



EMPATHY IN THE WORKPLACE INSIGHTS

Q1 2022



Supported by:





BACKGROUND

Leaders and managers all over the world are adjusting to a workforce and consumer audience with vastly different attitudes and preferences.

In addition, new obstacles continue to challenge companies and communities everywhere with rapid changes in technology, politics, pandemics, wars and economic shifts in power.

To successfully navigate this new decade of increasing complexity, managers must apply empathy and compassion in order to thrive, or risk being isolated by both their teams and customers.

This ongoing research aims to uncover insights and solutions for communities and organizations looking to bridge empathy gaps and defy current global trends and carve a future worth living in.

Together, we believe that we will live in times where our communities, our businesses and planet are better off through leading with empathy.





METHODOLOGY

The Leading with Empathy programme, The Idea Consultancy, the Stronger with Digital Coalition under the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications and the National Employment Agency in Cambodia conducted a 120 person survey on empathy in the workplace in Q1 2022.

The surveys were conducted as computer-assisted personal interviews via digital forms communicated on social media, email newsletters, and instant-messaging group channels.

Supporting organizations were vetted for their outreach activities to networks of viable respondents.

Third party industry leaders and experts have peer reviewed the data and insights in this report.

Limitations:

- This report was conducted primarily in Phnom Penh, and although the majority of commerce, development and public sector activity occur in the capital and share similarities to other cities and states, this may not reflect insights across the whole Kingdom nor the entire ASEAN region.
- The terms Empathy and Compassion were not defined in this report scope, and were found to be subjective. A common public understanding was 'to put yourself in other's shoes and feeling/thinking as they would'.
- A 120 person sample size is considered small, future research aims to increase sample sizes
- Surveys were only conducted digitally



- 120 X Khmer and Expatriates
- Location: Phnom Penh
- 43% Entry Level workers: between 19-25 years old
- 52% Working White Collar Professionals: 26 - 45 years
- Male: 47% Female: 52.2 %
- Various sectors with the majority in professional services 15%, 14.5% in trade and distribution, and 12.6% in banking/insurance

Do you believe that your opinion counts in your company?

Influence in this question was subjective, but implied the respondent understood they possessed the capacity to have an effect on the company and others.

Almost half of the respondents believed their opinions mattered, indicating they felt both heard and understood. This implies empathetic practices such as active listening are present in white collar workplaces.

