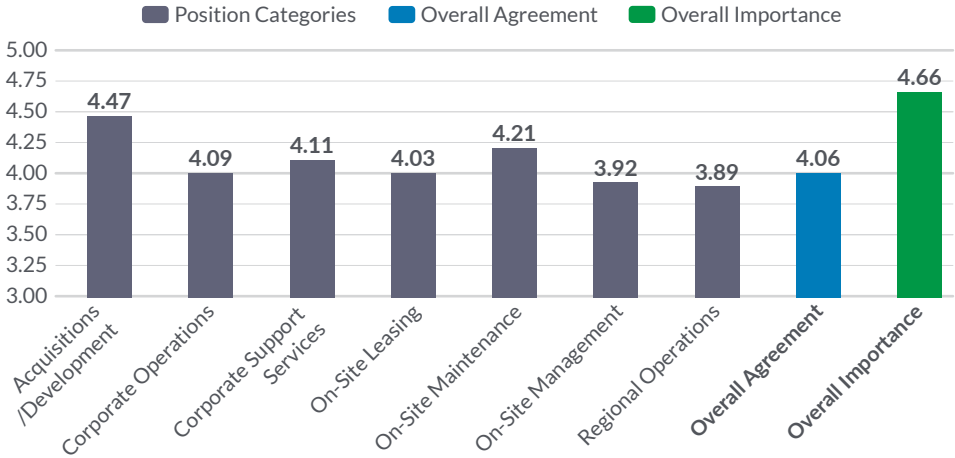
- “Don’t add any new methods/systems unless it replaces at least two old systems.”
- “I cannot stress how much I get behind on my work due to time that is taken on (internal) calls and other reports and audits that we have.”
- “There is no support. We either do not have enough employees or are terrible at handling our positions. When help is needed it can take weeks to get help, if you actually get it. You will have to email so many times and hope you get a response.”
- “Hire and spread the workload out so employees have time to do their tasks AND have time to plan, collaborate, and do new projects. I’ve seen many people spin their wheels and just get the basics of their job done.”
- “Many employee experience seminars and fun things to do are offered, but there isn’t enough time to get expected work done, so participation in these is not practical.”

Workload

Topic

I have the necessary resources, tools, technology, and support to do my job well

Score By Position



Summary

Overall, rental housing employees expressed slightly higher Agreement that they have the necessary resources, tools, technology, and support to do their job well over the previous year. However, a significant gap of 0.60 points exists between overall average Agreement and Importance. Concerningly, 11% of On-Site Management and 14% of Regional Operations team members disagree that they have what they need to do their jobs well. With the lowest levels of Agreement among all position categories and the only ones below 4.00 on a 5-point scale, these people leaders are in need of additional support. Expectedly, these positions also have the lowest levels of Agreement regarding their workload being able to be completed in the time allowed.

Executive leadership can use employee surveys to uncover valuable insights regarding the greatest obstacles associates face in completing their work. Often, the challenges that employees cite simply require an approval for positive change. Facilitating that can improve the team’s daily work experience and sense of productivity and accomplishment.

Workload I have the necessary resources, tools, technology, and support to do my job well

Agreement Distribution

	Totally Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally Agree
Overall	3%	7%	16%	31%	43%
Acquisitions/Development	0%	1%	11%	28%	60%
Corporate Operations	2%	8%	13%	33%	44%
Corporate Support Services	2%	6%	13%	37%	42%
On-Site Leasing	4%	9%	13%	27%	47%
On-Site Maintenance	2%	4%	15%	29%	50%
On-Site Management	3%	8%	20%	32%	37%
Regional Operations	3%	11%	18%	31%	37%

What employees are saying:

“[Employees] don’t feel valued when we work with the most outdated, antiquated, slow, sluggish computers. When we ask for more memory or something to help us work more efficiently, we are told it’s too expensive, yet we know that management is working on new and powerful computers. There seems to be a class system in place at this company.”

“There is too much being thrown on the managers. By definition, this is already a very challenging job, and there is barely enough to time to get it all done as it is. Every month, something new is getting tossed onto the manager’s plate of responsibilities. It is easy to be sitting at corporate and keep passing out tasks down the chain that look good on paper, but I am not sure if they realize what they are doing to managers. We already had a full job as it is, and there is no more room for any more work being piled on. When new initiatives and reports keep being created, it may seem small when you look at it in bite size pieces but over the months/years, it really starts to add up to something impossible.”

