2011 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement

Gratification and Commitment at Work in a Sluggish Economy

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RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

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11-0618

2011 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement

A Research Report by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM)

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About This Research Report

The following report presents the results of the 2011 Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement survey of U.S. employees. The objective of this annual survey is to identify and understand the factors important to overall employee job satisfaction and engagement. This knowledge helps organizations better understand and appreciate employee preferences when developing programs and policies designated to influence these areas. The survey explored 35 aspects of employee job satisfaction, divided into four topic areas—career development, relationship with management, compensation and benefits, and work environment. New this year, the survey was expanded to include multiple aspects of employee engagement. SHRM has conducted the Job Satisfaction Survey since 2002.

The overall results, illustrated in figures, are included throughout the report with the corresponding text. The more in-depth analyses are listed in tables in the Appendix; these include the following:

- A comparison of the level of importance of certain aspects to job satisfaction as indicated by employees, including statistically significant differences.

- Overall results for every year the survey was conducted compared with the 2011 findings to determine if there have been significant changes in the span of almost a decade.

- A comparison of the level of satisfaction with certain aspects of job satisfaction, as indicated by employees.

- Analysis based on employees' organization staff size.

- Additional analyses by employee job tenure, gender, race and age.

- An analysis of the top five job satisfaction aspects by demographic variables, including organization size, employee job tenure, age, job level and gender.

Executive Summary

Employees Are Satisfied With Their Jobs and Moderately Engaged

Organizations understand that employee job satisfaction and engagement are important to their business sustainability. In today's uncertain economy, the best-performing employers know that taking their employees' pulse and linking it to their business goals will help companies succeed and put them at a competitive advantage. According to this study, 83% of U.S. employees reported overall satisfaction with their current job, with 41% of employees indicating they were "very satisfied" and 42% "somewhat satisfied." Despite this high percentage of satisfied employees, the level of overall satisfaction has been trending downward since 2009. Figure 1 illustrates the data on overall employee satisfaction from 2002 to 2011.

Employees 67 years and older were more likely to report being very satisfied overall compared with employees in the 31-to-61 age group (52% and 29% respectively). Employees in smaller organizations (fewer than 100 employees) were more likely to report being very satisfied than were employees in larger organizations (2,500 or more employees). There were no significant differences in overall job satisfaction by employee industry, job tenure, race or gender.

While employees report being satisfied with their jobs, does this mean they are engaged? Employee engagement, which may be aligned with job satisfaction, is about employee's connection and commitment to their organization. In 2011, on average, employees were only moderately engaged (3.6) on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is highly disengaged, 3 is moderately engaged and 5 is highly engaged.

Employees 67 years and older were more likely to report being **very satisfied overall** compared with employees in the **31-to-61 age group.**

Figure 1 | Overall Employee Job Satisfaction Over the Years

2002 (n = 604)	2004 (n = 604)	2005 (n = 600)	2006 (n = 604)	2007 (n = 604)	2008 (n = 601)	2009 (n = 602)	2010 (n = 605)	2011 (n = 596)
77%	77%	77%	80%	79%	82%	86%	84%	83%

Note: Figure represents those employees who answered "somewhat satisfied" or "very satisfied."

Source: 2011 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: A Research Report by SHRM

Top Five Contributors to Employee Job Satisfaction in 2011

Although many factors contribute to employees' job satisfaction, only three have remained among the top five aspects most important to employee job satisfaction since 2002. In a weak/recovering economy, none of the aspects employees selected as the top five contributors to their job satisfaction was a surprise.[1]

Job security (63%*)*, for the fourth consecutive year, remained at the top of employees' list of most important determinants of job satisfaction, followed closely by *opportunities to use skills and abilities* (62%). Other aspects that rounded off employees' top five very important factors contributing to job satisfaction were:

- *Organization's financial stability* (55%) and *relationship with immediate supervisor* (55%) (tying for third place).

- *Compensation/pay* (54%).

- *Benefits* (53%), *communication between employees and senior management* (53%) and *the work itself* (53%) (tying for fifth place).

There were differences between the 2011 findings and the 2010 results. *Benefits*, which has been among the top two job satisfaction contributors since 2002, slipped to fifth place in 2011. New to the list of top five most important job satisfaction contributors this year were *relationship with immediate supervisor* and *communication between employees and senior management* (see Table 1). Also, more aspects were tied in this year's results compared with previous years. For the ranking of other aspects most important to employee job satisfaction, refer to Figure 2 on page 7 and Table 5 in the Appendix.

Table 1 | Top Five Aspects of Job Satisfaction Most Important to Employees: 2002 to 2011									
	2002	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
	(n = 604)	(n = 604)	(n = 601)	(n = 605)	(n = 604)	(n = 601)	(n = 601)	(n = 600)	(n = 598)
Job security	65% (1)	60% (4)	59% (4)	59% (3)	53% (2)	59% (1)	63% (1)	63% (1)	63% (1)
Opportunities to use skills/abilities	—	47%	44%	51% (5)	44%	50% (4)	55% (4)	56% (3)	62% (2)
Organization's financial stability	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	54% (4)	55% (3)
Relationship with immediate supervisor	49%	49%	46%	47%	48%	47% (5)	52%	48%	55% (3)
Compensation/pay	59% (4)	63% (2)	61% (2)	67% (1)	59% (1)	53% (3)	57% (3)	53% (5)	54% (4)
Benefits	64% (2)	68% (1)	63% (1)	65% (2)	59% (1)	57% (2)	60% (2)	60% (2)	53% (5)
The work itself	50%	46%	35%	46%	41%	47% (5)	50%	54% (4)	53% (5)
Communication between employees and senior management	62% (3)	54%	50%	48%	51% (4)	50% (4)	51%	47%	53% (5)

Note: A dash (—) indicates that this question was not asked that year.
Source: 2011 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: A Research Report by SHRM

Top Aspects Contributing to Employee Engagement in 2011

What did employees say about their commitment and connection to their employers?

- 83% of employees reported that they are determined to accomplish their work goals and confident they can meet their goals.

- 76% of employees reported satisfaction with their work and their relationship with their co-workers.

- 74% of employees were satisfied with opportunities to use their skills and abilities at work.

- 73% of employees said their relationship with their immediate supervisor was a contributor to their level of engagement.

- 71% of employees were satisfied with how their work contributed to their organization's business goals.

Factors that were not strongly connected to employees' overall job satisfaction and engagement were:

- Organization's commitment to a 'green' workplace.

- Organization's commitment to a diverse and inclusive workforce.

- Paid general training and tuition reimbursement programs.

As the survey results revealed, job security was the top concern among employees, and in most cases, it ranked among the top two very important aspects of job satisfaction, regardless of organization's staff size or employees' tenure, age or gender. Analysis by organization staff size showed that for employees in medium and large organizations (more than 100 employees), job security was the most important contributor to job satisfaction, while for employees at small-staff-sized organizations (1-99 employees), job security came second, following opportunities to use skills and abilities. Job security was the most important aspect for employees with three to five years and 11 or more years of tenure. Gen Xers and Baby Boomers (employees aged 31 to 66) named job security as the top contributor to their job satisfaction. For Millennials (employees younger than 31), job security tied with benefits as the second contributor, whereas opportunities to use skills and abilities were ranked most important. For female and male employees, job security placed in first and second place, respectively. These data are shown in the Appendix.

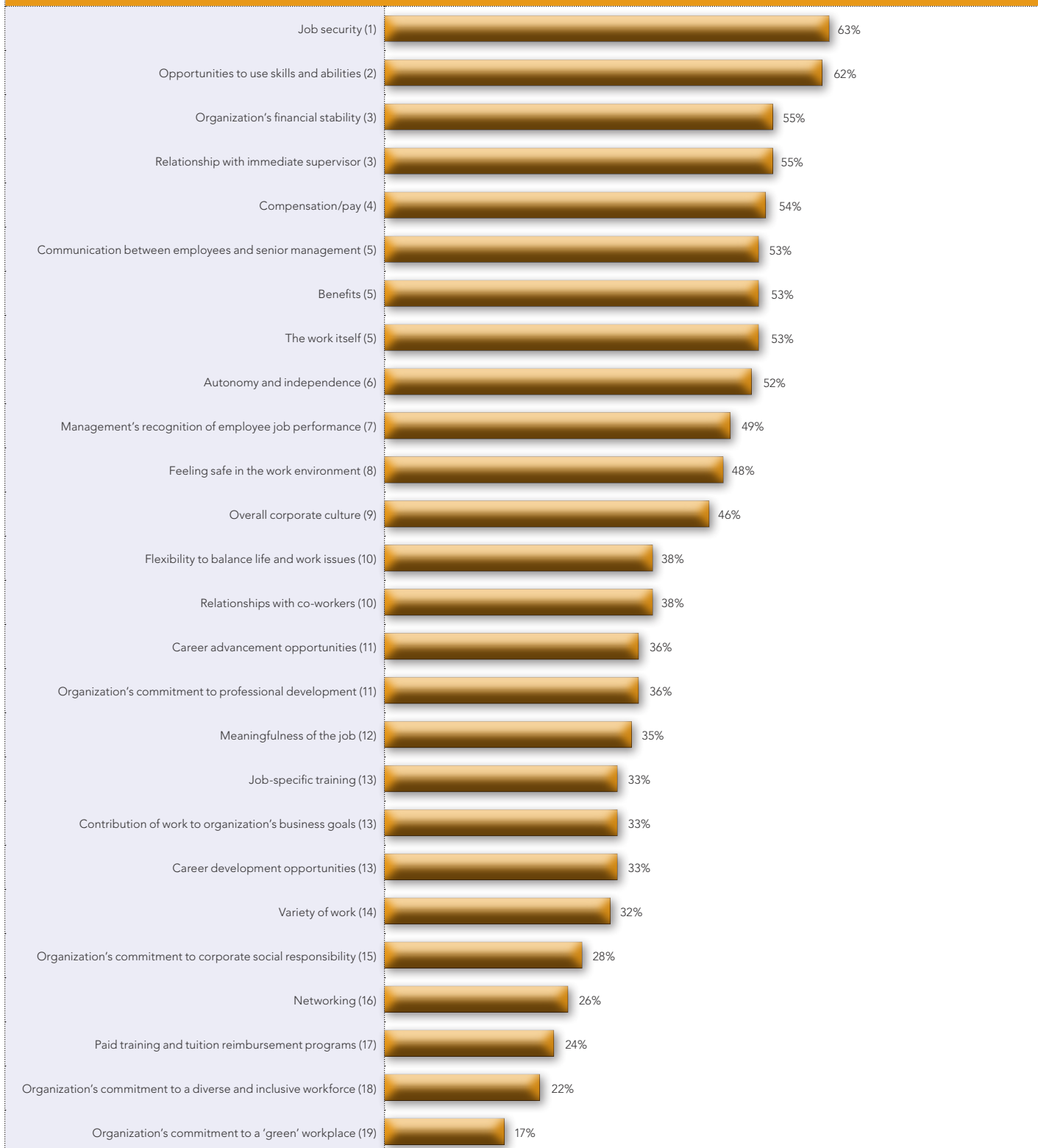## What Do These Findings Mean for Organizations?

- **Take Advantage of Existing Talent in-House:** One of the top contributors to job satisfaction and engagement among employees is having the opportunity to use their skills and abilities at work. Employees frequently have skills and abilities beyond the position for which they have been hired. Research shows that engaged employees need reasons to engage, are focused and have a sense of urgency in their work. Organizations should take steps to discover the skill sets of their employees and use them, especially during time of uncertainty. The SHRM Leading Indicators of National Employment (LINE™) show that HR professionals in manufacturing and service sectors have reported a trend toward increased difficulty recruiting key candidates in 2011. Tapping into the existing talent within the organization to help shape the company's future could be one of the ways that employers train and develop employees while meeting organizational goals. This could help organizations increase employees' motivation and productivity and improve their chances of retaining their best talent.

- **Partner with Employees:** The economic climate has changed the way employees look at their employers, their jobs and aspects important to their job satisfaction and engagement. The slow economy has meant that employees are less likely to look for new jobs. In this study, 64% of employees reported that they are unlikely to look for work outside their company in 2011. The findings of this research indicate that employees are looking to build better relation-

Tapping into the existing talent within the organization to help shape the company's future could be one of the ways that employers train and develop employees **while meeting organizational goals.**

ships with their organizations' management. Two of the top five contributors to employees' job satisfaction were *relationship with immediate supervisor* and *communication between employees and senior management*. The relationship with immediate supervisor was also a strong condition for employee engagement. Employers will benefit from partnering with employees because it will increase trust, connection and commitment within the organization.

• **Set Clear Direction:** After recent years of economic and organizational uncertainty, there may be a disconnect between management and employees. Clear direction set by the leaders of the organization and HR will help employees understand what lies ahead. Communicating effectively with employees can provide the workforce with direction, dispel rumors and promote trust. Organizations might consider upward communication such as gathering feedback from employees through focus groups led by their peers. Employers will need to take the results of their dialogue with employees and translate them into measurable actions that fit into their organization's strategic plan. These actions will need to have both short-term and long-term results. HR professionals are well positioned to help their organizations navigate through these changes.

Figure 2 | Very Important Aspects of Employee Job Satisfaction

Aspect	Percentage
Job security (1)	63%
Opportunities to use skills and abilities (2)	62%
Organization's financial stability (3)	55%
Relationship with immediate supervisor (3)	55%
Compensation/pay (4)	54%
Communication between employees and senior management (5)	53%
Benefits (5)	53%
The work itself (5)	53%
Autonomy and independence (6)	52%
Management's recognition of employee job performance (7)	49%
Feeling safe in the work environment (8)	48%
Overall corporate culture (9)	46%
Flexibility to balance life and work issues (10)	38%
Relationships with co-workers (10)	38%
Career advancement opportunities (11)	36%
Organization's commitment to professional development (11)	36%
Meaningfulness of the job (12)	35%
Job-specific training (13)	33%
Contribution of work to organization's business goals (13)	33%
Career development opportunities (13)	33%
Variety of work (14)	32%
Organization's commitment to corporate social responsibility (15)	28%
Networking (16)	26%
Paid training and tuition reimbursement programs (17)	24%
Organization's commitment to a diverse and inclusive workforce (18)	22%
Organization's commitment to a 'green' workplace (19)	17%

(n = 600)

Note: Figure represents those who answered "very important." Percentages are based on a scale where 1 = "very unimportant" and 4 = "very important.

Source: 2011 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: A Research Report by SHRM

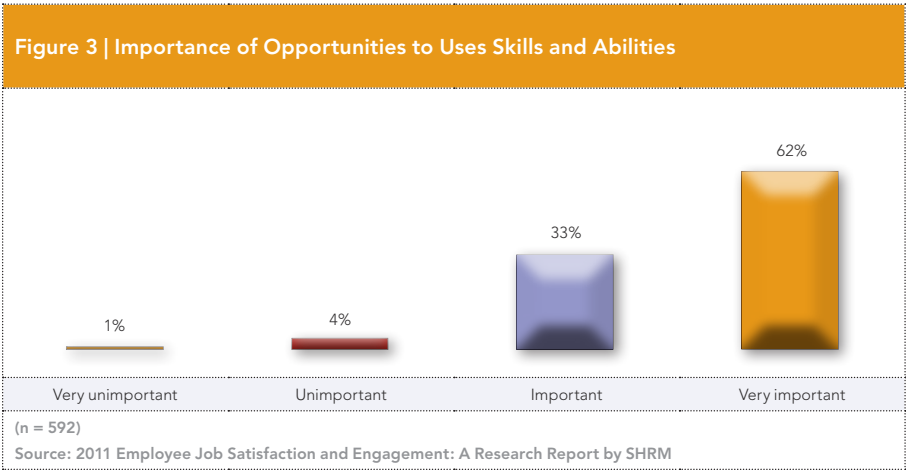# Survey Results:
Employee Job Satisfaction

Career Development

Career development is an opportunity for employees to continually take part in more advanced or diverse activities (e.g., training, networking) that result in improving skills, gaining new skills, taking greater responsibility at work, improving their status and earning higher income. Employees rated only one of the factors in the career development category—*opportunities to use skills and abilities*—in the top five very important contributors to job satisfaction.

