01. Approach

02. Inside the Minds of SMB Owners

03. Applications

04. Pop Quiz!

05. Appendix
01. Approach
This isn’t a presentation about the quality of jobs, it’s about the qualities that define the people who create them.
We know what makes a job high quality

**Economic Stability**
- Stable, family-sustaining pay
- Sufficient, accessible, and broadly available benefits
- Fair, reliable scheduling practices
- Safe, healthy, and accessible working conditions

**Equity, Respect & Voice**
- Organizational and management culture, policies, and practices that
  1. Are transparent and enable accountability
  2. Support a sense of belonging and purpose
  3. Advance DEIA
  4. Address discrimination

- Ability to improve the workplace, such as through collective action or participatory management practices

**Economic Mobility**
- Clear and equitable hiring and advancement pathways
- Accessible, paid training and development opportunities
- Wealth-building opportunities
But we need to persuade diverse small and medium business (SMB) owners to adopt these job quality elements (JQEs) — and do it at a scale that could force a broad change in the culture of work.
We used a three part methodology to uncover the key influences and **values** driving SMB owners.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metaphor Elicitation</th>
<th>Message Testing</th>
<th>Content Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A two-round qualitative design, where participants are asked to submit links to images and sounds related to key prompts, and then verbally discuss them.</td>
<td>Five messages on the basis of our ME results. We used a survey experiment to test which of these five messages were the most effective at persuading SMB owners and CDFIs of the importance of job quality.</td>
<td>Focused on the two most effective messages from Phase 2, disaggregated into four narrow messages, and expressed through visual implementations (fliers) to test the effectiveness of these real-world materials.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 24

N = 1,267

N = 910
By speaking to a diversity of SMB owners to prioritize equity.

**Age**
53.2% of respondents were between 30 and 49 years old.

**Education**
40.3% of respondents possess a Bachelor’s degree or higher.

**Race**
- White: 48.8% (n = 1047)
- Black: 25.4% (n = 545)
- Hispanic/Latino: 25.7% (n = 552)

**Gender Identity**
- Female: 51.4% (n = 1064)
- Male: 49.6% (n = 1064)
- Other Gender/Non-Binary: 0.05% (n = 10)

**SMB Size**
- Small business owners with 1-10 employees: 69.4% (n = 1488)
- Medium business owners with 11-50 employees: 30.1% (n = 646)

**Industry**
- Construction: 317
- Retail: 291
- Professional Services: 165
- Arts & Recreation: 157
- Manufacturing: 128
- Wholesale: 122
- Health & Social Services: 112
- Finance & Insurance: 106
- Real Estate & Leasing: 101
- Agriculture: 91

© A—B 2023
Privileged and Confidential. All rights reserved.
To land on the most comprehensive picture of SMB owners and identify new opportunities to bring JQE from the margins to the center of their businesses

- Audience analysis to understand SMB owners and the tensions blocking them from investing in job quality
- Core narrative that synthesizes the problem and articulates the solutions that will break through
- Messaging guidance for financial intermediaries to talk to SMB owners about job quality
- Sample applications ready to be used in communications to SMB owners from financial intermediaries
This playbook contains the tools to **seize on a unique moment** of challenge and opportunity for SMB owners.

- It’s designed to guide financial intermediaries to galvanize SMB owners to invest in job quality.
- It’s tailored to engage in conversations surrounding the changing concept of work and employer expectations.
- It’s built for this moment, where small business owners are adapting to a new path forward in an evolving economic landscape.
Inside the Minds of SMB Owners
As **entrepreneurs**, SMB owners are...

- Strong Leaders
- Independent
- Innovative
- Positive
But as daily **managers**, SMB owners feel...

- Challenged by "Impostor Syndrome"
- Isolated and Beholden
- Powerless to Compete for Top Talent
- Unable to Connect the Dots
We need to resolve this **paradox** and offer JQE as a way to **reframe and empower them as leaders of the business and community**

- Strong Leaders
- Independent
- Innovative
- Positive

Challenged by “Impostor Syndrome”
Isolated and Beholden
Powerless to Compete for Top Talent
Unable to Connect the Dots
01. What we heard

Challenged by “Impostor Syndrome”

What We Miss

All too often, we talk about job quality by talking about how it can make SMB owners more money.

How It Impacts JQE

SMB owners start a business to be independent, have control, innovate, and give back to their communities—not to make more money. Talking about the bottom line triggers their anxieties.

Highlights from our Research:

An online sample of > 10,000 SMB owners showed that their top psychological drivers are:

- Creativity
- Proving competence
- Expressing individuality

“...you didn’t want to feel it was all just about getting rich. It was really more about the product and the process and working together.”

- Interview participant

In a randomized controlled trial, messages that appealed to the bottom line failed to move SMB owners on any outcome.
01. Where we move them

Validated as Leaders

How we do it

Explain job quality investments as a means of building their status as a community leader
What we heard

Isolated and Beholden

Highlights from our Research:
SMB owners feel the weight of responsibility for all of those who depend on them.

“...you're really providing for everybody else... the owner is providing so much, and only taking so much for themselves.”
- Interview participant

What We Miss

SMB owners start business to have control and freedom, but often end up feeling isolated inside their businesses.

How It Impacts JQE

This feeling of being trapped can make them resentful of their employees whose lives are not tied to the business, reducing investments in job quality.

They experience their days as an unending stack of burdensome tasks: As soon as one task is completed, many more are added, precluding a sense of accomplishment or mastery.
Where we move them
Supported and in Control

The Solution

Offer job quality as a way to take control and build internal leverage to manage the tensions they face.
What we heard
Powerless to Compete for Top Talent

SMB owners feel that they have no control over the job market. Good talent feels hard to find and even harder to keep long term—especially for some of the less glamorous positions they need to fill.

Highlight from our Research:
Employers observe employees’ autonomy to leave at any time for a better deal. This freedom to switch—a luxury SMB owners do not share—fuels SMB owners’ constant worry about employee retention.

“Big thing is money... we’re a small business, one of our biggest hardships is always trying to keep people because there can always be better benefits or better pay elsewhere.”

- Interview participant

How It Impacts JQE
SMB owners see job quality as another area where they have to give up resources and yet still fail against larger businesses and corporations.

SMB owners’ fears over losing control of employees underlie fantasies featuring a loyal and obedient workforce.
03.

Where we move them

Having a Competitive Edge

The Solution

Make job quality an attainable practice to open doors for good talent to stay and make the business more competitive

SMB owner-submitted images about business owners
What we heard
Unable to Connect the Dots

04.

Highlights from our Research:
Testing revealed that framing JQE as a means to achieve status in one’s community is most successful in building support for JQE.

“We’re a neighborhood restaurant. So if our community around the restaurant don’t have access to money or jobs then they won’t be able to support their business—that will give us no growth in the community.”

- Interview participant

How It Impacts JQE
SMB owners don’t make the connection between providing quality jobs as a way to grow their status and impact on the community.

Content testing demonstrated that images and text connecting SMB owners to their community are most successful in getting SMB owners to learn more about JQE.
Where we move them
Leaving an Impact

The Solution

Position great quality jobs as a way to improve employee’s lives so they can thrive and give back in the community, while bolstering SMB owners’ reputation.
03. Applications
From: EOP

To: Financial Intermediaries

Objective: Give them the tools to talk to SMB owners about JQE
From:
CDFI

To:
Established SMB owner

Objective:
Persuade them to invest in JQE to scale their business

Intervention Point:
Powerless to Compete for Top Talent
From: CDFI

To: New SMB owner

Objective: Persuade them to build their business with JQE in mind

Intervention Point: Challenged with "Impostor Syndrome"
What you **show** is as important as what you say—and our testing revealed the best practices

**Do**

Showcase people’s faces – and smiling faces. Positive emotions are contagious and persuasive.

**Don’t**

Show people with neutral or negative expressions, or with their backs turned to the camera.

*Based on findings from content testing*
What you **show** is as important as what you say—and our testing revealed the best practices

---

**Do**

- Share authentic moments of people in their natural environment

**Don’t**

- Choose staged photos with posed models or crowds

*Based on findings from content testing*
What you **show** is as important as what you say—and our testing revealed the best practices

---

**Do**

Use imagery of happy smiling people interacting with each other and with the community

---

**Don’t**

Use imagery of people by themselves, looking dissatisfied or unhappy

---

*Based on findings from content testing*
04. Pop Quiz!
01. Which one is **not** a core motivator for SMB owners?

A. Freedom

B. Innovation

C. Social Status

D. Money
01. Which one is **not** a core motivator for SMB owners?

- **A** Freedom
- **B** Innovation
- **C** Social Status
- **D** Money

SMB owners see money as a means to an end, not the core motivator. Money creates more anxiety than motivation.
What message is the most successful among SMB owners?

A. Our business is run like a swiss watch. The products, the clients, the service and our workers all have to be in the right place, moving at the right time.

B. A key part of growing your business is becoming a model for excellent service. If we can outperform our competition, and be known as being the best on the block, then our business will thrive.

C. Business owners know that investing in high-quality raw materials will pay off in the end. The most important thing a business owner must understand is that you have to spend money to make money.

D. We know that if we focus our goals on helping others, those people will help our business grow as well. Having a give-and-take relationship with our community is most important.
What message is the most successful among SMB owners?

A. Our business is run like a Swiss watch. The products, the clients, the service and our workers all have to be in the right place, moving at the right time.

