

STATE OF



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INTRO



IN THIS REPORT.

RA*W exists to bridge the gap between the creative industry and young talent. We open doors. We create connections. We believe the next generation of creatives deserves not just entry, but a future worth staying for.

This report is for two groups of people. If you're a junior creative, this is your experience put into numbers. You're not imagining it. You're not being dramatic. The data backs you up. If you're in a position of power at an agency, this is your wake-up call.

We surveyed* 107 young professionals across the Dutch creative industry to uncover what's really happening behind the job titles. What we found should concern everyone who cares about the future of this industry.

*With a sample of 107, each percentage has a margin of error of about ± 9 percentage points (95% confidence). Treat the results as indicative.



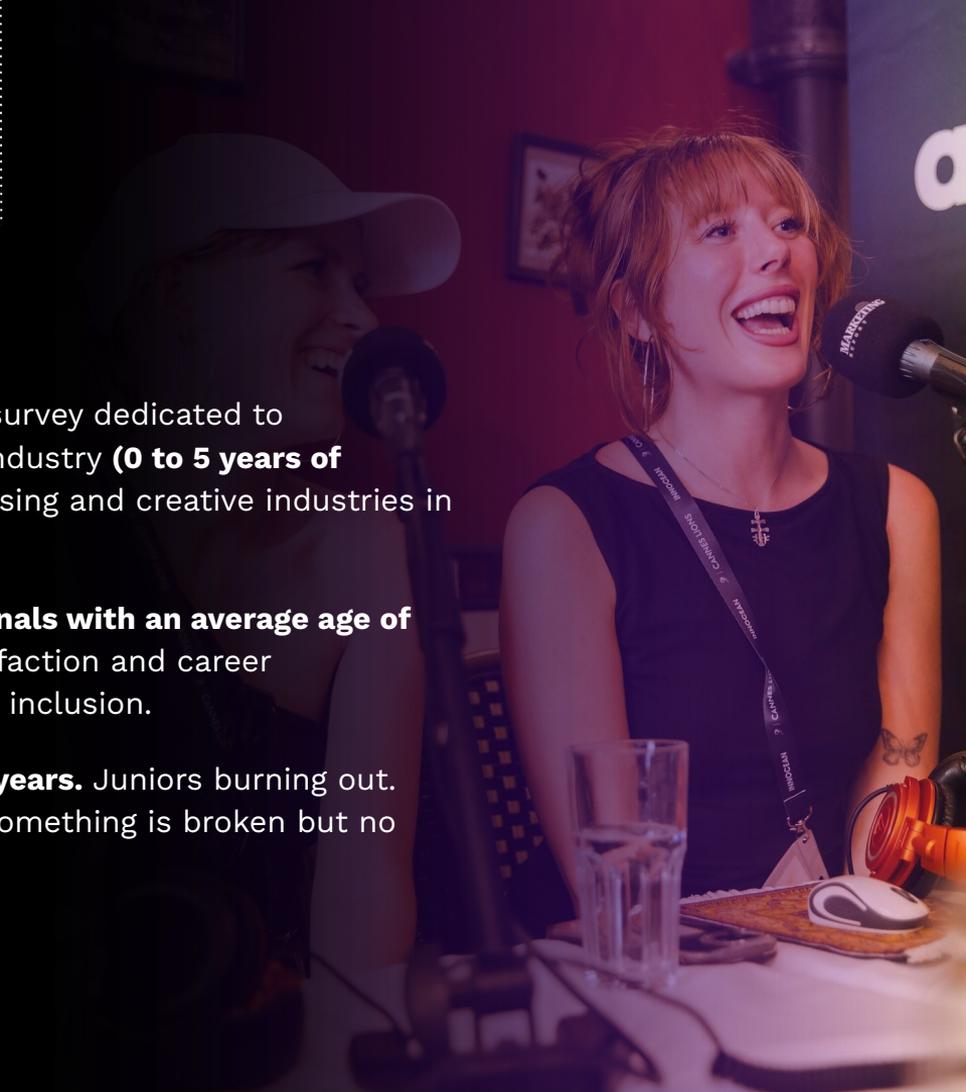
INTRO ○

WHY NOW?

This is the RA*W State of Talent: the first annual survey dedicated to understanding how young people in the creative industry (**0 to 5 years of experience**) actually experience working in advertising and creative industries in the Netherlands.

We collected responses from **107 young professionals with an average age of 27.5**. The survey covered everything from job satisfaction and career development to workload, mentorship, salary, and inclusion.

Why now? **Because the signs have been there for years.** Juniors burning out. Talent leaving for other industries. A feeling that something is broken but no data to point at. This research gives us that data.





