

Coca-Cola Consolidated Uncaps Frontline Potential through Its Employee Value Promise



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America's Largest Coca-Cola Bottler and a Frontline-Driven Enterprise

Coca-Cola Consolidated, Inc., is the largest Coca-Cola bottler in the United States—manufacturing, selling, and distributing beverages on behalf of The Coca-Cola Company and its partners. Its portfolio includes more than 300 brands and flavors, reaching approximately 60 million consumers across 14 states and the District of Columbia. The company supports this scale through a network of 11 production facilities and 60 distribution centers. Founded in 1902 in Greensboro, North Carolina, and now headquartered in Charlotte, North Carolina, Coca-Cola Consolidated employs approximately 17,000 teammates across its footprint.

The company's scale and complexity make frontline execution a critical strategic advantage. Its operating model spans manufacturing, warehousing, logistics, delivery, merchandising, and retail-facing sales across a broad regional service area. Nearly 75% of the company's teammates work in frontline roles, including drivers, technicians, mechanics, warehouse operators, merchandisers, and sales professionals, whose efforts are essential to delivering products safely, reliably, and consistently in local markets.

Supporting these employees are the teams and functions that enable this, including HR, L&D, talent acquisition, operational leadership, and other support functions that help equip frontline employees with the skills, resources, and guidance to perform at their best. Together, these interconnected groups form the execution engine through which Coca-Cola Consolidated creates value for customers, communities, and the broader Coca-Cola system.

“*Our frontline teammates are at the heart of how we operate and perform. Our responsibility is to create an experience where they feel valued, developed, and supported—so they can thrive, grow their potential, and build meaningful, enduring careers with us.*”

Todd Miller, Vice President, HR-Organizational Capability, Coca-Cola Consolidated

Summary

Challenge

- Competing for talent in technical, physically demanding, and highly mobile frontline roles in a tight labor market.
- Addressing rising skill requirements in manufacturing, logistics, and equipment services while navigating an aging skilled-trades workforce.
- Meeting increasing frontline expectations for meaningful work, career growth, and strong leadership.

Solution

- Defined and launched an EVP centered on enduring careers, continuous learning, and teammate support.
- Built an integrated talent strategy that operationalizes the EVP across key touchpoints in the frontline talent lifecycle.
- Invested heavily in the “critical middle”—frontline managers—through multiyear leadership pathways and programs as the primary lever for shaping the teammate experience.

Results

- Achieved a 94% offer-acceptance rate, reflecting a strong employer brand and frontline talent pipeline.
- Delivered an 82% annual engagement score, while reducing turnover by 13 percentage points for full-time teammates and 52 percentage points for part-time teammates.
- Strengthened internal mobility, with a 41% promotion rate and 74% of teammates reporting access to career-growth tools.

Navigating Scale, Speed, and Capability

Coca-Cola Consolidated's frontline reality is defined by the intersection of scale, speed, and capability—three interconnected challenges that shape how work gets done every day.

Scale: A Vast, Dispersed Frontline Workforce

Coca-Cola Consolidated operates a large, geographically dispersed frontline workforce of 12,000–13,000 teammates

across 14 states and Washington, D.C., with a mix of full- and part-time roles supporting seasonal and tourism-driven markets. While many teammates work in plants and warehouses, a significant portion of the workforce is mobile or field-based, spending their days in trucks, stores, and customer locations. This distributed operating model makes it challenging to reach frontline teammates through traditional communication and HR support approaches. At the same time, Coca-Cola Consolidated competes head-to-head with major logistics and e-commerce employers for highly skilled and licensed specialists such as CDL drivers, warehouse operators, merchandisers, and field technicians in already-tight local labor markets.

Speed: High-Volume Hiring and Fluctuating Demand

The scale of Coca-Cola Consolidated's operations, combined with the scarcity of skilled talent, intensifies competition for frontline workers and heightens the need to quickly hire and ramp up thousands of teammates each year while aligning staffing levels with fluctuating demand. The organization must move quickly to ensure that safety, quality, and customer service are not compromised.

However, Coca-Cola Consolidated's objective is not simply to staff the operation at speed, but to do so in a way that creates a sustainable, engaging employee experience rather than a revolving door. "Our biggest challenge isn't just filling roles—it's ensuring our frontline teammates feel supported, capable, and confident, and that they see a long-term future with our organization," said Todd Miller, Vice President, HR-Organizational Capability at Coca-Cola Consolidated.

Capability: Rising Complexity and Shifting Expectations

Many frontline roles are physically demanding and increasingly complex, especially in manufacturing, logistics, and equipment services, where automation, digital tools, and evolving regulatory requirements are reshaping work. Skilled-trades talent—including manufacturing mechanics, diesel technicians, and refrigeration and cooling equipment specialists—is in short supply, both within Coca-Cola Consolidated and across the broader labor market, deepening capability gaps. At the same time, frontline expectations, particularly among younger generations, have shifted toward meaningful work, visible career growth, and strong leadership.