B. A key part of growing your business is becoming a model for excellent service. If we can outperform our competition, and be known as being the best on the block, then our business will thrive.

C. Business owners know that investing in high-quality raw materials will pay off in the end. The most important thing a business owner must understand is that you have to spend money to make money.

D. We know that if we focus our goals on helping others, those people will help our business grow as well. Having a give-and-take relationship with our community is most important. SMB owners see themselves as leaders in their communities, driving them to give back.
03.

Which image would be most effective on a JQE flyer?

A

B
03. Which image would be most effective on a JQE flyer?

SMB owners want to see themselves — moments engaging with their community are the best.
04. What is a key motivator for Black + Latinx SMB owners?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social / Professional Status</td>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>Expressing Individuality</td>
<td>Proving Competence / Skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
04 Pop Quiz

What is a key motivator for Black + Latinx SMB owners?

A. Social / Professional Status
   Black + Latinx SMB owners want to be recognized within their community.

B. Creativity

C. Expressing Individuality

D. Proving Competence / Skills
Thank you
05. Appendix
Metaphor Elicitation

Insights

March 22, 2023
Prepared for The Aspen Institute

N=24, Conducted January - February 2023
01. Process + Objectives

Project framework and checkpoints
Narrative Lab Process

01 Process + Objectives

1. Landscape Analysis and Planning
   Aug-Oct 2022

2. Metaphor Elicitation
   Jan-Mar 2023

3. Message Testing

4. Playbook Development
Job Quality Narrative Lab Process

2 Current Phase

- Conduct interviews with small-to midsize business owners and supporting institutions (CDFIs & small business associations)
- Understand business owners’ perceptions of job quality
- Examine dimensions of job quality
Good Job Quality Elements

01. Equity, Respect, and Voice
   a. Employee satisfaction

02. Economic Stability
   a. Compensation
   b. Benefits

03. Economic Mobility
   a. Incentives
   b. Professional growth
   c. Wealth-building

Good Jobs: A Working Definition

**Economic Stability**
- Stable, family-sustaining pay
- Sufficient, accessible, and broadly available benefits
- Fair, reliable scheduling practices
- Safe, healthy, and accessible working conditions

**Economic Mobility**
- Clear and equitable hiring and advancement pathways
- Accessible, paid training and development opportunities
- Wealth-building opportunities

**Equity, Respect & Voice**
- Organizational and management culture, policies, and practices that:
  - are transparent and enable accountability
  - support a sense of belonging and purpose
  - advance DEIA*
  - and address discrimination.
- Ability to improve the workplace, such as through collective action or participatory management practices

*DEIA: diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility
02. Methodology
RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS - METAPHOR ELICITATION

Groundbreaking research methods for consumer research & narrative building

A—B conducts metaphor elicitation to learn about participants’ thoughts and feelings through participant-supplied data and 60-minute in-depth, one-on-one interviews.

Individuals use at least 6 metaphors for each minute of speech. Metaphors are the key to human expression.

We extract the non-verbal attitudes of a people by exploring both conscious and non-conscious associations moving past the conscious mind to uncover deeper thoughts and feelings.

I feel/believe...

I think...

Metaphor 1

Metaphor 2

***

Metaphor 6
Methodology

01. **Fielding:** Aspen Institute EOP and A–B recruited participants to participate in a multi-day research exercise conducted in-house over two nonconsecutive days.

02. **Introduction:** Participants completed a 15-minute introductory session to where the requirements and parameters of the study were described.

03. **Survey:** Participants completed an online survey that requested that participants provide sounds, images and a story vignette.

04. **In-Depth Interview:** A–B conducted in-depth interviews with 24 participants.

05. **Analysis:** A–B is in the process of analyzing three data points: the survey written responses, the submitted images and sounds, and the verbal data from interviews.
02 Methodology

Participants - Full Sample

01. Entities:
   - 3 - CDFIs
   - 1 - Small business association
   - 20 - Business owners

02. Business Size (SMB = 20):
   - 13 have 10 or fewer full-time employees
   - 7 have more than 10 full-time employees

03. Industries (SMB = 20):
   - 4 Educational Services
   - 4 Other Services
   - 3 Retail Trade
   - 3 Accomodation and Food Services
   - 2 Manufacturing
   - 1 Agriculture, Forestry
   - 1 Arts, Entertainment and Recreation
   - 1 Health Care and Social Assistance
   - 1 Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services

04. Number of full-time W-2 employees (SMB =20):
   - 1 - have zero W-2 employees
   - 4 - have one W-2 employee
   - 6 - have 2-5 W-2 employees
   - 9 - have 6 or more W-2 employees

05. Race & ethnicity: Self-identified as:
   - 5 - Black / African American
   - 6 - White Latinx
   - 9 - White
   - 2 - Asian
   - 2 - Mixed Race

06. Gender identity: Respondents self-identified as:
   - 7 - Male
   - 17 - Female

07. Geography (in US):
   - 7 - West
   - 4 - South
   - 6 - Northeast
   - 5 - Midwest
   - 2 - East
03. Insights + Results

What We Found
Values, Drivers, and Behaviors

01. **Values**: What do SMB owners say they care about?

02. **Drivers**: What are the psychological drivers of SMB owners?

03. **Behaviors**: What do SMB owners do or not do?

04. **Audience Segments** among SMB Owners
01. Values

What do SMB owners say they care about?
SMB owners care most about self-oriented values such as freedom, social power, social status and money

**Self-enhancement:** May, or may desire to, prioritize their own interests above those of others. May seek self-protection and the avoidance of anxiety rather than personal growth. May have a personal (self) focus rather than a social (other) focus.

151 - Creativity - Freedom to Be Creative: May be, or may desire to be, more individualistic, adaptive, and imaginative. Life is an exploration and learning about new ideas and being imaginative is important.

136 - Authority - Being in Charge and Directing People: May be, or may desire to be, more likely to exercise control, be authoritative, and be seen as influential. May be more likely to be decisive and direct, to take risks to gain rewards, to have high self-confidence, and to be motivated by solving challenging problems. Life is about social power and being in control.

135 - Influence - Acquiring Wealth and Influence: May be, or may desire to be, more likely to accumulate wealth, and the status and power that comes from money and material possessions. May also be more outgoing, self-disciplined, and organized; and less soft-hearted. Life is about money and social status.

*Numbers indicate indexes relative to online adult population. Numbers over 100 indicate that this group over-indexes on a trait. Numbers under 100 indicate that this group under-index on a trait.*
They are low in other-oriented values such as equality and conformity

**Self-transcendence:** May, or may desire to, rise above their own interests and emphasize those of others. May seek personal growth rather than self-protection and the avoidance of anxiety. May have a social others focus rather than a personal.

**92 - Dependability:** May, or may desire to, emphasize the importance of being dependable, responsible, and faithful to family and friends. Life is about being a reliable and trustworthy friend.

**90 - Equality:** May, or may desire to, emphasize the equality and protection of all people. Life is about social justice.

**84 - Duty:** May, or may desire to, emphasize adherence to obligations, rules and laws. May also be more self-disciplined, obedient, organized and dependable.

**79 - Conformity:** May, or may desire to, emphasize politeness and tactfulness, and may seek to avoid upsetting or harming others. Life is about courteousness and civility.

*Numbers indicate indexes relative to online adult population. Numbers over 100 indicate that this group over-indexes on a trait. Numbers under 100 indicate that this group under-indexes on a trait.*

Source: Resonate
Black + Latinx SMB owners **over-index on self-enhancement values**, especially money and status

**Self-enhancement:** May, or may desire to, prioritize their own interests above those of others. May seek self-protection and the avoidance of anxiety rather than personal growth. May have a personal (self) focus rather than a social (other) focus.

**195 - Influence - Acquiring Wealth and Influence:** May be, or may desire to be, more likely to accumulate wealth, and the status and power that comes from money and material possessions. May also be more outgoing, self-disciplined, and organized; and less soft-hearted. Life is about money and social status.

**176 - Authority - Being in Charge and Directing People:** May be, or may desire to be, more likely to exercise control, be authoritative, and be seen as influential. May be more likely to be decisive and direct, to take risks to gain rewards, to have high self-confidence, and to be motivated by solving challenging problems. Life is about social power and being in control.

**171 - Achievement - Show Abilities and Be Admired:** May, or may desire to, seek success and the admiration of others for being successful. Ambitiousness and determination may be distinguishing attributes. Life is about getting ahead, “winning,” and impressing others.

*Numbers indicate indexes relative to online adult population. Numbers over 100 indicate that this group over-indexes on a trait. Numbers under 100 indicate that this group under-index on a trait.*
White SMB owners over-index on values related to openness to change

**Openness to change:** May, or may desire to be, open to change and willing to consider novel experiences and fresh ideas. May seek personal growth rather than self-protection and the avoidance of anxiety. May have a personal (self) focus rather than a social (other) focus.

**158 - Creativity - Freedom to Be Creative:** May be, or may desire to be, more individualistic, adaptive, and imaginative. Life is an exploration and learning about new ideas and being imaginative is important.

**123 - Independence - Freedom to Determine Actions:** May be, or may desire to be, more self-directed, more self-reliant, and more likely to seek solutions to problems themselves rather than depend on others. Life is a sequence of events that is primarily under their own control.