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INDUSTRY SATISFACTION AND FUTURE OUTLOOK



1 IN 3

JUNIORS SAY THEY'LL POSSIBLY LEAVE THEIR CREATIVE JOB WITHIN FIVE YEARS, IF NOTHING CHANGES.

1 in 3. Read that again.

This is the talent that you recruited, onboarded, and trained. And **33%** of them are already looking at the door. Not because they hate the work. Because they don't see a future in how things are being run.

The problem is retention. And retention is a leadership problem.

PACK SHOT
WORKSHOP



3.6 OUT OF 5

AVERAGE SATISFACTION SCORE OF YOUNG CREATIVES ACROSS ALL ROLES.

Not bad. But not good either. Just above average.

A **3.6** means most young creatives aren't miserable enough to quit tomorrow, but they're not inspired enough to fully commit either. They're in a grey zone where small frustrations pile up over time.

When we cross-reference this with the third who are uncertain about their future, it starts to make sense. People aren't dramatically unhappy. They're quietly disappointed. And quiet disappointment is harder to spot but just as dangerous for retention.

"Fine" is not a retention strategy.





WHAT THEY NEED

92%

RATE CULTURE AND MENTORING AS HIGHLY IMPORTANT

When asked what matters most in a job, the answer wasn't salary. It wasn't perks. It was culture and guidance.

91% rated "fun and inspiring office culture" as important. **92%** said the same about personal mentoring and coaching. **83%** prioritized a clear career path.

Meanwhile, only **41%** rated extra benefits like sports discounts as highly important. They're not asking for ping pong tables or pizza Fridays. They want to matter. To be guided. To see a future.





THE BARRIERS YOUNG TALENT FACE





65%

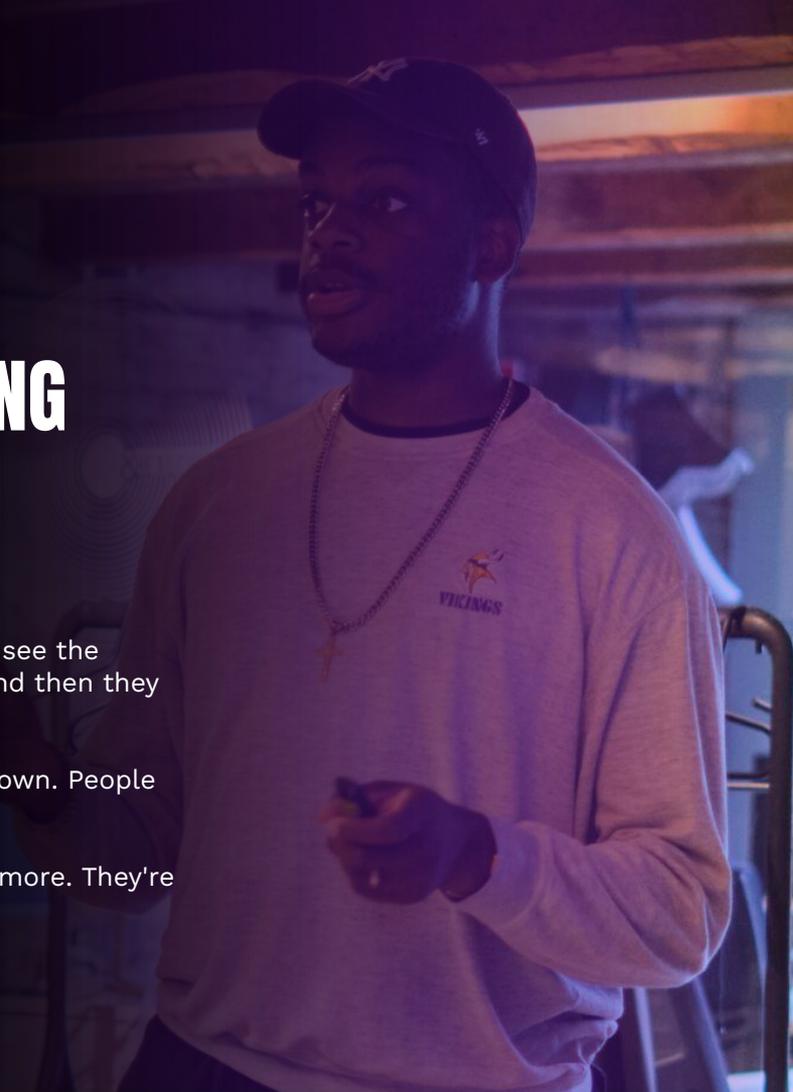
SAY INSUFFICIENT SALARY IS HOLDING THEM BACK.

Almost two thirds feel their pay doesn't match their effort.