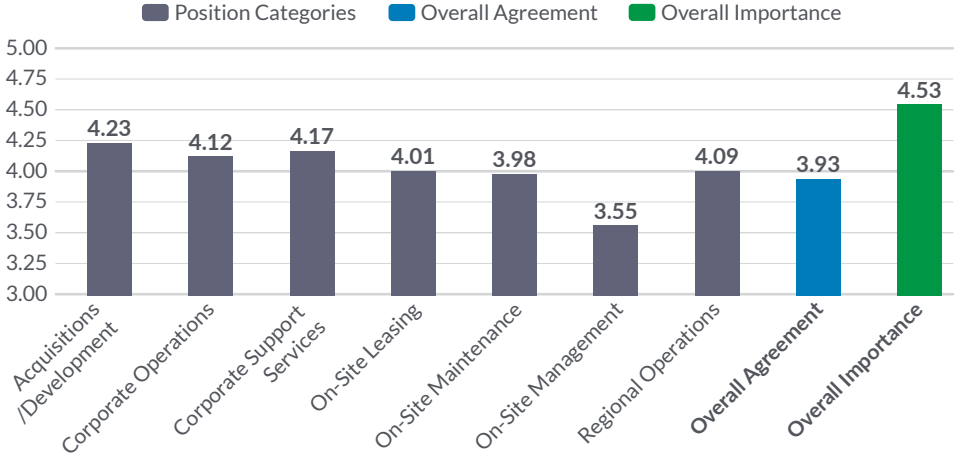
“The company needs to get with the times in terms of technology, etc. Most companies give managers a company card for expenses, employee lunches, etc. This company does things the old fashioned way with petty cash and cash reconciliation. You also have to submit support tickets for operations management to fix ledgers, and you have to do your own calculations of how to adjust ledgers instead of it being done for you.”

Onboarding

Topic

I am given adequate time during office hours to participate in or complete required training

Score By Position



Summary

Topics related to employee onboarding have become a serious risk to employee engagement and retention. Within the first 90 days of employment, only two out of three new hires agree that they are given adequate time during office hours to complete required training. On-Site Management, Leasing, and Maintenance associates express the highest levels of disagreement. This is significant, as they are the customer-facing representatives of the organization.

Common themes in employee comments include frustration at being expected to jump in and work immediately without receiving training and a lack of one-on-one instruction.

While rental housing companies have been experiencing more vacant positions than usual, new hire training can still be prioritized to ensure that associates understand expectations, are familiarized with basic tools and technology, and know who to turn to with questions. This sets new employees up to be able to start contributing to the workplace more quickly and confidently, which is a key factor in employee retention.

Onboarding I am given adequate time during office hours to participate in or complete required training job well

Agreement Distribution

	Totally Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally Agree
Overall	7%	9%	16%	20%	48%
Acquisitions/Development	5%	3%	9%	30%	53%
Corporate Operations	6%	0%	23%	18%	53%
Corporate Support Services	1%	4%	21%	25%	49%
On-Site Leasing	9%	9%	9%	17%	56%
On-Site Maintenance	8%	7%	16%	17%	52%
On-Site Management	8%	17%	22%	18%	35%
Regional Operations	0%	18%	1%	36%	45%

What employees are saying:

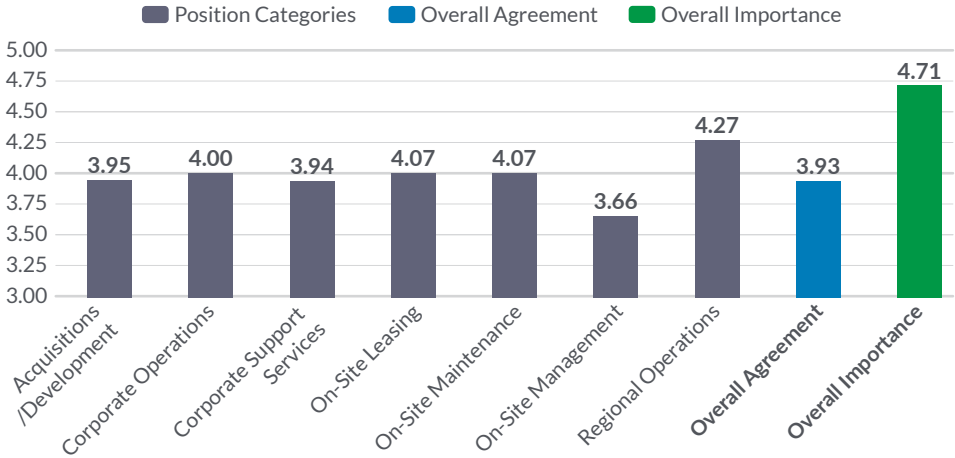
- “Dedicated time is needed to knock out the virtual trainings versus coming into the office. There should be a couple meet ups with trainings to see consistency is happening on all properties.”
- “Have more time to actually get training done, not expected to work regular day and train and work off clock to get half of training done but be expected to get work done when not trained yet!”
- “Need to be a little more understanding about timeframes and the training that is required to do the job right.”
- “We were already short staffed, so the training got ignored. Only received Word documents instead of actual guidance.”
- “Prior to being put on the job, required training should be completed to better assist and know how to better jump in and help.”

