



# **BOMBAS**

Mery Gurung, McKenzie Martin, Joel Salgado, Hali Semancik

June 09, 2024

School of Journalism and Communication University of Oregon

J453 Strategic Planning & Case Studies

Kathryn Kuttis

## **Table of Contents:**

Problem & Opportunity Statement ... 3

Situation Analysis ... 4 & 5

Audience Profiles ... 6 & 7

Key Messages ... 8

Goals & Objectives ... 9

Strategies & Tactics ... 10 & 11

Appendix: Research ... 12 - 45

## **Problem & Opportunity**

Bombas is a successful company, and it has grown beyond its tech capabilities in recent times. Bombas needs top-tier tech employees to keep up with its growing giving network. It has a unique opportunity to fix this; by positioning the company's values, community relations and philanthropy. This provides workers with a sense of fulfillment and connectedness. The company's retention rates and culture will show that Bombas is an ideal workplace. Bombas has remained a company that values community through philanthropy. This provides workers with a sense of fulfillment and connectedness. Highlighting the company's culture will show that Bombas is the ideal company to work for. Bombas is shadowed by more traditional tech companies for career development. We believe headhunters play a vital role to build Bombas' reputation as a non-traditional tech company that prioritizes community.

## Situation Analysis

We enjoyed meeting with you last week to learn more about Bombas. Based on our research, we believe the company is well-positioned to attract top tech workers. The tremendous shifts in workplace and layoffs in the tech industry has put a higher emphasis on community engagement.

Our research shows that employees at big tech companies feel disconnected from contributing to a larger purpose. They lack a feeling of fulfillment and crave an opportunity to make a societal difference. The culture in place at Bombas already instills excitement through its contributions to the public. By approaching the company's problem through an angle that highlights building community, we believe Bombas will increase its recognition within the tech industry.

Randy Goldberg and David Heath founded Bombas in New York City in 2013. Their mission is to address the unhoused crisis. They are a BOGO (buy one, give one) model company that gives back to unhoused Americans. The company produces socks, t-shirts, underwear, slippers, and slides. Bombas is finding the most efficient way to optimize social impact while maintaining sustainability and brand integrity. Their strengths include high-quality socks, a great work environment, and a strong social mission. The company has donated over 100 million pairs of socks. This milestone has caused a problem for the company — a shortage of tech workers to connect with their giving partners. This issue must be addressed as its volume of donations is expected to grow in future years.

Per our recent discussion, Bombas needs to attract top tech talent. The rise of hybrid work has been significant in a post-pandemic climate. Tech fatigue has increased as a result. Based on our research, we discovered that 2 in 5 tech workers experience burnout. 42% of workers say they are considering quitting their jobs by the end of the year. One key driving factor in feeling burnt out is a sense of detachment from the company and the community. Burnout is highly prevalent in the tech industry. This is where we see an entry point for Bombas. Bombas is known for its commitment to philanthropy and can provide tech workers with meaningful activities to

participate in outside their company roles. Bombas offers tech workers a chance to feel passionate about tech again.

This is where the target audiences' needs intersect with Bombas. Tech workers are passionate about driving societal impact, which aligns with the company's values and mission. The company's BOGO model and mission to address homelessness can provide an opportunity to combat tech fatigue through personal fulfillment in their careers. In addition, our research indicates a positive work culture and work-life balance help combat burnout. Bombas employees have testified for positive work environments and flexibility. So, our target audiences' needs align themselves with the company.

The current state of the tech talent market is characterized by uncertainty, high demand, and limited supply. To attract and retain tech talent, we will position Bombas as a company that can offer a secure and fulfilling work environment and differentiate itself as an employer of choice. We will highlight our commitment to professional development, inclusive culture, and meaningful work aligning with Bombas social impact and community engagement values.

In conclusion, we believe our suggestions will greatly benefit your company. We recommend reviewing the goals and objectives we have provided for the company. This includes more specific ways to reach the target audience. Our overall goal is to increase the tech worker presence in the company. We have three objectives to execute that goal.

We look forward to working with you.

## **Audience Profiles**

### **Target Audience:**

Mid-level and senior tech employees who are experiencing exhaustion and stress due to prolonged and excessive use of technology, leading to tech fatigue.

Age: 25-45 years old

Gender: All genders

Education: Bachelor's degree or higher in computer science, engineering or other related fields

Geography: New York

### **Psychographics:**

Values:

- Desire for work that uses their skills and contributes to something larger than themselves.
- They aim for a balance between their career aspirations and personal growth.
- They seek opportunities to find joy and satisfaction in their work.

Interests:

- They have a strong interest in the latest technological advancements and trends.
- They are conscious of environmental impacts and support sustainable practices.
- They are committed to ongoing education and professional development.

Behavioral Factors:

- They are active users of various digital platforms for both work and leisure, staying updated with the latest industry news.

### **Profile: Adrian**

Adrian is a 30-year-old software engineer who lives in Manhattan. He has been working in the tech industry for ten years and has gradually climbed the career ladder. Adrian has a passion for coding and technology but has recently been feeling the strain of long hours and constant digital connectivity. Adrian is seeking a way to combat tech fatigue. Despite the fatigue, he remains deeply invested in his career and personal growth. This leaves them longing for a more

meaningful engagement. With a degree in computer science, Adrian has spent many years building innovative solutions but now seeks a position that would impact the community.

Adrian values work-life balance and enjoys outdoor activities such as hiking and biking. As an active member of tech forums and social media, Adrian frequently engages with content related to social causes and community initiatives. He often shares tips on achieving work-life balance and contributes to threads about the latest tech trends and innovations. Adrian values the community aspect of these forums, finding support and fellowship with other tech professionals facing similar challenges.

## **Key Messages**

### **Primary Message:**

Our primary message is that workplace shifts from post-COVID work life impacted tech worker fatigue. Prioritizing social impact which consists of volunteering and community involvement can help to combat workplace burnout.

### **Secondary Messages:**

#### **1. Tech-Driven Social Impact**

- Bombas use of technology supports its donation process and allows them to reach more people in need with greater efficiency.
- This incorporation of technology supports Bombas growth and mission, making it a place for tech workers who want to make a difference.

#### **2. Positive Work Environment**

- A positive work environment is where employees feel happy and supported. Bombas creates a positive work environment with a people-first approach. According to [The Muse](#) “Bombas fosters a people-first approach—every decision is influenced by employees to ensure their personal and professional growth, fulfillment, and happiness.”
- Bombas workers referred to as "Hive members," are united in their purpose to assist individuals in need. Their common objective is to create a positive work environment where coworkers develop friendships.

#### **3. High Employee Retention**

- According to [Forbes Magazine](#), “only 7 people have quit in 6.5 years,” highlighting Bombas ability to retain its employees.
- This statistic highlights how Bombas creates a consistent work environment where employees feel valued and supported.



## **Goal & Objectives:**

### **Problem Statement**

The company needs more tech workers to keep up with its new network growth of over 3,500 giving partners.

### **Goal**

Increase top-tier tech worker presence within the company.

### **Objective 1**

The objective is to increase awareness of Bombas tech opportunities among tech workers battling tech fatigue by 20% through targeted media relations campaigns showing Bombas tech social opportunities by October 2024 as measured by an internet poll.

### **Objective 2**

The objective is to produce and publish four short-form informational videos on Bombas LinkedIn to increase awareness about Bombas by 15% by September 2024. Measured by LinkedIn follower engagement.

### **Objective 3**

The objective is to build connections with 10% of the top-tier headhunting firms specializing in tech recruitment by August 2024 regarding placing future hires at Bombas; success will be measured through the number of successful hires made from these firms.

