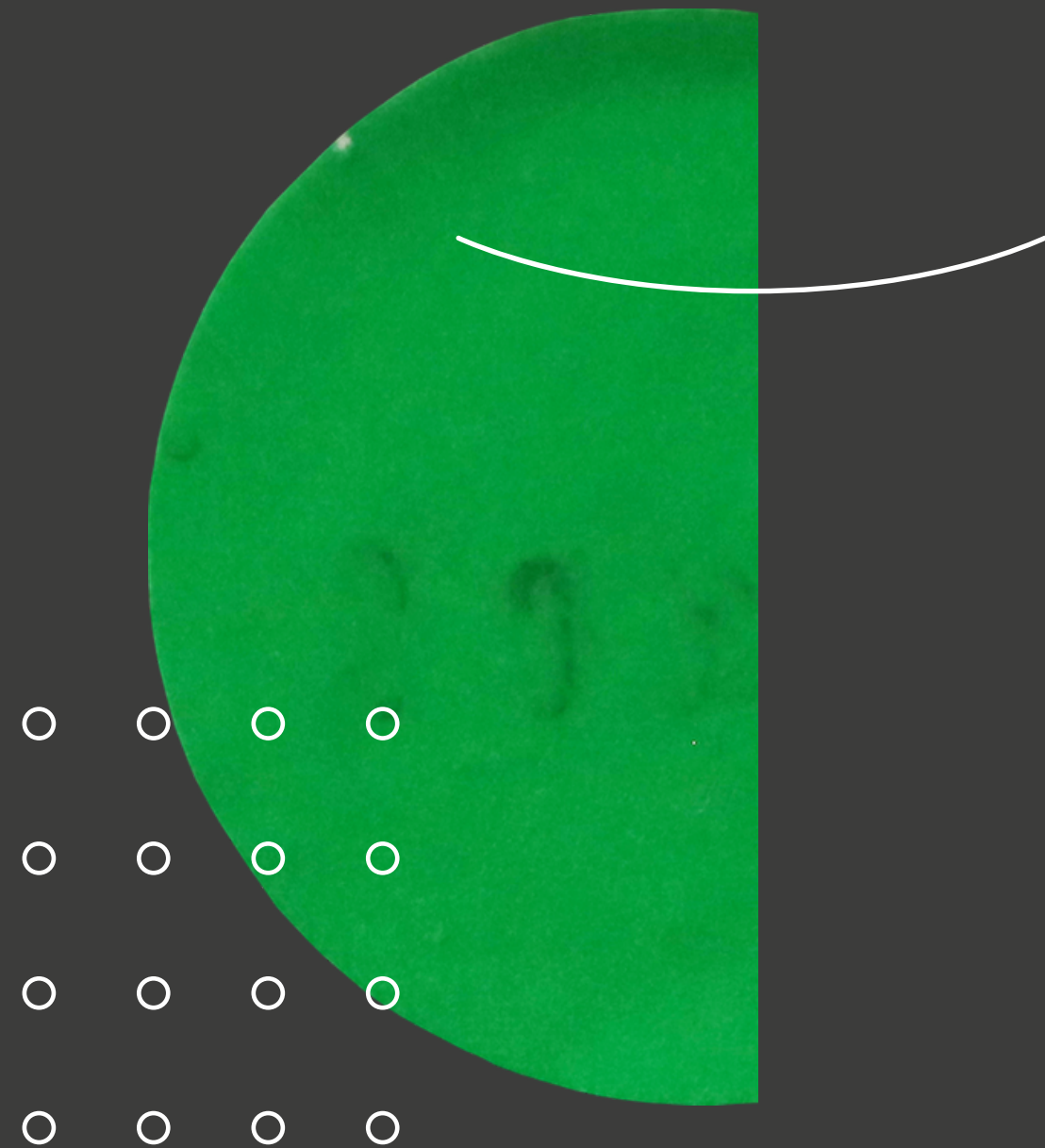tb.lx

human resources barometer

Assessing people's motivations to work at tb.lx

Highlights

- The majority of employees placed **Flexibility** and **Work-Life Empathy** at the top of the scale;

- Higher **Compensation and Benefits** are the leading driver for someone to leave;

- High levels of **Psychological Safety** will drive your company to achieve excellence.

Index

About tb.lx

tb.lx by Daimler Trucks & Buses is a startup within the corporate based in Lisbon, Portugal, founded in 2018.
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With the vision to live in a world of sustainable and connected transportation, tb.lx is developing data-driven eMobility software and connectivity services for several global Daimler brands like Mercedes-Benz, Fuso or Freightliner.

These new customer-centric products improve vehicle efficiency, costs and sustainability for users all around the world, such as fleet managers, drivers, operators, cities.

For more information please visit www.tblx.io.

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Foreword

tb.lx

Sara Gorjão
Chief People Officer

João Paulo Figueira
Data Scientist

Working on the tb.lx barometer was super insightful. Not only because I could really understand and learn our tblxers motivations from the qualitative data, but also get a better grasp of what happens behind the hood on the data science and analytics aspect with the support of an amazing expert - JP. We can also now be even more proactive when it comes to retention efforts, because we know we have the data to guide us in our decision-making process!

The best projects are the ones that prove to be helpful, and I can happily include the tb.lx barometer in that lot. I had a blast working on this. On the one hand, I learned about retention psychology by the expert hand of Sara Gorjão, with whom I had very engaging brainstormings and discussions. On the other hand, it allowed me to explore new technical fields with the production of the questionnaire application. It was a great experience!
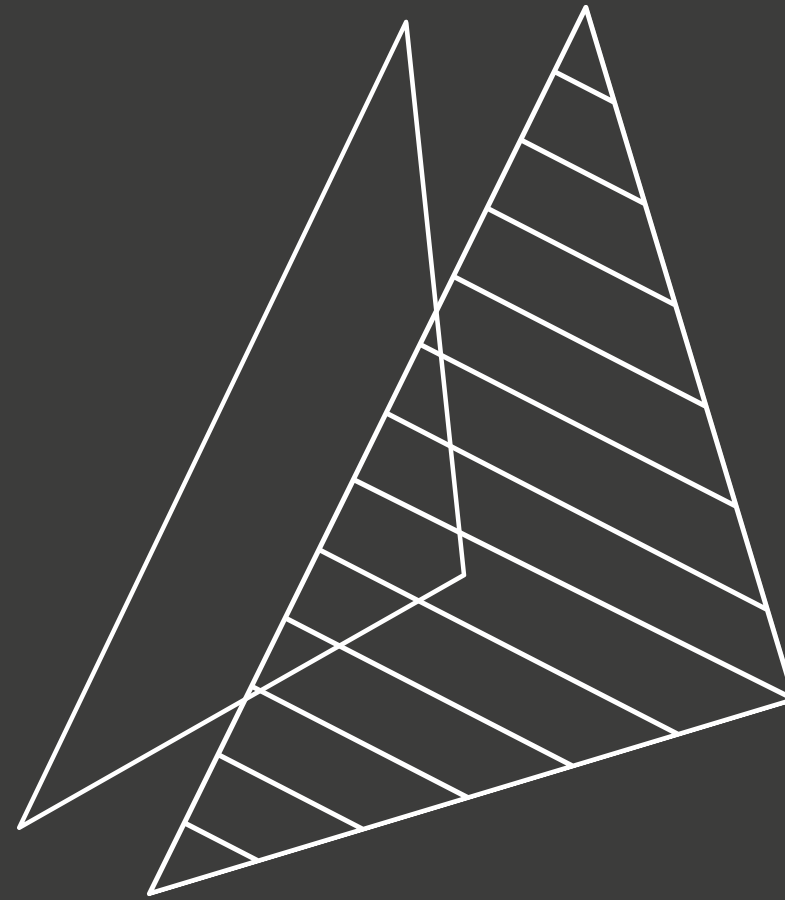
DO YOU KNOW WHY PEOPLE LEAVE YOUR COMPANY? AND WHY THEY STAY?

Introduction

Why do people leave or stay at your company? This is a hard question to ask, and even harder to answer. At tb.lx we really wanted to understand this, and dig deep into what motivates our employees to work with us.

We have a proactive approach towards HR strategies: we not only care about employee retention, but also want to enable the best possible work environment by fostering a company ecosystem in which employees feel motivated to work in, and safe to express their ideas.

Back in 2020, the People Team, inspired by Stack Overflow, thought about surveying our employees about their main drivers and motivations. In Stack Overflow's developer survey, they asked respondents if they could control compensation, benefits, and location, what three characteristics would most influence their decision to choose one job offer over another. Overall, the results showed that the "languages and technologies" that the developer would be working with were most important, followed by the "office environment or company culture" and "flexibility of schedule".