This isn't just about wanting more money. It's about fairness. Young creatives see the hours they put in, especially during pitches. They see what they contribute. And then they see a paycheck that doesn't add up.

When salary feels arbitrary or disconnected from contribution, trust breaks down. People start feeling used. And used people leave.

Clear salary bands and transparent compensation policies aren't optional anymore. They're the baseline for keeping talent.





64%

SAY THERE ARE TOO FEW JOB OPENINGS.

Nearly two thirds believe the doors into this industry are too narrow, with too few entry-level roles creating a bottleneck that leaves talented people stuck in internships or freelance limbo or pushing them to leave altogether.

You can't claim there's a talent shortage while keeping junior headcount frozen; if you want to fix the pipeline, create real entry-level jobs with genuine growth potential. The talent is out there the openings aren't.



52%

SAY THERE'S NOT ENOUGH MENTORSHIP.

More than half feel they're not getting adequate guidance.

The pattern is clear: seniors are too busy with their own workloads to invest time in juniors. Formal mentorship programs either don't exist or exist only on paper. Feedback comes too late or too rarely to be useful.

This is how you lose people. Not because they lack talent, but because nobody invested in developing it. Mentorship isn't a nice extra. It's how you build the next generation of creative leaders. Skip it and watch them build those skills somewhere else.





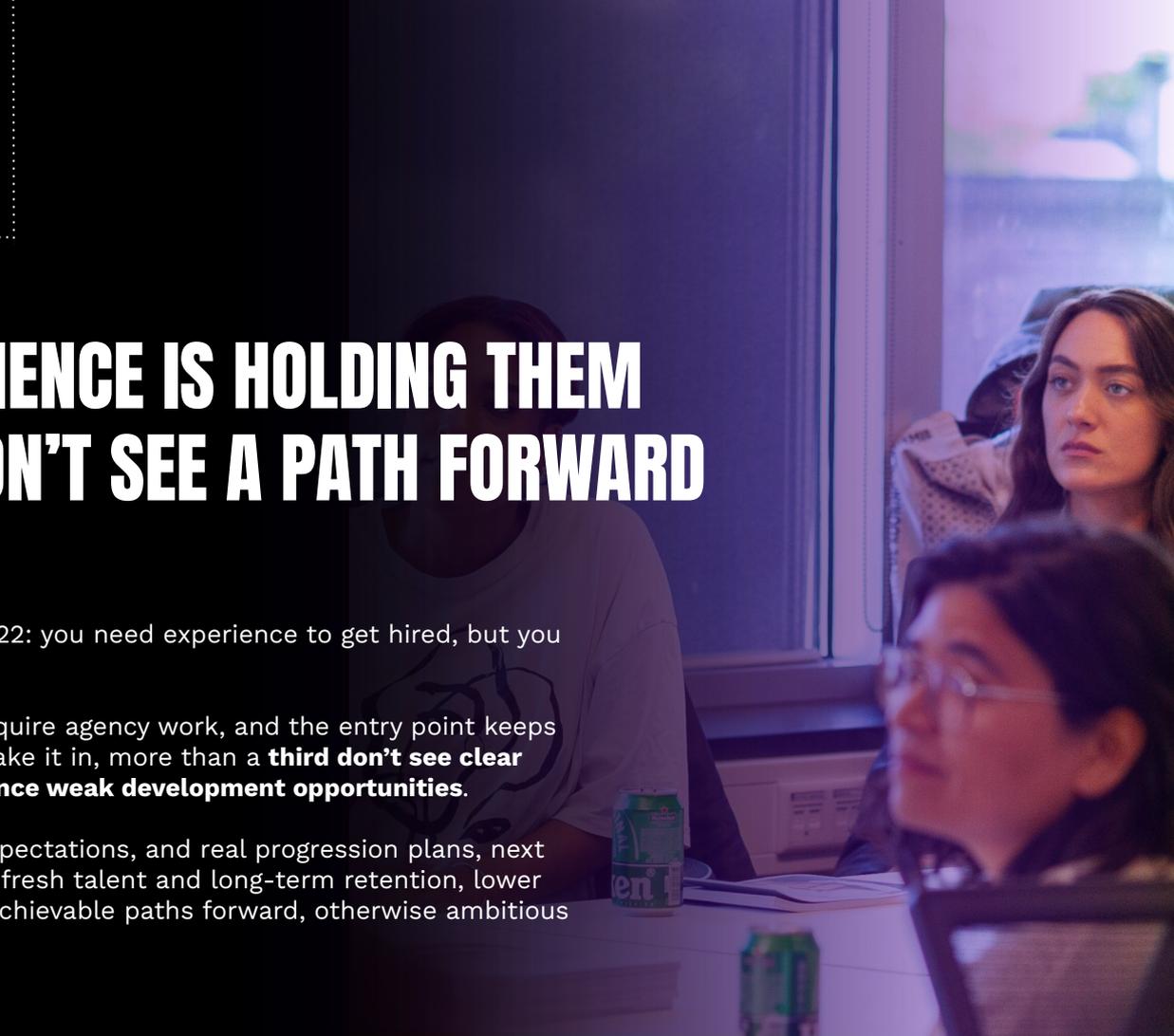
47%

SAY LACK OF EXPERIENCE IS HOLDING THEM BACK AND MANY DON'T SEE A PATH FORWARD ONCE THEY'RE IN.

