

Welcome to the Era of **Zero Drag** Organizations

The Trickle-Down Effect of Change

What happens when disruption becomes the new norm?

Where organizations no longer have the time to absorb one seismic shift, recalibrate, and prepare for the next.

Today, that era of sequential change is over.

Trade policies are shifting. The pandemic reshaped the very definition of work. Visa restrictions are tightening borders. Climate change is intensifying. Geopolitical tensions are destabilizing economies. And AI is transforming industries overnight, while misinformation continues to spread at an unprecedented scale.

The times we live in are truly unprecedented. And at the center of this storm stand the leaders, tasked with providing direction when the ground itself is moving. However, ***Only 2 in 10 CHROs report that their leadership teams took early action and maintained stability through recent crises, clearly showcasing that not every leader feels prepared to act in these times of uncertainty.***

This leadership uncertainty doesn't remain confined to the top, it trickles down throughout the organization. Employees too, are left navigating uncertainty, which can quickly translate into insecurity about their roles. One clear example is working alongside AI: not because it is replacing jobs today, but because its impact on tomorrow's roles remains unclear.

Over time, this lack of clarity erodes confidence, focus, and commitment.

Lastly, these changes no longer unfold over years or even quarters; they emerge day by day, touching every corner of the organization. Every second CHRO acknowledges that managing change is not an occasional hurdle, but a persistent challenge of modern leadership.

So, the question is no longer whether change is coming, it is already here and will remain a constant. The way to move forward now is not to respond once disruption arrives, but to build the readiness to navigate it.

This is where Zero Drag organizations come in. These organizations adapt and optimize their systems to remove friction, so information, decisions, and work move smoothly. They prepare before change becomes urgent, acting when it can still be understood, shaped, and managed, rather than experienced as overwhelming.

This is why the next decade will not be won by strategy alone. It will be defined by culture, trust, and leadership capability.

Uncertainty and Change is Increasingly Influencing Employees' Decisions When Selecting a Workplace.

Today, employees are increasingly prioritizing workplaces with strong cultures, with 90% considering work culture a key factor when choosing an employer.

This preference reflects how expectations of work are changing. Employees are looking for better work-life balance, clarity on where their careers are headed, and environments that enable productivity and meaningful work.

As a result, 6 out of 10 employees say they are willing to accept a reduced salary in exchange for improved workplace culture and flexibility, clearly signaling where their non-negotiables are shifting.

In a skills-driven market, this makes one thing clear: employees gravitate toward organizations where culture enables balance, clarity, and performance. Organizations that get this right gain a decisive advantage, with 8 out of 10 employees saying that knowing a workplace is Certified™ makes them more likely to want to work there.

Therefore, culture serves as a talent magnet, retention engine, and productivity enabler for organizations that want to succeed in a skills-driven market.

8 in 10

employees say that knowing a workplace has been certified makes them more likely to want to work there.

90%

Employees cite work culture as a crucial consideration when selecting a potential employer.

6 in 10

are willing to accept a reduced salary in exchange for improved workplace culture and flexibility.

Great Culture Becomes Your Competitive Advantage

We observed from our recent Voice of India study that Great Workplaces handle the current pace of change differently. They promote faster information flow by clearly communicating expectations and welcoming challenging ideas. Decisions are quicker as management involves employees and considers different viewpoints. Change feels manageable because employees feel valued, management is competent, and the workplace is welcoming.

With clear information, decisions can be made faster and with more confidence. And when people see that their input matters and decisions make sense, they feel safer and more capable of navigating change.

In this way, change stops being a source of anxiety and becomes something the organization and employees can manage together.



Why Culture Remains a Metric for Growth in the Future Where Change is Constant

No matter how the industry shifts or how the future of work evolves, culture remains the foundation of every organization. It shapes how people collaborate, how leaders lead, and how organizations respond to change.

In times of uncertainty, culture becomes the steady force that enables organizations not just to adapt, but to thrive. Yet the growing complexity of today's world demands more than adaptation. It requires us to remove friction from the workplace, the unnecessary processes, misalignments, and barriers that slow people down.

Organizations that do this successfully create environments where clarity replaces confusion, alignment replaces resistance, and momentum replaces drag.

These are what we call
Zero Drag Organizations.