**111 - Authority - Being in Charge and Directing People:** May be, or may desire to be, more likely to exercise control, be authoritative, and be seen as influential. May be more likely to be decisive and direct, to take risks to gain rewards, to have high self-confidence, and to be motivated by solving challenging problems. Life is about social power and being in control.

*Numbers indicate indexes relative to online adult population. Numbers over 100 indicate that this group over-indexes on a trait. Numbers under 100 indicate that this group under-index on a trait.
SMB owners are driven by a desire for freedom, control and creativity

Q: What is the origin story of your business?
“I would start to be honest with you. It just started because I didn’t want to do my previous job, which was pretty much the same job, but I didn’t want to work 100 hours per week any more. I want to spend more time with my family...” (Participant 27)

Q: When did you become a business of more than one?
“It was humbling, especially as a Capricorn, I’m a very much like, one team fits all. And I have, I was very dominant in my positionality. I also was a huge micromanager in my positionality. And so when it came to my job, and so I just kind of carried those skills and tools into when I launched my business.” (Participant 7)
SMB owners desire to provide and advocate for their communities

Q: What is your role as a business owner in the community?

“In my case, we’re a neighborhood restaurant. So if the people from around or us, our community around the restaurant, they don’t have the access to you know, money jobs, then they won’t be able to support their business then that will give us no growth in the community.” (Latinx restaurant owner, Participant 16)

Q: What is your role as a business owner in the community?

“In the community, you want to have a good name. And you do that, I think, by treating your employees well and treating your customers well.” (White restaurant owner, Participant 25)
Black + Latinx SMB owners strive to be leaders in their communities

Most cited values:

Autonomy/ freedom/ agency/ income → Startup/entrepreneurship/creativity

Improving status and influence → Respect, recognition

Equality → Being able to give back /provide for community: jobs, services, charity, volunteering

Q: How are businesses born?

“You’re a Beyoncé … connected to folks with with power and all the wealth that you are celebrity, on whatever level.” (Participant 8)
Black + Latinx owners are especially motivated by status in order to lift up their communities.

“I think that that reason why employees like working in the industry .... is because we transform lives. You know we have literally transformed families. I have 2 children that are named after me.” (Participant 19)
02. Drivers

What drives SMB owners’ behaviors?
SMB owners’ behaviors are driven by a desire to stand out.

131 - Creativity: The desire to exhibit creativity is a top driver of decisions and actions.

109 - Proving competence/skills: The desire to prove competence and skill is a top driver of decisions and actions.

104 - Expressing individuality: The desire to express individuality is a top driver of decisions and actions.

*Numbers indicate indexes relative to online adult population. Numbers over 100 indicate that this group over-indexes on a trait. Numbers under 100 indicate that this group under-index on a trait.
Black, Latinx, and White SMB owners desire to stand out, but for different reasons

- Black + Latinx SMB owners want to be recognized most for their leadership abilities. White SMB owners want to be recognized most for their competence.

- Black + Latinx SMB owners want to be seen by peers. White SMB owners want to be distinct from peers.

**Black + Latinx SMB owners**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top Psychological Drivers</th>
<th>BY INDEX with minimum composition: 10%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social/Professional Status</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition From Peers</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**White SMB owners**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top Psychological Drivers</th>
<th>BY INDEX with minimum composition: 10%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proving Competence/Skills</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressing Individuality</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Resonate
Self-directed.. or just centered on self?

When asked "what motivates employees?", many SMB owners answer based on what they want.

They opted for lavish gifts and trips that make them look good over job quality elements that help employees build wealth or expertise.

SMB owners’ submitted images

Participant 10

Participant 22

Participant 23

Participant 17

Q: If money was no object how would you motivate your employees?

"I would like to do special things for them like going on a trip or something like that. And actually I'm planning something like this, for later on in the year that we, the American team, would go to Honduras to a resort."

(Participant 19)

Q: If money was no object how would you motivate your employees?

"So I would like to take care of their health benefits at 100%. I would like to give them all six figures. I would like to also offer them company cars and company cell phones … I would like to give them a two-week stay overseas at a business condo that I own, and each of them have access to that, unrestricted on how many people can go and it's fully paid. … I would go crazy on my employees, they don't even know—when I have it, it's going down. They would get access to a private jet."

(Participant 7)
03. Behaviors

What SMB owners actually do
Power-driven
SMB owners are driven to start businesses because they value power, autonomy and independence.

Power loss
Their reactions further perpetuate lack of control over employees. Contributes to fantasies about not being in charge.

Power grab
They lament the lack of employee loyalty and assert authority in order to keep employees in line.

Power tools
They convince themselves that the jobs they offer come with “perks”. They justify their lack of JQE planning with narratives that place employee satisfaction out of their control.

Power failure
They plan for all aspect of their business except for job quality, failing to see the connection between job quality and hiring/retaining employees.
SMB owners plan for every aspect of their business except for job quality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“How are businesses born?”</th>
<th>“What is a good job (for your workers)?”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant 3</td>
<td>Participant 6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Oh, my gosh...that? I feel like, that’s a very tough question to answer.”
Job Quality Elements: What SMB owners provide

01. Equity, Respect, and Voice
   a. SMB owners said they value equity, respect and voice but few demonstrated formal processes or policies for achieving any of these.
   b. Employees are given little or no opportunities to improve workplace (e.g., through participatory management or collective action).

02. Economic Stability
   a. SMB owners recognize the importance of good pay but many say that they struggle to pay competitive wages.
   b. Many struggle to afford health benefits. Most do not offer it.
   c. SMB owners focus on the “free” or low-cost benefits (e.g., flexible work schedule and time off).
   d. Retirement was barely mentioned.

03. Economic Mobility
   a. SMB owners recognize the importance of advancement but provide little formal process to help employees achieve that goal.
Instead of intentional planning for job quality, SMB owners “sell” aspects of the job as perks

Example: “Unpaid months off of work due to seasonal industry is a ‘sabbatical’”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant 29 (CDFI)</th>
<th>Participant 23 whose employees are on unpaid hiatus from January - March</th>
<th>Participant 23 who runs a youth golf tournament</th>
<th>Participant 21 who runs a cleaning service</th>
<th>Participant 17 who owns a chain of cookie dough restaurants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Marketing Director is the top hat)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

HOW TO TAKE A WINTER SABBATICAL FROM WORK

FREE GOLF!
SMB owners desire to **provide and advocate for their communities**

Q: What is your role as a business owner in the community?

“In my case, we’re a neighborhood restaurant. So if the people from around or us, our community around the restaurant, they don’t have the access to you know, money jobs, then they won’t be able to support their business then that will give us no growth in the community.” (Latinx restaurant owner, Participant 16)

Q: What is your role as a business owner in the community?

“In the community, you want to have a good name. And you do that, I think, by treating your employees well and treating your customers well.” (White restaurant owner, Participant 25)
They “sell” the job as a calling or passion, which also limits their responsibility for employee satisfaction

**Q: What is a “good job”?**

“You have to be passionate about what you’re doing. Like when you’re doing something that you truly like, I think the work is easier. Not necessarily easier, but it’s lighter. I don’t know how to explain. But like, for me, the idea of work is, is working in something that I truly like, and I’m passionate about.” (Participant 3)

**Q: What do employees like about working in your industry?**

“This industry, it’s like I said, if you don’t have the passion, you’re not going to understand it. Just because sometimes to work in this industry and to grow. You have to make sacrifices, a lot of sacrifices – and big sometimes.” (Participant 16)
SMB owners rationalize job quality blindness through narratives that place employee motivation outside their control.

Employee motivation is a fixed trait, stemming from personality or generational differences.

Q: How do you motivate employees (if money were no object)?

“Maybe it’s just lack of whatever it is. Dopamine. You know something that gets them going to to to want something or to want more than what they have.” (Participant 24)

“I think the younger generation are lazy. I think technology and the importance of being on technology, if the Instagram and the Twitter and all the other things that come along, I think their world is different than what my world was.” (Participant 10)
Another “externalizing” narrative is that burnout is an inevitable consequence of their industry.

Q: What do people dislike about your industry?

“Clinicians have to deal with every person that they’re talking to and their problems on a daily basis. [They’re] going home, knowing that this person is suffering, or if there’s children—what they’re going through... The burden of working in this industry is a lot.”
They feel **powerless** to hire and retain employees

“Big thing is money, our industry… there’s always another company that wants to pay more that has better benefits, I mean, we’re a small business. So that’s one of our biggest hardships is always trying to keep people, because there can always be, you know, better benefits or better pay elsewhere.”

(Participant 24)

“There’s so much mobility in the business that you could give people all this paid time off, and then they screw you in six months, and they leave and you know, so that certainly has happened. So that kind of sucks.”

(Participant 20)
Drill Sgt. CEO: They long for control and prize employee qualities that maintain hierarchy

Q: How are businesses actually born?
“...You can see what the military is like, it’s, it’s a, it’s a, it’s a well run business basically. Right? Um, and you really do need to be that, that structured and that you have to persevere and you, you have to keep pushing forward.” (Participant 18)

Q: What is a good employee?
“I took a picture of the meat loaf album. "I would do anything" that’s the name of the song, so like that’s my idea of good employee someone that has a lot of skills that’s willing to do anything for you, you know. I think that’s better than sometimes having a lot of skill.” (Participant 24)
They see employees as mere instruments of efficiency and productivity

Although SMB owners are low in the values of duty and conformity, they prize those traits in their employees

- **Most valued characteristics:**
  - Punctuality, dependability, resilience, intelligence, engagement, commitment, show initiative, experience, adaptability, and self efficacy.
  - Trustworthiness, loyalty, formal, communication skills, care free, understanding, and caring.

