

The logo for SME Fusion features a circular icon on the left containing a stylized white leaf. To its right, the text 'sme' is in a smaller font with a colorful swoosh above the 'e'. Below 'sme' is the word 'fusion' in a large, bold, white sans-serif font. Underneath 'fusion' are two horizontal lines, and below those is the text 'THE MANUFACTURING WORKFORCE EVENT' in a smaller, all-caps sans-serif font.

**f** sme  
**fusion**  
THE MANUFACTURING WORKFORCE EVENT

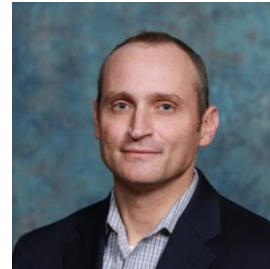
**DETROIT, MI**

April 8-10, 2025

April 9, 9:45 AM – 10:30 AM  
**Engage to Retain**



**Denise Cowburn, moderator**  
Sr. Client Executive/Workforce Development  
Specialist  
**SME**



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Senior Vice President, Partner Development  
**Mainstay**



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Human Resource Director  
**Kent Elastomer Products, Inc.**





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THE MANUFACTURING WORKFORCE EVENT

Stay Interviews

**Employee Retention**

# Kent Elastomer Products

## Looking at Retention Strategically

Kent Elastomer Products, (KEP), a subsidiary of Meridian Industries, Inc., was founded in 1960. We are a leading U.S. solutions provider for the global medical market, as well as orthodontic, food and beverage, sports and recreation, laboratory, and industrial markets worldwide.

**Company Size:**  
147- January 2023  
170- January 2024  
197- January 2025

**Turnover:**  
9% 2023  
18% 2024

**Concerns:**

- Cost of Hires/Turnover
- Culture Decline
- Quality of Hires



# The Challenge

## Why can't we keep people?

### What causes people to leave?

Is this a recruiting or onboarding issue or is it a retention issue?

### What is the average tenure we see people leave?

For us, this was around 90- 120 days.

Verifying it is not an onboarding issue.

### Determining the causes.

Is it the culture, the policies, the people, or the leadership?

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# Addressing the Problem

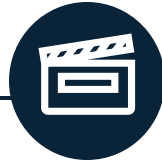
## Following these steps



Stay Interviews

**Research & Identify**

To develop solutions



Take Action

**Be Agile & Quick**

Show you listened



Tools

**Maintainable System**

The progress can't stop



Communicate

**We Heard You**

Follow Up



## The Solution ..... Stay Interviews

- One on One Conversation
- Multiple Leaders Conducting Them
- All Tenures Included
- Ask Smart Questions
- Train your Leaders
- Be Prepared to Listen
- Be Inquisitive
- Document It
- Confidentiality & Trust
- Appreciation & Follow Up

**If you're not prepared to act,  
don't do them!**



One on One



Ask Smart  
Questions



Listen



# Listening & Taking Action

What did we find out?

- Good people are leaving because they need time off during the first year.
- People are considering leaving because of the overtime, not because they didn't want it but because they were notified at the last minute.
- If you couldn't do the last-minute overtime, you received attendance points that counted towards you pointing out and getting fired.
- Accrued points also meant you lost out on the quarterly and yearly attendance bonus which made it not much of a perk for new people or long-tenured employees.
- Seniority or longevity didn't earn you any additional perks other than vacation time.
- Communication is not active and many people don't know the larger company goals or structure.
- Shift schedules aren't flexible.
- Leadership is not on the off shifts enough.

How did we take action?

- Implemented No Point/No Pay Days
- Implemented Overtime Passes
- Overtime Passes cancel out the Attendance Points
- Company Newsletter Implementation
- Quarterly Town Halls
- Employees earn additional Overtime Passes for tenure



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## Listening & Taking Action

What did we find out?

