What Makes Employees Head for the Hills?

2019 WORKPLACE SATISFACTION SURVEY
It’s a candidate’s market

With opportunities readily available to employees across industries, employers often struggle to retain their workforce. No employer wants to lose their most valuable players, especially given the high costs of employee turnover. In today’s environment, how do you keep your team happy enough to stay put?

Addison Group surveyed more than 1,000 job seekers to understand what they value in their work lives and what causes them to seek other opportunities (even when they’re relatively happy in their current role).

Here’s what the data reveals about why employees take other jobs, and what you can do to help make your organization a place they’d like to stay for the long haul.
Job satisfaction is high...but it’s not enough

While many job seekers are aware of the job market being in their favor, there’s a disconnect between how they experience the candidate’s market and the way it impacts their job search.

The report revealed good news for employers. For the most part, employees are satisfied with their current jobs with 72 percent of employees reporting they are satisfied or very satisfied with their current position. Additionally only 5 percent report they are very unsatisfied. However, that doesn’t mean employers can rest on their laurels.

As it turns out, job satisfaction is not enough to retain employees. Almost eight out of 10 respondents (79 percent) say they are likely or very likely to job search after one bad day at work.

Employees aren’t blind to their options, either. They understand the candidate’s market — and 69 percent of employees are optimistic or very optimistic about their ability to find a new job.

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

- Employers used to aim for job satisfaction to retain employees. Now, you need to aim far beyond that. **Even employees who report they are satisfied in their current positions are open to finding new job opportunities** — and in a candidate’s market, those opportunities are plenty.

- It’s critical to understand what causes the “bad days” at work that nudge employees to look for new jobs. Engage your employees for feedback to understand what their daily frustrations and pain points are before you lose them.
Money talks

While it’s common to not discuss money, it’s always top of mind for your employees.

In fact, almost half (47 percent) of job seekers report they are unsatisfied with salary/compensation. And they’re not just unsatisfied—they’re informed. Fifty-eight percent of respondents have done online research about salaries on websites like Glassdoor, while 38 percent have conversations with peers in their industry. Another 30 percent talk directly to their coworkers about salary.

Additionally, competitive salaries are viewed as a top benefit of a candidate’s market, with 34 percent of respondents saying this was the benefit that mattered most.

Fortunately, employees do feel empowered to negotiate. Slightly over half (53 percent) feel comfortable negotiating with employers, while 69 percent report they negotiated salary within the past year.

It’s no surprise that money motivates employees. And in a candidate’s market, it’s easier than ever for job seekers to jump ship for higher salaries. With salary information so easily accessible on websites like Glassdoor, transparency about compensation is critical.

Prioritize clear communication and honest conversations between managers and employees about salaries.

If you can’t swing higher salaries, look to offer competitive benefits and other perks.
Clean up your side of the street

It’s not all about money. Beyond salary, there are other critical factors that can make or break the employee experience.

Dissatisfaction with the work environment is most likely to encourage satisfied employees to seek other jobs, with 81 percent of respondents reporting this to be true. As it turns out, toxic work environments or a lackluster company culture will drive employees away even more than less hefty paychecks.

The relationship between managers and their reports directly contributes to work satisfaction. Thirty-nine percent of respondents report that their manager/direct supervisor has a strong impact on how they feel about their current jobs.

Stalled career growth is the other biggest obstacle to employee happiness. More than three-fourths (76 percent) of employees report that being passed over for a promotion will lead them to seek other jobs. And 43 percent report being unsatisfied with their career path in general. Remember: If employees don’t see a clear path to progression in your company, they will find it elsewhere.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 76% of employees report that being passed over for a promotion will lead them to seek other jobs
- 39% report that their manager/direct supervisor has a strong impact on how they feel about their current jobs
- 81% of job seekers are dissatisfied with their current work environment
- 43% are unsatisfied with their career path in general

Work culture reigns supreme. **Improve manager training to keep supervisor-report relationships positive**, and invest in a company culture that allows for an enjoyable and productive work environment.

**Evaluate how your managers support your employees** across your company to avoid dissatisfaction.

**Clarify career paths and give employees a clear roadmap of their career progression** at your company. If employees feel lost or bored in their career, they’ll run for the hills.
Focus on your employees

Beyond workplace culture and improvements to career paths, there are other concrete factors that bolster employee retention.

Employee benefits are an important battle ground. Forty-four percent of respondents are unsatisfied with their current employee benefits. With companies now providing innovative and exciting perks for employees, businesses that don’t look far less appealing. While offerings like transportation stipends, fitness memberships and free breakfast at work are enticing, not all benefits need to be costly. Added flexibility (like opportunities for remote working and unlimited PTO) can be just as impactful.

Another factor that might be less concrete:
Meaningful work. “The work I do” is the strongest factor when it comes to influencing loyalty (55 percent), even above salary (50 percent). Meaningful work might be a murky goal to attain, but it starts by letting your employees own their contributions and genuinely make positive impacts to your company.

50% say salary is the strongest factor when it comes to influencing loyalty

44% of respondents are unsatisfied with their current employee benefits

55% say “the work I do” is the strongest factor when it comes to influencing loyalty

KEY TAKEAWAYS

You can’t always offer employees more money. But if you’re giving them opportunities for meaningful work, they’ll stay longer.

Encourage efforts that can make work more meaningful, such as seeking out company-wide volunteer opportunities or taking on nonprofit clients pro-bono.

Beyond the basics, strive to offer your employees benefits that genuinely improve their lives.
Be Your Employees’ Number One Choice

Employees will always have choices. And even when they’re largely satisfied at their current jobs, they’ve got wandering eyes. Reassure them that the grass isn’t greener at another company by offering competitive salaries, enticing benefits packages and opportunities for impactful work. Improving employee retention also requires eliminating the day-to-day frustrations that most often motivate employees to look elsewhere.

To learn more about employee perceptions of the workplace, visit www.addisongroup.com/insights/.
METHODOLOGY

Addison Group surveyed more than 1,000 U.S. job seekers in July 2018. These respondents were currently employed in either full-time or part-time positions, and actively looking for a new job. The gender and age breakdowns of the respondents are as follows:
About Addison Group

Addison Group is a leading professional services firm specializing in consulting, staffing, and executive search for Information Technology, Finance & Accounting, Executive Search, Healthcare, HR & Administrative, and Engineering. Addison’s strengths are its strong management and executive teams, a relationship-focused selling strategy, a history with clients of delivering the right candidate at the right time, and a loyal candidate base. With over 24 offices in cities across the United States, Addison Group offers a national reach with a localized touch.

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