Onboarding

Topic

The training provided has helped me become effective at doing my job

Score By Position



Summary

With a gap of 0.79 points between Agreement and Importance, this topic is one of the top risks for new employees. Only 69% of rental housing employees agree that the training provided in the first 90 days of employment helped them become effective at doing their job, while 13% disagree. On-Site Managers appear to have the greatest challenge, with 18% disagreeing that their training has helped them become effective.

Company leaders are encouraged to critically review the training that is delivered to new hires during onboarding to ensure it matches with the knowledge and skills these associates need to be successful. In addition, defined training plans can help track new employees' progress on acquiring the knowledge and skills needed for their specific roles. If the plans are not being completed, leaders can seek to understand the obstacles the new hire is facing in feeling effective in their role.

Onboarding The training provided has helped me become effective at doing my job

Agreement Distribution

	Totally Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally Agree
Overall	6%	7%	18%	27%	42%
Acquisitions/Development	3%	5%	24%	30%	38%
Corporate Operations	6%	0%	22%	33%	39%
Corporate Support Services	4%	6%	21%	30%	39%
On-Site Leasing	4%	9%	14%	23%	50%
On-Site Maintenance	5%	6%	12%	29%	48%
On-Site Management	10%	8%	22%	25%	35%
Regional Operations	0%	0%	27%	18%	55%

What employees are saying:

“Training should be offered to all new employees and not just to employees on new properties. Watching (instructional) videos for 8 hours did not train me on the office work or how to deal with residents. I still do not know how to print an inventory and condition form and trying to find someone to show me how is difficult when everyone is only concerned with their own work. A lot of the work is put on me that the others in the office don’t want to do, but I don’t have the tools or knowledge on how to do it.”

“I couldn’t access my email the first day. I am two months in, and I still don’t have a clear idea of all my job duties or how to do my job confidently. I didn’t get any training until my second week.”

“Clearer instructions and a better training plan. I feel like I am just winging it. I hope for things to get better soon.”

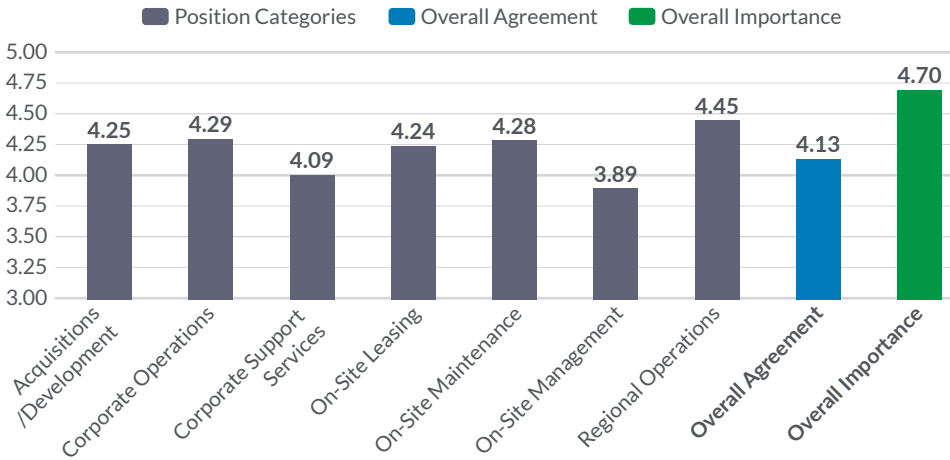
“The lack of assistance, guidance, and leadership for training has been beyond disappointing. Most days I am trying to just blindly teach myself my own job. I do not feel supported at all.”

