

Recommendation Report: Starbucks



STARBUCKS®

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Executive Summary

From the beginning, Starbucks has aimed to become a different kind of coffee company and from the start in 1974 to now, Starbucks has risen to the number one most popular coffee chain around the world with over 30,000 stores located around the globe. With this rise to popularity, there are reasons as to why Starbucks has achieved its position in the coffee world.

Since its beginning, Starbucks has been dedicated to its partners and its customers. The company constantly listens to its partners on how to improve the workplace not just for them but for the customers as well. They also don't call their partners employees because of the importance they place on their impactful presence in the workplace. Partners are the key to success at Starbucks and they should be treated as such. With the amazing benefits partners are given, Starbucks has been able to keep a low turnover rate and keep the loyalty of their partners. Not only do all partners have the same benefits, but they all have the opportunity to go to college for free. With the partnership of Starbucks and Arizona State University, partners at Starbucks can get a degree online with over 60 options without worrying about tuition. However, partners aren't the only focus at Starbucks, but they are part of the puzzle that completes the third place inside their stores. Starbucks is dedicated to creating a place that its customers can call home. When customers feel that they are welcome they will return to that place and that is what the company Starbucks is trying to strive for. In order to create this third place, partners are required to go through training every three months to make sure they are doing what will keep the third place alive inside their stores. With partners being the frontline to customers, Starbucks has listened to the opinions of their employees and has also partnered with Lyra health to better assist in the mental health of their employees.

With all these benefits, Starbucks still falters in some areas. The open bathroom policy may have been a good idea in the first place, but it has caused a lot of safety concerns for baristas and customers. Not only does the open bathroom policy keep some stores from maintaining the third place, but workplace-related stress also causes the third place to falter when it is not addressed. Many new employees find themselves becoming overwhelmed with the expectations that certain stores have for them to know or remember what they have only learned in a week. Other long-term employees have also found that they are often left with baristas who do not have the knowledge they need when they are placed in certain positions and that they are left with finding coverage when a barista quits or calls out for work.

There may be many weaknesses that Starbucks faces but they have many opportunities to be able to grow from these. The recommendations given by their workers is to either put locks on the bathroom doors for downtown area stores as they are more at risk and to let new baristas become comfortable with a specific role before moving onto the next one, so they are not overwhelmed with not having the knowledge of what position they are placed in. Another recommendation would be to hire baristas who have previous experience, not just in coffee standards but in general as Starbucks stores require a certain amount of dedication and knowledge of customer service.

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	1
STRENGTHS.....	1
Employees are Partners	1
The Third Place.....	2
Employee Safety and Training.....	2
Part time vs. Full time Benefits.....	2
Starbucks College Achievement Plan	3
Lyra Health.....	3
WEAKNESSES	4
Open Bathroom Policy	4
Work Related Stress	5
OPPORTUNITIES	5
Veteran Opportunities	5
Global Expansion.....	6
THREATS	6
Local Coffee Competition	6
Rising Prices.....	6
RECOMMENDATIONS.....	7
New Bathroom Policy	7
Relieving Stress	7
CONCLUSION.....	7
BIBLIOGRAPHY	8

Introduction:

"Dream more than others think practical. Expect more than others think possible. Care more than others think wise."

-Howard Schultz

Starting from a small café in Pike's Place Market, Washington to a global coffee chain, Starbucks has indeed made its mark not just on customers but on its employees. Starbucks has become a leader in both coffee brewing and its actions towards its partners. They have created many benefits including free education, healthcare benefits, mental health benefits, and other options. Time and again Starbucks has shown that their partners are more than employees that work at a coffee company. They are family and they deserve to be treated as such.

Starbucks is the pinnacle of what companies should strive for in their CSR policies, particularly in their response to part-time workers and their benefits. Although Starbucks cares immensely about their customers and partners, there are still some weaknesses that they face. The safety of stores is being compromised along with the mental health of their partners. Starbucks needs to find new, innovative ways to face these challenges and as the company has proved in the past, they are more than up for the challenge.

Strengths:

Employees are Partners

Based on Howard Shultz's vision, employees at Starbucks have not been called employees but partners. Since the beginning, employee's are Starbucks have been seen as an investment for the company as they are one of the most important parts of success. **Howard Shultz did not see the employees hired under Starbucks as 'employees' but as partners and the reasoning behind this would be that the company believes that workers are all partners in shared success¹.** Every success in Starbucks, whether big or small, is shared success and this success is only made possible through its partners.

