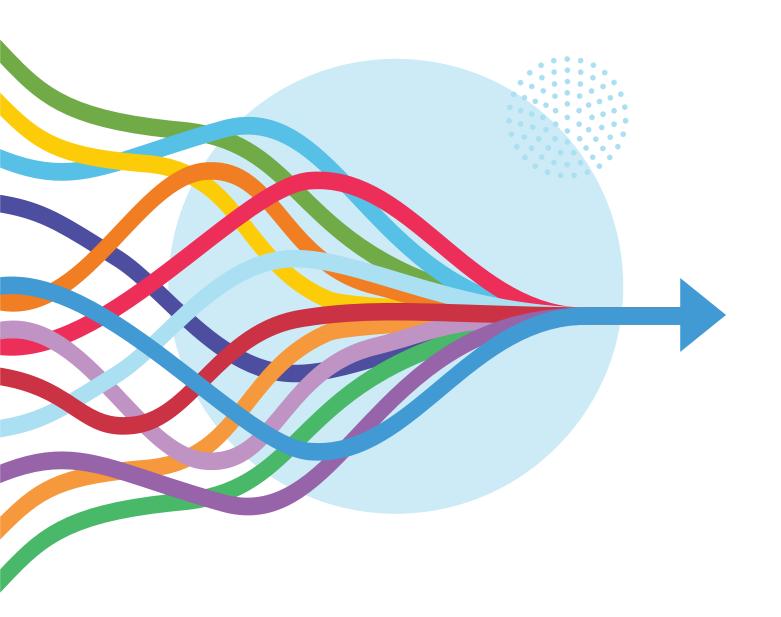# motivosity

13 CEOs on How to Build a Culture of Resilience

Building a resilient culture has been the focus of successful organizations and leaders for decades. Resiliency is just as important in the workforce as it is in a personal life—strengthening the ability to withstand or recover quickly from difficult conditions. In business—just as in life—ups and downs are inevitable. And when your culture is based on resilience, you can ride the waves and come out ahead.

But what most CEOs and other leaders get wrong is understanding how to build a resilient culture. And the how starts with creating a culture of connection and community. When everyone on the team—or in the business—feels connected to the mission of the business, respected for their work, and supported by their colleagues, you create a community that helps everyone better cope with change, support each other during hard times, share the good, and dispel feelings of fear and insecurity.

What are the steps to achieve such a culture? We asked 13 CEOs for advice. In these pages they share 13 crucial lessons and 13 actionable insights you can take to build a culture of resilience in your company.

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Fostering Empathy in Leadership

"The fundamental skill leaders need to build a culture of resilience is empathy. Empathetic leadership creates an environment where employees feel valued, supported, and safe. That last one is critical for a resilient culture; when employees feel that they can safely express concerns and share ideas, they are much more equipped to bounce back from setbacks.

In my organization, my leadership team is tasked with fostering community and connection. We have an open-door policy and encourage team members to share feedback, concerns, and suggestions.

We do our best to be transparent in our decision-making and include team members at all levels of experience. This helps reinforce resiliency in the face of challenges and changes, and it fosters an environment where diversity of thought leads to creative decision-making."

Key Takeaway:

Building a culture of resilience starts with your leadership team. When leaders create an environment where employees feel empowered to share feedback, supported in their work, and valued by the business, resilience can grow.

Actionable Insight:

Consider implementing an open-door policy or an anonymous feedback option so employees can share feedback, concerns, and suggestions. eNPS and employee surveys create another opportunity to take a pulse on employee satisfaction and feedback for the business.

Neal Frick
CEO,
CyberCore Technologies

Neal Frick, the CEO of CyberCore Technologies, has over 20 years of proven experience growing organizations through a people-based approach. Author of the book, "The E Suite: Empathetic Leadership for the Next Generation of Leaders," Neal offers advice on how to wield empathy in the workplace to build high-performance organizations.

"The fundamental skill leaders need to build a culture of resilience is empathy…When employees feel that they can safely express concerns and share ideas, they are much more equipped to bounce back from setbacks."

