

Community Audit for Western Wisconsin



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The Community Audit was funded through the Western Wisconsin Workforce Development Board, Inc. from a grant from the United States Department of Labor. The survey was administered by Workforce Connections, Inc. Requests for additional copies can be made through Workforce Connections, Inc. If there are any questions, concerns, or requests for in-depth analysis or specific information for data from the survey, please feel free to contact Beth Sullivan, Director of Planning and Marketing at Workforce Connections, Inc., 402 N. 8th Street, P.O. Box 2908, La Crosse, WI 54602-2908 or call 608-789-5610.

Dear Western Wisconsin Employers:

Retaining a workforce is a key component to success of every private or public business. What are the most important factors in workforce retention? Not surprising, wages are high on the list, but wages are not always the most important factor.

The Western Wisconsin Workforce Development Board, Inc. (WDB) and Workforce Connections, Inc. are extremely pleased to publish a cumulative Community Audit Report for western Wisconsin. This project was made possible through a grant from United States Department of Labor.

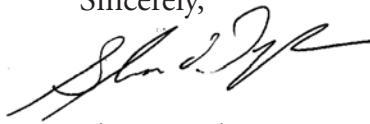
Workforce Connections, Inc. staff surveyed area employees in an eight-county Western Wisconsin Workforce Development Area regarding issues considered to be important for staying with their job. The October-December 2002 survey, targeted employers with high levels of vacant jobs and industries with a high presence in the area.

The Community Audit surveyed 3,651 employees from such industry sectors including manufacturing, health care, retail trade, education, transportation, communication, finance, and public administration. A total of 75 employers took part in this audit.

The results of this audit will be used by the WDB to plan strategies for employee retention. Individual reports were also given to each participating employer.

On behalf of the WDB and Workforce Connections, Inc. we would like to thank Bill Brockmiller, Labor Market Analyst, for his help with initiating this project and all participating employers and employees who helped make this audit possible.

Sincerely,



Shon Doyle
WDB Chairperson



Jerry Hanoski
Workforce Connections, Inc.
Executive Director

Background

The United States Department of Labor awarded the Western Wisconsin Workforce Development Board, Inc. (WDB) and Workforce Connections, Inc., as the fiscal and administrative agent for the WDB, a grant to conduct a Community Audit. The WDB identified that the greatest need or “gap” in services in western Wisconsin is a pool of qualified applicants to fill jobs.

This labor shortage has increased the importance of employers retaining the individuals that they currently employ. In western Wisconsin, there had never been a statistical study of what actually contributes to an employee remaining in his or her current employment, although there were retention theories. The Community Audit was designed to flush out actual retention factors.

During a testing phase conducted prior to the survey, three factors continually appeared: wages, benefits, and meaningful work. The employee or retention survey was designed to determine the importance of these factors along with other factors including: promotional opportunities, flexibility, location, coworkers, and opportunity to gain new skills. Employees were asked to rank the eight factors and to respond to other questions created to identify other work-related motivators and satisfaction factors such as: satisfaction with current wages and benefits, utilization of current skills and abilities, sense of meaningful work, and motivation.

Survey distribution methods included: on-site administration, inserts in paychecks, or mailed with a business reply envelope. Information that was collected was compiled for each individual company in a report. Over 3,650 employees in western Wisconsin responded to the survey, representing approximately 75 employers. Employers were solicited for participation in a manner to reflect the industry mix relative to that of western Wisconsin.

Members of each organization’s management were also surveyed to uncover discrepancies that could be used to refocus activities to add value to the work of the employees. Participants in this survey were asked to predict how they expected their employees to respond to the questions on the retention survey. In the overall survey, major discrepancies did not appear, but in some specific companies’ employee and management rankings did not coincide.

