

# The Pay Conversation You're Probably *Not* Having

Why compensation feels harder—  
and how better data brings clarity

You gave raises. You adjusted starting wages. You added a bonus.

And still—something feels off

A reliable operator starts asking more questions. A new hire comes in higher than expected. A supervisor hesitates before making an offer.

No one is raising a flag, but the tension is there.

➔ *That's because compensation today isn't a single decision. It's a system. And most companies are managing it one moment at a time.*

*The people who carry the business rarely complain—  
but they absolutely recalibrate.*

## THE **PRESSURE** ISN'T GOING AWAY

Across print and packaging, a few things are happening at once:

- Wages are shifting—role by role
- Skills are evolving faster than job descriptions
- Hiring pressure is resetting expectations internally

At the same time, your operation depends on more than just “top talent.”

It depends on the people who show up every day, hit deadlines, train others, and keep production steady.

They don't always ask for more. But they notice when things change.

The people who carry the business rarely complain—but they absolutely recalibrate.

## NOT ALL VALUE **LOOKS** THE SAME

Some employees drive growth.

Some create stability.

Some do both.

But most compensation structures don't clearly reflect the difference.

Raises often follow urgency—filling a role, securing a hire, reacting to the market. Less often do they reflect consistency or long-term contribution.

Over time, that creates quiet gaps:

- Between new hires and long-tenured employees
- Between visible impact and steady performance
- Between what leadership values—and what compensation reinforces

These aren't dramatic issues. But they're the ones that stay.

## WHERE COMPANIES GET **STUCK**

Most compensation challenges aren't about dollars. They're about alignment.

- Hiring decisions are made under pressure
- Pay adjustments happen in isolation
- Bonus programs exist—but aren't tied to clear outcomes
- Employees don't fully understand how their pay works

In other words:

Compensation is being managed as a series of decisions, not a defined system.



GRAPHIC  
MEDIA ALLIANCE

# Compensation isn't just a number— it's a set of levers.

## IF COMPENSATION IS ONLY SALARY, YOU'RE LIMITING YOUR OPTIONS

One of the biggest shifts happening right now is this:

Compensation isn't just a number—it's a set of levers.

And each one carries a cost and a return.

- **Base pay** creates stability. If it's off, nothing else matters.
- **Variable pay** drives alignment—but only if it's measurable.
- **Benefits** support retention, especially for long-tenured employees.
- **Flexibility and development** create differentiation—often where smaller companies can compete.

Most organizations use all of these to some degree.

Very few manage them intentionally.

The question isn't just "What are you paying?"

It's "How are you paying—and is it working?"

### Survey Sponsored by Significans AUTOMATION

Significans Automation helps print and packaging companies improve workflow efficiency through customized, vendor-neutral automation, integration, and process optimization designed to support scalable growth, stronger operational performance, and smarter production systems.

## MOST DECISIONS ARE BEING MADE WITHOUT CONTEXT

Every organization is making compensation decisions right now:

- Hiring offers
- Counteroffers
- Annual increases
- Bonus allocations

But many of those decisions are made without a reliable benchmark.

The risk isn't just underpaying or overpaying.

It's not knowing which one you're doing.

And just as important:

Most companies don't know how their full compensation package compares—only base wages.

## A SIMPLE PLACE TO START→

As you think about your own organization:

- Do you know where your most reliable operators sit compared to the market?
- Are your pay decisions consistent—or driven by urgency?
- Can you clearly explain how compensation grows over time?

If those answers aren't clear, you're not alone.

But it's worth addressing.

### 2026 WAGE + BENEFITS SURVEY OPENS JUNE 1

Compensation decisions are becoming more complex—and better data creates clarity. Participate in the 2026 Wage + Benefits Survey to benchmark wages, evaluate compensation strategies, and see how your organization compares across the industry.

## CLARITY CHANGES THE CONVERSATION

The companies navigating this well aren't necessarily paying more.

They're clearer.

Clear on:

- What they pay for—skill, output, reliability, growth
- How roles compare internally and externally
- Where they are competitive—and where they're not
- How incentives connect to performance

That clarity improves decision-making—and builds trust.

Because when people understand how pay works, they're more likely to see it as fair.

## A BETTER WAY TO CALIBRATE

The Wage + Benefits Survey exists to bring context to these decisions.

Not as a report to review once a year—but as a tool to help you:

- Understand where your wages actually sit in the market
- See how others are structuring compensation—not just what they're paying
- Identify gaps before they turn into retention issues
- Evaluate your full compensation approach, not just salary

It helps you step back and look at compensation as a system—not a reaction

## FINAL THOUGHT

Compensation isn't getting simpler. Roles will continue to shift. Expectations will continue to evolve.

But the companies that understand how to use all the levers—base pay, incentives, benefits, and flexibility—will make better decisions with more confidence.

Participation in this summer's Wage + Benefits Survey is one step toward that clarity.

Not because it gives you all the answers.

But because it gives you a stronger foundation to make the decisions that matter.