In 2021, the need to understand what made tblxers "happy and stay" came from our own Engineering and Product teams in our first round of Goal setting sessions of the year.

So, understanding what makes people stay, grow and be happy at our company is important for everyone, rather than an issue driven by only HR or the Leadership team. Everyone was engaged in assessing employee satisfaction and understanding where we could improve it. But one thing was clear: the teams didn't want the typical survey with open-ended questions.

The end goal was to create a barometer with dimensions that our tblxers could select and order from most important to least important, and they wanted the first list to be big enough, so they had options to choose from. Also, they wanted these options to reflect our specific reality. What happens with the other surveys that we might find out there is that the assessment areas are very broad and usually don't reflect the company's reality very closely. It makes sense to highlight that our turnover rate is relatively low, and our continuous improvement mindset is a significant cornerstone of our culture.

We hope that by making the design and development of our tool transparent, you can find inspiration and some guidelines to develop your own assessment tool that is tailored to reflect your company's culture, motivation levels and mitigate turn-over risks.

Psychological Safety is a must-have for genuine answers

To design and build what we then called our "tb.lx barometer," we first assessed our Psychological Safety and Motivational Drivers levels. For this, we used a tool called fable+ and took results as a baseline for our barometer. Overall, our Psychological Safety levels were at **82%**, and our Motivational Drivers were **79%**. We were in the "flow" zone.

Research has shown that a high level of Psychological Safety is the number one factor of high-performing and successful teams (Rozovsjy, J. 2015), followed by Dependability, Structure & Clarity, Meaning, and Impact.

According to Google's experience, "individuals on teams with higher psychological safety are less likely to leave Google, they're more likely to harness the power of diverse ideas from their teammates, they bring in more revenue, and they're rated as effective twice as often by executives."

Having a company culture with high Psychological Safety levels is the perfect scenario where people can freely express themselves without fear of judgment. They can take risks that push for innovation. They feel supported by upper management by receiving feedback and improving. In other words, "Psychological Safety is Trust at Work" (Baluchova, E. 2021).

Regarding Motivational Drivers, the fable+ survey showed that team members feel accountable for their work and invested in reaching team goals, also feeling valued and connected. With this great team and company environment, it was time to put our ideas into practice. How were we going to assess the two main questions for the barometer?

Methodology *tl;dr*

1. Open ended questionnaire to understand the major topics to track on our barometer;

2. These topics will gravitate between two drivers: Stay or Leave the company;

3. A content analysis was performed to highlight which common topics emerged;

4. The team did an intuitive and empirical based association of the topics and aggregated them into parent dimensions, considered the most important contributors for the drivers;

5. Focus on in this first stage was the overall "totals" for each aggregate dimension and not the specific contributors for Stay and Leave;

6. After this first analysis, we organized the dimensions into a barometer survey where we asked each employee to rank the dimensions for each driver Stay and Leave;

7. By following this approach we create a link with the scientific method: we observe a reality through the first questionnaire, propose a theory by analysing the data, and test the theory by applying the barometer.
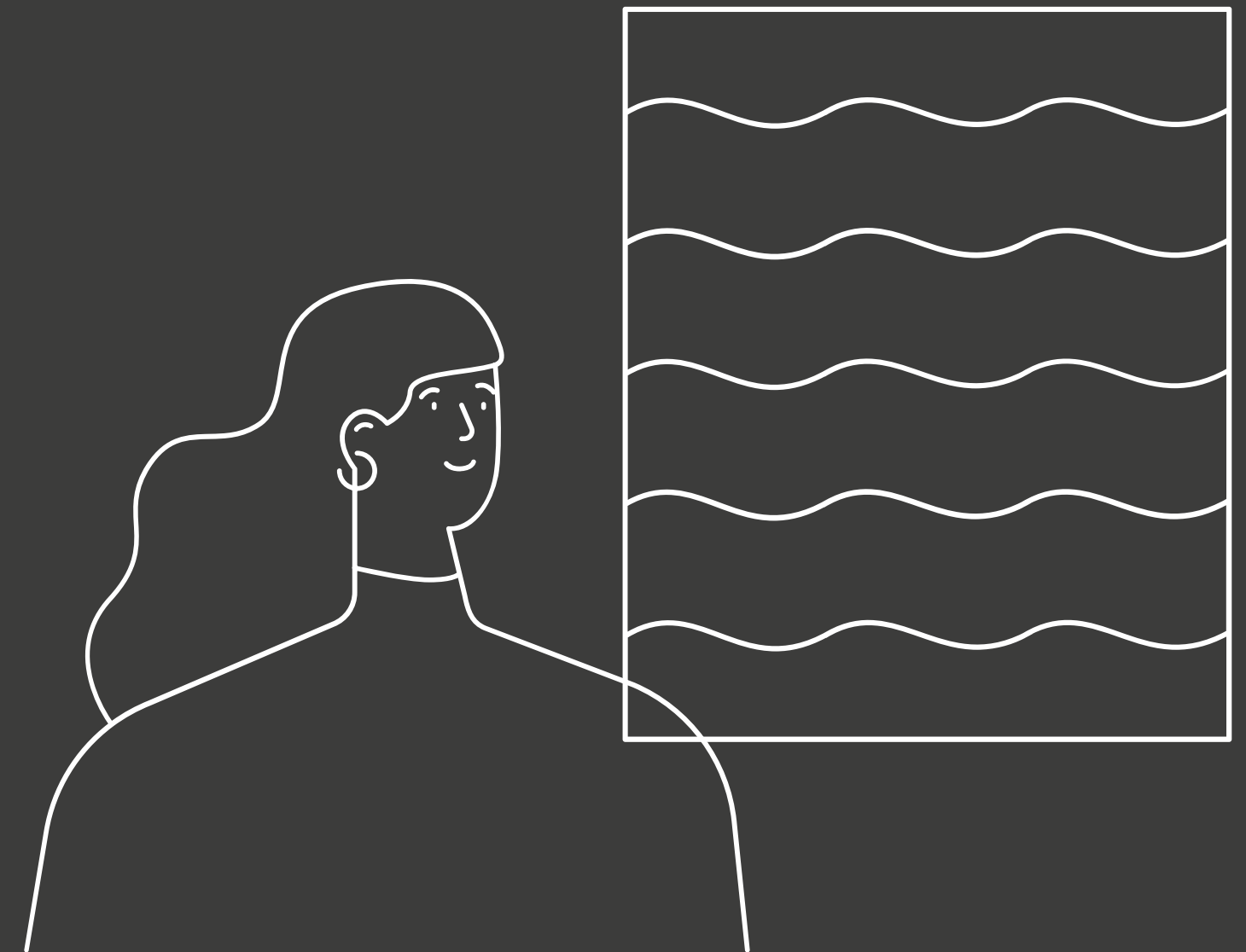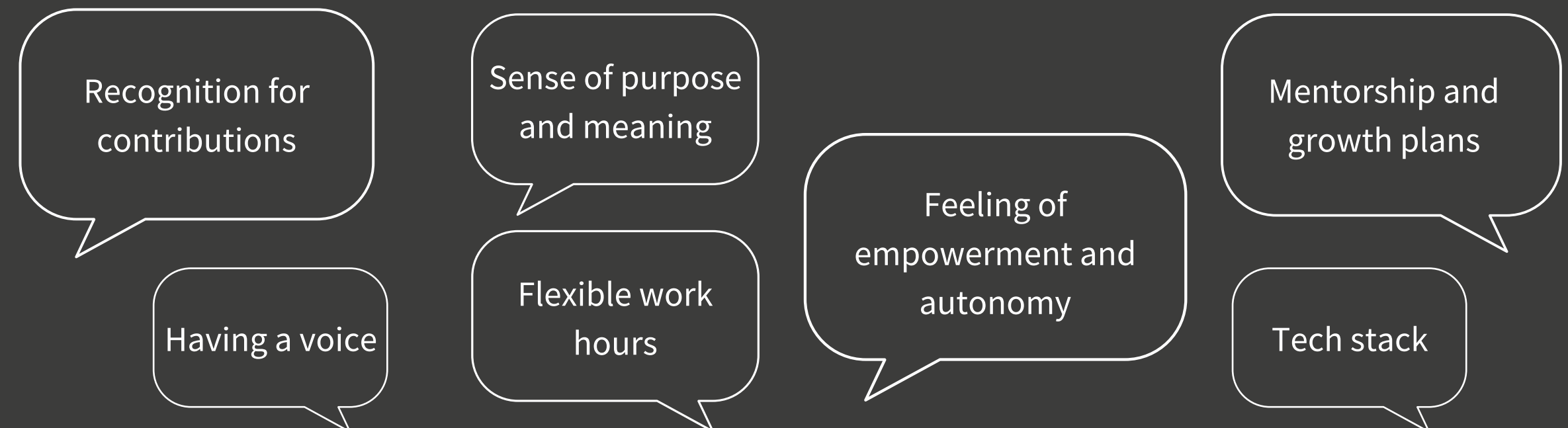
Methodology
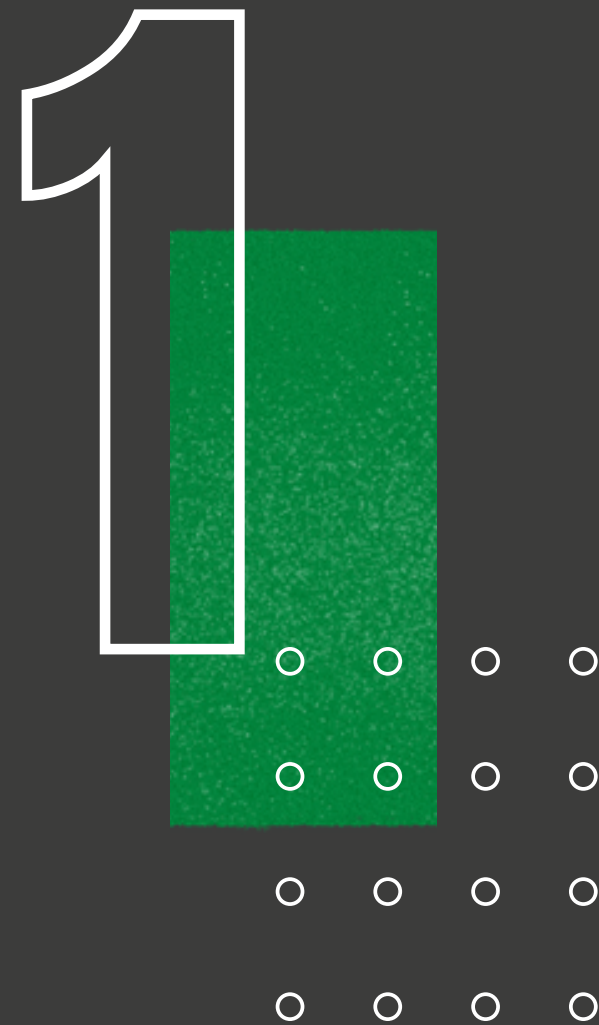
tb.lx