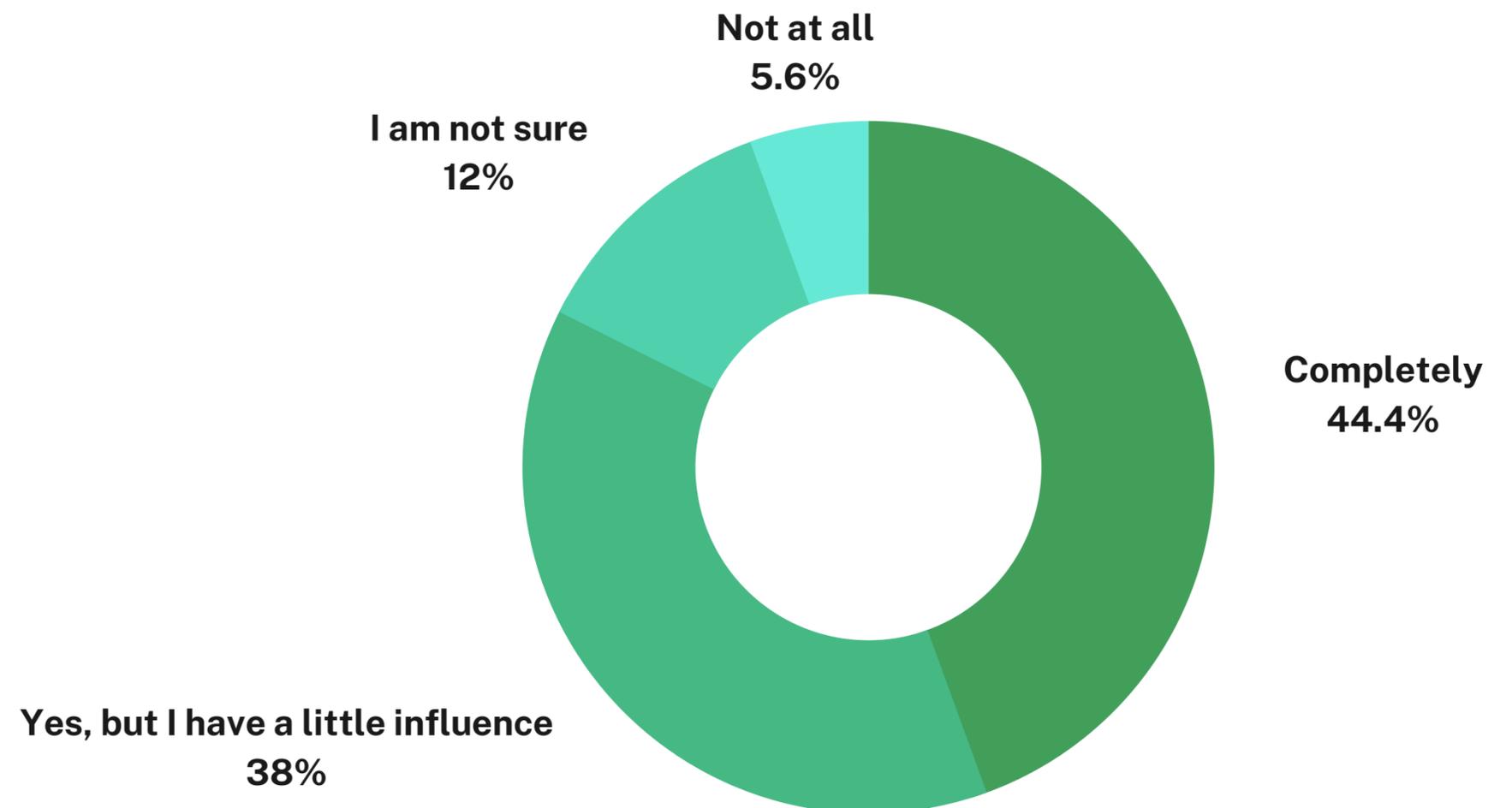
What's interesting is that:

- 44% of respondents who were not business owners completely felt their opinion mattered - higher than anticipated

For leaders to consider:

- How much influence are you deliberately designing into roles?
- Is succession planning and future delegation of authority part of your HR planning?

Sample without business owner responses





Empathy in the workplace

28.1%

"I would rate my boss as an empathetic and compassionate person"

Approximately 3 out of 10 employees distinctly rated their leaders and managers as empathetic and compassionate. Indicating significant room for growth in the context of leadership and management in the workplace.

29.6%

"I believe my colleagues would rate me as an empathetic and compassionate person."

Roughly 3 out of 10 employees confidently rated themselves to be perceived as empathetic.