Incremental adaptations were no longer enough. Coca-Cola Consolidated needed a step-change transformation that would redesign frontline careers, embed learning and support into everyday work, and invest heavily in leadership. Together, these challenges around scale, speed, and capability created a unified strategic priority: how to design and communicate a compelling frontline experience—and then deliver that experience consistently at scale.

Strategic Promises and Integrated Talent Practices

Coca-Cola Consolidated anchored its frontline transformation in an employee value promise (EVP) that clearly defines what a compelling career at the company looks and feels like. The company intentionally used the nomenclature "employee value promise" rather than "employee value proposition" to signal a commitment, not merely a proposition, to what employees can expect from their careers. The EVP also creates shared accountability across the organization for helping teammates reach their full potential.

This promise is operationalized through a deliberate marketing strategy that reaches current and prospective employees and an integrated talent engine that delivers on the EVP at every touchpoint in the talent lifecycle, from recruitment and onboarding to development, advancement, and long-term career growth.

A Clear Career Promise, Communicated with Intention

Guided by six core commitments, the EVP promises a career at Coca-Cola Consolidated where every teammate feels inspired, empowered, rewarded, developed, connected, and supported. This promise comes to life through targeted messaging, compelling imagery, and *Behind the Bottle* videos that showcase the career journeys of frontline teammates. It appears throughout EVP collateral and is reinforced in recruitment campaigns such as Refresh Your Career and Uncap Your Potential, positioning the company as a place to build a career, not just hold a job (see Figure 1 on the next page).

FIGURE 1: Coca-Cola Consolidated's EVP

EMPLOYEE VALUE PROMISE



● Be Inspired

We aspire to have a culture that inspires you to serve others in reaching their fullest potential, all while achieving your own.

● Be Empowered

We encourage all Teammates to share feedback and ideas to make an impact as part of our increasingly diverse team.

● Be Rewarded

We offer competitive pay and comprehensive benefits and rewards to our Teammates for the vital work they do.

● Be Developed

We provide ample opportunities for you to learn, grow and achieve your career goals.

● Be Connected

We believe it's essential for our Teammates to feel a sense of belonging and bring their whole selves to work.

● Be Supported

We support each other's well-being and build strong, supportive relationships with a One Team mindset



Source: Coca-Cola Consolidated, 2026

Coca-Cola Consolidated reinforces a clear narrative of opportunity, growth, and shared accountability throughout the organization, helping teammates realize their full potential. Consistent messaging brings the EVP to life across recruiting materials, apprenticeship flyers, employee bulletin boards, internal communications, and the company's internal channel, One Team, ensuring a unified experience at every touchpoint.

"How you communicate, when you communicate, and where you communicate are really important. We've taken it on as a deliberate operating principle in the talent space, but also as a total HR organization, to ensure that our message is consistent, simple, repeatable, and actionable," said Miller.

An Integrated Frontline Talent Engine

To make the EVP actionable, Coca-Cola Consolidated built an integrated talent strategy that unites talent

acquisition, talent development, and learning and leadership development into a single execution-driven frontline talent engine. This model operationalizes the EVP through systemic talent practices that shape work, develop leaders, invest in learning, and create rewarding career opportunities across the organization. Several practices illustrate how the company translates its EVP into a consistent, compelling frontline journey.

Onboarding as a Yearlong Experience

Coca-Cola Consolidated designed a structured onboarding program with milestones spanning day one, the first 100 days, and the full first year of employment. On day one, each new teammate participates in a virtual welcome session that introduces the company's purpose, culture, products, teammates, and the broader Coca-Cola system and brand partners. The experience is reinforced through

a video-based learning module, *The Secret Ingredient: It's Teammates*. New hires also begin role-specific onboarding through a learning management system and structured on-the-job shadowing focused on safety, customer service, quality, and core responsibilities.

During the first 100 days, teammates follow a structured, role-based curriculum that blends e-learning, on-the-job training, and regular leader coaching to accelerate proficiency and reinforce safety. Frontline leaders regularly work alongside teammates in the field and in stores, observing work firsthand, providing real-time feedback, and embedding standard work and expectations into daily routines.

Coca-Cola Consolidated deepens learning by taking teammates out of their regular environment for two-day experiential sessions at one of its seven regional learning centers. These centers replicate real-world retail stores and operational settings—such as grocery aisles, gas station coolers, and in-store displays—and provide scenario-based training focused on safety, quality, customer service, sales, and product handling (see Figure 2).