Nearly half feel stuck in their classic catch-22: you need experience to get hired, but you need to get hired to gain experience.

“Junior” roles ask for 3+ years, portfolios require agency work, and the entry point keeps moving further away. Even for those who make it in, more than a **third don't see clear growth ahead**, and nearly a **quarter experience weak development opportunities**.

Without visible role ladders, defined skill expectations, and real progression plans, next year looks exactly like this year. If you want fresh talent and long-term retention, lower unrealistic entry barriers and create clear, achievable paths forward, otherwise ambitious people will find them somewhere else.





42%

SAY HIGH WORKLOAD IS A MAJOR BARRIER.

More than four in ten say workload is holding them back. And over a third of respondents work more than 4 hours of overtime per week, mainly around pitches.

Overtime has become the industry's unofficial business model. You're running on the fumes of young people's enthusiasm, and it's burning them out. This isn't dedication. It's extraction.

Monitor the hours. Cap the overtime. Rebalance the work. If your business model depends on burning people out, your business model is broken.



DIVERSITY

14%

SAY THEIR ORGANIZATION TRULY REFLECTS THE DIVERSITY OF SOCIETY.

Only **14%** feel their workplace represents the world around them. Meanwhile, **37% said their organization doesn't reflect diversity at all.**

This number should be a wake-up call. An industry that creates work for society but doesn't reflect society has a credibility problem.

Diversity statements mean nothing if the people on the ground don't see change. Set concrete goals. Track them publicly. Be accountable. Or keep wondering why your work feels out of touch.





WHY THEY STAY DESPITE THE CHALLENGES





PASSION

88%

SAY IT'S ABOUT PASSION FOR CREATIVITY.

Almost nine out of ten are here because they love the craft. That passion remains their foundation.

This is a gift. You have people who genuinely want to be here, who love what they do. That kind of motivation can't be bought. But it can be destroyed.

Every time you exploit that passion instead of protecting it, you're burning fuel you can't replace. Create conditions where creativity thrives, and you'll get the best work of their careers. Keep grinding them down, and watch that **88%** turn into bitter ex-creatives working in other industries.



