

TEAM ACE PRESENTS

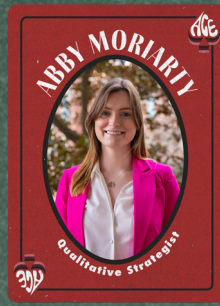
THE PERFORMANCE REVIEW



2024 STATE OF THE YAYA



MEET THE TEAM



Team Ace

We are a team of 11 unique and talented people coming together to craft an impactful message. We are stronger when we are together, and that is why we will ace anything we set our minds to. We empower each other to do the best work that we can do. Win or lose, we enjoy the opportunity to do these incredible projects, create lasting friendships and have some fun along the way! The ace is the strongest card in the deck and like the ace, we intend to be the strongest team that we can be.

Concept Overview

Work is a circus. That's what YAYAs would say about the current workplace, anyway. As they apply for jobs, go to the office and prepare to build their careers, they often feel a connection to a variety of acts one would typically see under the big top. With Team Ace as your ringmaster, The Performance Review welcomes you into the workplace circus and introduces you to a cast of characters who feel pressure to perform in a ring that wasn't built for them. YAYAs may feel like an act in their management's circus and that their performance is under review, but it doesn't have to be that way.



THE PERFORMANCE REVIEW

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COME ONE, COME ALL!

Watch our newest workplace act, the endlessly flexible and perfectly balanced YAYA, perform an array of tricks to amaze and delight you. They can juggle multiple jobs, keep the balance between work and life and bend over backwards for your applause. Get a ticket while you can because we're dying to hear your performance review.

WHAT IS MOJO AD?

MOJO Ad is the premier student-staffed, full service agency at the University of Missouri. We specialize in the youth and young adult (YAYA) market. No one knows these consumers quite like we do. As members of this elusive demographic, we serve as liaisons between the YAYA market and the professionals seeking to reach them.

STATE OF THE YAYA

Originally coined by MOJO Ad, “YAYA” refers to 18- to 24- year-olds. These consumers are at a pivotal life stage in which they are developing their identities and embracing their reality. At 31 million strong in the United States, these consumers are choosing whether to stick with the brands they know or try new ones. If marketers fail to reach them, they might never catch up.

The State of the YAYA is an annual report that provides marketers with an in-depth look at the trends and activities of the 18- to 24- year-old market. Created by MOJO Ad staff, the report presents exclusive data to help marketers connect with them on a deeper level. This report not only highlights who they are as consumers, but individuals as well, by providing a deeper look at their attitudes and behaviors.

METHODOLOGY

Our 60-question survey was distributed nationwide through Qualtrics. This resulted in 850 completed responses from YAYA consumers. The sample was representative of the U.S. Census Bureau data for 18- to 24- year-olds related to race, ethnicity and gender. Our qualitative research consisted of 14 focus groups and 11 in-depth interviews with 82 total participants across the U.S. In addition to our primary research, we utilized dozens of secondary resources, including Mintel, Pew Research Center, Forbes, Statista and McKinsey & Co., plus past State of the YAYA reports, to gain a better insight into the evolving YAYA market.

WELCOME TO THE RING

Step on in, gather 'round and prepare to be dazzled. Welcome to The Performance Review! Behold, this circus isn't like one you've seen before. Instead of a tent, we've taken the show to somewhere a little bit more unexpected: the modern workplace. Throughout the performances, you will see our YAYAs attempt the impossible to maintain their careers. But first, allow me to introduce myself. I'm your Ringmaster—the storyteller who will guide you through this extraordinary journey, weaving our performers' narratives with the data.

Now, it's time to bring out our first act. Despite their best efforts, no one seems to be able to understand exactly what this performer is trying to say. Pay attention! They might not speak up, but if you look closely, you can see their frustration rising and rising. That's right, it's our very own Mime!

The Mime's story begins where any aspiring worker would: the job search. Like the Mime, YAYAs are eager to look for work opportunities, but are frustrated by the obstacles they face in the job search process. Entering the post-pandemic workforce has proven difficult for YAYAs, as employers have hundreds of unemployed but experienced workers to choose from instead of those just entering the workforce.¹ Because of this, 63% of YAYA respondents said they feel uncertain about the future of the job market.