- Good people are leaving because they need time off during the first year.
- Overtime
  - Notified at the last minute AND
  - Received attendance points that counted towards you pointing out and getting fired if unavailable.
  - Accrued points = lost quarterly and yearly attendance bonus.
- Seniority or longevity didn't earn you any additional perks other than vacation time.
- Communication is not active. People don't know the larger company goals or structure.
- Shift schedules aren't flexible.
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# Technology to Support & Maintain

## Simple. Trackable. Analytics.

Team Forms

Stay Interviews

Employees Department

Mogadore

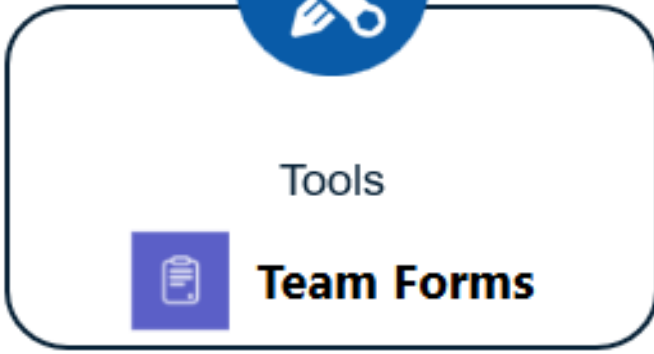
Winesburg

Kent

What do you look forward to most when you come to work every day?

What do you dread about work?

Utilized for Stay Interviews & Pulse Surveys



#	CREATED BY	TITLE	FORM VERSION	EMPLOYEES DEPART...	MOGADORE	WINESBURG	KENT
39	Anonymous	39 Stay Interviews	5	Tubing Inspection	false	true	false
23	Anonymous	23 Stay Interviews	5	CD Inspection	false	true	false
29	Anonymous	29 Stay Interviews	5	Lead	false	true	false
28	Anonymous	28 Stay Interviews	5	Assembly	false	true	false
25	Anonymous	25 Stay Interviews	5	Lead	false	true	false
20	Anonymous	20 Stay Interviews	4		false	true	false
18	Anonymous	18 Stay Interviews	4	Stripline	false	true	false
16	Anonymous	16 Stay Interviews	4	Stripline	false	true	false
13	Anonymous	13 Stay Interviews	4	Custom Dipping	false	true	false
4	Bethaney Mucci	4 Stay Interviews	1	Custom Dip	false	true	false
5	Bethaney Mucci	5 Stay Interviews	1		false	true	false
1	Bethaney Mucci	1 Stay Interviews	1		false	true	false
2	Bethaney Mucci	2 Stay Interviews	1		false	true	false





# Communicate **Improvements & Non-possibilities**



## **Communicate What You Heard**

What do you plan to do about it, even if it is nothing.



## **Choose Words Wisely**

Literally, say “We heard employees say.....” or “We took action on this because of employee feedback.”



## **Keep the Stay Interview Going**

Regular pulse surveys (we use a texting system)

Open Door Policy

Suggestions Boxes



## Results & Key Takeaways

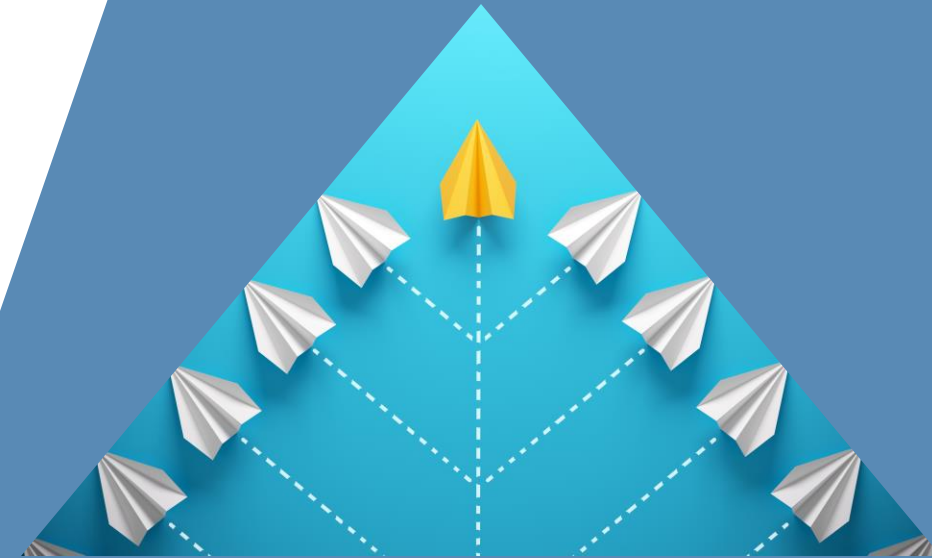
### Stay Interviews

- Require willingness to change
- Training for those conducting them
- Active listening
- A consistent format for submitting feedback
- ACTION!