## Strategies & Tactics

### Strategy:

Our strategy is to target headhunters and work with them to place tech workers at Bombas. A headhunter is paid based on success in placing a candidate in a job. So, a headhunter is more incentivized to place candidates in a position with high employee retention. Headhunters must be informed of how the company can benefit them if they put a candidate there. Surveys, social media campaigns, and personal incentives are ways to educate headhunters. According to our [research](#), "employers tend to enlist headhunters when there is a sense of urgency, and they are unable to find the right person to fill a role on their own." With Bomba's recent growth, it is essential to hire tech workers promptly. So, targeting headhunters will help reach, spread awareness, and work towards our objective with our target audience.

### Tactics:

We have three tactics to reach and incentivize headhunters to place tech workers at Bombas.

1. Give headhunters the results of a survey poll on how people in the workforce volunteer because they feel they have to versus because they want to. Bombas' brand personality revolves around giving back and working with giving partners. Providing headhunters with information on workers' volunteering activity aligns seamlessly with the Bombas brand.
2. Make a social media campaign on the top five factors of high employee retention rate. The informational campaign will showcase employee testimonies, compare retention rates to competitors, and highlight the importance of a positive workplace environment. The campaign will be launched on Instagram, LinkedIn, Facebook, and X. These four

platforms have a high engagement with our target audiences' age demographic.

Additionally, these four platforms intersect the strongest with career-based postings.

3. Bombas will create and sponsor an award directed at headhunters. The award will highlight headhunters who successfully transition tech workers from one industry to the next. Skills learned in all areas of the workforce are transferable. So, transitioning from a major tech company to a non-traditional one would be no different – for example, Bombas. The award will be named The BeeKeeper Achievement – paying homage to Bombas' bee branding and headhunters role in maintaining and managing their candidates. All headhunters will be eligible for the award. This will provide a fun incentive for headhunters.

## Appendix: Research

### *Key Articles Collected During Secondary Research*

#### **Tech burnout: An ongoing mental health crisis in the industry | Talkspace**

There's no denying that tech is a high-stakes industry. As a tech team member, you'll be left behind if you're not at the forefront of the latest and greatest. The pressure for tech professionals to stay ahead of the curve — and the competition — can lead to tech burnout, a widely known industry issue fueled by the expectation of long hours, relentless pressure, and ever-changing demands. Some **studies** suggest that as many as 2 out of 5 tech workers may experience burnout. Further, 42% say they might quit their job within the next 6 months.

Burnout is a state of chronic stress that leads to physical and emotional exhaustion, a sense of detachment, and feelings of ineffectiveness. This is so much more than just having a bad day — it's an occupational phenomenon especially prevalent in the tech industry, where innovation never sleeps, and downtime is rare.

Understanding the potential for tech employee burnout in your workforce is a must. If your people are burned out, it can lead to high turnover, low morale, and decreased productivity, ultimately affecting your bottom line.

The good news is that addressing the issue of burnout in the tech industry is easy when you understand the causes and use these proven strategies to **prevent employee burnout**.

The root causes of burnout in the tech industry

There are several common causes of tech worker burnout. Taking the time to understand them means it's easier to make improvements that set your workforce up for success.

#### High-pressure work environments

In an industry built on finding the next big breakthrough, it's easy to see how quickly pressure can mount on tech professionals. After all, to be successful, employees must deliver innovation and results at speeds that exacerbate stress levels. According to **recent research**, more than half (52%) of people who work in tech experience depression or anxiety.

Long working hours and the culture of overwork

Technology never sleeps. Unfortunately, this norm in **tech culture** has set a precedent where every tech team member commonly sees long hours as a representation of dedication. The problem, though, is this has created an unsustainable model where a healthy **work-life balance for employees** takes a backseat, and unreasonably long workdays and workweeks are the norm.

Rapid pace of technological change & continuous learning demands

Staying relevant in the world of tech means having a workforce that's always up-to-date with constantly evolving advancements. This need for continuous upscaling adds even more pressure for employees, who often struggle to keep up with existing workloads and must also find a way to meet professional development demands.

Remote work challenges & the blurring of work-life boundaries

The shift to remote work over the last few years has been a double-edged sword. While there are definite benefits to offering remote opportunities for employees, the new work structure has blurred the lines of work-life boundaries. Without a clear separation between work and personal life, the potential for disengagement can grow, even among the most dedicated members of your team.

“Poor work-life balance can lead to burnout because it results in chronic stress, fatigue, and an inability to recharge. This can lead to physical and emotional exhaustion.” -**Talkspace therapist Bisma Anwar, LPC, LMHC**

Signs of burnout in tech workers

While burnout can be a silent event, it tends to surface through several signs. Knowing what to look for can help you identify employee burnout early so you can pivot before the impact is too significant.

These are some of the most common **signs of employee burnout**:

- **Deteriorating performance and productivity:** A noticeable decline in output is a huge tech burnout red flag. A sudden lack of enthusiasm, missed deadlines, or subpar results — especially from those on your team who are typically high achievers — is something to be on the lookout for.
- **Physical exhaustion and chronic fatigue:** The tech industry demands intense cognitive engagement that can take a toll on even the most dedicated employees. If your team

members seem persistently tired or weary, or if you notice an uptick in illness, it's a clear sign that something more may be going on.

- **Detachment and cynicism:** Negative attitudes can indicate emotional exhaustion, a hallmark of burnout. If your team has started seeming cynical toward work or projects that once fostered passion, it might mean burnout is creeping in. Mental withdrawal can severely impact team dynamics and affect morale.

### The ripple effects of burnout in tech

Unfortunately, burnout affects more than just the individual experiencing it. It can ripple through an entire company.

For example, chronically stressed employees are at higher risk for severe health issues ranging from insomnia to depression. An increase in absenteeism can affect productivity and revenue.

Additionally, extreme burnout can disrupt team dynamics and project timelines, and in some cases. From an organizational standpoint, the repercussions of increased **tech turnover rates** can also be costly. If people leave due to high-stress levels, your remaining workforce may start underperforming because they're stretched too thin.

### Impact on individuals

Burnout can go far beyond just personal physical and mental health concerns. It can also stifle professional growth as employees who were once driven by innovation start to struggle with motivation and creativity — which are both essential in an industry that thrives on fresh ideas.

“Burnout can lead to feelings of depression as prolonged stress and exhaustion can negatively impact mental health. It can contribute to symptoms such as sadness, hopelessness, and a loss of interest in activities.” -**Talkspace therapist Bisma Anwar, LPC, LMHC**

### Organizational consequences

Beyond the individual impact tech burnout can cause, plummeting productivity can start an organization-wide chain reaction. Quality assurance can be difficult to maintain. Customer satisfaction and brand reputation can take a hit. There's also the financial impact felt by the need to hire and train new employees when people quit or are increasingly absent.

### Effect on innovation

Without energetic minds contributing to the process, innovation can suffer. Burned-out employees are less likely to be able to share knowledge or offer valuable contributions to projects, halting progress and costing your company.

#### Culture and morale

Keeping workplace culture positive and morale up in an environment where burnout is causing apathy or fatigue can be tricky. Enthusiasm is a critical piece of the collaborative problem-solving necessary in the tech industry — staying ahead of the competition can be challenging when it's lacking.

#### Industry-wide implications

The tech industry relies heavily on effectively sharing resources and talent pools. If those resources are dwindling because employees are burning out faster than they can be replenished, it can mean big trouble across the board.

#### How to prevent & solve burnout in tech

It's clear that tech is a demanding industry. Long hours and high expectations are more the rule than they are the exception — but we're finding out this model backfires more often than not. That said, there are several tactics you can implement to combat the issue of burnout head-on.

#### Automate

One of the most effective yet straightforward ways to reduce burnout in your company is by automating as much as possible. It's important to note that automation *does not* mean replacing people. It's about strategically using tools and processes to reduce stress and workloads, freeing people up for more complex or creative tasks that machines can't replicate. In short, automating mundane processes means your talented workforce has more time for innovation.

