



THE WORK CHOICE SURVEY

Summary results

An investigation into Employer of Choice issues

Discovering why people really choose employers is central to the WorkChoice survey and part of our pursuit to get to the bottom of what an ‘Employer of Choice’ is all about. These are the summary results of a pilot study to discover what lies at the heart of employees’ expectations for their careers and their employers.

Increasingly we are trying to move away from the term “Employer Brand” and replace it with the more accurate and readily understood description: “Employer Reputation”. The key dimension which drives reputation is what employees look for from their employers and in turn, how that employer meets those expectations. Put all those elements together and you have what constitutes an “Employer of Choice”. McKinsey in their original War for Talent research believed that talent was attracted to organisations, which could claim to be great companies, offering great jobs at appropriate levels of remuneration. We believe that is true, and have developed this theory by adding easily understood dimensions to make the constituent parts of “Employer of Choice” more readily understood to audiences within any organisation.

Organisational success depends on having a stable, talented and committed workforce. The ability to detect employee commitment and retention problems before it’s too late is critical and recently the idea of employee engagement has received much more attention. Research has shown that fully engaged employees tend to be more motivated, productive, conscientious and have higher levels of organisational commitment. Furthermore, several research initiatives (e.g. CIPD, Gallup and the Institute of Employment Studies) report a strong correlation between engagement and the organisation’s bottom line.

This pilot WorkChoice survey is the first step in our pursuit to offer the employer the ability to discover what motivates and engages their employees. We aim to empower employers by providing the means to understand what workforces want from their employer, thereby helping the organisation meet those expectations. This, in turn, will go towards preventing disengagement and the consequent productivity and turnover implications.

A series of focus groups were conducted which provided an initial pool of 40 factors identified as being significant to the employee. From these, 42 questions were devised to form the survey. Questions relating to the individual and their role within the organisation were also identified for inclusion.

We selected employers across a range of sectors and industries, inviting them to be part of the research and asking each to invite their employees to complete the survey. Every participating employer was then issued with a confidential and organisation-specific URL link to the questionnaire, which acted as the gateway to complete the survey. This was given to each organisation, which then sent it via email to their selected employees. No specific criteria were issued relating to the sample numbers, demographics and status of the targeted employees, and participation was strictly on a voluntary basis.

Responses to the 42 items were based on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from Very Strongly Agree to Very Strongly Disagree and employees were asked to identify their degree of agreement or disagreement to each of the statements by clicking on the relevant node. Responses to the biographical and role-specific questions were by selecting the most relevant answer from the drop-down box.

Responses were logged as they were submitted via the website and held in a master database, prior to data analysis.

It was surprising (even for a communications company) to discover that **'openness in communications'** was the highest-rated single factor (albeit by a small margin), although perhaps the most unexpected single finding was that **'acceptable pace and stress'** rated so lowly. However anecdotal comments from employers with whom the results have been shared do point to the view that the majority of studies relating to stress in the workplace tend to focus on the subject itself, rather than its relative importance to the other features of working life.

In general, the highest-rated factors were in the **Culture** and **Job** clusters. While **Environment** and **Company** issues seemed of least importance. Variances did occur, the most interesting of which were:

- Respondents aged under 30 ranked **'The opportunity to learn new things'** as the most important factor, whereas those over 40 rated it only 14th.
- For the more senior respondents (ranked by salary) issues such as **'Participative style in decision making'** and **'Inspiring corporate mission'** were more important, whereas more junior respondents placed a higher value on **'Respect for lifestyle'** and an **'Egalitarian, single status culture'**
- **'Opportunity to learn new things'** was valued more highly by those with less length of service (#3 under 1 year; #2 1-2 years) whereas for those with more than 5 years experience, it rated only 13th. However for that group of longer servers, **'Seeing the results of my work'** was the most highly rated factor.
- For respondents based in London **'Rewards for exceptional performance'** is ranked top, whereas for respondents based in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland it is rated only 10th. It is also worthy of note that respondents in London ranked the **'Opportunity to learn new things'** 3rd, whereas those in the Midlands rated it only 14th.

The survey also caused us to re-think some of our earlier focus group research. Specifically, that meant grouping the factors into five main clusters for analysis purposes, as well as re-classifying some of the factors themselves. This accounts for some clusters only containing 4 factors while another has 13.

For managers (and particularly HR managers) there is a clear message to perhaps concentrate on more of the behavioural aspects within work, together with ensuring jobs are intrinsically interesting and clearly measured, while fretting less about cafeteria-based benefits, flexible working practices and corporate social responsibility (for this, see also The Economist 22 January 2005).

For a full copy of this report, or if you are interested in participating in future surveys, please email stephen.allen@workcomms.com.