To foster ownership and promote dissemination of the issue within the company, we created a first brainstorming group in a live "Microsoft Teams session", with members from each team from tb.lx - engineering, product, people and communications, and asked them two questions:

1. WHAT ARE THE THINGS THAT MAKE YOU STAY AT TB.LX?
2. WHAT WOULD MAKE YOU LEAVE TB.LX?

They saw the questions in the shared screen and started contributing with their answers in a "brain dump" unfiltered way. Some examples of the answers can be found below:

Recognition for contributions

Sense of purpose and meaning

Mentorship and growth plans

Feeling of empowerment and autonomy

Having a voice
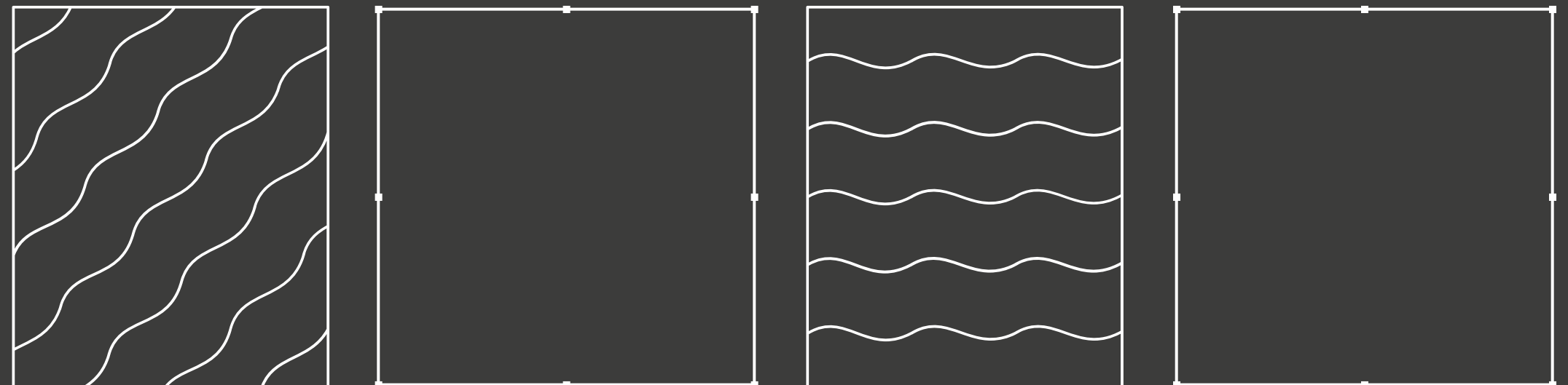
Flexible work hours

Tech stack

Methodology

After this first round, we asked each team member to disseminate these questions in their teams. Each team was free to choose their preferred tool/method to gather the answers (e.g. collection tools: typeform, retrool, miro board, chat).

They sent the answers back to the People team and we collected them in a shared file.

Methodology
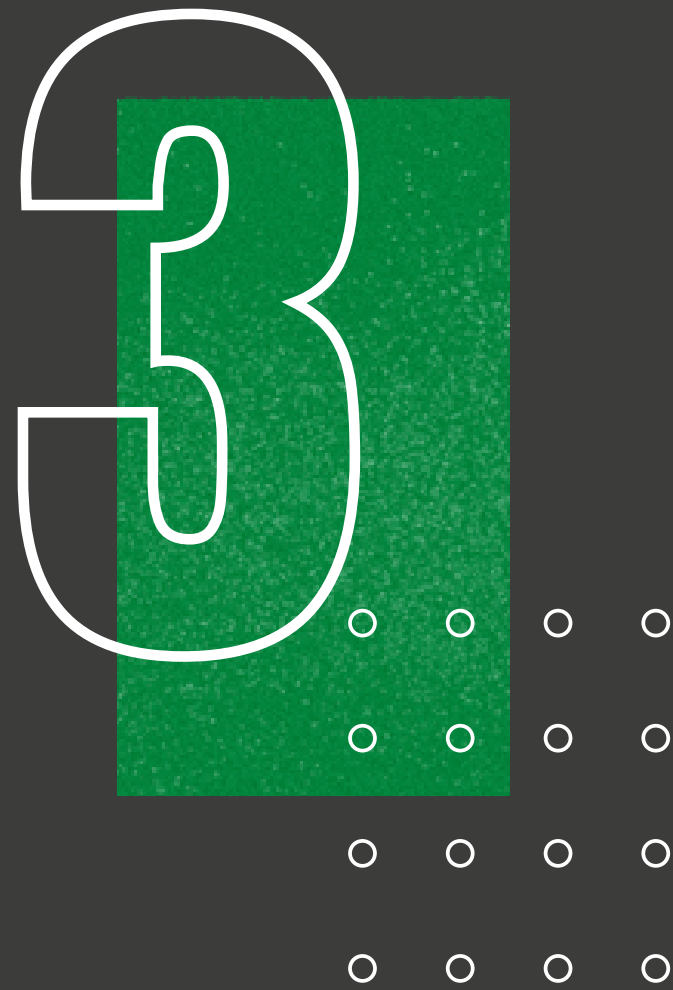
After collecting all the answers, we categorized every statement into preliminary topics with our Data Science team's help. At this point, we wanted the topics to be very granular. We found a total of **33** first preliminary areas. We decided to name the areas regardless of their positive or negative outcomes. For example:

CHALLENGE

Stay (Positive):
"Challenging projects/products"
"The role itself - I love to be a PO and even do some work as PM (explore market needs and understand the user)"
*"Being challenged to stay updated and learn new things every day"*

Leave (Negative):
"Only working in support projects / not developing new features"
"Working solely on boring tasks"
"Technological stagnation"

