

Workplace Productivity Employees Survey Executive Summary

Introduction and background

In December 2003, Cabinet Business Committee agreed to the establishment of the Workplace Productivity Working Group (WPWG), to advise the Government on practical ways to improve New Zealand's productivity performance. Subsequent to recommendations made by the WPWG, a Reference Group to support implementation of the Government's Workplace Productivity Agenda (the Agenda) was established.

The report of the WPWG identified a number of issues relating to information and access to information, which limit: *The extent to which employers and employees in workplaces in New Zealand are able to take action to lift workplace productivity.*

In order to address the issues identified by the WPWG, a strategic communications programme, intended to engage all of the key stakeholders, is currently being implemented by the Department of Labour in conjunction with Business NZ, Chambers of Commerce and NZCTU (New Zealand Council of Trade Unions):

- To continue to raise the profile of workplace productivity.
- To keep the Workplace Productivity Agenda 'alive', by promoting the benefits and opportunities of productivity improvements.

BRC Marketing & Social Research (BRC) was commissioned in June 2005 by the Department to conduct a series of quantitative research studies with both employers and employees in relation to practices implemented to improve workplace productivity and Work-life balance.

Objectives

The main objectives of the employees' research are:

- To benchmark and monitor changing levels of awareness of Work-life balance and workplace productivity issues among employees.
- To provide a base line from which to measure the future effectiveness of the DoL's communications plan to raise awareness about Work-life and productivity issues among employees.

With these research objectives in mind, the information objectives of the employee survey were to:

- Identify employees' attitudes towards Work-life balance issues.
- Identify different types of Work-life balance arrangements in the workplaces that are available to employees to assist them in balancing their time and energy between their paid work and all the other things they need and want to do.
- Identify barriers and factors creating difficulties for employees to achieve the Work-life balance they desire.
- Identify awareness of, and attitudes towards, workplace productivity.
- Identify types of staff related things that have been discussed or implemented in employees' workplaces to improve workplace productivity.
- Identify employees attitudes towards activities intended to improve workplace productivity.

The work-life balance findings from the benchmark employees survey are provided in a separate report titled "Work-Life Balance in New Zealand" available from www.dol.govt.nz/worklife/quality.asp.

Methodology

A total sample of n=2,000 households was interviewed for this Benchmark survey, of which the sample was randomly selected from Telecom New Zealand's White Pages.

Interviewing was conducted by telephone, with BRC interviewers calling randomly selected households. In each household BRC asked to speak to a person aged 15 years or older and work 10 hours or more per week in paid employment, including self-employment. Interviews were conducted from BRC's CATI facility in Wellington, between 25 October and 21 November 2005, and the survey achieved a response rate of 17.9%.

Summary findings

There are two core groups covered by this report, a very satisfied majority (50%) and a dissatisfied minority (roughly 10% of all surveyed).

In relation to those employees who reported they were satisfied with their jobs, while they do not come from any particular industry group (viz. employees were just as likely to be satisfied regardless of the main activity of their workplace), they are more likely to report that their Work-life balance is better than those who are dissatisfied.

The research has also identified that there are two key staff related practices to improve productivity, which stand out from the rest in relation to employees having more favourable attitudes towards their workplaces:

- Developing a workplace culture where people work together better.
- Encouraging workers to be innovative.

Employees who rated their workplaces highly in regard to these two practices generally have more positive views on workplace productivity practices in general, and are more likely to agree that their workplace performs well in relation to various processes for identifying and implementing changes to improve productivity.

The reader should also be aware that the relationships between job satisfaction, perceptions of Work-life balance, attitudes towards productivity improvement and processes for identifying and implementing changes to improve productivity are likely to be complex.

Table 1 outlines correlations between key summary measures collected in the survey. The closer the correlation is to 1.0, the stronger the association.

- Key points to note from the table are that:
- An employee's rating of work life balance is closely correlated (0.37) to job satisfaction, and we would expect job satisfaction to reflect both how an employee feels about their work life balance and other aspects of their job.
- an employee's rating of work life balance is not very strongly correlated to the number of work life balance practices used by the employee (0.15), but this is to be expected if other factors, such as the extent of "life" demands (presence of dependents etc), influences an employees work life balance (as is likely to happen).
- the number of staff related practices implemented at a job is closely correlated to positive attitudes to workplace productivity (0.46) and the rating for steps in making workplace improvements (0.53). Both of these measures of views on productivity and steps for creating change are closely related (0.63).
- While views on productivity and the process for creating change are strongly related to job satisfaction (0.42 and 0.43 respectively) we would expect this relationship to work both ways, with high levels of job satisfaction favourably affecting views on productivity in the workplace and steps for creating change.
- The number of staff related practices implemented have a slightly stronger correlation to job satisfaction (0.29) than number of work life balance policies used by employees (0.24).