The Third Place and Customer Satisfaction

¹ "Culture and Values," *Starbucks Coffee Company*, <https://www.starbucks.com/careers/working-at-starbucks/culture-and-values>, accessed on November 10, 2021.

Starbucks is committed to creating a warm, inviting place for customers and their partners and this is how Howard Shultz came up with the idea of the third place. Based on the atmosphere that Howard Shultz experienced in Italy, Starbucks created a policy in order to replicate the feeling that was felt inside of the espresso bars that Shultz visited². The third place is simply a home away from home; the stop between home and work. Starbucks wanted to create a place where people who have no place to go can feel like they have a home to go to and thus the third place was formed. Over the years, Starbucks has kept its customer satisfaction at a relatively high rate as seen in *Figure 1*³. Compared to other companies, Starbucks has excelled in keeping their customer satisfaction about 70 even with the major drop to 74 in 2015. It goes to show that by creating a place that people feel welcome and invited into, customers will continue to come back, and Starbucks has proven this time and time again.

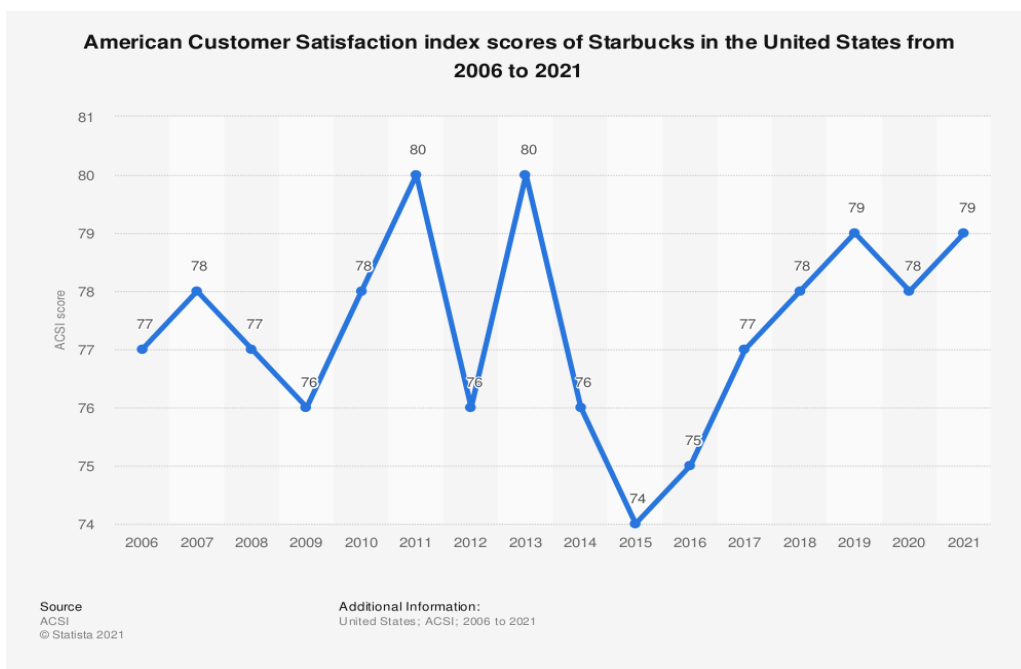


Figure 1

Employee Safety and Training

All partners are subject to training whether they have just been hired or have been with Starbucks for years. The reason for this is so that partners can remind themselves of the standards that Starbucks has to keep the 'third' place active. With videos, modules, and quizzes to refresh partners' minds, this allows for reflection on one's behalf and reminders to be safe when using equipment that may be hazardous. Not only are there modules based on safety in the workplace, but also safety with customers and other partners. Starbucks designates these modules every three months to keep old standards and new standards known within the company.

Part-Time vs. Full-Time Benefits

² Howard Shultz and Dori Jones. Yang, "Pour Your Heart Into It: How Starbucks Built a Company One Cup At a Time," 1997, accessed on November 10, 2021.

³ American Consumer Satisfaction Index, "American Customer Satisfaction Index scores of Starbucks in the United States from 2006 to 2021," July 2021, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/216719/starbucks--customer-satisfaction-in-the-us/>, accessed November 10, 2021.