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Having a Strong and Clear Purpose

"Every company needs to have a "why" for the product or service they are offering. It's not just to make a profit; it's about the problem or issue the company is addressing to make life better for their customers or clients.

When times get tough, if you don't have a clear business purpose, you can easily get distracted. Resilience is about recovering quickly, failing fast, and bouncing back strong—to do this, you need a strong purpose."

Key Takeaway:

Understanding your "why" in business isn't just for earning sales. Getting clear about your "why" can help your team understand how to make life better for your customers. When everyone understands the "why," they feel their purpose, helping build resilience.

Actionable Insight:

If your team doesn't understand the "why" of your business (or if your business isn't clear on the "why"), communicate that message and give everyone the opportunity to feel their purpose in the mission of the business. Company values also create a good opportunity for employees to stay connected to the business—helping everyone see how they can emulate the values the business rates highly.

Vincent Walden
CEO,
KonaAI

Vincent Walden has more than 20 years of experience as a legal, compliance, and investigation technology innovation expert. In his work he advises clients on forensic data analytics monitoring and investigative programs focused on anti-corruption, sanctions and trade compliance, antitrust, information governance, and legal discovery. Vincent is internationally recognized as an anti-fraud and compliance thought leader, writer, and speaker.

"Resilience is about recovering quickly, failing fast, and bouncing back strong—to do this, you need a strong purpose."

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Integrating Your Mission Into Daily Work

"What I have seen is that if you remain true to your mission and continue to integrate your mission, not just in words but in actions, then your team members will eventually be convinced that your mission matters.

They can learn to live out that mission in their daily work. This is the most powerful impact I have seen to build resiliency, as it builds meaning and purpose at work. Folks see the impact we are making on our patients and community."

Key Takeaway:

Businesses that remain true to their mission—and continue to embed that mission in their daily work—cultivate employees that believe in that mission and in turn, build resilience as a team.

Actionable Insight:

Encourage your organization to integrate the company's mission and values into every action within the business. Leadership should model what this looks like, tying back goals and projects to the mission, vision, and values of the organization.

Jason Lohr
CEO,
SAC Health

Jason is passionate about service, locally and globally. As CEO of SAC Health System, the largest specialty and residency-based Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) in the nation, he is humbled to lead an organization that serves more than 36,000 patients with 144,000 visits annually. Jason has a passion for global health and continues to serve overseas 4 weeks each year. Jason has also earned a Fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives, FACHE credential, showing his commitment and dedication to healthcare leadership.

"[Employees] can learn to live out that mission in their daily work. This is the most powerful impact I have seen to build resiliency, as it builds meaning and purpose at work."

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Setting a Tone for Resilience

"The most important thing a CEO can do to build a resilient culture is to establish and set the correct tone. Employees will act in whatever manner you set the tone.

For instance, back in 2008, the CEO of an airline company told his employees that he would not take a salary for a year because profits had dropped substantially. They readily agreed when he asked them to allow the company to hold their pay steady during the recession. He set the tone and led by example. That is strong leadership.

In business, transparency with employees is especially important for negative impacts. Being honest and telling them how we plan to deal with the effects sets a proper proactive tone that helps them deal with the situation."

Key Takeaway:

The culture of the business and the attitude of the employees starts at the top. Leadership sets the tone for the entire organization.

Actionable Insight:

Implement transparency into your organization, especially if something negative is on the horizon. Be honest and clear with your employees about how you plan to deal with the challenge as a business.

Bruce Tasios
CEO,
Tasios Orthodontics

Dr. Bruce Tasios pours his heart and soul into every smile he creates. Thousands of patients have trusted him to give them the smile of their dreams. Dr. Tasios has a long list of accomplishments including Fellow of the Royal College of Dentists of Canada (Orthodontics), Diplomate of the American Board of Orthodontics, Specialty Certificate in Orthodontics (Rutgers University), Master of Dental Science (Rutgers University), General Dental Residency (Mount Sinai Hospital), Doctor of Dental Surgery (University of Toronto), and a Bachelor of Science (Queen's University). Dr. Tasios pursuit of perfection in every aspect of orthodontic care has helped him establish an award-winning orthodontic experience.