After this step, we found connections between the preliminary topics and aggregated them into meta-topics. We ended up with **17 meta-topics**, the foundation of the tb.lx barometer.
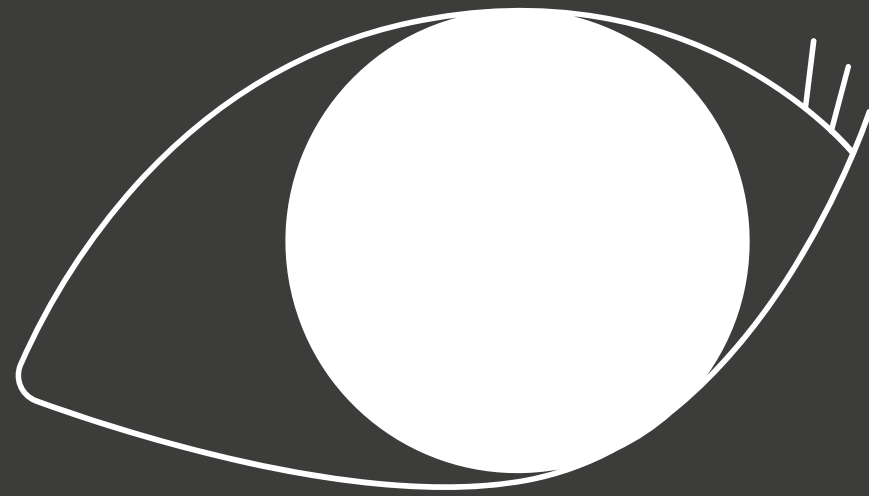
AN IN-DEPTH LOOK AT OUR META-TOPICS

Topic	Stay	Leave	Total
Growth	29	18	47
Team Spirit	33	5	38
Flexibility and Work-Life Empathy	18	10	28
Management and Leadership Style	15	13	28
People-Centric Approach	18	8	26
Ownership	11	13	24
Challenge	10	13	23
Startup Spirit	10	11	21
Company Vision	9	10	19
Compensation and Benefits	9	9	18
Feeling of Purpose	8	6	14
Having a Voice and Being Heard	7	4	11
Recognition	6	4	10
Impact	6	3	9
Startup Within the Corporate	3	3	6
Contribution / Giving Back	4	1	5
International Environment	3	0	3

Table 1. Meta-topics from most relevant to least relevant

Our Meta-Topics

1. Growth

Growth was one of the strongest dimensions mentioned by tblxers. This represents not only the internal drive to grow (*"Learn new things every day"; "Possibility to grow as a person and as an engineer"; "Career progression - The opportunity to grow to new positions and responsibilities"*) but also the support the company provides for this growth (*"Growth plan / mentoring"; "Constructive feedback"; "Good training program"; "The support that I get to do my job better"; "Opportunity to grow is tangible"; "A lot to learn from Daimler and the truck industry, without being stuck in it"*).

On the other hand, on the negative side, every team mentioned that *"no progression, no growth"* would be a reason for them to leave tb.lx.

2. Team Spirit

This dimension had the second highest score for tb.lxers. It splits into Sense of Community, and Coworkers and Team Spirit. Sense of Community is one of the reasons people Stay at tb.lx. It reflects "a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through commitment to be together" (McMillan, D. W.; Chavis, D. M. 1986). To quote the respondents: *"Knowing everyone in the company"; "the team's (and overall company's) dynamic", "where people are quite free to express and where efforts are actually noticed and appreciated"; "Support in difficult situations and openness to handle any problems/issues"; "I can ping anyone and most surely will get some support from them if needed"; "Feeling that I'm part of something"; "Brilliant people without the ego in their way".*

Co-workers & overall team spirit also largely contribute to this dimension. *"Very smart but down-to-earth colleagues"; "Being able to work with people that I look up to"; "Intensive and authentic collaboration between all collaborators"; "good work environment with a good relation between the colleagues"; "The people and the 'rooting for each other' mentality, the openness"*. On the other hand, if this dynamic shifts, it could be a reason for people to consider leaving: *"if the team dynamics change in a way of being a hostile atmosphere with alpha people"; "bad work environment / bad relation between the colleagues"*. We must keep fostering a collaborative and supportive work environment in the company and in the teams.

Our Meta-Topics

3. Management & Leadership Style

This dimension includes: Management and Leadership, Authenticity, and Transparency. "People leave their Jobs. It's up to managers to design jobs that are too good to leave". – Harvard Business Review. Management and Leadership Style play a major role in the motivation to stay in a company and here at tb.lx it comes up as the third most relevant dimension to stay or to consider leaving (if something changes).

As Goler, Gale, Harringthon and Grant say "When you have a manager who cares about your happiness and your success, your career and your life, you end up with a better job, and it's hard to imagine working anywhere else." (Goler, L; Gale, J.; Harrington, B. and Grant, A., 2018). Our employees mention aspects like *"the accessibility of leaders and not having an intimidating corporate and hierarchical structure"*, *"transparency in the leadership team"* and having *"inspiring C-levels"* as main aspects keeping them in the company.

4. Challenge

The **Challenge** dimension includes the call to solve interesting and complex problems and the reward of using a modern and exciting technological stack. We also find mentions to continuous improvement through learning and exposure to a demanding environment.

5. Company Vision

Alignment with the company vision is the epitome of this topic. Respondents seem to feel strongly connected to electrical mobility and associated services. Besides these topics, the vision also includes how the company is independent and product-driven. It also relates to acting according to the company's principles: *"Be part of a company that is socially responsible"*, working on *"projects with huge impact"* and the *"Sustainability focus"*. On the other hand, if the company vision changes and ceases to be aligned with our core values, some employees might find this a good reason to consider leaving. It is of utmost importance to stay true to our vision and purpose.

Our Meta-Topics

6. Ownership

The Ownership dimension aggregates information from the following topics: 1) Trust - There is a mutual trust relationship between the team and the individual, reflected in the absence of micro-management and double-checks; and 2) Empowerment / Autonomy - People feel empowered to take matters into their hands, to take responsibility for issues, and make decisions on work-related issues within their authority range.

7. Compensation and Benefits

This dimension includes salary, money benefits, flex wallet, perks and work tools. These last two seem to be related as some respondents refer to physical work tools, such as computers and monitors, as being part of the perks. The ability to use software tools of choice is also considered a perk.

8. Feeling of Purpose

Purpose, meaning, value and impact of one's work are the main tenets of this dimension. Respondents want their work to have a meaningful purpose, deliver value to the target users so that it has a real impact. The loss of independence and becoming a small cog in the corporate machine is a negative point.

Our Meta-Topics

9. Startup Spirit

The startup spirit dimension includes its specific mindset and the related sense of agility. Startup Mindset, which relates to the small company size and a flat hierarchy. And Agility, which relates to easy management accessibility, the startup pace, and the absence of bureaucracy. There is also a clear desire to avoid a consulting stance.

10. Flexibility & Work-Life Empathy

This dimension comes up in the third position in the most-voted rank, and includes Work-Life Empathy, Flexibility, and Remote-First Culture. The first one closely relates to the balance of time reserved for work and private life. Negative associations emerged relating to overworking and burnout. Regarding Flexibility, most respondents referred to work hours, with minor negative mentions to content and rules. The Remote-First Culture topic refers to the preference, or lack thereof, for working primarily from home. It also refers to the lack of strict rules enforcing office work, linking to Flexibility.

11. Having a Voice & Being Heard

A growing body of research indicates that a key indicator of organizational success is a company's ability to make employees feel heard. On the contrary, as a group, and as individuals, not having a voice can lead to deep dissatisfaction. Essentially, employee voice refers to the amount of voluntary effort a person is willing to put into communicating suggestions, opinions, concerns, and ideas that can be used to make improvements (Emplify, 2020). For tblxers, this dimension is also very important. They feel that "everyone's voice is heard regardless of seniority or time in the company", and "see that everyone gets involved, everyone has a say, everyone speaks and new ideas are taken into account". On the contrary, we must pay attention to this when promoting retention, since "not Being involved in decisions that will affect me (excluded from decisions)" is a major red flag.

Our Meta-Topics

tb.lx

12. People-Centric Approach

This dimension aggregates 1) People-First Culture, in which the focus on people is an essential aspect of the company culture. 2) Respect, Diversity, and Inclusion, when the company fosters an environment of respect and welcomes diversity, and 3) Sandbox Environment, which relates to how safe people feel in taking risks, trying new approaches, failing, and learning from mistakes. Everyone is free to speak and express their opinion without fearing an aggressive or callous backlash.

13. Recognition

Acknowledging employees and their individual contributions makes them feel like they can be the best version of themselves at work, and this contributes to reduced stress, absenteeism and attrition (Tyfting, M.; Forbes, 2020). The recognition dimension seems to play an important factor at tb.lx. *"Feel my good work recognized and rewarded fairly"* and *"having recognition and acknowledgement for contributions"* is detrimental for people to stay and we must invest in this aspect if we want to keep our employees motivated and engaged.