Teammates practice in low-risk, highly realistic environments and are fully paid for their time, travel, and meals, ensuring they never have to choose between learning and earning. Leaders continue with regular one-on-one coaching throughout the year. By the end of the first year, teammates have experienced a structured learning journey that combines immersive practice and ongoing leadership support designed to build proficiency and enable internal career growth.

Visible Career Paths and Long-Term Pipelines

Coca-Cola Consolidated invests heavily in visible, structured pathways that help build a strong pipeline of future leaders and highly skilled or licensed specialists.

To ensure a steady leadership pipeline, the company recruits and selects participants both internally and externally for its 15-month Field Management Trainee program. Trainees rotate through production, warehouse, delivery, merchandising, sales, and equipment services, followed by a 9-month interim assignment leading a small team as a supervisor. Throughout the program, trainees work on real projects, receive frequent coaching, and gain direct exposure to senior leaders.

FIGURE 2: One of Seven Regional Learning Centers



Source: Coca-Cola Consolidated, 2026

Upon completion, they transition into full-time frontline leadership roles such as supervisor or district sales manager. This immersive model develops leaders with a deep understanding of the entire value chain, preparing them to step confidently into critical frontline leadership roles (see Figure 3).

To address skilled-trades shortages and a scarce technician workforce, the company partners with technical schools and community colleges to offer earn-and-learn apprenticeships in manufacturing mechanics, equipment services, and diesel mechanics. Apprentices attend school full-time while working part-time in operational roles. Tuition, books, and approved

FIGURE 3: The Field Management Trainee Program



Coca-Cola CONSOLIDATED

FIELD MANAGEMENT TRAINEE 15-MONTH ROTATIONAL PROGRAM

WHAT YOU'LL EXPERIENCE

- End-to-End Business Exposure: See how our business works across functions and connect the dots.
- Real Projects and Feedback: Do meaningful work, get coached often, and grow fast.
- Access to Leaders: Build relationships and learn from experienced leaders.
- A Clear Next Step: Finish ready for a full-time, frontline leadership role that fits your strengths.

CAREER PATHWAYS	BENEFITS	PROGRAM STRUCTURE
Supervisor, Delivery Supervisor, Production Supervisor, Warehouse Supervisor, Technical Services District Sales Manager And more!	• Competitive salary • Health, dental, and vision insurance • Mileage reimbursement • Career advancement opportunities upon successful performance and program completion	Rotational Training - 6 months Production • Warehouse • Delivery • Merchandising • Sales • Equipment Services • Learning Summits Rotational Training - 9 months Train as an interim supervisor in a dedicated function, leading a small team to build people-leadership skills.

Start Your Leadership Journey!

UNCAP YOUR POTENTIAL

Work4COKE.com

BE CONNECTED • BE SUPPORTED • BE INSPIRED • BE REWARDED • BE DEVELOPED • BE EMPOWERED

Coca-Cola CONSOLIDATED

Two employees, a man and a woman, are looking at a laptop screen together.

Source: Coca-Cola Consolidated, 2026

costs are paid directly to the institution, and participants follow a structured pathway into full-time employment upon completion (see Figure 4).

Technology as an Enabler of Frontline Work

Coca-Cola Consolidated invests in technology to enable frontline workers to perform day-to-day work effectively and safely, while also building the capabilities needed to use it successfully. This commitment begins from the moment they express interest in a role. “Fizz,” the company’s conversational AI hiring assistant powered by Paradox, engages candidates around the clock via text-based chat—automating screening and scheduling—to fast-track hiring while building a compelling candidate experience.

In warehouse operations, tablets mounted on forklifts direct pickers to the right locations and quantities, replacing paper-based processes with real-time digital instructions. Sales teams use tablets and handhelds that surface customer buying habits, recommend next actions, and support seamless communication with delivery teams through shared notes.

In automated warehouse environments, technology reshapes rather than replaces frontline roles. Work shifts toward higher-skill responsibilities that require new capabilities to ensure systems operate efficiently and effectively.

To support this transition, the company systematically trains teammates to use digital tools as part of standard work and reinforces adoption through leader-delivered coaching.

FIGURE 4: The Earn-and-Learn Apprenticeship Program

Start your journey with us.

Coca-Cola Consolidated Apprenticeship
Every bottle is an open door.

Earn while you learn with the Nation's largest Coca-Cola bottler

Career Pathways

- Manufacturing Mechanic
- Equipment Services Technician (HVAC, plumbing, & Electrical Skills)
- Diesel Mechanic with Red Classic Transportation, a subsidiary company of Coke Consolidated

EEO Employer/Vet/Disabled
Must be 18+ years old to apply

Uncap your potential

Be Rewarded

- Employee Assistance Program
- Mentorship at work and school
- Tuition, books, & costs paid to school
- Professional & Leadership Development

Be Inspired

- Consumer Engagement - Innovative partnerships alongside Coca-Cola North America.
- Sustainability - Package recycling, water leadership, & climate protection.
- One Team - Everyone has a seat at the table.
- Community Impact - Giving back to the communities where we live and work.

www.work4COKE.com

Source: Coca-Cola Consolidated, 2026

The company continuously updates learning programs to reflect evolving roles and technologies, grounded in a 70-20-10 development model: 70% hands-on experience, 20% social learning, and 10% formal instruction.