There were five sections in the survey:

- Demographics
- Ranking of eight retention factors
- Rating of importance of 17 factors
- Determination of motivational factors
- Questions on specific job satisfaction and retention

Ranking of retention factors and importance were done on the mean (average) score and not the percentage of agreement with each answer. This was done to allow for comparative ranking among factors when asked using different scales.

There were two main scales used in the survey. The first scale ranked the relative importance of eight factors. Employees were asked to rate these factors on a scale of '1' to '8' with '1' being the most important and '8' being the least important. For the eight factors, a specific numeral ranking could only be used once. Any responses with duplicate ratings were considered non-responses. For example, if a person rated 'wages' as '1' and 'location' as '1,' both would be rated as non-responses for that particular survey, as there was no way to ascertain the relative importance of either statement.

When more factors were introduced, employees were asked to rate each factor as '1=Very Important,' '2=Important,' '3=Unimportant,' '4=Very Unimportant,' and '5=Not Applicable.' 'Not Applicable' was considered to be a non-response, as it was not considered in computing the mean score.

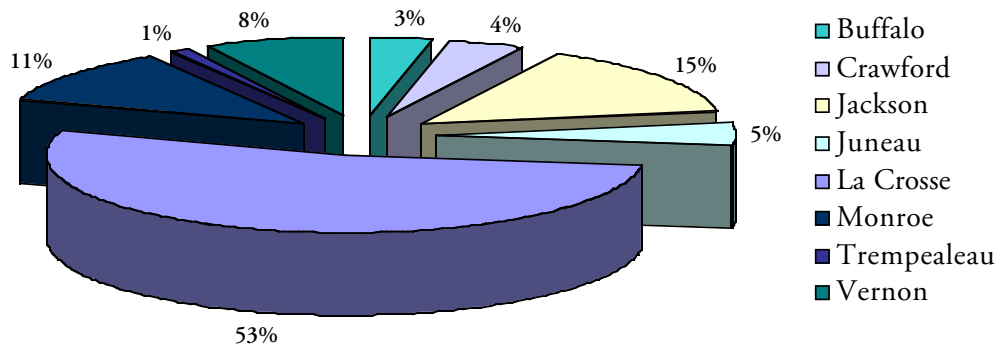
Note: The following report is a comprehensive summary of the findings for the region.

- The overall results are statistically accurate with a 99 percent confidence level and a 2.5 percent margin of error.
- Individual county results (except for Trempealeau County) are at least 90 percent accurate with an 8 percent margin of error. La Crosse County results were 99 percent accurate with a 5 percent margin of error.
- Sector results (except for transportation) were 90 percent accurate with a 8 percent margin of error.
- For other demographics, the results give an overview of the opinions of those in the demographic group.

Demographics

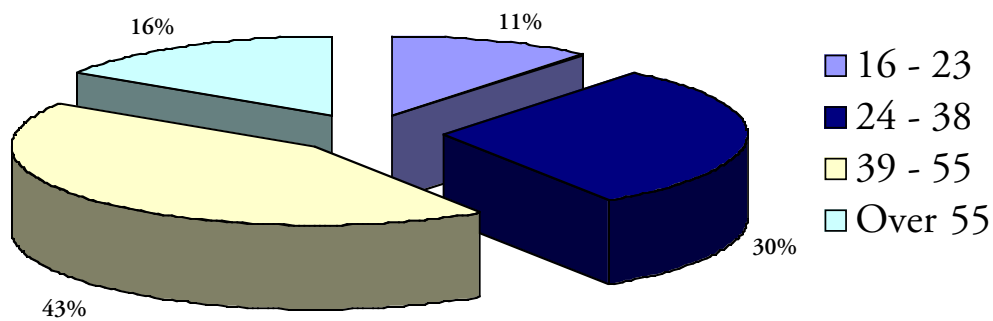
Demographics were chosen in order to analyze the survey on different levels. Surveys were distributed in the western Wisconsin eight-county region including: Buffalo, Crawford, Jackson, Juneau, La Crosse, Monroe, Trempealeau, and Vernon Counties. Survey respondents selected their county of employment rather than their county of residence for consistency with current labor market information.