"The most important thing a CEO can do to build a resilient culture is to establish and set the correct tone."

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Aligning With Organizational Intent

Our tendency in the West is to focus on actions. "What shall we do?" The key to building a culture of resilience is the foundational work on who we are.

Clarifying, communicating, and enforcing alignment with the organization's purpose, vision, values, and strategic intent is crucial. This foundation empowers resilience at every level of the organization.

Key Takeaway:

Too many leaders focus on actions, when the key to building a culture of resilience at your business is focusing on the work of who you are as a person. Spending time figuring out how you align with the vision, values, and the purpose of the business is the first step in building resilience.
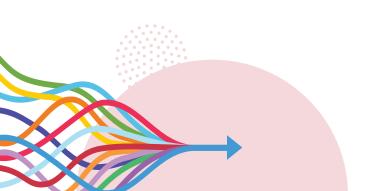
Actionable Insight:

Every level of the organization needs to understand how they align with the business's purpose, vision, values, and strategic intent. Consider implementing time to help individuals find out how they align in onboarding and annual check-ins.

Robert White
Founder and CEO,
Extraordinary People, LLC

Robert White works with entrepreneurs, executives, and professionals eager to live extraordinary lives personally and professionally. His entrepreneurial and training/mentoring experience helps him get clients real results. As an experienced CEO, Executive Coach, Transformational Leadership Trainer, and best-selling author, Robert helps leaders and their teams maximize leadership effectiveness for real results.

"The key to building a culture of resilience is the foundational work on who we are."

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Embracing Responsibility and Foundational Habits

"Launching CoinLedger, we aimed to embed resilience deeply into our operational fabric with a straightforward "You build it, you own it" mantra. This principle implies enduring responsibility for maintaining creations and fostering robustness among our engineers.

Inspired by "Atomic Habits," we prioritize foundational habits, such as precision in crypto-tax management, to build sturdy systems progressively. Our engineers evolve into Site Reliability Engineers (SREs) and embrace full ownership of their creations, ensuring flawless operation even during nocturnal hours.

We focus on being really tough and reliable. This helps keep our platform working well and makes sure our users can trust us, even when things in the crypto world are changing a lot."

Key Takeaway:

Prioritize foundational habits to help build resilient systems. By encouraging employees to embrace full ownership of every task, everyone at the organization breeds responsibility for both creating new work and iterating on that work.

Actionable Insight:

Consider asking your team to read "Atomic Habits" and discuss which habits might help your organization build more resilience. Integrate the "you build it, you own it," principle to help everyone feel connected and responsible to the vision of the business.

David Kemmerer
Co-Founder and CEO,
CoinLedger

As Co-Founder and CEO of CoinLedger, David Kemmerer has built an extensive career in leadership and innovation. CoinLedger was built to solve the challenges cryptocurrency presents staying compliant with tax laws and to help further enable the crypto economy. David's resume hosts a long list of accomplishments including a Bachelor of Business Administration in Finance, Investment, and Banking from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Forbes Contributor, and time at both NetSuite and Oracle.

"We aimed to embed resilience deeply into our operational fabric with a straightforward "You build it, you own it" mantra."

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Encouraging Communication and Ongoing Training

"Developing a culture of resiliency within a business is essential for its long-term success. The promotion of open and transparent communication is an essential action. In a dental practice, fostering an environment where team members feel at ease expressing their concerns, suggestions, and opinions is beneficial.

Regular meetings are held to discuss obstacles, generate solutions, and recognize achievements. Adapting to unexpected situations, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, can be achieved by encouraging open communication. This strategy helps collectively navigate uncertainty and provides mutual support.

In addition, prioritizing ongoing training and development ensures that the team has the skills necessary to handle any circumstance. Investing in the development of employees increases their self-assurance and resilience in the face of adversity, contributing to a culture of resiliency."

Key Takeaway:

To ensure long-term success of any business, a culture of resilience is essential. To do this, leaders must promote open, ongoing, and transparent conversations. These actions help employees feel comfortable sharing concerns and feedback, helping build a culture of teamwork and resilience.