Some of this uncertainty stems from the requirements in job postings. Sixty-seven percent of respondents felt that employers asked for an unrealistic amount of experience for entry-level positions. One focus group participant said, "It may be an entry-level position, but it requires five years of experience. You know they're not really looking for somebody that's entry-level." Much like the Mime, YAYAs feel as though they are being looked over in the job market, and struggle to express their concerns. When asked what emotion they most closely associate with the job search process, 26% of respondents answered stress.

Despite this, YAYAs are still hopeful! The second and third most closely associated emotions when searching for a job are excitement (16%) and joy (12%), with 54% of respondents saying they feel optimistic about the future of the job market.

The Mime's act isn't done yet! Once YAYAs finally find a job, they learn that it isn't what they expected. YAYAs are frustrated with different aspects of the workplace, especially as it pertains to current communication and feedback norms. In meetings, they find it difficult to get a word in and feel they have fewer chances to bring new ideas to the table.² But this just scratches the surface of what the Mime has to say.



YAYAs are looking to receive feedback in a way that differs from the traditional methods. Instead of waiting for annual or quarterly reviews, YAYAs want feedback on a more frequent basis. One participant said doing so “takes the pressure off a quarterly review because there’s more casual and frequent check-ins. I feel like if quarterly or annuals don’t go well, I’m like ‘How long were you feeling this way? How long were you ‘hating’ me?’” Similarly, 64% of YAYAs responded that their manager should not address something that happened over a month ago in a performance review. So, how often should feedback be given? The answer is up for debate. However, when asked whether they wanted multiple check-ins a day from their managers, 50% of YAYAs wanted that kind of input.

When giving feedback, a traditional strengths-based approach doesn’t resonate with YAYAs.³ To adapt to their employees’ needs, managers should focus on using tangible examples, relevant action steps and a futuristic vision when giving YAYAs feedback.³ Seventy-five percent of respondents want their supervisor to be hands-on with assignments. In doing so, managers can be more aware

of what YAYAs are currently working on and therefore have insight to give more frequent and relevant feedback.

On top of being actionable, YAYAs want their managers to intersperse positives and negatives; 78% of respondents said they want to be told what they’re doing well in addition to what they aren’t. When receiving any feedback, 72% of YAYAs want to be face-to-face with their manager. Why? One participant said, “When getting feedback remotely, like in an email or over Teams [messaging], it’s hard to read it sometimes because you can’t read someone’s facial expressions or tone of voice. It’s better with using Zoom or a Teams [video] call [because] you can’t necessarily read between the lines.” However, in the office, they also look to peers and managers for ways to learn. Seventy-two percent of YAYAs said they appreciate when their supervisor shares examples of when they struggled so they can learn from their supervisor’s mistakes. Overall, whether it’s positive or negative feedback they’re receiving, 76% of YAYAs want to be recognized for the work they do.

21%

biggest workplace frustration is a lack of **CONSISTENT FEEDBACK**

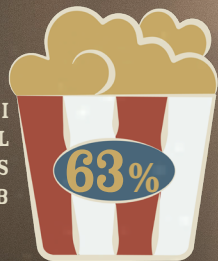


DATA EXTRAVAGANZA

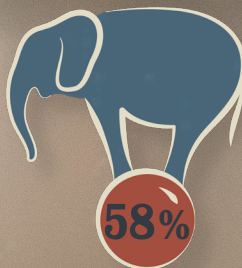


As digital natives, YAYAs are comfortable incorporating new technology. While they are open to AI in the workplace, some expressed reservations:

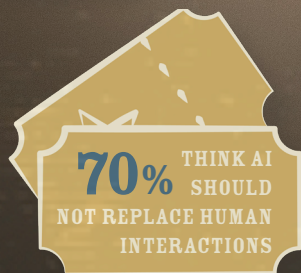
VIEW AI AS A TOOL THAT HELPS THEIR JOB



SPLIT ON IF AI HAS NEGATIVELY AFFECTED THEIR JOB



OPEN TO EXPLORING HOW TO USE AI IN THEIR JOB



THINK AI SHOULD NOT REPLACE HUMAN INTERACTIONS



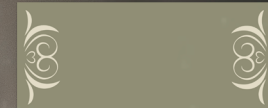
WORRIED ABOUT AI REPLACING THEIR JOB



USE VOICE TECHNOLOGY TO HELP THEM DO THEIR JOB

TOP WORKPLACE FRUSTRATIONS

21%



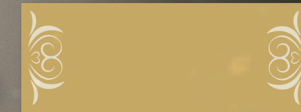
Unclear path of advancement

19%



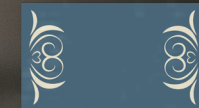
Menial tasks/busy work

24%



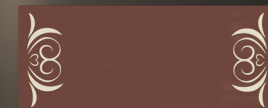
Lack of responsibility

15%



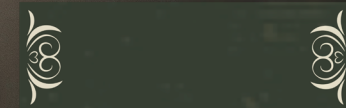
Don't see how responsibilities relate to company goals

21%



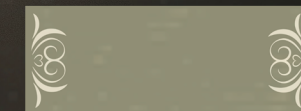
Lack of relationships with co-workers

27%



Company values profit over people

23%



Don't feel like their work is meaningful/making a difference

50% 40% 30% 20% 10% 0%

BEYOND THE BOX



I hope no one in our audience is claustrophobic because things might start to get a little tight as we step into the box of workplace norms. Nobody knows this better than our next act, the Contortionist. They've bent and twisted all out of shape to fit inside, but they can't help but wonder what they could do without these constraints. Like our contortionist, YAYAs are attempting to fit into workplace norms that feel restrictive and built for someone else.

Despite only just entering the workforce, 74% of managers reported YAYAs are more difficult to work with than other age groups because of a perceived lack of effort, motivation and productivity.¹ When YAYAs themselves were asked what notions their co-workers have of their age group, the top responses were that YAYAs are lazy, don't want to work, have a lack of motivation and lack a strong work ethic. One YAYA said, "I've heard that we get a reputation of being lazy and wanting things done for us without putting in the work, which I don't think is true of our generation—at least from my experience [and] from what I've seen."

*“I left my friends to
go to work because
they said they*

**NEEDED
ME.”**



Not wanting to negatively stand out in the workplace, YAYAs fit themselves into the box of workplace norms, trying to please their managers. For example, one participant said, “I had a job where I wasn’t scheduled, and they called me and told me they needed me immediately. I’m the kind of person that is not very good at saying no. I was already doing stuff with my friends, but I left my friends to go to work because they said they needed me.” Another participant said, “I feel like whenever I’ve had internships or jobs in the past, I push myself 10 times harder than I normally would just to make it look like I might go above and beyond.”

YAYAs come into the workplace expecting to have to work hard to combat these stereotypes. Another YAYA said, “As a Black woman, I already have to work [hard] to get to where other people are. So, when people say ‘Gen Z’s lazy,’ I’m just like ‘Well, okay, that’s another added layer I have to get up to.’” The pressure to combat these stereotypes is causing YAYAs to stretch and twist, but they’re not sure if they can hold their pose.

THE BALANCING ACT

This next act is all about balance—work-life balance, which can be challenging to pull off. Take it from our Unicyclist. Watch as they ride the fine line between their work and personal lives. All it takes is one small slip for them to fall off one way or another. Can they make it through the whole ride and finish their career perfectly balanced?

The Unicyclist isn't the only one trying to keep upright as YAYAs face the same struggles to maintain a balance between their work and personal lives. Our survey revealed that 21% of YAYAs are working multiple jobs. This is impressive when you consider that only 16% of the rest of the population is doing the same.⁴ The most popular secondary job YAYAs would be interested in working is content creation (47%), with 62% of YAYAs saying they consider being an influencer to be a career. Other side

ACT

gigs that interested YAYAs were food delivery (41%), babysitting (32%), photography/videography (30%) and serving/bartending (26%).