The Zero Drag Organization

As we move into an age of acceleration, organizations are discovering that their highest cost is no longer payroll. It is drag, drag on speed, drag on trust, drag on judgment, and drag on collaboration.

In this new reality, the winner isn't the biggest organization, but the one with the least friction. The competitive advantage of 2030 will come down to organizational aerodynamics: how smoothly work, decisions, and information move through the system.

Insights from the Voice of India 2025 study reinforce this shift.

Great Workplaces don't remove people to improve performance. They remove drag. They delete friction, not belonging.

Great Place To Work.



They simplify decision-making, reduce unnecessary approvals, and allow trust to do the heavy lifting. Because when trust increases, drag reduces. When drag reduces, throughput increases. And when throughput increases, growth follows. That is the economics of culture. **That is the Adaptation P&L.**

Welcome to 2030, the era of the Flow Advantage. By the end of this decade, Great Workplaces will be significantly stronger than their peers, not just in financials, but in resilience, stakeholder confidence, and brand equity.

Why? Because the future doesn't reward scale. It rewards flow. In the decade ahead, advantage will belong to organizations that move fastest, not because they are larger, but because they carry less drag.

Employee

Employee

Employee

Employee

01

Leadership

Listening
Speaking
Developing
Inspiring
Thanking
Sharing
Celebrating
Hiring
Caring

02

Experience

Trust
Pride
Camaraderie
For All

03

Culture

Collaboration
Innovation
Agility
Opportunity
Belonging
Well-Being

04

Performance

Profitability
Productivity
Efficiency
Customer Satisfaction
Social Impact
Market Resilience
Talent Acquisition
Retention

This is the *Great Place To Work Effect*

High-trust leaders build trust, which shapes the employee experience. Companies that cultivate great cultures outperform the market and competition on nearly every business metric, regardless of size, industry, or geography.



How Better Performance Is the Outcome of Culture

Beyond responding to employee expectations or external disruption, culture plays a decisive role in organizational performance. In environments of high trust, work moves faster, coordination improves, and energy is spent on execution rather than friction.

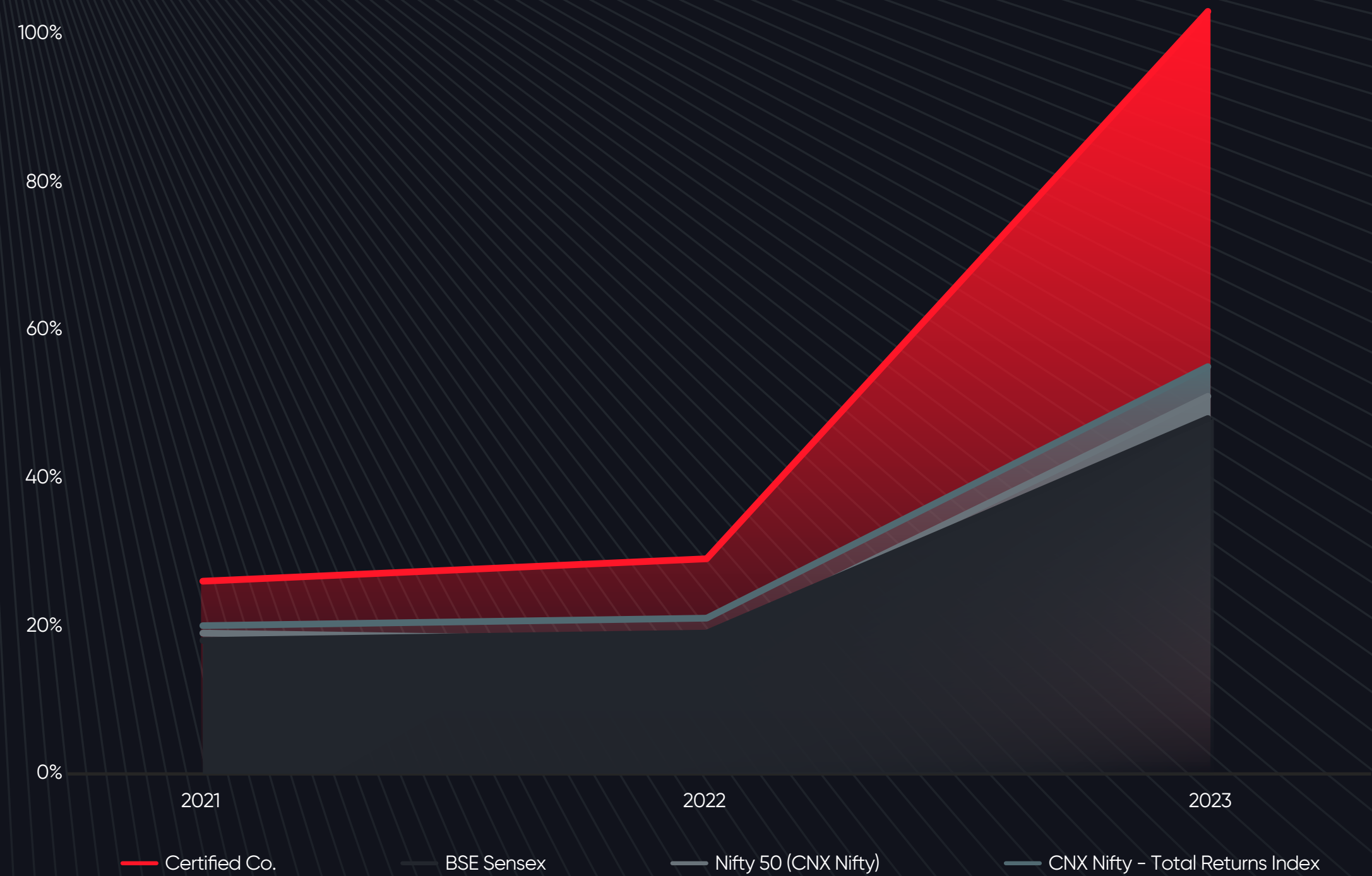
This shows up clearly in performance. Over time, these advantages compound supporting stronger profitability, sustained growth, and resilience through disruption. This is the Great Place To Work Effect, where we see culture translate into impact and performance.

