



Quarterly survey report
Winter 2010

Employee outlook Emerging from the downturn?

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Summary of key findings

Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction has once again dipped this quarter to a net satisfaction score of just +35 (+37 in autumn, +48 in summer, +46 in spring). As with previous quarters, men (+33) continue to be less satisfied with their jobs than women (+38).

Satisfaction has decreased across all organisation sizes and sectors. Those employees working in the charity/not-for-profit sector remain the most satisfied. Like last quarter, private sector employees are the least satisfied (+34), with public sector employees not far ahead (+35).

There has been a dramatic dip in job satisfaction among 18–24-year-olds, from +28 last quarter to just +5 this quarter.

Employee attitudes towards management

Employees continue to be generally positive in their attitudes towards their immediate line managers. Employees are most likely to feel their managers always/usually treat them fairly (68%), are committed to their organisation (68%), are supportive if they have a problem (62%) and listen if they have suggestions to make (61%).

Employee perceptions of their senior managers

Overall respondents continue to be less positive in their attitudes towards their senior managers. Respondents are most negative and most likely to disagree that their senior managers consult them about important issues (–28). Negative perceptions of consultation is an issue that has got worse over the four quarterly surveys and needs to be tackled to improve employee engagement, motivation and retention in the long term.

Communication and advocacy

Like previous quarters, just under half of employees (49%) feel fully/fairly well informed about what is happening in their organisation. Employees in the voluntary sector are most likely to feel informed (64%) compared with 49% in the private sector and just 46% in the public sector.

When it comes to opportunities to feed views and issues upwards, scores have dipped once again this quarter.

Pressure at work

Just over four in ten employees (41%) say they feel under excessive pressure either every day or once or twice a week, hardly changed from the figure from the previous quarter's survey (42%).

Men are more likely to report being under excessive pressure than women. Public sector employees are also more likely to say they feel under excessive pressure every day or once or twice a week than those working in the private sector or those in the voluntary sector.

Employees attitudes and the recession

Just under a fifth of employees (19%) think it is likely or very likely that they could lose their job as a result of the recession. The survey shows public sector workers have become increasingly worried about job security over the last nine months.

The survey asked part-time workers to agree or disagree with whether ideally they would like to find full-time work but are unable to find a suitable full-time job. In all 13% agree that this is the case; however the majority (70%) of part-time workers disagree, while 11% neither agree nor disagree.

Nearly a third of respondents (30%) report their organisation has made redundancies, a very slight increase from the previous quarter's figure (29%). The proportion of employees saying their organisation is planning to make redundancies has also edged up to 15% from 14% for the previous quarter.

Almost a quarter of employees (23%) say their organisation has cut back on training in response to the recession, again a slight rise from the previous quarter's figure (20%). The proportion of staff saying their organisation has frozen pay has increased to 35% from 29% from the autumn 2009 *Employee Outlook*, while 6% of respondents report their organisation has cut pay, down from 8%.

The proportion of people reporting an increase in conflict at work between colleagues, bullying by line managers, as well as increases in stress and people taking time off sick, has also edged up again.

Personal standard of living

There has been a drop in reported standard of living since our last quarterly survey, despite much anticipation that the UK is to come out of recession in 2010. In all 29% of respondents say that their personal standard of living has worsened over the last six months compared with just 9% that say their standard of living has improved. This compares with the last quarter when 28% of employees said their standard of living had deteriorated and 14% said it had improved.

Job-seeking

Just under a quarter of all employees (22%) are currently looking for a new job. This has dipped slightly from the previous three surveys (25%).

Once again, younger employees seem far more likely than older employees to be looking for a new job. Only 4% of respondents have moved organisation in the last six months and, of that group, 36% are receiving more money but 40% are receiving less.

When asked if they would ideally like to change jobs within the next year, 37% of employees said they would – a slight decrease from last quarter (40%).

While public sector employees are least likely to be looking for a new job currently, they are the group that ideally would most like to change jobs in the next year (42%).

Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction has dipped to an all-time low, particularly among younger workers.