Table 1: Correlation of

area	Satisfaction with job	Rating of Work-life balance	Number of staff related practices that were implemented	Number of positive Workplace Productivity statements Agreed with	Number of steps for change rated as Good	Number of Work-life balance practices used by employees
Satisfaction with job	1	0.37	0.29	0.42	0.43	0.24
Rating of Work-life balance	0.37	1	0.12	0.22	0.23	0.15
Number of staff related practices that were implemented	0.29	0.12	1	0.46	0.5	0.22
Number of positive Workplace Productivity statements Agreed with	0.42	0.22	0.46	1	0.63	0.21
Number of steps Workplace Culture statements rated as Good	0.43	0.23	0.5	0.63	1	0.19
Number of Work-life balance practices used by employees	0.24	0.15	0.22	0.21	0.19	1

The closer the correlation is to 1.0, the stronger the association.

Key findings

Employees' job satisfaction

By far, most respondents reported they were satisfied or very satisfied with their job (35% and 50% respectively), and there were no statistically significant differences amongst the different Industry Groupings.

And as might be expected, those who reported having a good Work-life balance were more likely to say they were satisfied/very satisfied with their job.

Understanding of workplace productivity

When asked what the term '*workplace productivity*' meant to employees, the following responses were mentioned most frequently:

- Working efficiently/ effectively (60%).
- Producing quality product/ providing good service (58%).
- Getting the work done/ achieving purpose of business (57%).
- Quality workplace environment (44%).
- Getting the most out of employees (43%).

When viewed by the different Industry Groupings, employees working in Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Retail Trade sectors were significantly more likely to mention *revenue and profitability*, while those working in Government Administration, Defence, Education and Health and Community Services sectors were significantly less likely to report this.

Staff related practices to improve productivity

Among the staff related practices that were implemented in the last twelve months, employees most frequently mentioned the following:

- Changes to health and safety practices (76%).
- Increasing workers' skills through training (72%).
- Encouraging workers to use new technology (68%).
- Purchasing machinery or equipment (62%).

When compared to the Employers survey results, with the exception of changes to health and safety practices, all other practices were significantly less likely to be identified as having been implemented.

However, despite these gaps between employees and employers, when viewed by industry type the same types of practices that had been implemented were reported by both employees and employers (in their benchmark survey).

On average, the surveyed employees identified slightly less than seven out of twelve staff related practices that had been *implemented* in their workplaces (i.e. a mean score of $M=6.9$).

However, employees working in the following sectors were significantly more likely to report more practices had been implemented: Cultural and Recreation Services ($M=8.1$), Finance and Insurance ($M=7.9$) and Education ($M=7.4$). On the other hand, those working in Personal and Other Services ($M=6.0$) and Retail Trade ($M=6.2$) sectors reported fewer practices.

Workplace culture and productivity statements

Between 65% and 86% of employees agreed or strongly agreed that the positive statements about workplace culture and productivity applied to their own working environment.

Respondents most often agreed or strongly agreed with *My workplace values the contribution that I make in my job* (86%) and *My workplace offers me the opportunity to improve my skills* (81%).

On average, the surveyed employees agreed with roughly four out of five of the positive workplace culture and productivity statements (i.e. a mean score of $M=3.8$). However, employees working in Cultural and Recreation Services ($M=4.2$) and Education ($M=3.9$) sectors were significantly more likely to report this. In contrast, those working in Transport and Storage ($M=3.3$) and Manufacturing ($M=3.5$) sectors were significantly less likely. Statistical analysis identified that there is also a significant relationship between perceptions of the positive workplace culture and productivity issues and whether or not certain staff related practices had been implemented.

Most importantly, two staff related practices appear to have significantly strong relationships with employees' perceptions of their workplace's culture and the implementation of productivity practices, namely:

- Developing a workplace culture where people work together better.
- Encouraging workers to be innovative.
- Processes for identifying and implementing productivity changes in the workplace

Between 62% and 72% of employees reported that in relation to identifying and implementing changes, their workplace's performance was good or very good.

Employees most often reported that their workplace's performance was good or very good in *Providing support to employees in making those changes (such as training)* (72%) and *Generating new ideas for possible change in the workplace* (69%).

On average, the surveyed employees gave a good rating to roughly five out of eight of the change implementation practices (i.e. a mean score of $M=5.3$). While employees working in Cultural and Recreation Services ($M=6.6$) sector were significantly more likely to report this, those working in Manufacturing ($M=4.5$) and Education ($M=5.8$) were significantly less likely.

Moreover, the average number of change implementation practices rated as poor was roughly two out of eight (i.e. a mean score of $M=1.9$).

While employees working in Manufacturing ($M=2.7$) sector were more likely to report this, those working in Education ($M=1.5$) and Cultural and Recreation Services ($M=0.6$) were less likely.