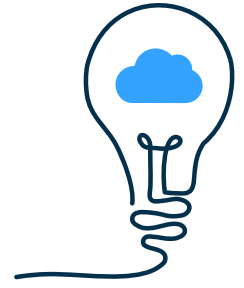# Curiosity@Work Report

2021

WHAT IS THE VALUE OF CURIOSITY?

On a global scale, curiosity is proving to be more than a trait, becoming an asset that is increasingly crucial to business performance and success. According to the Harvard Business Review[1], encouraging curiosity in the workplace has tangible benefits for company performance and growth. It can help companies adapt to changing market conditions and external pressures, drive innovation, improve staff morale, turnover and overall performance. It can help create a growth mindset, drive continuous learning, facilitate digital transformation and allow organizations to stay relevant in a world of constantly evolving trends.

Curiosity is defined as the impulse to seek new information and experiences and to explore novel possibilities. Though curiosity in the workplace has widespread benefits, its cultivation can't be achieved overnight, requiring intention, effort, and an organizational culture that allows it to flourish. Implementing the circumstances needed for its development can be a challenge for businesses and therefore an opportunity for more organizations to pioneer the advancement of this trait in their workplace.

SAS agrees that curiosity is vital to both organizational and personal success. The SAS Curiosity@Work Report is designed to formally assess the demand for curiosity in the workplace and the increasing value managers place on curiosity as an intrinsic skill.

Through original research and analysis of LinkedIn mentions and engagement around curiosity, this report aims to highlight why curiosity at work is becoming an increasingly critical skill, the growing importance of fostering curiosity among the workforce, and the essential methods companies and individuals may use to better embrace and encourage this attribute among their employees. Through these lenses, this research serves as an essential step toward understanding how curiosity can directly improve job performance and satisfaction and guide business leaders on the best practices for fostering a data-curious culture within their workforce.

[1] Gino, Francesca. "The Business Case for Curiosity." Harvard Business Review, 8 Oct. 2018. Retrieved from hbr.org/2018/09/the-business-case-for-curiosity

METHODOLOGY

Research findings found in this report are derived from:

- SAS' proprietary survey conducted with 1,973 managers working within financial services, retail/consumer goods, manufacturing, healthcare/life sciences, or government. Respondents were surveyed online from August 19 to September 5, 2021, in six countries (Brazil, Germany, India, Singapore, United Kingdom and United States).
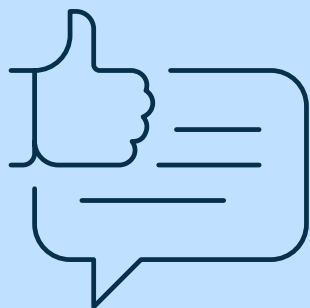
- LinkedIn's analysis of conversation surrounding curiosity on its platform. This was accomplished through an analyzed scan of posts (including job postings) and jobs skills over the last year (periods July 1, 2019 – July 31, 2020, and August 1, 2020 – August 30, 2021) for mentions of curiosity keywords and engagement with posts mentioning these themes.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Through the research conducted, several key points were uncovered regarding the value and utility of curiosity. The findings served to paint an impressive but nuanced portrait of curiosity as a potential asset for individuals and organizations worldwide.

The research shows that, if properly harnessed, curiosity is indeed a highly valuable trait. By offering perspectives and insights that may not have been otherwise considered, curiosity can serve as a stepping-stone toward profoundly enhanced innovation, productivity, and problem-solving, with uses pertinent to challenges of all kinds, be they creative, analytical, competitive, and even personal (as well as interpersonal) in nature.

However, while potentially hugely useful, efforts to seek, recognize, accept, or properly manage curiosity can be a struggle; as confounding as it is invaluable, perceived curiosity can be strangely divisive within organizations, or even within individuals themselves, who may find it deserving of both admiration and wariness simultaneously.

The sentiments uncovered are largely consistent across markets and industries surveyed, indicating the global application and relevance of curiosity as a concept.

Key findings include:

Managers consider curiosity a highly valuable trait

In the age of the Great Resignation and current hiring frenzy, as more employees voluntarily leave their jobs, curiosity is considered a highly valuable trait among managers on a global scale. Nearly three quarters (72%) of managers believe curiosity is a very valuable trait in employees, with more than half strongly agreeing it has become much more important over time (51%), that curiosity drives real business impact (59%) and that employees who have more curiosity are higher performers (51%). Most also believe this trait is necessary no matter an employee's role or level within their organization.

Curiosity is rising across LinkedIn®

Whether it's an employer including curiosity in their jobs posting or an individual engagement with content about curiosity, this theme is rising across LinkedIn. According to data from LinkedIn, engagement with company posts that discuss curiosity has risen by 158% from 2020 to 2021. This data also shows that the last year has seen 90% growth in job postings that mention curiosity, 87% growth in the mention of skills related to curiosity and 71% growth in member posts and shares that mention curiosity.

Curiosity addresses many of today's critical business challenges

Benefits associated with curiosity directly address key business challenges and concerns. Curiosity can improve employees' job satisfaction, create more innovative and productive workplaces, and encourage employees to stay with their organization for longer. In today's environment, managers are finding it especially challenging to keep employee morale and motivation high, with 60% of managers citing this as a difficulty. Over half of managers face challenges retaining good employees (52%), getting employees to push beyond just basic job duties (51%) and driving cross-collaboration with other teams and departments (50%). However, the managers surveyed agreed that the very valuable benefits of curiosity include greater efficiency and productivity (62%), improved creative thinking (62%), stronger collaboration and teamwork (58%), and greater employee engagement and job satisfaction (58%).

Curiosity plays a key role in driving digital transformation and data insights

Most managers agree that curiosity is particularly valuable when innovating new solutions (62%), tackling complex problems (55%), and analyzing data (52%), making it an important trait for fueling data insights and integration. Conversely, digital integration and data are also important to fostering and building a more curious workforce. Those who are considered more curious note their employer is significantly more advanced in digital transformation (56% vs. 29% among those who rate low in curiosity) and frequently use more data sources in their roles – particularly those that help them better understand their customers (58%), performance (60%), and employees (63%).

Managers across the curiosity spectrum can be divided into four segments

Managers can be categorized into four curiosity-minded segments – high curiosity collaborators, flexibility driven opinion seekers, productivity-focused leaders, and anti-curiosity leaders. Each segment has views about how valuable curiosity is as a trait in the workplace, where its benefits lie, and how curiosity can be encouraged among employees.

Younger and newer managers place more value on curiosity

It is younger and newer managers who are more likely to say that curiosity is a very valuable trait in employees and is a characterization of managers at newer companies. Younger managers tend to value employees' curiosity more highly than their older, more tenured counterparts (73% of Millennials and Gen X vs. 63% of Boomers). This is also true of managers at newer companies (78% are at organizations 10 years old or less vs. 70% at organizations 11 years old or more). Digging deeper, there is evident conflict among these younger and newer managers who emphasize the importance of this trait, but also worry more about the potential drawbacks of curiosity compared to their older, more tenured counterparts.

Fostering curiosity requires company and managerial commitment

Looking to managers who rate high in curiosity (roughly 38% of those surveyed), we see that a focus on curiosity within both company and managerial practices is paramount. Embracing curiosity does not stop at telling employees they can be curious but should play a key role in company structure. Managers at organizations who have embraced curiosity often encourage curiosity across the enterprise, including company training and development (79%), employee performance reviews (76%), promotion (74%) and hiring (74%) criteria, and corporate mission, vision, or values (70%). These managers also use a variety of methods to further encourage this valuable trait in their direct reports, including rewarding curiosity in performance reviews (71%), allowing the use of work time to explore passion projects (60%), and one-on-one coaching or mentoring (59%). These companies that formally include curiosity (or similar traits) within aspects of their corporate mission, vision and values, training, promotion and hiring criteria are better able to foster and encourage curiosity skills.