Why are YAYAs taking on more jobs than they can balance? Many indicated that they feel a second source of income is necessary to be financially stable. One participant echoed this sentiment saying, "I'm going into healthcare. A lot of people in my business don't make a lot of money, so they'll use those other side routes, like social media or stuff like that, to try to bring in that extra income."

Top three reasons for second jobs

59%
pay bills

43%
support
family

41%
spending
money





66%
*struggle to find a healthy
work-life balance*

In addition to working multiple jobs at once, many YAYAs are constantly striving to learn new skills to keep their act in the show. In fact, 79% said they need to constantly learn new skills to consistently advance their career; 71% percent said new skills help them feel like they are progressing in their career. While adding on more to what they're balancing is difficult, 75% of YAYAs enjoy "leveling up" in the workplace. One reason for this is because the accessibility of portable technology means education is no longer limited to a specific chapter of their lives.⁵ A shift to digital learning during the pandemic made online learning second nature to YAYAs.⁶ This is reflected through microlearning in their freetime with various social media

platforms.⁶ With all of this extra learning, it's no wonder that 76% of respondents said a person's job title doesn't always reflect their ability.

YAYAs know they can't continue to struggle to maintain balance, so they are looking to employers for support. Eighteen percent of respondents indicated that work-life balance should be an employer's top priority for their employees. A large part of having a healthy work life stems from having positive mental health. Eighty percent of respondents said their employer must value mental health, with 32% saying it should be their employer's No. 1 priority.

72% *would leave a company if it did not prioritize its employees' mental health*

Nearly half of YAYAs would quit their job if it interfered with their work-life balance.⁷ In general, YAYAs want their employers to recognize that their employees have other priorities. In fact, 78% of YAYAs responded that they appreciate when their supervisor understands that work may not be the most important thing in their life.

For remote workers, the boundary between work and life can be even more difficult to maintain. One of our participants spoke to this idea, saying that, "Sometimes it can be difficult to separate the workplace from my actual living space. Luckily, I have a separate room for [work], but it's not like I have a 15-minute drive home or anything to decompress. Once I'm done, I just walk out of my office. It's still kind of somewhat in your mind—what you've been doing at work all day."

"It's just work, work, work, and if you're not working 50 hours a week, then what are you doing with your life?"

On top of feeling overworked, 28% of respondents said their biggest workplace frustration is insufficient compensation. One participant said, "I don't want to get \$30,000 after I went to a four-year university and have experience in the industry." Not only do they feel underpaid for their qualifications, but

53% of YAYAs feel underpaid for how much time they dedicate to their jobs. Seventy-seven percent want to be paid for the exact amount of hours they work because of how often they stay late or are online after their set hours.

YAYAs want autonomy in their jobs. One-third of respondents said their biggest workplace frustration is that there is not enough flexibility in their work schedule, leading to 72% who want to work wherever and however they want, as long as they get their work done. For example, 74% of respondents would prefer to decide when they begin and end their workday, and 71% would prefer to work a four-day work week. In general, 69% said that they wish they had more independence over how their work gets done in the workplace. YAYAs aren't reliant on being in the office to be productive, with 66% of respondents saying they would prefer to work a remote job. No matter where they are working, independence and flexibility is something YAYAs crave. They'll move around until they find it, with 73% of YAYAs feeling it's normal for people their age to change jobs frequently.

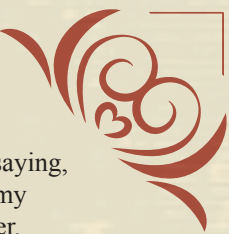
Between multiple jobs, learning new skills and working more hours than they're paid for, YAYAs are beginning to lose their balance. If they can't stay upright, their act might have to be reevaluated.

DRESS REHEARSAL



For our next act, our clown is going to take you all behind the scenes. In addition to being a comic genius, the Clown is a bit of a fashionista. Each day, they pull out a new outfit for dress rehearsal to try and make their performance the best it can be. Sometimes, this can be challenging. The Clown knows there's a formal dress code at the circus, but they feel like their performance is better when they're able to experiment with their costumes.