Job satisfaction has once again dipped this quarter to a net satisfaction score of just +35 (+37 in autumn, +48 in summer, +46 in spring). As with previous quarters, men (+33) continue to be less satisfied with their jobs than women (+38).

There are some interesting differences across job satisfaction by age group. Like last quarter, those who are 55 or older are most likely to be satisfied with their jobs, while the younger age groups are least satisfied. However, there has been a dramatic dip in job satisfaction for 18–24-year-old respondents, from +28 last quarter to just +5 this quarter. This adds weight to many of the current concerns about the ‘lost generation’ of young people who are being disproportionately negatively affected by the current economic climate. This is particularly worrying because this ‘lost generation’ that is being disenchanted from a young age represents the future of work in the UK.

Satisfaction has decreased across all organisation sizes and sectors. While there are differences in job satisfaction according to size of organisation, these have reduced since last quarter. While sole traders remain most satisfied (+60), the difference in satisfaction between small (+33), medium (+29) and large (+29) organisations has reduced.

Those employees working in the charity/not-for-profit sector remain the most satisfied (+55). Like last quarter, private sector employees are the least satisfied (+34), with public sector employees not far ahead (+35).

Job satisfaction is highest for those employees working in health and social work (+55), other community, social and personal services (+50) and education (+50). It is lowest for employees working in hotels and restaurants (+19), transport (+20) and manufacturing (+28).

Table 1: Employee net satisfaction by age

	Winter	Autumn	Summer	Spring
18–24	+5	+28	+44	+35
25–34	+24	+25	+35	+44
35–44	+35	+43	+46	+45
45–54	+34	+39	+48	+40
55+	+54	+55	+61	+60

Table 2: Employee net satisfaction by sector and size of organisation

	Winter	Autumn	Summer	Spring
Charity/voluntary	+55	+57	+60	+54
Private sector firm or company	+34	+35	+46	+46
Public sector	+35	+39	+45	+45
Sole traders	+60	+64	+72	+71
Micro businesses	+48	+51	+60	+59
Small businesses	+33	+43	+46	+46
Medium businesses	+29	+38	+50	+40
Large businesses	+29	+25	+39	+38

Employee attitudes towards management

Respondents continue to have negative attitudes towards senior managers with a lack of consultation likely to be one of the reasons.

Employee attitudes towards line management

Employees continue to be generally positive in their attitudes towards their immediate line managers, although as Table 3 shows, 13 out of 14 items are rated lower than previous quarters. Employees are most likely to feel that their managers always/usually treat them fairly (68%), are committed to their organisation (68%), are supportive if they have a problem (62%) and listen if they have suggestions to make (61%). On the other hand, employees are most likely to say their manager

rarely/never coaches them on the job (45%), discusses their training and development needs (40%) or gives them feedback on how they are performing (28%).

The item that shows the biggest drop since last quarter is the number of employees who believe their manager to be usually or always open and honest (55% down from 60%). This suggests that the lack of trust shown in senior managers in this survey is now featuring in employees' relationships with their own line managers.

Table 3: To what extent does your immediate supervisor/manager or boss usually or always do each of the following? (%)

	Winter	Autumn	Summer	Spring
Consults me on matters of importance to me	52	54	54	53
Discusses my training and development needs with me	36	39	39	40
Recognises when I have done a good job	52	56	55	57
Makes me feel my work counts	48	51	54	53
Gives me feedback on how I am performing	44	45	46	46
Is open and honest	55	60	61	60
Is supportive if I have a problem	62	63	65	64
Keeps me in touch with what's going on	47	51	50	51
Makes clear what is expected of me	56	58	59	58
Listens if I have a suggestion to make	61	63	63	63
Treats me fairly	68	69	70	70
Is committed to my organisation	68	69	69	71
Makes sure I have the resources to do the job	51	50	54	54
Coaches me on the job	28	30	29	30

Employee perceptions of their senior managers

Overall, respondents continue to be less positive in their attitudes towards their senior managers.

Respondents are most likely to agree that their senior leaders have a clear vision of where the organisation is going and how to get there (net agreement score of +17); they are also more likely to agree than disagree that they treat employees with respect (+11).

