

Mid-Year
WORKFORCE
INTELLIGENCE
SNAPSHOT

Mid-Year

WORKFORCE

INTELLIGENCE SNAPSHOT

What we are seeing across the workforce in 2026, and what executive teams need to be watching before year-end.

As companies navigate continued economic uncertainty, AI adoption, workforce transformation, and evolving employee expectations, EMBER's Workforce Performance System™ continues to measure the behavioral conditions that drive organizational growth and revenue for companies.

This mid-year snapshot highlights six emerging patterns across EMBER's benchmarking data. Together, these signals show how workforce identity, culture, leadership, employee experience, and workplace execution are evolving as enterprises move through the second half of the year.

Table of Contents

02 - 03	—	Executive Overview
04 - 08	—	Workforce Insights
09 - 10	—	Workplace Trends
11 - 12	—	Actions Leaders Can Take
13 - 14	—	Signals Summary
15	—	How to Reach Us

ABOUT THE DATA

The insights in this report are powered by EMBER™, the first workforce performance system to causally link workforce identity with business outcomes and revenue. Built on nearly a decade of empirical research and validated across Fortune 500 companies and more than 25 industry sectors, the system combines proprietary workforce intelligence, predictive analytics, and enterprise benchmarking to help leaders better understand the workforce and workplace conditions that influence revenue growth, innovation, customer experience, brand strength, and organizational performance.

EMBER is exclusively partnered with Newmark in commercial real estate, bringing proprietary workforce and workplace intelligence to the firm. The system combines its insights with Newmark Consulting Group's strategic advisory to help organizations make more informed decisions about culture, organizational design, leadership, transformation, workplace, and business performance.

AHEAD OF THE FULL 2026 WORKFORCE PERFORMANCE REPORT

These mid-year findings provide an early view of the cultural, workforce, and workplace conditions shaping leading, global companies today. The full 2026 Workforce Performance Report, to be released later this year, will include expanded benchmark findings, industry comparisons, executive insights, and emerging trends to help leaders strengthen employee experience, accelerate transformation, and improve business performance.

What we are watching at mid-year?

Six patterns emerge across the data and show how workforce performance is evolving as companies move through the second half of 2026. The findings reflect EMBER's full ten-signal system: six workforce vital signs and four workplace indicators.

01

Organizational identity is becoming a competitive advantage.

Companies with stronger workforce identity continue to demonstrate greater resilience through transformation, organizational change, and technology adoption.

BUSINESS IMPACT

When employees share a clear sense of organizational identity and direction, transformation requires less interpretation, encounters less internal friction, and moves through the business faster.

LEADERSHIP MOVE

Define the few elements of identity and direction that must remain consistent through transformation, then reinforce them through leadership decisions, operating priorities, and resource allocation.

HOW TO APPLY

- Name the three enterprise priorities that guide tradeoffs across functions.
- Use the same language and decision criteria across executive meetings, town halls, and manager communications.
- Redirect funding, talent, and leadership attention toward the priorities the company says matter most.

TAKEAWAY

The enterprises that are moving the fastest are not necessarily the ones investing the most. They are the ones whose people understand who they are, what matters, and where the business is going.

EXECUTIVE SIGNAL

+18%

IDENTITY ADVANTAGE

Top-quartile companies maintain workforce identity scores 18% above the benchmark during periods of significant transformation, giving employees greater clarity and direction as the business changes.

02

Leadership alignment matters more than leadership visibility

Employees increasingly respond to consistency between leadership decisions rather than communication frequency alone.

BUSINESS IMPACT

Conflicting executive signals slow execution, weaken trust, and force managers and employees to interpret strategy for themselves.

LEADERSHIP MOVE

Align the message, decision logic, tone, and channel across the executive team before communications go out. Prioritize consistency over cadence.

HOW TO APPLY

- Agree on what has changed, what has not changed, and what employees need to do differently.
- Resolve conflicting priorities before asking managers to cascade them.
- Use one shared set of terms and measures across leadership communications and operating reviews.

TAKEAWAY

Employees do not need to hear from leaders more often necessarily. They need to hear a consistent message and see it reinforced through leadership decisions and actions.

EXECUTIVE SIGNAL

▼14%

CONNECTED LEADERSHIP

A 14% decline in Connected Leadership indicates that employees are receiving less consistent signals about priorities, decisions, and direction.

03

AI readiness is primarily a human challenge.