Counties



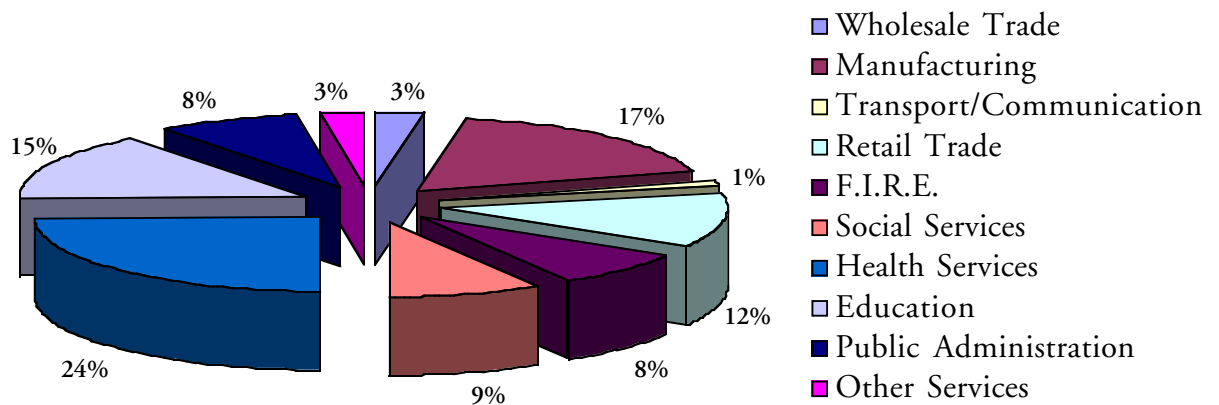
The survey tracked the age of respondents to determine if differences in job retention priorities existed. Results also showed that satisfaction with one's job and job retention were related. Ages were selected to roughly coincide with current census data.

Age



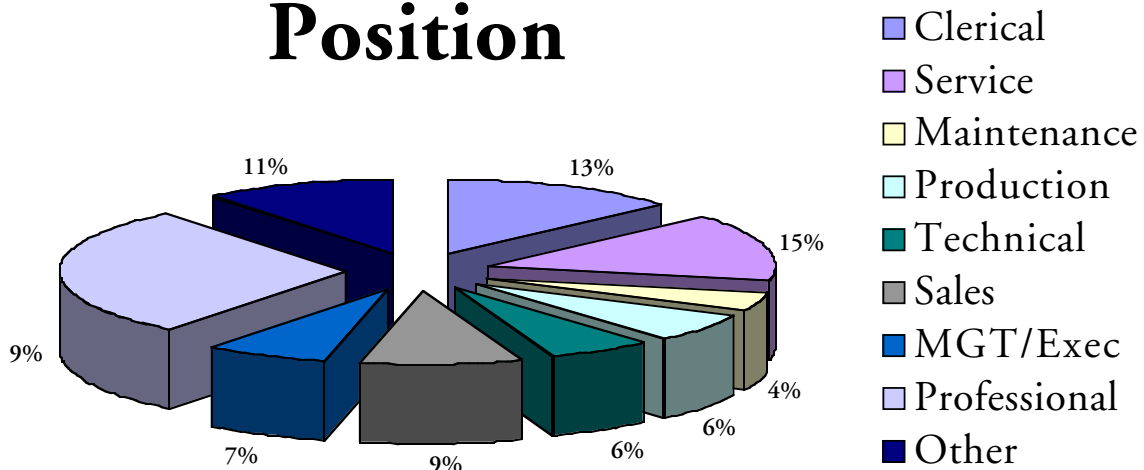
Participating businesses were coded by Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) code to identify industry sectors. These sectors included: Wholesale Trade, Manufacturing, Transportation/Communication, Retail Trade, Finance/Insurance/Real Estate (F.I.R.E.), Social Services, Health Services, Education, Public Administration, and Other Services.