Actionable Insight:

Prioritize training and development for your entire team. This can ensure each employee has the skills they need to handle any circumstance, increase their self-assurance, improve their job skills, and build resilience.

Dr. Jennifer Silver
CEO, Owner, Dentist,
Macleod Trail Dental

Born in Newfoundland, but now an Albertan for 15 years, Dr. Jennifer Silver is the CEO and Owner of Macleod Trail Dental. Dr Silver has a great understanding of patients' needs. She enjoys taking time to discuss procedures and treatment options so every patient feels comfortable and at ease at Macleod Trail Dental. Dr. Silver graduated with a Doctor of Dental Surgery from the University of Melbourne, Australia where she also received an award for the Most Outstanding Research Project, the William Leslie Elvins Prize, and graduated on the Dean's Honours List.

"Developing a culture of resiliency within a business is essential for its long-term success."

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Minimizing Complexity to Succeed

"It's all about minimizing complexity. Complexity can often be the enemy of resilience. The fewer changes you have to make when facing challenges, the better. So, we've focused on streamlining our processes and making incremental changes rather than massive overhauls. By keeping things straightforward, we've made it easier for our employees to adapt and bounce back when hurdles arise.

It's about fostering a culture where everyone knows their role and can respond to changes with confidence and agility. So, yes, simplicity has been a key factor in building our resilient company culture."

Key Takeaway:

Minimize the enemy of resilience—complexity. When challenges arise and the team is required to make massive overhauls, resilience stalls out. Instead, streamline processes and prioritize incremental changes to help everyone stay on track, stay motivated, and stay the course when things get hard.
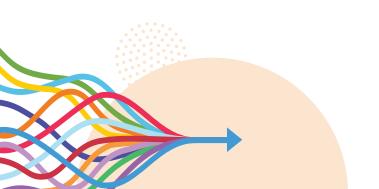
Actionable Insight:

A resilient culture starts with a culture where everyone knows what their role is and how they contribute to the big picture. Don't just do this one—consider opportunities throughout the year where you can reinforce the necessity of every role and every employee.

Dom Wells
CEO,
Onfolio

Buying profitable online businesses and helping them grow is Dom Wells' superpower. As CEO and Founder of Onfolio Holdings, Inc., Dom is responsible for developing and implementing Onfolio's long term business strategy. He is a serial entrepreneur with more than a decade of experience investing in and building digital businesses. Dom has grown Onfolio from a startup to a NASDAQ listed company. For Onfolio's investors, Dom has built a diverse and profitable portfolio of online businesses that deliver consistent returns. Dom is passionate about entrepreneurship and regularly speaks on digital business strategy, online business investment and profitable growth opportunities. For Dom, diversification and exceptional talent are the keys to sustainable growth.

"Complexity can often be the enemy of resilience. The fewer changes you have to make when facing challenges, the better."

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Prioritizing Employee Well-being

"To foster a resilient culture, a company should place paramount emphasis on the well-being of its employees. This includes both physical and mental health, as well as work-life balance.

When employees feel supported and valued by their employers, they are more likely to be resilient in the face of challenges. This means providing resources for stress management, promoting work-life balance, and creating a positive and inclusive workplace culture.

Regular mental health check-ins with employees have been implemented and resources such as counseling services and mindfulness workshops are offered. A healthy work-life balance is also encouraged by promoting flexible work schedules and offering wellness benefits like gym memberships."

Key Takeaway:

A resilient culture is one that prioritizes employee well-being. Work-life balance, flexible work schedules, and wellness benefits all help employees improve their physical and mental health which in turn, helps them become more resilient at work.

Actionable Insight:

Flexible work schedules and wellness benefits can help employees feel supported while improving their well-being. If your company doesn't have any wellness benefits, consider adding them. If you do offer these benefits, encourage your employees to use them.