Companies continue investing heavily in AI, yet readiness appears determined by trust, role clarity, and leadership confidence rather than technology deployment alone.

BUSINESS IMPACT

AI investment will outpace value realization when employees do not understand how roles, decisions, and performance expectations are changing.

LEADERSHIP MOVE

Manage AI readiness as a workforce transition. Clarify what work will change, what remains human, how success will be measured, and where employees can safely experiment.

HOW TO APPLY

- Identify the tasks AI will augment, automate, or leave unchanged in priority roles.
- Create clear guardrails for experimentation, data use, escalation, and human review.
- Equip managers to explain how performance expectations and career paths will evolve.

TAKEAWAY

Successful AI adoption is behavioral before it becomes technical.

EXECUTIVE SIGNAL

2.6X

AI READINESS GAP

Technology investment is advancing 2.6 times faster than workforce readiness to adopt and apply it.

04



Employer brand is becoming an internal performance strategy.

Stronger internal workforce identity create more credible employee advocacy, stronger recruitment positioning, and greater organizational resilience.

BUSINESS IMPACT

Workforce identity is an early indicator of whether the company can credibly deliver its market and employer promise.

LEADERSHIP MOVE

Audit the gap between the company's external promise and the employee experience. Correct the highest-impact contradictions before increasing employer-brand investment.

HOW TO APPLY

- Compare recruiting messages with the realities employees experience after joining.
- Identify policies or leadership behaviors that contradict the stated culture or brand promise.
- Use employee feedback and operational data to fix the experience before amplifying the message.

TAKEAWAY

The strongest employer brands are built on an employee experience that makes the external promise credible.

EXECUTIVE SIGNAL

9mo

IDENTITY LEAD TIME

Changes in workforce identity tend to appear up to nine months before measurable movement in business outcomes.

05

Performance is becoming more connected.

The strongest enterprises no longer manage culture, leadership, talent, workplace, and brand independently. They are beginning to measure them as one connected performance system.

BUSINESS IMPACT

Siloed interventions may improve a local metric while leaving the larger conditions constraining performance unchanged.

LEADERSHIP MOVE

Create a shared executive view of workforce performance that connects people, workplace, brand, technology, and business measures to the same strategic outcomes.

HOW TO APPLY

- Connect workforce measures to revenue growth, customer outcomes, innovation, and transformation milestones.
- Review leadership, talent, brand, technology, and workplace investments together rather than in separate functional forums.
- Prioritize interventions that improve multiple performance conditions at once.

TAKEAWAY

Workforce performance tied to business growth, not isolated HR metrics.

EXECUTIVE SIGNAL

+22%

PERFORMANCE EDGE

Companies with stronger workforce identity outperform peers by 22% across the benchmark measures most closely linked to execution, innovation, employee advocacy, customer experience, and business performance.

The Workplace has been redefined to mean the Workforce.

WORKPLACE IDENTITY SCORE (WIS™) IS THE STANDARDIZED MEASURE OF WORKPLACE VALUE.

The workplace is where that signal is either reinforced or contradicted through leadership, organizational design, technology, culture, and the daily experience of work.

As companies continue investing in transformation, AI, and new ways of working, the workplace is becoming far more than a physical environment. It has evolved into a strategic operating system that influences how quickly people adopt change, align around priorities, build trust, and execute strategy. The enterprises creating the strongest business outcomes are intentionally designing employee experiences that align with, rather than compete with, their culture and strategic direction.

WIS measures whether the workplace conditions employees experience every day translate culture into stronger execution and market growth.



06

The workplace is becoming a strategic advantage.

Organizations with the strongest workforce performance use the workplace as a strategic business lever, aligning leadership, organizational design, technology, and the employee experience around business strategy to drive more consistent execution across the enterprise.

BUSINESS IMPACT

The workplace has become one of the most influential drivers of organizational performance, shaping culture, collaboration, innovation, AI adoption, leadership effectiveness, and the employee experience. When these conditions reinforce workforce identity, companies move faster, adapt more effectively, and execute strategy with greater consistency.

LEADERSHIP MOVE

Treat the workplace as a business system rather than a facilities decision. Evaluate whether leadership behaviors, organizational design, technology, employee experience, and workplace policies are reinforcing the culture and strategic priorities the company is trying to build.

