

Flexibility



Flexible work options win worker loyalty

Workplace flexibility has been linked to employee loyalty, satisfaction and productivity in three surveys, two in the U.S. and one in Switzerland.

Swiss employees are happiest and show more loyalty towards their employer when they have flexible working hours, says one poll by **Zurich University** and the **Swiss Federal Institute of Technology**. That survey of 1,359 employees found the greater the flexibility the higher employers were rated by their staff. **LiveOps** surveyed its independent agents and found two-thirds saying the work flexibility was one reason they chose to work there. And a **Workplace Options** poll of American workers found 69% saying they would have more loyalty to their employers if they were offered greater flexibility in managing time and schedules. Said the release, "Employers can capitalize on this opportunity to provide such a benefit to employees while gaining their trust and improving morale."

25701 SWISSINFO.CH, 3-18-10, PR-USA.NET., 4-1-10
WORKPLACE OPTIONS RELEASE, 5-18-10

Telecommuting

Study finds payoff for flexibility and telework

A Brigham Young University study finds workers with flexibility and the option to telecommute were able to clock 19 more hours a week before feeling work-life conflict.

It wasn't too surprising that teleworkers are able to balance work and family life better than office workers. The surprise was that they can maintain that balance even while sometimes squeezing in as much as two extra days of work each week. The researchers analyzed data from 24,436 **IBM** employees in 75 countries, identifying the point at which 25% of them reported that work interfered with personal and family life. For office workers on a regular schedule, the breaking point was 38 hours a week. Given a flexible schedule and the opportunity to telecommute, employees were able to clock 57 hours per week before experiencing such conflict. The typical high-flexibility work arrangement included a mix of office time and telework. **IBM's** telework push began back in the '90s, says study author E. Jeffrey Hill, and managers were initially skeptical, afraid they would have no way of knowing whether their staff was working. Now more than 80% of **IBM** managers agree that productivity increases in a flexible environment. The benefits of telecommuting were apparent among both men and women.

25702 LAB SPACES, 6-2-10

Benefits

The benefits picture changes with economy

Improving productivity is now key for 84% of employers, up from 79% in 2008. This MetLife survey of both employers and employees gathered some opinions about how to do so.

The 8th annual *Employee Benefits Trends Study* found the economy has caused a significant shift for both employers and workers. Controlling costs is now employers' number one objective, edging out retention. Increasing productivity is third, and the number saying this is very important has gone from 79% in 2008 to 84% this year. But the pressures on employees may be having a negative impact on productivity; 68% of workers say they've been affected by feelings of job insecurity in the past year, have experienced a decrease in the quality of their work, an increase in their workload or say they were distracted by financial worries. More than 75% said financial advice and guidance programs would improve their productivity, 82% thought work-life programs would do it, and 81% said health and wellness programs would help. The report compared healthier employees with those whose health is either poor or fair, and found nearly three times as many in the latter group say they believe their financial situation will deteriorate in the next six months.

25703 Press release, METLIFE, 4-12-10

Childcare



Offering childcare raises productivity

A study compared employees whose employers offered dependent care with those that didn't, and found doing so may cut health care costs.

Employees who were offered that benefit reported being less stressed and in better overall health than those who didn't have it. They had fewer headaches and digestive problems, and fewer incidents of more serious health issues like high blood pressure, heart disease and diabetes. And those who were less stressed were typically more focused on their work, and more engaged. The study, by **Bright Horizons** and Dr. Jamie Ladge of **North-eastern University**, reviewed data from about 4,000 working parents. Nearly a third (31%) of those with dependent care were less likely to report lost productivity due to stress over the previous month and 25% had fewer personal health problems. Parents who were not offered dependent care were a third more likely to report being down, depressed or hopeless. They were 62% more likely to experience sleep issues that had an impact on their work and three times as likely to be treated for high blood pressure and diabetes.

25704 Press release, BRIGHT HORIZONS, 6-24-10

Paid Sick Leave

Not having paid sick leave has consequences

One in three working Americans has no paid sick leave, and nearly one in six has lost their job for taking time off to deal with personal or family illness.