The bottom line is that YAYAs also want autonomy in what they wear to the workplace. They believe feeling comfortable and confident in their outfit allows them to produce better work, with 81% of YAYAs appreciating when their job's dress code is flexible. While the results are split on whether YAYAs actually want their jobs to have a dress code, 62% said they want to experiment with what a dress code could mean for their outfits. To that end, one participant said, "When I started my first internship, I felt like I had to go out and buy a whole new wardrobe. But, I also like having some freedom to express my own personal style and not be super boxed in."



Another participant echoed this idea, saying, "The more I like my outfit, the better my mood is. I feel like if my mood is better, then my work is probably better." Sixty-two percent of YAYAs agreed with this, saying that what they wear to work impacts their performance.

While some want to dress up, others want flexible work attire to be comfortable. Seventy-one percent of respondents feel that dressing comfortably at work makes them feel more productive, and 63% feel that they should be able to wear sweats to work. One participant agreed, saying, "If you're just in an office space working with each other, I don't think [dress code matters]. I think you should be allowed to come in with whatever you want to wear, whether or not it's a work [outfit], or if you just want to wear sweatpants."

Whether the dress policy is professional or casual, both YAYAs and the Clown want to be able to pick out an outfit that makes them feel comfortable. Only then are they confident enough to perform their best.



76%

want a flexible dress code to express their personal style because it makes them feel more confident

MORE THAN A PERFORMER

“It makes me want to work harder because you care about me as a HUMAN.”

As we come to the conclusion of our show, our performers want you to know something. They are very proud of the work they do and find a lot of meaning in their jobs. But, at the end of their performance, they wipe off their makeup, change out of their costumes and rejoin their lives outside of work. They want you to know they are more than what you see in the ring. They want you to connect with them as people, not just performers. YAYAs feel the same way: they want their employers to recognize the person behind their work and connect with them.

One participant said, “I never was able to form a relationship with any of my supervisors. We just strictly got on a Zoom business meeting, and then got off.” Another shared, “I hate corporate communication that’s like: ‘Good morning, comma.’ You can be professional, but also personal. Even just a ‘Hope you guys are having a good week.’ It makes me want to work harder because you care about me as a human and not just as another person completing tasks [for] your deadlines.”

To both YAYAs and our performers, there’s more to their job than just getting

the work done: 71% appreciate when their supervisor gets to know them outside of work, and 68% appreciate when their supervisor has conversations with them that don’t revolve around their jobs. One participant explained, “I would like [my supervisor] to be someone that I could connect with, and not just about work—someone I could actually be friendly with or have a conversation with.” In the end, 22% of respondents reported that it doesn’t matter what they do with their co-workers outside of work, as long as it’s authentic.

Along with a connection, 73% of YAYAs appreciate when their supervisors offer to help them with personal matters outside of their job description. One participant said they appreciate “having managers that take the time to ask about you, check up on you, make sure you’re making time for yourself.”

Performing each and every day is hard work. Getting to know co-workers helps alleviate some of the pressures of the job and makes it a more enjoyable environment.



68% *want connection with their co-workers outside of work*

IMPLICATIONS

Consistently providing personalized and timely feedback will make YAYAs more confident in their job performance.

FEEDBACK

If they know that they will be notified about a problem as soon as it arises, YAYA employees can focus on their current job performance rather than wondering about what will come up later in a performance review.

Implementing flexible dress policies increases workplace confidence and productivity.

DRESS

Every YAYA's preference for work attire is different. When YAYAs are allowed to wear what makes them comfortable, within reason, they find that their confidence and moods improve. When workers are feeling their best, they do their best work.

Mental health improves when YAYAs have agency over when to work, where to work and how to work.

AGENCY

YAYAs have a lot on their plates, and it's getting pretty hard to keep a healthy balance between their work and personal lives. To assist with this, employers can give their YAYA employees some support by implementing policies that give them more agency over their work.

YAYAs' ideal managers are invested in who they are as people, not just workers.

CONNECTIONS

YAYAs look to their supervisors for mentorship and connection. YAYAs feel more invested in their jobs when managers are willing to talk about non-work related topics and share personal stories about challenges they have faced in the past.

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Want to learn more about The Performance Review? Scan the QR code to watch short videos highlighting the research and our team.



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