HOW TO APPLY

- Test whether decision rights, tools, policies, and physical or digital environments support the way teams are expected to work.
- Align workplace investments with transformation, AI adoption, customer experience, and growth priorities.
- Identify moments in the employee experience where the company's stated culture is reinforced or contradicted.

TAKEAWAY

The workplace is no longer simply where work happens. It is how culture, leadership, technology, organizational design, and strategy are experienced by employees every day.

EXECUTIVE SIGNAL

+31%
WORKPLACE EXECUTION ADVANTAGE

Organizations with the strongest WIS use space as a driver, aligning leadership, organizational design, technology, and the employee experience around business strategy to ensure more consistent execution across the enterprise.

Why workplace decisions matter

REAL ESTATE AND WORKPLACE DECISIONS ARE NOT DOWNSTREAM SUPPORT CHOICES.

They are operating decisions that can accelerate or inhibit role clarity, AI adoption, brand delivery, collaboration, and execution. WIS gives leaders a way to connect those decisions to the workforce conditions that drive business performance.



The executive question is no longer simply whether employees are engaged.

It is whether the company has created the identity, culture, leadership, employee experience, and workplace conditions required to execute its strategy.

FIVE ACTIONS BEFORE YEAR-END.

1

ALIGN THE EXECUTIVE SIGNAL.

Resolve inconsistencies in priorities, language, and decision logic before increasing communication volume. Create one enterprise narrative that leaders can apply consistently to decisions, investments, and employee communications.

2

TRANSLATE STRATEGY INTO ROLE-LEVEL MEANING.

Make clear what the strategy changes for teams, roles, decisions, measures of success, and the way work gets done. Employees should be able to explain how enterprise priorities affect their own work.

3

DIAGNOSE AI READINESS BEFORE SCALING DEPLOYMENT.

Identify where trust, role clarity, leadership confidence, skills, policy, or workplace conditions could prevent adoption. Address the human transition with the same discipline applied to the technology implementation.

4

TEST WHETHER THE WORKPLACE SUPPORTS EXECUTION.

Evaluate whether space, tools, technology, policy, leadership behaviors, and work practices reinforce the culture and behaviors the strategy requires.

5

MEASURE THE SYSTEM, NOT ISOLATED SYMPTOMS.

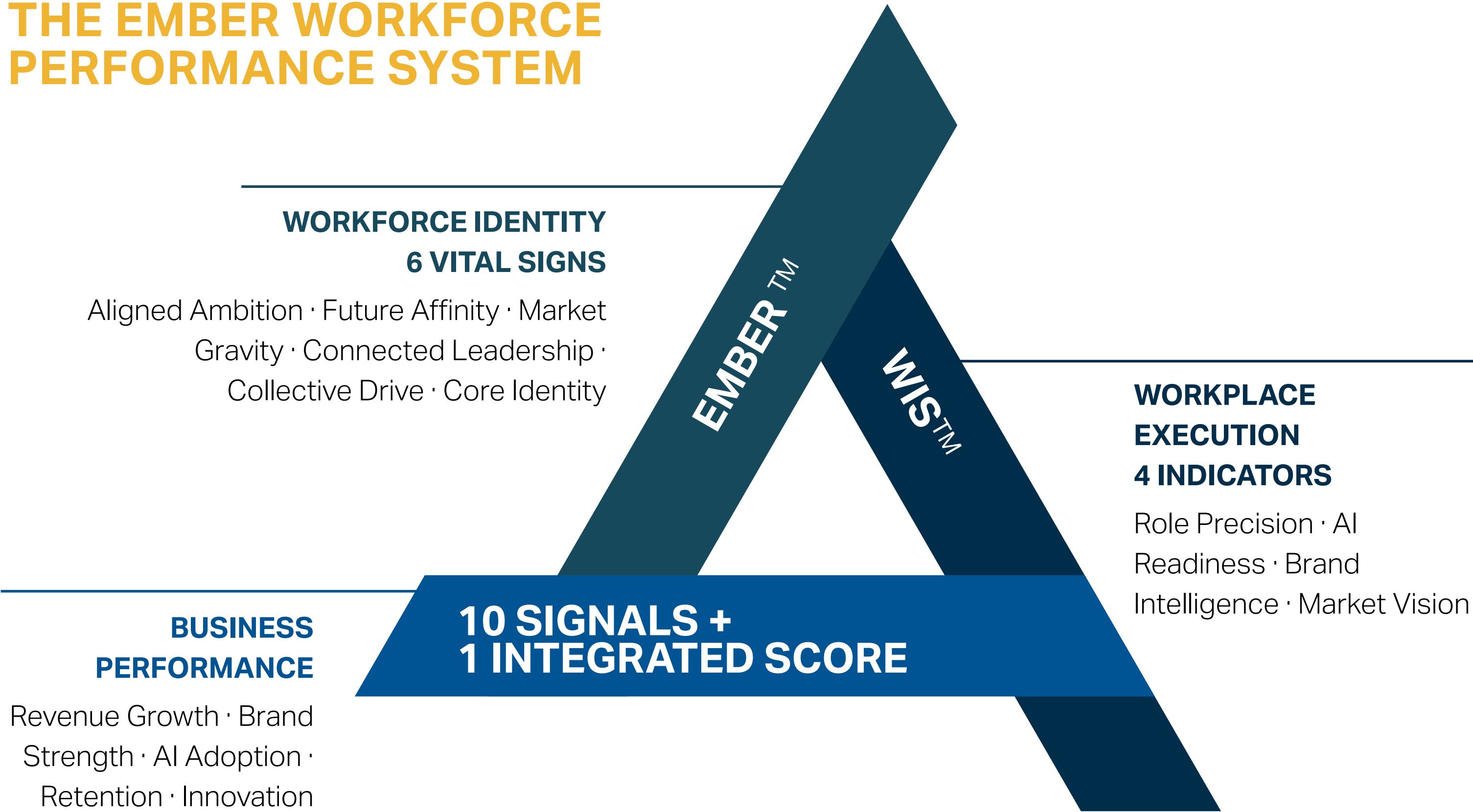
Connect workforce identity and workplace execution to prioritize the interventions with the greatest business impact. Use a shared executive scorecard rather than disconnected functional measures.

