



Employee Satisfaction

and the performance of managers



The state of the workplace is a critical determinant in organizational performance. It is no secret that a happy workplace is a necessary condition for any high performing business. However, scientific work can be challenging, and latest indicators point to room for improvement when it comes to the workplace and the role of managers.



Introduction

The issue of workplace efficiency and productivity is closely tied to employee satisfaction.

In its simplest terms, a happy and contented workforce is usually one where workers are motivated and productive, and where the organization is performing well.

Conversely, an unhappy workforce typically has high levels of absenteeism and staff turnover and is not in a state to be achieving the highest levels of productivity and competitiveness.

In one of the largest exercises of its kind, Kelly Services undertook a worldwide survey to identify how scientific workers feel about their jobs.

The findings are the result of an extensive global survey conducted by Kelly Services during the second half of 2006.

The Kelly Global Workforce Index sought the views of approximately 70,000 people in 28 countries covering Europe, Asia Pacific and North and South America.

The survey examined the views of employees across a range of industries including more than 3,000 working in science related fields worldwide.

Specifically, the survey wanted to know how happy science workers were in their jobs, and how they rated their bosses.

In one of the largest exercises of its kind, Kelly Services undertook a worldwide survey to identify how scientific workers feel about their jobs.



The survey findings

Respondents were asked a series of questions about their level of happiness in the job and how they felt about their bosses or managers.

The aim was to identify how people feel about their work – whether they are happy, unhappy or indifferent; as well as to discover how they rate the effectiveness of those who work as their direct superiors.

Overall, the survey found that 60% of workers in the scientific area described themselves as either happy or very happy in their jobs.

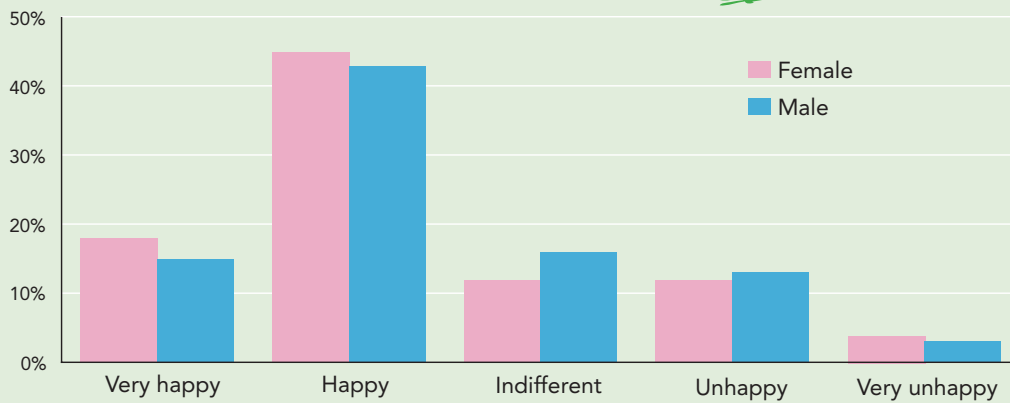
Females were slightly more happy in their work (63%) compared with males (58%).

A total of 13% of respondents said they were unhappy in their jobs and 3% were very unhappy.

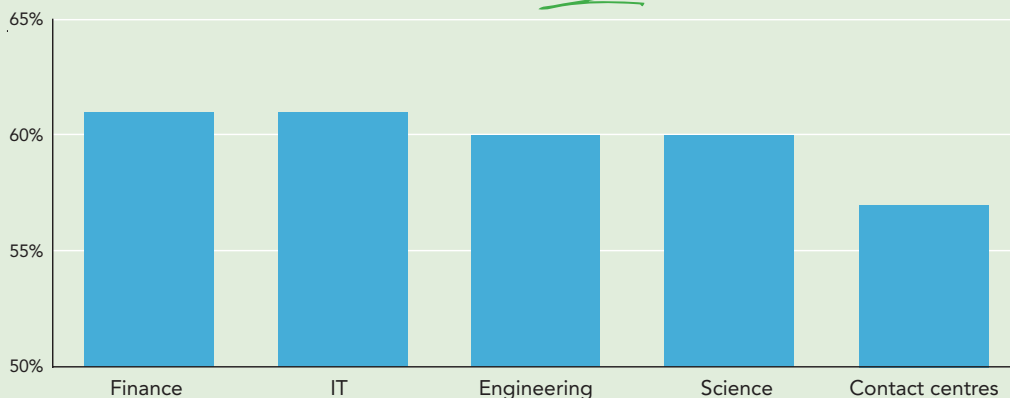
Overall, it appears that workers in science and science related fields are reasonably contented with their work although the findings hardly give an overwhelming sense of confidence about the state of the scientific workplace.

By comparison, with other industry sectors covered by the survey, the science profession comes out reasonably well. Of the five sectors examined, Finance and IT are the happiest places to work with 61% happiness, followed by Engineering and Science (both 60%) and Call Centres (57%).

