Keeping IT workers satisfied

Posted by tomhoff - 2010/01/05 08:46

There's an old saying that you can't please everyone. But if the results of a new study on U.S. worker job satisfaction carry any weight, it's getting harder and harder to please the masses.

According to a new study conducted by The Conference Board, only 45% of Americans are satisfied with their work, which represents the lowest levels in 22 years. The figure is down from 49% in 2008.

Workers who are 25 and younger expressed the most dissatisfaction, with 64% reporting that they're unhappy in their roles.

Among the reasons for dissatisfaction cited in the study:

-Fewer workers consider their jobs to be interesting.
-Incomes have not kept up with inflation.
-The rising cost of health insurance has cut into workers' take-home pay.

Many CIOs have been hard-pressed to offer their staff raises beyond 3%-to-4% for each of the past few years as corporate bean counters have forced cost-cutting across the enterprise. But savvy CIOs find other ways of keeping IT workers engaged during good times and bad. These techniques include:

-Job rotations, both within the IT organization and throughout the enterprise. Highly-valued IT workers are sometimes given rotational assignments to further develop their skills. This could include a multi-month stint in a new technical discipline or in a different role on a project team. In other cases, IT staffers are placed directly into a business unit to help them learn more about what makes that business tick and become more responsive IT partners.

-Stretch assignments, such as giving a junior IT staffer an opportunity to either lead or play a significant role in a project.

-Mentorships, where an IT staffer or manager is either mentored by a supervisor to expand their skills and knowledge or to be a mentor to a fellow colleague.

-Additional technical or managerial training, often available through vendor partners without creating a budget burden.

There are plenty of other techniques for keeping IT workers engaged and satisfied outside of additional compensation. What are the most useful approaches you've come across?

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Re:Keeping IT workers satisfied

Posted by srw134 - 2010/01/06 00:36

Some of this is not really that surprising as who was the happiest when they were doing the junior work in their early twenties? The question is inspiration, its seems like many companies management still have yet to really inspire their employees and this just becomes harder in an environment where salary's and benefits are limited. The company that I worked for when I was 23 was great at inspiring the new people working for them and allowing them to see the influence that you had over the product (or service in my case).

-sean

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Re:Keeping IT workers satisfied

Posted by sediga - 2010/06/15 04:32

Another thing to keep in mind is that the report is about 2008-10; not the best time to look for a job. I know a number of people that stayed put and are waiting for the economy to pick up. I figure the average person stays at a job for about 2-4 years. Many people have not been able to switch jobs for the past 2 years now due to the crappy economy and lower pay. I would say that once the economy picks up a little, there will be lots of people changing jobs.

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Re:Keeping IT workers satisfied
Posted by srw134 - 2010/06/15 14:55

I agree, I think there will be a mass changing of the guard in many of these companies once people start to feel comfortable in making the jump.

-sean

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Re:Keeping IT workers satisfied
Posted by mhenricks - 2010/08/30 11:51

It's also worth noting that gender may play a role. Men are more likely than women to be motivated by financial rewards and power, according to an analysis of people tested by Psychtest.com. Women were relatively more into maintaining a balanced lifestyle and improving the world.

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Re:Keeping IT workers satisfied
Posted by srw134 - 2010/09/01 19:26

While I would say this is true, I have certainly seen a surge in the women I have worked with who are motivated by stability and money. Overall it does seem like these women reach a nice balance between getting what they are worth financially and getting the stability which is desired by many.

-sean

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Re:Keeping IT workers satisfied
Posted by tomhoff - 2010/11/05 11:02

These are all good points. True, there hasn't been a lot of job movement between 2008 and 2010. And while I'm one of those people who has also predicted that there *could* be a mass exodus of workers leaving their existing employers once job opportunities really start to rev up, it will be interesting to see whether that actually occurs.

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Re:Keeping IT workers satisfied
Posted by searley - 2010/11/18 15:35

We currently make major use of our vendors, like IBM, BMC and Compuware, to supply classes on their products. It actually works great, because the more a customer knows about a particular product, the more entrenched the product becomes in the infrastructure. The customer gains great insight into the product capabilities and how to use the product to the ultimate benefit of the company. The vendor gets to demonstrate the superiority of the product and how it actually delivers value to the business. A win win!

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Re:Keeping IT workers satisfied
Posted by srw134 - 2010/11/19 03:56

The simple use of training seems like common sense but many companies seem to leave many of their employees out by not providing this formal training in-house. If the employee is to be trained it ends up being on their dime and on their own time. It is nice to see that at least one more company has the right idea.

-sean

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Re:Keeping IT workers satisfied
Posted by tomhoff - 2010/11/19 08:14

The training/investment picture is a bit muddled. Some companies continue to set aside a decent amount of capital for IT training, even in a down economy. Smart IT leaders recognize it's an important tool for keeping valuable IT staffers engaged and current with their skills. Unfortunately, training budgets are among the top areas cut by many companies when business conditions weaken.

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Re:Keeping IT workers satisfied
Posted by srw134 - 2010/11/20 20:28

Well I have seen this first hand, I have worked at companies with unlimited training budgets (in terms of certifications). In these companies as long as you stayed engaged and billing they would allow you to take as many tests as you wanted and provided the funds for the training materials. The idea behind this was that the more trained the employee the more projects they could be useful on (this was a consulting business). Of course, as the business gets hit these budgets contract. In a more typical organization, it is nice to see that employees are getting the training that is required to perform their jobs efficiently. Too many times I have been brought into companies mainly because the existing staff was undertrained (but technically able). It does seem like a common misconception that this training does not pay off but it does over time.

-sean

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Re:Keeping IT workers satisfied
Posted by LorenaAiacoboaie - 2012/07/10 10:17

Brinn Black: As a young country music artist, Brinn Black has accomplished more than she could have ever dreamed of. Her debut single â€œSweet Virginia Sunsetâ€• was played on over 150 stations around the world. She has toured across the nation, and been able to share the stage with some of country musicâ€™s biggest stars! According to Brinn, "my life is truly blessedâ€œ. When asked what compels her to write her songs she says, â€œI make music for myself because it's such an emotional outlet for me," Black says. From an early age, music has been an incredible escape for the young songbird. http://www.brinnblack.net/

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