Opportunities to Use Skills and Abilities

Six out of 10 employees rated opportunities to use their skills and abilities at work as the most important contributor to their job satisfaction, positioning it second only to job security (see Table 1). This is the highest that this category has been since 2004, when it was first added to the list of aspects important to employee job satisfaction. Almost 75% of employees indicated satisfaction (somewhat and very satisfied) with this aspect. It is generally thought that employees feel good about their jobs when they are using their skills and abilities and contributing to the organization. Among employee demographics, opportunities to use skills and abilities rank at the top for employees with two years of tenure or less, six to 10 years of tenure, employees aged 30 or younger, and male employees. This element of job satisfaction appeared to be especially important to employees with college and post-graduate degrees compared with employees with two years or less of college education (Table 8). This aspect was also a higher priority for professional nonmanagement employees than for nonexempt (hourly) nonmanagement employees.

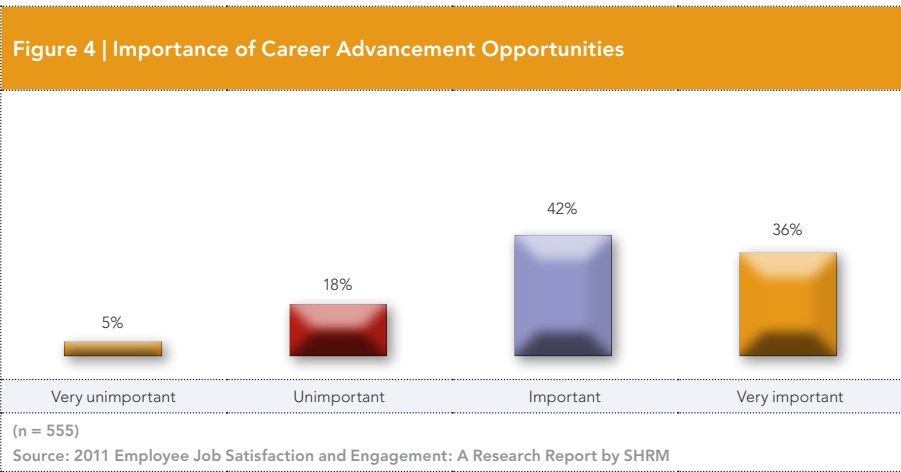Employees rated only one of the factors in the career development category—**opportunities to use skills and abilities**—in the top five very important contributors to job satisfaction.

Figure 3 | Importance of Opportunities to Uses Skills and Abilities

- Very unimportant: 1%
- Unimportant: 4%
- Important: 33%
- Very important: 62%

(n = 592)
Source: 2011 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: A Research Report by SHRM

Career Advancement Opportunities

As illustrated in Figure 4, 36% of employees reported that this factor was very important to job satisfaction. Career advancement opportunities within the organization have continued to decline in importance since 2002, when this category was among the top five. Career advancement was a higher priority for employees in middle-management and professional nonmanagement positions than for executive-level employees. Employees in larger organizations (500 or more employees) found this aspect to be more important than did employees in smaller organizations (fewer than 100 employees). This aspect was also more important to younger employees (age 30 and younger) than to employees aged 46-64. These data are shown in Table 8.

Although this aspect continues to rank low in importance, employees are also not particularly satisfied with it: Only 42% of employees reported their satisfaction (26% were very satisfied and 16% were somewhat satisfied) with this aspect of job satisfaction. HR professionals are in a position to help their organizations develop coaching and/or mentoring programs to promote knowledge sharing and internal networks between experienced and more junior employees. HR professionals also can identify the positions for which succession planning makes sense. These often include key positions, positions with direct impact on strategic practices and those with lengthy learning curves.

Figure 4 | Importance of Career Advancement Opportunities

5% — Very unimportant
18% — Unimportant
42% — Important
36% — Very important

(n = 555)
Source: 2011 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: A Research Report by SHRM

Organization's Commitment to Professional Development

Slightly more than one-third of employees indicated that an organization's commitment to professional development was very important to their job satisfaction. These data are depicted in Figure 5. The low ranking in importance could be related to the impact of a leaner workforce, in which employees are expected to do more with less, making it difficult to find time to invest in their professional development. While only 36% of employees rated this aspect of job satisfaction important to job satisfaction, 54% of employees reported being satisfied with their organization's commitment to professional development. Professional development opportunities (e.g., attending training or conferences, obtaining certifications) are meant to develop or enhance employees' skills and knowledge so that they can use this information in their current positions, meet their professional and personal goals, and build their resume for future jobs. This aspect of job satisfaction was valued more by professional nonmanagement employees than by nonmanagement hourly employees. An organization's com-

mitment to professional development was more important for African American employees than for Caucasian employees.
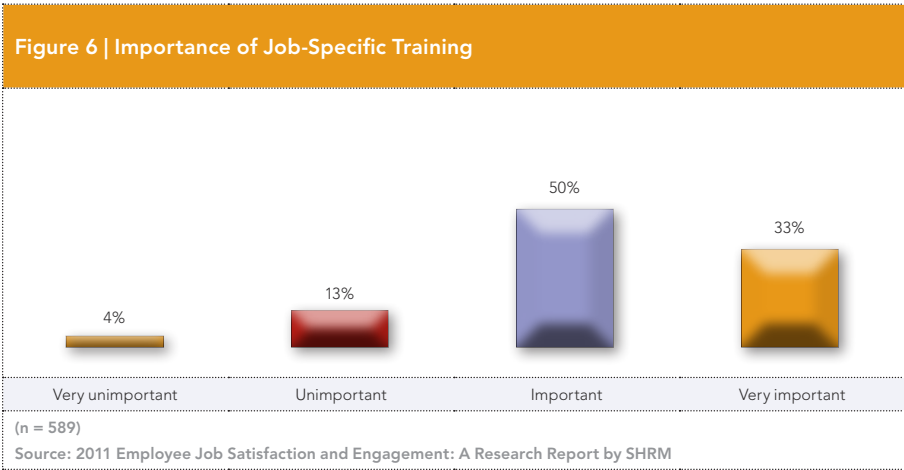
This contributor to employee job satisfaction was not recession-proof in many organizations. According to a SHRM poll on the U.S. and global recession and its impact on organizations, 30% of HR professionals reported that professional development for employees was among the activities affected by budget cuts within their organization. In the same poll, 35% of HR professionals indicated that if the current financial challenges to the U.S. and global economy continue, their organizations will likely or very likely cut professional development for employees.[2] Though budgets might be leaner, investing in the development of their employees will help organizations fill their mission-critical positions. One way organizations can continue to make sure their employees grow and develop is to take advantage of web-based training, which is more cost-effective than face-to-face training such as seminars or conferences. Employees can be trained at their desks without incurring the travel-related cost of professional development.

An organization's commitment to professional development was **more important** for **African American** employees than for **Caucasian** employees.

Figure 5 | Importance of Organization's Commitment to Professional Development

- Very unimportant: 4%
- Unimportant: 11%
- Important: 49%
- Very important: 36%

(n = 594)
Source: 2011 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: A Research Report by SHRM
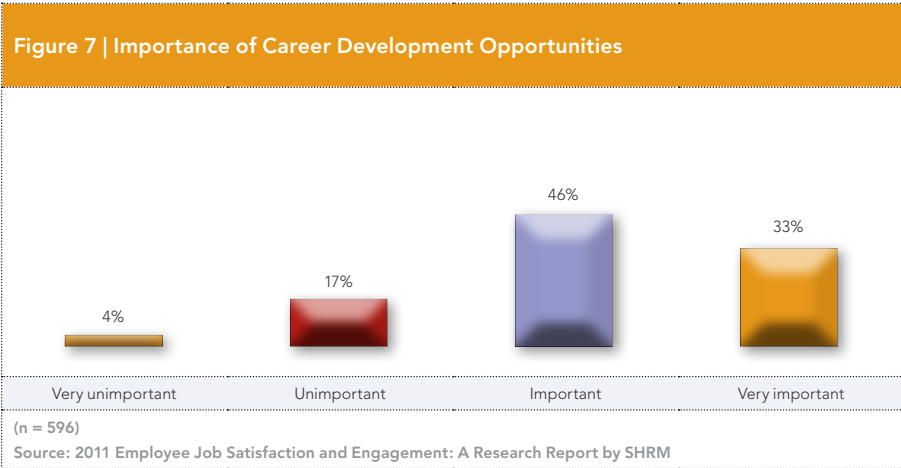
Job-Specific Training

Employers may offer job-specific training to provide employees with the relevant skills to enable them to perform their duties efficiently. The immediate application of skills acquired through such training may boost employee confidence and productivity. A third (33%) of employees viewed job-specific training as very important to employee job satisfaction (see Figure 6), and 55% were satisfied with it. There were no significant differences among employee demographics.

Figure 6 | Importance of Job-Specific Training

- Very unimportant: 4%
- Unimportant: 13%
- Important: 50%
- Very important: 33%

(n = 589)
Source: 2011 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: A Research Report by SHRM
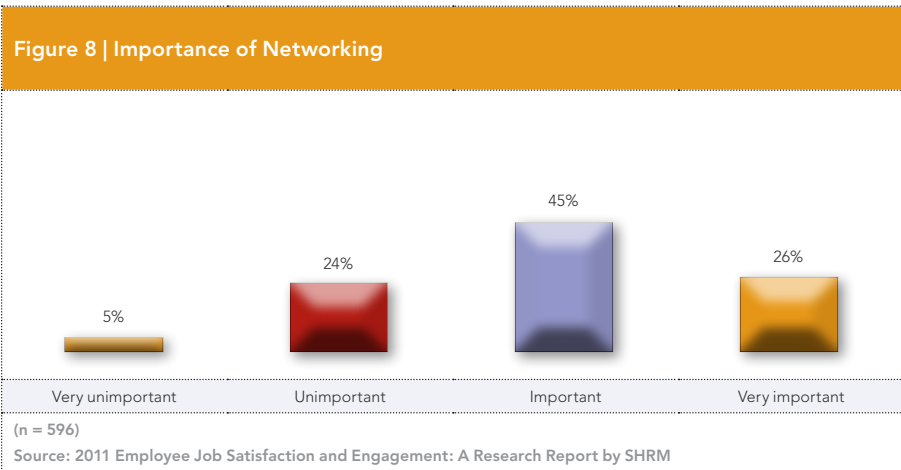
Career Development Opportunities

Through on-the-job learning experiences, cross-training opportunities, stretch goals and other mechanisms to use skills beyond what is required by their position, employees can enhance their skills and competencies. These prospects help employees determine the next step in their career, either within or outside the organization. One-third (33%) of employees indicated that career development was very important to them (see Figure 7), and 47% were satisfied with this aspect. Career development was a higher priority for employees in large organizations (500 to 2,499 employees) compared with employees in smaller organizations (fewer than 500 employees).

Figure 7 | Importance of Career Development Opportunities

Very unimportant	Unimportant	Important	Very important
4%	17%	46%	33%

(n = 596)

Source: 2011 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: A Research Report by SHRM
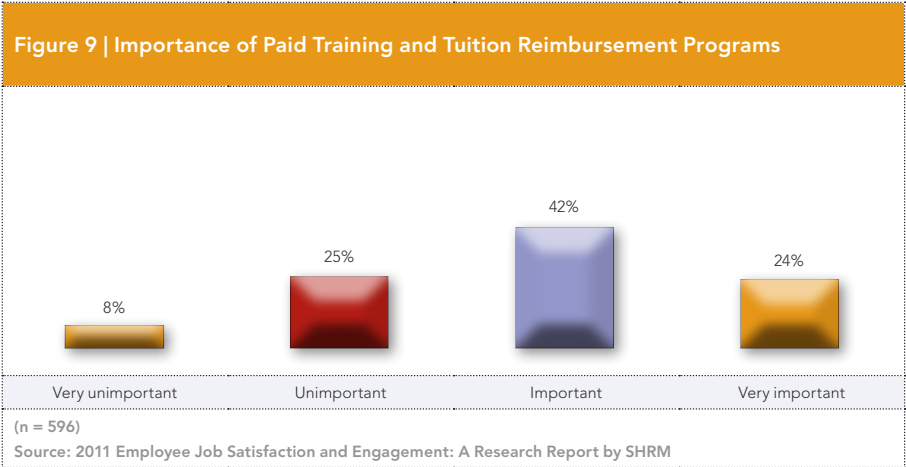
Networking

Employees saw networking as one of the least important contributors to their job satisfaction, as shown in Figure 8. Only 26% of employees said networking was very important to job satisfaction. Over the years, employees have continuously rated networking very low. It is possible that employees see networking as something they pursue on their own. Networking may not be particularly important to employee satisfaction, but building alliances can be valuable when looking for job leads or clients. Through networking, employees can obtain career-related guidance and benefit from the experiences and perspectives of others. Nearly 50% of employees were satisfied with networking. Employees with post-graduate education, four years of college and some college education placed more importance on this aspect than did employees with a high school diploma.

Figure 8 | Importance of Networking

Very unimportant	Unimportant	Important	Very important
5%	24%	45%	26%

(n = 596)

Source: 2011 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: A Research Report by SHRM

Paid Training and Tuition Reimbursement Programs

In a 2011 SHRM study, HR professionals reported that more than half of their organizations offered educational assistance to their employees: 58% offered undergraduate educational assistance and 54% offered graduate educational assistance.[3] Training helps employees and their employers. Only 24% of employees believed paid training and tuition reimbursement was very important to employee job satisfaction (Figure 9), and 42% said they were satisfied with this aspect. Employees with some college education placed more importance on this factor than did employees with high school education. This aspect was also more important to employees in larger organizations (500 or more employees) than to employees in smaller organizations (fewer than 100 employees) (Table 8).

Figure 9 | Importance of Paid Training and Tuition Reimbursement Programs

Very unimportant	Unimportant	Important	Very important
8%	25%	42%	24%

(n = 596)

Source: 2011 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: A Research Report by SHRM
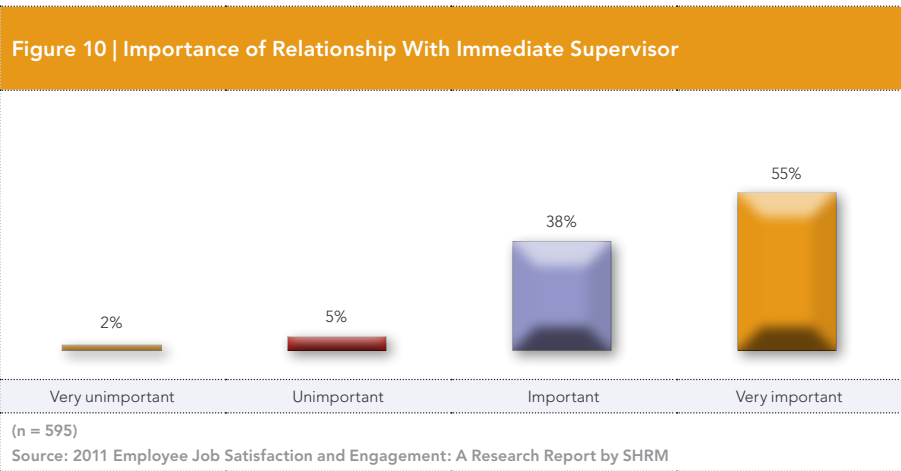
Employee Relationship With Management

The relationship an employee has with his or her supervisor is a central element to the employee's affiliation with the organization, and it has been argued that many employee behaviors are largely a function of the way they are managed by their supervisors. One of the components of a good relationship is effective communication. When there are open lines of communication (e.g., encouraging an open-door policy), supervisors can respond more effectively to the needs and problems of their employees. Effective communication from senior management can provide the workforce with direction. In addition, management's recognition of employees' performance through praise (private or public), awards and incentives is a cost-effective way of increasing employee morale, productivity and competitiveness.

Relationship With Immediate Supervisor

Employees rated their relationship with their immediate supervisor as more important to their job satisfaction than benefits and compensation. This is the second time employees rated this aspect among the top five contributors to job satisfaction (Tables 1 and 5).