EMBRACING CURIOSITY

Though valuable, curiosity remains a nebulous and often inscrutable tool for organizations to properly manage in their operations. To harness the potential that curiosity can offer them, it's recommended that organizations and managers…

01

TAKE A TOP-DOWN APPROACH TO EMBRACING CURIOSITY.

C-suite executives and company leadership are believed to be in positions where it is especially valuable to embrace a curiosity mindset. By fostering the attribute at this level and formally incorporating curiosity (or similar traits) in company mission, vision and values, training, and performance reviews, curiosity's role in an organization can be firmly solidified.

02

RECOGNIZE AND ACCEPT CURIOSITY'S VALUE ACROSS A WIDE RANGE OF APPLICATIONS.

Knowing curiosity directly contributes and coincides with skills in areas of technical expertise (e.g., data analysis, AI) and personal attributes (e.g., creative thinking, problem solving), both of which are vital for business success, this trait is bound to become even more important for job applicants to foster and demonstrate as they seek to develop their careers.

03

GUIDE MANAGERS ON HOW THEY CAN RECOGNIZE AS WELL AS FOSTER CURIOSITY AMONG DIRECT REPORTS.

Curiosity is complex, and many managers understand the benefits of this trait but can struggle to develop and harness this skill among their employees.

04

PROVIDE MORE OPPORTUNITIES TO BUILD SKILLS RELATED TO DATA ANALYSIS AND FURTHER ADVANCE AREAS OF DIGITAL INTEGRATION.

Employees who are more curious note they use more data sources in their role and consider their organizations to be more advanced in digital transformation. Fostering this skill at all levels will help companies to benefit from improved data-driven insights and new innovations.

05

FIND WAYS TO ENGAGE WITH EMPLOYEES AND POTENTIAL HIRES ON TOPICS RELATED TO CURIOSITY BOTH WITHIN THE WORKPLACE AND ON MEDIA CHANNELS LIKE LINKEDIN®.

This engagement can be accomplished through means like company posts dedicated to how one's organization formally defines and encourages curiosity in their employee development and hiring practices. When companies are vying for applicants, leading the curiosity conversation has the potential to attract and retain much needed employees.

MANAGERS SEE INCREASING VALUE IN CURIOSITY ON A GLOBAL SCALE

In the age of the Great Resignation and current hiring frenzy, 72% of managers, globally, believe curiosity is a very valuable trait in employees. This value sustains across industries, roles, and employee levels.

Our research defines curiosity as the impulse to seek new information and experiences and explore novel possibilities. So why should organizations and managers care about encouraging, and developing curiosity in their direct reports?

When discussing the value of curiosity, the majority of managers recognize the importance and business value of curiosity:

- **51%** believe it is much more important for employees to have curiosity today than it was five years ago

- **59%** strongly agree curiosity in employees drives real business impact

- **51%** strongly agree that employees who have curiosity tend to be higher performers

Likewise, managers know that not just organizational leaders benefit from this trait, but employees across the spectrum. More than half of managers say it is very valuable for employees to have curiosity at all levels – particularly within leadership:

- C-suite executives **(58%)**

- Directors and department leaders **(56%)**

- Mid-level managers **(51%)**

- Entry-level employees **(53%)**

While increasing value is being placed on curiosity at all levels, there is still progress to be made in many organizations, with the potential for a clear competitive advantage among those organizations that can effectively tap into the power of curiosity as a skillset among their employees. This leaves others who fail to embrace this trait at risk of falling behind, highlighting how crucial it is that organizations communicate and engage with their employees and prospective hires on the importance of curiosity and its role as a desired trait in the workplace.

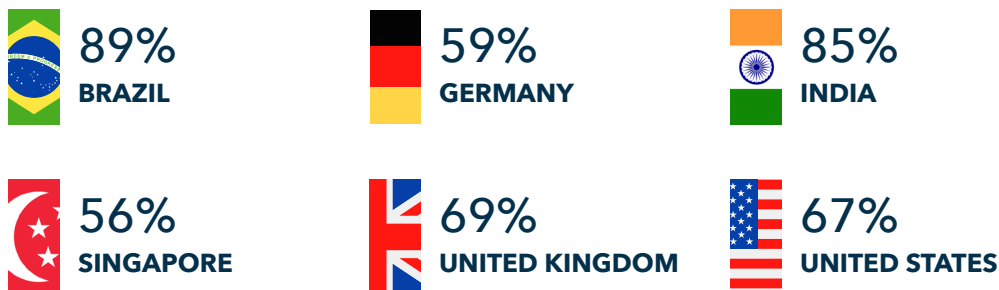# MANAGERS SEE INCREASING VALUE IN CURIOSITY ON A GLOBAL SCALE

CONTINUED

A closer look at opinions on curiosity, at both the country and industry level, shows most managers across regions and industries recognize curiosity as a highly valuable trait in employees, and one that offers the potential to yield a meaningful positive impact on the development and success of a business.

The majority of managers across the countries surveyed recognize the importance and business value of curiosity. However, managers in India and Brazil place the greatest value on curiosity, with more than four in five managers there agreeing that it is very valuable.

COUNTRY COMPARISON

More than half believe curiosity is a very valuable trait in employees

89% BRAZIL	59% GERMANY	85% INDIA
56% SINGAPORE	69% UNITED KINGDOM	67% UNITED STATES

Half or more strongly agree curiosity in employees drives real business impact

49% BRAZIL	58% GERMANY	76% INDIA
48% SINGAPORE	53% UNITED KINGDOM	57% UNITED STATES
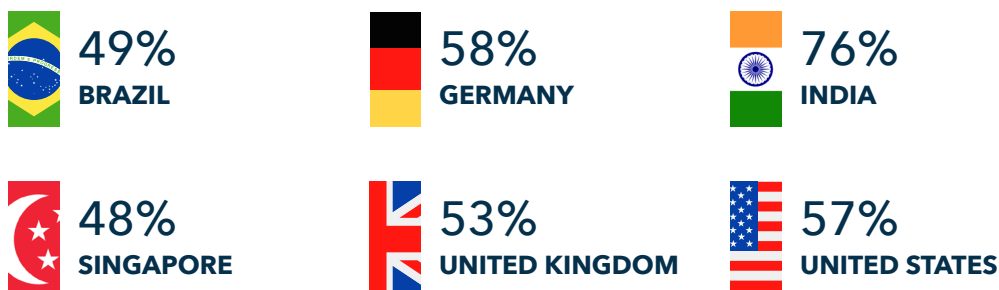
MANAGERS SEE INCREASING VALUE IN CURIOSITY ON A GLOBAL SCALE

CONTINUED

At the industry level, managers are generally aligned when it comes to curiosity's value. However, managers working within public sector organizations place the greatest value on curiosity, with more than four in five managers t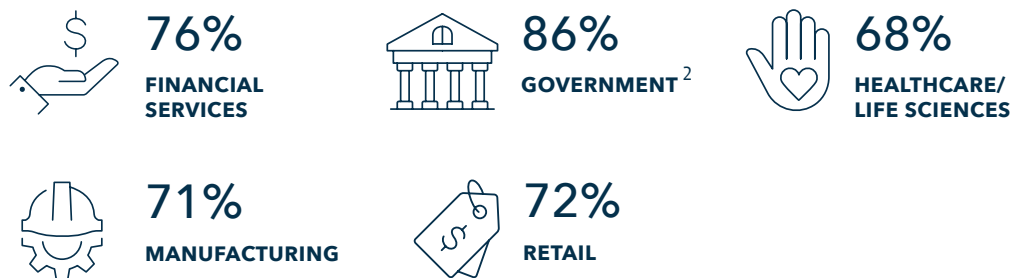here agreeing that it is very valuable. Surprisingly, the sector with the fewest managers that believe curiosity is highly valuable is healthcare and life sciences.

