



## Working remotely alleviates more stress than it creates

Employees who spend most of their working week as telecommuters have greater job satisfaction than people who are primarily office workers, according to a study from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM).

Kathryn Fonner and Michael compared the advantages and disadvantages of the two work arrangements and found the main benefit of teleworking for at least three days a week to be decreased work-life conflict. While poor workplace communication is often cited as the biggest disadvantage of telework, respondents reported this as being of minimal importance and, although they exchanged information with others less frequently than office-based workers, they reported similar timely access to important work-related information.

According to Kathryn Fother the results of the study suggest multiple reasons why high job satisfaction and teleworking are linked. Specifically, remote working tends to shield employees from distracting and stressful aspects of the workplace, including office politics, interruptions, endless meetings and information overload.

"Our findings emphasize the advantages of restricted face-to-face interaction, and also highlight the need for organizations to identify and address the problematic and unsatisfying issues inherent in collocated work environments," said Fonner. "With lower stress and fewer distractions, employees can prevent work from seeping into their personal lives."

Kathryn Fonner added that, as well as introducing teleworking, organizations can consider a number of other strategies to increase job satisfaction including:

- Limiting meetings and mass emails
- Streamlining communication by creating an accessible repository of information
- Designating times and spaces for office-based employees to work uninterrupted
- 'Creating a supportive climate where employees can register concerns without fear of retaliation'
- Encouraging employees to disconnect themselves from work communication when their day is finished

The study is reported in the November 2010 issue of the Journal of Applied Communication Research

Previous Article - Who Telecommutes?

Rising gas prices have resulted in many professionals considering telecommuting as an economical work option, but spending too much time working from home can mean saying goodbye to the corner office.

Surveys developed in 2006 by OfficeTeam, a leading staffing service specializing in placement of administrative professionals, were conducted by an independent research firm and include responses from 100 senior executives in Canada and 150 in the USA.

They found 32 per cent of Canadian respondents and 43 per cent of US respondents said telecommuting is best suited for staff-level employees, compared with 28 per cent and 18 per cent respectively who felt telecommuting is most beneficial for managers. In addition, more than half of Canadian respondents and more than two-thirds of US respondents said senior executives at their firms rarely or never telecommute.

When asked, 'At which level do you think telecommuting programs are most beneficial?' participants responded:

When asked, 'Overall, how frequently do senior executives at your firm telecommute?' participants responded:

According to Diane Domeyer, executive director of OfficeTeam, it is often easier for staff-level employees to telecommute because their work can be performed autonomously. However, even those people who work from home need to spend time in the office.

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# Emotional Intelligence and Job Satisfaction

Research from the University of Haifa found that employees with high levels of emotional intelligence are more dedicated and satisfied at work. The study surveyed 809 employees and managers in two public sector organisations and two private companies, examining the influence of emotional intelligence on factors such as organizational politics, work attitudes, formal and informal behavior, feelings of justice, and burnout.

The study found that employees with high levels of emotional intelligence tended to rate the level of justice within their organizations as higher than their peers. They tended to be more satisfied with their jobs and more committed to their organizations. Factors such as burnout, intention to leave or negligent behavior were less prevalent. Employees

Importance of Work Rewards	Age Under 40	Age 40 Plus
Career is important	77%	60%
Pay is important	50%	56%
Benefits are important	64%	65%

  

Satisfaction with Work Rewards	Age Under 40	Age 40 Plus
Satisfied with career at present	50%	48%
Satisfied with pay	53%	49%
Satisfied with benefits	69%	65%

with higher levels of emotional intelligence also perceived the impact of organizational politics as less severe and demonstrated better coping skills, using less aggressive forms of persuasion to influence supervisors.

Researcher Dr. Galit Meisler concluded: "This study has shown that employees with a higher level of emotional intelligence are assets to their organization. I believe it will not be long before emotional intelligence is incorporated in employee screening and training processes and

in employee assessment and promotion decisions."

Job Satisfaction Survey

A 2008 survey by The Segal Company, a New York-based compensation, benefits and HR consultancy found that state and local public sector workers under age 40 focused more on career (job security, training) than their older colleagues and

were also more likely to actively look for work elsewhere.

Elliot Susseles, senior vice president of the Segal Company, said:

"The study found that the biggest driver of turnover for employees under 40 is dissatisfaction with career opportunities and job content. This suggests the importance of establishing and communicating career path opportunities, work development and interesting work assignments to successfully recruit and retain younger employees."

Both age groups had similar concerns about pay and benefits but, as has been traditional for government employees, pay remains less important than benefits for all workers, regardless of age. Nevertheless, satisfaction levels for pay and career were low for both age groups. Segal

consider that these findings reflect the challenge of attracting and keeping new talent in state and local public service.

The following table compares under and over 40s in the public sector:

54% of under 40s said they would be actively looking for work elsewhere within the next year compared with 42% of the older group. [hrmguide.com](http://hrmguide.com)



Companies responding to high profile failures tend to learn from the experience and ultimately prove more successful, according to research from the University of Colorado Denver Business School published in the Academy of Management Journal. The study focused on organizations involved in space launches and exploration.