Mark Buskuhl
Founder and CEO,
Ninebird Properties

Mark Buskuhl is the Founder and CEO of Ninebird Properties. A long time Dallas-Fort Worth resident, Mark started buying real estate in 2002. Over the years he and his team have paid cash for homes, lots, and tracts of land all over North Texas, oftentimes changing entire streets and neighborhoods. Mark has extensive experience in mortgage lending, construction, land development, property appraisal, real estate title issues, probate, heirship, property taxes, and real estate sales. This has positioned Ninebird Properties to become one of the leading cash home buyers in Dallas Fort Worth.

"When employees feel supported and valued by their employers, they are more likely to be resilient in the face of challenges."

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Cultivating Learning and Adaptation

"One pivotal step in fostering a culture of resilience within a company is to prioritize continuous learning and adaptation. In the realm of book service and publishing, this translates to staying attuned to ever-evolving reader preferences, market trends, and technological advancements.

We've embraced this by encouraging a culture of curiosity. We promote open dialogue, regularly host workshops on industry innovations, and empower our team to experiment with new ideas. By nurturing a learning mindset, we equip our employees to weather challenges, pivot when necessary, and thrive in an ever-changing landscape."

Key Takeaway:

Prioritize learning and adaptation to help your business foster resilience. To do this, leadership needs to cultivate a culture of curiosity through open dialogue, encouraging new ideas, and even hosting workshops that allow team members to learn and discuss industry innovations.

Actionable Insight:

Promote continuous learning at your organization through traditional professional developments, company-wide sponsored learning events, and encouraging everyday learning and experimenting with new ideas.

Vikrant Shaurya
CEO,
Authors On Mission

Vikrant Shaurya is a visionary entrepreneur, bestselling author, and the Founder and CEO of Authors On Mission. With an unyielding passion for books and storytelling, Vikrant embarked on a mission to revolutionize the publishing industry. Under his leadership, Authors On Mission has thrived as a comprehensive, 100% done-for-you service that has empowered over 500 authors to transform their ideas into bestselling books.

"By nurturing a learning mindset, we equip our employees to weather challenges, pivot when necessary, and thrive in an ever-changing landscape."

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Promoting a Growth Mindset

"A key action a company can take to create a culture of resilience is to promote a growth mindset. This involves encouraging employees to be open to feedback, take risks, and practice continuous learning.

For instance, our company has a #no-failure-feedback Slack channel where team members can share constructive criticism with each other, either by sharing their own observations or passing along comments from clients.

Any department can respond to threads with encouragement and advice. Since Slack is a searchable platform, other employees can also learn from these experiences in the future. Plus, the public nature of the channel destigmatizes requesting help and creates a teamwork mindset."

Key Takeaway:

The three key pillars of a resilient culture all center around how leadership encourages employees to show up for work. Encouraging openness to feedback, risk, and continuous learning starts at the top with leaders modeling the same behavior.

Actionable Insight:

Consider implementing a #no-failure-feedback Slack channel at your organization where employees can share feedback and constructive criticism.

Michael Alexis
CEO,
teambuilding.com

Michael Alexis is the CEO of teambuilding.com, a business built to lead smart, fun, engaging building activities. As a Canada native, Michael studied Tourism at University of Guelph then law at University of British Columbia. Michael is best known for his obsession with Level 10 Integrity, Asimov non-fiction, and ultra-light living.

"A key action a company can take to create a culture of resilience is to promote a growth mindset."

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Empowering Your Team With Autonomy

In the journey with ZenMaid, one pivotal practice has been underscored: empowering the team. As a CEO, I've realized that resilience isn't just about enduring; it's about equipping the team with the authority and the resources they need.

It means allowing them the autonomy to make decisions, solve problems, and think outside the box. This not only boosts their confidence but also fosters a spirit of resilience.

Incorporating this approach, everyone has been actively encouraged to take ownership of their tasks and their outcomes. Feedback, continuous learning, and innovation are promoted.

It's not merely about task completion but understanding the bigger picture and the impact of their contributions. This mindset, rooted in empowerment, has been a driving force in crafting a resilient and dynamic team."

Key Takeaway:

Empowerment is the most pivotal practice you can implement to build a culture of resilience. By empowering the team with the authority and resources they need, everyone can make decisions, solve problems, and take ownership of their work.

