

## Research

### *Working at home is more productive*

**A study finds people produce substantially more when working from home; "fewer interruptions" is the reason given by most respondents.**

**A** fourth of those surveyed by the UK **Telework Association** say they produced more than 50% more, and nearly everyone was at least somewhat more productive. Other reasons given: saving commute time, able to fit work around other commitments, better able to concentrate, and less stressed. And a new survey by **Forrester Research** agrees. Teleworkers, they found, work an average two hours more per week than office workers, largely because they can access applications anywhere. In related news, the Canadian **Fraser Health** authority, reports that their voluntary telework program for medical transcriptionists has reduced traffic and parking lot congestion, worker stress levels, and demand for office space. Teleworkers report being "much happier," and are an average 20% to 30% more productive. The initial investment of \$2,000 has also yielded an environmental payoff. The experiment has resulted in savings of 40,000 kilometres (nearly 25,000 miles) traveled on area roads, \$20,000 in gas saved and \$5,000 in parking fees.

# 25601 NEXTGOV, 1-11-10, TELEWORK ASSOC., 2-17-10  
NEW WESTMINSTER NEWS LEADER, 1-22-10



### *Penn State study finds major telework benefits*

**A meta-analysis of 46 studies on telecommuting has found a host of benefits if employees who telework also have autonomy and control.**

**T**he study, said lead researcher Ravi Gajendran, a **Penn State** doctoral candidate, found employees who telecommute are more productive, less likely to quit and more satisfied with both their jobs and their personal lives. Employees reaped the most benefits when their managers gave them autonomy and flexibility on when and how they worked from home. The only downside? Employees who spent as many as three days a week working away from the office began to feel isolated. But managers reported that even those employees stayed on track in their work. Another study, reported in the same article, finds workers who have more control over their hours are less likely to experience frustrations at home. **Boston College** professor Monique Valcour and colleagues surveyed 570 call center reps, asking about work hours, job complexity and work-family balance. Employees with stimulating, autonomous jobs reported

higher job satisfaction, and companies with flexible hours, autonomous work and increased job complexity also experienced lower turnover.

# 25602 AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOC. 1-08, pg. 11



### *Human capital issues linked to deal success*

**A new global survey has found that effectively addressing human capital issues can be a critical tipping point in an organization's success.**

**H**ewitt & Associates compared the survey responses of companies that exceeded their objectives with those that didn't and found a clear link between success and investment in leadership and key talent issues. Those who exceeded their goals were twice as likely to effectively identify and retain leaders (81% vs. 42%) and assess critical talent (73% vs. 35%). The analysis found the loss of critical employees can have a devastating impact on corporate transactions, with 10% of a deal's value depending on which critical employees separate during or immediately after the transactions. While nearly two-thirds of companies say leadership and key talent retention are critical to the success of a deal, 49% reported they have lost critical employees at the same rate, or at an even higher rate than non-critical employees. Many companies, said a Hewitt executive, are permitting key leaders and talent to walk out the door.

# 25613 PLANSponsor, 2-22-10

## *Flexibility improves health and wellbeing*

*A new evidence review by researchers from Durham University in the U.K. adds more support for the theory that having some control at work is good for employees' health.*

The researchers took a close look at ten studies of workers from around the world, studies that examined flexibility in shiftwork, flextime, overtime, retirement, fixed-term contracts, etc. Their purpose was to determine what had been discovered about the effects on health of “flexible working” – measures that give employees more autonomy. They found ten studies that fit the description, from the U.S., Finland, the Netherlands, the U.K., Australia and Denmark. Five of the studies showed that more flexibility for workers led to statistically significant improvements in health, and in the workers’ senses of social support and community. One Finnish study found that both blood pressure and pulse rates dropped in airline maintenance workers who had more flexibility and control over the shifts they worked. Another linked more flexibility over shifts to less mental strain and stress. Even though the other five showed no significant effects, researchers concluded that more flexibility in work schedules “has the potential to promote healthier workplaces and improve work practices.” They also found interventions that are motivated or dictated by the needs of the employer, even if they include flexible work arrangements, either have no effect on employee health or make it worse. Another conclusion: more studies are needed on the impact of flexible working.