14. Impact

The fact that we are doing something meaningful and impactful is definitely a driver for people to join, stay and feel motivated at our company. Aspects like *"Project visibility"*, *"Possibility of delivering services and products that deliver value and connect vehicles worldwide"* and have an impact in the world of today and tomorrow, affecting our generation and the generations to come speak dearly to our employees. As stated in one of our latest medium articles, *"by creating software solutions that will facilitate the use of electric vehicles, we are ultimately enabling more and more of them to circulate on the roads, therefore reducing the negative environmental impacts of the transportation sector".*

Our Meta-Topics

15. Contribution and Giving Back

Related to the aspects of Growth and Recognition but on the other end of the spectrum is Contribution. Our employees feel motivated by the possibility of giving back - teaching others, making the company grow, improving the team through their contributions. A selfless drive is very interesting to observe in our company culture.

16. International Environment

One other aspect that deserves mentioning is the experience of an international environment that our ecosystem allows. At tb.lx, with a total of 46* employees, we have 11 nationalities from all parts of the globe. Moreover, we interact with Business Partners from Asia, North America and Central Europe, which allows our people to get in touch with different cultures and points of view without leaving our company.

17. Startup Within the Corporate

Being a startup within a large corporation brings about the benefits of the "safety net" effect, where people value the stability of the larger DTB corporation and the growth potential it enables. On the other hand, respondents fear that the larger corporation might crush the company's autonomy by reducing it to a mere satellite.

*the headcount when this research was made
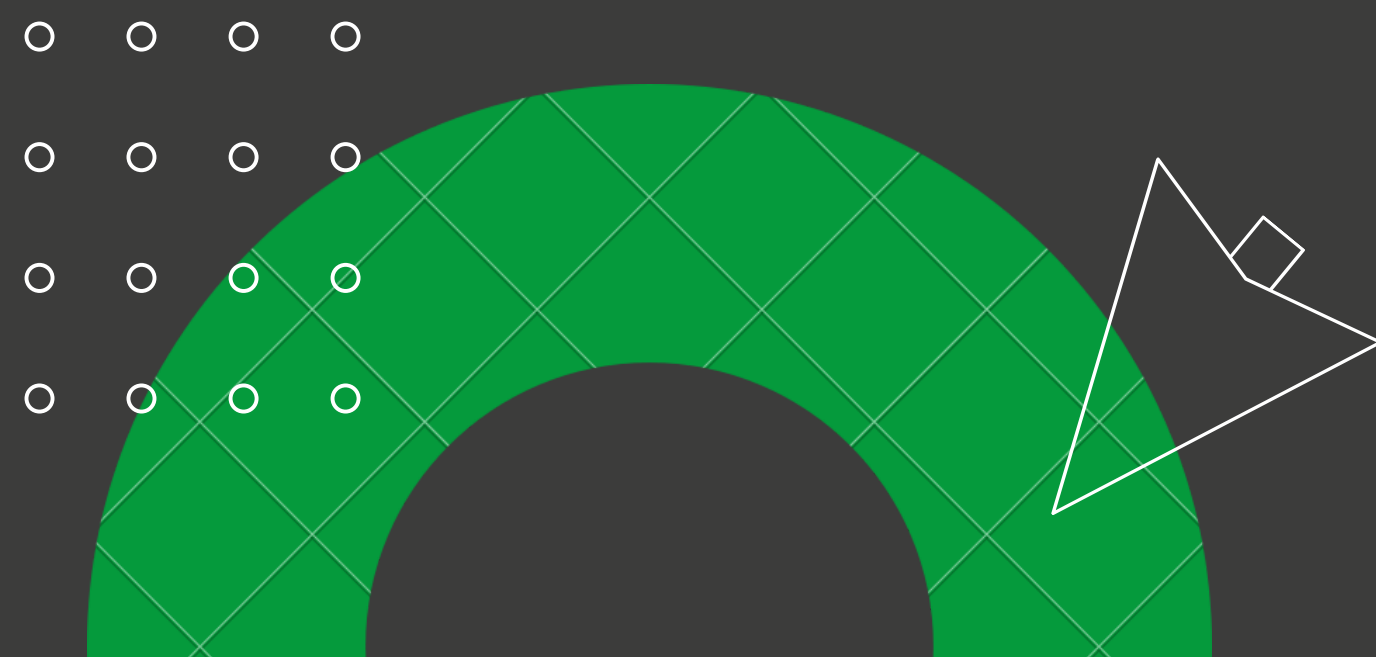
TB.LX BAROMETER

Our custom-made Online Assessment Tool

The barometer

We delivered the barometer to all our employees through a custom-made web application that collects the ranked reasons for staying and leaving the company.

To quickly deliver a working solution, we resorted to a Python-based platform to generate web-based data applications named Streamlit. This platform converts regular Python scripts into customisable web applications tuned for data exploration. It is a trendy tool within the Data Science community to remotely deliver model results and simple dashboards. We adapted it to collect information from a streamlined user interface and store it into a small database.

Our SRE team set up an Azure DevOps pipeline to automatically deploy the application upon committing to the repository. This setup resulted in rapid development and deployment cycles, allowing us to field the application in a matter of days.
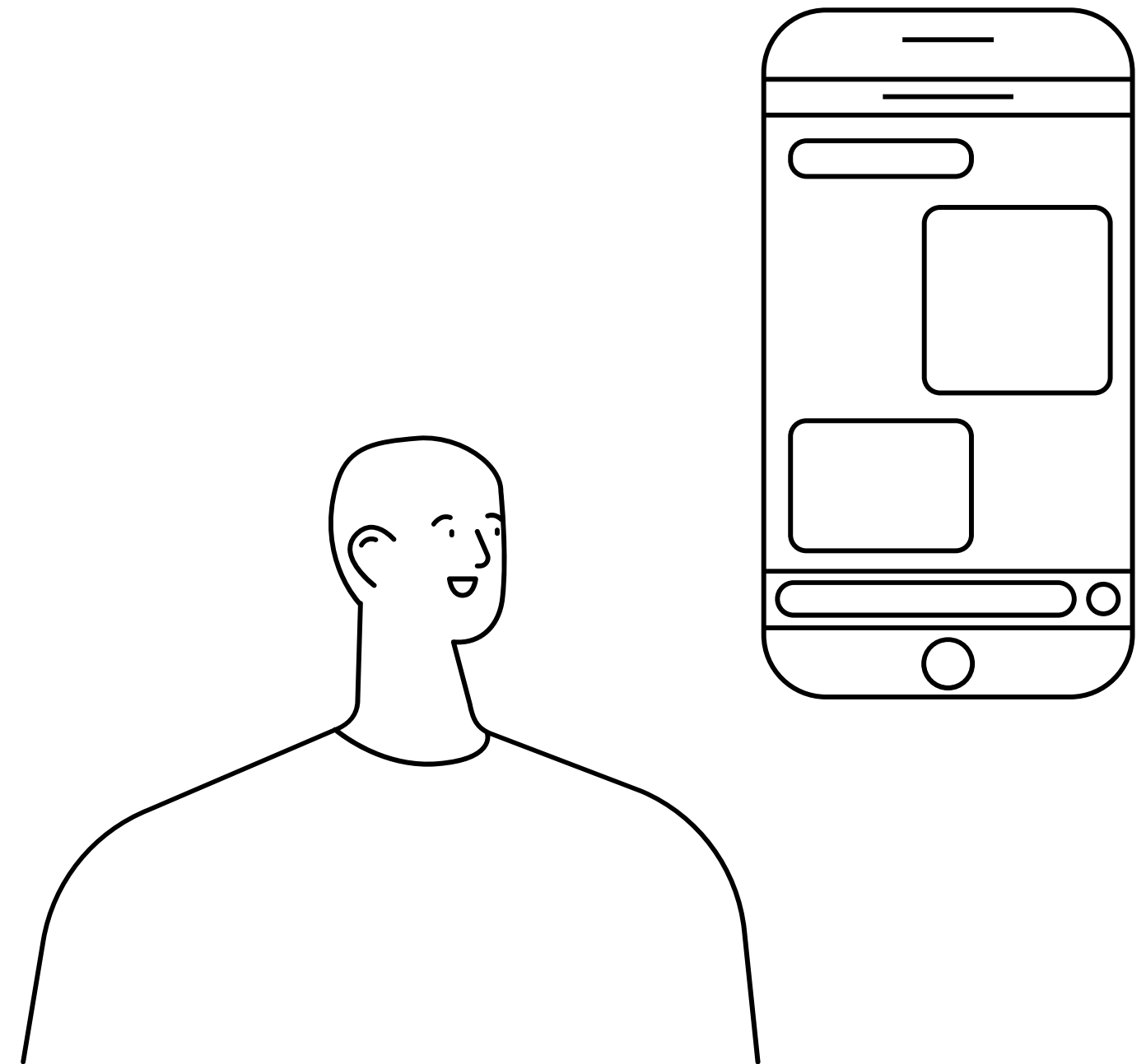
Results

We collected the answers from 46 employees, and the top ten most meaningful dimensions are in the table below:

Stay		Leave	
Dimension	**Weight**	**Dimension**	**Weight**
Flexibility and Work-Life Empathy	483	Compensation & Benefits	504
Compensation & Benefits	479	Management and Leadership Style	471
Feeling of Purpose	423	Flexibility and Work-Life Empathy	400
Growth	422	Challenge	365
People-Centric Approach	412	Growth	363
Challenge	408	Team Spirit	343
Team Spirit	403	Feeling of Purpose	310
Having a Voice and Being Heard	304	Recognition	272
Company Vision	296	Company Vision	208
Impact	296	Impact	200
Management and Leadership Style	292	Having a Voice and Being Heard	179

Table 2. Rank of the top ten most relevant dimensions

Regardless of Seniority; Domain Area (Engineering, Product, Business Support); Gender; and other factors, the aggregated results for our combined sample show that, at tb.lx, **Flexibility and Work-life Empathy**, followed by **Compensation and Benefits**, and **Feeling of Purpose** are the three main reasons our people Stay at our company.

