



What makes for an exceptional place to work?

The workplace you offer is often a major differentiator in getting and keeping talented staff. Perhaps you are in charge of designing workplaces for customers or maybe you are the person making decisions about the environment you will provide for your team. Either way, you have a significant burden on your shoulders. Aon Hewitt, a global insurance broker and employee benefits consultancy, released their 'Inside the Employee Mindset' study for 2015.

The study explores employee perspectives and attitudes about their personal employment experiences.

Topics included in the survey investigated company culture and values, the work environment, communication, engagement and total rewards offered to employees by leadership. Three major questions were identified to define overall employment experiences: what makes an employer clearly stand out from others, what do employees think about the rewards offered by their company, and how - and who - do employees want to communicate and engage with? Included in the study were four generations: Traditionals, Baby Boomers, Generation X and Millennials, men and women, across all job categories. Let's explore those three issues.

Differentiator or Expectation?

While some generations see certain things as differentiators, others see the same things as expectations.

It doesn't matter where they work, some just think certain things are basic assumptions that they expect to be there. Providing a fun place to work is more important to Boomers than Gen Xers or Millennials. Maybe it is because they have been working longer and need more stimulation to keep going until retirement. And, that fun factor ranked as more important for men than it is for women. Gen X and Boomers want stimulating work and empowerment and consider both to be differentiators. Millennials consider both to be an expectation, and also expect to have career and development opportunities to be made available as well.

Rewards:

It's no surprise that most job candidates were attracted to a company based on pay and benefits. We've all got to pay our bills, right? 52% of respondents listed this as their number one concern. Interestingly, those who were looking for jobs with hourly pay were more concerned with the rewards issues than those seeking salaried jobs. Likewise, the availability of career and development opportunities was more important to those seeking hourly job compensation vs. salaried positions.

Baby Boomers were more interested in doing meaningful work than any of the other groups. But then, this was the generation that wanted to change the world back when they were in college. Clearly that has remained high on their lists of things to accomplish in life. Asked what they would like to see improved to

increase their job satisfaction, pay and benefits were at the top of the list, but in much lower numbers - 24%. Women were more likely than men to select this as one of their top three picks for improvement, as well as Baby Boomers. Why? With retirement age looming, it's no secret that a large number of Boomers have not saved sufficient funds to retire at their current lifestyle. Women and Boomers were also interested in having open and honest communication in their work environment. And, those Boomer guys want more fun. We hear that it is the Millennials who want fun, fun, fun in the workplace, but this study shows Boomers making those demands.

Communication:



Employees want open, honest, transparent communications from their leaders in the executive suite. They are smart and more highly educated than earlier generations, so they know when things are being white-washed. They want to have access to communicate with those top leaders. What do they want to talk about? Themselves, of course! They want to hear about their own careers, development opportunities, their job performance and chances for advancement. Every employee wants recognition for their contributions and how they can get ahead in the company. The survey respondents felt they were getting good communication about their benefits and wellness issues, not enough feedback about their careers and how to move up the ladder and get ahead.

Attracting, hiring and retaining the rock stars of talent in your industry, or your clients' industry, weights heavily on providing a business environment that is satisfying to them on many levels. Whether you provide that much sought after 'fun' element through the physical facilities of your company, or implement work processes and systems that are created around fun and entertainment, you need strategies to make this change. Rewards come in many shapes and forms. Some rewards like increased pay and benefits can be costly. Still, other rewards like simple recognition of a job well done cost little or nothing and yet are very valuable to your hard working staff.

What strategies have you put in place to address employee rewards? Have you done all that you can to open lines of communication from top to bottom of your organization chart? How engaging has your communications with employees been? Is your idea of communication sending out cold, impersonal missives that do little more than send 'blah, blah, blah' messages to your people? If so, don't expect them to read them, much less answer them. Today's employees need to be engaged and treated like real people recognized as having value to your company. It's time to get to work on these issues that are rolling around in your employees' minds. If you don't, you'll find your company losing your best talent and attracting mediocre employees.⁴

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