Industry



Respondents within each sector further identified their specific position within their organization. Positions included: Clerical/Support, Service, Maintenance, Production/Assembly, Technical, Sales, Managerial/Executive, Professional, and Other.

Position



Employment Factors

Overall Results

Respondents were asked to rank a set of eight factors as to their relative importance in decisions to remain at current employment. A ranking of '1' was the most important factor while '8' was the lowest factor. Mean (average) scores were computed for each factor. The factor with the mean score closest to a '1' was determined to be the most important factor.

It is interesting to see that all mean scores were above the average score of 4.5 and were within one and one-half points apart. This would indicate that no one factor was deemed as being overwhelmingly important or unimportant. Further, the spread of scores among 'wages,' 'benefits,' and 'meaningful work' was approximately one-half of a percentage point (0.54). This low spread indicates that when determining whether or not to remain employed in a current job, respondents factor the three almost equally.

	Overall
<i>Wages</i>	<i>2.27</i>
<i>Benefits</i>	<i>2.53</i>
<i>Meaningful work</i>	<i>2.81</i>
<i>Location (proximity to home, school, etc.)</i>	<i>3.17</i>
<i>Flexibility</i>	<i>3.19</i>
<i>Co-workers</i>	<i>3.62</i>
<i>Opportunities to gain new skills/training</i>	<i>3.73</i>
<i>Opportunity for advancement</i>	<i>3.82</i>

Location Observations

When looking at the difference in ranking among those working in the differing counties, a few observations can be made:

- Those who work in Monroe County ranked 'meaningful work' as '1' and 'wages' as '2.'
- Those who work in Buffalo County ranked 'location' as '2,' while those working in Trempealeau County ranked 'location' as '1.'

Employment Factors

Sector Observations

For the most part, manufacturing mirrored the overall results. The most notable difference in the ranking of employment factors appeared among those in the education and social service sector. ‘Meaningful work’ was the most important factor, with ‘benefits’ and ‘wages’ close behind. However, the point spread for educators among the top three factors was even closer than the spread for the overall results (0.45).

	Overall	Education
<i>Meaningful work</i>	2.81	2.26
<i>Benefits</i>	2.53	2.54
<i>Wages</i>	2.27	2.66
<i>Location (proximity to home, school, etc.)</i>	3.17	3.23
<i>Flexibility</i>	3.19	3.47
<i>Co-workers</i>	3.62	3.70
<i>Opportunity for advancement</i>	3.82	3.86
<i>Opportunities to gain new skills/training</i>	3.73	4.05

The social service sector, which included non-profit and charitable organizations, also placed higher value on ‘meaningful work.’ This sector was also less concerned with ‘benefits’ than with ‘flexibility in scheduling.’

	Overall	Social Services
<i>Meaningful work</i>	2.81	2.29
<i>Wages</i>	2.27	2.59
<i>Flexibility</i>	3.19	2.77
<i>Benefits</i>	2.53	3.13
<i>Location (proximity to home, school, etc.)</i>	3.17	3.19
<i>Co-workers</i>	3.62	3.53
<i>Opportunities to gain new skills/training</i>	3.73	3.66
<i>Opportunity for advancement</i>	3.82	3.80

Employment Factors

Age Group Observations

Another cohort with notable differences were the age groups. While the rankings for the 39-54 age groups directly correlated with the overall rankings, in other age categories a few differences occurred.

16-23 Age Group

- Those 16-23 placed less value on ‘benefits’ and more value on ‘flexibility’. The rankings were ‘4’ and ‘2’ respectively.