Aspects such as **Growth**, our **People-Centric Approach**, and the **Challenge** are also primary drivers and contributors for our employees to stay motivated and connected to the company. If they were to leave, aspects such as a better offer regarding Compensation and Benefits, a change in the Management and Leadership style, and our vision regarding Flexibility and Work-life Empathy would push towards considering different options in the market.

One note to highlight is that companies usually don't ask about the impact of Compensation and Benefits as a motivator or dissatisfying factor, since the answers could be biased, related to an unconscious fear of *"If I don't mention compensation and benefits maybe I won't receive a promotion in the upcoming salary revision cycle"*. We wanted to challenge this since we feel that, at tb.lx, we live in a psychologically safe environment, and people shouldn't be afraid of expressing how they feel. Interestingly enough, our employees mentioned that our level of compensation and benefits is a solid reason to keep them motivated, alongside other non-tangible / "emotional aspects''.
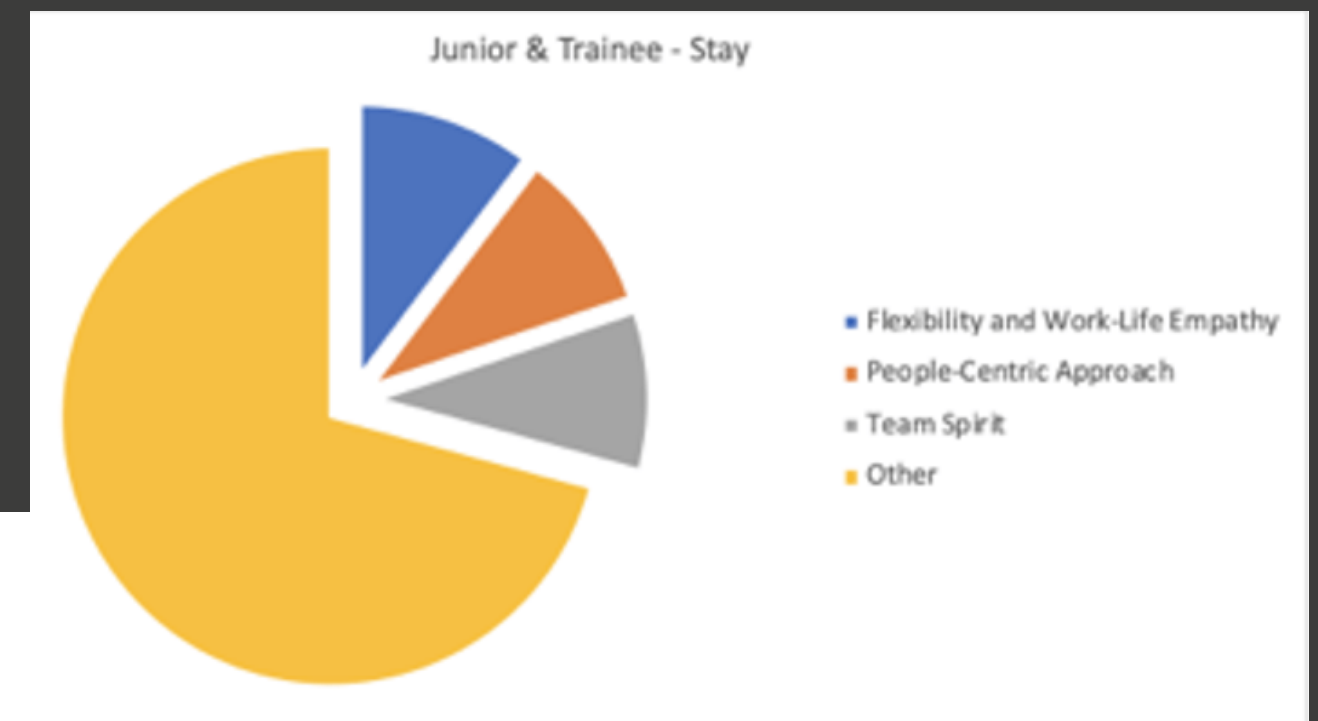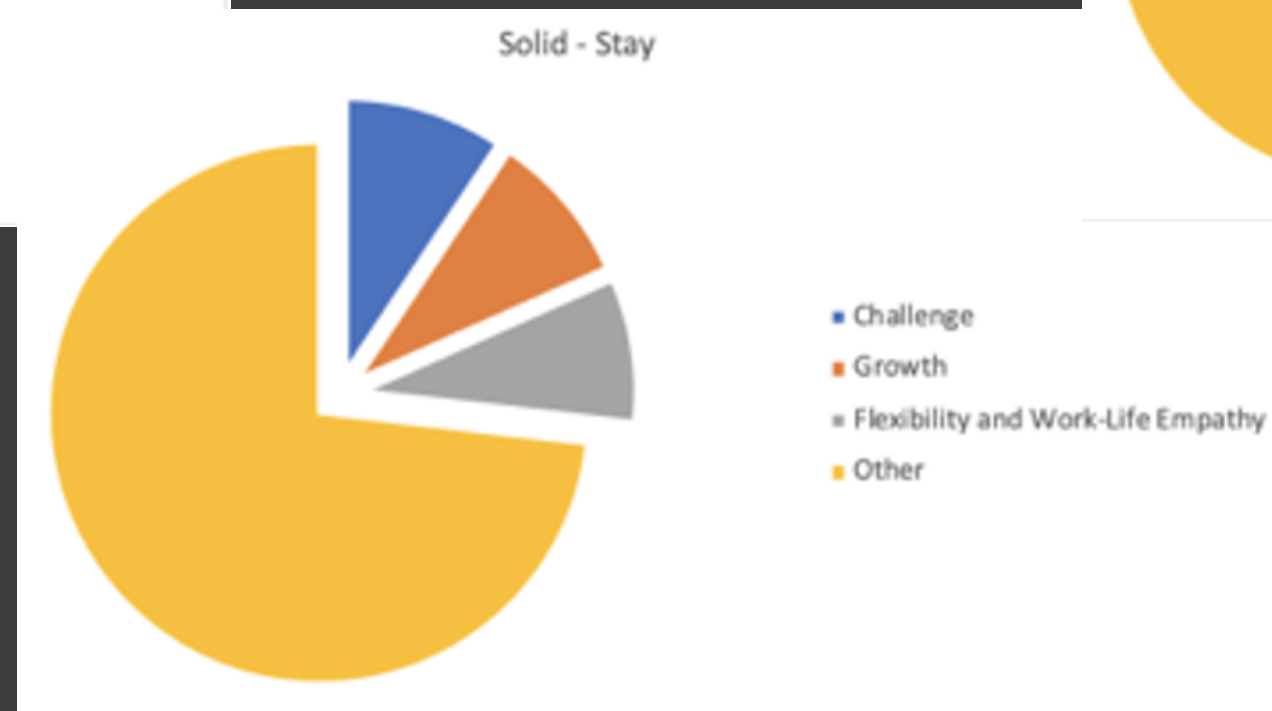
Results