PEOPLE

62%

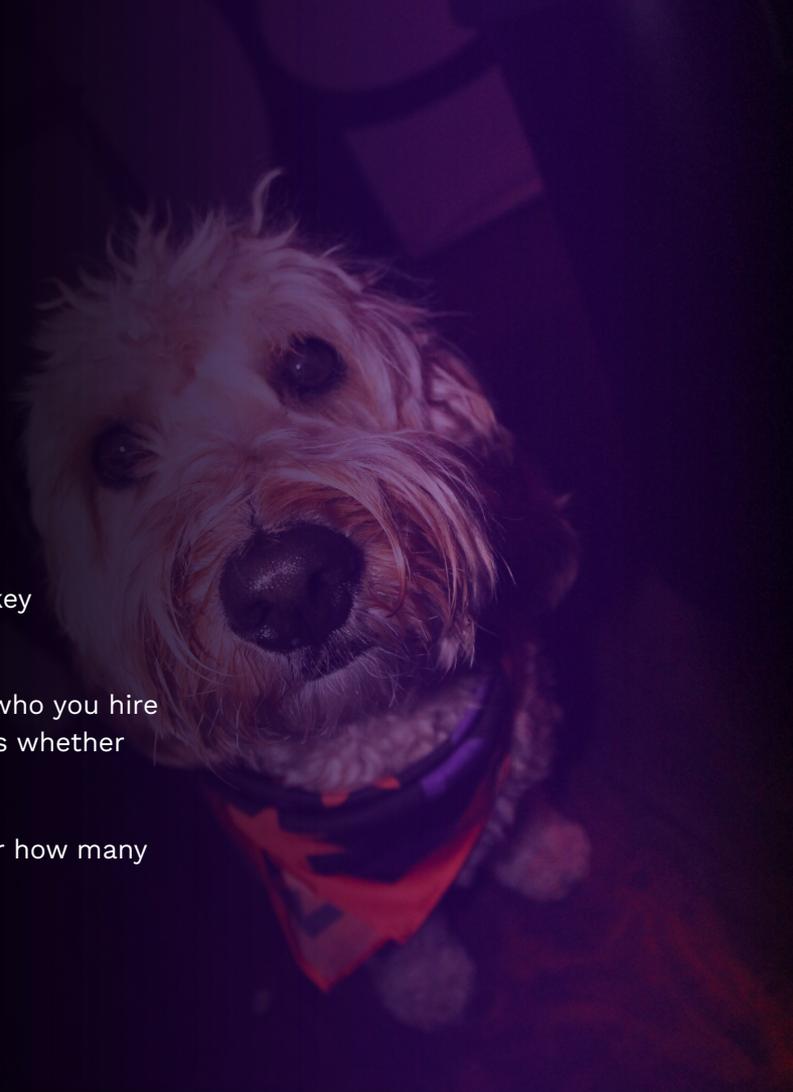


SAY THEY WANT TO WORK WITH INSPIRING PEOPLE.

More than six in ten said collaboration with other creative professionals is a key motivation.

Culture isn't a mission statement. It's not a values poster in the kitchen. It's who you hire and how they treat each other. It's whether seniors actually talk to juniors. It's whether feedback is given with respect or contempt.

Great people make people stay. Toxic environments push them out, no matter how many awards are on the shelf.





VISIBILITY

62%

SAY IT'S THE CHANCE TO SEE YOUR WORK IN THE WORLD.

That moment of seeing something you made out in the real world. A billboard. A commercial. A campaign people talk about. That's a core part of why people love this job.

If juniors only work on internal decks while seniors get their names on everything visible, you're denying them one of the key rewards of this career.

Let them own projects publicly. Credit them properly. Give them something to be proud of, and they'll work even harder for the next one.



IMPACT

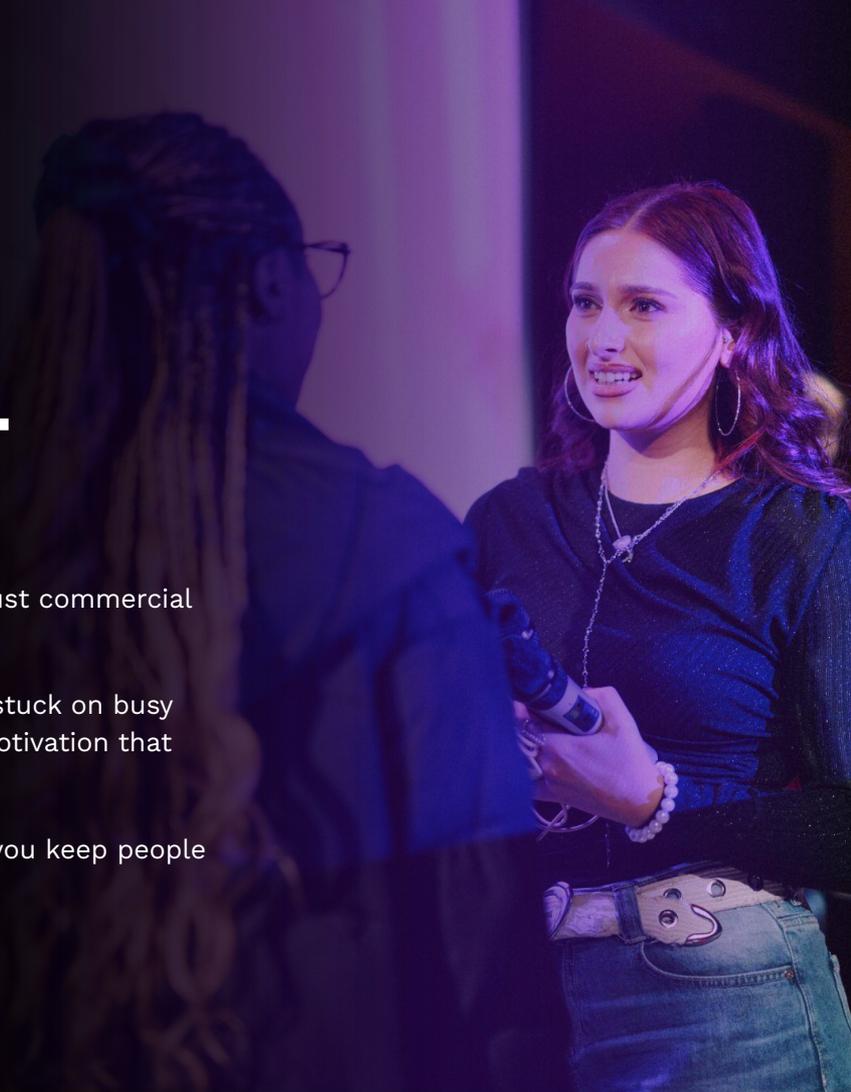
61%

SAY IT'S ABOUT MAKING A SOCIAL OR CULTURAL IMPACT.