Respondents are less positive about having confidence

in their senior managers (+2) and trusting them (-1). However, respondents are most negative and most likely to disagree that their senior managers consult them about important issues (-28). Negative perceptions of consultation is an issue that has got worse over the four quarterly surveys and needs to be tackled to improve employee engagement, motivation and retention in the long term.

Table 4: Net satisfaction scores with the following statements about directors/senior managers

	Winter	Autumn	Summer	Spring
They consult employees about important decisions.	-28	-30	-21	-24
They treat employees with respect.	+11	+11	+13	+11
I trust them.	-1	+3	+5	-1
I have confidence in them.	+2	+1	+5	+2
They have a clear vision of where the organisation is going.	+17	+17	+16	+17

Communication and advocacy

Employees are less likely to recommend their employer as a good place to work compared with the last quarter and they are increasingly unhappy with their opportunities for feeding back their views to senior managers.

Like previous quarters, just under half of employees (49%) feel fully/fairly well informed about what is happening in their organisation. Employees in the voluntary sector are most likely to feel informed (64%), compared with 49% in the private sector and just 46% in the public sector. Again there are noticeable differences according to age, with employees 55 and older feeling the most informed (51%) and 18–24-year-old employees the least likely to feel well informed (45%).

When it comes to opportunities to feed views and issues upwards, scores have dipped once again this

quarter (winter: +5; autumn: +7; summer: +12; spring: +13). Those working in the voluntary sector are most satisfied with opportunities for upward feedback (+29), followed by the private sector (+7) and the public sector (–4).

Employee advocacy has dipped this quarter, with a score of +27 for recommending their organisation as an employer, compared with +33 in the autumn. With a net score of +57, employees within the voluntary sector would be most likely to recommend their employer, while the private sector (+23) would be least likely to.

Table 5: Net score for likelihood of recommending organisation as an employer to others

	Winter	Autumn
Overall	+27	+33
Charity/voluntary	+57	+52
Private sector firm or company	+23	+27
Public sector	+34	+41

Workload and pressure at work

Just over four in ten employees say they feel under excessive pressure either every day or once or twice a week, while just under a third of employees feel their workload is too much.

Just over four in ten employees (41%) say they feel under excessive pressure either every day or once or twice a week, hardly changed from the figure from the previous quarter's survey (42%).

Men are more likely to report being under excessive pressure than women. Public sector employees are also more likely to say they feel under excessive pressure every day or once or twice a week (44%) than those working in the private sector (41%) or those in the voluntary sector (36%).

People aged between 35 to 54 years old are most likely to report being under excessive pressure at work.

In terms of organisational seniority, board-level directors are most likely to report being under excessive pressure either every day or once or twice a week (59%), followed by middle managers (52%), line managers (49%) and other senior managers or directors below board level (47%).

Workload

Just under a third of employees (29%) feel their workload is too much, compared with 61% who say it is about right and 9% who say it is too little. These figures are almost unchanged from the previous quarter. Again men are more likely to say the workload they face in their jobs is too much (32%) than women (26%). Public sector employees are more likely to say their workload is too much (38%) than private sector workers (28%) or those in the voluntary sector (22%).

Table 6: Proportion of respondents feeling under excessive pressure at work (%)

	All	Men	Women	Private sector	Public sector	Voluntary sector
Every day	14	14	13	14	14	9
Once or twice a week	27	30	24	27	30	27
Once or twice a month	24	25	23	24	26	23
Less frequently than once a month	24	21	26	23	22	38
Never	12	10	14	13	8	4

Work–life balance

The recession does not appear to have affected people’s attitude to work–life balance, with nearly six in ten people agreeing they achieve the right balance between work and home – little changed from previous quarters.

The number of people agreeing they achieve the right balance between their work and home lives (59%) has increased slightly from the last quarter (57%), with women more likely to agree (64%) than men (54%). Younger workers are less likely to be satisfied with their work–life balance than older workers. Just 43% of 18–24-year-olds agree they achieve the right balance between work and home, compared with 56% of employees aged between 35 and 44 and 65% of people aged 55 and above. Voluntary sector employees are more likely to agree they achieve the right work–life balance than those working in the private or public sectors. See Table 7.