- **Most loathed characteristics:**
  - Lazy, clueless, only there for the money, who perform poor quality work, uncommitted,
  - Difficult, uncaring, untrustworthy, dishonest, hater, judgey, intimidating, toxic, gossipy, insubordinate, bad work ethic, with problematic lives (addiction)
SMB owners resent their employees’ autonomy

**Q: What is your image of a bad employee?**

“Yeah, they just don’t care. They don’t care about the work they put out, they don’t care what they get here. They don’t care about the image of the business. They don’t care how it looks to the outside, they don’t care how they present themselves on the job site, they just don’t care. They just don’t care. No, then don’t be here. If you just don’t care, don’t be here, right?” (Participant 25)

**Q: What is your role in the community?**

“When you’re a business owner you’re providing for yourself with the reality is, you know, you’re really providing for everybody else. And then you get, you know, something else for yourself. So ... the woman that’s holding the person that’s holding the bigger piece of bread is actually, you know, the employees, whereas the other person is the owner, because they’re providing so much, and only taking so much for themselves.” (Participant 24)

**Q: What do your employees dislike about industry?**

“At any point they could just quit, you know, like they could just say, hey, I don’t want this. I don’t like this. I can just quit whenever I want, and so I think that’s the the sound that I think of when people are starting to dislike. The industry is just what I quit. I’m not doing it.” (Participant 24)
SMB owners feel burdened by being in charge
An ambivalent relationship with power
SMB owners secretly wish that they could be “saved” by a superhero employee

**Q: What is your image of a good employee?**

“[a good employee is] Superman or Superwoman you come you’re ready, you’re on the case. And you know, as soon as there’s a problem, you show up and you’re just on the job.” (Participant 8)
04. Gender-based Insights
Female SMB owners share power more often than their male counterparts

Women talked more about sharing ownership with employees in terms of responsibilities and decision-making power.

Q: What do employees like about working in your industry?

“There’s nothing that they do that I don’t do. There’s nothing, I cook, I change diapers, I organize I label, I do lesson plans. I put activities together, the holidays are coming up here, are the ideas, I put the birthdays together. There’s no difference.” (Participant 6)

Q: What is a good job?

“I think a big part of that is for the employee to have buy in, for them to really care about what they’re doing. And, you know, one way that we do that, is we ask them their opinion, you know, do you think do you think this could be done in a better way?” (Participant 21)
Female SMB owners also have to assert their power

This may be due to employees’ gender stereotypes or differences in leadership style: A flat structure embraced by women can create blurred lines of authority. In addition, employees may automatically recognize the authority of male owners.

Q: What do employees like about working in your industry?

“My colleagues, as I call them, not staff do not feel like I’m superior to them. Ever. And the only time that my ex-employees probably felt like that, was the moment that they became too comfortable with me being complicit in allowing them to overstep when it came to me being their boss. ...And now that they’re not here, and they haven’t been able to find a job, I think that they probably are self reflecting now.” (Participant 6)

Q: What is your image of a bad employee?

“Okay, so I’m the boss. Period, there’s no nothing comes after that. I am the boss period. That’s the sentence.... I’m all for open dialogue. But what you’re not going to do under any circumstances is not do it.” (Participant 17)
05. Industry-specific Insights
SMB owners in care industries, like early education, especially struggle to hire and retain employees

Q: What’s your role in the community?

“Yeah, with childcare. I mean, it’s [difficult to hire staff] …definitely since COVID. … people don’t want to be in child care anymore or the rate of pay. And I feel like I’ve always been above whatever the minimum standard is, I’m always two or $3. Above that, give, you know, bonus caregivers days off, that’s paid sick time pay that as a small business owner when I first started, …there was things I could not afford.” (Participant 10)

Q: What do people dislike about your industry?

“I think educators in this day and age feel, feel overwhelmed with the work, that there are a lot of things that they have to manage, and a lot of things that are coming at them all at once. Oftentimes, they don’t feel like that their work is respected from a monetary point of view.”
Manufacturing owners face the physical burdens of the job

Q: How are businesses actually born?

“It's hard work. It's just hard work. It's just hard work. Just get dirty. I mean, in our, in our business, you get physically dirty. But you also get emotionally and psychologically, like it's just a lot of work. It's just a lot of work.” (Participant 25)

Q: short story

“It's like any more difficult job, you know, starts to take a toll on your body, and you eventually start to question that.” (Participant 24)
06. CDFI Insights
CDFIs understand the importance of job quality, but don’t treat it as a core part of their training.

CDFIs do not include hiring and retaining employees as part of their core business advising.

Q: what do you tell them about like management and hiring and training?

A: “We start with the module that is called Design your idea, which is kind of okay, I’m going to decide to do healthy empanadas. And then we started studying your competition, your competitors, your market, your audience and all that, and then how to get your clients. Module three is how you price your product and how you get funds. And the fourth one is marketing to launch your business.”

(Participant 3)
CDFIs perceive that SMB owners overpromise and under-deliver on job quality

“They want to have good employees, they offer more than they can give. ...and then you have this employee waiting for you. So okay, so when you’re going to give me the increase that you told me that you were going to give me.” (Participant 29)

“He told her well, as soon as we start getting profit, so I’m going to share X percentage. And I just say, Do you know, when are you going to start having profits? No. So you can offer that to her? Because she’s gonna have you know, he’s gonna pass month 1, 2, 3 And then you don’t have anything to share with her... she’s going to quit.” (Participant 29)
07. Key Insights
Power-driven
SMB owners start businesses because they value power, autonomy and independence.

Power loss
Their reactions further perpetuate lack of control over employees.

Power grab
They lament the lack of employee loyalty and aspire to keep employees in line.

Power failure
They plan for all aspects of their business except for job quality, failing to see the connection between job quality and hiring/retaining employees.

Power tools
They convince themselves that the jobs they offer come with “perks”. They justify their lack of JQE planning with narratives that place employee satisfaction out of their control.

Insight: Highlight how JQE maintains their position: at the top and in control.

Insight: Maintain sense of autonomy when advising on JQE. Idea must come from them.

Insight: Remind SMB owners that JQE is worth planning for/is core to business.

Insight: Draw connection between JQE and control over employees. Point out incongruity.

Insight: Draw connection between JQE, loyalty and good customer service.
Summary of Insights

- **SMB owners are struggling**
  - SMB owners wish to be saved by a superhero employee
  - SMB owners struggle with their bottom lines

- **SMB owners value freedom, social power, social status and money**
  - Black + Latinx SMB owners are especially motivated by social status
  - Black + Latinx SMB owners desire to use their status to advocate for their communities
  - White SMB owners also care about their communities but they tend to define their communities more in terms of geography (i.e., the people that live in their local community)
  - All SMB owners are driven by a desire to apply their unique and creative perspective to a problem they care about
  - All SMB owners want to lead but who they want to lead differs across audiences

- **SMB owners’ values are incongruent with their actions**
  - They value social control but do not take control when it comes to their employees
  - SMB owners plan for every aspect of their business except for job quality
    - They feel empowered to start a business but see themselves as powerless over employees

- **Subgroup insights**
  - CDFIs recognize the importance of job quality but do not include job quality as part of their core business trainings
  - Female SMB owners embrace a flat structure. Male SMB owners did not mention this type of leadership style
  - Child care owners face unique financial challenges. Manufacturing owners may lose employees due to physical burdens of the job
Recommendations

- **Remind SMB owners that job quality is key to success**
  - will make their business more money
  - is something their customers want (customers reward businesses that treat employees well)
  - is an issue that SMB owners experience themselves
  - can drive employee loyalty and employee commitment to great service
  - will help them empower their communities

- **For Black + Latinx SMB owners**
  - Job quality must be a *status symbol* - something they can flaunt (e.g., through a public award ceremony, a badge they can put on their website)

- Narratives must preserve their sense of autonomy - they must come to their own conclusion that job quality is necessary

- Therefore, the messenger must be an SMB owner
Policy Recommendations

- **Marketing Funding:** Tie SMB owners’ capital needs for marketing to capital incentives
  - SMB owners desire funds for marketing
  - Loans or grants for marketing should be tied to demonstrated production of quality jobs

- **Awards and Recognition:** SMB owners value virtue and status signaling
  - Best place to work awards and recognition would drive pro-job quality behaviors

- **Money Matters:** CDFIs, business associations, and capital granting organizations like banks should tie assistance requirements to job quality plans

“So, for example, the 3 important things in business to to me in terms of what’s revenue impacting is marketing, marketing, marketing. But that cost money. Okay? And finally I had money for it.” (Participant 19)
04. Audiences
Audiences

- **The Bad and Bougies**
  - Aspire to be exemplars in their communities
  - “Job quality will increase your influence, visibility and status in your community”

- **The Mister Rights**
  - Libertarian tendencies, authoritarian
  - “Job quality is an investment”
  - Message: “To advocate for local issues, first take care of your employees”

- **Disempowered Despots**
  - Don’t see the connection between their actions and lack of control over employees.
  - Power over their businesses, but no power over their employees
  - Time and energy spent toward every aspect of their business. But no desire to pay attention to their number one expense: labor
  - They want their employees to be robots.
  - See themselves as victims – helpless to hire and retain good people