#### Train and educate your team

Ongoing education does more than simply help your team stay current with the latest technological advances. It's a vital way to help people successfully navigate expectations. You can even implement stress management tactics and tips into the mix. Offering tech development and wellness education supports individual employees and organizational growth, which can be invaluable to your company's success.

#### Make sure managers and leadership have a well-being plan

Leadership can prevent — or at least reduce — burnout through a proactive strategy. They should set clear expectations, emphasize the importance of boundaries, and foster workplace environments that prioritize regular breaks, vacations, and personal time off without penalty.

#### Use a teamwork mentality

Valuing collaboration over competition is a healthy approach if you're looking to avoid burnout in the tech industry. Promoting the essential need for teamwork helps build an environment that is resilient to burnout.

#### Offer resources and support

Ensuring your employees have support and mental health resources readily accessible demonstrates how committed you are to overall **employee well-being**. You can also create and promote policies reinforcing the importance of self-care and boundaries as another way to show how much you value your workforce.

#### Manage burnout with mental health support

Prioritizing employee mental health is an effective way to reduce tech burnout. Taking care of your employees offers many benefits, from improved mental well-being to increased productivity. Offering mental health support, like through access to **online therapy for employees**, signals that you're willing to invest in the people who make your company what it is.

Talkspace is an online therapy platform that's been **proven effective in studies**. In fact, 68% of participants showed significant symptom improvement after just three weeks of treatment. It's been said that your employees are your most valuable resources. Isn't it time to give back to them? Contact Talkspace today to combat tech burnout with **therapy for tech employees**.

#### Sources:

1. *"The State of Burnout in Tech: 2022 Edition."* *BurnoutIndex* by Yerbo. Accessed January 2, 2024.  
<https://f.hubspotusercontent30.net/hubfs/7677235/The%20State%20of%20Burnout%20in%20Tech%20-%202022%20Edition.pdf>.
2. BIMA. *"The Voices of Our Industry - BIMA Tech Inclusion & Diversity Report 2019,"* 2020.



<https://bima.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/BIMA-Tech-Inclusion-and-Diversity-Report-2019.pdf?ref=theouut.com>.

## 5 Ways to Mitigate Tech Employee Fatigue in 2023 | *Entrepreneur*

To say the U.S. is home to an enormous labor market, specifically technology, would be a gross understatement. According to data published by the International Trade Administration, an agency in the U.S. Department of Commerce that promotes the export of non-agricultural products and services, the U.S. is home to one-third of the [\\$5 trillion global information technology market](#), thus making it the largest tech market in the world. But that's not all; there is far more to it than that.

The same International Trade Administration data revealed that the [tech industry](#) accounts for nearly \$2 trillion of the U.S. value-added gross domestic product (GDP) and some 12 million jobs. Yes, you read that correctly — 12 million jobs. The software and electronic devices we use in our professional and personal lives helped make the U.S. a leader in the global tech market.

As far as tech companies go, the U.S. is home to more successful ones than any other nation. And these are the same ones that have created the roughly 12 million tech jobs that help keep unemployment numbers low and the country's economy chugging along nicely. Based on market cap, some of the [largest and most successful tech companies in the U.S.](#) include the following:

- Apple
- Alphabet (Google)
- Microsoft
- Meta
- Dell Technologies
- Intel
- IBM
- HP
- Tesla
- Cisco Systems

The one thing these companies have in common is that they are all highly competitive. And that competitiveness is the mechanism that drives their marketing strategies, fuels their innovations

and enables them to bring to market the software and devices that most of us use in our day-to-day lives.

To achieve these things, many companies offer tantalizing financial incentives to compel employees to work harder and longer than they otherwise would. Some go as far as to make working overtime compulsory. Studies show that an estimated [18% of employees](#) in the U.S. work 60 or more hours per week. And instead of the usual 40-hour work week, many are working 47 hours each week. These long workdays can and often do take a toll on an employer's workforce.

Related: [How to Deal With Employee Burnout](#)

### **Employees in some of America's largest tech companies report feeling fatigued and burnt out**

According to ZDNet, an esteemed business technology news website, roughly [2 in 5 tech employees](#) say they want to quit their tech jobs due to excessive stress, exhaustion and poor work-life balance. A separate study published by CNBC echoed the same as it detailed the state of affairs at [Microsoft](#), a multinational technology corporation and the world's largest purveyor of computer software. The study revealed that roughly 50% of employees and 53% of managers said they frequently felt burnt out at work.

In the fast-paced world of technology, [employee burnout](#) and fatigue have become increasingly common. With long hours, tight deadlines and a constant need to stay updated with the latest technologies, tech employees can quickly become overwhelmed and exhausted. Here are some ways to mitigate tech employee fatigue in 2023:

Related: [Become a Better Leader By Helping Your Team Manage Stress](#)

### **5 things tech employers can do to boost employee morale and combat workplace fatigue**

1. Encourage work-life balance: It is essential to encourage tech employees to maintain a [healthy work-life balance](#). This can be achieved by setting reasonable work hours, providing flexible work arrangements and encouraging employees to take regular breaks. I am also a big believer in offering employees extra days off as needed, especially when they have stressful personal life issues they are dealing with.

2. Promote a positive work culture: A positive work culture can significantly reduce employee fatigue. By fostering a supportive and [collaborative work environment](#), tech employees are more likely to feel valued and motivated. I like to do employee game meetings with prizes, where the sole goal of the meetings is to have fun and not discuss work.
3. Offer training and development opportunities: Regular training and [development opportunities](#) can keep tech employees engaged and motivated. It can also help build their skills and knowledge, reducing the likelihood of fatigue caused by feeling overwhelmed or unprepared. These training opportunities can be directly related to their jobs or personal skills that they would like to develop. I once paid for a cooking class for an employee because they were stressed out about cooking dinner for their family every night. The fact that this class had nothing to do with their job made it even more rewarding for this person.
4. Provide mental health support: It is essential to [prioritize mental health](#) and provide resources and support for employees struggling with burnout or fatigue. This can include access to counseling, stress-management workshops and other resources to help employees manage their mental health. I also allow my employees to have additional days off as needed to help them decompress and not be as stressed about their job responsibilities.
5. Recognize and reward employees: Recognizing and rewarding employees for their hard work and contributions can help to [boost morale](#) and reduce fatigue. This can be achieved through bonuses, promotions or other incentives recognizing employees' efforts and contributions.

In conclusion, mitigating tech employee fatigue is essential for maintaining a productive and healthy workforce. By encouraging work-life balance, promoting a positive work culture, offering training and development opportunities, providing mental health support and recognizing and rewarding employees, tech leaders can help employees [stay engaged](#), motivated and energized.

## **Bombas Jobs and Company Culture | *The Muse***

### [Working at Bombas](#)

Bombas is a comfort-focused apparel brand with a mission to help those in need. For every item purchased, a specially designed item is donated to a member of the homeless community. The company launched in 2013 after the founders learned that socks are the most requested clothing item at homeless shelters. With millions of pairs sold and donated, Bombas continues to innovate with new apparel while creating a positive impact. Inquisitive people who love to learn, understand the importance of giving, and embrace successes and failures are sure to find a place within the Bombas Hive. Bombas fosters a people-first approach—every decision is influenced by employees to ensure their personal and professional growth, fulfillment, and happiness.

### [Giving Back Culture](#)

The company's passion for giving back is deeply embedded in its mission and culture. In addition to donating a specially designed item for every item purchased, Bombas encourages employees to regularly lend a helping hand—and they have multiple ways to do so. Whether it's the "Giving 101" experience, where new hires do neighborhood sock drops, to the 10-plus monthly volunteer opportunities, a job at Bombas is about more than just showing up for work everyday, it's about making a difference.

