

STUDY SHOWS EMPLOYEES MORE CONCERNED WITH WORK ENVIRONMENT THAN PAY



The current economic situation is affecting both employers and employees alike. Job opportunities are not as readily available as many people would like, and businesses are struggling to maintain or boost their productivity while keeping the costs low. With that in mind, it may surprise some people to learn that there are employees considering leaving their jobs, which could possibly be prevented without employers having to raise pay or benefits. A recent survey report by Mercer, *What's Working*, was conducted by the company's employee research group. It revealed a significant increase across multiple countries of employees that may be keeping an eye out for alternate employment, totaling nearly a third of all workers who participated in the survey. There is also approximately 21 percent of employees who may not be looking elsewhere for employment but who are not content with their current jobs, rating low for "engagement," which is defined as an employee's loyalty, commitment and motivation. The survey likewise shows that employers facing potential financial strain could inspire or motivate employees by means other than finances and avoid additional monetary burdens. Employees hoping for improvement in their jobs were less interested in salary-related changes than a better work environment. Being treated with respect was the most significant element desired by the workers. According to the survey results, employee engagement could also be increased by refining the balance between work and life, the type of work that employees do, and the quality of both fellow workers and leadership. Mercer's human capital global segment leader for talent management, Jason Jeffay, stated that "employers face significant challenges in raising engagement but they can be overcome by making the right trade-offs and investments in the employment deal, while enhancing leadership skills and managerial effectiveness on the front line." Engagement for employees encompasses everything in the workplace, not simply benefits or pay based on performance. The survey does show employees unhappy with their base pay, but it further indicates that the workers would prefer improvements in the way they are treated and their daily surroundings at work over financial stimulation. Pete Foley, an employee research consultant and a principal at Mercer, warns employers about recognizing "a change in mood or sentiment" before it becomes "a full-blown issue." He further suggests that employers "periodically take the pulse of their own employees to identify their specific areas of concern and link employee opinion to outcomes such as productivity and retention." The survey, taking place over three quarters (from the fourth quarter of 2010 through the second quarter of 2011), included roughly 30,000 workers in 17 countries, with 2,400 of those employees in the U.S. Mercer had previously conducted a similar survey in 2005, predating the economic recession, a period of time which the National Bureau of Economic Research has set from December of 2007 to June of 2009.

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