- **Misguided Misfits**
  - They mean well but don’t do well
  - They desire to do well by their employees but don’t understand that they’re off track
  - They think the job is a benefit and that benefits are perks.
  - They prioritize the things that cost the least: recognition, time off, pizza parties

- **The Do Rights**
  - They provide quality jobs
  - They are highly empathetic and understand how job quality benefits their business

- **The Almost Do Rights**
  - Planning for employees advancement, but not paying for it
Aspen Institute JQE

Message Test Analysis

July 28, 2023
Prepared for The Aspen Institute

N = 1,267

Field dates:
June 26 to July 10, 2023
01. Process + Objectives
02. Methodology
03. Message Creation
04. Results
05. Main Takeaways
06. Appendix
01. Process + Objectives

Project framework & checkpoints
Narrative Lab Process

1. Landscape Analysis + Planning
2. Metaphor Elicitation
3. Message Testing
4. Content Testing + Playbook Development
Job Quality Narrative Lab Process

3 Current Phase

- Conduct surveys with small-to-midsize business owners and supporting institutions (CDFIs & small business associations)
- Test messages we believe will be persuasive
- Analyze the persuasiveness of the messages given our full sample and certain subsamples of interest
02. Methodology

Experimental Design
How Persuasion Message Testing Works

We use validated survey panels to recruit a sample of convenience representing the people that you want to persuade.

We randomly assign respondents into groups. These groups are pretty identical to ensure that no bias is introduced. Each group views either test creative or control creative.

When we compare the differences in values, beliefs, opinions between those who saw test creative vs. control.
About the Message Test Participants

Full sample (N) was 1267 small-to-medium business owners aged 18 and over with the following characteristics:

01. **Race/Ethnicity:**
   - n = 657
   - White: 51.9%
   - Black: 21.7%
   - Hispanic / Latino: 23.8%

02. **Gender Identity:**
   - 664 (52.4%) Female
   - 598 (47.2%) Male
   - 5 (.4%) Neither Male nor Female

03. **Age:**
   - 54.6% of respondents were between 30 and 49 years old

04. **College Education:**
   - 42.4% of respondents possess a Bachelor’s degree or higher (n=537)

05. **Political Party Membership:**
   - n = 599
   - Democrat: 47.3%
   - Independent: 17.6%
   - Republican: 35.1%

06. **Business Size:**
   - 873 (68.9%) small business owners with 1 to 10 employees
   - 394 (31.1%) medium business owners with 10 to 50 employees

07. **Industry:**
   - Retail
   - Construction
   - Professional Services
   - Arts & Recreation
   - Wholesale
   - Manufacturing
   - Health & Social Services
   - Real Estate & Leasing
   - Finance & Insurance
   - Transport & Warehousing
03. Message Creation

How previous work influenced our messages
Good Job Quality Elements

1. Equity, Respect, and Voice
   ○ Employee satisfaction

2. Economic Stability
   ○ Compensation
   ○ Benefits

3. Economic Mobility
   ○ Incentives
   ○ Professional growth
   ○ Wealth-building

---

**Good Jobs: A Working Definition**

**Economic Stability**
- Stable, family-sustaining pay
- Sufficient, accessible, and broadly available benefits
- Fair, reliable scheduling practices
- Safe, healthy, and accessible working conditions

**Economic Mobility**
- Clear and equitable hiring and advancement pathways
- Accessible, paid training and development opportunities
- Wealth-building opportunities

**Equity, Respect & Voice**
- Organizational and management culture, policies, and practices that:
  - are transparent and enable accountability
  - support a sense of belonging and purpose
  - advance DEIA*
  - and address discrimination.
- Ability to improve the workplace, such as through collective action or participatory management practices

*DEIA: diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility
Power-driven
Small-to-medium sized business owners start businesses because they value power, autonomy and independence.

Power failure
They plan for all aspects of their business except for job quality, failing to see the connection between job quality and hiring/retaining employees.

Power loss
Their reactions further perpetuate lack of control over employees.

Power grab
They lament the lack of employee loyalty and aspire to keep employees in line.

Power tools
They convince themselves that the jobs they offer come with ‘perks’. They justify their lack of JQE planning with narratives that place employee satisfaction out of their control.

Breaking the power cycle

Insight: Highlight how JQE maintains their position at the top and in control.

Insight: Maintain sense of autonomy when advising on JQE. Idea must come from them.

Insight: Draw connection between JQE, loyalty and good customer service.

Insight: Remind small-to-midsize business owners that JQE is worth planning for/is core to business.

Insight: Draw connection between JQE and control over employees, point out incongruity.

Insight: Highlight how JQE maintains their position at the top and in control.
The Messages

Accomplishments
— Appeals to the drive to achieve, rise above the competition

Bottom Line
— Appeals to financial concerns, the economic case for JQE

Community Status
— Appeals to the desire for recognition, to be the “best on the block”

Congruence
— Appeals to the desire to live out one’s values, to “walk the walk”

Micromanaging
— Appeals to the desire for control and a business that runs like a well-oiled machine

Participants were randomly assigned to listen to one of the five messages or to a control condition on an unrelated topic.
Measurement: Job Quality Pillars

● **Support**: How important are the following to your business/to your employees? To what extent is it your responsibility as an employer to provide the following?

  ● **Stability**:
    ○ “Paying your employees enough for them to support a family”
    ○ “Providing quality healthcare benefits to your employees”
    ○ “Offering consistent, reliable scheduling”

  ● **Mobility**:
    ○ “Providing employees with opportunities for promotion and raises”
    ○ “Offering free professional development to your employees”

  ● **Equity, Respect, and Voice**:
    ○ “Employees feeling a sense of belonging and purpose at work”
    ○ “Creating a safe, respectful and inclusive environment”
    ○ “Giving employees the power to make improvements to the workplace”

● **Business Value***: Providing employees with economic stability / economic mobility / equity, respect, and voice is (1 = Not at all important, 5 = Extremely important) to my business.

● **Efficacy to Provide***: As an employer, it is within my power to provide my employees with economic stability / economic mobility / equity, respect, and voice (1 = Strongly Disagree, 6 = Strongly Agree).

* Respondents viewed the JQE diagram while answering these questions.
**Measurement: Other Outcomes**

- **Perceived Value of Job Quality:** Improving the quality of my employees’ jobs will:
  - Give me more control over my business (1 = Strongly Disagree, 6 = Strongly Agree)
  - Increase my status in the community
  - Improve the products and services my business
  - Help my bottom line
  - Help my community

- **Willingness to Support Employees Financially:** You’re given a loan of 10k to grow your business. How much do you budget for each of the following aspects of your business?
  - Supporting existing employees (e.g., salary, benefits, formal training programs)
  - Marketing
  - Upgrade or purchase new equipment, infrastructure or technology
  - Your own compensation

- **Positive Emotions:** To what extent did the message you just listened to make you feel hopeful / energized / empowered / happy (1 = Not at all, 5 = Extremely)?

- **Shareability:** How likely would you be to share the message you just heard with your friends and family (1 = Very Unlikely, 5 = Very Likely)?

- **Identification with Speaker:** The speaker is just like me (1 = Strongly Disagree, 6 = Strongly Agree).
04. Results
Key Findings

**Toplines 1 and 2:** “Micromanaging” and “Community Status” were the most effective messages

“Micromanaging” was particularly effective among Republican and White small-to-medium sized business owners. It also increased positive emotions across the board.  

“Community Status” was the only message to increase willingness to spend on behalf of employees.

**Topline 3:** “Accomplishments” was the most effective among Black and Democratic small-to-midsize sized business owners.

It drove support for specific job quality initiatives and for belief in job quality being good for business.

**Topline 4:** “Bottom Line” fell flat across the board.

Simply highlighting economic benefits of JQE doesn’t move the needle (and often backfires).
Recommendations

**Good Jobs = Tight Ship**

Sell JQE as a means of improving operations and regaining control. Use imagery and language connoting smooth operations and fine-tuned systems.

**Achieving Mainstay Status**

Show small and medium sized business owners the path from better jobs to a better reputation and deeper ties to the community.

Small-to-midsize business owners value their roles as positive forces in the community but need to be shown how their role as an employer fits in to that.

**Appeal to Democratic and Black Small-to-Midsized Business Owners’ 5-Star Ambitions**

Emphasize to these audiences that true excellence requires excellent job quality.

Businesses that make a name for themselves have great employees, and great employees are the result of good jobs.

**Move Beyond the Balance Sheet**

The straightforward financial case for improving job quality is not sufficient and may pull small and medium sized business owners’ focus away from workforce issues.
Topline 1

“Micromanaging” was a top performer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Successful Message Elements:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓ Increased Support for Specific Job Quality Elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Increased Value of Job Quality to the Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Increased Efficacy to Provide JQE to Employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Increased Perceived Value of Job Quality to Business Owner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❏ Increased Willingness to Support Employees Financially</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Promoted Positive Emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Shareability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❏ Identification with Speaker</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Micromanaging” promoted positive emotions on the full sample

- The “Micromanaging” treatment increased positive emotions.

- Similar to our metaphor elicitation, we find that business owners feel good when they are in control.