Researchers commissioned by the **Public Welfare Foundation** found more than half of employees without paid sick days have gone to work with a contagious disease vs. 37% of those with paid sick days. Twice as many (20% vs. 10%) used the emergency rooms of hospitals because they couldn't take time off, and 24% sent a sick child to school compared to 14% of those who had sick day coverage. Three out of four consider paid sick days a basic right and believe employers should be required to provide the benefit. Most favor seven sick days per year for employees, with part-time workers earning sick days proportionately. Voters, said the report, were 33% more likely to support a candidate who favored paid sick days.

25705 Press release, UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO, 6-21-10

Generational Issues

More 65+ workers staying in workforce

More adults over 65 are staying put, delaying retirement because of a drop in income and perhaps making it harder for younger workers to find jobs.

Given the number of baby boomers, if the shift toward later retirement persists, experts say it will have serious consequences for younger people. They may

already be paying the price; employment among younger Americans fell substantially from the start of 2008 to the end of 2009. Fortunately for young job-seekers, the new health care law allows their parents to cover them until age 26. Says the report by **Thomson Reuters/University of Michigan**, the new law, together with the difficulty in finding work, may turn out to encourage "an extended period of adolescence."

25706 INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS TIMES, 4-9-10

New grads seem ill-prepared for workplace

A study has compared the qualities companies look for in new graduates with those that are actually present, and found a few that are missing.

Dressing right was one of those missing qualities; others included the ability to communicate, listen respectfully and be motivated to finish a task. When a **York University** study made that discovery, York invited a speaker from **Johnson Controls**, one of the area's biggest employers, to impart some helpful advice from the real world. "Dude, dress up," she told a packed campus auditorium, many in shorts and flip-flops. "This isn't the mall." This study also found new grads to have a sense of entitlement, and research from the **University of New Hampshire** agrees. Employers may find their new Gen Y hires feel entitled to undeserved preferential treatment, are more prone to get into workplace conflicts and less likely to enjoy their job. They sometimes have unrealistic expectations and a strong resistance to accepting negative feedback. This article suggests supervisors remove as much ambiguity as possible from situations, document who does what so credit and blame

can be accurately determined, and try to make sure everyone understands the organizational structure so they know who's responsible for what.

25707 NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO, 5-28-10

Press release, UNIV. OF NEW HAMPSHIRE, 5-14-10

Gender Issues

Awareness rises but women still lag in pay
Women at many of the world's top companies continue to lag behind their male peers in pay and opportunities for professional advancement.

Companies in the U.S., Spain, Canada and Finland lead the world in employing the largest numbers of women, from entry level to senior management, says a report by the **World Economic Forum**. The Forum surveyed 600 heads of HR at the largest employers in 20 countries representing 16 different industries. They found 72% had no systems to track salary differences by gender and 60% had no affirmative action policies to promote women, nor did they measure women's participation in their workforces. Companies in India had the lowest percentage of female employees (23%) just below Japan (24%). Companies in Turkey, Austria, and Italy, all with 30% or fewer females, rounded out the bottom five, although both Turkish and Italian companies had a high percentage of female top executives – Turkey because of so many family-owned firms, and Italy because of so many multinational corporations. The forum's findings follow a Catalyst study of 4,500 business school graduates which found that, even in this high-potential group, women consistently lagged behind men in advancement and compensation,

whether or not they had children. Said a spokeswoman, "Women enter the workplace pipeline in representative numbers. Then, something fails to happen."

25708 THE NEW YORK TIMES, 3-8-10

The Workforce



Rising stars planning to leave within year
High-potential employees are increasingly disengaged and actively seeking new employment opportunities; 25% plan to leave their current companies within the year.

The survey, by the **Corporate Executive Board**, found 21% of employees identifying themselves as highly disengaged. The figures may have changed as the economy failed to improve. But a related article did report that more people quit their jobs than were laid off in March, April and May. The disengaged group has increased nearly three-fold since 2007, suggesting that even if employees hesitate to leave, companies should be taking steps to re-engage their high-potential employees. This report offered tips for doing so. Emerging leaders need stimulating work, recognition and a chance to grow. Candidates should be tested to make sure they're able to

handle tougher roles as their careers progress, and should be challenged, recognized, and incorporated into strategic planning. "Share future strategies with them," suggests the report, "and emphasize their role in making them come to fruition."

25709 NEWSLINE, 6-8-10

ASSOCIATED PRESS, 6-9-10

Low-Wage Workers

Don't stint on benefits for low-wage workers
A study finds that it pays to provide benefits for low-wage workers like training, career tracks, health insurance and workplace flexibility.