### [Team Spirit](#)

Employees at Bombas, also known as "Hive members," are on a collective mission to help those in need. Their shared goal and team spirit helps foster a welcoming work environment, where colleagues develop meaningful friendships. Some popular Bombas team events include biannual retreats and monthly "Hive Hangouts," like paint nights and axe throwing. Lauren DiGregoria, Director of Acquisition Marketing, says the workplace culture is unlike anything she's experienced. She was floored by the number of coworkers who wanted to grab coffee and introduce themselves during her first week—a gesture new hires can expect to see.

### [Benefits at Bombas](#)

Health Insurance and Wellness: 100% employer-paid medical, dental, and vision insurance; monthly health and wellness reimbursement

Financial and Retirement Plans: 401(k) with employer match; equity for full-time employees

Vacation and Time Off: unlimited PTO; flexible WFH policy

Education and Professional Development: company-sponsored professional development assistance program

Events: biannual company retreats; monthly social events outside of the office, including “Hive Hangouts”

Volunteer Opportunities: 10+ giving events each month

Other Perks: free socks; summer Fridays

## **What is a Headhunter? What They Do and How They’re Paid | *Investopedia***

### **What Is a Headhunter?**

A headhunter is a company or individual that provides employment recruiting services on behalf of the employer. Headhunters are hired by firms to find talent and to locate individuals who meet specific job requirements.

Headhunters may also be referred to as executive recruiters and the function they perform is often called executive search. Headhunters may have a pool of candidates for specific positions or may act aggressively to find talent by looking at competitors' employees. Employers tend to enlist headhunters when there is a sense of urgency and they are unable to find the right person to fill a role on their own.

### **KEY TAKEAWAYS**

- A headhunter, or executive recruiter, is an individual or company hired by an employer to recruit talent for an open role.
- Headhunters are often paid on contingency and typically earn commission only when they are successful in placing a candidate in a job.<sup>1</sup>

- A good headhunter won't ask you about your current or past salary, so it's important to address the salary range that you are seeking.

### Understanding Headhunters

Finding and recruiting job candidates is often performed by hiring managers, human resources personnel, or internal recruitment specialists. But in some cases, employment agencies or executive search firms may be employed. Third parties working on behalf of a hiring company are colloquially referred to as headhunters.

A headhunter is retained to fill jobs that require specific or high-level skills or offer high pay. Headhunters working on behalf of a firm often scour international organizations for top talent. In addition, some individuals may contact a headhunter to provide a résumé or curriculum vitae (CV) or to apply for a position for which the headhunter is seeking talent. Headhunting is supported on many levels by internet technologies, including social media and online job boards.

### How Headhunters Are Paid

Headhunters typically only make money when they are successful in placing a candidate in a job. Independent, third-party recruiters are often paid on contingency, meaning they do not get paid unless their candidate is hired. The typical fee is 20% to 30% of a new hire's total first-year salary. As headhunters work for the employer, they have the incentive to please them rather than the candidate.

There is no licensing necessary to become a headhunter or recruiter, so anyone can become one. Less-reputable recruiters often compete with professional ones that possess large networks of clients and candidates. They may operate in a similar way, such as an unsolicited email, call, or LinkedIn request.

### What Should You Look for in a Headhunter?

The quality and helpfulness of headhunters vary. Here are some characteristics to look for and avoid:

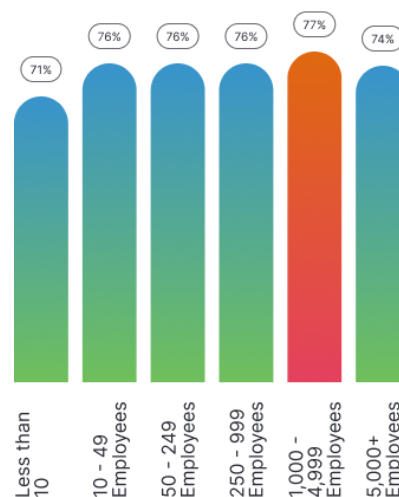
- A good headhunter will contact you knowing ahead of time that you are a good fit for a role based on your skills and experience.
- If a headhunter asks for your past or current salary, this is a red flag. Rather, they should tell you the salary range of the opportunity they are calling about and then ask you whether it is a good fit.
- An unprepared headhunter will not have done proper homework on your background and may try to interview you on the fly once you are on the phone.
- Quality headhunters are easy to reach and communicate with, and they conduct themselves professionally. It is a bad sign if a headhunter talks fast, is rude, makes too many demands, is hard to reach, or neglects to respond to messages.
- A good head hunter will want to stay in touch especially if you're a good candidate and will want to keep you in their network of potential candidates for openings.

## 2024 Global Talent Shortage | *ManpowerGroup*

75% of employers report difficulty in filling roles.

### Global Talent Shortage Over Time

#### Global Talent Shortage by Company Size



#### Global Talent Shortage by Industry Vertical

77%  
Health Care & Life Sciences

76%  
Consumer Goods & Services

76%  
Information Technology

76%  
Transport, Logistics & Automotive

75%  
Industrials & Materials

73%  
Communication Services

72%  
Financials & Real Estate

71%  
Energy & Utilities  
Talent Scarcity Around the World

Japan 85%  
Hong Kong 79%  
Switzerland 73%  
Germany 82%  
Spain 78%  
The Netherlands 71%  
Greece 82%  
Puerto Rico 78%  
Guatemala 71%  
Israel 82%  
Australia 78%  
U.S. 70%  
Ireland 81%  
Austria 78%  
Costa Rica 70%  
Portugal 81%  
Sweden 77%



Norway 69%  
India 81%  
South Africa 76%  
China 69%  
U.K. 80%  
Türkiye 76%  
Mexico 68%  
France 80%  
Argentina 76%  
Poland 66%  
Canada 80%  
Global Average 75%  
Czech Republic 66%  
Brazil 80%  
Italy 75%  
Colombia 66%  
Singapore 79%  
Belgium 74%  
Peru 65%  
Romania 79%  
Hungary 73%  
Panama 65%  
Slovakia 79%  
Taiwan 73%  
Finland 59%

ManpowerGroup is Here With Solutions Across the Entire HR Life Cycle

ManpowerGroup's expert family of brands - Manpower, Experis, and Talent Solutions - are creators of talent at scale across 75 countries and territories, connecting millions of people to meaningful work and hundreds of thousands of organizations to skilled talent.

#### About The Survey

ManpowerGroup surveyed 40,077 employers across 41 countries: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Hong Kong, Hungary, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Mexico, The Netherlands, Norway, Panama, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Romania, Singapore, Slovakia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Türkiye, U.K., and the U.S.

## Why the balance of power in tech is shifting toward workers | *MIT Technology Review*

Something has changed for the tech giants. Even as they continue to hold tremendous influence in our daily lives, a growing accountability movement has begun to check their power. Led in large part by tech workers themselves, a movement seeking reform of how these companies do business, treat their employees, and conduct themselves as global citizens has taken on unprecedented momentum, particularly in the past year.

Concerns and anger over tech companies' impact in the world is nothing new, of course. What's changed is that workers are increasingly getting organized. Whether writing public letters, marching in protest, filing lawsuits, or unionizing, the labor force that makes the corporate tech world run is finding its voice, demanding a future in which companies do better and are held more responsible for their actions.

A week to remember

It began with a Facebook outage. For some six hours on October 4, 2021, services for its 3.5 billion users across the world were unreachable. The timing couldn't have been worse for the company: just hours before, whistleblower Frances Haugen had dropped a series of damning revelations about Facebook's willingness to put corporate goals above ethics and its users' well-being. The stock price plunged. On the 5th, a Tuesday, Haugen would unflinchingly testify for three and a half hours before the United States Senate Commerce Committee on how "Facebook consistently chose to prioritize its profits" over public safety.