- Respondents who felt more positive also reported greater support of JQE.
Respondents in the full sample would share “Micromanaging” over other messages

- Business owners were most willing to share the “Micromanaging” message with their friends and family.
“Micromanaging” was particularly effective among White and Republican small and medium sized business owners

- White respondents were especially willing to share the “Micromanaging” message with their friends and family (see right).

- Among Republicans, “Micromanaging” increased several measures of JQE support, including the belief that it is good for business.

How likely are you to share with friends and family?

White respondents: N = 657

How likely are you to share with friends and family?

- Not Significant at p < .15
- Significant at p < .15

0.28
0.30
0.30
0.68

-0.40
-0.38
-0.38

Treatment Differences 85% Intervals Included
“Micromanaging” promotes support of a wide range of JQE actions

- “Micromanaging” also promoted the belief that JQE was good for business, and it promoted business owner efficacy in adopting JQE.

- As we’ll see, “Micromanaging” does not suffer from some shortcomings of other messages. No audiences reacted negatively to it.
“Micromanaging” is most likely to evoke a sense of small and medium sized business owner identity

- Small and medium sized business owners who listened to the “Micromanaging” message emphasize the importance of employee investments. Specifically, these business owners are among those most likely to cite the need to “provide quality jobs & compensation.”

- In addition, business owner identity is the second most cited theme, including mentions of responsible planning and dedication.

“The most important part was about the responsibility business owners have to provide good employment to others.”

In your opinion, what was the most important part of the message you just heard?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Importance of making employee investments</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide quality jobs &amp; compensation</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiring / getting the right people</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take care of employees &amp; working environment</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investing in your employees</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work as a team</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business owner identity</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owners have to be responsible planners</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being an owner is hard work, takes dedication</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owners never clock out &amp; are the business</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of making business investments</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on customer needs</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*responses can be coded under multiple codes, so percentages may not add up.
Topline 1: Summary

“Micromanaging” was the most effective message overall.

The “Micromanaging” message promotes positive emotions.

It made respondents want to share it (especially White respondents).

The message drove support for JQE across the board.

“Micromanaging” increased belief that JQE is good for business. It also instilled confidence in the ability to provide JQE and did not have any negative effects (i.e., backlash).
Topline 2

“Community Status” was also highly effective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Successful Message Elements:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Increased Support for Specific Job Quality Elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Increased Value of Job Quality to the Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Increased Efficacy to Provide JQE to Employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Increased Perceived Value of Job Quality to Business Owner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Increased Willingness to Support Employees Financially</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❏</td>
<td>Promoted Positive Emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❏</td>
<td>Shareability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❏</td>
<td>Identification with Speaker</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Community Status” increased support for all Job Quality Elements among the full sample

- “Community Status” drove support for many aspects of JQE.
- It also increased belief in JQE being good for business and perceived self-efficacy to provide JQE.
- However, unlike “Micromanaging,” “Community Status” did not promote positive emotions* or intention to share.
“Community Status” was the only message to increase financial support for employees in the full sample

- “Community Status” persuaded business owners to invest in their staff.
- On average, those who listened to this message allocated $400 more to employees.

If given a 10k loan, how much would you spend on supporting existing employees?

### Results

- **Community Status**: 402.48
- **Micromanaging**: Not Significant at p < .15
- **Congruence**: 85.97
- **Bottom Line**: -58.22
- **Accomplishments**: 226.40

*Full Sample: N = 1267*  
*Treatment Effects vs. Control 85% Intervals Included*
In particular, “Community Status” increased Democrats’ financial support to employees

- Democratic business owners allocated on average over $600 more to their employees if they listened to “Community Status” (vs. Control).

If given a 10k loan, how much would you spend on supporting existing employees?

### Results

**Democrats**

- N = 599
- “Micromanaging”: 176.22
- “Congruence”: 46.31
- “Community Status”: 618.23
- “Bottom Line”: 7.55
- “Accomplishments”: 470.59

**Independents**

- N = 223
- “Micromanaging”: -229.24
- “Congruence”: -160.18
- “Community Status”: 1023
- “Bottom Line”: -147.08
- “Accomplishments”: 277.96

**Republicans**

- N = 445
- “Micromanaging”: 231.96
- “Congruence”: 148.72
- “Community Status”: 320.90
- “Bottom Line”: -157.74
- “Accomplishments”: -295.22

Treatment Effects vs. Control
85% Intervals Included
Small and medium sized business owners emphasize employee and community relations in “Community Status”

- Small and medium sized business owners who listened to the “Community Status” message emphasize community impact through their employees in addition to employee investment.

- Many reference that good employment leads to good communities.

“In your opinion, what was the most important part of the message you just heard?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance of making employee investments</th>
<th>Community Status 34%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide quality jobs &amp; compensation</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investing in your employees</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take care of employees &amp; working environment</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiring / getting the right people</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work as a team</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community impact</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain employee, and community relations</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community building</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business owner identity</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owners have to be responsible planners</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owners never clock out &amp; are the business</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being an owner is hard work, takes dedication</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*responses can be coded under multiple codes, so percentages may not add up.

“Good business produces good jobs which lead to good community”
Topline 2: Summary

“Community Status” was also an effective message overall.

The “Community Status” message increased support for a wide range of Job Quality Elements.

It was the only message to persuade business owners to spend more on supporting their employees.

This effect was largest among Democrats.

“Community Status” was not as emotive nor as shareworthy as “Micromanaging.”
“Accomplishments” was the most effective message among Black and Democratic small-to-midsize business owners
If we focus on Democrats, “Accomplishments” had the largest increases on support for Job Quality Elements

- While not as persuasive to the full sample, the “Accomplishments” message was the most impactful among Democratic business owners.
**“Accomplishments”** also promotes financial support of employees among Democrats

- Democratic business owners allocated on average $470 more to their employees if they listened to “Accomplishments” (vs. Control).

If given a 10k loan, how much would you spend on supporting existing employees?

**Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Democratics</th>
<th>N = 599</th>
<th>Independents</th>
<th>N = 223</th>
<th>Republicans</th>
<th>N = 445</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Micromanaging</td>
<td>470.59</td>
<td>470.59</td>
<td>470.59</td>
<td>470.59</td>
<td>470.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congruence</td>
<td>41.31</td>
<td>41.31</td>
<td>41.31</td>
<td>41.31</td>
<td>41.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Status</td>
<td>618.23</td>
<td>618.23</td>
<td>618.23</td>
<td>618.23</td>
<td>618.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bottom Line</td>
<td>7.36</td>
<td>7.36</td>
<td>7.36</td>
<td>7.36</td>
<td>7.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accomplishments</td>
<td>176.22</td>
<td>176.22</td>
<td>176.22</td>
<td>176.22</td>
<td>176.22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Not Significant at p < .15
- Significant at p < .15

Treatment Effects vs. Control
85% Intervals Included
“Accomplishments” was the most effective message among Black respondents

- “Accomplishments” persuaded Black business owners of the value of a broad range of JQE aspects.
As a whole, respondents do not identify with the “Accomplishments” message

- While the “Accomplishments” message was effective with Black and Democratic business owners, the full sample identified more with other messages.

- White and Republican respondents also seemed to not identify with or want to share the “Accomplishments” message.
“Accomplishments” was the most effective message among Black and Democratic respondents.

Among these groups, it increased the favorability of JQE elements across the board.

The “Accomplishments” message increased the probability of small and medium sized business owners allocating money to support employees among Democrats.

However, the overall sample did not identify with this message. White and Republican respondents particularly did not identify with it, and they were less likely to share this message.
Topline 4

“Bottom Line” fell flat across the board
“Bottom Line” was not persuasive

- “Bottom Line” failed to increase business owners’ belief that JQE would help their businesses.
04 Results

Hispanic/Latino SMB owners would share other messages before “Bottom Line”

- “Bottom Line” backfired among Hispanic/Latino business owners, who were less likely to share this message relative to most other messages.

How likely are you to share with friends and family?

- “Bottom Line” — “Micromanaging”
  -0.32

- “Bottom Line” — “Congruence”
  -0.26

- “Bottom Line” — “Community Status”
  -0.38

- “Bottom Line” — “Accomplishments”
  -0.36

Hispanic/Latino respondents
N = 302

Treatment Differences 85% Intervals Included
SMB owners focus on non-employee investments in “Bottom Line”

- Many small and medium sized business owners who listened to the “Bottom Line” message emphasize the importance of business investments alongside employee investments.

“In your opinion, what was the most important part of the message you just heard?

| Importance of making employee investments | 41% |
| Investing in your employees | 15% |
| Provide quality jobs & compensation | 13% |
| Take care of employees & working environment | 12% |
| Hiring / getting the right people | 5% |
| Work as a team | 1% |
| Importance of making business investments | 16% |
| Business owner identity | 11% |
| Owners have to be responsible planners | 4% |
| Owners never clock out & are the business | 4% |
| Being an owner is hard work, takes dedication | 3% |

*Responses can be coded under multiple codes, so percentages may not add up.
Topline 4: Summary

“Bottom Line” fell flat across the board.

Getting people to focus on their bottom line did not promote the adoption of JQE.

A simple economic message falls short of objectives to expand JQE adoption.

An appeal to financials is not sufficient and may backfire.