The study was based on interviews at a variety of companies, and was conducted by **McGill** professor Jody Heymann. Heymann found such benefits led not only to lower turnover and easier recruitment, which might be expected, given those options, but also helped increase worker productivity and overall profitability. The report offered recommendations for executives, including understanding who it is in the company who performs the "essential work," realizing that the firm's success depends on those workers, recognizing the importance of working conditions for those at the bottom of the company's wage scale, and recognizing that the importance of those conditions is universal in all parts of the world. The study, called "*Profit at the Bottom of the Ladder: A Summary Report on the Experiences of Companies That Improve Conditions at the Base*," was published by the *Harvard Business Review*.

25710 HR FOCUS, 6-21-10

Health



Working overtime may be bad for the heart

A study finds people who work more than 10 hours a day are about 60% more likely to develop heart disease or have a heart attack than those who clock just seven hours a day.

Working long hours appears to hurt your health. The study followed more than 6,000 British civil servants with no history of heart disease for an average of 11 years. All were drawn from a larger, ongoing study known as Whitehall II that began in 1985. During the study, 369 people had heart attacks (some of them fatal) or were diagnosed with heart disease after seeking medical attention for chest pain. People who worked 10 to 12 hours a day had a 56% increased risk of heart disease, heart attack or death, while those who worked for eight to 10 hours were not at increased risk. The study factored in workers' rank and salary, since socioeconomic status has been linked to heart health. It also took a number of health factors into account, like smoking, blood pressure, cholesterol levels, diet and exercise. In some ways, those who put in longer hours were healthier – less likely to drink heavily and smoke, and got more exercise. But they tended to sleep less, reported experienc-

ing more stress, having more demanding jobs and less control over their work. One expert suggests the possibility that the workers' overall lifestyle – including Type A behavior – contributed to both the long hours and the heart risk. "The findings are sort of a wake-up call," said another, who suggests doctors should be extra vigilant about the heart health of patients who work long hours.

25711 CNN.COM, 5-11-10



Global Work-Life

Sweden takes the lead in paid paternal leave

Mikael Karlsson, a moose hunter and soldier-turned-game warden, cradles two-month-old Siri in his arms and says he cannot imagine not taking baby leave. Says he, "everyone does."

Nearly everyone in Sweden, that is. This *New York Times* article reports that 85% of Swedish fathers take parental leave, and those who don't face questions from family, friends and colleagues. Here, men are at the heart of the gender-equality debate. The pony-tailed finance minister calls himself a feminist, ads for cleaning products rarely feature women as homemakers, and preschools vet books for gender stereotypes in animal characters. "Men no longer want to be identified just by their jobs," says a spokesman. "Many women now expect their husbands to take at least some time off with the children." "Daddy leave" was introduced in 1995, and soon more than eight out of 10 men were taking advantage of it, encouraged to do so by the fact that the family lost one month of subsidies if they didn't. This article points out that family-friendly poli-

cies don't come cheap. Taxes account for 47% of the country's GDP, vs. 27% in the U.S. and 40% in the E.U. overall. Family benefits cost 3.3% of GDP, the highest in the world. But public deficit and debt levels are a fraction of those in most developed economies. Children are guaranteed a place in full-time preschool at a maximum cost of \$150 per month, and parental leave is paid at 80% of salary up to \$3,330 a month. Says one Swedish HR professional, "Graduates used to look for big paychecks. Now they want work-life balance."

25712 THE NEW YORK TIMES, 6-27-10



The Economy

U.S. workers feeling pain of the recession

The recession has hit more than half the nation's working adults, pushing them into unemployment, pay cuts, reduced hours at work or part-time jobs.

The impact will be felt for years, says a **Pew Research Center** survey. Hardest hit are the 9.7% who have been out of work for an average of nearly six months. Nearly half of respondents say they're in worse shape than they were; 40% have tapped savings and retirement accounts to make ends meet; nearly a fourth have borrowed money and 24% of those 29 and under have moved back in with their parents to weather the storm. While more than 60% believe their personal finances will improve by next year, they're still cautious, and that persistent caution may keep the situation from improving. Nearly half say they plan to save more, nearly a third plan to spend less, and 30% say they will borrow less money.

25713 THE WASHINGTON POST, 6-30-10