How happy are/were you in your most recent job? By gender (%)



Percentage happy workers in jobs by industry sector worldwide (%)





Happiness fluctuates with age

One of the features of the science industry is that the state of employee satisfaction appears to fluctuate significantly throughout the average science career.

In a general sense, both younger workers as well as those closer to retirement age were the most happy in their jobs. A relatively high 67% of those aged under 20 were happy in their jobs, but this drops dramatically to just 58% for workers aged 20-24 and 59% for 25-34 year olds.

This suggests that after a period of initial enthusiasm, young workers embarking on a scientific career quickly come up against some harsh and challenging realities.

There is a period of resurgence in work happiness between the ages of 35 to 44 but for whatever reason, this evaporates suddenly. Those workers aged between 45 and 54 have the lowest levels of satisfaction of all age groups.

However, once workers reach 55 and older the level of job satisfaction climbs to 74%, suggesting this group of workers have collectively found their niche and are quite comfortable with their work or their contribution.

There are clear signs that the typical science career has periods of fluctuating career happiness that are not evident in other industries studied. This may be a

sign to HR professionals that certain age groups need more careful examination, career development or mentoring.

It is recognized by human resource professionals that it is vitally important to try and find what makes a contented and motivated workforce because workers who enjoy their work will make a more effective contribution to the performance of the organization.

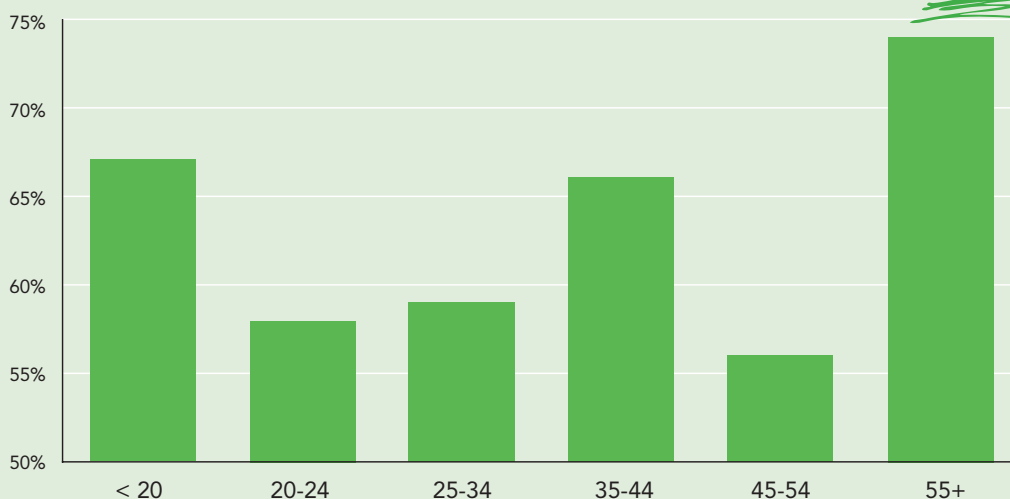
The best employers understand this and provide people with interesting and challenging work as well as opportunities to learn and more fully develop their own skills.

If we look at what workers say is important to them, they want a workplace with good morale, stimulating work, a degree of autonomy, and one where they receive feedback from their bosses.

Developing and maintaining a happy workforce can be one of the most challenging jobs of any manager.

With many countries experiencing severe skills shortages, it becomes increasingly important to hang on to valued employees. Many organizations underestimate the costs that are associated with high staff turnover including loss of customers, re-training costs, disruption to existing staff and programs, and low morale.

Percentage of Science industry employees happy in their jobs, by age (%)





Bosses rated by their staff

The other main element of the global survey was to find out how employees rated their bosses. Survey respondents were asked to give their bosses a score out of ten.

Workers in the scientific area across the globe gave an average score of 6.9 out of 10 for their bosses.

Again, while this was clearly a pass mark, even a credit, it was certainly short of a distinction and suggests there is considerable room for improvement in management-employee relations.

Females were slightly more compassionate on their managers, giving an average score of 7.0 out of 10, compared with 6.8 from men.

Bosses were rated on four attributes – communication, leadership, team spirit and delegation skills. Workers felt that bosses were best at delegating effectively with a score of 7.0 out of 10. On the other three attributes, managers were awarded 6.6 out of 10.

Also, younger workers tended to be slightly more favourable in rating their bosses.

Workers were also asked about one of the key elements that contributes to assessing the quality of an employer – whether or not they were rewarded for a job well done.

A total of 60% of respondents said that they were regularly or sometimes rewarded for doing a good job – either by way of praise or recognition.

Many employers do not always appreciate the impact that rewards have in lifting morale and providing encouragement. Simply taking the time to tell someone when they've done a good job or provide some constructive feedback can make a big difference.

Many employers recognize this but it's not universal. Sometimes senior managers are so busy managing the business they frequently overlook the people aspects, which are vitally important.