Co-author Vinit Desai, assistant professor of management, said:

"We found that the knowledge gained from success was often fleeting while knowledge from failure stuck around for years. But there is a tendency in organizations to ignore failure or try not to focus on it. Managers may fire people or turn over the entire workforce while they should be treating the failure as a learning opportunity."

Vinit Desai and co-author Peter Madsen, assistant professor at Brigham Young University School of Management, found little evidence that organizations learned significantly from

## Failure is a learning opportunity

successful projects but acknowledged that the process may be different in other settings.

Researchers compared responses to the flight of the space shuttle Atlantis in 2002 and the subsequent flight of the Columbia. A piece of insulation broke off during the first voyage, damaging a solid rocket booster but not impeding the mission or the overall program. Researchers found there had been little follow-up or investigation into the incident.

When the Columbia was launched another piece of insulation broke off, destroying the shuttle and its seven-person crew. This prompted the suspension of all shuttle flights and a major investigation that resulted in 29 recommended changes to prevent future disasters. The



researchers suggest that the difference in response reflects the fact that Atlantis was considered a success and the Columbia a failure.

Vinit Desai commented:

"Whenever you have a failure it causes a company to search for solutions and when you search for solutions it puts you as an executive in a different mindset, a more open mindset."

Researchers identify the airline industry

as one sector of the economy that has effectively learned safety lessons as a result of failures.

Vinit Desai said:

"Despite crowded skies, airlines are incredibly reliable. The number of failures is miniscule and past research has shown that older airlines, those with more experience in failure, have a lower number of accidents."

The researchers suggest that organizations should analyze less significant incidents and apply lessons learned rather than wait for major failures.

Vinit Desai concluded:

"The most significant implication of this study...is that organizational leaders should neither ignore failures nor stigmatize those involved with them. Rather leaders should treat failures as invaluable learning opportunities, encouraging the open sharing of information about them." [hrmguide.com](http://hrmguide.com)

Whenever you have a failure it causes a company to search for solutions and when you search for solutions it puts you as an executive in a different mindset, a more open mindset

# Integrating HR Technology

HR Technology is a major growth market with increasingly sophisticated HR information systems (HRIS), HR management systems (HRMS), applicant tracking software and other IT products become available. Web-based HRIS is fast becoming a basic element of people management. Large corporations use HRIS extensively and more and more providers are addressing the potential of web-based HRMS solutions for medium and smaller businesses.

The 13th Annual HR Technology® Conference and Expo that took place in Chicago from September 29 to October 1 2010 saw a number of new and award-winning products on show. Among this year's developments is Acquire InSight, selected by Human Resource Executive magazine as one of its 2010 Top HR Products. Developed by workforce planning and analytics specialists Acquire, it is aimed to fill a void in the business analytics marketplace. It is claimed to improve HR planning decisions by delivering workforce analytics related to talent management initiatives and workforce trends directly to top managers. Acquire hosts a secure reporting engine enabling users to provide managers with access to workforce-performance metrics specific to their particular departments. The deal includes dedicated

access to a certified workforce analyst, who can hypothesis test business drivers and link workforce trends to business trends.

Acquire InSight can integrate information from HRIS and talent management systems, presenting disparate data in a comprehensive format directly to decision makers when they need it. The Talent Pipeline shows the movement of talent throughout the organization and can focus on each individual manager's staff development results. Acquire InSight also lets

users match business events with workforce trends on a timeline.

Meanwhile, HumanConcepts has launched Workforce Monitor™ described as an intuitive, analytical dashboard that allows managers to analyze their organization based on measures such as organizational unit, headcount or span of control and dimensions including age, gender, tenure, salary and ethnic origin. As an example, users can look at the overall headcount of the organization and then analyze this by department to identify units which are out of alignment. The system can provide a visual representation of headcounts across departments, by ethnic origin, by salary ranges, and a host of other dimensions.

In a survey of 200 global enterprises and medium-sized businesses, SumTotal® Systems conclude that integrating 'talent functions' within one software platform can eliminate the need for separate data silos and make cross-functional reporting easier. This allows significant benefits as organizations can obtain more holistic views of workforce productivity and growth potential without time-consuming manual abstraction and col-

location of information. They identified the top five HR benefits of integration as:

- Reduced voluntary turnover
- Higher workforce productivity
- Better workforce alignment to overall business strategy
- Improved internal talent mobility
- Faster on-boarding (time-to-productivity)

SumTotal also looked at fifteen possible HR process integrations and concluded that the top five were:

- Employee Development & Succession Planning: Enable employee development planning for future roles
- Employee Development & Learning Management: Enable employee development plans to be executed via learning and training
- Learning Management & Performance Management: Enable learning and training activities as a key component of goal completion
- Reporting & Core HR: Enable a single, centralized reporting

repository across all HR functions

- Performance Management & Compensation Management: Enable merit-based pay-for-performance

Christopher Faust, vice president of global marketing at SumTotal Systems, said:

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"Seamlessly linking HR processes and technologies to facilitate real-time business intelligence for improved decision making is a critical priority for HR leaders today. More and more global enterprises are experiencing firsthand the business benefits that a single, complete talent platform can deliver. Our research continues to validate the top strategies that drive tangible business value which help organizations to accelerate their growth, retain their top performers, and improve overall workforce productivity."