Just under a third (31%) of respondents agree their organisation helps them manage their work–life balance. Again, women are more likely to agree (36%) than men (29%). Public sector employees are most likely to agree their organisation supports their work–life balance (41%), followed by those in the voluntary sector (39%) and employees in the private sector (28%).

In all 32% of respondents agree their manager provides support to help them manage their work–life balance. See Table 8.

Table 7: I achieve the right balance between my work and home lives (%)

	All	Men	Women	Private sector	Public sector	Voluntary sector
Strongly agree	13	10	16	13	11	15
Agree	46	44	48	45	48	56
Neither agree nor disagree	15	16	14	16	16	8
Disagree	17	19	14	16	20	14
Strongly disagree	7	8	6	8	5	6
Not sure	1	1	1	1	1	0
Not applicable	1	1	1	1	0	0

Table 8: My manager provides support to help me manage my work–life balance (%)

	All	Men	Women	Private sector	Public sector	Voluntary sector
Strongly agree	7	5	9	6	7	16
Agree	25	22	27	24	31	30
Neither agree nor disagree	23	23	22	23	26	18
Disagree	15	16	15	15	16	19
Strongly disagree	13	15	11	13	18	9
Not sure	0	0	0	0	0	0
Not applicable	17	18	15	19	2	8

Employee attitudes and the recession

The number of employees reporting that the economic situation is affecting both the organisation they work for and their own working lives has increased since the previous quarter.

Just under a fifth of employees (19%) think it is likely or very likely that they could lose their job as a result of the recession – a slight increase from the last quarter (17%). Private sector employees remain most concerned about losing their jobs, with 19% thinking it likely or very likely this could happen compared with 18% of voluntary sector staff and 16% of public sector employees. The survey shows, however, that public sector workers have become increasingly worried about job security over the last nine months, with the proportion of public sector staff thinking it likely or very likely they will lose their jobs steadily increasing from just 7% in May and 12% in November 2009.

Young people are most concerned about their job security, with a quarter of workers aged between 18 and 24 years old believing it is likely they will lose their jobs.

The survey shows that employees have become even more pessimistic about their chances of finding a new job if they lose their current one since the autumn *Employee Outlook* survey. The proportion of people believing it would be difficult or very difficult to find another job if they lost their current one has again crept up to 63% from 62% for the previous quarter. At the same time the proportion of employees thinking it will be easy or very easy to find a new job has fallen to just 9% of respondents from 11% over the same period. There is little difference between the sectors in these views. See Table 10.

Table 9: How likely do you think it is that you could lose your job as a result of the economic recession? (%)

	All	Private sector	Public sector	Voluntary sector
Very likely	4	4	3	3
Likely	15	15	13	15
Neither likely nor unlikely	25	26	21	20
Unlikely	32	31	37	28
Very unlikely	21	19	24	32
Don't know	4	4	2	2

Table 10: How easy would it be to find a new job if you lost your current role? (%)

	All	Private sector	Public sector	Voluntary sector
Very easy	2	1	1	4
Easy	7	7	8	7
Neither easy nor difficult	23	23	23	20
Difficult	38	38	40	47
Very difficult	25	26	23	16
Don't know	5	4	4	7

The survey asked respondents in what ways the organisation they work for has been affected by the recession. In all, 83% of respondents say their organisation has been affected by the recession in some way, which crept up from 82% in the previous quarter.

Nearly a third of respondents (30%) report that their organisation has made redundancies, a very slight increase from the previous quarter's figure (29%). The proportion of employees saying that their organisation is planning to make redundancies has also edged up to 15% from 14% for the previous quarter. However, the proportion of public sector respondents saying their organisation has made redundancies has increased to 23% from 19%, while the proportion of these respondents saying their organisation is planning to make redundancies has increased to 31% from 24% over the same period.