A 2026 mid-year pulse on the conditions shaping performance.

These six emerging findings provide an early view of the workforce and workplace conditions shaping the second half of 2026. They point to a broader shift: workforce identity is becoming a clearer signal of organizational readiness, while the employee experience and workplace determine whether that identity becomes execution and performance.

The full 2026 Workforce Performance Report will expand this analysis with deeper benchmark findings, sector comparisons, and implications for leaders navigating transformation, AI adoption, culture, talent, brand, and growth.

THE EMBER WORKFORCE PERFORMANCE SYSTEM



ENGAGEMENT CREATES NOISE.
IDENTITY CREATES SIGNAL.

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT | NOISE

Scattered, reactive, and difficult to translate into a single direction for action.

WORKFORCE IDENTITY | SIGNAL

One clear, directional indicator connected to organizational performance.

Employee engagement scores can move in multiple directions at once and rarely point to a unified course of action. Workforce identity resolves those fragmented signals into a measurable indicator, while workplace conditions determine whether that signal becomes organizational performance.

THE
PROOF

FORTUNE 500 BENCHMARKING

Built on proprietary first-party workforce data from Fortune 500 enterprises across 25 industry sectors.

CAUSAL METHOD

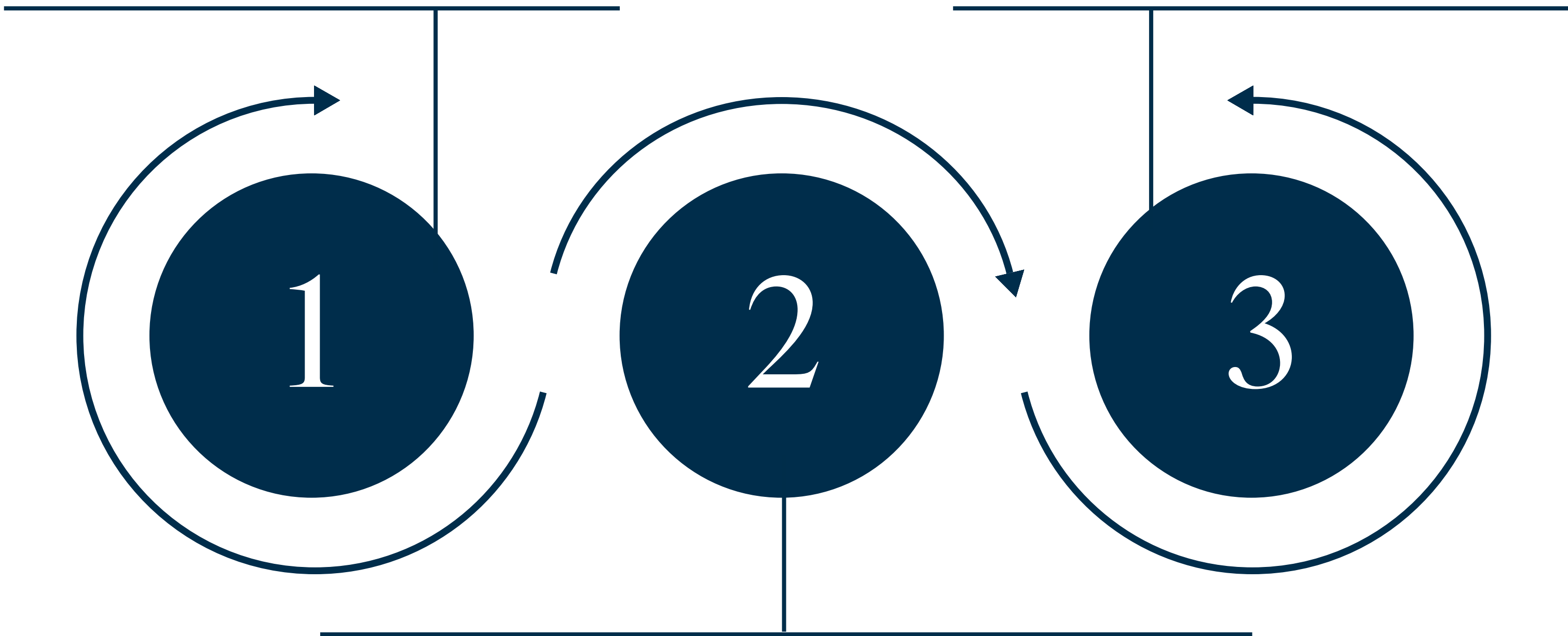
The first system to causally link workforce identity to revenue growth.

IRB-APPROVED STANDARD

Standardized and statistically validated to U.S. federal review-board protocols.

UP TO 25% OUTCOME

Revenue improvement delivered across client engagements.



EXECUTIVE INTELLIGENCE SNAPSHOT

NEARLY A DECADE OF DATA

Longitudinal workforce intelligence built across nearly 10 years.

THOUSANDS OF ORGANIZATIONS

Proprietary benchmarks spanning organizations at scale across the market.

MILLIONS OF DATA POINTS

A deep first-party evidence base connecting workforce dynamics to enterprise performance.