Onboarding

Topic

I have access to the training and development needed to do my job well

Score By Position



Summary

While 77% of rental housing employees in their first 90 days of employment agree they have access to training and development needed to do their job well, 1 in 10 disagree. On-Site Leasing and On-Site Management associates are most impacted, with 11% and 13% disagreeing they have access to necessary training, respectively. These two roles have the farthest reaching impact on a company’s internal and external customers, so employees’ lack of confidence in their readiness to perform poses a significant risk. On-Site Managers often impact the greatest number of direct reports, and On-Site Leasing associates interact with a great number of residents and prospective residents. For this reason, they should have unfettered accessibility to training and support in their roles.

Common desires expressed in employee comments include more in-person training options, off-site training to allow focus on the learning, and access to mentors or peers to field questions.

Even companies with robust training programs can find that new hires don’t know where to access training or don’t feel they can step away from day-to-day responsibilities to complete training. Communicating where to find or request instruction as well as creating time and space for the learning to occur should be prioritized, especially in an employee’s first 90 days of hire.

Onboarding I have access to the training and development needed to do my job well

Agreement Distribution

	Totally Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally Agree
Overall	4%	6%	13%	27%	50%
Acquisitions/Development	0%	3%	16%	33%	48%
Corporate Operations	6%	0%	6%	35%	53%
Corporate Support Services	1%	7%	17%	33%	42%
On-Site Leasing	5%	6%	7%	25%	57%
On-Site Maintenance	4%	4%	10%	23%	59%
On-Site Management	5%	8%	22%	23%	42%
Regional Operations	0%	0%	9%	36%	55%

What employees are saying:

“I spoke with my manager and asked her for more training. Hopefully one day.”

“A more robust training program, including training on company-specific policies and procedures, is needed. The current program is for system training only and includes .the standard procedure for (property management software), not the specific (Company) way. There is virtually no training on the help desk ticket procedure and the polices surrounding it. I had to learn how to use it by trial and error and lots of tickets being rejected. Having a dedicated mentor for each new hire that is familiar with the role would also be helpful.”

“Have a specific training employee dedicated to train new hires for at least their first week. I was not given this, and this caused me to be shown many different ways to do things, which caused confusion and not knowing the correct procedures. I was also told by my original manager not to go to her for leasing training which is not acceptable when I did not have a scheduled trainer dedicated to me. I was not set up for success, nor have I had a single moment to do any online training.”

Conclusion

In today's highly competitive labor market, retaining talent in the rental housing industry is exceptionally challenging. The 2023 Swift Bunny Employee Engagement Report provides valuable insights into areas of greatest opportunity regarding the employee experience. The findings highlight how critical it is for rental housing companies to build and support a company culture that features competitive compensation and addresses company communication, career development, balanced workload, and a comprehensive onboarding process. By making these aspects of the work experience a priority, employees are enabled and empowered to do their best work in an environment of mutual respect throughout all levels of the organization.

Research and Report Design

The 2023 Swift Bunny Employee Engagement Report utilized a two-dimensional approach to assess the importance of employee engagement topics compared to the agreement with those topics based on employee experiences with their current employer. This provides the ability to identify the alignment of importance and agreement, as well as defining significant gaps or imbalances between importance and satisfaction. In addition, a correlation analysis provides a third dimension to identify the drivers of an employee's likelihood to remain with their company in the next year. The report is based on surveys completed by employees representing over 300,000 apartment units nationwide. The study's findings may be shared with the requirement that all content is sourced as follows:

Swift Bunny 2023 Employee Engagement Risk Report, swiftbunny.com.

How We Can Help

Swift Bunny offers a suite of multifamily-specific talent management solutions. Ingage by Swift Bunny™ is the apartment industry's first employee lifecycle feedback system. The solution pairs meaningful data with personalized insights and planning, empowering multifamily leaders to take specific action to solve their greatest workplace challenges. Inquire by Swift Bunny™ is a flexible and user-friendly custom survey solution for collecting opinions and feedback from both employees and residents. Intouch by Swift Bunny™ is a multifamily-specific customer survey solution. Uncovering honest feedback from both employees and customers can help organizations to identify priorities, reduce employee and resident turnover, and improve the bottom line. Learn more at swiftbunny.com, contact@swiftbunny.com, or 888.896.2933.