INDUSTRY COMPARISON

More than two-thirds believe curiosity is a very valuable trait in employees

76%
FINANCIAL SERVICES

86%
GOVERNMENT [2]

68%
HEALTHCARE/ LIFE SCIENCES

71%
MANUFACTURING

72%
RETAIL

More than half strongly agree curiosity in employees drives real business impact

60%
FINANCIAL SERVICES

53%
GOVERNMENT

61%
HEALTHCARE/ LIFE SCIENCES

55%
MANUFACTURING

60%
RETAIL
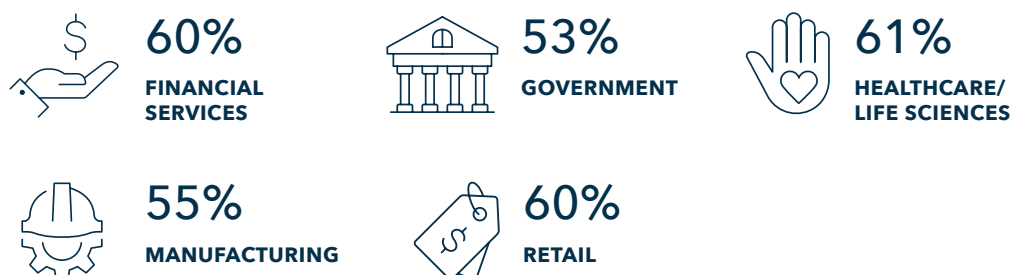
[2] Base note: n=90 Government, results should be viewed as directional

LINKEDIN® TRENDS SHOW A RISING FOCUS ON CURIOSITY IN THE ONLINE PROFESSIONAL CONVERSATION

There are signs that the case for curiosity has also permeated social spheres outside organizations' internal communications. According to data from LinkedIn examining job, company and member posts, and skills profiles, since 2020 curiosity has gained traction as a rising topic of conversation.

From 2020 to 2021, LinkedIn members have been more engaged with curiosity-related topics. These trends are not isolated to simply discussing curiosity and related skills but reflect a significant increase in interest in and engagement with curiosity-related content.

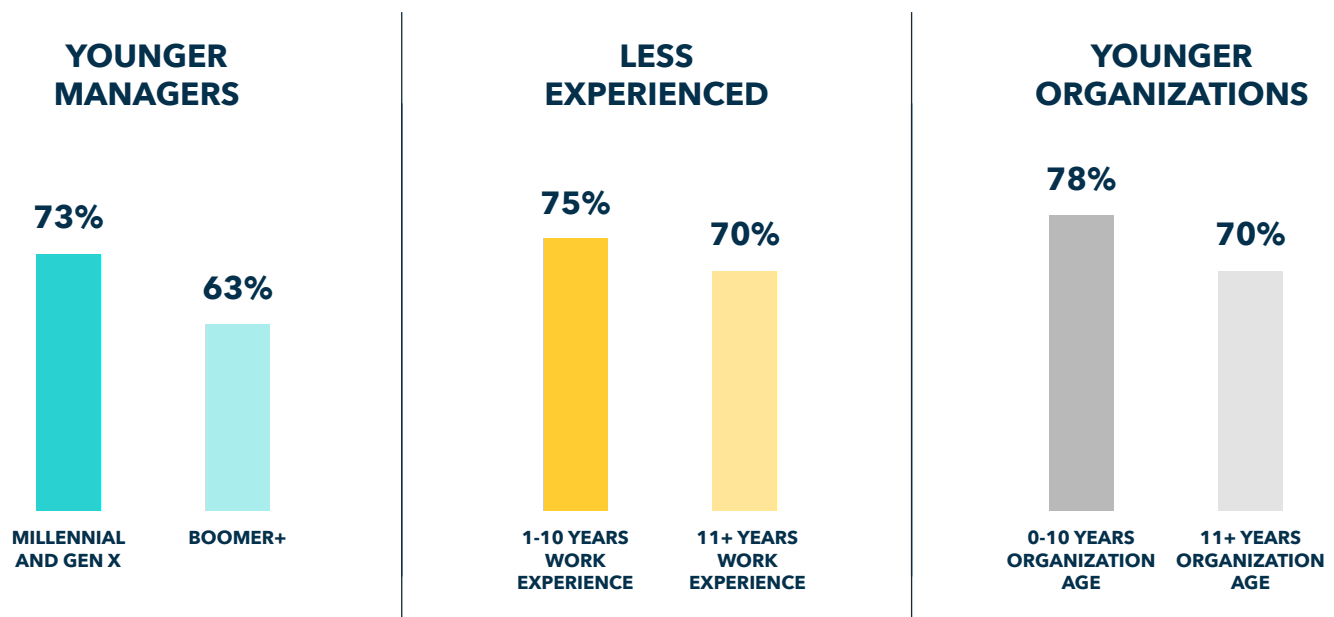**According to global LinkedIn data, year on year, there has been:**

- **71%** increase in member posts and shares mentioning curiosity

- **87%** growth in job skills related to curiosity

- **90%** growth in job postings explicitly referencing skills associated with this trait

- **158%** increase in engagement on company posts, shares, or articles with text mentioning curiosity keywords

A global analysis of media coverage of "curiosity" and related topics over the past year, conducted as part of SAS' proprietary survey, also shows signs of this concept earning increased media attention and becoming a key factor of consideration regarding workplace trends and benefits to organizations. Nearly 3,000 stories within top-tier media on the topic examine curiosity as a trait, skill, or approach in the workplace, highlight curiosity in organizational culture, as a leadership skill, in DEI and even digital technology. Many experts cited in this coverage predict that events like the COVID-19 pandemic will be responsible for kick starting a revolution in the way employers and employees interact and the types of skills and traits that are most valued – such as curiosity.

TENURE AND EXPERIENCE DRIVE EMPHASIS ON CURIOSITY

It would seem that curiosity and youthful ambition enjoy an almost symbiotic relationship to one another. Possibly driven by a desire to make their mark, to explore, to challenge the status quo or to change their world, research shows that younger and newer managers tend to value employees' curiosity more highly than their older, more tenured counterparts. Additionally, this characterization appears to also be true of managers at newer companies.

CURIOSITY IS A VERY VALUABLE TRAIT IN EMPLOYEES

YOUNGER MANAGERS

73%
MILLENNIAL AND GEN X

63%
BOOMER+

LESS EXPERIENCED

75%
1-10 YEARS WORK EXPERIENCE

70%
11+ YEARS WORK EXPERIENCE

YOUNGER ORGANIZATIONS

78%
0-10 YEARS ORGANIZATION AGE

70%
11+ YEARS ORGANIZATION AGE

Though they emphasize the importance of this trait, younger or newer managers worry about employees and job applicants showing too much curiosity at the expense of other traits **(43% of those with 10 years of work experience or less vs. 12% of those with more than 20 years of experience believe employees and job applicants have too much curiosity)**.