If we take a closer look at the rankings from the barometer, we can observe that seniority plays a part when it comes to choosing the most relevant dimensions that make you want to stay or leave a company. Some dimensions are relevant regardless of seniority, like Flexibility and Work-Life Empathy.
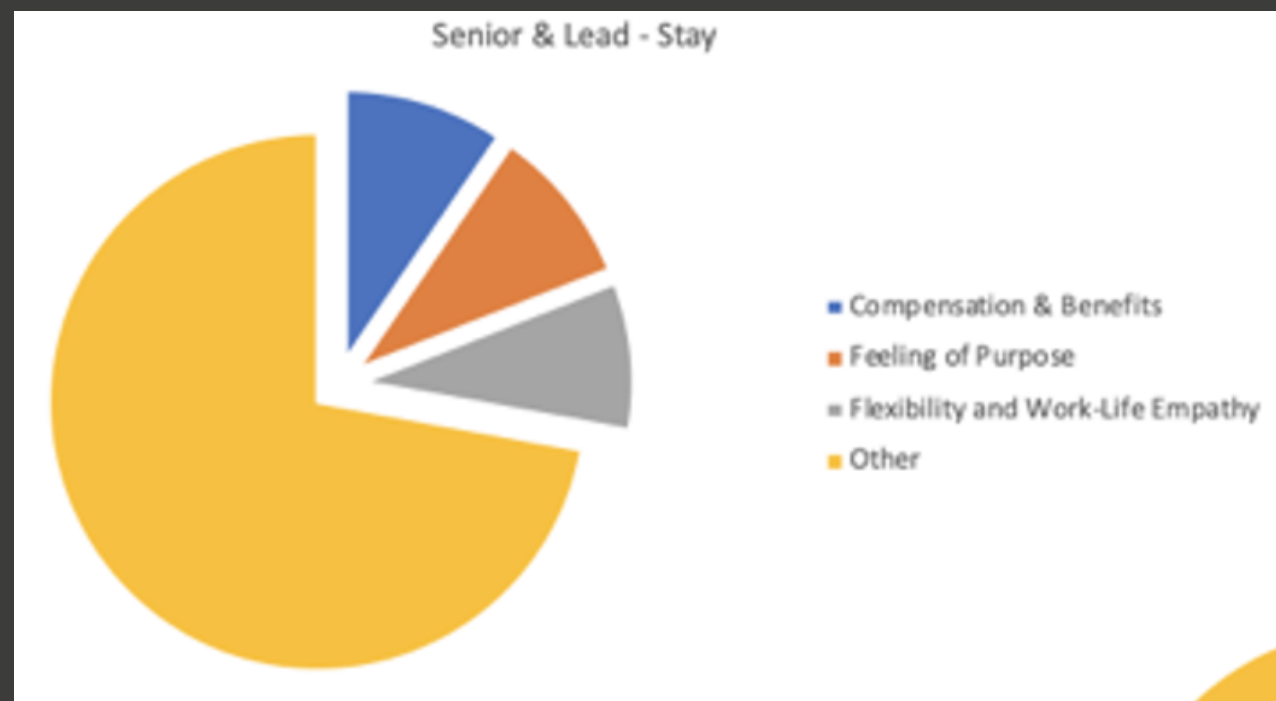
Graph 1. Reasons to Stay: Senior Level
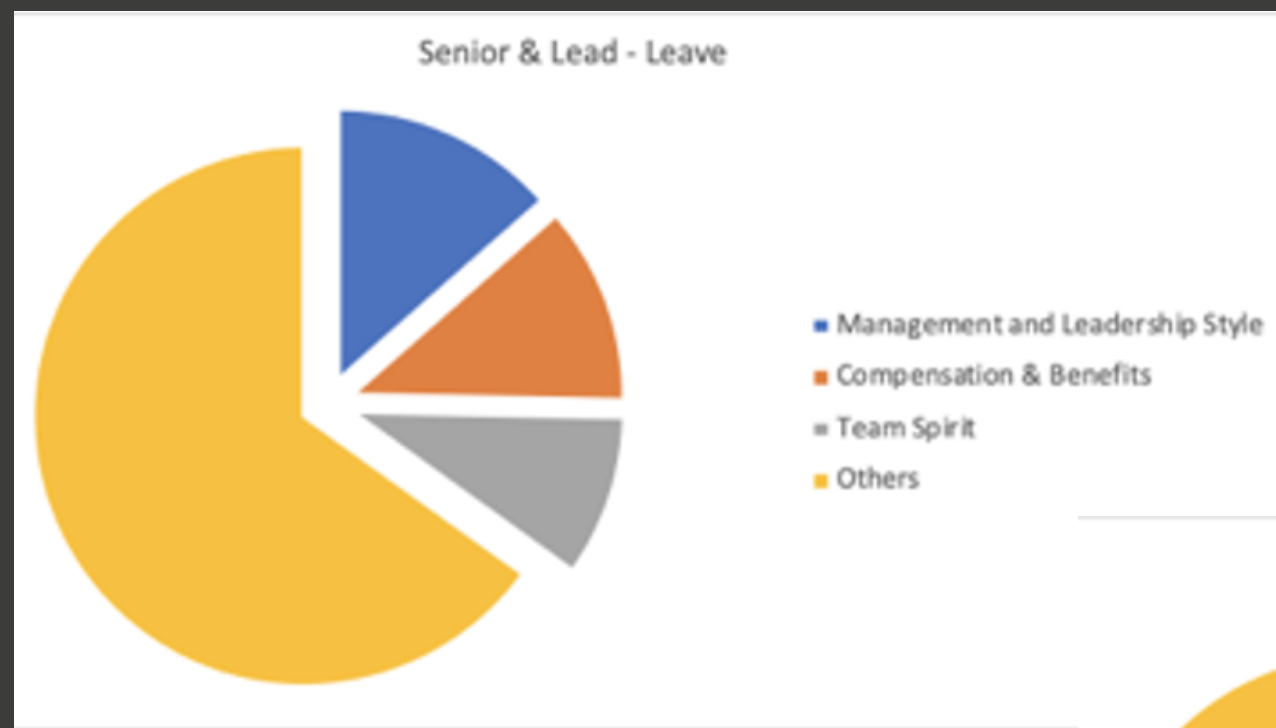
Graph 2. Reasons to Stay: Solid

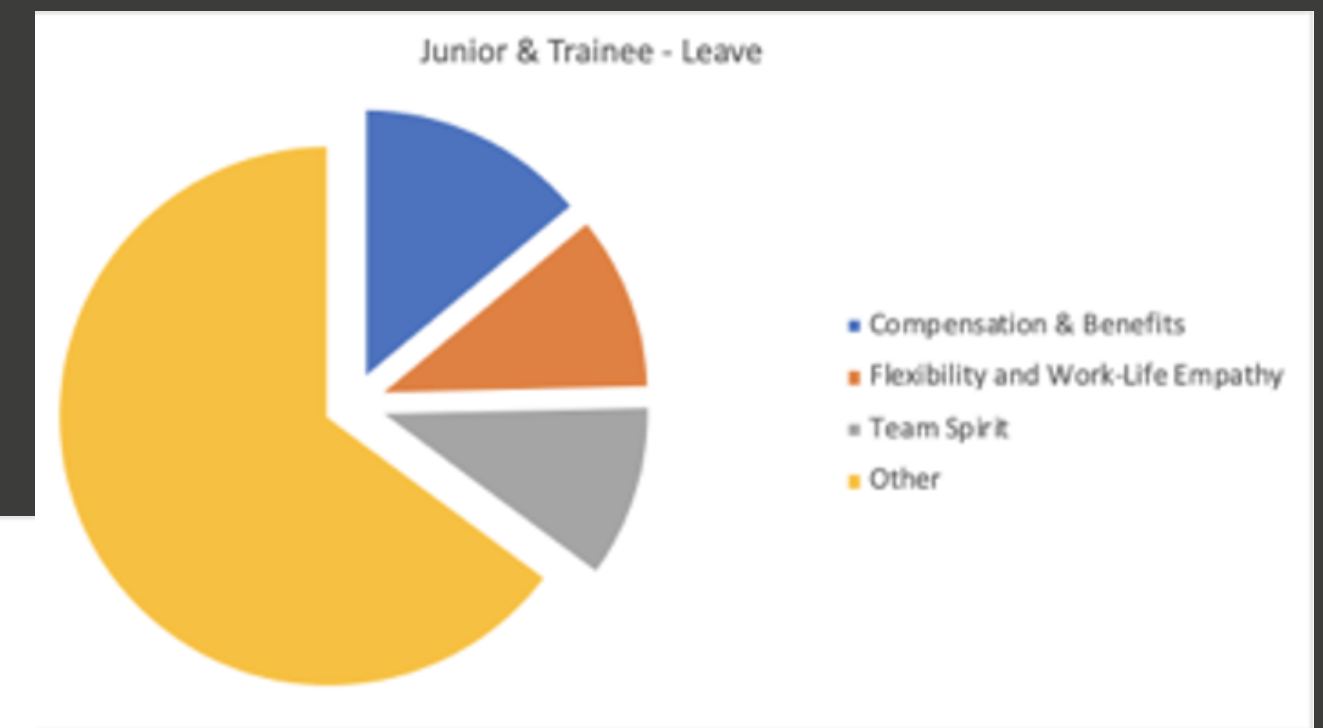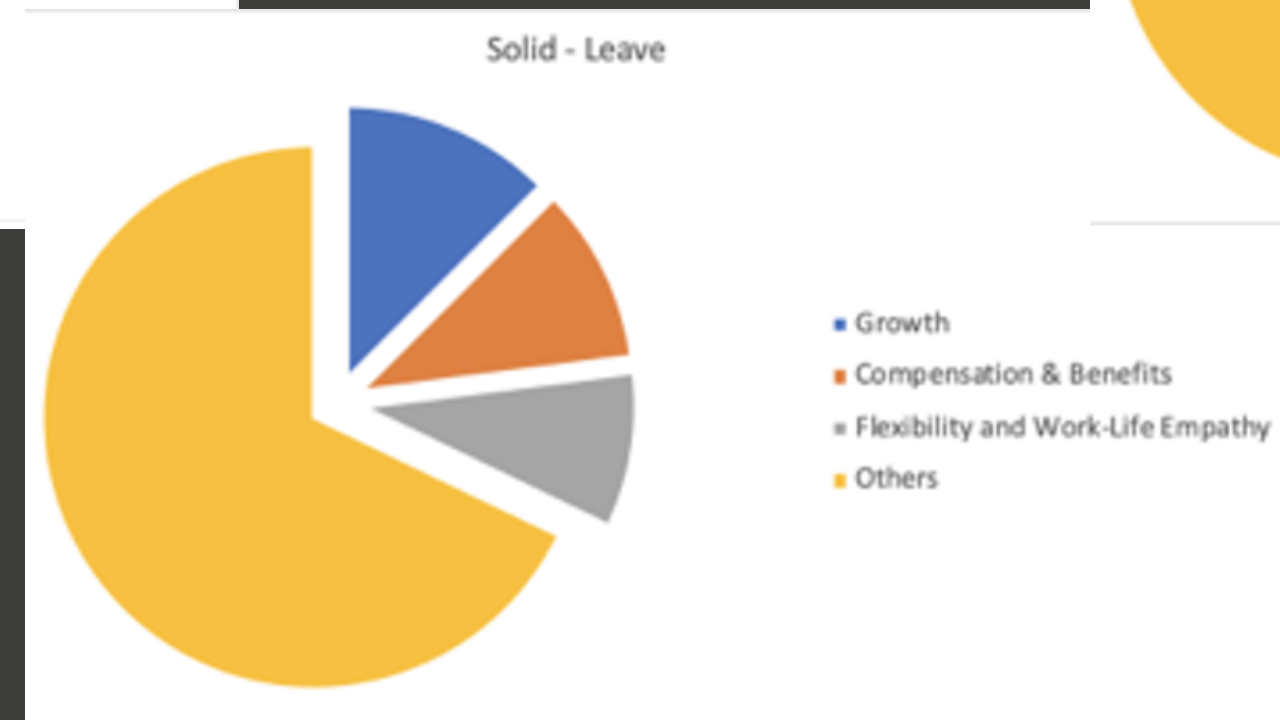**Graph 3**. Reasons to Stay: Junior and Trainee Level