Actionable Insight:

Minimize micromanagement by empowering your team with as much decision-making power as possible. Help each team member understand the impact of their contributions and give them the opportunity to take ownership over their work.

Amar Ghose
CEO,
ZenMaid

Amar is the founder and CEO of ZenMaid Software, Inc. He started and ran Fast Friendly Spotless, a maid service in Orange County, CA. With the help of customized software to automate work he successfully operated the service in under 30 minutes per day. He created ZenMaid scheduling software to help other maid service owners do the same.

"As a CEO, I've realized that resilience isn't just about enduring; it's about equipping the team with the authority and the resources they need."

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Prioritizing Employee Happiness

"Disconnection at work has become such a massive problem that even the U.S. Surgeon General is focusing on it as part of his administration. Harvard Business Review indicates that lonely employees are a top driver of voluntary turnover and cost US businesses up to $406 billion per year. When companies decide to invest in helping make employees happier at work, they'll see the benefits in productivity and in retaining their best talent longer. Team members will collaborate better and be more resilient in the face of organizational change or economic obstacles.

Building connections at work isn't difficult, but it does require some intentionality and willingness to put the people-side of work above the productivity side at certain times. Here are a few quick ideas any business could use to get started: make time in meetings to share personal experiences or highlights, create opportunities for people to be together without having a business agenda to it, invest in technology that helps like-minded individuals form communities within the organization, give the entire team funds for appreciating each other. Each one of these is a proven difference-maker when it comes to being connected at work."

Key Takeaway:

By prioritizing employee happiness, you can impact employee productivity, your team's connection, and your organization's resilience. Focusing on employee happiness doesn't have to take a lot of effort, but it does require intentionality and the willingness to prioritize your employees over productivity when needed.

Actionable Insight:

Helping your team build relationships can be as simple as carving out time during meetings so employees can connect on a personal level, sharing about their weekend or upcoming plans. It can also mean planning team or group events where everyone can relax and connect and not talk about work. And for the organizations that are ready to take it to the next level, consider investing in technology that can help facilitate a social place for everyone to connect digitally and recognize good work.
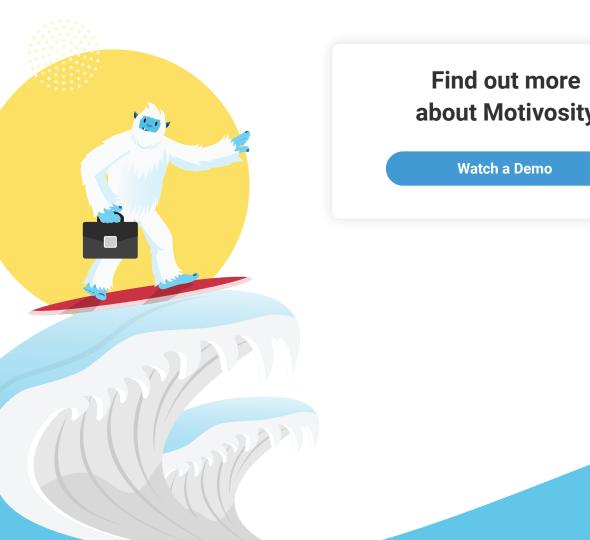
Scott Johnson
Founder and CEO,
Motivosity

Scott Johnson is the Founder and CEO of the leading employee experience software, Motivosity. He is recognized as a technology leader and entrepreneur who has spent his career focused on making people's time at work count for something more. Scott is passionate about leveraging technology in social ways to ultimately help people be more effective and get more value out of life. Motivosity helps companies promote gratitude and connection in today's digital era of work.

"When companies decide to invest in helping make employees happier at work, they'll see the benefits in productivity and in retaining their best talent longer."

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Build a Culture of Resilience with Motivosity

Empower your employees, promote team building, and help everyone see the impact of their work on the business with Motivosity, the employee experience platform that helps you create and foster connected, winning cultures. With Motivosity, you can make your employees' experience at work more meaningful, get real-time insights into employee engagement, help managers create the right habits focused on employees, and build a community of connection and gratitude with peer-to-peer recognition.

Find out more about Motivosity

Watch a Demo

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