This suggests a need to help newer and younger managers learn to appropriately identify and manage curiosity, as they may not yet be experienced enough to know how best to harness it among employees.
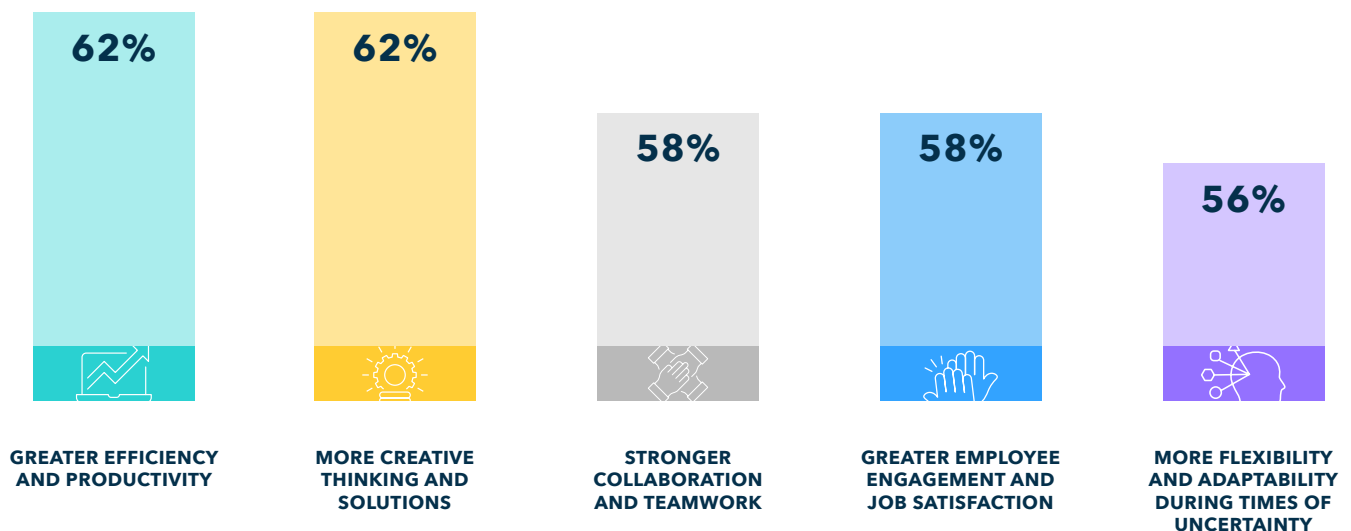
CURIOSITY HAS THE POTENTIAL TO ADDRESS KEY BUSINESS CHALLENGES AND LEAD TO FUTURE SUCCESS

Curiosity has the power to address several key issues related to retention and employee job satisfaction along with an ability to encourage innovation and creative thinking.

Currently, managers find it especially challenging to:

- Keep employee morale/motivation high **(60%)**

- Retain good employees **(52%)**

- Get employees to push beyond basic job duties **(51%)**

- Collaborate with other teams and departments **(50%)**

Many of the benefits associated with curiosity directly address these key business challenges and concerns. The majority of managers agree that the highly valuable benefits of curiosity include:

62%	62%	58%	58%	56%
GREATER EFFICIENCY AND PRODUCTIVITY	**MORE CREATIVE THINKING AND SOLUTIONS**	**STRONGER COLLABORATION AND TEAMWORK**	**GREATER EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND JOB SATISFACTION**	**MORE FLEXIBILITY AND ADAPTABILITY DURING TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY**

Through improved employee job satisfaction, collaboration and workplace productivity, curiosity can help address key managerial challenges and lead to prolonged organizational success.
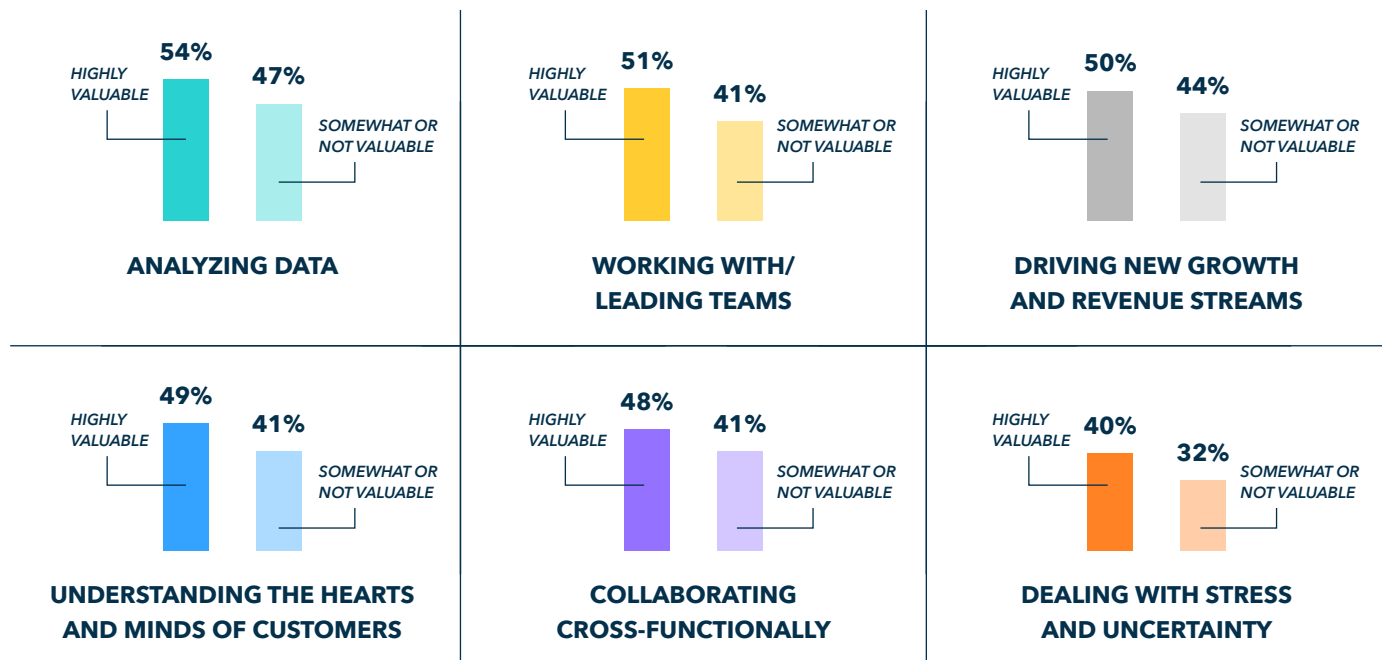
CURIOSITY CAN ADD VALUE ACROSS DEPARTMENTS AND JOB ROLES

Where in an organization is curiosity valued most?

Technical, research-minded, or creative roles like IT **(64%)**; research and development **(54%)**; and marketing **(46%)** are often identified by managers as the departments in which curiosity among employees is especially valuable. These results differ from those of other business departments such as legal **(19%)** or purchasing **(25%)**, areas that are often less focused on creative problem-solving and innovation. However, in considering other curiosity benefits, like greater employee engagement, job satisfaction or the ability to nurture collaboration within organizations – it can be argued that any department or role benefits from curiosity.