Open-ended responses suggest that “Bottom Line” drew attention to non-workforce considerations.
05. Main Takeaways
## Message Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>“Micromanaging”</th>
<th>“Community Status”</th>
<th>“Accomplishments”</th>
<th>“Bottom Line”</th>
<th>“Congruence”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased Support for Specific Job Quality Elements</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓ (Black respondents, Democrats)</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased Value of Job Quality to the Business</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased Efficacy to Provide JQE to Employees</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased Perceived Value of Job Quality to Business Owner</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓ (Democrats)</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased Willingness to Support Employees Financially</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓ (Full sample and Democrats)</td>
<td>✓ (Democrats)</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoted Positive Emotions</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shareability</td>
<td>✓ (Full sample and White respondents)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification with Speaker</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Main Takeaways

- **Increased Support for Specific Job Quality Elements**
  - ✓
- **Increased Value of Job Quality to the Business**
  - ✓
- **Increased Efficacy to Provide JQE to Employees**
  - ✓
- **Increased Perceived Value of Job Quality to Business Owner**
  - ✓
- **Increased Willingness to Support Employees Financially**
  - ✓ (Full sample and Democrats)
  - ✓ (Democrats)
- **Promoted Positive Emotions**
  - ✓
- **Shareability**
  - ✓ (Full sample and White respondents)
Key Findings

**Toplines 1 and 2:** “Micromanaging” and “Community Status” were the most effective messages

“Micromanaging” was particularly effective among Republican and White small-to-medium sized business owners. It also increased positive emotions across the board.

“Community Status” was the only message to increase willingness to spend on behalf of employees.

**Topline 3:** “Accomplishments” was the most effective among Black and Democratic small-to-midsize sized business owners.

It drove support for specific job quality initiatives and for belief in job quality being good for business.

**Topline 4:** “Bottom Line” fell flat across the board.

Simply highlighting economic benefits of JQE doesn’t move the needle (and often backfires).
## Recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good Jobs = Tight Ship</th>
<th>Achieving Mainstay Status</th>
<th>Appeal to Democratic and Black Small-to-Midsize Business Owners’ 5-Star Ambitions</th>
<th>Move Beyond the Balance Sheet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sell JQE as a means of improving operations and regaining control.</td>
<td>Show small and medium sized business owners the path from better jobs to a better reputation and deeper ties to the community. Small-to-midsize business owners value their roles as positive forces in the community but need to be shown how their role as an employer fits in to that.</td>
<td>Emphasize to these audiences that true excellence requires excellent job quality. Businesses that make a name for themselves have great employees, and great employees are the result of good jobs.</td>
<td>The straightforward financial case for improving job quality is not sufficient and may pull small and medium sized business owners’ focus away from workforce issues.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Example application of findings: CDFI Annual Convening

Recommendations for CDFIs:

- CDFIs focus on the financial aspects of businesses, but here we find that focusing too much on the bottom line may lead small business owners to downplay jobs. CDFIs should also focus on providing HR support, so that clear expectations are created between employer and employee.

- To get businesses to value job quality, CDFIs should emphasize how job quality can buy autonomy and piece of mind for business owners. A business’ operations will be smoother and its owner more independent if it has high quality, trustworthy employees. But these employees can only be attracted with good jobs.

- Where possible, CDFIs should also highlight that having good relations with the community is good for business. Remind business owners that providing good jobs to employees is a good tool for establishing good relations with the community.
Aspen Institute JQE

Content Test Analysis

September 28, 2023
Prepared for The Aspen Institute

N = 910

Field dates:
September 8 to September 13, 2023
01. Process + Objectives

Project framework & checkpoints
Narrative Lab Process

01 Process + Objectives

1. Landscape Analysis + Planning
2. Metaphor Elicitation
3. Message Testing
4. Content Testing + Playbook Development
Job Quality Narrative Lab Process

Current Phase

- Conduct surveys with small-to-midsize business owners and supporting institutions (CDFIs & small business associations)
- Test content we may use to recruit their participation in an online webinar
- Explore which tested item is the most effective
02. Methodology

Experimental Design
We use validated survey panels to recruit a sample of convenience representing the people that you want to persuade.

We randomly assign respondents into groups. These groups are pretty identical to ensure that no bias is introduced. Each group views either test creative or control creative.

When we compare the differences in values, beliefs, opinions between those who saw test creative vs. control.
About the Content Test Participants

Full sample (N) was 910 small-to-medium business owners aged 18 and over with the following characteristics:

01 Race/Ethnicity:
- White: 390 (42.9%)
- Black: 270 (29.7%)
- Hispanic / Latino: 250 (27.5%)

02 Political Party Membership:
- Democrat: 459 (50.4%)
- Independent: 138 (15.2%)
- Republican: 313 (34.4%)

03 Gender Identity:
- Female: 439 (48.2%)
- Male: 466 (51.2%)
- Neither Male nor Female: 5 (0.005%)

04 Age:
- 49.3% of respondents were between 30 and 49 years old
- 43.0% of respondents were between 20 and 29 years old
- 16.7% of respondents were 50 years old or older

05 College Education:
- 36.0% of respondents possess a Bachelor’s degree or higher
- 35.0% of respondents possess an Associate degree or technical certificate
- 4.0% of respondents possess a High School Diploma or equivalent
- 25.0% of respondents possess a Certificate or other credential
- 1.0% of respondents possess no formal education after high school

06 Business Size:
- 615 (67.6%) small business owners with 1 to 10 employees
- 252 (27.7%) medium business owners with 11 to 50 employees
- 43 (4.7%) large business owners with over 50 employees
- 0 (0.0%) micro business owners with 0 to 1 employee

07 Industry:
- Construction: 135
- Retail: 102
- Professional Services: 59
- Arts & Recreation: 55
- Health & Social Services: 46
- Manufacturing: 44
- Finance & Insurance: 42
- Real Estate & Leasing: 36
- Mining & Extraction: 34
- Wholesale: 30
**Measurement: Job Quality Pillars**

- **Agreement:** To what extent do you agree with the message you just heard?

- **Shareability:** How likely would you be to share the message you just heard with your friends and family?

- **Attend free:** The e-invite invites you to attend a webinar about Job Quality. Given what you know about the event from the e-invite, how likely would you be to attend the webinar?

- **Learn more:** Would you be interested in learning more about the webinar and the organization that sponsors it?

- **Positive emotions/negative emotions**

- **Value of JQE**
  - Economic stability
  - Economic mobility
  - Economic voice

*Respondents viewed the JQE diagram while answering these questions.*
03. Content Creation

How previous work influenced our messages
1. Equity, Respect, and Voice
   ○ Employee satisfaction

2. Economic Stability
   ○ Compensation
   ○ Benefits

3. Economic Mobility
   ○ Incentives
   ○ Professional growth
   ○ Wealth-building

---

**Good Jobs: A Working Definition**

**Economic Stability**
- Stable, family-sustaining pay
- Sufficient, accessible, and broadly available benefits
- Fair, reliable scheduling practices
- Safe, healthy, and accessible working conditions

**Equity, Respect & Voice**
- Organizational and management culture, policies, and practices that:
  - are transparent and enable accountability
  - support a sense of belonging and purpose
  - advance DEIA*
  - and address discrimination.
- Ability to improve the workplace, such as through collective action or participatory management practices

*DEIA: diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility
Phase 1: Metaphor Elicitation

Breaking the power cycle

Power loss
Their reactions further perpetuate lack of control over employees.

Power-driven
Small-to-medium sized business owners start businesses because they value power, autonomy and independence.

Power failure
They plan for all aspects of their business except for job quality, failing to see the connection between job quality and hiring/retaining employees.

Power grab
They lament the lack of employee loyalty and aspire to keep employees in line.

Power tools
They convince themselves that the jobs they offer come with ‘perks’. They justify their lack of JQE planning with narratives that place employee satisfaction out of their control.

Insight: Maintain sense of autonomy when advising on JQE. Idea must come from them.

Insight: Remind small-to-midsize business owners that JQE is worth planning for/is core to business.

Insight: Draw connection between JQE and control over employees, point out incongruity.

Insight: Highlight how JQE maintains their position at the top and in control.

Insight: Draw connection between JQE, loyalty and good customer service.

Insight: Draw connection between JQE, loyalty and control over employees, point out incongruity.
Phase 2: Message Test

Accomplishments
— Appeals to the drive to achieve, rise above the competition

Bottom Line
— Appeals to financial concerns, the economic case for JQE

Community Status
— Appeals to the desire for recognition, to be the “best on the block”

Congruence
— Appeals to the desire to live out one’s values, to “walk the walk”

Control and Autonomy
— Appeals to the desire for control and a business that runs like a well-oiled machine

Most effective messages
Phase 3: Content Test Research Objectives

From our message test, we identified two effective message directions:

“Autonomy and Control” & “Community Status”

In our next phase of testing:

- Zoom in on more granular themes of these messages
- Explore practical applications of messages
  - i.e., an invitation to a webinar hosted by Aspen Institute

We know all messages are effective

We are exploring which one is the best and worst in the particular context of inviting business owners to a JQE Webinar.
**Content Test:** Webinar E-Invite for CDFIs & SMB owners

**Control**

**Autonomy**

**Community**

**Status**

---

**HOW BETTER JOBS CAN TRANSFORM YOUR BUSINESS: A WEBINAR**

Business owners can’t handle everything alone. That’s why we need our peers to do part of what we need. But the only way to get good people is to offer better jobs.

**JOIN US TO LEARN ABOUT:**

- Improving your business with the people you can handle your growth
- Making your business work for you and your family
- Organizations that help business owners secure stronger employees

You plan for every other aspect of your business; start planning for your people.