Simply taking the time to tell someone when they've done a good job or provide some constructive feedback can make a big difference.



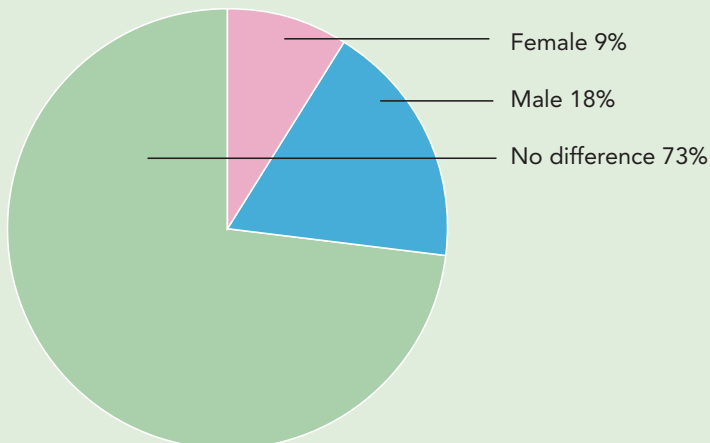
Do Men or Women make the best Bosses?

One of the key questions that arises frequently in the workplace is 'Who makes the best bosses – men or women?'

Across the science sector, there is an overwhelming agreement that it doesn't make any difference. Some 73% of those in the survey said there was no difference between men and women bosses, while 18% said they preferred men and 9% liked female bosses.

Younger workers predominantly prefer female bosses while those workers aged 45 and over much prefer male bosses.

Who makes best bosses? Science industry responses





Country comparisons

There are some marked differences in the way science employees feel about their work amongst the countries in the survey.

On the question about how happy employees are in their work in the science industry, the US and France emerged as the two countries with the most contented workforces. Australia, Germany, Canada and Italy all sit comfortably around the global average, while Belgium rated well below other countries in the survey.

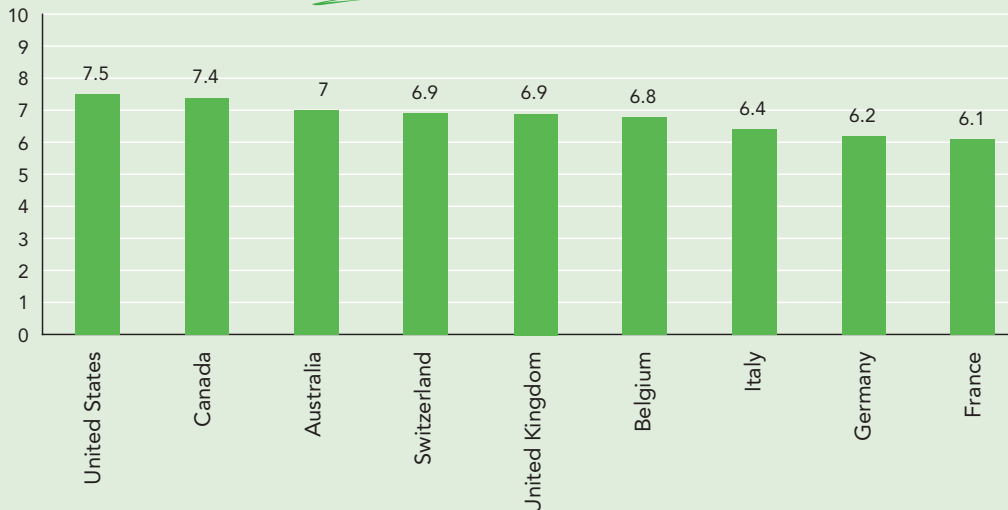
It is worth noting that because of varying sample sizes, not all 28 countries are subject to this analysis.

On the question of the bosses' rating, a handful of countries have employees who clearly admire their employers. At the top of the scale are US, Canada and Australia, all with ratings of seven or above. France and Germany had the lowest rating.

How happy are/were you in your current/most recent job:
 Science industry country comparison (%)



Average Boss Rating for Science Industry:
 Country Comparison (Score out of ten)





Conclusion

The scientific sector has undergone enormous changes in recent years with many of the best and brightest under increased pressure to meet KPIs and benchmarks in a fiercely competitive environment.

There has been a considerable transfer of skills as science has become a truly global workforce.

Clearly the majority of those working in the sector say that are happy with their lot in life. Yet the picture that emerges is somewhat unconvincing and not reflective of a dynamic and valued profession that is involved in some of the planet's most profound and far reaching work.

It is reasonable to wonder whether the scientific workplace needs some improving; whether initiatives that have transformed other workplaces into high performing units could be examined in the area of science. There are clearly signs that job satisfaction, while arguably acceptable when viewed across the board, undergoes periods of severe despondency.

This is not an ideal state of affairs when trying to attract the best talent and motivate people to deliver their best.

There are clearly signs that job satisfaction, while arguably acceptable when viewed across the board, undergoes periods of severe despondency.

~~~~~

60 years of doing it right