Almost a quarter of employees (23%) say their organisation has cut back on training in response to the recession, again a slight rise from the previous quarter's figure (20%). Once again it is the public sector where there has been the biggest change, with 35% of employees in this sector reporting a cut in training, a significant rise from the last quarter's figure of 21%. A fifth of employees (20%) say that their organisation has cut back on the number of hours that people work, little change from the last quarter. The proportion of staff saying their organisation has frozen pay has increased to 35% from 29% from the autumn 2009 *Employee Outlook*, while 6% of respondents report their organisation has cut pay, down from 8%. Almost a third of employees (32%) report their organisation has frozen recruitment, again a slight rise from our previous *Employee Outlook* survey (27%).

Table 11: In which ways if at all has your organisation been affected by the economic downturn? (%)

	Winter '10			
	All	Private sector	Public sector	Voluntary sector
It has made redundancies.	30	33	23	19
It is planning to make redundancies.	15	12	31	11
It has cut back on training.	23	21	35	22
It has cut back on the number of hours that people work.	20	23	12	10
It has frozen pay.	35	39	24	35
It has cut pay.	6	8	2	3
It has frozen recruitment.	32	31	42	22
It has reduced the amount contributed to employee pensions.	5	5	4	6
It has reduced employee benefits/perks.	18	21	13	12
It has been affected in some other way.	13	21	29	37
It has not been affected by the economic downturn.	17	18	11	13
Don't know	6	5	11	3

Table 12: As a result of the economic downturn have you noticed any of the following... (%)

	Winter '10	Autumn '09	Spring '09
An increase in conflict at work between colleagues	18	17	15
An increase in bullying by managers	14	12	11
An increase in stress	49	47	46
An increase in people taking time off sick	24	17	16
None of these	43	45	47

The proportion of people reporting an increase in conflict at work between colleagues, bullying by line managers, as well as increases in stress and people taking time off sick, has edged up again.

Half (49%) of respondents report an increase in stress, a fifth say there has been an increase in sick leave, while 18% of employees report an increase in conflict and 14% think bullying by managers has increased. See Table 12.

Impact of the recession on individuals

The increasing impact of the recession on organisations is having a wide-ranging impact on individuals at work.

Employees are particularly unhappy with the opportunities to learn new skills and progress at work. Just 25% agree they are learning new skills; however 43% disagree (net

agree score -18) and only 6% say there are more opportunities to progress compared with 64% who disagree (net agree score -58). Nearly six in ten respondents (57%) agree there is more stress at work in contrast to 18% disagreeing (net agree score +39).

Respondents are also more likely to disagree than in the last quarter that they are confident about finding work elsewhere. Just 14% agree this is the case compared with 57% disagreeing (net agree score -43). Compared with the last quarter, respondents are also more likely to agree they are worried about the future.

The survey asked respondents to agree or disagree with a number of statements about how they as individuals have been affected by the recession.

Table 13: Ways in which individuals have been affected by the economic downturn

	Winter '10	Autumn '09
Feel less secure in my job	18	18
Learning new skills	-18	-9
There are more opportunities to progress	-58	-51
I feel confident of finding work elsewhere	-43	-40
I feel worried about the future	32	30
There is more office politics	16	10
There is more conflict in the workplace	-6	-13
There is more stress at work	39	31
I am concerned about being made redundant	8	6
I am less trusting of colleagues	-27	-32
I am less trusting of my manager	-8	-16
My workload has increased	14	14

Table 14: Thinking about the last six months, has your personal standard of living... (%)

	All	Men	Women	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+
Improved	9	10	7	11	14	9	9	6
Stayed the same	62	61	63	66	64	60	56	66
Worsened	29	29	30	23	22	32	35	28

Personal standard of living

There has been a drop in reported standard of living since our last quarterly survey, despite much anticipation that the UK is to come out of recession in 2010. In all, 29% of respondents say that their personal standard of living has worsened over the last six months compared with just 9% that say their standard of living has improved. This compares with the last quarter when 28% of employees said their standard of living had deteriorated and 14% said it had improved. See Table 14.