**REGISTER HERE**

For more details, click here: [www.48880.com](http://www.48880.com)

---

**HOW BETTER JOBS CAN TRANSFORM YOUR BUSINESS: A WEBINAR**

Business owners hold deep ties to their communities, investing in the people who make our communities better.

**JOIN US TO LEARN ABOUT:**

- How providing quality jobs strengthens community ties and business success
- Building loyalty with your community by supporting your employees
- Organizations that help business owners secure stronger employees

Good jobs are the foundation of a successful business and a strong, healthy community.

**REGISTER HERE**

For more details, click here: [www.48880.com](http://www.48880.com)

---

**HOW BETTER JOBS CAN TRANSFORM YOUR BUSINESS: A WEBINAR**

Successful businesses build deep ties to their communities, investing in the people who make our communities better.

**JOIN US TO LEARN ABOUT:**

- Building loyalty with your community by supporting your employees
- Organizations that help business owners secure stronger employees

Good jobs are the foundation of a successful business and a strong, healthy community.

**REGISTER HERE**

For more details, click here: [www.48880.com](http://www.48880.com)
04. Results
Key Findings

**Topline 1: “Community” was the strongest invitation**

- It was close to the competition, but “Community” is slightly better than all other messages.

- For certain subgroups, “Community” promotes:
  - More agreement
  - More willingness to attend a webinar
  - More willingness to learn more
  - More positive emotions than other treatments

- Given these advantages, and the lack of any drawbacks from this message, “Community” is the clear winner.

**Topline 2: “Status” was the least strong invitation**

- Although also close to the competition, “Status” is slightly weaker than all other messages.

- The “Status” treatment:
  - Encouraged fewer to attend the webinar
  - Promoted fewer positive emotions
  - Persuaded key populations against the importance of Job Quality

- In short, “Status” was the least effective message.
Recommendations

In the context of inviting business owners to an event:

**Highlight how providing job quality strengthens one’s links to their community**

Exposing participants to the “Community” message clearly made them more interested in and willing to attend a webinar about job quality. Future invitations should be modeled after the “Community” asset tested in this content test.

**Do not copy the visual elements from the “Status” treatment**

“Status” made it less likely that participants would be interested in attending a job quality webinar. This perhaps was because of the content of the message, or perhaps it was because of the visual content of that treatment, but “Status” shows us an example of the least effective message among those we considered.

**Include smiling faces and happy people interacting with each other**

It is interesting to note that “Community” had the highest number of happy faces, and “Status” showed one person giving her back to the reader. Visual cues matter. Make sure the visual components are engaging, inclusive and that they draw people in.

**“Autonomy” and “Control” can be used as well.**

Remember that our message test told us that all of these messages were strong messages. “Autonomy” and “Control” did not excel but all our comparisons start from a high baseline. “Autonomy” and “Control” elements could still be useful to include in future materials.
### 04 Results

**Topline 1**

“Community” was the top performer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary Message Elements:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✔️ Increase Agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□  Promote Sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔️ Promote Webinar Attendance Likelihood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□  Promote Willingness to Learn More</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔️ Promote Positive Emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□  Persuade about JQE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The “Community” treatment
### First thing respondents noticed about the “Community” treatment

- Many noticed the happy and diverse people in the images
- Many noticed the importance of job quality
- These seem to be some of the elements that made this treatment effective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Community (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Importance of high job quality for employee retention &amp; teamwork</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of job creation &amp; quality</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of quality employees &amp; retention</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People working together</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The happy, diverse people</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy / smiling people</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diverse representation</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The people</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendly looking people</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Community” promoted agreement relative to other treatments

- In the full sample, “Community” promoted agreement relative to “Status,” “Control,” and “Autonomy.”

- These positive effects for “Community” on agreement were also present among Black and White subgroups, and among Republican and Independent subgroups.
“Community” promoted a series of positive effects in several subgroups

- “Community” promoted positive emotions among Republicans and Independents.
- These effects only existed in these subgroups, but not in the full sample.
“Community” promoted a series of positive effects in several subgroups

- “Community” made male respondents more willing to attend a JQE webinar.
- These effects only existed in this subgroup, but not in the full sample.
“Community” promoted a series of positive effects in several subgroups

- “Community” made Independents more willing to learn more about JQE.
- These effects only existed in this subgroup, but not in the full sample.

![Graph showing the Willingness to learn more among Independents](image-url)
Topline 1: Summary

“Community” was the most effective message overall.

“Community” promoted agreement in the full sample and among Black and White respondents.

“Community” promoted desirable effects in several other subgroups.

It promoted positive emotions among Republicans and Independents. It made male respondents more willing to attend a JQE webinar. It made Independents more willing to learn more about JQE.
### Summary Message Elements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Increase Agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Promote Sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>Promote Webinar Attendance Likelihood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Promote Willingness to Learn More</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>Promote Positive Emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>Persuade about JQE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Topline 2

“Status” was the weakest invitation
The “Status” treatment

04 Results

How better jobs can transform your business: A webinar

Successful businesses build deep ties to their communities. Investing in employees is a way of investing in the community.

Join us to learn about:
- Elevate from boss to leader for your employees and your community
- Being a role model for the people that rely on your business
- Organizations that help business owners secure stronger employees

Good jobs are the foundation of a successful business and a strong, healthy community.

Register here

For event details click here: www.r42890.co

© A—B 2023

Privileged and Confidential. All rights reserved.
While “Status” worked in the message test and our qualitative work, the “Status” images included in the content of this design put people off

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The happy, diverse people</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy / smiling people</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diverse representation</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The people</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendly looking people</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

People responded more favorably to the presence of people showing positive emotions in “Community” over “Status”
The “Status” invite made people less willing to attend the webinar

- Relative to “Community” and “Autonomy,” the “Status” invite made full-sample participants less likely to want to attend a webinar about job quality.

- Subgroup analysis shows that these effects were particularly pronounced among Republican respondents.
“Status” also reduced positive emotions relative to other treatments

- For the full sample, positive emotions were the lowest in the “Status” condition relative to all others.

- In our subgroup analyses, we found that similar effects were also present among Black participants.
In certain subsamples, “Status” persuaded respondents against the importance of Job Quality

- In the full sample, “Status” did not have any significant effects in terms of Job Quality persuasion.

- For Hispanic/Latino respondents, the “Status” treatment did improve support for JQE.

- But in other groups, such as Black and Republican respondents, participants in the “Status” condition showed less support for JQE than those exposed to other treatments.

- These mixed effects do reveal a slight disadvantage for the “Status” treatment, as it is less effective in promoting JQE among some key audiences.
04 Results

Topline 2: Summary

“Status” was the least effective e-invite

“Status” made respondents, especially Republicans, less willing to attend the webinar.

“Status” reduced positive emotions in the full sample and among Black participants.

Even though “Status” increased support for JQE among Hispanic/Latino participants, it also reduced support for Job Quality among Black and Republican participants.
05. Main Takeaways
## Content Assessment: Full Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>✓ (vs. 2, 3, and 4)</td>
<td>✓ (vs. 1)</td>
<td>✓ (vs. 1)</td>
<td>✓ (vs. 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend Free</td>
<td>✓ (vs. 2)</td>
<td>✓ (vs. 1 and 3)</td>
<td>✓ (vs. 2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn More</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend Dollar</td>
<td>✓ (vs. 4)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓ (vs. 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Emotion Scale</td>
<td>✓ (vs. 2)</td>
<td>✓ (vs. 1 and 4)</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓ (vs. 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JQE Importance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Stability Interest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Mobility Interest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity, Respect, and Voice Interest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key Findings

Topline 1: “Community” was the strongest invitation

- It was close to the competition, but “Community” is slightly better than all other messages.
- For certain subgroups, “Community” promotes:
  - More agreement
  - More willingness to attend a webinar
  - More willingness to learn more
  - More positive emotions than other treatments
- Given these advantages, and the lack of any drawbacks from this message, “Community” is the clear winner.

Topline 2: “Status” was the least strong invitation

- Although also close to the competition, “Status” is slightly weaker than all other messages.
- The “Status” treatment:
  - Encouraged fewer to attend the webinar
  - It promoted fewer positive emotions
  - It persuaded key populations against the importance of Job Quality
- In short, “Status” was the least effective message.
**Recommendations**

*In the context of inviting business owners to an event:*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highlight how providing job quality strengthens one’s links to their community</th>
<th>Do not copy the visual elements from the “Status” treatment</th>
<th>Include smiling faces and happy people interacting with each other</th>
<th>“Autonomy” and “Control” can be used as well.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exposing participants to the “Community” message clearly made them more interested in and willing to attend a webinar about job quality. Future invitations should be modeled after the “Community” asset tested in this content test.</td>
<td>“Status” made it less likely that participants would be interested in attending a job quality webinar. This perhaps was because of the content of the message, or perhaps it was because of the visual content of that treatment, but “Status” shows us an example of the least effective message among those we considered.</td>
<td>It is interesting to note that “Community” had the highest number of happy faces, and “Status” showed one person giving her back to the reader. Visual cues matter. Make sure the visual components are engaging, inclusive and that they draw people in.</td>
<td>Remember that our message test told us that all of these messages were strong messages. “Autonomy” and “Control” did not excel but all our comparisons start from a high baseline. “Autonomy” and “Control” elements could still be useful to include in future materials.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>