Employees rated their relationship with their immediate supervisor as **more important** to their job satisfaction than **benefits and compensation.**

Figure 10 | Importance of Relationship With Immediate Supervisor

2% Very unimportant
5% Unimportant
38% Important
55% Very important

(n = 595)

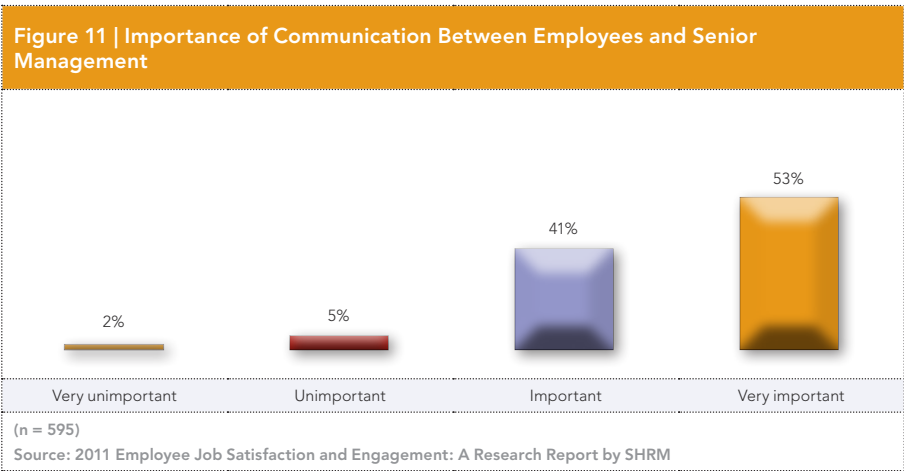Source: 2011 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: A Research Report by SHRM

The relationship employees have with their supervisors is directly connected to their success and growth at work. Supervisors who develop a positive relationship with employees may be more likely to learn their employees' strengths and weaknesses, making it easier for supervisors to use the benefits of their employees' talents for the good of the organization. Employees who have positive

relationships with their supervisors—a relationship in which they feel safe and supported—may be more likely to go above and beyond what is required of them. They also may share with their supervisor job-related problems or even personal problems, which can be barriers to employee productivity. It is important that supervisors set clear expectations and provide feedback about work performance so as to avoid any potential frustrations or issues. Nearly three quarters of employees were satisfied with this aspect of job satisfaction.

The relationship with immediate supervisor was cited as important more frequently by college graduate employees compared with employees who only had high school education or some college education (see Table 8).

Communication Between Employees and Senior Management

Effective communication from senior management, especially during times of uncertainty, can provide the workforce with direction. A little more than half (53%) of employees reported that communication between employees and senior management was very important to employee job satisfaction (see Figure 11 and Table 1). Communication between employees and senior management made the list of top five contributors to employee job satisfaction in 2002, 2007 and 2008. In 2011, employees aged 67 and older ranked this aspect at the top of their list.

Figure 11 | Importance of Communication Between Employees and Senior Management

Very unimportant	Unimportant	Important	Very important
2%	5%	41%	53%

(n = 595)

Source: 2011 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: A Research Report by SHRM

Frequently, employees are concerned about the repercussions of bringing forth suggestions and concerns to management. Employees need to be encouraged to do so without fear of retaliation. Organizations use different methods to encourage feedback and communication from employees to senior management, such as employee attitude surveys, focus groups and suggestion boxes.
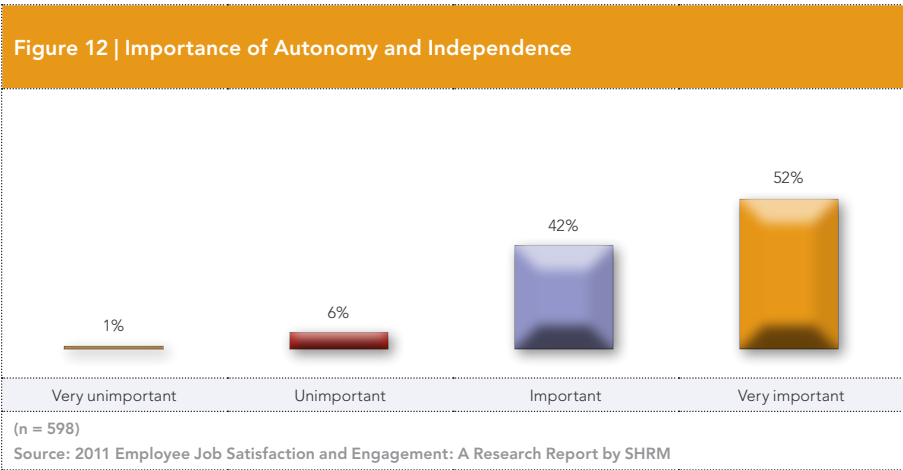
There were no significant differences among employee demographic categories. Only 54% of employees indicated that they were satisfied with communication between employees and senior management, suggesting that this may be an area of improvement.

Autonomy and Independence

Slightly more than half (52%) of employees stated that autonomy and independence were a very important job satisfaction factor (see Figure 12). Providing employees with increased freedom, flexibility and discretion to make decisions on the job (e.g., scheduling the work and determining how it is to be done) can give them a greater sense of responsibility for the outcomes of their work.

Sixty-nine percent of employees were satisfied with their level of autonomy and independence.

There were differences in this category by employee education, organization staff size and job level. Employees with some college education perceived this aspect as more important than did employees with only high school education. This aspect was more important to employees in medium-staff-sized organizations (500 to 2,499 employees) compared with employees in smaller (100 to 499 employees) and larger (2,500 to 24,999 employees) organizations. Employees in middle-management and professional nonmanagement positions valued autonomy and independence more than employees in hourly nonmanagement positions did. Autonomy and independence was rated as the second most important job satisfaction factor by employees aged 67 and older. These data are depicted in Table 8.
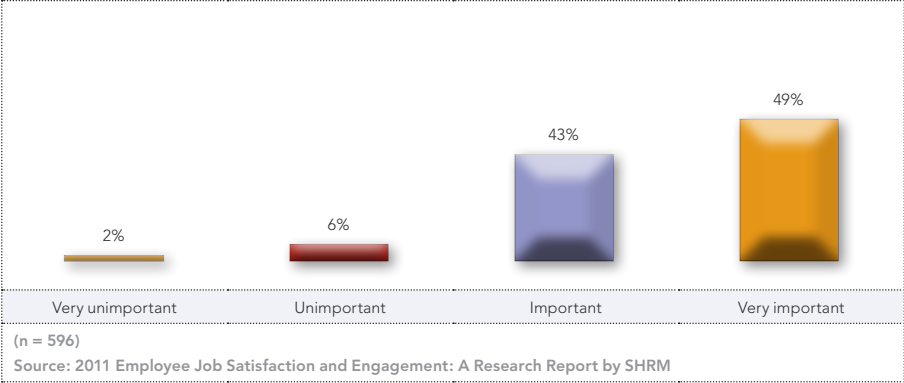

Figure 12 | Importance of Autonomy and Independence

(n = 598)
Source: 2011 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: A Research Report by SHRM

Management's Recognition of Employee Job Performance

Acknowledging employees' performance through praise (private or public), awards and incentives is believed to be a cost-effective way of increasing employee morale, productivity and competitiveness. Recognition should not focus only on monetary recognition; sincere acknowledgement of a job well done also goes a long way. According to a 2011 SHRM poll, 80% of employers reported that they have an employee recognition program.[4] However, when employees were asked about the importance of management's recognition of employee job performance in relation to job satisfaction, almost half (49%) of employees indicated that this aspect was very important to their job satisfaction and 43% said it was important (see Figure 13).

What about employees' satisfaction with this aspect? Employees may feel more committed to their organization if they believe that their efforts are valued, especially during turbulent times. More than half (57%) of employees reported they were satisfied with management's recognition of employee job performance. Employees who have been with the organization between six and 10 years were more likely to connect this factor to their overall job satisfaction compared with more tenured (16 or more years) employees.

Very unimportant	Unimportant	Important	Very important
2%	6%	43%	49%

(n = 596)

Source: 2011 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: A Research Report by SHRM

Expert Q & A

Dawn Adams, president, HResults

- **Do you think employees' satisfaction with their jobs rose during the recession? What do you think was the most important factor regarding job satisfaction during the past few years?**

Employee satisfaction and engagement are very individual issues that are influenced by an employee's personal life, professional situation, expectations and values. One factor that influences this is communication from—and a connection to—the employer. During the recession, companies managed their reductions in force in varying ways. This was a crucial time for companies to communicate to employees their importance in relation to the company's success.

Companies that communicated their visions and created a climate of employee appreciation and recognition during this time experienced higher employee satisfaction. Those employees felt "in the know" and trusted their management. Companies that did not focus on or communicate appreciation to employees likely experienced lower employee trust, confidence and cooperation, as well as higher employee burnout, disengagement and voluntary turnover. Employees in those organizations felt blindsided, unappreciated and, in some cases, betrayed.

- **Now that the economy has improved and more people are looking for new jobs, what types of perks or benefits are they seeking?**

"Companies that did not focus on or communicate appreciation to employees likely experienced lower employee trust, confidence and cooperation, as well as higher employee burnout, disengagement and voluntary turnover."

Employees continue to seek competitive wages, an appreciative climate, affordable benefits and workplace flexibility.

- **HR departments were strained during the economic downturn, between budget cuts and having to handle the unenviable task of administering layoffs. What should be HR's top priority to improve employee relations going forward during the economic recovery?**

HR's top priority should be talent management and retention of high performers. HR needs to listen carefully to what employees need in order to find out what isn't working, and then determine how to meet their needs so that HR develops and leverages current talent. Some initiatives could include coaching the high performers, providing clearer direction to the average performers and providing greater opportunities to all employees, allowing them to contribute and make decisions with more impact.

- **Do you think we are still at the point where most workers are grateful just to have a job, or do you see the tide turning, with employees demanding more out of their employers?**

While many workers are grateful for their jobs, they expect recognition for their efforts and loyalty. Although employees are aware of high benefits costs and may accept higher co-pays or deductibles, they still need and expect affordable options from their employers.

- **Health care reform in 2010 created many new responsibilities for HR professionals. Do you think those will interfere with other efforts to reform benefits, such as developing workplace flexibility policies?**

Health care reform required HR professionals to spend their time and energy learning about altering plans and complying with unclear or changing regulations. As the reform regulations are firmed up and the dust begins to settle, HR professionals will need to continue to find and provide additional perks—such as workplace flexibility—that do not increase expenses.

"While many workers are grateful for their jobs, they expect recognition for their efforts and loyalty."
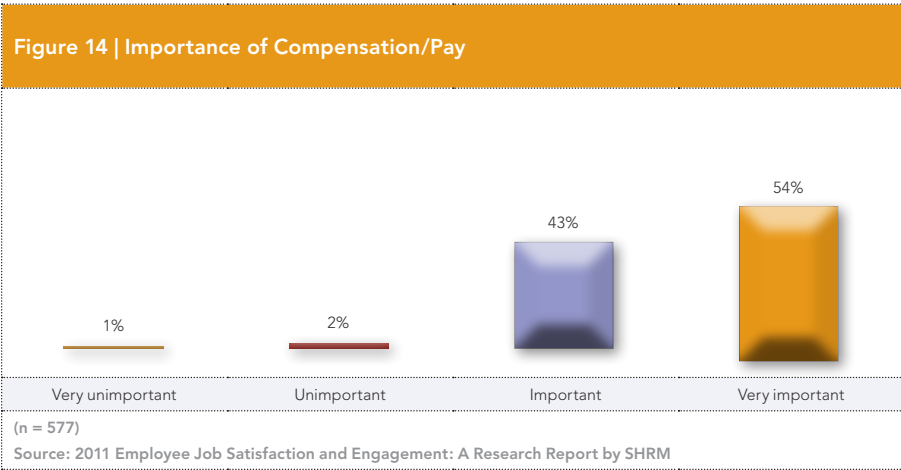
Compensation and Benefits

To attract the best employees, companies must research the market in their area as well as their industry to ensure that their salaries and benefits match up against their competitors. Effective compensation program also ensures that pay levels are equitable internally. Benefits for employees can include a wide array of perks and other offerings; however, of primary importance to many employees are health care, paid time off, retirement and family-friendly benefits.

Compensation/Pay

Compensation has consistently remained one of the top five job satisfaction factors most important to employees. In 2011, 54% of employees indicated that this aspect was very important to their job satisfaction, putting it almost 10 percentage points below job security and only 1 percentage point below relationship with immediate supervisor. Although employees still value being paid well, more important to employees this year were stability in their job and their organization's finances as well as better relationship with management. At the time data were collected for this research, the unemployment rate in the U.S. was at 8.9%, in contrast to 4.7% during the same period in 2006 and 4.6% in 2007[5], when employees rated compensation as the most important factor contributing to their job satisfaction.

Differences emerged among employee demographics. Nonexempt hourly employees and professional nonmanagement employees placed more importance on compensation/pay than did employees in executive positions. Newly hired employees (0 to two years of tenure) were more likely to connect this factor to

> **Compensation** has consistently remained one of the **top five** job satisfaction factors most important to employees.

Figure 14 | Importance of Compensation/Pay

Very unimportant	Unimportant	Important	Very important
1%	2%	43%	54%

(n = 577)

Source: 2011 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: A Research Report by SHRM
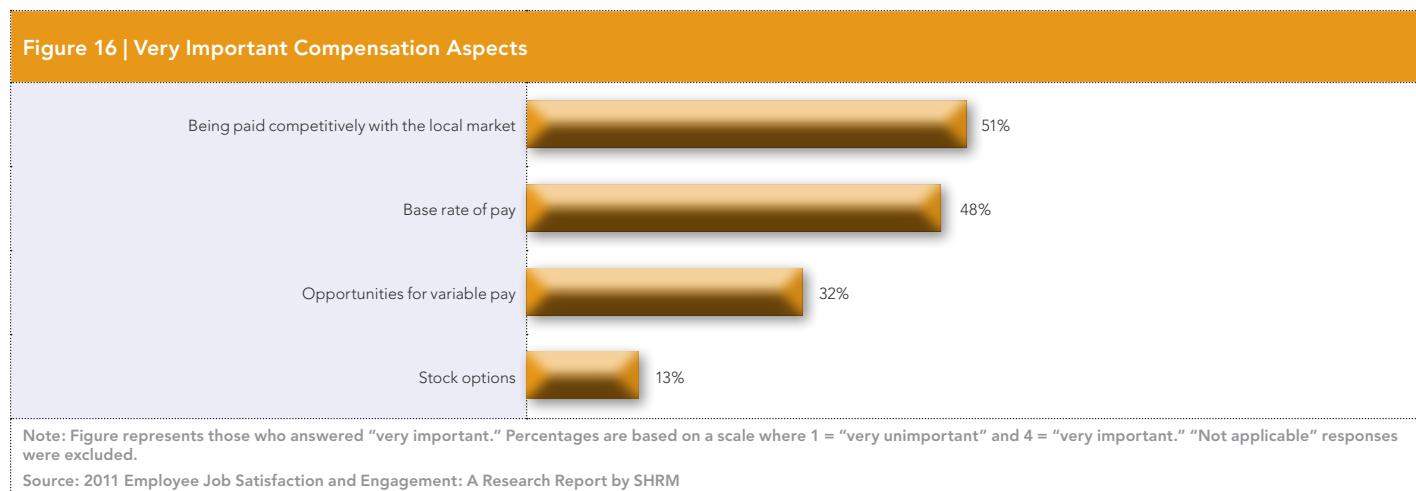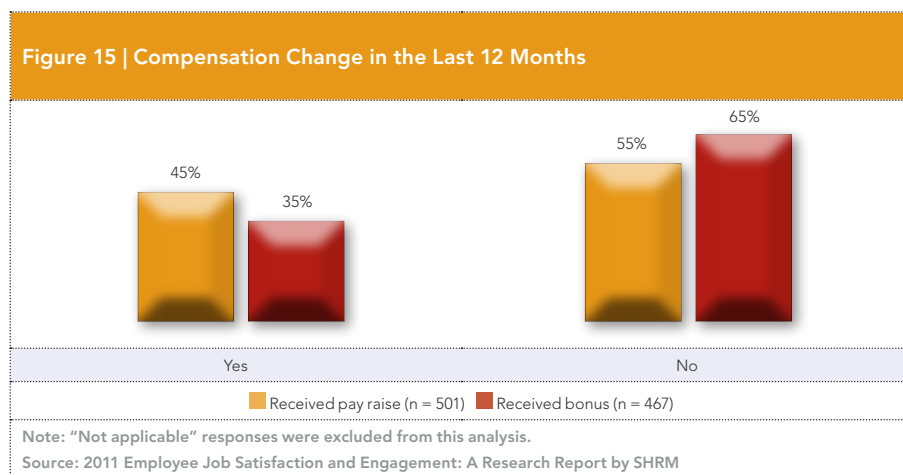
their overall job satisfaction compared with more tenured (16 or more years) employees.

Along with compensation/pay overall, employees were asked if they had received a pay raise (e.g., merit increase, cost of living increase) within the last 12 months: 45% reported receiving a raise and 35% indicated that they received bonus (see Figure 15). These numbers were similar to 2010.

Six out of 10 employees were satisfied with compensation/pay overall.

Employees were asked to rate the importance of the following four common components of compensation (see Figure 16).

- *Being paid competitively with the local market:* To attract the best employees, companies must research the market in their area to ensure that their salaries match up against their competitors. Fifty-one percent of employees rated this aspect as very important.