More than six in ten want their work to have meaning. Real impact, not just commercial success.

The projects you assign to juniors matter more than you think. If they're stuck on busy work while seniors get the meaningful briefs, you're draining the exact motivation that makes them valuable.

Let them own work that matters. Let them see their impact. That's how you keep people who care.





RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REAL CHANGE





REAL CHANGE

REAL CHANGE

**THESE AREN'T JUST STATS.
THESE ARE YOUR PEOPLE.**

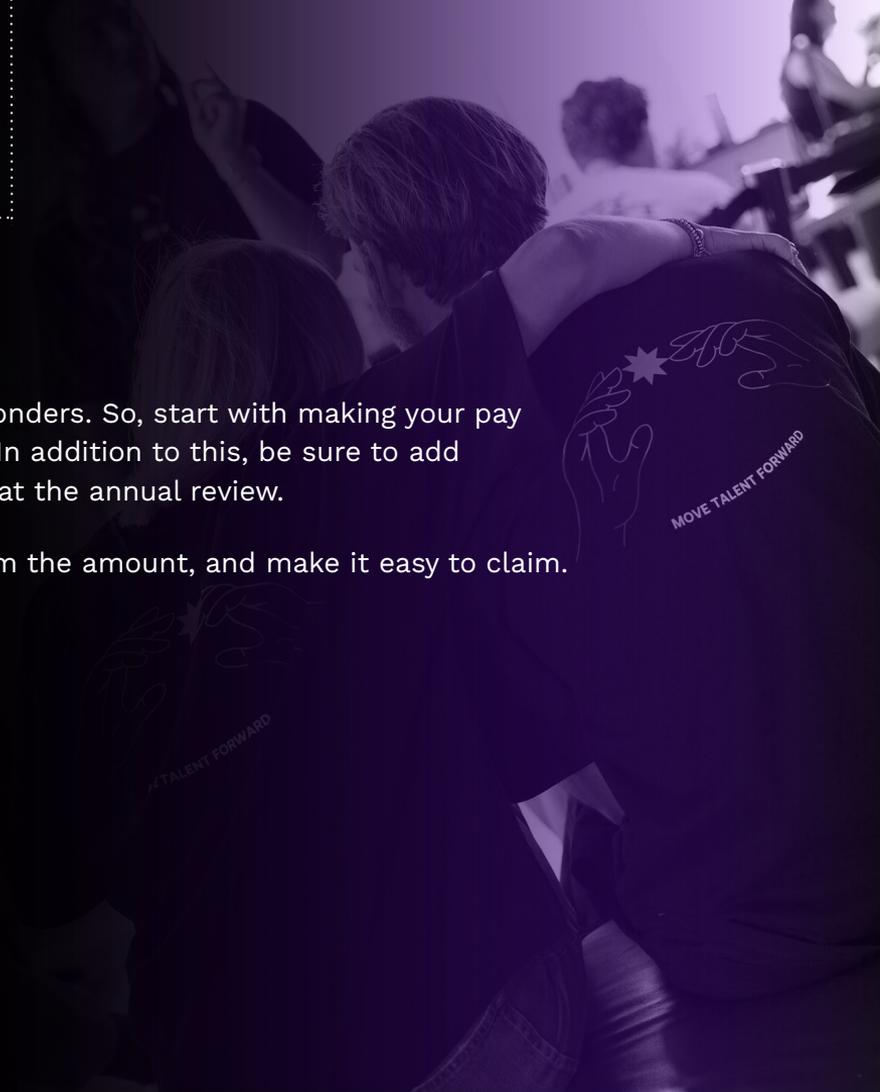


RECOMMENDATION ○

PAY TRANSPARENCY

In a field that is often chaotic and uncertain, clarity works wonders. So, start with making your pay transparent. Set clear bands, share them, and uphold them. In addition to this, be sure to add mid-cycle pay, bonus and/or recognition interviews. Not just at the annual review.

Factor in their learning budget as well, does it exist? Tell them the amount, and make it easy to claim.