# 25603 HEALTH BEHAVIOR NEWS SERVICE, 2-16-10

## *Low-Wage Workers*



## *Low-wage workers exploited, cheated*

*A study's authors have expressed shock after finding 68% of workers polled had experienced a pay violation in the immediately preceding week.*

The study, called “Broken Laws, Unprotected Workers,” found the average worker’s pay was reduced 15% by violations of the fair labor laws. Those violations included sub-minimum-wage pay, time off the clock that was wrongly uncompensated, unpaid or underpaid overtime, inadequate or nonexistent meal breaks, late pay, illegal deductions and failure to provide a pay stub. Survey respondents were mostly from vulnerable populations; The majority were Latino/Latina; 13.5% were black, 16.8% were Asian and just 6.3% were Caucasian. Most telling was the fact that 70% were foreign-born and 38.8% were “unauthorized,” leading the authors to conclude that their illegal status may be contributing to the poor employment practices. In fact, the second-highest rate of employer retaliatory conduct complained of by workers in the survey was the combined category of “employer threatened to fire workers or call immigration authorities.” The study, conducted by several researchers, was funded by the **Ford Foundation**, among others.

# 25604 Press release, RHEUBAN & GRESEN, ATTYS, 1-1-10

## *Managing*

## *Even if it's negative, workers want feedback*

*Accentuating the positive is the best way for managers to drive employee engagement; the second best is to focus on employee weaknesses. The worst choice: giving no feedback.*

Gallup, Inc. interviewed more than 1,000 employees for this report, breaking management styles into three categories based on employee perceptions: managers who focus on strengths, those who focus on weaknesses, and those who focus on neither. A fourth of employees fell into that third, or “ignored,” category; 37% said their managers focus on their strengths, 11% say they concentrate on the negative, and 27% didn’t have strong opinions either way. Gallup then compared engagement results. Of those in the “strengths” group, 61% report being engaged in their jobs. For those whose managers focus primarily on negative characteristics, engagement was considerably lower – just 45%. Only 2% in the “ignored” category were highly engaged. Says one Gallup researcher, “At least negative feedback lets people know that they matter.” This article also reminds us that engagement does matter. Organizations with high engagement scores exceed their peers in nine areas of business performance, including customer loyalty, profits, productivity, quality, turnover and absenteeism. Organizations with the highest engagement scores in Gallup’s database have an 83% chance of achieving above-average business performance.

# 25606 WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT, 2-10, pg. 10

## *New toolkits will help managers and hourly workers with flexibility*

**Corporate Voices has released two new toolkits that will guide managers and hourly workers as they introduce workplace flexibility.**

One of the new guides is for those who manage hourly and nonexempt workers. It offers tips on creating a flexible work environment and a discussion guide for managers on establishing team-based flexibility. The other is a toolkit for hourly workers, a guide for how to talk to managers about a flexible work arrangement, and tips for how to propose one. Both toolkits offer self-assessment worksheets to be used when considering a particular flexible work arrangement. Click here to download the *Guide for Implementing Flexibility with an Hourly and Nonexempt Workforce*.

# 25611 Press release, CORPORATE VOICES, 2-18-10



### **The Workforce**

## *Americans are less happy with their jobs*

**Americans who are lucky enough to have work in this economy aren't necessarily happy about their jobs, and they're growing more unhappy; only 45% are currently satisfied.**

Nate Carrasco, Odessa, Texas, says he's been unhappy in most of his jobs, including the current one at an auto parts store. He's in a fast-growing group, says a new survey by the **Conference Board**, which has been tracking worker satisfaction since 1987. The 2009 poll found

only 51% now find their jobs interesting, the lowest number since the first survey in 1987, when nearly 70% said they thought their jobs were interesting. The drop in workers' happiness can be partly blamed on the worst recession since the 1930s, which has made it difficult to find challenging and suitable jobs. But it also says something troubling about work in America, says Linda Barrington, managing director of human capital at the Conference Board, who helped write the report. They found that those who do say they have interesting jobs are more likely to be innovative, take calculated risks and show the initiative that drives productivity and contributes to economic growth. Other reasons for dissatisfaction (besides boring jobs): incomes that have not kept up with inflation, and the soaring cost of health insurance, which has eaten into workers' take-home pay. That weak wage growth has probably played a role in the fact that workers' unhappiness has been rising for more than 20 years. After growing in the 1980s and 1990s, average household incomes adjusted for inflation have been shrinking since 2000. And compared with 1980, not only do three times as many workers contribute to the cost of their health insurance, but those contributions have gone up. The most dissatisfied workers (64%) were those under 25, and most satisfied were those between 25 and 34, who may see some opportunities for upward mobility. Other key findings: fewer feel secure in their jobs, (43% vs. 47% in 2008 and 59% in 1987). And the number satisfied with their boss (51%) is down from 55% in 2008 and 60% two decades ago.