25 INDUSTRY SECTORS

Cross-sector intelligence spanning the breadth of the U.S. economy.

TOP 25% PERFORMANCE QUARTILE

Highest-identity organizations outperform peers on revenue per employee.

ABOUT EMBER SCIENCE

EMBER™ is the Workforce Performance System™, helping organizations measure, predict, and strengthen workforce performance through the validated science of Collective Organizational Identification (COI™). Built on more than a decade of empirical research, EMBER enables leaders to move beyond traditional engagement metrics by measuring the workforce and workplace factors that are causally linked to organizational performance, brand strength, AI readiness, and revenue growth.

The Workplace Identity Score (WIS™) extends that science by measuring whether an organization's workplace is designed to reinforce workforce identity through leadership, operations, organizational design, and culture. Together, COI™ and WIS™ form the first integrated system measuring both workforce identity and workplace performance, enabling organizations to design identity-driven workplaces that strengthen execution, innovation, AI readiness, brand performance, customer experience, enterprise value, and revenue growth.

Learn more at emberinsight.com

EMBER is exclusively partnered with Newmark in commercial real estate, bringing proprietary workforce and workplace intelligence to the firm.

AN EMBER REPORT IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
NEWMARK CONSULTING GROUP (NCG)

*Want to see how
your organization
compares?*

Validated with proprietary
first-party workforce data
across multiple Fortune 500
companies and 25
industry sectors.

SCHEDULE AN EXECUTIVE BRIEFING

Connect with our team to see
where your company stands
and what to do next.

Dr. Yasmeen J. Coning

Executive Vice Chairman,
Newmark Consulting Group

yasmeen.coning@nmrk.com

Heather Watson

Partner, Behavioral Science Studio,
Newmark Consulting Group

heather.watson@nmrk.com

NMRK.COM/NCG