Women are more likely to say their standard of living has deteriorated (30%) compared with men (29%) and are also less likely to report their standard of living has improved (7%) than men (10%).

Workers aged between 18 and 34 are more likely to report improvements to their standard of living, while those aged between 35 and 54 are least likely to.

Hours worked

The survey asked respondents whether the number of hours they work in a typical week have increased, decreased or stayed the same in the last three months. The proportion of respondents reporting an increase in hours is 22%, a decline from the last quarter's figure of 27%. In all, 8% of employees say their hours have

decreased (10% for the previous quarter) and 70% report no change. Voluntary sector employees are more likely to say their hours have increased (24%) than staff in the private sector (23%) and those in the public sector (19%).

Part-time working

Official statistics for August to October 2009 showed that there were just over 1 million employees and self-employed people working part-time because they could not find a full-time job. This is the highest figure since records for this series began in 1992.

In light of this, the survey asked part-time workers to agree or disagree with whether ideally they would like to find full-time work but are unable to find a suitable full-time job. In all, 13% agree that this is the case; however the majority (70%) of part-time workers disagree, while 11% neither agree nor disagree. Nearly a fifth (18%) of male part-time workers agree they would like to find full-time work but are unable to find a suitable position, compared with 12% of women.

In all, 85% of part-time workers agree they work part-time because it allows them the right work-life balance. Just 7% of respondents disagree and 7% neither agree nor disagree.

Table 15: In the last three months, have the number of hours you work in a typical week... (%)

	All	Men	Women	Private sector	Public sector	Voluntary sector
Increased	22	23	21	23	19	24
Stayed the same	70	71	70	69	76	75
Decreased	8	6	9	8	5	2

Table 16: Ideally I would like to work full-time hours but I am unable to find a suitable full-time job (%)

	All	Men	Women	Private sector	Public sector	Voluntary sector
Strongly agree	5	8	4	4	6	0
Agree	8	10	8	8	6	14
Neither agree nor disagree	11	10	12	13	6	3
Disagree	42	34	44	42	48	33
Strongly disagree	28	27	28	26	29	41
Don't know	0	0	0	0	0	0
Not applicable	6	11	5	6	5	8

Job-seeking

Nearly a quarter of employees say they are currently looking for a new job while nearly four in ten workers say they would ideally like to change jobs in the next year.

Just under a quarter of all employees (22%) are currently looking for a new job. This has dipped slightly from the previous three surveys (25%).

Once again, younger employees seem far more likely than older employees to be looking for a new job – 43% of UK employees aged 18–24 say they are looking for a new job compared with just 12% aged 55 and over. Private sector employees (24%) are also more likely than voluntary (20%) and public sector (17%) employees to be looking for a new job.

Only 4% of respondents have moved organisation in the last six months and, of that group, 36% are receiving more money but 40% are receiving less.

When asked if they would ideally like to change jobs within the next year, 37% of employees said they would. This represents a slight decrease from last quarter (40%), but overall this figure is high and consistent with the previous two quarters. A further 11% are uncertain or undecided at present. While public sector employees are least likely to be looking for a new job currently, they are the group that ideally would most like to change jobs in the next year (42%).

Fewer employees this quarter (33% compared with 40% last quarter) are currently very/fairly optimistic that they will be able to change jobs within the next year. More respondents this quarter are also feeling pessimistic about the prospect of changing jobs (46% compared with 41% last quarter).

Conclusions

Most economic forecasters believe the UK emerged from recession in the last quarter of 2009; however, our winter 2010 *Employee Outlook* report shows that any return to economic growth is yet to filter down to the workplace. The survey shows that most employees are suffering from a New Year hangover, with job satisfaction levels hitting an all-time low of +35 and the proportion of respondents reporting that their standard of living has worsened over the last six months increasing since the previous quarter.

These findings are not surprising when considering the ongoing impact of the recession on employees in all sectors and sizes of organisation. The proportion of people thinking it likely or very likely they could lose their job has increased since the last quarter, and while private sector employees are most likely to believe this, the proportion of public sector employees worried about losing their jobs has increased significantly since the last quarter as concern mounts over public service budget cuts. At the same time workers have become more pessimistic about their chances of finding a new job, with nearly two-thirds now thinking this would be difficult.