23%

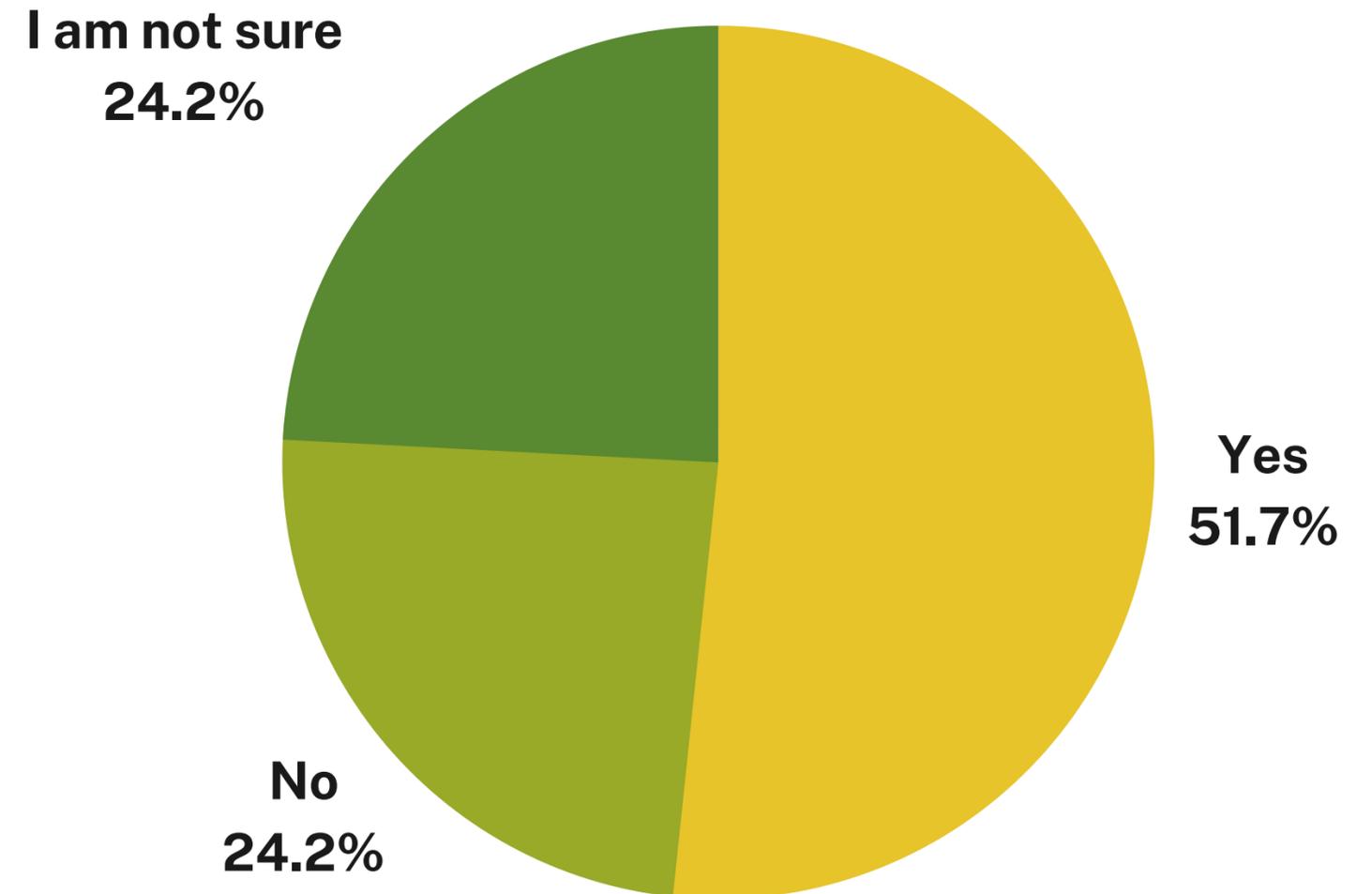
"I would generally rate my colleagues as empathetic and compassionate people."

Just over 2 out of 10 respondents confidently rated their colleagues as empathetic and compassionate people.

Do you believe there is enough compassion and empathetic practice in your workplace?

This question is subjective, as 'enough' compassion and empathy means different things for different people.

However, it does reveal that for just over half of the respondents working in white collar jobs in Phnom Penh have accepted the status quo, which is in contrast to less than 30% of respondents rating their boss and their colleagues as empathetic and compassionate.



What do you think makes a manager empathetic?

Qualitative data was diverse with key themes presented in the AI generated wordcloud on the right.

The majority of responses from employees related to an intention to understand, key listening skills and genuine and caring intentions.



70%

of respondents say that it is important that a company shows empathy and that they would be willing to pay more for their goods and services.