Compared to many popular companies like Amazon or Google, Starbucks has one thing that puts them above the rest and that is offering the same benefits to part-time workers who work as little as 20 hours a week as the benefits offered to those who work 40 hours a week⁴. Some of these benefits include health, dental, vision along with paid vacation, paid holidays, 401(k) savings plan, and stock options. These benefits don't stop there as more benefits have been added since the COVID-19 pandemic first started. Part-time and full-time workers have been offered self-isolation pay for the COVID-19 pandemic and have taken measures to keep partners safe such as requiring masks, updating cleaning and sanitizing procedures, and requiring a COVID-19 check-in before clocking into work. Starbucks has also partnered with Arizona State University to offer all partners an opportunity to complete an online degree for free with all costs paid for by Starbucks themselves. This kind of treatment towards those who work part-time is a one-of-a-kind opportunity that Starbucks has to offer to those "partners" who work for them. According to Bradley Honeycutt, who is the director of compensation and benefits at Starbucks, admits that our part-timers are on the front line with our customers. If we treat them right, we feel they will treat (customers) well. It seems common sense to treat part-time employees like full-time employees but not many companies have the same mentality as the only difference between part-time and full-time employees is the number of hours they work.

Starbucks College Achievement Plan

Since 2014, Starbucks and Arizona State University have partnered together to allow full-time and part-time partners who work more than 20 hours a week to receive a free online degree with all expenses paid also known as the Starbucks College Achievement Plan. Those who work under 20 hours a week also have this option available to them through the Pathway to Admission program. With over 60 degrees to choose from, there is something for anyone and everyone. This benefit allows those who can't afford college to be able to get a degree without worrying about student debt after graduating as Starbucks provides 58% of the scholarship contribution.⁵ With over 6,000 partners graduated and 18,000 partners on their way to graduating as shown in Figure 2⁶, this program indeed is an accomplished partnership between Starbucks and Arizona State⁷.

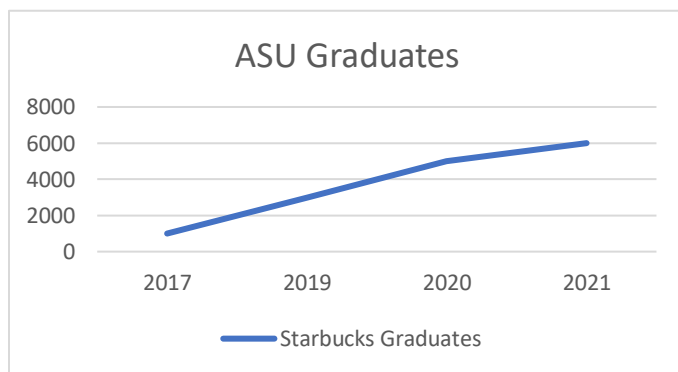


Figure 2

⁴ "Benefits and perks", *Starbucks Coffee Company*, <https://www.starbucks.com/careers/working-at-starbucks/benefits-and-perks/>, accessed on November 4, 2021.

⁵ Isaac Windes, "Starbucks and ASU brew new opportunities for student workers," *The State Press*, <https://www.statepress.com/article/2017/04/sppolitics-starbucks-and-asu-expansion-collaboration>, accessed November 30, 2021.

⁶ "10 Things You Don't Know About the Starbucks College Achievement Plan," *Starbucks Coffee Company*, May 2017, <https://stories.starbucks.com/stories/2017/10-things-you-dont-know-about-the-starbucks-college-achievement-plan/>, accessed on November 3, 2021.

⁷ "10 Things You Don't Know About the Starbucks College Achievement Plan," *Starbucks Coffee Company*, May 2017, <https://stories.starbucks.com/stories/2017/10-things-you-dont-know-about-the-starbucks-college-achievement-plan/>, accessed on November 3, 2021.

Lyra Health

Based on partner feedback, Starbucks has changed the way they have viewed mental health for those who need professional help inside their stores. Beginning in 2020, Starbucks has partnered with Lyra Health to offer free mental healthcare services to partners. Partners and their family members will receive 20 sessions with a coach or therapist each year⁸. With Lyra health, partners can access high-quality care, receive mental health treatment based on their specific needs, and book appointments on the spot with available health professionals either in-person or by video. According to the president of Starbucks, Kevin Johnson, the care of partners is one of Starbucks' top priorities. Listening to partners and exploring new ways to better benefit them is how Starbucks is going to support them and their families⁹.