Results

The same logic applies when looking at the drivers to consider leaving. A better offer regarding Compensation and Benefits is considered at all levels.

Senior & Lead - Leave

- Management and Leadership Style
- Compensation & Benefits
- Team Spirit
- Others

Graph 4. Reasons to Leave: Senior Level

Graph 5. Reasons to Leave: Solid

Solid - Leave

- Growth
- Compensation & Benefits
- Flexibility and Work-Life Empathy
- Others

Junior & Trainee - Leave

- Compensation & Benefits
- Flexibility and Work-Life Empathy
- Team Spirit
- Other

Graph 6. Reasons to Leave: Junior and Trainee Level

Conclusions

The comfort of working at a company that supports personal growth through training and open feedback, that makes people feel safe for experimenting with new solutions without the guilt risk, that allows employees to make an impact on others' lives through their work, promotes a personal involvement that fosters outstanding results, learning and value delivery.

As Adam Grant mentions in his book Think Again (2020), "Your organisational culture impacts your team's ability to rethink. [...] If you want your team to have the ability to review and reassess their decisions, then your workplace needs to adopt a learning culture. In learning cultures, the highest priority is growth, and rethinking is routine. Employees maintain an element of doubt about their methods, and they're always aware of just how much they don't know."
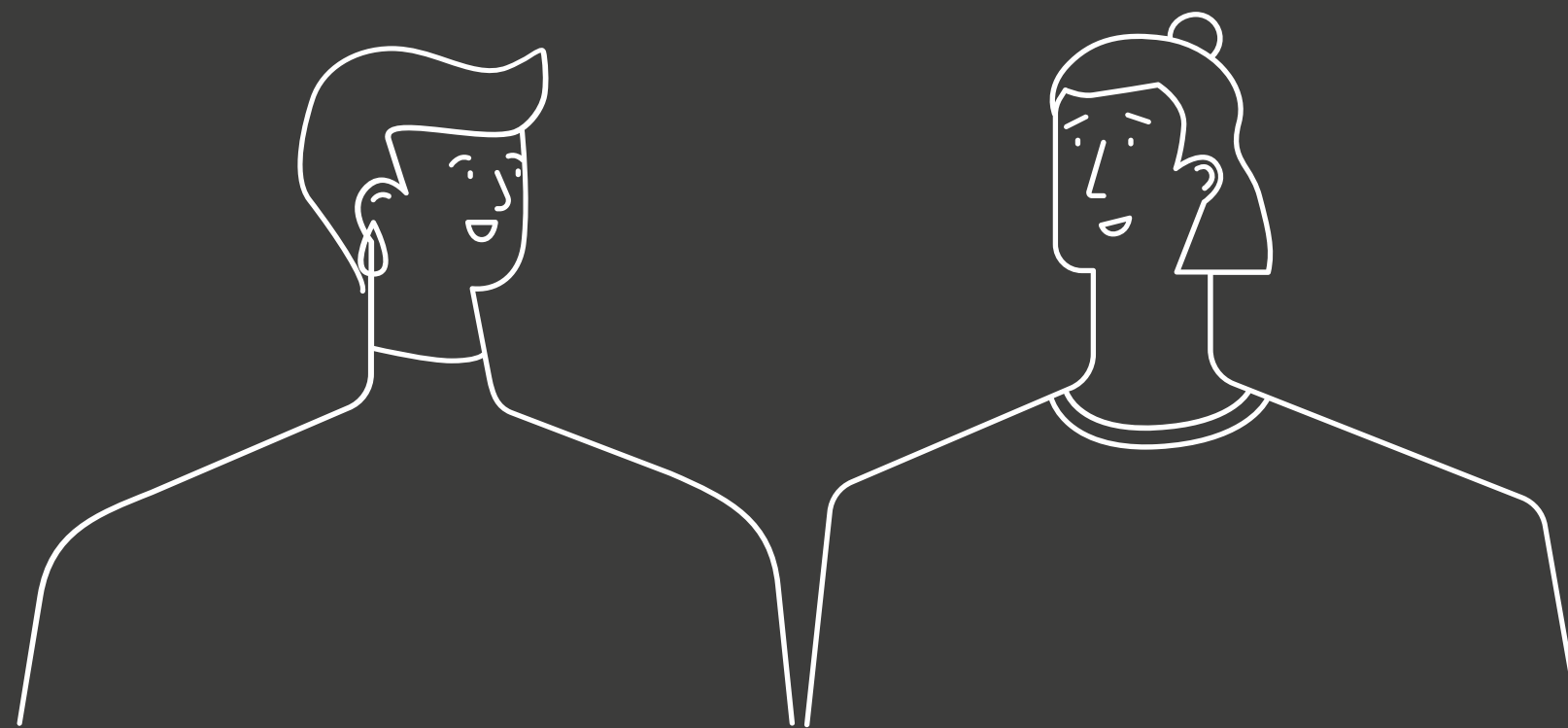
Conclusions

Grant further states that this learning mindset means people stay humble rather than falling victim to overconfidence. You might assume that organisations focusing on performance get better results, but research shows that companies with learning cultures are the most innovative and make the least mistakes. In a software company like ours, where we must push creative product ideas in the automotive tech sector, this learning culture is a must. Two of our guiding principles are "Engage to learn" and "Failure as part of the process".

What our data shows us is that providing an atmosphere of psychological safety, where the significant aspects of material compensation are met, a people-centric approach prevails, and there is a focus on delivering the best growth opportunities, will drive you to achieve excellence as a company.

We also must pay attention to individuality. Aspects such as the seniority level and the domain area of the employees play a significant part when looking for ways to keep them engaged and satisfied. The weight they give to specific dimensions is also related to their experience and the area they operate. We, as a company, must be attentive to that.