	Overall	16-23
<i>Wages</i>	2.27	2.28
<i>Flexibility</i>	3.19	2.67
<i>Meaningful work</i>	2.81	2.78
<i>Benefits</i>	2.53	3.06
<i>Location (proximity to home, school, etc.)</i>	3.17	3.27
<i>Opportunities to gain new skills/training</i>	3.73	3.43
<i>Co-workers</i>	3.62	3.46
<i>Opportunity for advancement</i>	3.82	3.72

24-28 Age Group

- The 24-28 age group mirrored the overall results with the exception of preferring ‘flexibility’ to ‘location.’

	Overall	24-28
<i>Wages</i>	2.27	2.24
<i>Benefits</i>	2.53	2.60
<i>Meaningful work</i>	2.81	2.87
<i>Flexibility</i>	3.19	3.04
<i>Location (proximity to home, school, etc.)</i>	3.17	3.20
<i>Co-workers</i>	3.62	3.61
<i>Opportunities to gain new skills/training</i>	3.73	3.73
<i>Opportunity for advancement</i>	3.82	3.79

55 and Older Age Group

- Those 55 years of age and older ranked ‘benefits’ over ‘wages.’

	Overall	Over 55
<i>Benefits</i>	2.53	2.26
<i>Wages</i>	2.27	2.46
<i>Meaningful work</i>	2.81	2.73
<i>Location (proximity to home, school, etc.)</i>	3.17	3.12
<i>Flexibility</i>	3.19	3.56
<i>Co-workers</i>	3.62	3.62
<i>Opportunities to gain new skills/training</i>	3.73	3.87
<i>Opportunity for advancement</i>	3.82	3.89

Position Differences

Respondents were asked to identify their positions. In looking at the differences in ranking by positions, a few observations can be made:

- Generally, those in clerical and sales positions ranked ‘flexibility’ (‘2’) over ‘benefits’ (‘4’).
- Positions that place a higher emphasis on ‘new skills’ were those in the maintenance and technical positions.
- Maintenance workers placed the least value on ‘meaningful work’ of all respondents (‘5’) and the highest value on ‘co-workers’ (‘4’).

Retention Factor Summary

Overall Results

The next section of the survey introduced even more factors (17 in all). In this section, respondents were asked how important various factors were in decisions to remain employed at their present jobs. The scale was 'Very Important (1),' 'Important (2),' 'Unimportant (3),' 'Very Unimportant (4),' and 'Not Applicable (5).' The factors were ranked on the mean score; however, any 'Not Applicable' responses were considered a non-response and were not included in the computations.

While 'wages,' 'benefits,' and 'meaningful work' were included, the questions about these factors were varied to see if their importance would still hold. It is interesting to note that these three factors still appeared in the top five with even less spread between them.

Rank	Factor	Mean Score
1	<i>The availability of health insurance</i>	1.51
2	<i>Feeling valued and respected</i>	1.54
3	<i>Wages are comparable to similar positions elsewhere</i>	1.69
4	<i>Having a safe, comfortable workspace</i>	1.70
5	<i>Challenging, interesting work</i>	1.71
6	<i>Making a meaningful contribution</i>	1.72
7	<i>The people I work with</i>	1.75
8	<i>Quality of life in the area</i>	1.75
9	<i>Knowing there is someone to go to</i>	1.78
10	<i>The opportunity to gain new skills</i>	1.88
11	<i>Getting feedback from supervisors</i>	1.89
12	<i>The company's values match my personal values</i>	1.92
13	<i>Having a variety of duties</i>	1.98
14	<i>Having authority/autonomy in my job</i>	2.01
15	<i>The opportunity for promotion</i>	2.23
16	<i>Availability of reliable transportation</i>	2.26
17	<i>Child or dependent care is nearby</i>	2.56

Retention Factor Summary

Observations

Again, the education and social service sectors were those with the most notable differences.