Those who believe curiosity is a highly valuable trait are more inclined to view the attribute as beneficial across departments and are more likely to recognize curiosity is especially useful for a number of purposes.

Those who believe curiosity is highly valuable, vs only somewhat or not valuable, say it is particularly useful to have curiosity when:

HIGHLY VALUABLE **54%** / SOMEWHAT OR NOT VALUABLE **47%**	HIGHLY VALUABLE **51%** / SOMEWHAT OR NOT VALUABLE **41%**	HIGHLY VALUABLE **50%** / SOMEWHAT OR NOT VALUABLE **44%**
ANALYZING DATA	**WORKING WITH/ LEADING TEAMS**	**DRIVING NEW GROWTH AND REVENUE STREAMS**
HIGHLY VALUABLE **49%** / SOMEWHAT OR NOT VALUABLE **41%**	HIGHLY VALUABLE **48%** / SOMEWHAT OR NOT VALUABLE **41%**	HIGHLY VALUABLE **40%** / SOMEWHAT OR NOT VALUABLE **32%**
UNDERSTANDING THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF CUSTOMERS	**COLLABORATING CROSS-FUNCTIONALLY**	**DEALING WITH STRESS AND UNCERTAINTY**

This research helps to dispel the notion that curiosity only "belongs" within certain roles, as many or all of these skills are necessary for cohesive and successful workplaces, regardless of position, department, or even industry.

INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT DATA EXPERTISE, DIGITAL INTEGRATION, AND CURIOSITY ARE INTERCONNECTED

For their business to succeed in the next three years, managers say their organization needs employees with:

- Technical expertise in areas of artificial intelligence **(63%)** and data analysis **(60%)**

- Personal attributes like creative thinking **(59%)**, problem-solving **(59%)**, and flexibility **(57%)**

However, when filling their departments and reviewing job applicants, managers struggle to find new hires with a combination of necessary technical skills **(65%)** and/or personal attributes **(60%)** – like curiosity – that their departments need to succeed.

Analyzing the positive outcomes of curiosity, managers, overall, agree it is especially valuable for employees to have this trait when:

- Innovating new solutions **(62%)**

- Tackling complex problems **(55%)**

- Analyzing data **(52%)**

These findings highlight the importance of curiosity in fostering data insights and digital integration in the workplace.

Frequent analysis or data use is a marker of highly curious organizations. Expertise in data analysis and a propensity toward understanding complex issues is necessary in new applicants and among employees alike. Managers who rate high in curiosity often note they use more data in their role and frequently use sources that help them understand not only their customers and business performance but also employees.

Those who rate high in curiosity:

- Use an average of four different data types in their role

- Use employee data **(63% vs. 47% among those who rate low in curiosity)**, performance metrics data **(60% vs. 44%)**, and customer data **(58% vs. 44%)** more often.

Highly curious managers and organizations are also advanced in their use of data and their company's integration of digital technology. Those who rate high in curiosity are more likely to describe their company's digital integration as very advanced (56% vs. 29% among those who rate low in curiosity).

These findings highlight the close connection between curiosity and business needs in data and digital integration. More curious organizations are outperforming in these areas, highlighting how vital this trait is for fostering data insights and digital integration in the workplace. With digital transformation an imperative for organizations everywhere, it's clear that curiosity has the potential to be a critical success factor and competitive differentiator for those that can effectively harness this skill among their workforce.
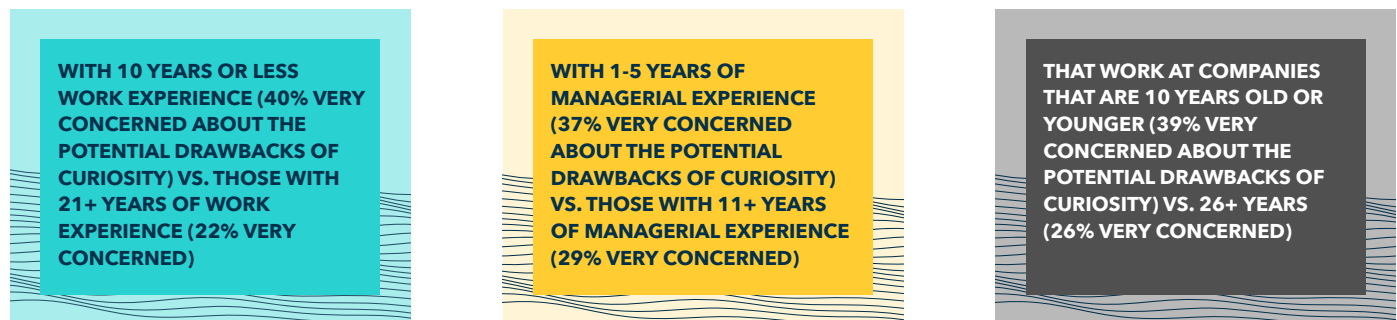
HESITATIONS AND CONCERNS ABOUT CURIOSITY PERSIST AND FALL ALONG EXPERIENCE LEVEL LINES

Despite the many benefits of curiosity as a workforce skill, many organizations and managers are hesitant to encourage curiosity in the workplace. A third of managers (35%) go as far as to say they believe current employees and applicants have too much curiosity, and a similar proportion report strong concern for:

- Increased risk of errors or bad decisions **(37%)**

- Greater difficulty coming to a final decision and taking action **(36%)**

- Decreased efficiency or productivity **(34%)**

- Greater difficulty managing employees **(33%)**

These concerns are more prevalent among less experienced managers and younger organizations who may not have the tools or experience necessary to harness and foster this skill in employees effectively. Managers more concerned with the potential drawbacks of curiosity are those:

WITH 10 YEARS OR LESS WORK EXPERIENCE (40% VERY CONCERNED ABOUT THE POTENTIAL DRAWBACKS OF CURIOSITY) VS. THOSE WITH 21+ YEARS OF WORK EXPERIENCE (22% VERY CONCERNED)

WITH 1-5 YEARS OF MANAGERIAL EXPERIENCE (37% VERY CONCERNED ABOUT THE POTENTIAL DRAWBACKS OF CURIOSITY) VS. THOSE WITH 11+ YEARS OF MANAGERIAL EXPERIENCE (29% VERY CONCERNED)

THAT WORK AT COMPANIES THAT ARE 10 YEARS OLD OR YOUNGER (39% VERY CONCERNED ABOUT THE POTENTIAL DRAWBACKS OF CURIOSITY) VS. 26+ YEARS (26% VERY CONCERNED)

This presents a disconnect in the perceived benefits of curiosity and organizations' potential to harness and utilize this skill among employees. This disconnect could be short-sighted, as it could likely lead to stifled creativity and innovation, stagnant productivity, a more timid and less collaborative working environment, diminished team morale, and, ultimately, a crippling aversion to growth overall.