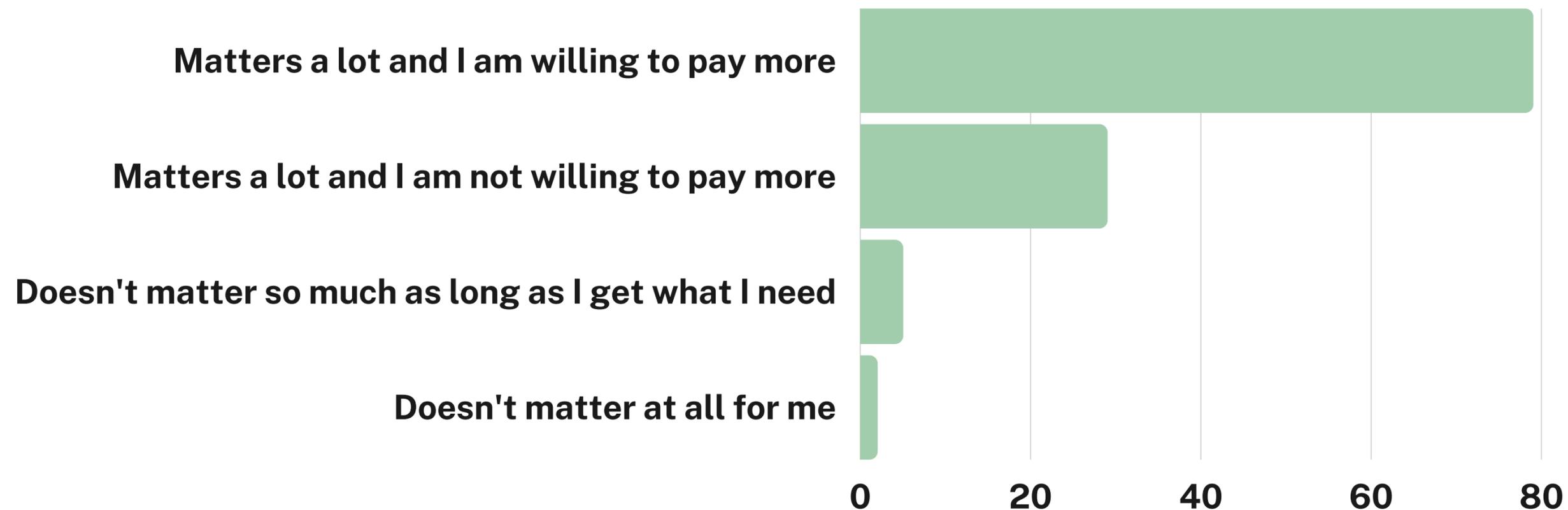
LEADING WITH
EMPATHY

How much does it matter to you as a consumer that a company appears to be empathetic and compassionate in the way they operate?

Approximately 7 out of 10 consumers are willing and able to pay more for brands that they deem empathetic and compassionate in how they act internally and externally.

This ratio applied across every income data set from the lowest monthly earners to the highest monthly earners indicating a clear trend for the entire consumer market.

This trend shows that most consumers across every income category prefer their brands to exhibit empathy and compassion.



WORKFORCE INSIGHTS

- The data indicates that empathetic work practices such as active listening are present in white collar workplaces in Cambodia with 44% of workers believing that their opinions matter completely in their organizations and 51% of workers believing there is enough empathetic practice in their workplaces.
- Not all work places will allow or have appropriate situations for workers to offer opinions in their organization but can better manage expectations and this context much better through communication. The 38% of workers who believe they are heard but have little influence are more likely to leave the organization than their counterparts who feel more control in their career and workplace.
- The boss, colleague and self-evaluations of empathy and compassion all rated lower than 30% indicating room for improvement for empathetic practice and capacity building for managers and leaders in the workforce.
- Practicing coaching skills such as listening and understanding were rated as the top skills and actions for managers and leaders to be perceived as empathetic.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- As per the previous research report which surveyed a different subset of respondents in Q4 2021, there is an indication for a clear opportunity for companies to act and communicate their activities which are empathetic and values-tested - 7 out of 10 people are willing to pay more - this means higher margins for companies.
- Unlike the previous report, this survey included an income breakdown which showed companies and organizations targeting any income segment would benefit from acting with empathy and compassion.
- Also unlike the last report, this survey reached 120% more respondents and was able to gather top-of-mind brand and organizations deemed as empathetic and compassionate:
- Beebee & Bongo, Viroth's Hotel, Brown Coffee, Ican School, The Idea Consultancy, Exo Travel, ACLEDA Bank, Smart, Google, Phare Circus, SHE Investments, WVOB, the British Embassy, Chip Mong, France AJ Medical, JTrust Bank, FWD Cambodia, DFDL, Camseed, DKSH, UNDP, KPMG, Indriya, Minthacare, Bloo, PrimPharm Counselling, and Thalias