- *Base rate of pay:* 48% of employees viewed base rate of pay as very important to employee job satisfaction.

- *Opportunities for variable pay (bonuses, commissions, other variable pay, monetary rewards for ideas or suggestions):* Variable pay, or differential pay, is often not added to the employee's base pay and is dependent upon performance. This allows organizations to better control their labor costs and tie

Figure 15 | Compensation Change in the Last 12 Months

Yes — 45%, 35%
No — 55%, 65%

Received pay raise (n = 501)   Received bonus (n = 467)

Note: "Not applicable" responses were excluded from this analysis.
Source: 2011 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: A Research Report by SHRM

Figure 16 | Very Important Compensation Aspects

Being paid competitively with the local market — 51%
Base rate of pay — 48%
Opportunities for variable pay — 32%
Stock options — 13%

Note: Figure represents those who answered "very important." Percentages are based on a scale where 1 = "very unimportant" and 4 = "very important." "Not applicable" responses were excluded.
Source: 2011 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: A Research Report by SHRM

performance and pay together. A third of employees (32%) reported that this aspect was very important to job satisfaction.

- *Stock options:* This is another form of compensation that organizations offer to their employees. Only 13% of employees rated stock options as very important.

Benefits

Fifty-three percent of employees rated benefits as a very important contributor to their job satisfaction. Benefits have ranked among the top two aspects of job satisfaction for employees since 2002 (Tables 1 and 5). In 2011, for the first time since collecting data on job satisfaction, benefits ranked fifth, tying with the work itself and communication between employees and senior management. In a 2011 SHRM study, 77% of HR professionals reported that their organizations' employee benefits offerings have been negatively affected; this is up 5% from 2010.[6]

The only significant difference in the assessment of the importance of benefits to overall job satisfaction was based on employee organization staff size. Benefits were more important to employees in larger organizations (500 or more employees) compared with those in smaller organizations (fewer than 100 employees). Almost two-thirds of employees were satisfied overall with their benefits.

Employers use benefits as one of the tools to recruit and retain top talent. HR is tasked with finding the right mix of employee benefits that satisfy the personal and financial needs of the current and potential workforce, given existing business conditions and cost constraints. It is important for organizations to take into account and anticipate the needs, preferences and makeup of their workforce when considering benefits offerings. Finding a cost-effective and affordable benefits package is particularly challenging, given the high costs of offering benefits, particularly health care costs.

Benefits for employees can include a wide array of perks and other offerings; however, of primary importance to many employees are health care, paid time off, retirement and family-friendly benefits (e.g., domestic partner benefits, subsidized child care, elder care referral service, scholarships for family members, etc.). These benefits were further examined to learn about their importance to employee job satisfaction, and results are illustrated in Figure 18.

There were differences across some employee demographic categories. *Health care/medical benefits* were valued more by nonexempt (hourly), professional nonmanagement and middle management employees compared with executive

Health care/medical benefits were valued more by nonexempt (hourly), professional nonmanagement and middle management employees compared with executive employees.

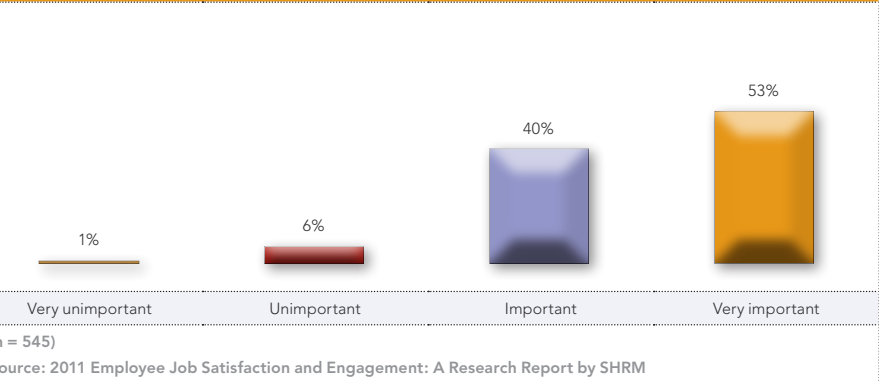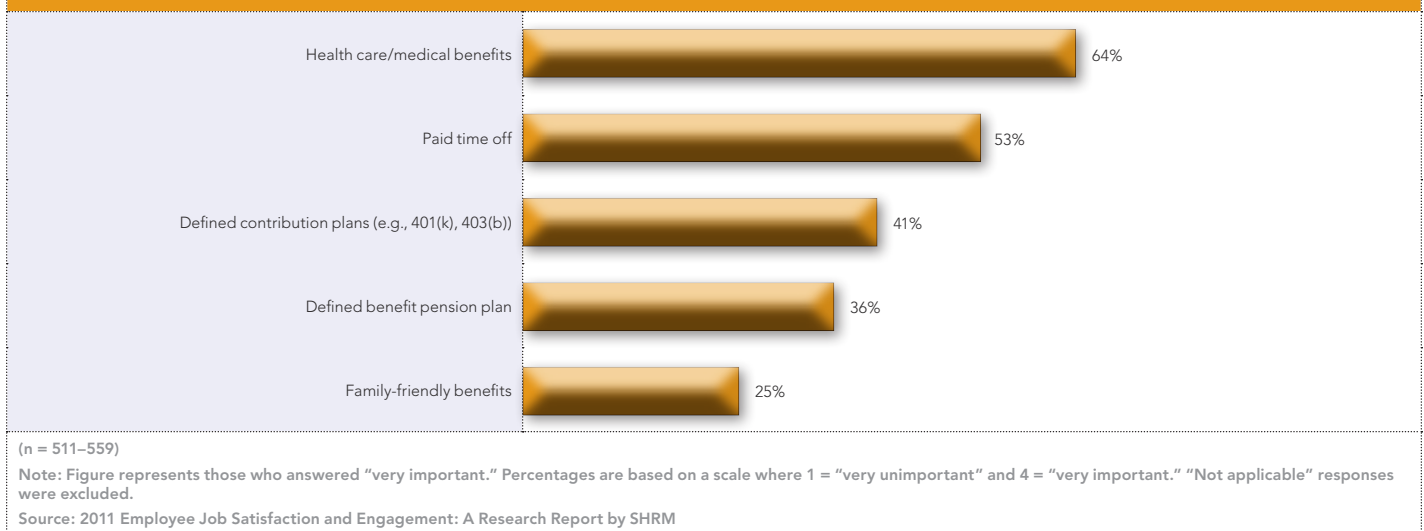

Figure 17 | Importance of Benefits

Very unimportant: 1%
Unimportant: 6%
Important: 40%
Very important: 53%

(n = 545)
Source: 2011 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: A Research Report by SHRM

Figure 18 | Very Important Benefits Aspects

Benefit	Percentage
Health care/medical benefits	64%
Paid time off	53%
Defined contribution plans (e.g., 401(k), 403(b))	41%
Defined benefit pension plan	36%
Family-friendly benefits	25%

(n = 511–559)

Note: Figure represents those who answered "very important." Percentages are based on a scale where 1 = "very unimportant" and 4 = "very important." "Not applicable" responses were excluded.

Source: 2011 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: A Research Report by SHRM

employees. African American employees placed greater importance on retirement benefits than did Caucasian employees, as did Baby Boomers compared with Generation X employees. Female employees placed more importance on family-friendly and paid time off benefits than their male counterparts did. Paid time off benefits were more important to employees in larger organizations (25,000 or more employees) than to employees in smaller organizations (fewer than 100 employees). Defined benefit pension also was more important to employees in larger organizations (2,500 or more employees) than to employees in smaller organizations (fewer than 100 employees) (see Table 9).
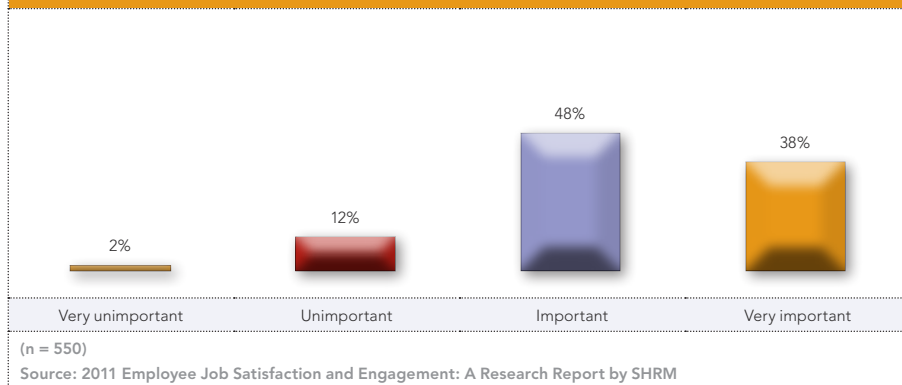
For more detailed information about the types of benefits and trends in benefits offerings over the last six years, see the *SHRM 2011 Employee Benefits* research report.

Flexibility to Balance Life and Work Issues

The advancement of technology, the growing number of employees with caring responsibilities (both child care and elder care responsibilities) and global changes have prompted organizations and lawmakers to start a conversation on how, where and when work gets done. In March 2010, President Obama and the First Lady hosted the Forum on Workplace Flexibility. President Obama said, "Workplace flexibility isn't just a women's issue. It's an issue that affects the well-being of our families and the success of our businesses. It affects the strength of our economy—whether we'll create the workplaces and jobs of the future that we need to compete in today's global economy." In July 2010, SHRM joined a national partner coalition to advance workplace flexibility. Then in February 2011, SHRM announced a partnership with the Families and Work Institute (FWI). The purpose of this partnership, known as *Moving Work Forward*, is to help organizations be more successful by transforming the way businesses view and adopt flexible workplace practices. For details of this partnership, visit www.movingworkforward.org.

How important is flexibility to balance life and work issues to employees? More than a third (38%) of employees rated it as very important (Figure 19). The importance of this contributor, also referred to as work/life fit, to job satisfaction has decreased since 2002. This could be because organizations are offering this benefit in a variety of ways compared to eight years ago when it was first added to the list of job satisfaction contributors. The *SHRM 2011 Employee Benefits*

48%

38%

12%

2%

| Very unimportant | Unimportant | Important | Very important |

(n = 550)
Source: 2011 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: A Research Report by SHRM

research report provides numerous examples of ways in which organizations provide flexibility for their employees. These include flextime (offered by 53% of responding organizations), telecommuting (45%) and compressed workweeks (35%).[7] Even though the importance of this contributor may be on a downward trend, 65% of employees report satisfaction with their level of flexibility to balance life and work issues. Compared with male employees, female employees were more likely to indicate that flexibility to balance life and work issues was important to their job satisfaction.

Expert Q & A

Paul Villella, chief executive officer, HireStrategy

● **Have we reached a point where some workers are comfortable seeking new jobs, now that economic conditions have improved? If so, what are their reasons for looking elsewhere?**

Yes, in general, many specialized higher-level skilled employees in technology, accounting, sales and human resources are seeking jobs now that the economy has improved. In many cases, these same employees have been employed over the past few years during the recession and slow recovery, and chose to stay because of limited options. However, they may have preferred to move from their position or company simply because they wanted additional advancement, challenge or a better work environment.

● **What industries are seeing the most movement at this time, and where are openings still limited?**

Technology by far is where the most opportunities exist, then advanced roles in accounting and accomplished sales professionals. Some rebound in higher-level administrative roles is also occurring, along with human resource positions, especially experienced recruiters. Lower-level skilled workers and less experienced skilled workers in general are still challenged in finding meaningful employment, but those areas also are improving, albeit slowly.

● **Do you think employees' satisfaction with their jobs rose during the recession, at least for those who were able to stay employed? What**

> *"Technology by far is where the most opportunities exist, then advanced roles in accounting and accomplished sales professionals."*

do you think was the most important factor regarding job satisfaction during the past few years?

I do not think job satisfaction rose during the recession. In fact, it probably declined, because many individuals who would have otherwise changed jobs stayed [at their jobs] and, in many cases, wore multiple hats, further frustrating them in their roles.

- **Do you think employers that eliminated benefits or cut perks during tough economic times will have a harder time keeping workers when the job market improves?**

I think that these same employers will respond to market conditions and restore or enhance current benefits and perks.

- **With the standard 40-hour workweek becoming dated in most sectors, do you see workplace flexibility becoming more prevalent in today's labor force? How can the benefits of flexibility be measured for employers that are hesitant to use such policies?**

I do see the use of worker flexibility as a key to employee retention. Telecommuting when possible is also on the rise and factors into an employee's decision about moving on versus staying with their current employer.

"In fact, it [job satisfaction] probably declined, because many individuals who would have otherwise changed jobs stayed [at their jobs] and, in many cases, wore multiple hats, further frustrating them in their roles."
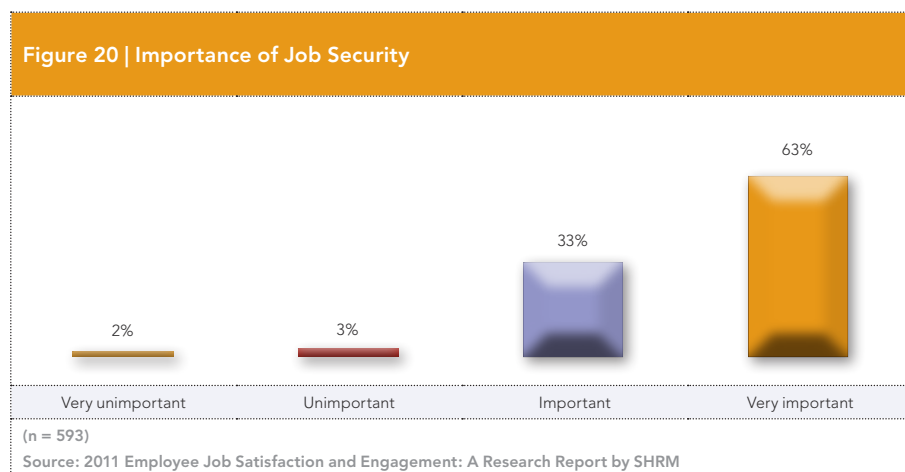
Work Environment

Employers understand that employees spend a fair amount of their time at work and take steps to ensure the work environment is conducive for employees to be productive and satisfied at work. Employees ranked three aspects from the work environment category in the top five contributors important to employee job satisfaction.

Job Security

For the fourth consecutive year, job security tops employees' list of aspects most important to their job satisfaction. It is not surprising that with the economy still unstable, high unemployment in the U.S. and several global disturbances, employees continue to choose job security over all other aspects of job satisfaction. According to SHRM's Jobs Outlook Survey (JOS), 10% of organizations plan to decrease staff in the fourth quarter of 2011 and 53% plan to maintain current staff levels.[8]

There was agreement on the importance of job security across employee demographics. It topped the list for employees 31 to 66 years of age, female employees and employees employed in organizations with staff size of more than 100 employees (for more detailed data, see Tables 10 through 14 in the Appendix). There were some differences by employee job level, age and organization staff size. Job security was more important to nonexempt (hourly) and professional nonmanagement employees than to employees in executive-level positions. Baby Boomers viewed job security as more important than Veterans did. This aspect was more

For the fourth consecutive year, **job security** tops employees' list of aspects most important to their job satisfaction.

Figure 20 | Importance of Job Security

Very unimportant	Unimportant	Important	Very important
2%	3%	33%	63%

(n = 593)
Source: 2011 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: A Research Report by SHRM

important to employees in larger organizations (2,500 or more employees) than to employees in smaller organizations (fewer than 100 employees).
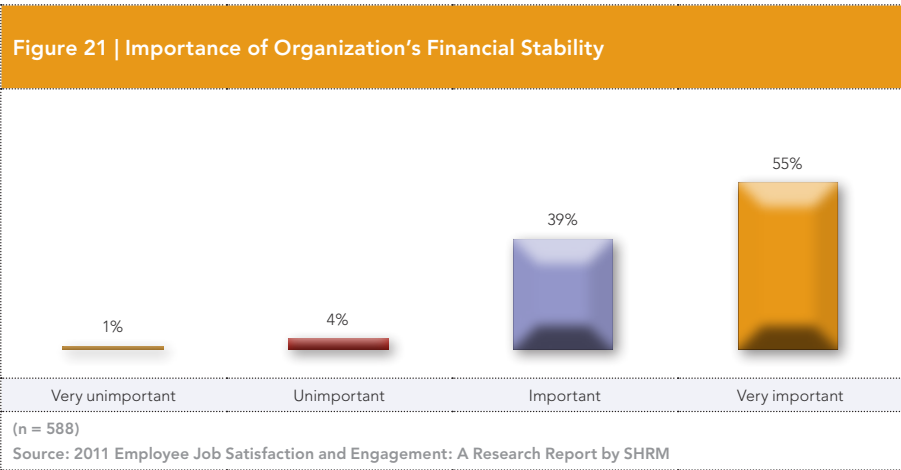
Two-thirds of employees were satisfied with job security in their current job.