- Employees in the education and social services sectors placed less value than others on ‘wages are comparable to similar positions elsewhere.’ While this factor was 3rd overall, education ranked it a ‘9’ and social services ranked it ‘11.’
- Those in education and social services placed higher value on ‘making a meaningful contribution’ than others. These sectors ranked the factors ‘3’ and ‘2’ respectively, while other sectors ranking ranged from ‘5’ (health care) to ‘12’ (retail). Clerical (‘9’) and maintenance (‘10’) positions also ranked this factor lower than the overall respondents.
- Age cohorts also showed differences. Those 16-23 year olds ranked ‘the availability of health insurance’ as ‘10’ out of the 17 factors.
- Of all the age cohorts, 16-23 year olds placed ‘getting feedback from supervisors’ the highest (‘8’); This was also a more important factor in the retail (‘7’) and social services sector (‘8’).
- Part-time workers and 16-23 year olds placed a higher value on ‘knowing there is someone to go to’ (‘3’) than other categories.

Transportation and childcare were included on the survey because those working in employment and training services see those as major barriers for those who struggle with entering the workforce. However, the availability of transportation as a factor in retention of respondent’s current job was ranked ‘14’ out of 17 factors, even in rural counties where transportation is not readily available. This finding may need more in-depth study since transportation in rural counties does seem to be a major factor in job retention.

Childcare or dependent care being near to the respondents workplace was ranked the lowest (‘17’) by all demographics, and those with dependents ranked this factor only slightly higher (‘15’). This may mean that the quality of childcare is of more importance than the location in relation to work.

The manufacturing industry again closely mirrored the overall results. These respondents placed a higher value on ‘quality of life’ (‘6’) and on ‘people I work with’ (‘4’).

Motivator Summary

To further check the importance of the three top factors ('wage,' 'benefits,' and 'meaningful work'), respondents were asked to list the factor that most motivated them to remain in their present jobs. Respondents could also identify any other motivating factor that may not have appeared on the list. In contrast to the other sections where each factor appeared in separate questions which were subsequently ranked, in this section the factors appeared as answers to a single question. Therefore, rankings were done by percentage of agreement rather than a mean score.

Overall Employee Motivators

<i>Sense of meaningful work</i>	<i>26.7%</i>
<i>Wages</i>	<i>21.8%</i>
<i>Benefits</i>	<i>20.4%</i>
<i>Co-workers</i>	<i>17.6%</i>
<i>Other factors not listed</i>	<i>7.4%</i>
<i>Supervisors</i>	<i>3.6%</i>
<i>Opportunities for advancement</i>	<i>2.6%</i>

Other factors that were listed included (in no particular order):