Weaknesses

Open Bathroom Policy

Although Starbucks does not discriminate based on gender, color, or circumstance there is the danger of getting a customer who may not have the best intentions, especially in the use of the bathrooms. In many downtown area Starbucks, there is the problem of the homeless using the bathroom to either use drugs, change their clothes, vandalize, or now with the new needle-box disposals, “shoot up” drugs and potentially leave bloody needles/rags in the bathrooms. Although Starbucks does have a ‘non-discrimination policy’ there are many baristas and customers who have found that this policy may not be as beneficial as it was intended to be. After the incident in 2018 involving two black male's being refused allowance into a Starbucks bathroom, Starbucks implemented the 'open bathroom' policy and since then customer visits have dropped 7.3% and customers spend 4.2% less time at Starbucks¹⁰. According to an 8-year employee of Starbucks, Cydnee Monteiro, “there are many hazards to allowing the homeless population to use our bathrooms such as bloody rags being left behind, people defecating on the toilet seats, leaving dirty clothes behind, and leaving blood on the floor or toilet seats. That doesn’t mean every homeless person does it, but it is a major hazard”. Especially with COVID-19 still going on, the bathroom hazards are and can be a very dangerous situation. With these kinds of situations, mainly part-time workers are faced with finding the solutions to deal with them and many find that they are not paid enough to deal with these kinds of situations. Working at around \$12 an hour depending on the state and location, many part-time employees agree that this is not enough

⁸ “Starbucks Transforms Mental Health Benefit for U.S. Employees.” *Starbucks Coffee Company*, Mar. 2020, <https://stories.starbucks.com/press/2020/starbucks-transforms-mental-health-benefit-for-us-employees/>, accessed November 8, 2021.

⁹ Starbucks Transforms Mental Health Benefit for U.S. Employees.” *Starbucks Coffee Company*, Mar. 2020, <https://stories.starbucks.com/press/2020/starbucks-transforms-mental-health-benefit-for-us-employees/>, accessed November 2, 2021.

¹⁰ Ed Hayward, “Paying a Price,” *BC News*, Feb. 2020, <https://www.bc.edu/bc-web/bcnews/nation-world-society/business-and-management/paying-a-price-at-starbucks.html>, accessed on November 3, 2021.

to be paid to deal with rude customers or bathroom hazards when they are mainly paid to make coffee and create a third place for customers. Starbucks needs to address these hazards as quickly as possible if they want to keep their clientele and keep their partners safe.

Work-Related Stress

Like many workplace environments, Starbucks is not an exception to workplace stress. Within Starbucks stores, there are many roles for baristas to play; barista, register, customer support, bar support, etc. With these roles comes responsibilities and many times these responsibilities can become overwhelming, especially when a barista may call out or when someone quits. This causes a lot of stress on all partners who will then have to struggle to complete the responsibilities of others and hopefully find someone to come and replace the person. It places stress on managers when someone quits because now, they have to find more people to hire to keep from being short-staffed and having to scramble to find someone, if anyone, to cover the lost shifts. Besides the stress of losing a barista or having a barista call out, another workplace stress within Starbucks is role ambiguity, meaning when baristas are placed in a role, they have no idea what to do or how to do it¹¹. Though Starbucks has cards that shift supervisors will hand out to give baristas tasks to finish before the end of the night, many times baristas will still lack the information they need to finish some of the tasks. Especially with newly hired baristas, Starbucks has found that their partners are not up to certain tasks as they have no prior knowledge or lack the skills and abilities to perform them. Many Starbucks stores have also found that their managers will hire people who have no prior experience of being a barista or prior experience in general. They are brand new to the work industry and do not have the knowledge or skills necessary to work in a fast-paced environment compared to those with years of experience. If Starbucks addresses these stresses in an understanding manner, they will improve the workplace for their partners and relieve the pressures that long-term partners have felt.