Organization's Financial Stability

The organization's financial stability was added to the list of aspects important to employee job satisfaction in 2010. For the second year, it has ranked among the top five aspects most important to employee job satisfaction—this year, at number three. More than half (55%) of employees viewed organization's financial stability as very important to their job satisfaction.

Employees are acutely aware of the impact of the recession on organizations and the bottom line. The ranking of the organization's financial stability varied across employees' demographics (see Tables 10-14). Employees with 11 to 15 years of tenure rated it as the second biggest contributor to their job satisfaction. Baby Boomers valued this aspect more than Millennials did, as did hourly nonmanagement and middle-management employees compared with executive-level employees.

Overall, 63% of employees were satisfied with their organization's financial stability.

Figure 21 | Importance of Organization's Financial Stability

Very unimportant	Unimportant	Important	Very important
1%	4%	39%	55%

(n = 588)
Source: 2011 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: A Research Report by SHRM

The Work Itself

It can be difficult for employees to remain motivated and satisfied with their jobs when their work is not interesting, challenging or exciting. More than half (53%) of employees indicated that the work itself was very important to job satisfaction. These data are illustrated in Figure 22. The work itself tied with benefits for the fifth spot on the list of most important contributors to employee job satisfaction.

There were differences among employee demographic categories. Employees with six to 10 years of tenure rated the work itself as the second highest contributor to job satisfaction. Employees with post-graduate degrees were more likely than employees with a high school diploma to select the work itself as a contributor to job satisfaction. Employees who have been with their organizations between 6 and 10 years placed more importance on this contributor than did employees who have been with their organizations for 11 to 15 years. This aspect was also more valued by professional nonmanagement employees than by hourly employees.

More than three-quarters of employees were satisfied with the work itself.
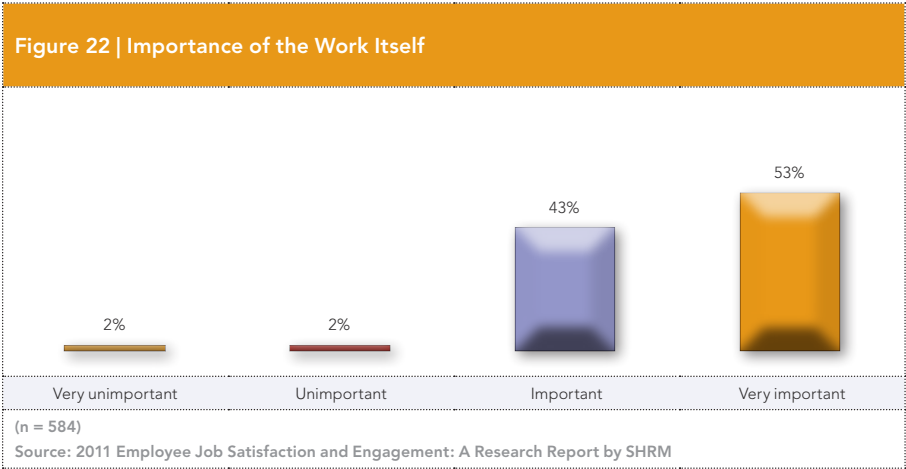
Feeling Safe in the Work Environment

While at work, employees expect their employers to take measures that ensure their safety. About one-half of employees (48%) indicated that feeling safe in the work environment was very important to their job satisfaction. Female employees considered feeling safe in the workplace an especially important job satisfaction factor compared with male workers, as did employees with a high school diploma compared with employees with post-graduate degrees.

Employees were generally highly satisfied with their level of safety in the workplace (78%).
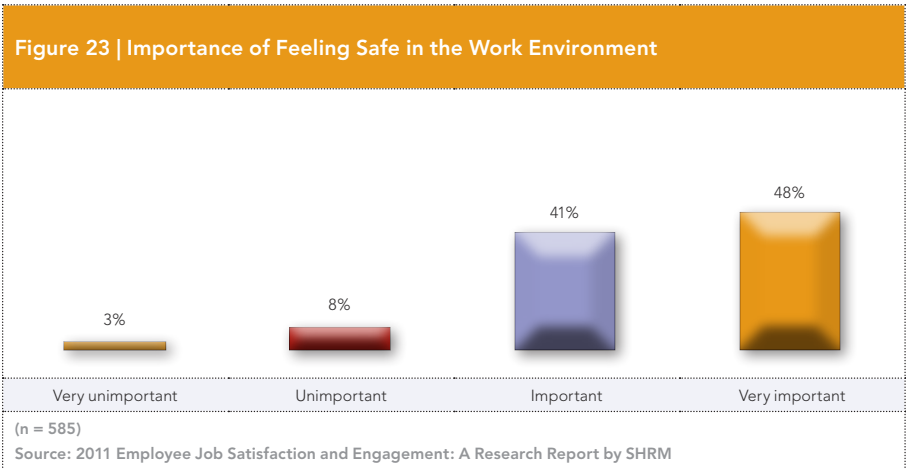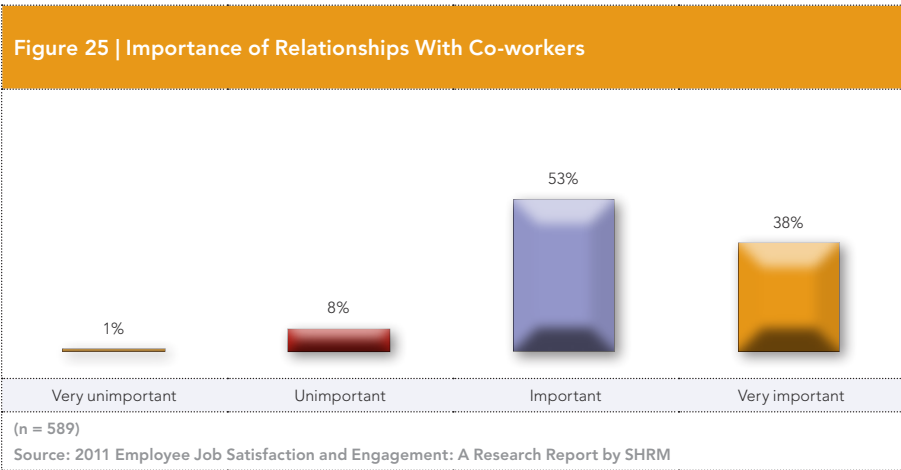
Overall Corporate Culture

The definition of corporate culture varies, but in general, culture consists of the collective attitudes and behaviors of individuals within the organization. It is the explicit and implicit expectations, norms of behavior and standards of performance, the organization's reputation, work ethics, values, and working conditions. Forty-six percent of employees believed that corporate culture was very important to job satisfaction, and 60% reported satisfaction with overall corporate culture.

There were significant differences within employee demographics. Older employees (born before 1945) were more likely to connect this factor to their overall job satisfaction than were younger employees (born after 1965). Employees with college degrees placed greater importance on this aspect than employees with a high school diploma did (see Table 8).

Figure 24 | Importance of Overall Corporate Culture

1%	5%	48%	46%
Very unimportant	Unimportant	Important	Very important

(n = 589)
Source: 2011 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: A Research Report by SHRM

Relationships With Co-workers

Employees' relationships with co-workers are important to their success at work. Building allies across the organization helps employees accomplish their work goals and their organization's goals. Forming positive relationships at work may make the workplace and work more enjoyable and increase job satisfaction. According to 38% of employees, this factor was very important to employee job satisfaction, and about three-quarters of employees expressed satisfaction with their relationships with co-workers.
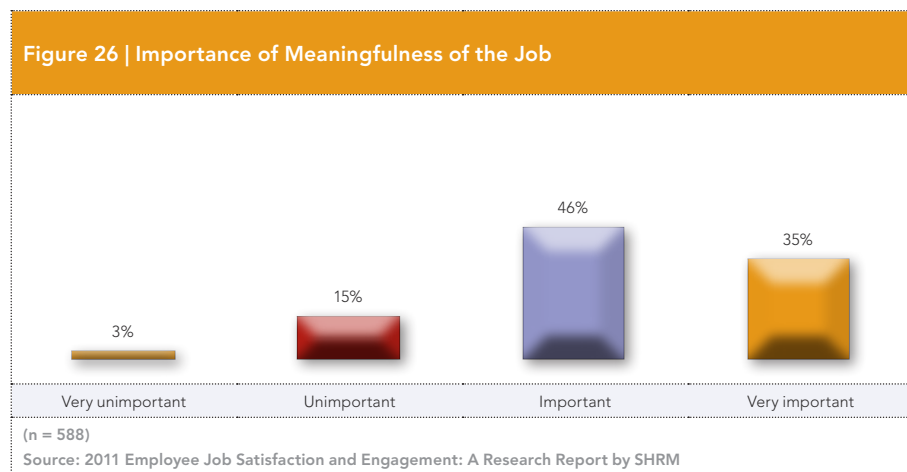
Figure 25 | Importance of Relationships With Co-workers

1%	8%	53%	38%
Very unimportant	Unimportant	Important	Very important

(n = 589)
Source: 2011 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: A Research Report by SHRM

Meaningfulness of the Job

When asked about the meaningfulness of one's job (the feeling that the job contributes to society as a whole), 35% of employees believed that this aspect was very important to overall job satisfaction (see Figure 26). When employees find their work to be meaningful and fulfilling, they are more likely to be satisfied and do their work well.
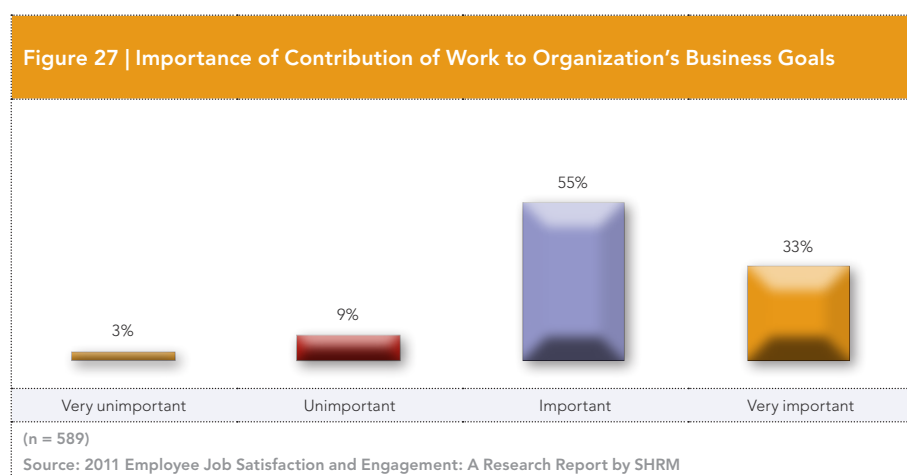
Female employees (40%) perceived this aspect to be more important to employee job satisfaction compared with male employees (31%). Likewise, this aspect was deemed more important by African American employees (66%) than by Caucasian employees (34%) (Table 8). Organizations can make a concentrated effort to communicate the ways in which the employees' work contributes to the organization's vision and society. This communication may include any corporate social responsibility and sustainability activities the organization is involved in or is contemplating.

More than two-thirds (69%) of employees were satisfied with the meaningfulness of their job.

Figure 26 | Importance of Meaningfulness of the Job

Very unimportant	Unimportant	Important	Very important
3%	15%	46%	35%

(n = 588)

Source: 2011 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: A Research Report by SHRM
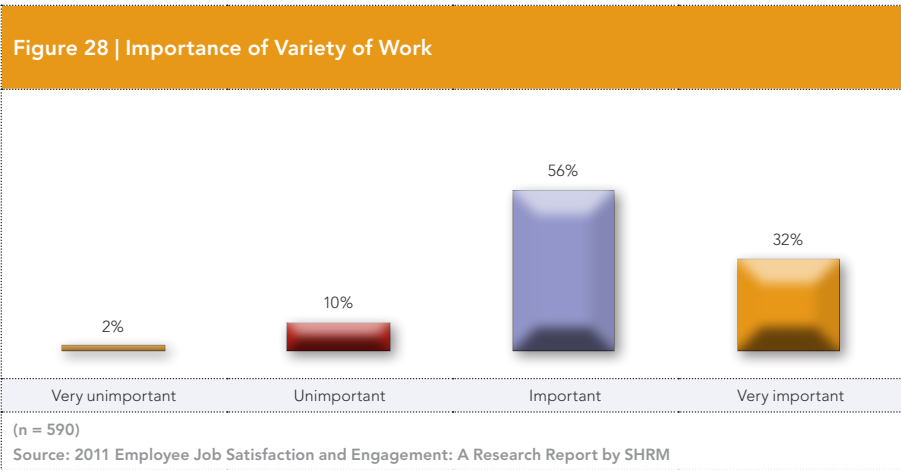
Contribution of Work to the Organization's Business Goals

Contributing to the organization's business goals was viewed by 33% of employees as a very important aspect of employee job satisfaction. Contributing to the organization's overall business goals can give employees a clearer sense of their role (i.e., how their work fits into the bigger picture) and the significance and relevance of their work to business goals. Compared with Generation X employees, Baby Boomers rated this facet as more important. These data are depicted in Table 8. In terms of satisfaction, 71% of employees said they were happy with the contribution of their work to their organization's business goals.

Figure 27 | Importance of Contribution of Work to Organization's Business Goals

Very unimportant	Unimportant	Important	Very important
3%	9%	55%	33%

(n = 589)

Source: 2011 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: A Research Report by SHRM

Variety of Work

Almost one-third (32%) of employees indicated that variety of work was very important to job satisfaction (see Figure 28). It has been argued that employees will be more satisfied with their jobs and find their work more meaningful when there is variety in activities and the types of skills they use at work. Similar to "the work itself" aspect, this includes providing employees with opportunities to work on new kinds of assignments that call upon or develop a range of skills and abilities. More than two thirds (68%) of employees reported satisfaction with the variety of their work. There were no significant differences among employee demographics.

Figure 28 | Importance of Variety of Work

- Very unimportant: 2%
- Unimportant: 10%
- Important: 56%
- Very important: 32%

(n = 590)

Source: 2011 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: A Research Report by SHRM

Organization's Commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility

An organization's commitment to corporate social responsibility (CSR) involves balancing financial performance with contributions to the quality of life of their employees, the local community and society at large. A broad range of practices and activities fall under the umbrella of CSR, such as charitable donations, cause marketing/branding and partnering with environmentally friendly suppliers/companies. As shown in Figure 29, 28% of employees rated the organization's commitment to corporate social responsibility as very important. An increasing awareness of CSR and sustainability in the past few years has lead many organizations to re-brand their products and services. According to a research report by SHRM, BSR and Aurosoorya, 72% of organizations reported engaging
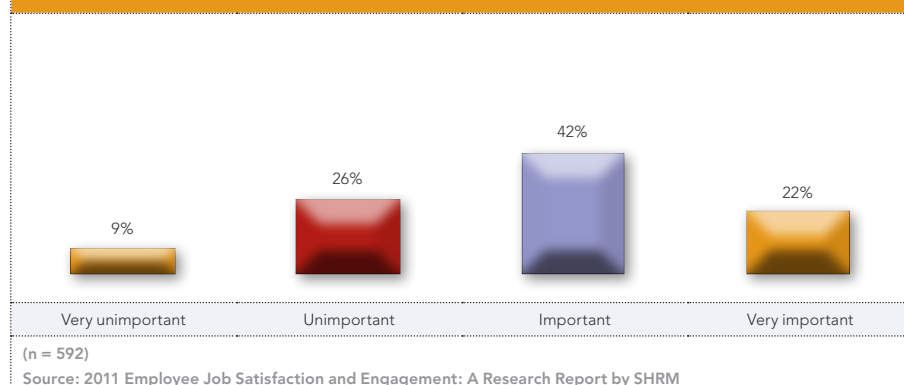
Figure 29 | Importance of Organization's Commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility

- Very unimportant: 3%
- Unimportant: 15%
- Important: 54%
- Very important: 28%

(n = 588)

Source: 2011 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: A Research Report by SHRM

in sustainable workplace or business practices.[9] The job satisfaction research indicates that organizations that practice corporate social responsibility have a stronger appeal for female employees than for male employees. Overall, 49% of employees said they were satisfied with their organization's commitment to CSR.