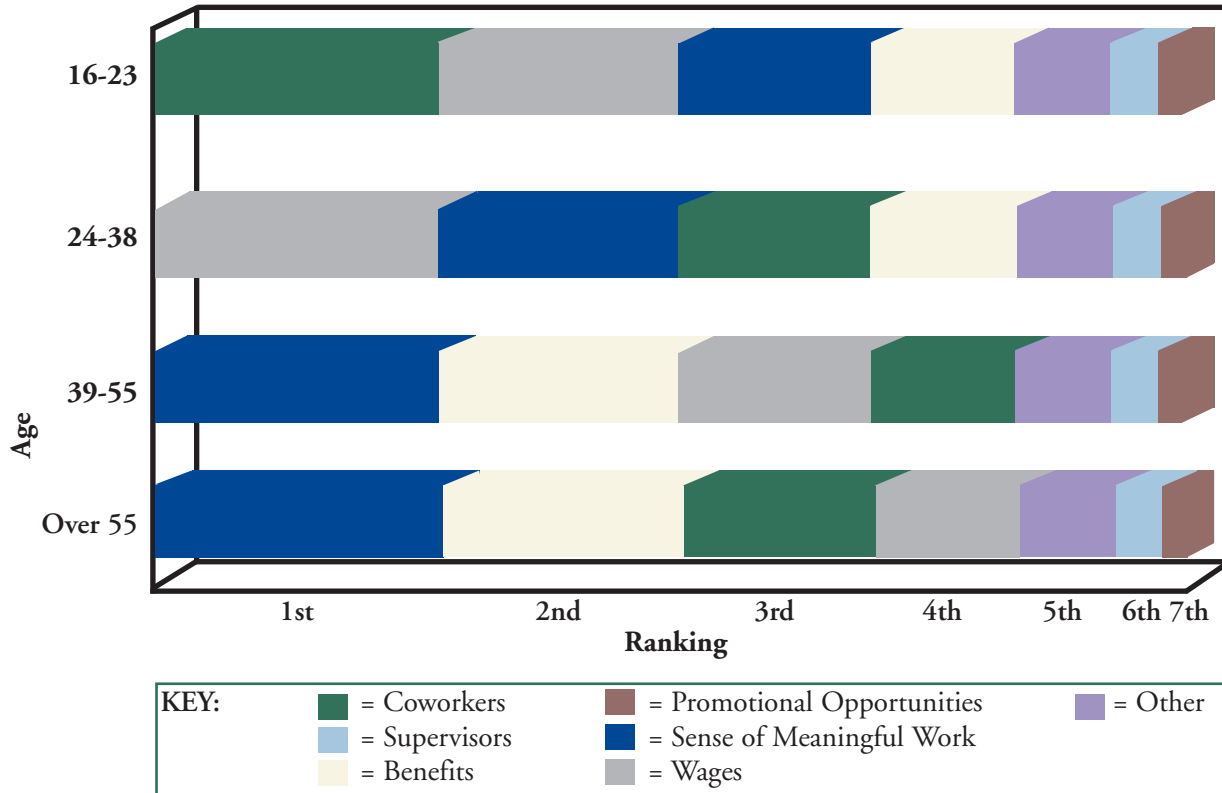
- Flexibility in scheduling
- Location (being close to home)
- Clients and/or customers
- Job satisfaction ("I like what I do")
- Job security

Appearing in the top factors again are 'sense of meaningful work,' 'wages,' and 'benefits.' It is also interesting to note, that 'flexibility' and 'location' are listed by respondents. These two factors appeared as number '4' and '5' in the initial ranking.

Age Group Observations

The most differences in motivating factors occurred among the age groups. The following table demonstrates the ranking by age cohorts:

Motivating Factors by Ranking



Sector Observations

- Employees in manufacturing were most motivated by ‘wages,’ ‘benefits,’ and ‘meaningful work.’
- Those in Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate were most motivated by ‘co-workers’ (‘11’), while ‘meaningful work’ was ‘2,’ ‘wages’ ‘3,’ and ‘benefits’ ‘4.’
- Public Administration employees were most motivated by ‘benefits.’

Retention Information

One section in the survey was devoted to specific questions about retention. The following table shows the percentage agreement to each of the questions:

Overall Retention Statistics	
92.7%	<i>Like their job</i>
89.7%	<i>Plan on staying in their current position</i>
86.6%	<i>Feel their job makes good use of their skills and abilities</i>
81.1%	<i>Feel being recognized is important for job satisfaction</i>
66.1%	<i>Said that wages are NOT more important than the work they do</i>

Observations

- Those in the education sector had the highest job satisfaction rate (96.4%) and the highest planned retention rate (94.2%).
- Job satisfaction increased as age cohorts got older. Respondents 16-23 years of ages reported 84.1% job satisfaction, which rose to 96.8% for those over 55.
- Respondents from the 16-23 age cohort reported the lowest planned retention rate (71.5%). Those in sales positions reported they were less likely to stay in their current position (79.7%) than those in other sectors.
- Employees aged 16-23 (78.3%), retail sector employees (76.3%), and those in production/assembly jobs (74.3%) were least likely to feel that their jobs made the best use of their skills and abilities; those in the education sector had the highest rating for this item (95.3%).
- Those in social service positions had the greatest percentage of employees who agreed that wages are not more important than the actual work. However, those in the retail, public administration, production, and sales sectors placed almost equal importance on wages and work.