If executives at Facebook and other tech companies hoped Haugen would be an outlier, Ifeoma Ozoma had other plans: a day after Haugen's testimony, Ozoma and several colleagues launched the Tech Worker Handbook online. Ozoma was herself a whistleblower, having called out racial and gender discrimination at Pinterest, together with her coworker Aerica Shimizu Banks, in 2020. Since then, she has become something of an inspiration for whistleblowers in the tech world. "I've heard from tech workers asking for advice since I first went public," she says. She

responded to hundreds of people individually, but to her that solution was just “not scalable,” so she used what she’d learned from those experiences to build the website. It got 30,000 hits on the first day.

The handbook guides potential whistleblowers on how to handle the media, explains legal rights, and teaches both online safety—to avoid corporate surveillance, for example—and offline tactics, like how to get through a doxxing campaign. “Preparedness is power,” says the front page. “Individuals should not have to rely on whisper networks for justice.” The site received an effusive response online and endorsements from activists, researchers, and other whistleblowers.

Just a day after publishing her handbook, Ozoma notched another major victory for accountability: on October 7, California governor Gavin Newsom signed bill SB 331 into law.

Also known as the Silenced No More Act, the bill protects workers who speak out about discrimination and harassment, even if they’ve signed a nondisclosure agreement, a common practice in the tech industry. The bill was written by state senator Connie M. Leyva and cosponsored by Ozoma, who drew from her whistleblowing and policy knowledge to help shape it. “Forty million people is a big fucking deal,” she says, referring to California’s population. “And if it would end there it would be a big fucking deal.”

It didn’t end there. As the law was making its way through the legislative system, a coalition of companies spearheaded by Ozoma pushed other tech firms to commit to extending its protection to all employees, not just those based in California. Expensify and Twilio agreed, but “it’s been a different story with Apple, Google, Facebook, Etsy, and a number of other companies,” Ozoma says.

Undeterred, the Transparency in Employment Agreements Coalition worked within the guidelines of the US Securities and Exchange Commission to file shareholder resolutions with seven technology companies, pushing them to extend the Silenced No More protections to all employees. Apple tried to get the proposal thrown out, but in late December the SEC ruled that

the proposal does not “seek to micromanage the company,” as Apple claimed, meaning shareholders can now vote on it. If it’s passed at the March 4 annual meeting, the company will have to publish a public report on the use of concealment clauses in cases of discrimination or harassment.

The Silenced No More Act went into effect on January 1, 2022. Even if every shareholder proposal effort fails, workers who live in California have been liberated from the restrictions that NDAs impose. The new law all but guarantees that new voices will step forward to bring their experiences to light.

“All of the work that we’re doing and speaking up and organizing builds on what has come before and makes it possible for more to come in the future and to be successful,” Ozoma says.

### Rooted in Techlash

To understand how advocacy and organizing within the tech industry work now, you have to go back to 2018, the year of the Techlash. Three important things happened that year. First a Cambridge Analytica whistleblower came forward with allegations of data misuse at Facebook. Then thousands of Google employees fought against Project Maven, an AI initiative created to enhance military drones. The year culminated in a massive, global Google walkout spurred by New York Times’ revelation of a \$90 million exit payout to Android creator Andy Rubin following allegations of sexual misconduct. “The walkout, I think, cleared a space for everybody to scream in the streets,” says Claire Stapleton, one of the organizers.

According to Collective Action in Tech, a project tracking the industry’s organizing efforts, every year since the walkout has seen more workers speaking out. The big tech companies’ image as friendly giants had been shattered. Part of the walkout’s legacy, Stapleton says, was “helping people see the gap between how companies present themselves and how they run a business, and what the capitalist machine is and does.”

In 2021, the sheer number of collective actions declined. But that's because the nature of those actions shifted, say JS Tan and Nataliya Nedzhvetskaya, who help run the Collective Action in Tech archive.

“Compared to 2018, I think there's a lot more realism about what organizing workers means and what comes with that,” says Nedzhvetskaya, a PhD candidate at the University of California, Berkeley. “One theory for why we're seeing this base building is because people realize this is a hard thing to do individually.”

Last year, rather than penning open letters (which can be a fairly quick process), workers began pushing for unionization, a notoriously prolonged ordeal. But creating unions—even if they're “solidarity unions,” which have fewer legal protections—is an investment in the future. Twelve tech-worker unions were formed in 2021, according to Collective Action in Tech's analysis, more than in any previous year. Tan, who originally conceived the archive, says most of those unions are at smaller outlets where there are fewer barriers to organization. But workers from larger firms are getting in on the action too.

“If the goal is to hold these big tech companies accountable,” says Tan, himself a former tech worker who helped organize within Microsoft, “it's not just one of these groups of workers who's going to be able to do it. It's the combined strength of them.”

### The fight against “digital slavery”

Nader Awaad knows where to find Uber drivers with time to spare. He approaches them while they idle in the parking lots outside London's bustling airports, waiting for customers. Awaad hands them a leaflet and talks to them about joining a union, patiently hearing them make the same complaints he's heard echoed across the industry.

Gig drivers aren't the white-collar software developers you might picture when you think of a tech worker, but they make up a huge and growing group of tech employees. Over the last year, they have become increasingly vocal about several basic demands: for better pay, increased

safety, a way to seek recourse if they are unfairly kicked off a company's app. In the UK and South Africa, drivers have brought Uber to court. In the US, DoorDash drivers went on an unprecedented, countrywide strike over plunging pay. In Hong Kong and mainland China, food delivery workers organized strikes for better pay and safety. In Croatia, Uber drivers held a press conference and a strike, saying their payments were late. "We feel like digital slaves," one union member said.

Awaad began driving for Uber in 2019 after being laid off from his previous job as a senior manager. He immediately felt the industry's problems. "It reminded me of reading Charles Dickens," he says. "The level of exploitation. The level of deprivation. I said, 'I can't believe it.'" Just as quickly, he realized he was not alone. Another driver he met at Heathrow sympathized. He looked around for a union to join, and by April 2019 he was a member of United Private Hire Drivers, a branch of the Independent Workers Union of Great Britain. He is now the elected chair.

His local membership of 900 or so drivers echoes those global problems, and he's helped organize pickets and strikes, but he says the companies are refusing to engage in open dialogue. Awaad says drivers have to stay on the road for 12 or 14 hours a day to earn enough to get by.

In a landmark case last February, the UK's Supreme Court ruled that drivers are entitled to holidays, pensions, and a minimum wage. Several unions say Uber has avoided those new obligations, but the European Commission has also taken notice of the problem. It issued a directive in December to "improve the working conditions in platform work," meaning new rules will follow.

Then there's the problem of algorithmic discrimination. Companies use algorithms to verify that drivers are who they say they are, but face-recognition technology is notoriously worse at recognizing nonwhite faces than white ones. In London, the vast majority of drivers are people of color, and some are getting removed from the platforms because of that gap.

Termination without a chance for appeal was a major motive for a strike Awaad helped organize in October. About 100 drivers rallied in the brisk London air, holding a large black banner with “End unfair terminations, stop ruining lives” written in white. In the background, protesters held signs with photos of drivers. “Reinstate Debora,” one of them said. “Reinstate Amadou,” said another.

During that rally, United Private Hire Drivers announced a discrimination complaint it had filed on the basis of the face-recognition errors. “We expect the court to come heavy on Uber because it happens in other countries, not only in our country,” Awaad says.

“At first I don’t think I understood how big the moment was going to be,” Field says. By the afternoon, big-name celebrities were voicing their support. The drivers who do get work face other dangers. Covid exposure is an ongoing concern. So is assault—Awaad has spoken with drivers who have been attacked and robbed of their cars. He plans to organize a protest in front of the UK parliament to demand safety measures, and has been reaching out to other unions representing drivers, hoping to form a coalition and get the companies to act.