Listening, Wellbeing, and Care

Coca-Cola Consolidated strives to create an exceptional teammate experience by fostering a culture rooted in care and support.

Care begins with structured listening. The company's annual pulse survey consistently achieves completion rates above 80%, despite a largely mobile, deskless workforce, giving leaders a strong, data-driven view of frontline needs. At each site, designated "pulse partners" help drive engagement by promoting the survey and building excitement around participation, framing it as a high-energy, event-like moment while making access easy via mobile devices and kiosks at distribution hubs.

Just as important, leaders close the loop by sharing key themes from what they have heard and communicating the actions being taken in response, reinforcing trust and encouraging continued participation. For example, when teammates shared uncertainty around growth and development opportunities, Coca-Cola Consolidated responded by launching Uncap Your Potential pop-up events at local sites. During these events, L&D business partners guided teammates through career tools, internal opportunities, and real examples of colleagues who have advanced within the organization.

The company further strengthens the "supported" dimension of its EVP with a robust care infrastructure. Chaplains are available at every location, meeting teammates where they are—on docks, in plants, and in break rooms—to provide confidential personal support and ensure access to help during difficult moments. The company deploys a dedicated Rapid Response Team during crises to deliver immediate assistance, reinforcing its commitment to standing by teammates and customers when they need it most. Onsite physical therapists support injured teammates in safely returning to work, while customizable benefits and mental health resources round out a holistic wellbeing offer.

Developing the "Critical Middle"

Coca-Cola Consolidated refers to its 1,700-plus frontline people leaders as the critical middle, recognizing their pivotal role in shaping the teammate experience, and invests heavily in their continuous development. As part of its Foundations of Leadership series, frontline leaders participate in three formal learning trimesters each year, focused on topics such as communication, situational leadership, motivation and inspiration, leading remote or dispersed teams, and goal-setting and accountability (see Figure 5 on the next page). This structured curriculum is reinforced through on-demand learning resources and AI-enabled simulations that allow leaders to rehearse difficult coaching and performance conversations in a safe, controlled environment.

The Measurable Impact of Frontline Excellence

Coca-Cola Consolidated's frontline strategy is delivering clear and measurable returns. The company generated strong hiring momentum at scale, supported by a 94% offer-acceptance rate, while also enabling significant internal mobility, reflected in a 41% promotion rate across leadership programs. Together, these outcomes demonstrate the impact of its Employee Value Promise in action, reinforcing frontline roles as pathways to enduring careers.

Since 2022, the company has reduced annual turnover by 13 percentage points for full-time teammates and 52 percentage points for part-time teammates—highlighting the effects of sustained investment in the frontline experience. These improvements are a powerful reminder of how intentional workforce strategies can strengthen retention, deepen commitment, and support long-term career stability.

Employee engagement has also reached 82% companywide, with even higher scores among people leaders, while the company continues to deliver strong year-over-year performance. Together, these results reinforce a broader conclusion: meaningful investment in frontline teammates strengthens not only the employee experience, but also the long-term performance and resilience of the business.

FIGURE 5: Continuous Development for Frontline Managers



Source: Coca-Cola Consolidated, 2026

Lessons Learned

- **Treat the employee value proposition as a value promise.** Define it as a set of explicit operational commitments the organization is willing to be accountable for.
- **Build an integrated talent engine rather than isolated programs.** Support teammates from day one through their careers, with aligned talent practices at every stage.
- **Overinvest in the critical middle.** Recognize that frontline leaders shape the day-to-day employee experience and that systematic development of this group can significantly improve retention and performance.
- **Listen and respond with tangible actions.** Closing the loop builds trust and reinforces that employee voice meaningfully influences decisions.

About the Author



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Nehal is senior director of research at The Josh Bersin Company, where she leads empirical research on all talent management topics, with a deep focus on frontline workforce strategies. She brings nearly 20 years of experience in human capital research, advisory services, and consulting in talent management, L&D, leadership, performance management, employment value proposition, and inclusion. She previously led the global advisory practice at Deloitte, where she provided consultative advice to global HR and talent leaders on advancing key talent priorities. Nehal has also led deployments of Gartner's benchmarking and diagnostic products for the EMEA, APAC, and ANZ regions. She has a master's degree in psychology, an advanced specialization in AI, and the Global Professional in Human Resources (GPHR®) certification. Nehal lives in India.

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