### Results/Outcome

Turnover in Q1 2025 is only 5% vs. 19% in 2024

Leaders have a better pulse on employee needs, which has driven a new approach to solutions.



**Listening Up**

# Retention from Day One

# AI-Driven Engagement

**Dan Rabin**

Mainstay

Senior Vice President, Workforce

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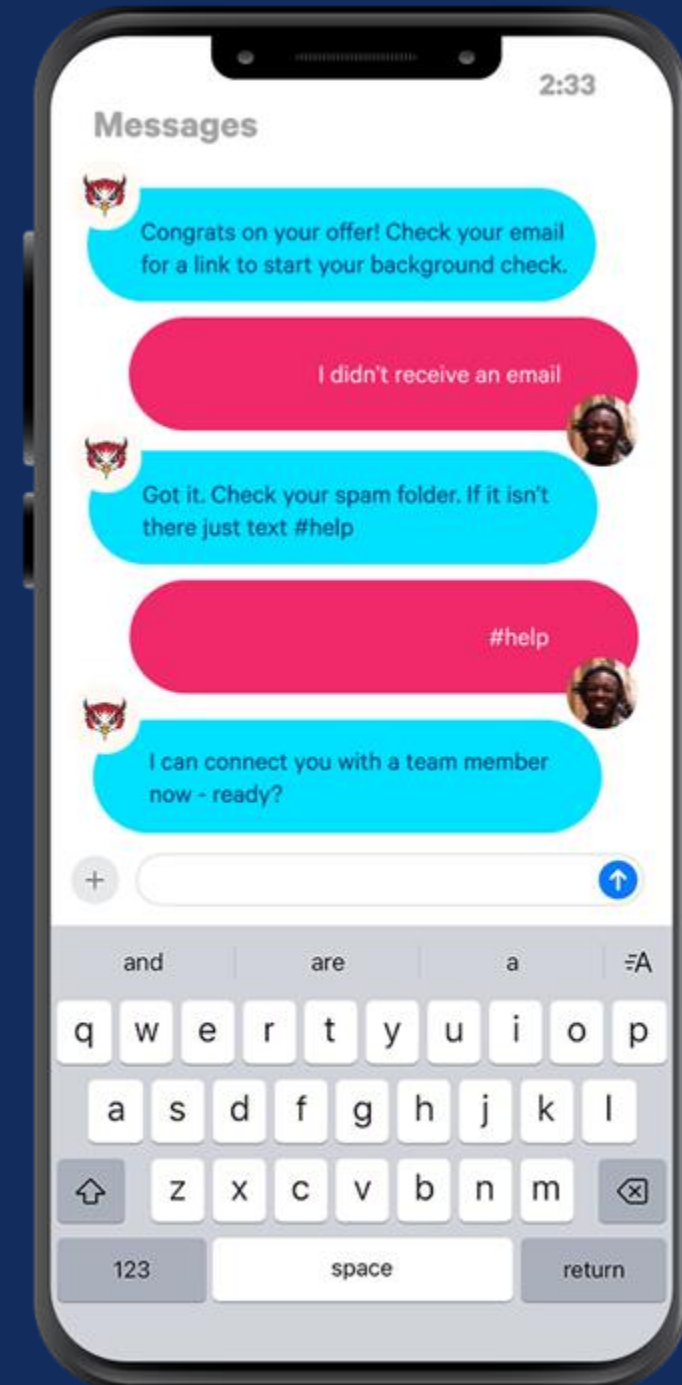
# About Mainstay

## Proven Engagement Strategists

Increasing learner **enrollment** and **retention** since 2014 with AI-powered, research-backed text conversations