This is why Great Workplaces are better equipped for the era of Great Adaptation. They are not reacting to change; they are designed for it. Trust enables faster decisions, inclusion expands influence, and culture becomes the engine that allows organizations to adapt, scale, and compete, regardless of market size.

Culture is a performance multiplier, in growth cycles and in moments of disruption alike. With Great Place To Work® Certified Organizations delivering a cumulative returns of 103%, it tells us that organizations built on trust don't just survive volatility; they compound resilience, accelerate execution, and outperform their peers.

For CHROs and CXOs leading through this era of changes, the question has fundamentally shifted.

It is no longer whether culture deserves investment. It is whether sustained business performance is possible without it.



*The question then becomes, **how do we intentionally build culture** as a strong pillar and **remove organizational drag**?*

Three Actions to Build a Zero-Drag Organization

Three Ways to Build Adaptation Velocity

01 Accelerate Workflows

Reduce approvals, handoffs, and rework loops. Empower teams to test ideas quickly, make decisions within clear guardrails, and move from insight to action without unnecessary delays.

02 Shift Leadership from Control to Enablement

Push decision authority closer to the work. Leaders provide context, priorities, and constraints while building teams capable of making high-quality decisions independently.

03 Design Systems for Flow, Not Friction

Identify and eliminate structural bottlenecks, measure cycle times, and replace low-value controls with transparency and trust. Make speed and adaptability core organizational metrics

Begin Your Zero Drag Journey

When organizations remove drag systematically, performance compounds. Teams move faster, learn faster, and execute faster. And speed becomes a sustained competitive advantage, not a one-time sprint.

The organizations that will lead in 2030 are being built today, not through grand announcements, but through deliberate choices to remove friction, one system at a time.

Think it through, and get started on your journey to becoming a *Zero Drag Organization* today.



About us

Great Place To Work® is the global authority on workplace culture. Our mission is to help every place become a great place to work for all. We give leaders and organizations the recognition and tools to create a consistently and overwhelmingly positive employee experience, fostering cultures that are proven to drive business, improve lives, and better society.

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Get Certified

Great Place To Work Certification™ is the most powerful way to elevate your employer brand, attract, retain, and engage the right people, and get the tools to unlock their potential.



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