Organization's Commitment to Diverse and Inclusive Workplace

This is a new aspect to the list of contributors to employee job satisfaction, added this year. The organization's commitment to diverse and inclusive workforce was viewed by 22% of employees as very important (see Figure 30), and more than one half of employees were satisfied with this aspect. Organizations that show commitment to a diverse and inclusive workplace were more appealing to African American employees (57%) than to Caucasian employees (20%) and to female employees (27%) than to male employees (18%) (see Table 8).

Organizations that show commitment to a **diverse and inclusive workplace** were more appealing to **African American employees** than to **Caucasian employees** and to **female employees** than to **male employees.**
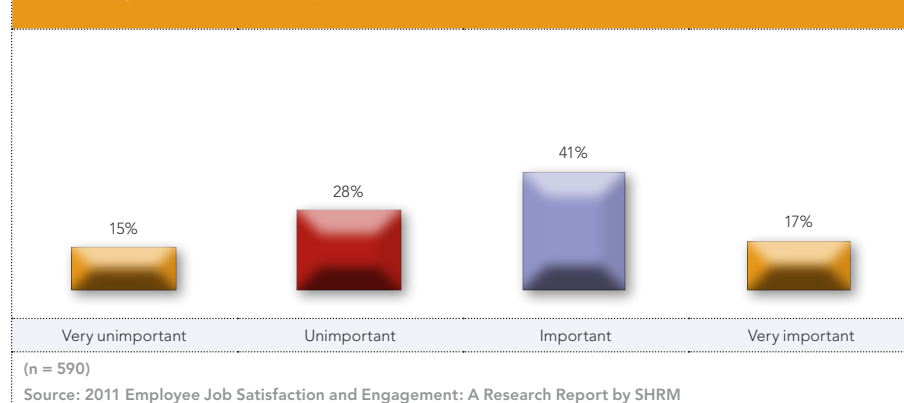
Figure 30 | Importance of Organization's Commitment to a Diverse and Inclusive Workplace

9%	26%	42%	22%
Very unimportant	Unimportant	Important	Very important

(n = 592)
Source: 2011 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: A Research Report by SHRM

Organization's Commitment to a "Green" Workplace

This aspect of job satisfaction for the fourth straight year was viewed by employees as the least important contributor to job satisfaction. Only 17% of employees believed that an organization's commitment to a "green" workplace—one that is environmentally sensitive and resource-efficient—was very important (see Figure 31). Although employees picked this aspect as the least important factor, 42% of respondents were satisfied with their organization's green initiatives. There were no significant differences by employee demographics.

Figure 31 | Importance of Organization's Commitment to a "Green" Workplace

15%	28%	41%	17%
Very unimportant	Unimportant	Important	Very important

(n = 590)
Source: 2011 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: A Research Report by SHRM

There are many reasons an organization might invest in a green workplace. According to *Advancing Sustainability: HR's Role*, a research report by SHRM, BSR and Aurosoorya, the top three most frequently reported positive outcomes of organizations' sustainable initiatives were improved employee morale, more efficient business processes and stronger public image.

2012 Top Trends from the SHRM Workplace Diversity Special Expertise Panel

1. The "jobless recovery" is forcing many organizations to increase their workload beyond reasonable expectations, resulting in burnout, decreased engagement and an inability to implement effective workplace flexibility; this may affect some employee demographics more than others.

2. Postponed retirements are affecting talent management (of all generational cohorts), generational demographics and psychographics.

3. Now that the disability community is both the largest and the fastest growing minority in the world, organizations will be reacting to various legislation (ADAAA in the U.S., quotas in other parts of the world) and issues related to the inclusion of employees with disabilities.

4. Advances in technology are allowing unique instances of discrimination and other misbehavior to "go viral" nearly overnight, requiring organizations to anticipate and manage to their brand more quickly than ever before.

5. The lack of a set career path and effective succession planning for diversity and inclusion professionals continues to malign the importance of the diversity and inclusion function within organizations.

6. Troop withdrawals in the Middle East will necessitate the inclusion of greater numbers of combat veterans into the civilian workforce than ever before, requiring organizations to obtain greater knowledge of PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), TBI (traumatic brain injury), other combat-related disabilities and military culture.

7. Continuing political and religious polarization around the world is fracturing the social fabric of historically moderate and conciliatory societies, creating confrontational and disharmonious workplace environments (in the U.S., this is particularly relevant due to the 10th anniversary of Sept. 11 and upcoming presidential election).

8. The increase of EEOC claims is forcing organizations to spend more time and resources on complaints, investigations and prevention of instances of retaliation, rather than on proactive or strategic diversity and inclusion initiatives.

9. Old modes of racial demographics are becoming obsolete due to increasing numbers within the biracial and multiracial segments.

10. More states are and will be enacting laws supporting same-sex marriages or civil unions, adding greater complexity to workplace culture as it relates to LGBT inclusion and total rewards structures.

Note: Trends sorted in order of importance, with the first trend being the most important.
Source: Future Insights: The top trends for 2012 according to SHRM's HR subject matter expert panels (SHRM, 2011)

Survey Results:
Employee Engagement

Engagement

New this year, the survey expanded to include some questions around employee engagement based on a well-established engagement theory and body of research.[10] After the recent recession and the continued economic uncertainty that continues to challenge many organizations, HR professionals and their organization's leaders will need to engage their employees to remain competitive and retain the best talent.

How does employee engagement differ from job satisfaction? Job satisfaction refers to how employees feel about their compensation, benefits, work environment, career development and relationship with management. Employee engagement is about employees' commitment and connection at work—what is motivating employees to work harder, who is motivating them to work harder and what conditions are motivating them to work harder.

Many organizations that survived the recession are relying on their workforce to help them stay ahead of their competitors and manage their bottom line. Because of the recession and slow recovery, organizations' resources have been stretched, and some employees may be feeling fatigued, dissatisfied and disengaged.

Why should organizations care about their workforce engagement level? Many studies have linked employee engagement to employee performance, customer satisfaction, productivity, absenteeism, turnover and support of the organization. In this research, employee engagement is divided into three areas—the "feel," the "look" and the conditions of engagement.

Engagement Opinions: The "Feel" of Employee Engagement

Personal engagement is defined by feelings of urgency, focus, enthusiasm and intensity. It is the energized feeling that an employee has about work. Employees with high engagement will generally agree or strongly agree with the eight statements in this section (see Table 2).

The findings indicate that employees were feeling the urgency and intensity in their work. Eighty-three percent of employees agreed (34% strongly agreed and 49% agreed) that they were determined to accomplish their work goals and confident that they could meet those goals. Seventy percent of employees said they were frequently putting all their effort into their work and were completely focused on their work projects. Slightly more than one half of employees reported feeling focused and enthusiastic about their work, 53% said that they enjoyed

Job satisfaction refers to how employees feel about their compensation, benefits, work environment, career development and relationship with management. **Employee engagement** is about employees' commitment and connection at work—what is motivating employees to work harder, who is motivating them to work harder and what conditions are motivating them to work harder.

volunteering for activities beyond their job requirements and 52% felt completely plugged in at work.

Table 2	Engagement Opinions						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Overall Agree
I am determined to accomplish my work goals and confident I can meet them.	2%	2%	13%	49%	34%	83%
I frequently feel that I'm putting all my effort into my work	2%	7%	21%	41%	29%	70%
While at work, I'm almost always completely focused on my work projects	2%	9%	19%	46%	24%	70%
I am highly motivated by my work goals	2%	9%	20%	43%	25%	68%
I am often so wrapped up in my work that hours go by like minutes	4%	11%	21%	42%	25%	67%
I have passion and excitement about my work	4%	10%	21%	39%	27%	66%
I enjoy volunteering for activities beyond my job requirements	4%	13%	30%	33%	20%	53%
I feel completely plugged in at work, like I'm always on full power	4%	14%	30%	34%	18%	52%
Note: Sorted in descending order by "overall agree" column.						
Source: 2011 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: A Research Report by SHRM						

Engagement Behaviors:
The "Look" of Employee Engagement

Engagement in an organization also can be measured by employee behaviors that have a positive impact on the organization's success. Organizations with highly engaged employees will find that employees agree or strongly agree with the statements in this section (see Table 3).

Employees rated engagement opinions (which are about personal engagement) higher than engagement behaviors (which are about the teams in the organization). Sixty percent of employees perceived that employees at their organization are encouraged to be proactive. The results in Table 3 show that employees feel people in their organization do not volunteer for new projects.

Table 3	Engagement Behaviors						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Overall Agree
In my organization, employees are encouraged to take action when they see a problem or opportunity	4%	12%	24%	41%	19%	60%
My work group never gives up	3%	10%	34%	37%	16%	53%
My colleagues quickly adapt to challenging or crisis situations	3%	15%	30%	35%	17%	52%
Employees in my organization deal very well with unpredictable or changing work situations	5%	16%	28%	35%	16%	51%
In my work group, we are constantly looking out to see what challenge is coming next	4%	12%	34%	34%	16%	50%
The people in my work group are always flexible in expanding the scope of their work	5%	16%	32%	33%	14%	47%
Others in my organization view unexpected responsibilities as an opportunity to succeed at something new	5%	17%	39%	28%	10%	38%
Other people in my organization often volunteer for new projects	6%	18%	42%	26%	9%	35%
Source: 2011 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: A Research Report by SHRM						

Conditions for Engagement

There are certain conditions under which employee engagement is much more likely to occur. Employees need the capacity to engage, reasons to engage and the feeling that they are free to engage. Table 4 lists conditions under which employee engagement can be maximized.

According to the data in Table 4, employees positively viewed the reasons to engage at their organizations. More than seven out of 10 employees were satisfied with their work, opportunities to use their skills and abilities at work, and the contribution of their work to their organization's business goals. However, employees' capacity to engage at their organization was low: only slightly more than 40% of employees were satisfied with career development opportunities and career advancement opportunities.

Table 4 | Satisfaction with Conditions of Engagement						
	Very Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neutral	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Overall Satisfaction
The work itself	3%	7%	14%	35%	41%	76%
Relationships with co-workers	2%	7%	14%	37%	39%	76%
Opportunities to use skills and abilities	4%	7%	15%	34%	40%	74%
Relationship with immediate supervisor	6%	9%	13%	34%	39%	73%
Contribution of work to organization's business goals	2%	6%	21%	39%	32%	71%
Autonomy and independence	5%	7%	19%	35%	34%	69%
Meaningfulness of job	4%	5%	22%	32%	37%	69%
Variety of work	3%	9%	21%	35%	33%	68%
Organization's financial stability	4%	9%	23%	34%	29%	63%
Overall corporate culture	6%	11%	22%	33%	27%	60%
Management's recognition of employee job performance	11%	15%	18%	33%	24%	57%
Job-specific training	5%	12%	28%	36%	19%	55%
Communication between employees and senior management	12%	15%	20%	28%	26%	54%
Organization's commitment to professional development	7%	13%	26%	31%	23%	54%
Networking	6%	10%	35%	26%	23%	49%
Organization's commitment to corporate social responsibility	7%	11%	33%	28%	21%	49%
Career development opportunities	7%	13%	31%	29%	19%	48%
Career advancement opportunities	11%	16%	31%	26%	16%	42%
Source: 2011 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: A Research Report by SHRM						

Overall Employee Engagement

Overall employee engagement is the average of all engagement items (engagement opinions, engagement behaviors and conditions for engagement) using a scale of 1 = "strongly disagree" or "very dissatisfied" and 5 = "strongly agree" or "very satisfied." Overall employee engagement is based on the following scale: 1.0 = "not engaged," 3.0 = "moderately engaged" and 5.0 = "highly engaged." This year, employees are moderately engaged overall (3.6).

Expert Q & A

Tony Schwartz, CEO, The Energy Project

● **Is it true that only a small percentage of workers are truly engaged with their jobs? Please explain why this is the case in today's labor environment.**

All the surveys, from Gallup to Towers Watson, consistently show that only a small minority of employees feel fully engaged at work. From our perspective at The Energy Project, the reason is that employers are so busy trying to get more out of their workforce that they've all but lost sight of meeting the most fundamental needs of their employees. We see those needs as physical (for energy), emotional (for appreciation), mental (for self-expression) and spiritual (for meaning). The more employees feel preoccupied by those unmet needs, the less energy they bring to work every day.

● **Do you think employee satisfaction improved during the recent recession, based on the fact that those employed were simply happy to have jobs? If not, why?**

There is little question that employee satisfaction deteriorated, in many cases dramatically, during the recession. And for most people, that recession isn't over. From a pure survival perspective, many employees were relieved to have jobs. That's very different than satisfaction. It's deeply unsettling, frightening and even traumatizing to watch those around you being laid off. Those layoffs, in turn, put more work on a smaller group of people—the survivors—who were often already feeling overworked. It also left them feeling uncertain and anxious about their own futures. None of this serves satisfaction or engagement.

"All the surveys ... consistently show that only a small minority of employees feel fully engaged at work. The reason is that employers are so busy trying to get more out of their workforce that they've all but lost sight of meeting the most fundamental needs of their employees."

- **Going forward, how can HR play a role in improving employee satisfaction? Is it a matter of simply changing a few policies in the workplace?**

I deeply believe that we're at an inflection point. We're in a new kind of energy crisis, and this one's personal. Demand is exceeding our capacity. So long as we have sufficient fuel in our tanks, we don't think much about capacity. Now, perhaps for the first time, we're beginning to run on empty—the sense that it's not sustainable—and virtually no company we've come across is actively addressing this issue.

The challenge to leaders, and to HR as their partners, is to help employees systematically build their capacity, and to provide support for doing so in the form of policies, practices, facilities and cultural messages. Just one example: Human beings are not meant to operate like computers, at high speeds, continuously, for long periods of time. When we try to do so, we end up being run by our digital devices.

We need a new workplace paradigm built around the fact that human beings are designed to pulse between spending and renewing energy. Counterintuitive as it may seem, intermittent rest and recovery actually fuel sustainable high performance—especially when demand is high.

- **Workplace flexibility is a hot topic at the moment, but benefits like telecommuting and flex schedules are not realistic in all workplaces. What are the alternatives as far as offering a less rigid 9-to-5 work schedule?**

Flexibility isn't an option—it's a necessity if you want to get the best from any given individual. The reason is that every human being has different needs and different rhythms. The starting point with any valued employee ought to be, "What can we do to empower you to bring the best of yourself to work every day?" That means accommodating a range of ways of working, even if doing so requires being creative and thinking out of the box.

- **If employers do not get more creative with workplace flexibility and related benefits, what will be the result, and how will that affect our labor force in the future?**

If people are truly an employer's greatest asset—as so many regularly say—then they ought to be actively investing in those assets. We know, from overwhelming evidence and also from common sense, that the better people feel at work, the better they perform. If they're encouraged to take care of themselves, feel valued, have opportunities to express their unique talents and believe what they're doing is meaningful, they're going to be more loyal and engaged and higher performing. Employers that address this reality in authentic and systematic ways will build huge competitive advantage in the years ahead.

"Human beings are not meant to operate like computers, at high speeds, continuously, for long periods of time. When we try to do so, we end up being run by our digital devices."

Conclusions

What Can HR Professionals and Employers Do?

It is no doubt that the factors that influence employee job satisfaction and engagement are dynamic in nature. These factors include internal and external ones, such as restructuring, demographic makeup of the organization, change in management, economic change, political change, global change and many others. This makes it difficult at times for HR professionals and employers to hone in on aspects most important to employee satisfaction and engagement.

Findings from this research reveal that:

- Employees are overall satisfied with their jobs, with 41% "very satisfied" and 42% "somewhat satisfied."

- Employees are moderately engaged.

- Employees are looking for security in their job and their organization's finances.

- Employees are looking to build a better relationship with upper management.

- Employees are determined to accomplish their work goals and confident in their ability to do so.

Many of the aspects rated as *very important* to employee job satisfaction received low ratings when it came to respondents' actual level of satisfaction. Less than three out of 10 employees reported feeling very satisfied with their organization's financial stability, job security, benefits, communication between employees and senior management, and compensation (see Table 6)—all of which were rated among the top five "very important" contributors to job satisfaction. Employees also reported dissatisfaction with career development and advancement opportunities, which are among factors that affect their capacity to engage.

What can HR professionals and employers do? HR professionals are strategically situated to help their organizations cultivate a culture that promotes employee engagement and job satisfaction through policies and practices, training line managers to better communicate the company's mission and vision, and involving line managers in the organization's strategic planning. HR professionals also can evaluate their employee engagement and job satisfaction by benchmarking their organization's employee survey results against others in their industry and against organizations of similar size using products and services such as SHRM Customized Benchmarking Service and SHRM People InSight.