In an ever-changing world, an inability to grow and adapt is an inability to survive. From this somber perspective, curiosity is far more than needless risk or fanciful endeavor; it's a lifeline – a compass for navigating unknown but inevitable new territories.
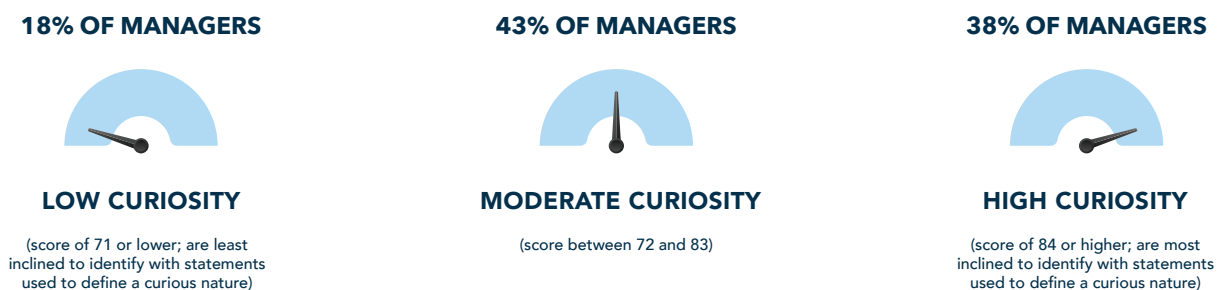
CURIOSITY IN ORGANIZATIONS

Effectively harnessing curiosity among direct reports is pivotal to furthering the success of an organization and realizing the benefits of this important trait.
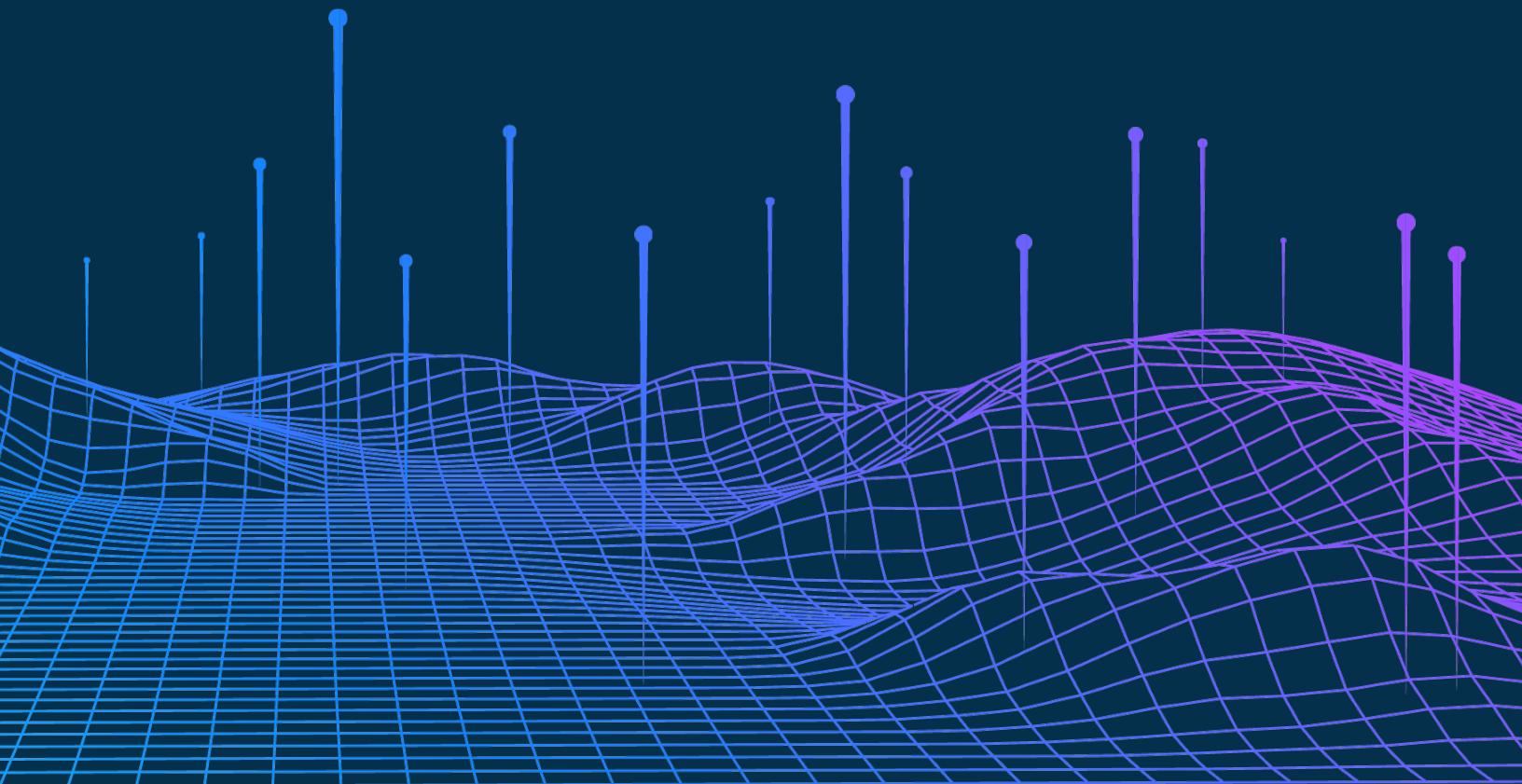
MANAGERS FALL ON A CURIOSITY SPECTRUM: THE CURIOSITY INDEX

To better understand who has embraced a curiosity mindset, we looked to research like that of American psychologist Dr. Todd Kashdan.

A Professor of Psychology at George Mason University, Dr. Kashdan and his team have dedicated over 20 years to studying and publishing research about curiosity in both personal and professional lives. Using this research[3] as a guide, we assessed managers' own curiosity to understand where differences arose in how they approached this trait among their direct reports and in their organization. This assessment resulted in the 2021 Curiosity Index[4] (a compound measure aggregating attributes associated with managers' personal curiosity). This Index organizes managers into categories of low, moderate, and high curiosity ratings based on their views and self-identified attributes related to curiosity in the workplace.

18% OF MANAGERS	43% OF MANAGERS	38% OF MANAGERS
LOW CURIOSITY	MODERATE CURIOSITY	HIGH CURIOSITY
(score of 71 or lower; are least inclined to identify with statements used to define a curious nature)	(score between 72 and 83)	(score of 84 or higher; are most inclined to identify with statements used to define a curious nature)

Managers who are highly rated on the Curiosity Index have embraced curiosity within their teams and work habits. These managers tend to agree more often with statements like:

- It is important to listen to ideas from people who think differently

- Even when confident in their approach, they like to hear other's opinions

- They seek out opportunities at work to expand their knowledge and skills

---

[3] Kashdan, Todd & Goodman, Fallon & Disabato, David & Mcknight, Patrick & Kelso, Kerry & Naughton, Carl. (2019). Curiosity has comprehensive benefits in the workplace: Developing and validating a multidimensional workplace curiosity scale in United States and German employees. Personality and Individual Differences. 155. 109717. 10.1016/j.paid.2019.109717.

[4] The 2021 Curiosity Index: The curiosity index score is based on the ratings of 8 different attributes related to curiosity in the workplace. The index transforms the attributes' raw ratings into a 0-100 metric where all the scores are averaged. Managers with a score of 71 or lower ranked "low" in the index, managers with a score ranging from 72 to 83 were categorized as "medium", and those with a score or 84 or higher were assigned to the "high" category. The thresholds in each category were derived based on the index score distribution and best practices.

Looking more closely at this 38% of managers, we can create a profile that indicates they are more likely to:

- Work in Government[5]

- Work at older organizations (26 years old or more)

- Work at global organizations

- Have more managerial experience (more than 10 years)

- Actively manage more direct reports (11+ direct reports)

- Be female

Conversely, a profile of managers who rate lower in curiosity (18%) shows they are more likely to:

- Work in Manufacturing

- Work at local organizations

- Have less managerial experience (10 years or less)

---

[5] Base note: n=90, results should be considered directional

CURIOSITY IS INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT FOR FUTURE CAREER SUCCESS AND EMPHASIZED AMONG HIGH CURIOSITY GROUPS

Today's managers require job applicants and employees with a combination of technical skills (e.g., data analysis or AI) and personal skills and attributes (such as creative thinking and problem solving).