In 2021, began working with enterprises to engage their **workforce** and drive **retention**

Proactively message large audiences, and respond to individual questions 24/7



*The Challenge*

# The Problems Surface Too Late



## Retention Starts *Before Day 1*

Why wait until **day 30, 60, or 90** to check in—*when employees leave on day 9.*

### Theory

It's not a hiring challenge  
—*it's an engagement challenge among resource constraints*

Can Human Centered, AI enable engagement  
*before it's too late?*



*The Solution*

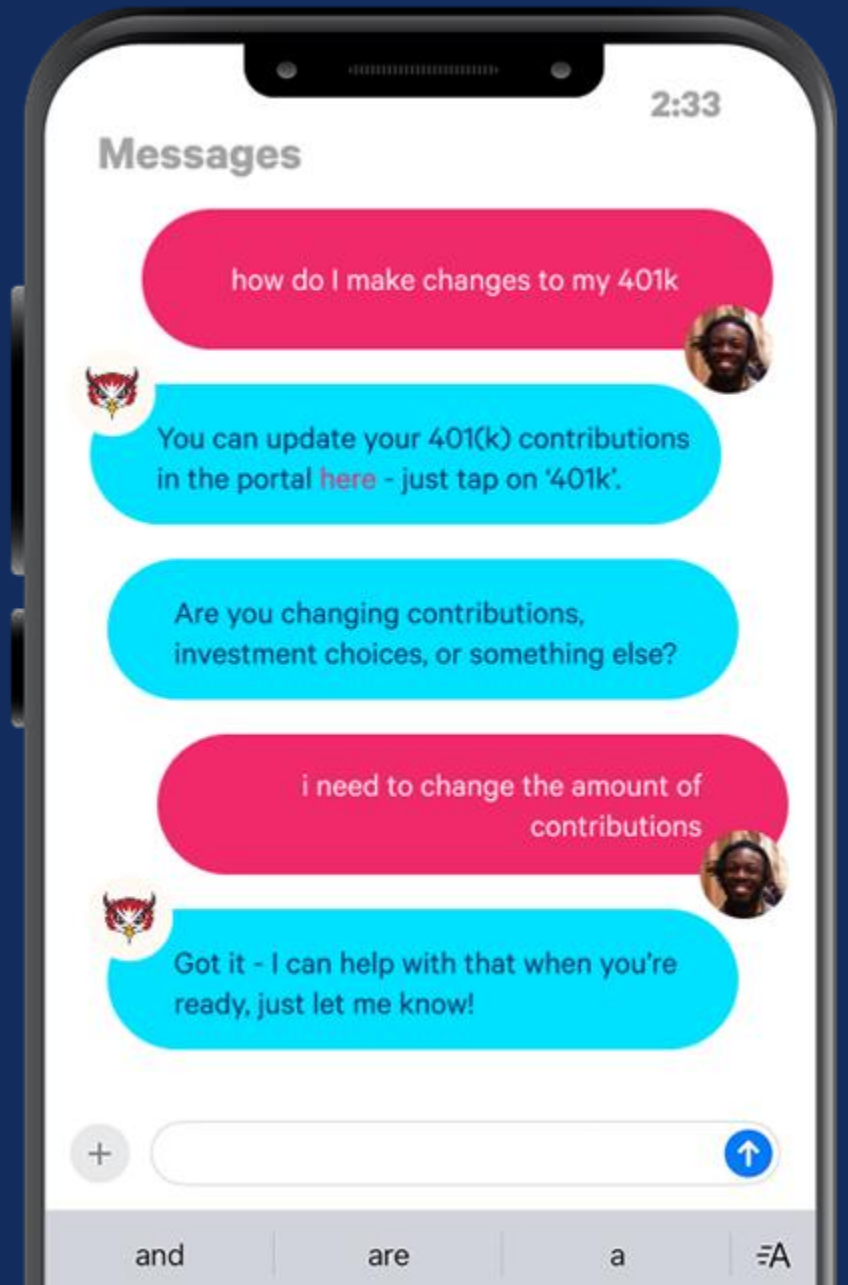
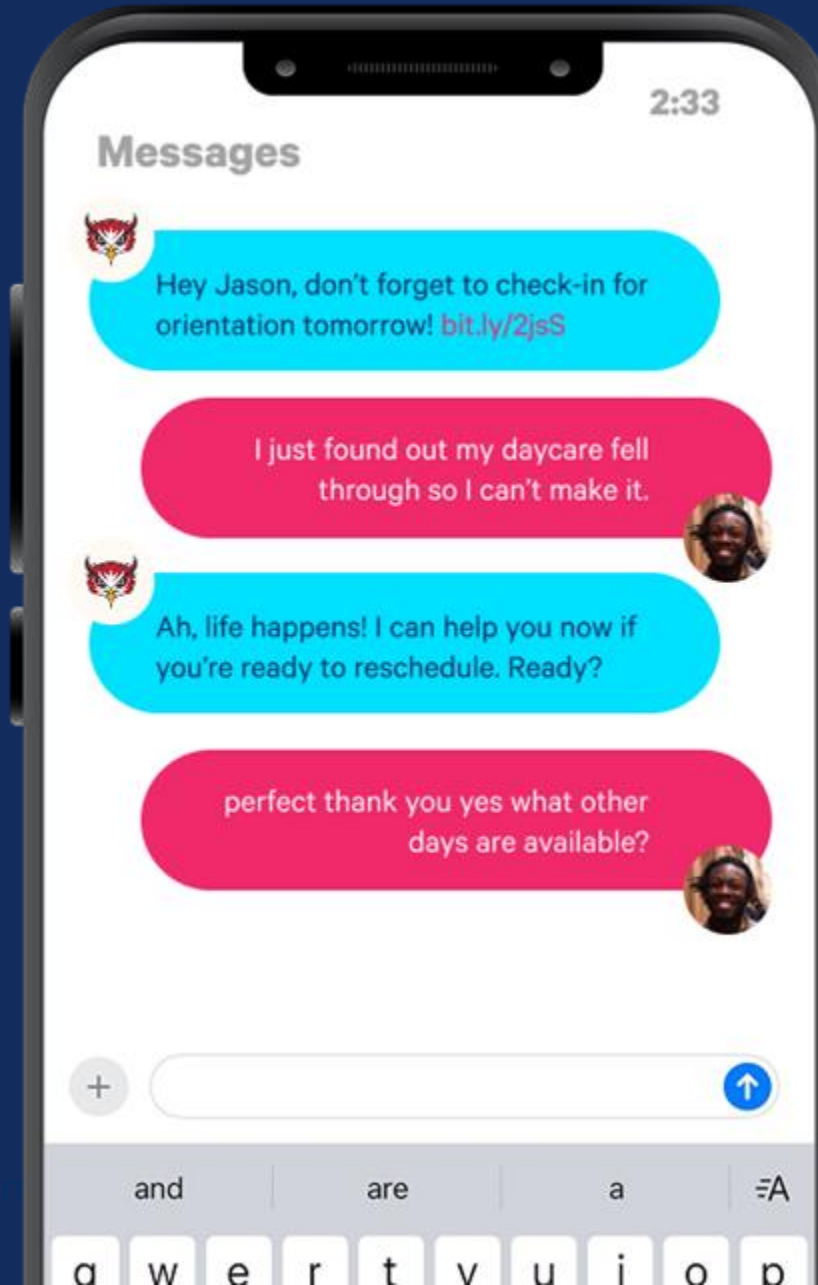
**Engage Early,  
Converse, &  
Support  
Continuously**