Many of the aspects rated as **very important to employee job satisfaction** received **low ratings** when it came to respondents' **actual level of satisfaction.**

About the Research

Methodology

The sample of employees was randomly selected by an outside survey research organization's web-enabled employee panel, which is based on the American Community Study. A total of 600 individuals completed the online 2011 Job Satisfaction Survey, yielding a response rate of 83%. The survey was in the field for a period of seven days. All respondents were employed, either full time or part time. Comparing the 600 employees in this survey to the 2010 sample of employees showed that the 2011 sample had more Baby Boomers than the 2010 sample.

Notations

Analysis: Throughout this report, conventional statistical methods are used to determine if observed differences are statistically significant (i.e., there is a small likelihood that the differences occurred by chance). When presenting data from the overall survey results, findings are discussed, in some cases, even if they are not statistically significant. In some cases, the data are not depicted in corresponding tables/figures even though the results are statistically significant. Additional analyses by employee job tenure, gender, job level and age were conducted.

- Organization staff size categories: small (1 to 99 employees), medium (100 to 499 employees) and large (500 or more employees).

- Employee job tenure categories, or total years with the company: two years or less, three to five years, six to 10 years, 11 to 15 years, and 16 years or more.

- Employee job level: nonmanagement (e.g., assistant, coordinator, specialist), professional nonmanagement (e.g., analyst, nurse, engineer), middle management (e.g., manager, supervisor, director) and executive level (e.g., CEO, CFO).

- Employee age categories: Millennials (born 1981 and after), Generation X (born 1965-1980), Baby Boomers (born 1945-1964), and Veterans (born before 1945).

Tables: Unless otherwise noted in a specific table, please note that the following are applicable to data depicted in tables throughout this report.

- Data are sorted in descending order by "overall" column in a table.

- Percentages for a question or a response option may not total 100% due to rounding.

- Tables include only response options for which there were significant differences.

Figures: Unless otherwise noted in a specific figure, the following are applicable to data depicted in figures throughout this report.

- Percentages for a question may not total 100% due to rounding.

Generalization of results: As with any research, readers should exercise caution when generalizing results and take individual circumstances and experiences into consideration when making decisions based on these data. While SHRM is confident in its research, it is prudent to understand that the results presented in this survey report are only truly representative of the sample of employees responding to the survey.

Number of respondents: The number of respondents (indicated by "n" in figures and tables) varies from table to table and figure to figure because some respondents did not answer all of the questions. Individuals may not have responded to a question on the survey because the question or some of its parts were not applicable or because the requested data were unavailable. This also accounts for the varying number of responses within each table or figure.

Confidence level and margin of error: A confidence level and margin of error give readers some measure of how much they can rely on survey responses to represent all U.S. employees. Given the level of response to the survey, SHRM Research is 96% confident that responses given by responding employees can be applied to all U.S. employees, in general, with a margin of error of approximately 4%. For example, 55% of the responding employees reported that the relationship with immediate supervisor was very important for employees' job satisfaction. With a 4% margin of error, the reader can be 96% certain that between 51% and 59% of employees believe that the relationship with immediate supervisor is very important to employee job satisfaction. It is important to know that as the sample size decreases, the margin of error increases.

About the Respondents

Organization Staff Size	
1-99 employees	37%
100-499 employees	15%
500-2,499 employees	14%
2,500-24,999 employees	19%
25,000 or more employees	15%
(n = 596)	

Job Tenure	
2 years or less	22%
3 to 5 years	20%
6 to 10 years	20%
11 to 15 years	13%
16 or more years	26%
(n = 600)	

Generation/Age	
Millennials (born 1981 and later)	16%
Generation X (born 1965-1980)	22%
Baby Boomers (1945-1964)	54%
Veterans (born before 1945)	9%
(n = 600)	

Gender	
Female	51%
Male	49%
(n = 600)	

Job Level	
Nonmanagement (e.g., assistant, coordinator, specialist)	41%
Professional nonmanagement (e.g., analyst, nurse, engineer)	25%
Middle management (e.g., manager, supervisor, director)	23%
Executive level (e.g., CEO, CFO)	10%
(n = 593)	

Organization Industry	
Educational services (elementary and secondary schools; junior colleges; colleges, universities and professional schools; business schools and computer and management training; technical and trade schools; other schools and instruction; educational support services)	17%
Health care and social assistance (ambulatory health care services; hospitals; nursing and residential care facilities; social assistance)	13%
Manufacturing (food manufacturing; beverage and tobacco product manufacturing; textile mills; textile product mills; apparel manufacturing; leather and allied product manufacturing; wood product manufacturing; paper manufacturing; printing and related support activities; petroleum and coal products manufacturing; chemical manufacturing; plastics and rubber products manufacturing; nonmetallic mineral product manufacturing; primary metal manufacturing; fabricated metal product manufacturing; machinery manufacturing; computer and electronic product manufacturing; electrical equipment, appliance and component manufacturing; transportation equipment manufacturing; furniture and related product manufacturing; miscellaneous manufacturing)	12%
Professional, scientific and technical services (legal services; accounting, tax preparation, bookkeeping and payroll services; architectural, engineering and related services; specialized design services; computer systems design and related services; management, scientific and technical consulting services; scientific research and development services; advertising, public relations and related services; other professional, scientific and technical services)	12%
Administrative and support and waste management and remediation services (office administrative services; facilities support services; employment services; business support services; travel arrangement and reservation services; investigation and security services; services to buildings and dwellings; other support services; waste management and remediation services)	12%
Retail trade (motor vehicle and parts dealers; furniture and home furnishings stores; electronics and appliance stores; building material and garden equipment and supplies dealers; food and beverage stores; health and personal care stores; gasoline stations; clothing and clothing accessories stores; sporting goods, hobby, book and music stores; general merchandise stores; miscellaneous store retailers; nonstore retailers)	12%
Information (publishing industries, excluding Internet; motion picture and sound recording industries; broadcasting, excluding internet; telecommunications; data processing, hosting and related services; other information services)	8%
Public administration (executive, legislative and other general government support; justice, public order and safety activities; administration of human resource programs; administration of environmental quality programs; administration of housing programs, urban planning and community development; administration of economic programs; space research and technology; national security and international affairs)	7%
Construction (construction of buildings; heavy and civil engineering construction; specialty trade contractors)	7%
Transportation and warehousing (air transportation; rail transportation; water transportation; truck transportation; transit and ground passenger transportation; pipeline transportation; scenic and sightseeing transportation; support activities for transportation; postal service; couriers and messengers; warehousing and storage)	7%
Repair and maintenance (automotive repair and maintenance; electronic and precision equipment repair and maintenance; commercial and industrial machinery and equipment, excluding automotive and electronic, repair and maintenance; personal and household goods repair and maintenance)	6%
Finance and insurance (monetary authorities—central bank; credit intermediation and related activities; securities, commodity contracts and other financial investments and related activities; insurance carriers and related activities; funds, trusts and other financial vehicles)	5%
Accommodation and food services (accommodation; food services and drinking places)	5%
Arts, entertainment and recreation (performing arts, spectator sports and related industries; museums, historical sites and similar institutions; amusement, gambling and recreation industries)	5%
Religious, grantmaking, civic, professional and similar organizations (religious organizations; grantmaking and giving services; social advocacy organizations; civic and social organizations; business, professional, labor, political and similar organizations)	4%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting (crop production; animal production; forestry and logging; fishing, hunting and trapping; support activities for agriculture and forestry)	4%
Utilities (electric power generation, transmission and distribution; natural gas distribution; water, sewage and other systems)	3%
Wholesale trade (merchant wholesalers, durable goods; merchant wholesalers, nondurable goods; wholesale electronic markets and agents and brokers)	3%
Real estate and rental and leasing (real estate; rental and leasing services; lessors of nonfinancial intangible assets, excluding copyrighted works)	3%
Mining (oil and gas extraction; mining, excluding oil and gas; support activities for mining)	2%
Personal and laundry services (personal care services; death care services; dry cleaning and laundry services; other personal services)	2%
Management of companies and enterprises (offices of bank holding companies; offices of other holding companies; corporate, subsidiary and regional managing offices)	1%
(n = 593) Note: Percentages do not total 100% due to multiple response options.	

Appendix

Elements of Job Satisfaction

The following 26 elements of job satisfaction, eight special compensation and benefits elements and 34 elements of employee engagement are examined in this report:

Career Development

1. Organization's commitment to professional development
2. Career advancement opportunities within the organization
3. Career development opportunities for learning and professional growth (mentorships, cross training, etc.)
4. Job-specific training
5. Opportunities to network with others (within or outside the organization) to help in advancing one's career
6. Opportunities to use skills and abilities in work
7. Paid training and tuition reimbursement programs

Relationship With Management

8. Communication between employees and senior management
9. Autonomy and independence to make decisions
10. Management's recognition of employee job performance (feedback, incentives, rewards)
11. Relationship with immediate supervisor

Compensation and Benefits

12. Compensation/pay

- Base rate of pay
- Opportunities for variable pay (bonuses, commissions, other variable pay, monetary rewards for ideas or suggestions)
- Stock options
- Being paid competitively with the local market

13. Benefits

- Health care/medical benefits
- Family-friendly benefits (life insurance for dependents, subsidized child care, elder care referral service, etc.)

- Paid time off (vacation, holidays, sick days, personal days, etc.)
- Retirement benefits (defined contribution plans such as 401(k) and other defined plans such as pensions)

14. Flexibility to balance life and work issues (alternative work arrangements, including job-sharing, flex schedules, telecommuting, etc.)

Work Environment
15. Feeling safe in the work environment
16. Job security
17. Meaningfulness of the job (understanding how the job contributes to society as a whole)
18. Organization's commitment to corporate social responsibility (balancing financial performance with contributions to the quality of life of their employees, the local community and society at large)
19. Organization's commitment to a 'green' workplace (environmentally sensitive and resource-efficient)
20. Overall corporate culture (organization's reputation, work ethics, values, working conditions, etc.)
21. Relationships with co-workers
22. Contribution of work to organization's business goals
23. The work itself (it is interesting, challenging, exciting, etc.)
24. Variety of work (working on different projects, using different skills)
25. Organization's financial standing
26. Organization's commitment to a diverse and inclusive workforce

Elements of Employee Engagement

Engagement Opinions
1. Determined to accomplish work goals
2. Highly motivated by work goals
3. Wrapped up in work
4. Completely plugged in at work
5. Volunteer for activities beyond job requirements
6. Passionate and excited about work
7. Putting effort into work
8. Completely focused on work projects

Engagement Behaviors
9. Colleagues adapt to challenging or crisis situations
10. Work group never gives up
11. Employees take action when a problem or opportunity arises
12. Work group anticipates next challenge
13. Employees in organization embrace unexpected responsibilities
14. Employees in organization volunteer for new projects
15. Work group is flexible in expanding scope of work

16. Employees in organization are flexible in unpredictable work situations

Conditions for Engagement

17. Career advancement opportunities

18. Career development opportunities

19. Job-specific training

20. Organization's commitment to professional development

21. Relationships with co-workers

22. Organization's financial stability

23. Networking

24. Opportunities to use your skills and abilities

25. Meaningfulness of job

26. Contribution of work to organization's business goals

27. The work itself

28. Variety of work

29. Communication between employees and senior management

30. Autonomy and independence

31. Management's recognition of employee job performance

32. Relationship with immediate supervisor

33. Organization's commitment to corporate social responsibility

34. Overall corporate culture

	2002 (n = 604)	2004 (n = 604)	2005 (n = 601)	2006 (n = 605)	2007 (n = 604)	2008 (n = 601)	2009 (n = 601)	2010 (n = 600)	2011 (n = 600)
Job security	65% (1)	60% (4)	59% (4)	59% (3)	53% (2)	59% (1)	63% (1)	63% (1)	63% (1)
Opportunities to use skills/abilities	—	47%	44%	51% (5)	44%	50% (4)	55% (4)	56% (3)	62% (2)
Organization's financial stability	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	54% (4)	55% (3)
Relationship with immediate supervisor	49%	49%	46%	47%	48%	47% (5)	52%	48%	55% (3)
Compensation/pay	59% (4)	63% (2)	61% (2)	67% (1)	59% (1)	53% (3)	57% (3)	53% (5)	54% (4)
Benefits	64% (2)	68% (1)	63% (1)	65% (2)	59% (1)	57% (2)	60% (2)	60% (2)	53% (5)
The work itself	50%	46%	35%	46%	41%	47% (5)	50%	54% (4)	53% (5)
Communication between employees and senior management*	62% (3)	54%	50%	48%	51% (4)	50% (4)	51%	47%	53% (5)
Autonomy and independence	46%	42%	41%	44%	44%	41%	47%	46%	52%
Management's recognition of employee job performance	49%	47%	45%	47%	49%	44%	52%	48%	49%
Feeling safe in the work environment	36%	62% (3)	55% (5)	54% (4)	50% (5)	53% (3)	54% (5)	51%	48%
Overall corporate culture	40%	43%	39%	40%	36%	40%	45%	41%	46%
Flexibility to balance life and work issues	62% (3)	57% (5)	60% (3)	59% (3)	52% (3)	44%	46%	46%	38%
Relationship with co-workers	23%	33%	34%	35%	34%	39%	42%	38%	38%
Career advancement opportunities	52% (5)	37%	28%	36%	28%	29%	32%	34%	36%
Organization's commitment to professional development	—	34%	31%	35%	31%	33%	30%	33%	36%
Meaningfulness of job	29%	38%	37%	42%	37%	45%	45%	38%	35%
Contribution of work to organization's business goals	—	35%	33%	37%	32%	34%	39%	36%	33%
Job-specific training	34%	34%	28%	36%	27%	27%	35%	34%	33%
Career development opportunities	51%	40%	34%	42%	35%	30%	29%	31%	33%
Variety of work	—	37%	45%	40%	34%	35%	34%	35%	32%
Organization's commitment to corporate social responsibility	—	—	—	—	—	33%	31%	28%	28%
Networking**	—	17%	19%	21%	18%	21%	22%	22%	26%
Paid training and tuition reimbursement programs	—	—	—	—	31%	32%	29%	26%	24%
Organization's commitment to a diverse and inclusive workforce	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	22%
Organization's commitment to a 'green' workplace	—	—	—	—	—	23%	17%	17%	17%

* Starting in 2004, "communication between employees and management" was changed to "communication between employees and senior management."

**Starting in 2008, "networking with others who have similar backgrounds and interests" was changed to "opportunities to network with others (within or outside the organization) to help in advancing your career."

Note: Table represents those who answered "very important." 2009, 2010 and 2011 percentages are based on a scale where 1 = "very unimportant" and 4 = "very important." Sample sizes are based on the actual number of respondents by year; however, the percentages shown are based on the actual number of respondents by year who answered the question using the provided response options. A dash (—) indicates that this question was not asked. Numbers in parentheses indicate position of aspect in respective column year.

Source: 2011 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: A Research Report by SHRM

Table 6 | Employees' Level of Satisfaction With Aspects They Find Most Important to Job Satisfaction

	Very Satisfied	Very Important	Difference (Gaps)
Job security (1)	28%	63%	35%
Compensation/pay (4)	22%	54%	32%
Communication between employees and senior management (5)	26%	53%	27%
Organization's financial stability (3)	29%	55%	26%
Benefits (5)	28%	53%	25%
Opportunities to use skills/abilities (2)	40%	62%	22%
Career advancement opportunities	16%	36%	20%
Overall corporate culture	27%	46%	19%
Autonomy and independence	34%	52%	18%
Relationship with immediate supervisor (3)	39%	55%	16%
Management's recognition of employee job performance	33%	49%	16%
Job-specific training	19%	33%	14%
Career development opportunities	19%	33%	14%
Organization's commitment to professional development	23%	36%	13%
The work itself (5)	41%	53%	12%
Organization's commitment to corporate social responsibility	21%	28%	7%
Paid training and tuition reimbursement programs	18%	24%	6%
Flexibility to balance life and work issues	33%	38%	5%
Organization's commitment to a diverse and inclusive workforce	27%	22%	5%
Feeling safe in the work environment	45%	48%	3%
Networking	23%	26%	3%
Meaningfulness of job	37%	35%	2%
Organization's commitment to a 'green' workplace	19%	17%	2%
Relationship with co-workers	39%	38%	1%
Variety of work	33%	32%	1%
Contribution of work to organization's business goals	32%	33%	1%

Note: Data are sorted by the "difference" column. Importance percentages are based on a scale where 1 = "very unimportant" and 4 = "very important." Satisfaction percentages are based on a scale where 1 = "very dissatisfied" and 5 = "very satisfied" and excluded "not applicable." Numbers in parentheses indicate position of aspect in 2011.