“We have two drivers who were killed in Nigeria. We have a driver who was killed on the 17th of February in London. We have, on a daily basis, attacks against the drivers,” Awaad says. “It’s not something that has to do with London only. It’s a global issue.”

### Busting union busters

In September, workers at Imperfect Foods who had voted to unionize found that their employer was prepared to play the role of union buster. The same thing happened in November at HelloFresh, another grocery delivery service, whose workers in Aurora, Colorado, reported bullying and intimidation from management. When workers at an Amazon warehouse in Alabama held a vote in April on whether to unionize, the company interfered so extensively that the US National Labor Relations Board ordered a do-over. (In a separate settlement, the agency said Amazon must allow its workers to freely organize unions.)

Such tactics are spreading, according to Yonatan Miller, a volunteer with the Berlin chapter of the Tech Workers Coalition. “Germany has a strong tradition of social compromise and social partnership, where companies are not as adversarial or hostile,” Miller says. “This is something that you’re kind of seeing imported from the US—this kind of US-style union-busting industry.”

The Tech Workers Coalition is a grassroots, volunteer-led organization with 21 chapters globally. Miller got involved in 2019 and still remembers the first meeting, in Berlin’s Kreuzberg neighborhood, with about 40 tech workers in attendance. “Most of us were, as they say in Germany, newcomers. And some of us were from Arabic or Muslim background,” he says. But most were from Latin America, Eastern Europe, or elsewhere in Europe.

The idea behind the coalition is to help find a global answer to a global problem, and in the Berlin chapter’s two years of operation, it has achieved plenty of tangible results. It helped organizers at the grocery app Gorillas, Germany’s first unicorn company, which fought bitterly against a workers’ council, a union-like organization within a company that negotiates rights for workers. It also helped raise funds for an Amazon warehouse worker in Poland who was fired in what the coalition says was retaliation for her union activity. When the HelloFresh workers were trying to unionize, the coalition chapter in Berlin organized a protest in front of the company’s headquarters in solidarity. Any time there’s need or want, the coalition comes in to provide training, advice, or support, much of it “happening more discreetly behind the scenes,” Miller says.

In his eyes, these efforts are bringing the tech industry closer to other industries’ standards. His labor organizing is inspired as much by the activity of teachers and health workers as it is by the Google walkout. The inability to mingle with these other workers is one reason the pandemic has been so frustrating—it cut off access to the bars and gatherings where complaints turn into ideas and, eventually, actions at a moment when the industry had just begun to accept the need for labor organizing. “We won the moral argument,” Miller says, “but we haven’t been able to flex it.”



Tech, with integrity

The dust from Frances Haugen's testimony last October hadn't yet settled when two former Facebook workers made an announcement. Sahar Massachi and Jeff Allen were launching the Integrity Institute, a nonprofit intended to publish independent research and help set standards for integrity professionals, who work to prevent social platforms from causing harm. Both Massachi and Allen had been ruminating on the idea for a while. They'd worked to clean up platforms as part of Facebook's integrity team; some of Allen's research was among the documents Haugen leaked. Now they wanted to answer big questions: What does integrity work look like as a discipline? What does it mean to responsibly build an internet platform?

"When you're doing that work, it just very quickly becomes clear that this is going to be a very long-term problem," says Allen. It's also a problem that goes beyond Facebook. Every platform struggles with how to handle spam, foreign influence operations, and networked disinformation. Allen and Massachi want the Integrity Institute to be the go-to place for advice and original research on these issues, which they plan to publish in an open-source format.

"Hopefully we'll get to a place where we can say being a tech worker is an ethical practice," Allen says.

Massachi and Allen are not whistleblowers. They're careful to stay well within the bounds of their NDAs and avoid getting into detail about their time at Facebook. But they represent a larger trend of former big tech employees using their expertise to bring knowledge about platform functions into the public light.

This includes algorithm ethicists, who had their own revolution in 2021. Meredith Whittaker, an AI researcher and former Google employee who helped organize the 2018 walkout, is now advising the US Federal Trade Commission. Timnit Gebru, who was fired in December 2020 from her position co-leading Google's Ethical AI team, announced the creation of the Distributed AI Research Institute a year later.

The firing of Gebru and then the team's founder, Margaret Mitchell, had sent shock waves through the AI and tech communities. Google employees penned a letter of protest to CEO Sundar Pichai, other engineers resigned, and a campaign titled #MakeAIEthical sought to disrupt Google's influence over the field. "Right now, it's obviously very difficult to imagine how anybody can do any real research within these corporations," Gebru told MIT Technology Review in December 2020. "But if you had labor protection, if you have whistleblower protection, if you have some more oversight, it might be easier for people to be protected while they're doing this kind of work."

"Strength in community"

Terra Field worried it would rain on the day of the walkout. The weather was cloudy, and she wasn't sure how many people would show. "None of us were particularly amazing at project management," she says. At Netflix, there's an ongoing joke that every meeting starts five minutes late: it's called the Netflix Five. That was true of the walkout, too. Field watched as, at five minutes past the hour, the parking lot of Netflix's office in Los Gatos, California, filled with trans workers and their allies, gathering to rally against the company's reaction to criticism of Dave Chappelle's latest special, *The Closer*.

Field hadn't expected her Twitter thread about the comedian's anti-trans jokes to lead to the work stoppage, but it was "incredibly gratifying" when over 100 people came to the rally. "At first I don't think I understood how big the moment was going to be," she says. By the afternoon, big-name celebrities—Dan Levy, Elliot Page, and Jonathan Van Ness among them—were voicing their support on social media.

Field began working at Netflix in 2019; it was her first job after she transitioned. She talked to the trans employee resource group during the interview process, and after she was hired, it wasn't long before she joined herself. The group, she said, became a lifeline for many during early pandemic isolation, and especially for those who transitioned during that time and needed community. But it also served a larger function at Netflix. Members met with other teams to

provide training. “It was a lot about helping people understand the trans experience—trying to build empathy, understanding,” Field says.

One of the key relationships the group built was with the content teams, who turned to its members as a resource and a sounding board. “It meant that there weren’t things that accidentally might hurt the trans community,” Field says. It was an informal process, but a helpful one. The group helped consult on a much-praised episode of *The Baby-Sitters Club*, for example, which thoughtfully featured a trans character. It also helped with questions on how to dub trans voices in different countries and talked about “how to make the content more authentic.”

But the group was blindsided by Chappelle’s special. Its members found out at the same time as everyone else—through a push notification. “We kind of felt betrayed on some level,” Field says. She thinks the reaction would have been different had trans workers known it was coming and had the opportunity to give feedback. “I’m from New Jersey, so the way I deal with things is complaining about them loudly,” she says.

That’s when Field sent her series of mega-viral tweets. Following the thread, she was suspended for attending a high-level meeting the company said she was not supposed to be at. After the walkout, she resigned, citing the firing of B. Pagels-Minor, another trans employee who helped organize it. Pagels-Minor denied having leaked sensitive materials to the press, as Netflix claimed.

“At first I don’t think I understood how big the moment was going to be,” Field says. By the afternoon, big-name celebrities were voicing their support.

According to data from Collective Action in Tech, identity-based discrimination was a driving factor for much of the current wave of organizing at US tech companies. Workers have demanded that companies remove anti-Asian content from their platforms and penned letters calling on corporate leaders to support Palestinians. Over 2,000 Apple employees petitioned against the recent hiring of an executive who they said was “misogynistic” and held “harmful

views” on women and people of color. The executive left the company as a result. During last year’s pride month, Google workers circulated a petition asking the company to take steps to ensure the use of chosen names instead of birth names for trans employees.

It makes sense to Field that Silicon Valley companies don’t see more protests about wages from their white-collar employees—those workers get stock options, good salaries, and free lunch. But such perks do little to address structural discrimination.

