

From HR Magazine

Only One Worker in Four Says Job Is Major Source of Happiness

7/2/2010

By SHRM Online staff

Slightly more than one-fourth of 509 U.S. workers find a major source of happiness and fulfillment in their job, according to survey findings released June 22, 2010.

For 60 percent, it's basically a source of income that allows them to enjoy other aspects of their life, reported Virginia-based Healthy Companies International.

Among the findings from a nationwide phone survey conducted in May 2010:

- Greatest job satisfaction was among those in mid-career—30 percent of those ages 45 to 54 feel fulfilled, vs. 25 percent of those ages 18 to 34.
- Men were slightly more likely than women to feel fulfilled in their jobs—28 percent and 24 percent, respectively.
- Income tends to correlate with a sense of job fulfillment—32 percent of those making \$75,000 or more said their job was a major source of happiness, vs. 17 percent of those earning less than \$25,000.
- Education also is a factor—41 percent of those who completed college report job satisfaction, vs. 20 percent of those with a high school education or less.
- Few said their job was mostly a drain on their energy and happiness—only 11 percent.

"People spend half their waking hours at work, and it's a shame if they feel unconnected or indifferent to what they do," said Stephen Parker, chief commercial officer of Healthy Companies.

"Many companies are obviously getting just a modest or minimal discretionary effort from their workforce," he said in a news release. "If, on the other hand, organizations were able to lift job satisfaction by just 5 or 10 percent, it would pay off in very real terms."

Even taking small steps has the potential to raise job satisfaction among employees, according to Parker.

"In some cases, leaders need to connect workers with the key roles they play in fulfilling the company's mission and in serving the higher purpose that great companies seek to achieve," he said. That includes recognizing employee contributions, letting employees know how their values fit with the company's values, encouraging employees to use their natural talents and giving them opportunities to collaborate more with colleagues.

Another recent survey, by global talent management firm OI Partners, found that employers are growing concerned about employees leaving, and the cost to replace them. It cited U.S. government statistics indicating that more workers left their jobs voluntarily in February, March and April 2010 than were laid off.

This means that employers are at a greater risk of losing good workers as hiring opens up. A [Manpower Inc. survey](#) of more than 18,000 U.S. employers showed that 18 percent of those employers expect an increase in staff levels in the third quarter of 2010, vs. 8 percent who expect a

decrease in payrolls.

"Companies have to demonstrate to employees that they are valued by investing in their career development, or they may lose them," OI Partners Chairman Tim Schoonover said in a news release.

Although the survey of 262 companies did not address the issue of job satisfaction and fulfillment, OI Partners noted that hiring or promoting the wrong executives and managers can damage employee morale, lower productivity and prompt higher turnover.

"Companies need to adopt an effective talent management strategy to identify, develop and retain top talent and ensure that employees are achieving their full potential," Schoonover said.

OI said that the companies surveyed used the following methods to retain managers and executives:

- In-house coaches and trainers: 67 percent for retaining managers; 52 percent for retaining executives.
- Better compensation and benefits: 43 percent, managers; 45 percent, executives.
- Mentoring programs: 27 percent, managers.
- Outside coaching firms: 33 percent, executives.
- Offering stock options: 28 percent, executives.

"The survey," Schoonover said, "demonstrates that businesses need to focus on coaching executives and managers in motivating employees, engaging them in their jobs more fully, and promoting better teamwork."