Source: 2011 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: A Research Report by SHRM

Table 7 | Satisfaction With Aspects of Employee Job Satisfaction

	Very Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neutral	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Feeling safe in the work environment	2%	4%	16%	33%	45%
The work itself	3%	7%	14%	35%	41%
Opportunities to use skills/abilities	4%	7%	15%	34%	40%
Relationship with immediate supervisor	6%	9%	13%	34%	39%
Relationship with co-workers	2%	7%	14%	37%	39%
Meaningfulness of job	4%	5%	22%	32%	37%
Autonomy and independence	5%	7%	19%	35%	34%
Flexibility to balance life and work issues	4%	10%	22%	32%	33%
Variety of work	3%	9%	21%	35%	33%
Contribution of work to organization's business goals	2%	6%	21%	39%	32%
Organization's financial stability	4%	9%	23%	34%	29%
Job security	6%	11%	16%	39%	28%
Benefits	8%	10%	17%	37%	28%
Overall corporate culture	6%	11%	22%	33%	27%
Organization's commitment to a diverse and inclusive workforce	3%	7%	37%	26%	27%
Communication between employees and senior management*	12%	15%	20%	28%	26%
Management's recognition of employee job performance	11%	15%	18%	33%	24%
Organization's commitment to professional development	7%	13%	26%	31%	23%
Networking	6%	10%	35%	26%	23%
Compensation/pay	9%	14%	16%	39%	22%
Organization's commitment to corporate social responsibility	7%	11%	33%	28%	21%
Job-specific training	5%	12%	28%	36%	19%
Career development opportunities	7%	13%	31%	29%	19%
Organization's commitment to a 'green' workplace	5%	9%	44%	23%	19%
Paid training and tuition reimbursement programs	10%	8%	35%	28%	18%
Career advancement opportunities	11%	16%	31%	26%	16%

(n = 459–576)

Data are sorted by the "very satisfied" column and excludes "not applicable."

Source: 2011 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: A Research Report by SHRM

	Overall	Differences Based on Gender	Differences Based on Tenure	Differences Based on Age	Differences Based on Job Level	Differences Based on Education	Differences Based on Race	Differences Based on Organization Staff Size
Table 8 | Comparison of Select Very Important Aspects of Employee Job Satisfaction								
Job security	63%	—	—	Baby Boomers (65%) > Veterans (45%)	Professional nonmanagement employees (65%), nonexempt hourly employees (66%) > executives (43%)	—	—	2,500 to 24,999 employees (75%) > 1 to 99 employees (55%)
Opportunities to use skills and abilities	62%	—	—	—	Professional nonmanagement employees (75%) > nonexempt hourly employees (53%)	College (72%) > high school (49%) Post-graduate (80%) > high school (49%), some college (60%), 2 years of college (54%)	—	—
Relationship with immediate supervisor	55%	—	—	—	—	College (71%) > high school (52%), some college (53%)	—	—
Organization's financial stability	55%	—	—	Baby Boomers (62%) > Millennials (52%)	Middle-management employees (61%), nonexempt hourly employees (58%) > executives (38%)	—	—	—
Compensation overall	54%	—	0 t0 2 years (62%) > 16 or more years (44%)	—	Professional nonmanagement employees (58%), nonexempt hourly employees (57%) > executives (37%)	—	—	—
The work itself	53%	—	6 to 10 years (64%) >11 to 15 years (40%)	—	Professional nonmanagement employees (64%) > nonexempt hourly employees (48%)	Post-graduate (69%) > high school (46%)	—	—
Benefits	53%	—	—	—	—	—	—	500 to 2,499 employees (63%), 2,500 to 24,999 employees (64%), 25,000 + employees (63%) > 1 to 99 employees (41%)
Autonomy and independence to make decisions	52%	—	—	—	Middle-management (56%), professional nonmanagement (69%) > nonexempt hourly employees (39%)	College (60%), some college (52%) > high school (32%) Post-graduate (75%) > high school (32%), some college (52%)	—	500 to 2,499 employees (68%) > 100 to 499 employees (43%), 2,500 to 24,999 employees (45%)
Management's recognition of employee work performance	49%	—	6 to 10 years (60%) > 16 or more years (39%)	—	—	—	—	—
Feeling safe in the work environment	48%	Female (56%) > male (40%)	—	—	—	High school (57%) > post-graduate (34%)	—	—
Overall corporate culture	46%	—	—	Veterans (65%) > Generation X (39%), Millennials (40%)	—	College (56%) > high school (36%)	—	—
Continued on next page								

Table 8 | Comparison of Select Very Important Aspects of Employee Job Satisfaction (continued)

	Overall	Differences Based on Gender	Differences Based on Tenure	Differences Based on Age	Differences Based on Job Level	Differences Based on Education	Differences Based on Race	Differences Based on Organization Staff Size
Flexibility to balance life and work issues	38%	Female (42%) > male (33%)	—	—	—	—	—	—
Career advancement opportunities	36%	—	—	Millennials (52%) > Baby Boomers (33%)	Professional nonmanagement employees (43%), middle-management employees (40%) > executives (20%)	—	—	500 to 2,499 employees (44%), 2,500 to 24,999 employees (44%), 25,000 + employees (45%) > 1 to 99 employees (24%)
Organization's commitment to professional development	36%	—	—	—	Professional nonmanagement employees (45%) > nonexempt hourly employees (32%)	—	African American (62%) > Caucasian (34%)	—
Meaningfulness of job	35%	Female (40%) > male (31%)	—	—	—	—	African American (66%) > Caucasian (34%)	—
Contribution of work to the organization's business goals	33%	—	—	Veterans (49%) > Generation X (28%)	—	—	—	—
Career development opportunities	33%	—	—	—	—	—	—	500 to 2,499 employees (47%) > 1 to 99 employees (27%), 100 to 499 employees (26%)
Corporate social responsibility	28%	Female (32%) > male (24%)	—	—	—	—	—	—
Networking	26%	—	—	—	—	Post-graduate (30%), college (33%), some college (34%) > high school (15%)	—	—
Paid training and tuition reimbursement programs	24%	—	—	—	—	Some college (34%) > high school (18%)	—	500 to 2,499 employees (31%), 2,500 to 24,999 employees (33%), 25,000 + employees (32%) > 1 to 99 employees (16%)
Organization's commitment to diverse and inclusive workplace	22%	Female (27%) > male (18%)	—	—	—	—	African American (57%) > Caucasian (20%)	—

Note: Dash "-"indicates that there were no significant differences in this category.

Source: 2011 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: A Research Report by SHRM

Table 9 | Comparison of Select Very Important Aspects of Compensation and Benefits

	Overall	Differences Based on Gender	Differences Based on Tenure	Differences Based on Age	Differences Based on Job Level	Differences Based on Organization Staff Size	Differences Based on Race
Health care/medical benefits	64%	—	—	—	Nonexempt hourly employees (62%), professional nonmanagement employees (74%), middle-management employees (65%) > executives (39%)	—	—
Paid time off	53%	Female (58%) > male (49%)	—	—		25,000+ employees (67%) > 1 to 99 employees (44%)	African American (78%) > Caucasian (52%)
Define contribution plans	41%	—	—	—	—	—	African American (67%) > Caucasian (41%)
Defined benefits plan	36%	—	—	Baby Boomers (45%) > Generation X (27%)	—	2,500 to 24,999 employees (49%), 25,000+ employees (45%) > 1 to 99 employees (27%)	African American (66%) > Caucasian (34%)
Opportunities for variable pay	32%	Female (36%) > male (28%)	—	—	—	—	—
Family friendly benefits	25%	Female (29%) > male (21%)	—	—	—	—	—

Note: Dash "-" indicates that there were no significant differences in this category.
Source: 2011 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: A Research Report by SHRM

Table 10 | Top Five Very Important Aspects of Job Satisfaction by Employee Job Tenure

Job Tenure	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth
2 years or less	Opportunities to use skills/abilities 70%	Job security 65%	Compensation/pay 62%	Organization's financial stability 60%	Relationship with immediate supervisor, communication between employees and senior management 57%
3 to 5 years	Job security 65%	Opportunities to use skills/abilities 60%	The work itself, relationship with immediate supervisor 57%	Compensation/pay 55%	Communication between employees and senior management 51%
6 to 10 years	Opportunities to use skills/abilities 71%	The work itself 64%	Autonomy and independence, relationship with immediate supervisor, communication between employees and senior management, job security 61%	Management's recognition of employee job performance 60%	Organization's financial stability 58%
11 to 15 years	Job security 72%	Organization's financial stability 58%	Benefits 56%	Opportunities to use skills/abilities 53%	Compensation/pay 51%
16 years or more	Job security 56%	Opportunities to use skills/abilities 55%	Organization's financial stability, benefits 53%	Autonomy and independence, relationship with immediate supervisor 51%	Communication between employees and senior management, the work itself 47%

Note: Table represents those who answered "very important." Percentages are based on a scale where 1 = "very unimportant" and 4 = "very important."
Source: 2011 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: A Research Report by SHRM

Table 11 | Top Five Very Important Aspects of Job Satisfaction by Employee Age

Age	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth
Millennials	Opportunities to use skills/abilities 63%	Job security, benefits 62%	The work itself 55%	Compensation/pay 54%	Communication between employees and senior management 53%
Generation X	Job security 65%	Opportunities to use skills/abilities 60%	Relationship with immediate supervisor 57%	Compensation/pay, organization's financial stability, benefits 52%	Communication between employees and senior management 49%
Baby Boomers	Job security 65%	Opportunities to use skills/abilities 63%	Organization's financial stability 62%	Compensation/pay 56%	Relationship with immediate supervisor 55%
Veterans	Communication between employees and senior management 69%	Autonomy and independence 67%	Opportunities to use skills/abilities, overall corporate culture 65%	The work itself 60%	Relationship with immediate supervisor, benefits 58%

Note: Table represents those who answered "very important." Percentages are based on a scale where 1 = "very unimportant" and 4 = "very important."
Source: 2011 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: A Research Report by SHRM

Table 12 | Top Five Very Important Aspects of Job Satisfaction by Employee Gender

Gender	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth
Male	Opportunities to use skills/abilities 64%	Job security 63%	Organization's financial stability 55%	Autonomy and independence, relationship with immediate supervisor 54%	Benefits 51%
Female	Job security 63%	Opportunities to use skills/abilities 61%	Compensation/pay 57%	Communication between employees and senior management, relationship with immediate supervisor, organization's financial stability, feeling safe in the work environment, the work itself 56%	Benefits 55%

Note: Table represents those who answered "very important." Percentages are based on a scale where 1 = "very unimportant" and 4 = "very important."
Source: 2011 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: A Research Report by SHRM

Table 13 | Top Five Very Important Aspects of Job Satisfaction by Employee Job Level

Job Level	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth
Nonexempt (hourly) nonmanagement employees	Job security 66%	Organization's financial stability 58%	Compensation/pay 57%	Benefits, relationship with immediate supervisor 56%	Communication between employees and senior management 54%
Professional nonmanagement employees	Opportunities to use skills/abilities 75%	Autonomy and independence 69%	Job security 65%	The work itself 65%	Benefits 59%
Middle-management employees	Opportunities to use skills/abilities 66%	Job security, organization's financial stability 61%	Autonomy and independence 56%	Relationship with immediate supervisor 54%	Benefits, the work itself 52%
Executive management	Opportunities to use skills/abilities, the work itself 63%	Communication between employees and senior management 57%	Autonomy and independence 51%	Communication between employees and senior management 50%	The work itself, overall corporate culture 48%

Note: Table represents those who answered "very important." Percentages are based on a scale where 1 = "very unimportant" and 4 = "very important."
Source: 2011 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: A Research Report by SHRM

Table 14 | Top Five Very Important Aspects of Job Satisfaction by Employee Organization Staff Size

Organization Staff Size	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth
1-99 employees	Opportunities to use skills/abilities 59%	Job security 55%	Organization's financial stability 54%	Relationship with immediate supervisor, communication between employees and senior management 52%	Autonomy and independence 51%
100-499 employees	Job security 58%	Opportunities to use skills/abilities 57%	The work itself 53%	Organization's financial stability, relationship with immediate supervisor 52%	Communication between employees and senior management 49%
500-2,499 employees	Job security, opportunities to use skills/abilities 69%	Autonomy and independence 68%	Relationship with immediate supervisor, benefits, compensation 63%	The work itself 62%	Management's recognition of employee job performance 60%
2,500-24,999 employees	Job security 75%	Opportunities to use skills/abilities 68%	Benefits 64%	Relationship with immediate supervisor 60%	Compensation 59%
25,000 or more employees	Job security 66%	Opportunities to use skills/abilities 64%	Benefits 63%	Organization's financial stability 60%	Autonomy and independence 56%

Note: Table represents those who answered "very important." Percentages are based on a scale where 1 = "very unimportant" and 4 = "very important."
Source: 2011 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: A Research Report by SHRM

Table 15 | Male Employees' Level of Satisfaction With Aspects They Find Most Important to Job Satisfaction

	Very Satisfied	Very Important	Differences (Gaps)
Job security	31%	63%	32%
Compensation/pay	24%	50%	26%
Opportunities to use your skills and abilities in your work	40%	64%	24%
Communication between employees and senior management	25%	49%	24%
Benefits	29%	51%	22%
Management's recognition of employee job performance	25%	47%	22%
Organization's financial stability	34%	55%	21%
Career advancement opportunities within the organization	17%	37%	20%
Autonomy and independence	35%	54%	19%
Career development opportunities	19%	35%	16%
Overall corporate culture	29%	44%	15%
Organization's commitment to professional development	24%	39%	15%
Job-specific training	18%	33%	15%
Relationship with immediate supervisor	43%	54%	11%
The work itself	40%	50%	10%
Feeling safe in the work environment	48%	40%	8%
Relationships with co-workers	42%	34%	8%
Organization's commitment to a diverse and inclusive workforce	26%	18%	8%
Organization's commitment to a green workplace	20%	14%	6%
Meaningfulness of job	36%	31%	5%
The variety of work	35%	31%	4%
Paid general training and tuition reimbursement programs	19%	23%	4%
Networking	24%	26%	2%
Organization's commitment to corporate social responsibility	22%	24%	2%
Contribution of work to organization's business goals	33%	34%	1%
Flexibility to balance work and life issues	33%	33%	0%

Note: Data are sorted by the "difference" column. Importance percentages are based on a scale where 1 = "very unimportant" and 4 = "very important." Satisfaction percentages are based on a scale where 1 = "very dissatisfied" and 5 = "very satisfied" and excluded "not applicable."
Source: 2011 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: A Research Report by SHRM

Table 16 | Female Employees' Level of Satisfaction With Aspects They Find Most Important to Job Satisfaction

	Very Satisfied	Very Important	Differences (Gaps)
Job security	24%	63%	39%
Compensation/pay	21%	57%	36%
Organization's financial stability	24%	56%	32%
Communication between employees and senior management	26%	56%	30%
Management's recognition of employee job performance	23%	52%	29%
Benefits	27%	55%	28%
Overall corporate culture	25%	48%	23%
Opportunities to use your skills and abilities in your work	39%	61%	22%
Relationship with immediate supervisor	35%	56%	21%
Career advancement opportunities within the organization	15%	34%	19%
Autonomy and independence	32%	49%	17%
The work itself	41%	56%	15%
Job-specific training	20%	34%	14%
Feeling safe in the work environment	43%	56%	13%
The organization's overall commitment to professional development	21%	34%	13%
Organization's commitment to corporate social responsibility	20%	32%	12%
Career development opportunities	19%	30%	11%
Flexibility to balance work and life issues	33%	42%	9%
Paid general training and tuition reimbursement programs	17%	25%	8%
Relationships with co-workers	37%	41%	4%
Networking	22%	26%	4%
Meaningfulness of job	38%	40%	2%
Contribution of work to organization's business goals	30%	32%	2%
Organization's commitment to a green workplace	18%	20%	2%
Variety of your work	31%	32%	1%
Organization's commitment to a diverse and inclusive workforce	27%	27%	0%

Note: Data are sorted by the "difference" column. Importance percentages are based on a scale where 1 = "very unimportant" and 4 = "very important." Satisfaction percentages are based on a scale where 1 = "very dissatisfied" and 5 = "very satisfied" and excluded "not applicable."

Source: 2011 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: A Research Report by SHRM

Endnotes

1. When reviewing the top five list of aspects that are most important to employees' job satisfaction, it is important to remember that in some cases there may be differences of only a few percentage points, affecting whether an aspect was rated first or second and so forth.

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