Opportunities:

Veteran Opportunity

Within the world of Starbucks, they have created many opportunities for growth and expansion within the community. They invite all people no matter what color, race, or sexual orientation to apply for retail and corporate careers. Not only has Starbucks created an opportunity for their part-time and full-time partners to earn a degree, but they have also partnered with Operation Gratitude and Blue Star families to support the mental health and well-being of veterans and

¹¹ Muhammad Azriuddin, et al. "Becoming an International Brand: A Case Study of Starbucks." *Journal of The Community Development in Asia*, <http://www.ejournal.aibpm.org/index.php/JCDA/article/view/706>, accessed November 9, 2021.

military families¹². Starbucks has proven how important veterans are to the company and will continue to show its appreciation for these partners and their families in the future.

Global Expansion

Starbucks has not only created opportunities in local communities in the United States but also in countries around the world such as Europe, China, South Korea, Japan, etc. They have been adamant about creating a more sustainable environment for their coffee farmers and the land it's grown on. They are finding new technologies that would better benefit the planting, growing, and harvesting of coffee in places such as Colombia where it is becoming difficult to cultivate coffee because of the latest climate system¹³.

It wasn't difficult for Starbucks to expand to European countries as they had already been introduced to coffee. On the other hand, it was very difficult for Starbucks to expand to Asian countries such as China because all they have ever known was tea. In result, when Starbucks tried to expand their coffee company to Hong Kong and Shanghai's main streets in 1999 to try to appeal to the white-collar workers and business people.¹⁴ To their demise, Starbucks found that their coffee was not popular and was too expensive at 19 yuan (\$2.99 in USD). They found they were losing money instead of making it, but the managers at the stores were hopeful about the future and promised if Starbucks was patient they would be rewarded.

After repurchasing shares in China in 2006, 2007, and 2011, Starbucks was able to take over the stores in Central China, North China, and South China and put \$1.3 billion dollars into their overseas shops¹⁵. As of January 11, 2019, Starbucks celebrated their twenty years in the Chinese market and their expansion in China. Not only is Starbucks reaching the furthest corners of China, but all corners of the globe in order to let everyone have a taste of their genuine, high-quality coffee.

GIS (Geographic Information System)

One new technology Starbucks has used to gauge where their stores will be built is a device similar to a GPS known as GIS (Geographic Information System). This device collects, stores,

¹² "During Military Appreciation Month, Starbucks Focuses on Supporting Mental Health." *Starbucks Coffee Company*, Apr. 2021, <https://stories.starbucks.com/stories/2021/during-military-appreciation-month-starbucks-focuses-on-supporting-mental-health/>, accessed November 2, 2021.

¹³ Michael Ko, "Working to Create a More Sustainable Future of Coffee for All," *Starbucks Coffee Company*, Sept. 2021, <https://stories.starbucks.com/stories/2021/working-to-create-a-more-sustainable-future-of-coffee-for-all/>, accessed November 3, 2021.

¹⁴ Hui-Jung Chuang, "Starbucks in the World." *Holistica : Journal of Business and Public Administration*, 2019, https://na02.alma.exlibrisgroup.com/view/action/uresolver.do?operation=resolveService&package_service_id=16535535660002001&institutionId=2001&customerId=2000, Accessed November 30, 2021.

¹⁵ Hui-Jung Chuang, "Starbucks in the World." *Holistica : Journal of Business and Public Administration*, 2019, https://na02.alma.exlibrisgroup.com/view/action/uresolver.do?operation=resolveService&package_service_id=16535535660002001&institutionId=2001&customerId=2000, Accessed November 30, 2021.

processes, analyzes, retrieves, and displays spatial data. In short, the GIS device is like a database that stores collects data such as traffic, consumer distribution, security information, business composition, and other geographic location information.¹⁶ With this device, Starbucks has been able to assess where to best place their Starbucks stores around the world based on simple calculations. It is no wonder why Starbucks has grown at such large rates and has such a large influx of money. The GIS is an advanced use of data that Starbucks uses to its benefit, and it has respectfully allowed the company to rise to its popularity with its use.