Because curiosity can influence these traits and managers agree that the trait is valuable, hiring applicants with curiosity and encouraging this skill within organizations can have resounding positive benefits that feed into organizational and personal success.

When inspecting managers that rate high in the Curiosity Index, we find that curiosity permeates aspects of their organization's structure, managerial style and overall hiring practices. Organizations and managers who have embraced curiosity often encourage curiosity across the enterprise, suggesting that a focus on curiosity within both company and managerial practices is paramount for fostering this skillset among the workforce.

Within their organization, more curious managers say their company includes curiosity across the enterprise:

79%	COMPANY TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT	(VS. 59% LOW CURIOSITY)
76%	EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE REVIEW CRITERIA	(VS. 55% LOW CURIOSITY)
74%	PROMOTION OR ADVANCEMENT DECISIONS	(VS. 55% LOW CURIOSITY)
74%	HIRING CRITERIA	(VS. 52% LOW CURIOSITY)
70%	CORPORATE MISSION, VISION, OR VALUES	(VS. 47% LOW CURIOSITY)

Similarly, these leaders incorporate curiosity throughout their managerial practices:

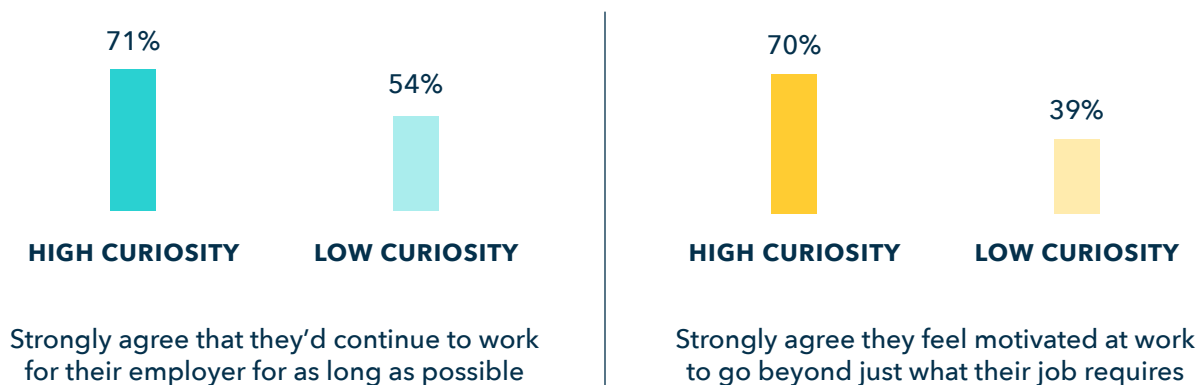|		
92%	COACHING OR TEAM DEVELOPMENT	(VS. 72% LOW CURIOSITY)
89%	EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE REVIEWS	(VS. 75% LOW CURIOSITY)
85%	PROMOTION OR ADVANCEMENT DECISIONS	(VS. 69% LOW CURIOSITY)
85%	HIRING DECISIONS	(VS. 67% LOW CURIOSITY)

While it is apparent that curiosity is a critical factor for success in one's career as it is emphasized in hiring and promotion procedures at these more curious companies, it is also important for employers to effectively encourage, recognize and utilize curiosity in pursuit of their organization's goals.

HIGH CURIOSITY MANAGERS ARE MORE INCLINED TO RECOGNIZE THE BENEFITS OF CURIOSITY IN THE WORKPLACE
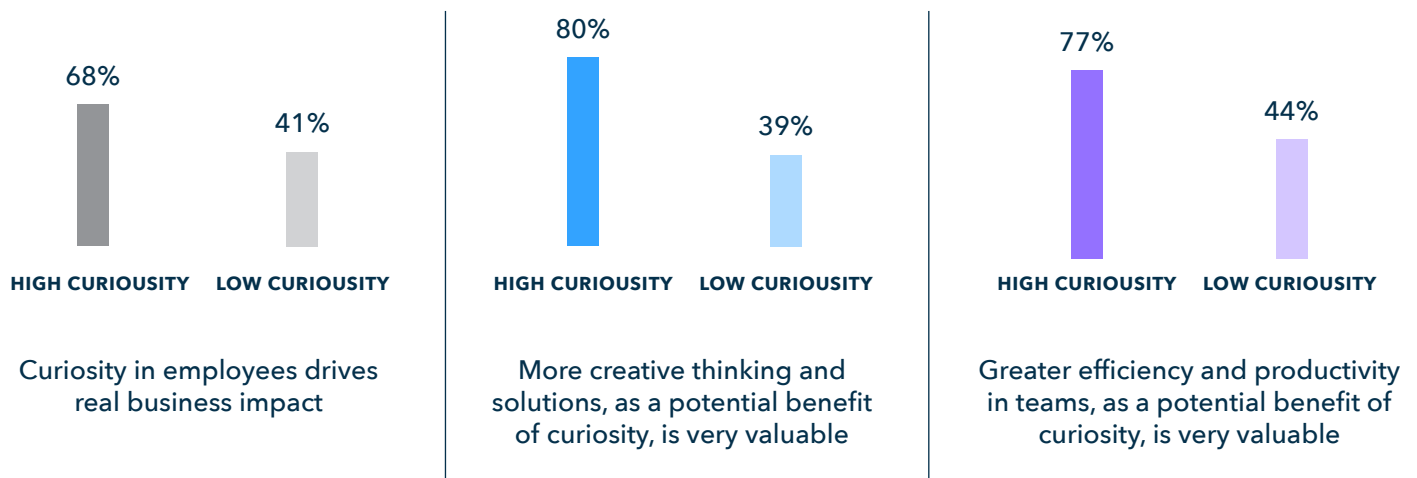
Encouraging curiosity can help organizations address critical employee engagement and retention challenges while building higher-performing teams.

Compared to their lower-scoring counterparts, highly curious leaders show greater engagement in their work and with their employer.

71%	54%		70%	39%
HIGH CURIOSITY	**LOW CURIOSITY**		**HIGH CURIOSITY**	**LOW CURIOSITY**

Strongly agree that they'd continue to work for their employer for as long as possible

Strongly agree they feel motivated at work to go beyond just what their job requires

Similarly, these managers are more likely to categorize their team as higher-performing. Seventy-two percent of managers who rate high on the Curiosity Index classify their direct reports' performance as very strong (vs. 43% rated low).

Perceptions of performance are strengthened for employees and their organization alike among these more curious managers. They are nearly 2 times more likely to say they strongly agree or believe:

68%	41%		80%	39%		77%	44%
HIGH CURIOUSITY	**LOW CURIOUSITY**		**HIGH CURIOSITY**	**LOW CURIOUSITY**		**HIGH CURIOUSITY**	**LOW CURIOUSITY**

Curiosity in employees drives real business impact

More creative thinking and solutions, as a potential benefit of curiosity, is very valuable

Greater efficiency and productivity in teams, as a potential benefit of curiosity, is very valuable

Before curiosity can be fostered effectively, managers must identify this trait within direct reports and new hires. More than two in five managers admit they do not feel fully equipped to identify curiosity in:

- Job applicants **(47%)**

- Direct reports **(42%)**

Furthermore, even if managers feel they are equipped to identify this trait, it is challenging for them to:

- Develop curiosity in employees who don't naturally have it **(47%)**

- Connect curiosity to job performance **(47%)**

- Connect curiosity to business impact **(43%)**

- Identify situations or problems in which curiosity is most useful **(43%)**

Managers who rate high in the Curiosity Index – who often feel they can capably identify curiosity – indicate that curiosity is more encouraged within their organizations: **58%** believe their employer is doing just enough to foster curiosity in employees, and this skill is encouraged through multiple tactics in their own managerial style.