**Your Employees  
Want Action**  
*(not another survey)*

Surveys don't build trust.

AI-driven conversations can  
**open judgment-free spaces**  
for employees; on their terms and  
schedule

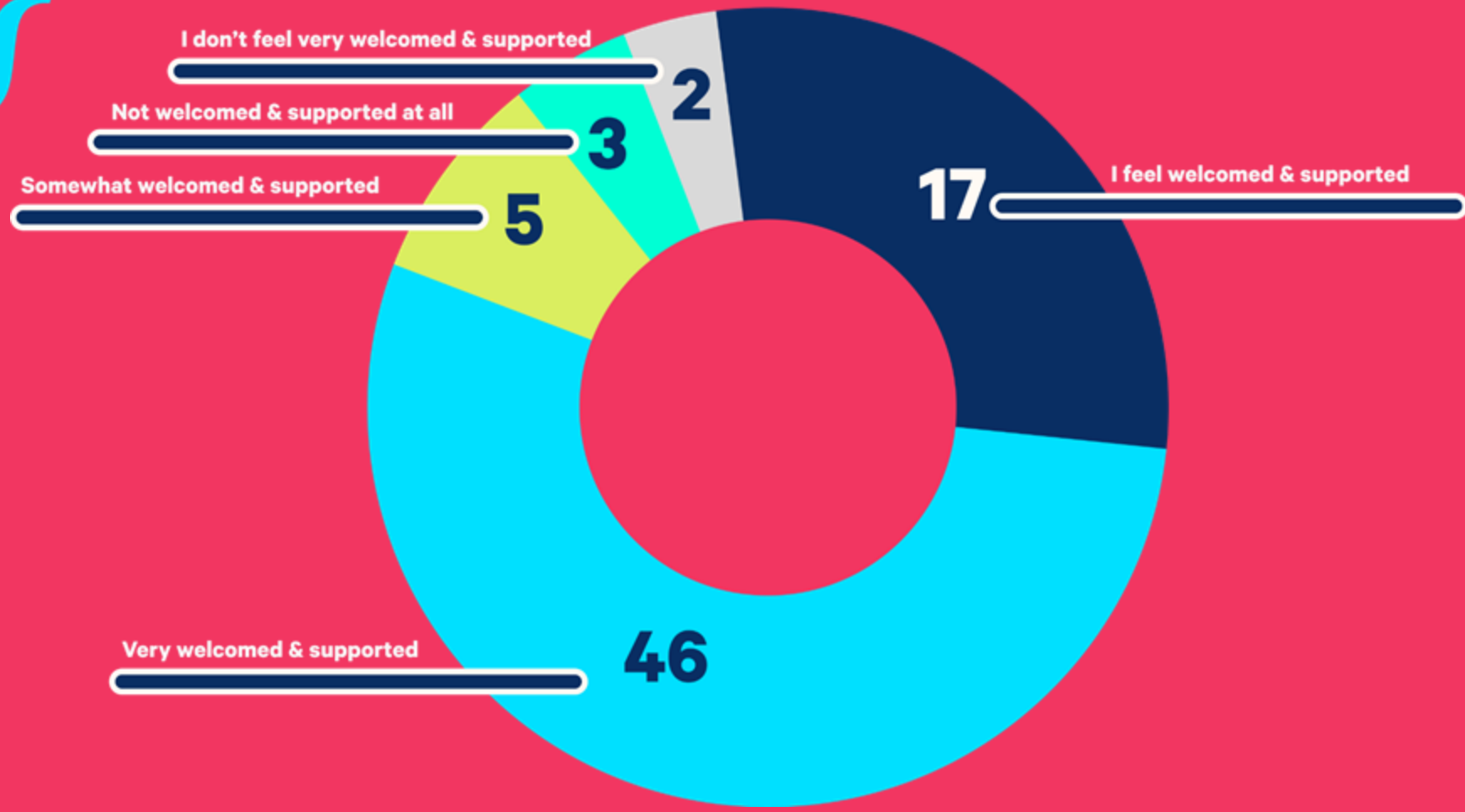
# Using AI to Enhance (not replace) Your Team



# Surfacing Actionable Data

*Engage early and intervene in real time*

How have you felt over the last 7 days?



# *The 3 Pillars of Our Methodology*

**Provide a  
resource to  
build trust**

**Create a  
genuine  
conversation**

**Take action  
with  
high-value  
interventions**

## *Outcomes*

**80%**  
engagement  
rate

**70%**  
90 day  
retention rate  
(compared to 44%)

**35%**  
increase in  
new hire  
orientation  
attendance

**30%**  
increase in  
engagement  
survey  
participation  
(hourly workers)



# Dan Rabin

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<https://mainstay.com/solutions/enterprise-companies/>





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