Field says she can’t imagine this type of action having happened five or 10 years ago, but now the gates have been flung open. “My hope is that this momentum continues and expands,” she says, “as people realize there’s strength in community.”

### **How Bombas Built A \$100 Million Brand By Giving Away Socks | *Privy***

Randy Goldberg and David Heath were working at a media start-up when they learned a surprising fact on Facebook: socks are the most-requested item at homeless shelters.

They thought, “Why not build a company to solve this problem?” The business could give away a pair of socks for every pair it sold. They called the company Bombas, the Latin word for bumble bee (“bee better” is stitched into every sock).

When the pair pitched this idea on *Shark Tank* in 2014, only one investor bought in. The other sharks dismissed the idea, saying that the buy-one-give-one model wouldn’t be profitable. Six years later, Bombas exceeds \$100 million in yearly revenue and has given away more than 20 million socks. How has the brand been able to sell so many \$12 socks? Balanced marketing.

“Our very best marketing, from both a creative and performance standpoint, is where we are truly able to marry both mission and product,” said Bombas CMO Kate Huyett. From the start,

Bombas' co-founders knew an inspiring mission wouldn't be enough to drive sales. To drive purchases, the brand's marketing campaigns focus on the positive impact *and* quality of their product.

**Get our best content on ecommerce marketing in your inbox 2 times a week**

### **Crowdfunding: Introduce your mission and product with a fundraising campaign**

Two years after dreaming up Bombas, Goldberg and Heath quit their day jobs and launched an Indiegogo campaign.

Their goal was to raise \$15K in 30 days to fund their new business. The results were staggering. Goldberg and Heath raised \$25K in just 24 hours and \$140K overall. Reading these numbers, you might think, "Wow, those two landed on a great business idea!" And that's true—but it doesn't fully explain the success behind Bombas' crowdfunding.

The core factor driving the fundraising was the *way* Bombas explained their brand on Indiegogo, not just the business concept itself. The crowdfunding page equally covers product and brand mission details, so visitors fully understand what makes Bombas' socks exceptional.

- Starting at the top of the page, the title lets page visitors know that Bombas is trying to deliver a high-quality product ("Better socks") and help a social cause ("Better world. Bee better.").
- The video on the page starts by explaining how Bombas is set up to increase sock donations at homeless shelters. About a minute in, the technical features that set Bombas' socks apart are described.
- Likewise, in the "Story" section, the co-founders break down why they chose to sell socks for homeless populations. It also includes a diagram that highlights their socks' unique technical features that make them so comfortable.

With this balance, the Bombas crowdfunding page was a powerful sales pitch. It told consumers what differentiated the brand's socks and tugged at their heartstrings with information about the Bombas mission.

**Takeaway: Understand your mission AND your product before asking for money**

To communicate your product's impact and quality as powerfully as possible, you'll need to do some research. It took the Bombas co-founders two years of learning about socks and homelessness to verify their business idea was worth launching.

Not sure what exactly to research? Build knowledge about your mission and product concept with these tips.

**MISSION RESEARCH**

Brainstorm what business model will have the most impact for your social cause. With Bombas, the one-to-one model solved the problem of too few sock donations in homeless shelters.

**PRODUCT RESEARCH**

Learn about your market. Become familiar with similar products to create the differentiating features of yours. Bombas' co-founders tried every pair of socks they could find to decide how their product should be designed.

Research the social issue you're trying to solve. This information will help you decide which business model will have the greatest positive impact. Plus, you may be able to use the most powerful information in your future marketing campaigns.	Work with manufacturers to understand what it will take to create a great product. Your initial product design almost certainly won't be your last. Find a manufacturer that will help you create multiple test versions of your product with advice from this Shopify guide.
---	---

Brainstorm catchy ways to communicate your mission to shoppers. Bombas' motto, "bee better," communicates that their brand is driven by more than profits.	Test your product with friends and family. Collect feedback through surveys and conversations to understand how you can improve your product before launching it.
--	---

This research is hardly overkill. After building this knowledge, you'll be able to make a solid case for your product and mission on your crowdfunding page.

### **Podcasts and video: Tell your story with engaging, long-form mediums**

After crowdfunding in 2013, Bombas made a 2014 appearance on the reality show *Shark Tank* that catapulted the business. Overnight, the brand was no longer a small company that relied on support from friends and family.

"*Shark Tank* was the first time we got a lot of attention," said Huyett. "It put us on the map at a national level."

With a broader audience, Bombas had to update their marketing. A crowdfunding page and

word-of-mouth weren't enough to keep brand awareness flowing at a national scale. The company needed marketing that could engage a large number of shoppers *and* communicate Bombas' product quality and social impact.

Podcast and video ads were natural solutions. These mediums grabbed shoppers' interest with audio and visuals, and they gave the brand ample time to explain their cause and product quality. Podcast ads were especially valuable for Bombas in its early years. Many people were listening to podcasts, but it wasn't a crowded advertising space yet.

"In a given week, about 50 to 60% of our new customers are coming from paid," said Huyett for Q4 2014. "Podcasting has ranged from 15% to 40% of that. It's a pretty meaningful percentage of our paid portfolio." Podcasts are still a valuable marketing channel for Bombas today because the host-read ads are so convincing. Shoppers' trust in Bombas grows when they hear their favorite hosts rave about the socks and the company's mission. "All the data we have suggests that they [podcasts] are profitable," said Huyett.

Video marketing through YouTube content and TV ads has also helped Bombas build its audience and generate sales. "In terms of scale, we're still seeing the best results in direct response national cable," said Huyett. "In terms of LTV [lifetime value], actually YouTube is proving to have a higher first-average order value than any other channel."

Why is video so effective for Bombas? The visuals show shoppers that the brand is true to their values of quality and service. They see a shot of the socks' unique honeycomb stitching and seamless toes, and they know that the product is well made.

Likewise, Bombas can show footage of how the brand is helping homeless people, whether that's a clip of their team at a shelter or a close-up shot of the socks that are donated.



Bombas keeps their videos just short enough to hold people's attention, but long enough to fully explain their business. Their YouTube content lasts anywhere from 20 seconds to 4 minutes, and it consistently pulls in millions of views for the company.

### **Takeaway: Don't rush your mission-based brand's marketing**

Conventional marketing wisdom says campaigns need to be snappy. Shoppers' attention spans are shorter than ever before, we're told, so grab their attention as quickly as possible.

Bombas' marketing offers a different lesson. Many of their most successful campaigns take their time, whether that's a podcast host gushing about the brand or a 3-minute-long YouTube video. These mediums give Bombas the space it needs to talk about the quality of its product and why they chose to make socks in the first place—a message that can't be summed up in a flashy display ad.

If you're running a mission-based brand, look for engaging marketing mediums that give you enough time to tell your story. You can always use podcasts, YouTube, and TV ads, like Bombas. Or, for an alternative video-based platform, check out Instagram TV. This relatively new social tool lets brands post long videos (10-minute limit for small accounts, 60-minute limit for large accounts). Consider creating a video series on Instagram TV about your brand's mission and process for making your products.

### **In-store: Teach shoppers about your product and mission offline**

From 2013 to 2018, Bombas' annual revenue dramatically leaped from \$300K to \$102 million. The company had grown to a point where Goldberg and Heath felt comfortable dipping into wholesale. In 2018, Bombas began selling its socks wholesale through Nordstrom and Dick's Sporting Goods. Today, the brand also sells its socks at Scheels and Athleta stores.

That's just four companies. With over \$100 million in annual revenue, Bombas has probably received offers to sell wholesale from many other businesses. But Bombas is selective when it comes to choosing wholesale partners because they know what an important lead generation

opportunity it is.