Common methods these more curious managers use to further encourage this valuable trait in their direct reports include:

- **71%** rewarding curiosity in performance reviews

- **69%** publicly praising employees who demonstrate curiosity

- **60%** allowing the use of work time to explore passion projects

- **59%** one-on-one coaching or mentoring

Managers looking to strengthen their direct reports' performance, encourage innovation and improve job satisfaction can look to these high-rated managers for guidance on the tools and methods needed to promote curiosity in the workplace. In order to more effectively harness the benefits of curiosity in their organization's culture, managers may consider emulating these high curiosity managers by:

- Explicitly including curiosity in the language and goals of their organization's mission

- Including curiosity or similar skills as criteria in job listings

- Rewarding curiosity in the workplace, either through public verbal praise, or even tangible incentives

- Spotlighting and advancing employees' work which effectively exemplifies curious attitudes

MANAGERS CAN BE CATEGORIZED INTO FOUR CURIOSITY-MINDED SEGMENTS

Managers across the curiosity spectrum can be further divided into one of four segments[6] based on how each segment does or does not value curiosity in the workplace.

High Curiosity Collaborators (35% of managers). The most curious segment. These managers value collaboration, are teamwork driven and are relentless in finding answers. They do this through listening and valuing co-workers' ideas and continuously seeking opportunities to expand skills but are more hesitant when new challenges present themselves. Focused on curiosity, these managers believe this trait leads to greater efficiency and productivity at work and results in greater job satisfaction.

These managers are:

• Well-equipped to identify curiosity in their employees and new hires

• Likely to believe curiosity can drive both business and employee performance

• Likely to recognize the value of curiosity as a trait across departments and levels

• Likely to believe curiosity is valuable when completing necessary and forward-thinking tasks relevant to company success

Flexibility Driven Opinion Seekers (26% of managers). These managers embrace challenges, and the possibility of being distressed does not impact their motivation. Curiosity leads to greater flexibility and adaptability during times of uncertainty and can bring more empathy and inclusivity to workplaces. These managers do not believe that curiosity leads to a boost in efficiency or overall team performance.

These managers are:

• Well-equipped to identify curiosity in their employees and new hires

• Likely to believe curiosity can drive both business and employee performance

• Likely to believe curiosity is valuable when dealing with work tasks compared to others – particularly dealing with stress or uncertainty

• Likely to show concern about curiosity's potential drawbacks like decreased productivity or efficiency

---

[6] Manager Segmentation: Managers were classified into segments based on their opinions on curiosity. Cases were clustered using a K-means algorithm which identifies seed cases that vary widely in characteristics, and then assigns cases to each segment based on Euclidean proximity.

MANAGERS CAN BE CATEGORIZED INTO FOUR CURIOSITY-MINDED SEGMENTS

CONTINUED

Productivity-Focused Leaders (24% of managers). These managers believe curiosity can lead to stronger collaboration and teamwork and help increase efficiency and productivity in the workplace. They do not, however, believe curiosity drives inclusivity and diversity of thought.

These managers are:

• Less likely to believe curiosity is much more important today than it was 5 years ago

• Likely to feel only somewhat equipped to identify curiosity in their employees and new hires

• Likely to believe curiosity is valuable when dealing with work tasks that require tackling complex problems

• Less likely to show concern for curiosity's potential drawbacks related to employee management, decreased efficiency or increased risk of errors compared to some other segments

Anti-Curiosity Leaders (16% of managers). The smallest segment, these managers do not believe curiosity adds any value to performance or the workplace.

These managers are:

• Less likely to believe curiosity is much more important today than it was 5 years ago

• Likely to feel only somewhat or less equipped to identify curiosity in their employees and new hires

• Less likely to agree curiosity drives real business impact or employee performance

• Less likely to believe curiosity is a valuable skill across employee levels or departments

CONCLUSION

Across industries, countries, organizations, positions, objectives, and skill sets, curiosity is increasingly viewed as a highly valuable, even essential trait among managers worldwide. Research has found that this elevated emphasis on curiosity has manifested itself in a number of ways, not least of which includes the trait's heightened prevalence and engagement as a "skill" on LinkedIn.

However, while the majority of managers believe curiosity is valuable, there is still progress to be made in many organizations. Not all managers and companies consistently agree with its inherent value, and harbor concerns about perceived potential drawbacks of curiosity in the workplace. Additionally, many organizations, including those which openly value curiosity, struggle to effectively foster, encourage, and capitalize on it in their day-to-day operations.

Understanding the value of curiosity will become more critical and necessary for managers and organizations alike as disruption across industries and hiring needs continue, especially during widespread hiring frenzies such as the one faced by countless businesses and industries in 2021.

Learning how to effectively foster and harness this trait in the workplace has the potential to increase organizations' overall performance and chances for success in the years ahead. A curiosity mindset can strenghten the workforce and drive new innovations. For those organizations that can effectively tap into the power of curiosity as a skillset among their employees, it has the potential to provide a powerful competitive advantage, leaving those organizations who fail to embrace this trait at risk of falling behind.

To build a more curious workforce, the acceptance of this trait must come from the top down. From executive leadership to managers and entry-level employees, curiosity requires a formal role within companies' mission, vision and values, performance reviews, and hiring practices. A purposeful focus on curiosity within managerial practices is crucial for fostering further curiosity among the workforce. Companies that formally, actively include curiosity within aspects of their corporate mission, culture, and job criteria are better primed to both encourage curiosity attributes and utilize them effectively.

It is not enough to establish curiosity in company lexicon and procedures; curiosity cannot sustain itself on lip-service alone. Instead, organizations must earnestly devote themselves toward developing curiosity-rich environments through employee education opportunities and skills building, increased availability of data, and advancements in digital integration.

All provide ample opportunities for employees and managers to be more curious.

METHODOLOGY

SAS conducted a global survey of managers to understand curiosity's value, impact, and prevalence within organizations. Managers were defined as individuals with three or more direct reports and currently work in one of five industries: financial services, retail/consumer goods, manufacturing, healthcare/life sciences, or government. This study took place in six countries (Brazil, Germany, India, Singapore, United Kingdom and United States). To gain insight into the current state of curiosity in the workplace, we surveyed managers about their opinions on curiosity and how their organization incorporates it into their business practices. In total, 1,973 managers were surveyed online from August 19 to September 5, 2021.

Findings from this original research were used to calculate the 2021 Curiosity Index or a compound measure aggregating attributes associated with a manager's personal curiosity to understand where managers fall on the curiosity spectrum and how their experiences differ related to this trait in the workforce. Managers were also segmented into one of four groups based on their own opinions about curiosity and attributing this skill to their work personality.

In conjunction with this original research, we also partnered with LinkedIn to analyze the conversation surrounding curiosity on its platform. To accomplish this, we analyzed a scan of posts (including job postings) and jobs skills over the last year (periods July 1, 2019 – July 31, 2020, and August 1, 2020 – August 30, 2021) for mentions of curiosity keywords and engagement with posts mentioning these themes.