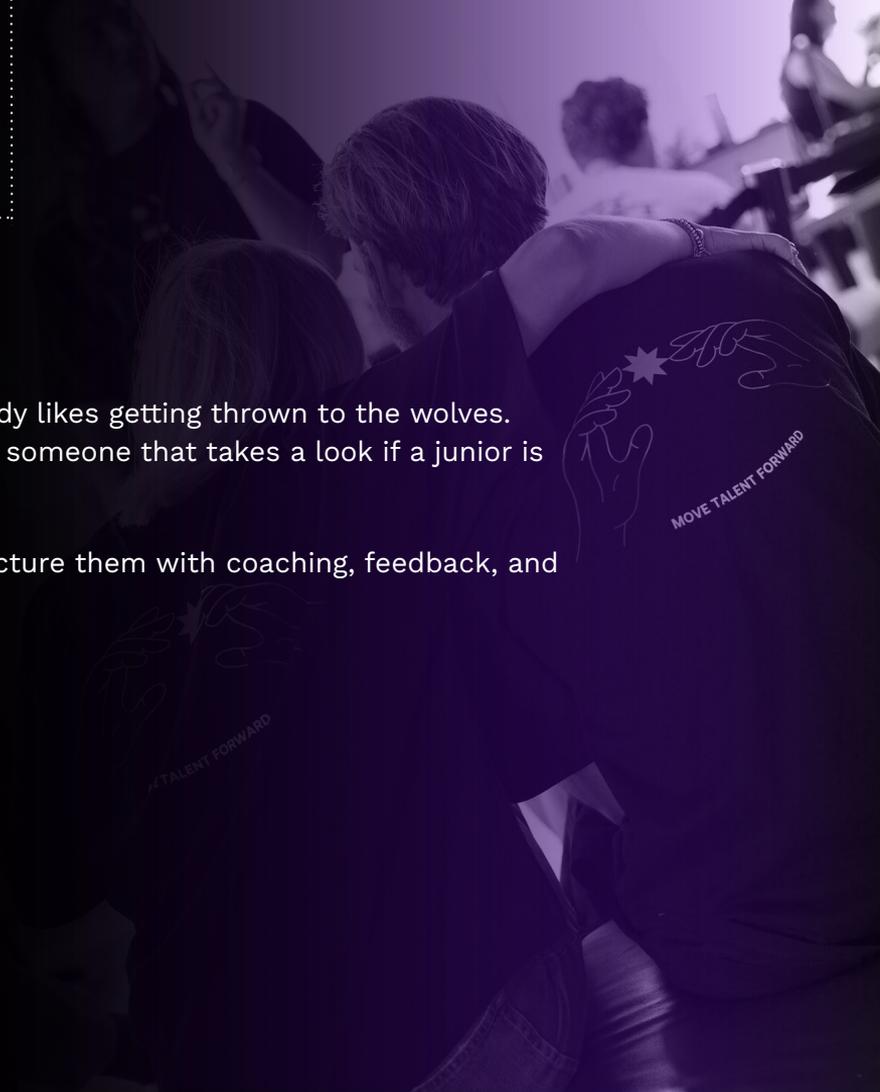


RECOMMENDATION ○

MENTORSHIP

It can sometimes feel like you're thrown to the wolves. Nobody likes getting thrown to the wolves. That's why it's important to offer actual mentorship. Not just someone that takes a look if a junior is reallllyly asking for it.

Hook them up with a more senior person. Do monthly's, structure them with coaching, feedback, and recognition.