“We’ve grown the wholesale side of our business slowly, just because we are trying to test and learn how to have success and how to tell our story appropriately,” said Goldberg. Focused on attracting high-value customers, the Bombas team only sells its socks wholesale if they’re able to educate shoppers about their mission and product in-store. The brand curates the wholesale shopping experience by:

- Training employees at wholesale stores to educate customers about Bombas’ one-to-one model and the quality of their socks.
- Setting up educational signage and displays about Bombas’ one-to-one model and sock design at wholesale stores. At Scheels, Bombas plays a video about their brand next to their socks display.

Bombas knows that shoppers at wholesale stores might dismiss their \$12 socks without any background on the company. To keep that from happening, the brand goes the extra mile to educate in-store shoppers. After learning about the brand’s product design and the one-to-one model, people are much more likely to find the socks valuable.

### **Takeaway: Take your brand storytelling offline**

As powerful as digital marketing can be, it’s hard to beat interacting with shoppers in person.

Instead of just reading about your brand, in-store shoppers can see the quality of your products first-hand. Plus, if you’ve educated employees about your brand, they can make sure shoppers fully understand your company’s social impact.

So, to attract high-value customers, consider selling your products wholesale with partners that have similar audiences and values to your brand’s. And make sure their shoppers can easily learn about your brand’s mission and products in-store.

If you're not ready to make a wholesale agreement, another option is to set up a temporary pop-up shop. For just a few days or weeks, you can expose shoppers to your brand in person without making a major financial investment.

### **Marry your product and mission in your marketing**

Shoppers appreciate brands with social causes, but that charity isn't enough to drive a purchase. They have to believe in your product too—otherwise, they might as well donate to nonprofits directly.

Build their trust in your brand with marketing that's focused on your product quality and your mission. If you communicate both ideas well (and truly do make high-quality products), shoppers will keep coming back to your brand—not only because they love your products, but because they love how they can make a positive impact with their purchase.

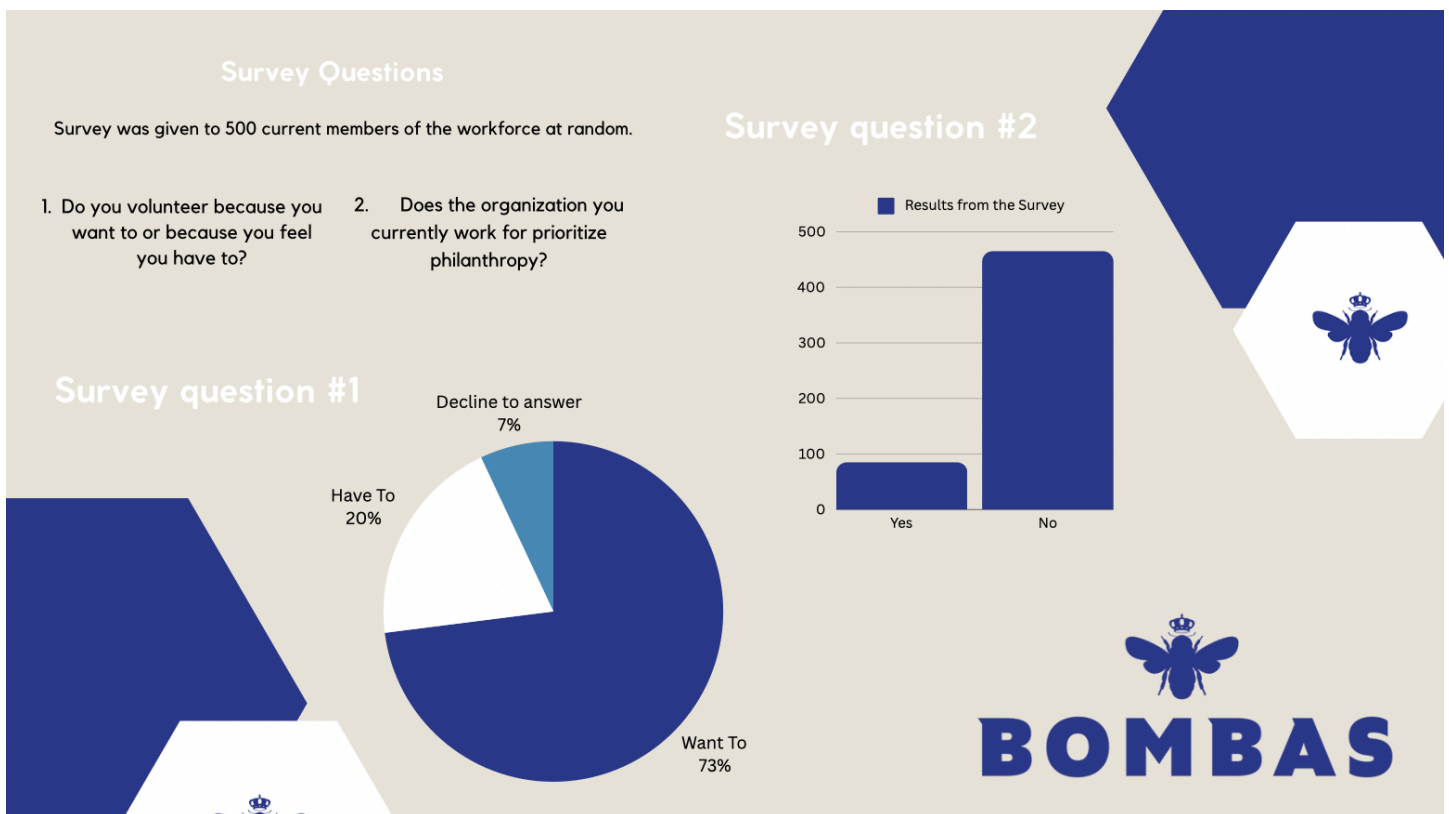
### *Websites that Helped in Thinking/Approach*

<https://shop.bombas.com/pages/giving-back>

<https://www.indeed.com/hire/c/info/what-is-a-headhunter>

<https://www.businessinsider.com/guides/style/bombas-socks-review>

## Charts for Primary Research



Survey results from a questionnaire given to 500 current members of the workforce at random.

The questions include: 1. Do you volunteer because you want to or because you feel you have to? and 2. Does the organization you currently work for prioritize philanthropy?

The results of this survey are to be given to headhunters as tactic #1 (see page 10).

**Primary Research Question: How often do you feel fatigued due to long hours of digital connectivity?**



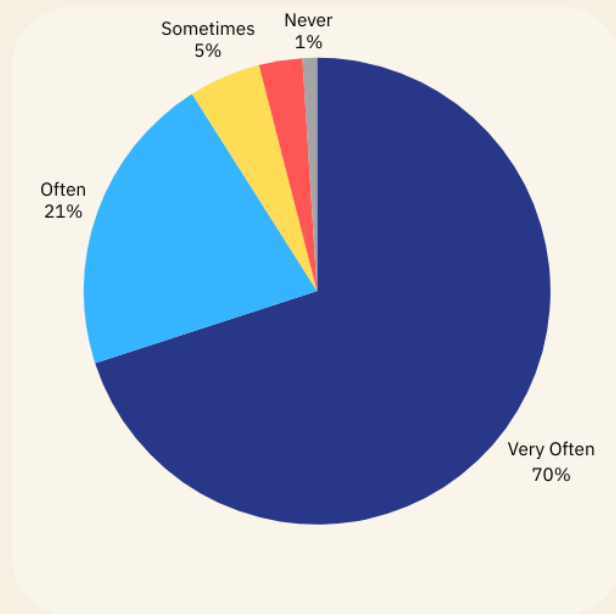
**Very Often**

**Often**

**Sometimes**

**Rarely**

**Never**



Survey results from a questionnaire given to 300 software engineers in Manhattan who share similar characteristics with Adrian. The question given: 1. How often do you feel fatigued due to long hours of digital connectivity?