Threats:

Local Coffee Competition

Although Starbucks may be a giant coffee corporation that is popular in many countries and communities, there is competition between smaller local coffeehouses. The reason for this would be the clientele who do not love going to well-known big brands and would rather spend their money and time in local, lesser-known coffeehouses that don't make as much money as a big corporation. The appeal of a local coffeehouse, especially to Starbucks baristas, has caused a lot of partners to quit and switch to a local coffee shop that offers more tips and more intimate customer interactions. Many customers have the misconception that Starbucks doesn't serve good coffee or the highest quality coffee simply because it is everywhere¹⁷. As a result, customers will look for local coffeehouses. Even with Starbucks upholding the third place, the environment in a local coffee shop also draws customers' attention. They have to find a way to appeal to those who do not like the popularity of Starbucks to continue expanding their company and keeping their loyal customers loyal to their store.

Rising Prices

Starbucks also faces the rising prices of coffee beans and is subject to supply chain risks related to fluctuations in the prices of this key input the increase in the prices of milk products leads to another threat to its profitability¹⁸. With this problem, Starbucks would have to raise their drink prices which are already expensive compared to other coffee companies and would most likely create dissatisfaction with customers. This could also cause problems with customers who do not want to spend a lot of money on a simple cup of coffee. In order to face this problem, Starbucks

¹⁶ Hui-Jung Chuang, "Starbucks in the World." *Holistica : Journal of Business and Public Administration*, 2019, https://na02.alma.exlibrisgroup.com/view/action/uresolver.do?operation=resolveService&package_service_id=16535535660002001&institutionId=2001&customerId=2000, Accessed November 30, 2021.

¹⁷ Kate Taylor, "Starbucks' Biggest Competition Isn't Dunkin' Donuts - It's Your Neighborhood Hipster Coffee Shop." *Business Insider*, March, 2017, <https://www.businessinsider.com/starbucks-competition-independent-coffee-shops-2017-3>, accessed November 9, 2021.

¹⁸ Khan Johnson, et al. "Starbucks: An Analysis of Supply Chain Risk and Mitigation Strategies." *SFK Inc*, May 28, 2020, <https://sfkcorp.com/2015/04/28/starbucks-an-analysis-of-supply-chain-risk-and-mitigation-strategies/>, accessed November 10, 2021.

will have to find a way to expand to other vendors or find a way to keep their prices low but still be able to afford the necessities of a coffee shop.

Recommendations:

New Bathroom Policy

Although Starbucks has good intentions with the open bathroom policy, there are dangers to this policy as previously stated. However, there are ways to improve this policy that would keep its customers and employees safe as well as keep the third place active. To improve this policy, it would be beneficial to investigate the crime and homeless rates based on the location of stores as with crime and homelessness comes stores that are more at risk. With this investigation should come the decision of having locked doors with a passcode or not. As a result of this, baristas and frequent customers will feel safer, and customers will be willing to visit more often.

Relieving Stress

There is always going to be some kind of stress inside of any workplace, but there are still options that can benefit Starbucks in relieving these stresses. Hiring more baristas would alleviate some of the workplace stress on managers, shift supervisors, and other baristas who have to pick up the weight. Another way of relieving stress would be checking up on partners mental health to see where they are at. Knowing that someone cares and wants to help will significantly decrease the amount of stress baristas may be feeling and want to express. Making sure that new baristas feel comfortable in one place before moving them to another position will also help relieve stress especially on shift supervisors who need to focus on having a good shift and not on someone panicking because they have been placed somewhere they are not comfortable with.

With their partnership with Lyra Health which promises personalized, confidential, and evidence-based mental health care¹⁹ Starbucks can assist their partners and create a more welcoming and healthier environment to work in.

Conclusion:

Employees at Starbucks are very important to Starbucks, but they still have improvements that can be made to better help their partners and their customers enjoy the stores they are at. For over 50 years, Starbucks has been the pinnacle of how employees within a large company should be treated and that is how they have gotten so many partners who have stayed with them for so long and will continue to bring more into their stores.

Although they have their difficulties, with the amount of time Starbucks spends accounting for safety and their dedication for the third place, they will surely make changes to keep their partners and customers safe. It is no coincidence that Starbucks has survived so long, and they will continue to advance into the future if they continue focusing on their employee's and customers' opinions. They will continue to be the popular coffee stop around the world if they use their abilities to learn from other businesses and learn from their mistakes.

¹⁹ "Employee Assistance Program." *Starbucks Partner Benefits*, 2021, <https://www.starbucksbenefits.com/en-us/home/partner-family-support/employee-assistance-program-eap/>, accessed November 18, 2021.

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