# 25608 ASSOCIATED PRESS, 1-5-10



## *Women now majority in U.S. workplaces*

**For the first time in recorded history, the U.S. Labor Department reports women outnumber men on the nation's payrolls. The benchmark comes largely at men's expense.**

While both have suffered job losses, men have been losing their jobs faster than women in what has at times been referred to as a "man-cession" (men have lost a net 7.4 million jobs; women have lost 3.9 million). And in related news, a **Pew Research Center** report says more wives are now the higher-income spouse. In a trend researchers are calling "the rise of wives," women are increasingly better-educated than their husbands, and have emerged as the dominant income-provider in one out of every five marriages. Men increasingly get a significant economic boost when they tie the knot, says the report, improving their household incomes. Men are still the major contributors of household income, with 78% making at least as much or more than their wives. But the percentage of women whose income has outpaced their husband's has more than quadrupled, jumping from just 4% in 1970 to 22% now.

# 25609 THE NEW YORK TIMES, 2-6-10

THE WASHINGTON POST, 1-19-10

## The Workplace

### High performance workplaces share six basic characteristics

**Winning Workplaces is an organization that searches out and recognizes great places to work. They've now released six fundamental characteristics shared by those workplaces.**

Trust, respect and fairness top the list. Says a spokesperson, "A culture of trust means that everyone will have more honest conversations, will challenge one another, and people will be willing to take more risks together." Next on the list: open communication (that's two-way – from management to employees as well as employees to managers). Third is rewards and recognition. Says this article, "Recognition can be one-on-one with a supervisor, a public mention in a meeting or a note in a newsletter. It doesn't have to be complicated or expensive – just sincere." Learning and development is next; employees are given opportunities to develop new skills, even if their company can't invest in outside training. Next is teamwork and involvement; employees feel they have the opportunity to contribute directly to the organization's success, and to the larger community. Finally, work-life balance: the organization's policies, practices and culture affirmatively help employees balance the competing demands of work and family. **Winning Workplaces**, Evanston, IL, looks for companies that have built a corporate culture that fosters a productive work environment and satisfied employees.

# 25607 REMODELING MAGAZINE, 2-22-10



### Most won't hide office romances, says survey

**When Nathan Shaw was ready to propose to his Cisco Systems co-worker, Maiko Sato, he enlisted the help of his boss as a co-conspirator.**

While dating your boss or a subordinate is still taboo, a growing number of employers are realizing that trying to stamp out office romance is like standing in front of a speeding train. And a **CareerBuilder** survey of more than 5,000 employees reveals that 67% of employees say they see no need to hide their office relationships, up from 54% in 2005. Not all the old rules have changed; it's still not okay to have an affair if one or both partners are married to others, and it's not okay to snuggle up behind the copier; employers still expect even the most out-there couples to behave professionally. The issue is still a sensitive one legally, as court rulings in recent years have broadened employers' exposure to sexual-harassment lawsuits. A growing minority of employers have written policies requiring employees to disclose any romantic relationships to a superior and allowing the employer to separate the partners at work. But, says one expert, the office keeps coming up as No. 1 in surveys as the best place to meet a mate, leading bosses to conclude that they "have to be cool about it." There are downsides; coworkers may feel resentful, and messy breakups can have an impact

on productivity. This article says the best vaccination against a bad ending is a long corporate courtship. "Keep it light and fun at first," says one expert. Then if it doesn't work out, "you have basically just broken up with your lunch buddy."

# 25610 THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, 2-10-10



### Authors call for action in global workplace

**In their new book, Jody Heymann and Alison Earle reveal that job losses have led to deteriorating and inhumane working conditions worldwide.**

The recession, along with the fear of being "outsourced" has left many in high-income countries feeling they have no power to negotiate for better work protections and benefits. The result, they point out, has been an increase worldwide in the prevalence of longer hours, unpaid overtime, lower wages and fewer benefits. *Raising the Global Floor* makes a strong and dramatic case for change, reporting that there is global consensus on reforms that will work. These authors demonstrate that humane working conditions do not lead to higher unemployment or keep a country from being competitive. There are no long-term economic gains to be had, say Heymann and Earle, if workers are denied paid sick leave, annual leave, parental leave, the right to a day of rest, and many other basic protections that would improve the quality of their lives.

# 25612 Press release, 11-17-09



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