This gloomy view of the labour market is understandable given that nearly a third of respondents report their organisation has made redundancies as a result of the downturn, with a further 15% saying their employer is planning to make job cuts. Again, the survey provides evidence that the recession is increasingly impacting on public sector organisations, with a growing proportion of employees in this sector saying their employer has either made redundancies or is planning to do so.

It is not just in the area of job cuts where the situation has deteriorated since the last quarter. The proportion of respondents saying their organisation has cut back on training, frozen pay, cut back on benefits or frozen recruitment has increased since the autumn *Employee Outlook* report.

The survey also provides evidence of the pressure the recession is putting people under at work. The proportion of people reporting an increase in conflict at work between colleagues, bullying by line managers, as well as increases in stress and people taking time off sick, has edged up again – as it has every quarter since the survey series started in May 2009. More than four out of ten employees say they feel under excessive pressure at work either every day or once or twice a week.

Compared with the last quarter, employees feel less secure in their jobs, are less likely to agree they are learning new skills or have opportunities to progress and are more likely to feel worried about the future. They are also more likely to agree there has been an increase in office politics and less likely to trust their immediate manager.

However, it is employees' attitudes to senior managers that should ring most alarm bells for employers. Only about a third of employees say they trust or have confidence in their senior managers and just a quarter agree their organisation's directors consult them about important decisions. Employees' negative perceptions of consultation is an issue that has got worse over the four quarterly surveys and is likely to be one of the reasons for the lack of trust and confidence among staff in their leaders. Inadequate consultation needs to be tackled to improve employee engagement, motivation and retention in the long term.

Recommendations for employers

- Track job satisfaction and engagement levels within your organisation and think about different ways of increasing these. Job satisfaction is particularly low for 18–24-year-olds so pay attention to this group, particularly in your development and career paths and offerings. Opportunities for interesting work and coaching and mentoring should keep employees engaged.

- Try to increase trust in your senior managers and focus on consultation methods and opportunities to feed views and issues upwards. This quarter the findings suggest that trust in line managers has also dipped, so think about working with line managers to improve relationships and trust with employees.
- Our survey findings show an increase in the number of people saying there is more stress at work. Provide extra support to help employees cope and try to ensure workloads are balanced.
- With many organisations implementing pay freezes and standards of living falling, think about ways in which your organisation can support employees, such as providing financial advice, and so on.

Background to the survey

The CIPD has commissioned a quarterly survey among UK employees and sole traders to identify their opinions of and attitudes towards working life today, particularly during these difficult economic times.

YouGov conducted the latest quarterly online survey for the CIPD of 2,144 UK employees in the middle of December 2009. This survey was administered to members of the YouGov Plc GB panel of more than 185,000 individuals who have agreed to take part in surveys. The sample was selected to be representative of the Great Britain workforce in relation to sector (private, public, voluntary), industry type and full-time/part-time working by gender. The responding sample is weighted to the profile of the sample definition to provide a representative reporting sample. The profile is normally derived from census data or, if not available from the census, from industry-accepted data.

An email was sent to panellists selected at random from the base sample according to the sample definition, inviting them to take part in the survey and providing a link to the survey.

Respondents were drawn from a mixture of public (17%), private (72%) and voluntary/charity organisations (6%). The remaining classified their organisation as 'other'.

Size of organisation was classified in the following way: sole trader (one-person business), micro business (2–9), small business (10–49), medium (50–249) and large (more than 250).

Net scores refer to the proportion of people agreeing with a statement minus those disagreeing.

We explore leading-edge people management and development issues through our research. Our aim is to share knowledge, increase learning and understanding, and help our members make informed decisions about improving practice in their organisations.

We produce many resources on employee relations issues including guides, books, practical tools, surveys and research reports. We also organise a number of conferences, events and training courses. Please visit www.cipd.co.uk to find out more.



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