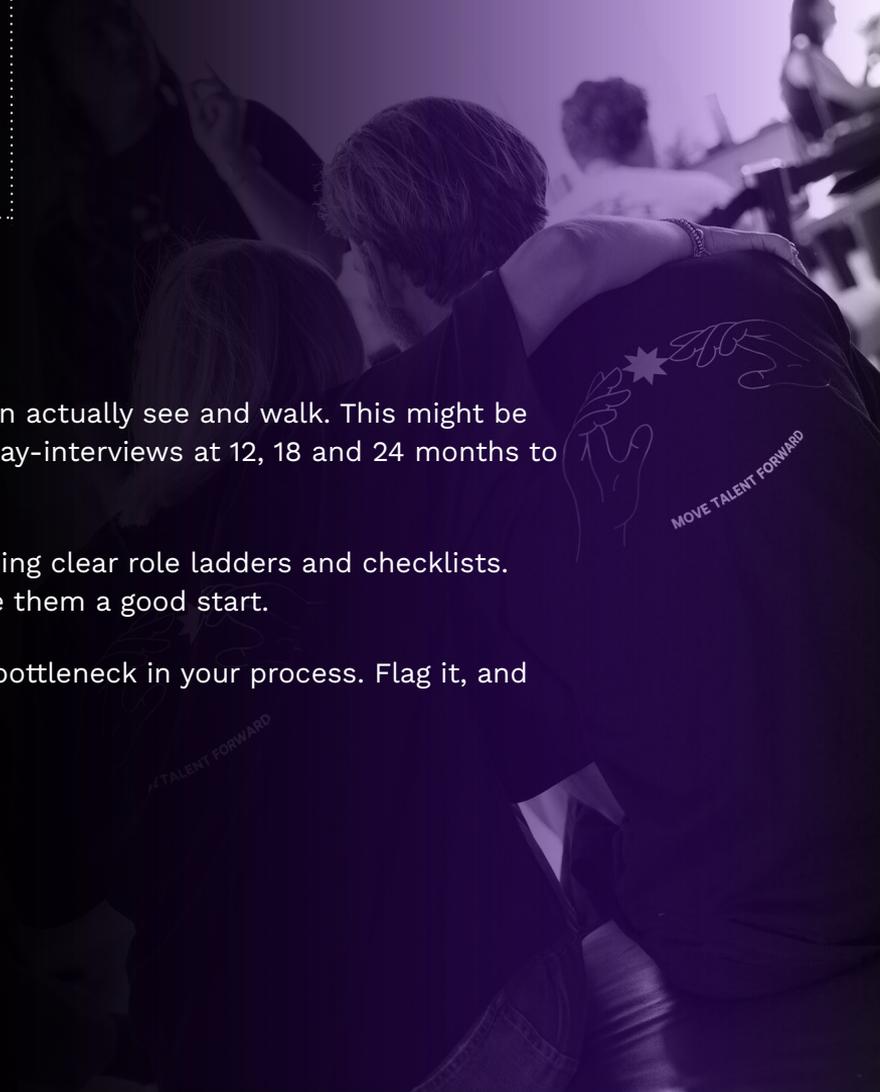
RECOMMENDATION ○

CLEAR GROWTH PATHS

People are more likely to stay if growth is a path that they can actually see and walk. This might be the most important step in diffusing the two year dip. Add stay-interviews at 12, 18 and 24 months to see where both parties' heads are at.

Help them grow successfully within that timespan by publishing clear role ladders and checklists. And make a 6-month growth plan with your new hires to give them a good start.

Track your data. Within those 24 months you might notice a bottleneck in your process. Flag it, and work on it.





RECOMMENDATION ○

MONITOR WORKLOAD

Look, we know this industry oftentimes runs on a bit of overtime. But if overtime becomes the norm within the company, take a good hard look at it. Rebalance workload, restructure a teams, and cap overtime.





RECOMMENDATION ○

HEAR THEIR VOICES

Open up feedback channels, and not just in the: “just tell me if you don’t like anything” kind of way. It’s hard for more junior staff to let their voices be heard towards management.

Run feedback surveys, make them anonymous (protect that anonymity), and report progress on what actions have been taken as a result of feedback.





CONCLUSION





CONCLUSION ○

SO WHAT NOW?

The data is in. One in three young creatives isn't sure they'll stay. More than half feel unsupported. Nearly two thirds feel underpaid. And 88% are still here because they love the work.

That last number is your window. The passion is there. The talent is there. What's missing is the structure to keep them.

Start here: make pay transparent, create real mentorship, show clear growth paths, monitor workload before it breaks people, and actually listen when they tell you something's wrong.

You don't have to figure this out alone. RA*W and similar organizations exist to help bridge the gap between leadership and young talent. Reach out. Start the conversation. Join the movement.

This industry doesn't change through reports. It changes through action.

MOVE TALENT FORWARD



RA*W STATE OF TALENT 2025



CONTACT US

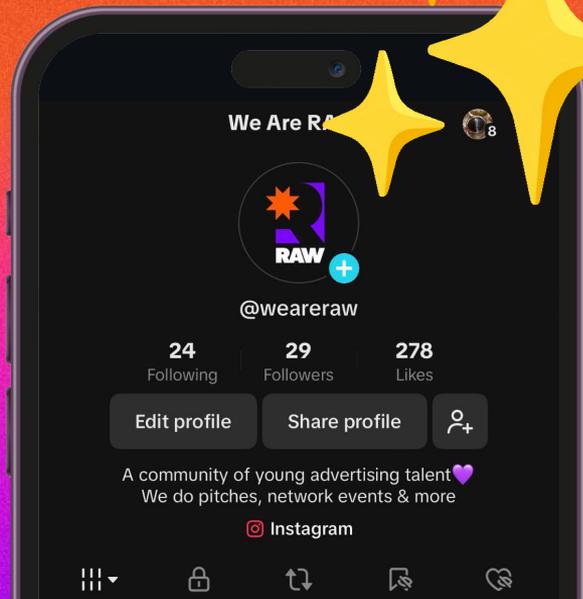
QUESTIONS? WE HAVE ANSWERS.

Contact:

Email us at hi@we-are-raw.com



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everything that is going on in the
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RAW

STATE OF



TALENT