EXPERT INSIGHTS

The results clearly show that there is a lack of empathy and compassion in the workplace, with less than 30% of respondents saying that their bosses, colleagues, and they themselves are empathetic. It is unclear from the data whether this is because empathy isn't considered important, or because they don't know how to demonstrate it. From my own personal experience as a coach, it is likely a mixture of both.

This contrasts with a huge 8 of 10 people saying that their opinion counts in the company to some degree. My interpretation of this is that work culture is very much head-focused, driven by logic and intellect. *"My opinion might count. **But my feelings do not matter.**"* This has been commonly accepted in many corporate cultures around the world, to the detriment of company performance and staff wellbeing. I hope we can all work together to shift this cultural norm.

A challenge we will face is the tolerance for the status quo, with over half the respondents saying that there is "enough" compassion and empathy in the workplace, despite that not being very much.

However, I know from studies and personal experience that when people are shown a better alternative, they respond positively. It may take some time to heal the culture of trauma, but it is something that many of us are working on.



Joey Ra,
Executive Coach. Founder and Head of
Faculty at Cambodia Coaching Institute.



Monika Nowaczyk,
CEO of Beebee+Bongo and Chief Knitting
Officer at Cambodian Knits

Compassion and empathy are at the heart of our management process at Cambodia Knits.

Rarely is a decision made without first listening to staff concerns and needs.

We have incorporated non-violent communication training in our regular meetings, helping staff to open to better understand their own and others feelings.

This has made for a much happier and positive work environment for all

I'm particularly impressed how self-aware the participants seem to be about their own empathetic abilities. Our **global culture generally does not value empathy or listening as important**; we are not well-trained in being empathetic nor compassionate. I think admitting that we are not, as almost 70% of those surveyed did across the board, is the right first step. The study also tells me that **we are now past arguing over whether these are good qualities for leaders to possess.**

It's clear however, that we need to deepen our understanding of what empathy is, and what contributes to its growth.



Akira Morita,
Consulting Partner at VIPASSA

Very positive to see the acknowledgement of the importance of empathy in the workplace, albeit there is **still some work to do to build it into the regular behaviour of managers & leaders.**

An empathetic manager / leader can better understand their teams' learning needs and can create a more supportive team culture for learning and positive improvement.

It **can pay big dividends for organisations through better impact** from their learning activities.



Gabriel Helmy,
CEO & Founder of The Capacity Specialists

FUTURE INSIGHTS TO GAIN

- How important is empathy and compassion in in the workplace for employees and employers?
- What do people define as empathy and compassion?
- A study on segmented audience perception on empathy ie) Their current understanding of empathy and levels of others in particular situations, empathy in the workplace vs. empathy at home, vs. empathy for oneself.
- What challenges exist for employees in communication and understanding in the workplace?
- What are the biggest obstacles to empathetic practice in workplaces?
- What are the biggest challenges to empathy at home?
- How much more are consumers across each segment willing and able to pay for brands perceived to be empathetic in specific sectors?

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Idea

Fayla Archadi - Associate Consultant at The Idea Consultancy for questionnaire design, field work, data tabulation and report design.

Sofia Perez for auditing and proofing

Sanghamitra Mandal, Venus, Sonyta, Vannak, Antoine and Rosie for report design and publication.

CCI - Cambodia Coaching Institute

Special thanks to Joey Ra for his expert opinion and time in reviewing the report drafts.

PEP Talks Working Group

National Employment Agency of Cambodia and Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications for sharing the survey on their platforms.

Monika, Akira and Gabriel for helping to review and offer insights to the report.