

2009 Employee Job Satisfaction

Understanding the Factors That Make Work Gratifying

Executive Summary:

Has the U.S. Recession Affected Employee Job Satisfaction?

Research indicates that employees who are satisfied with their jobs are more likely to stay with their employers. According to this survey, 86% of employees indicated overall satisfaction with their current position, with 41% of employees reporting they were very satisfied. What's more, majority of employees (58%) reported that the current economic climate has not made any difference in their level of satisfaction—and this is good news for employers, especially during the economically challenging time.

It is not surprising that during the current economic downturn, which some have compared to the 1929 Great Depression, employees selected job security for the second consecutive year as the most important aspect of their job satisfaction. It was also at the top of HR professionals' list this year for the first time. *Benefits, compensation/pay, opportunities to use skills and abilities and feeling safe in the work environment* rounded off employees' top five very important job satisfaction contributors—nearly identical to the top five of 2008 (see Table 1).

Factors that were not strongly connected to employees' overall job satisfaction were *organization's commitment to a 'green' workplace, networking, career development opportunities, paid training and tuition reimbursement programs, and organization's commitment to professional development.*

Other noteworthy findings include the following:

- ◆ Employees whose organizations had been somewhat affected by the current financial crisis were more satisfied overall with their current jobs compared with

employees whose organizations had been greatly affected by the recession.

- ◆ Nearly three out of 10 employees were very satisfied with their compensation/pay.
- ◆ The most common methods companies used to measure and monitor employee job satisfaction were exit interviews, feedback from employees' performance reviews, speaking with employees on an individual basis, tracking turnover data and conducting employee attitude surveys.

What Do These Findings Mean for Employers?

- ◆ **Conduct Environmental Scanning:** Identifying the external forces or trends that affect the organization is an integral part of the organization's strategic plan. Through a process called environmental scanning, organizations systematically gather and analyze all relevant data about external opportunities and threats that may affect them at present and in the future. Examples of external forces include changing demographics, economic conditions, emerging marketplaces, advances in technology and increased global competition. Organizations can then use these data to evaluate their mission/vision, develop goals and develop/train employees.

- ◆ **Tap Into Available Talent:** Opportunities to use skills and abilities were ranked among the top five aspects of job satisfaction for employees. Employee development will likely take a higher priority for organizations in the near future. Although the job market might appear to be saturated due to the cur-

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rent downturn in the economy, several demographic trends (e.g., Baby Boomers retiring around the same time, aging population and shortage of highly skilled workers) will have a major impact on the workplace over the next decade, particularly on talent management. HR professionals are in a position to prepare their organizations for the future by developing programs that will motivate, develop and boost skill levels of employees. Cross-training, mentoring, volunteering, etc., are low-cost programs that organizations can adopt during times of fiscal constraints.

◆ **Open the Communication Door:** HR professionals have always rated factors from “the relationship with management” category of job satisfaction aspects among their top five contributors to employee job satisfaction. Effective communication between senior management and employees is important. It will help employees understand the organization’s business goals, policies and vision, and keep employees informed about what is going on in the organization. Senior management can keep employees well-informed through companywide meetings and the use of technology in top-to-bottom communications (e.g., CEO blog, intranet mechanisms and e-mails). Organizations should also encourage communication from the bottom-up through employee feedback, suggestions, etc.