Employees were asked two open-ended questions. Although a myriad of answers were returned, the following shows an overall summary of the majority of responses. These appear in no particular order:

I would stay longer in my current position if my employer would _____.

- Recognize the importance of equal share of responsibility within employees
- Acknowledge the workload between employees; some get paid more but do less work
- Increase wages
- Provide better benefits or provide insurance at reasonable rates
- Allow more flexible schedules
- Give more recognition for a job well done
- Provide more opportunities for advancement
- Provide better maintenance for equipment and machines
- Structure jobs to allow for more autonomy and variety of tasks
- Change nothing - I plan to stay with my employer because I am happy.

State the main reason that you would seek employment elsewhere.

- I wouldn't, because I am happy with my current job and all it entails
- Frustration over communication breakdowns
- Advancement opportunities
- Better wages
- Better health insurance with lower premiums
- Full-time job opportunity
- New job closer to home
- For a change of pace – just to do something different
- Burn out - I don't enjoy my job
- A personal sense of accomplishment and fulfillment

Concluding Remarks

In general, the following conclusions can be drawn from the employee retention survey:

When choosing to remain in a position, employees weigh wages, benefits, and meaningful work almost equally.

‘Wages,’ ‘benefits,’ and ‘meaningful work’ kept appearing as top factors in each of the sections. The overall spread in rankings of ‘wages,’ ‘benefits,’ and ‘meaningful work’ were separately by a fairly slim margin (one half percentage point). When asked to balance the importance of ‘wages’ and ‘work,’ approximately two-thirds of employees felt that wages were not more important than the work that they do.

- To optimize retention of employees, employers should consider the balance of wages, benefits, and meaningful work.

Feeling valued and respected is an important factor for employees to remain employed.

A question specific to ‘feeling valued and respected’ appeared on the survey only once. However, when it did it outscored two of the top three factors. Comments that respondents wrote also conveyed the importance of being valued as a retention factor.

- Employers should institute feedback mechanisms and practices to ensure that employees know that they are valued.

Differences in retention factors were most notable among age cohorts.

Although subtle difference occurred among the industry sectors and employment positions, the most notable difference occurred among the age cohorts. Those just entering the workforce (16-23 year olds) were significantly different from the others. These employees are more concerned with ‘knowing there is someone to go to,’ ‘wages,’ ‘co-workers,’ and ‘getting feedback from supervisors’ than other age cohorts.

The 16-23 year olds also stood apart from the other cohorts when it came to motivation factors. While those who were above 23 years of age were mostly motivated by a ‘sense of meaningful work’ and ‘wages,’ the 16-23 age group sought their motivation from ‘co-workers’ and ‘wages.’ ‘Benefits’ took on more importance as workers aged.

- Employers should recognize the different motivational factors among employees and adjust their management style to suit each age category.

Those who choose education and social service sector positions place higher value on making a meaningful contribution than others.

Throughout the survey, those employed in education and the social service sectors ranked 'making a meaningful contribution' higher than 'wages.' They had the highest percentage of agreement to 'wages are not more important than the work I do.'

More in-depth study would be beneficial.

'Meaningful work' appeared as a top factor several times in the survey. However, there were no questions that uncovered what factors contribute to work being meaningful. Does 'meaningful work' mean giving back to society, helping others, or contributing to a finished product? Is 'meaningful work' related to pay? These issues can be flushed out by further in-depth questioning.

Transportation and childcare did not appear to be retention factors. However, it is assumed that the real issues concerning these two factors were not addressed. The question on childcare related to the location of the childcare and not to the quality. Availability of reliable transportation was an issue only for those in the transportation sector. The survey was not able to distinguish the importance of this factor between those who had reliable transportation and those who did not.



Administered by



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