

US Workers Feel Pride in Jobs, Organizations, But Don't Trust Managers; New Study Shows Big Disconnect Between Management, Non-management Views - Business Editors

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A new study from Mercer Human Resource Consulting confirms what many people already suspect: US workers' trust in management is low. According to Mercer's 2002 People at Work Survey, which surveyed a representative sample of nearly 2,600 US workers, only 34% agreed with the statement, "I can trust management in my organization to always communicate honestly." Four in 10 (42%) disagreed, and the rest (24%) gave a neutral response. Even among senior managers, just 60% agreed. In addition:

- When asked whether they believe their organization as a whole is well managed, just 40% said yes. One-third (33%) said no and the remainder (27%) gave a neutral response. Only 66% of senior managers agreed that their organization is well managed.
- When asked whether managers in their organization demonstrate concern for the wellbeing of employees, just 50% of the respondents said yes. One-quarter (26%) said no and the remainder (24%) gave a neutral response.

"Given all that's happened in the last year, with the decline of the economy and the outbreak of corporate scandals, it's understandable that employees express little confidence and trust in management," says Rod Fralicx, PhD, Mercer's global employee research director. "What's interesting, though, is that employees don't necessarily express the same feelings about their overall organization or their specific job. They clearly are making a distinction here."

In contrast to the relatively low views of management, more than two-thirds of the workers surveyed (68%) agreed that their work gives them a feeling of personal accomplishment, and 58% said they feel a strong sense of commitment to their organization. In addition, 64% said they are proud to work for their organization and 58% would recommend their organization to others as a good place to work. (See Table 1.)

The survey also asked workers whether they were seriously considering leaving their organization at the present time; three-quarters (75%) said no and one-quarter (25%) said yes. "Employees may not be happy with some aspects of their current work situation, but they also are not itching to leave right now," Dr. Fralicx says. "There appears to be a 'hunkering down' mentality due to the current state of the economy. It may be a different story, however, when the job market improves."

Mercer also cross-tabulated the "staying/leaving" findings with the findings on workers' sense of commitment to their organizations. "We discovered that, among the 75% who were planning to stay with their current organization, nearly a third -- 32% -- did not express a strong sense of commitment to their organization," he says. "This has huge implications regarding the potential productivity -- or lack of productivity -- of these workers in their current jobs. That's something employers should be very concerned about."

Demographic Differences

Mercer analyzed the 2002 People at Work Survey data by various demographic factors, such as industry, gender, age, organization size, length of employment, and job level. Some distinct patterns emerged from this analysis:

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- Industry. Employees in manufacturing held the most negative views about their jobs, employers, and managers. For instance, while 68% of workers overall said their work gives them a feeling of personal accomplishment, only 57% of manufacturing workers agreed with this statement. And while 58% of workers overall feel a strong sense of commitment to their organization, just 48% of manufacturing employees feel the same. Scores for employees in the retail/leisure industries also were low relative to overall totals. By contrast, employees in the financial services/insurance/real estate industries appear to be most satisfied with their employment situations. Their scores ranked 7 to 18 percentage points above the overall worker totals. (See Table 1.)

Table 1: US Worker Views of Their Jobs, Employers, and Managers

Survey Statement	All US Workers % Agree	Manufacturing Industry Workers % Agree	Financial Services/ Insurance/ Real Estate Industry % Agree
I trust management in my organization to always communicate honestly.	34%	27%	47%
I believe that the organization as a whole is well managed.	40%	34%	58%
Managers in my organization demonstrate concern for the wellbeing of employees.	50%	43%	58%
I feel a strong sense of commitment to my organization.	58%	48%	66%
I would recommend my organization to others as a good place to work.	58%	50%	69%
I am proud to work for my organization.	64%	57%	73%
My work gives me a feeling of personal accomplishment.	68%	57%	75%

- Job level. The 2002 People at Work Survey reveals a significant disconnect between the views of senior management, management, and non-management employees. Across the board, senior managers expressed more favorable views on issues related to jobs, employers, and managers. For example, 82% of senior managers said they had a strong sense of commitment to their organization, versus 68% for management employees and 52% for non-management employees. And 76% of senior managers said managers at their organization demonstrate a concern for the wellbeing of employees, versus 54% for management employees and 46% for non-management employees. (See Table 2.)

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Table 2: Senior Management, Management, and Non-management Views

Survey Statement	Senior Management % Agree	Management % Agree	NonManagement % Agree
I trust management in my organization to always communicate honestly.	60%	38%	30%
I believe that the organization as a whole is well managed.	66%	46%	35%
Managers in my organization demonstrate concern for the wellbeing of employees.	76%	54%	46%
I feel a strong sense of commitment to my organization.	82%	68%	52%
I would recommend my organization to others as a good place to work.	75%	66%	53%
I am proud to work for my organization.	81%	74%	59%
My work gives me a feeling of personal accomplishment.	84%	73%	65%

"Employees' position in the organization obviously has a major impact on how they view the organization and its strengths and weaknesses," Dr. Fralicx says. "From the perspective of the average worker, senior management is out of touch with the realities of the workplace and views the organization with rose-colored glasses." This is not an unexpected finding, he notes, although the gap between senior management and non-management varies significantly from one organization to the next. "What's critical is whether organizations are managing their people in a way that is closing or expanding this gap," Dr. Fralicx adds.

The results of Mercer's 2002 People at Work Survey are based on data collected from a statistically valid sample of nearly 2,600 working adults in the US representing a broad cross-section of industries. Respondents completed a mail-in survey consisting of more than 180 questions about their perceptions of their job, organization, work environment, compensation, benefits, and the management of their organization. The weighted survey results are representative of the entire US workforce and individual industry sectors.

Mercer Human Resource Consulting, one of the world's leading consulting organizations, helps organizations create measurable business results through their people. With more than 13,500 employees serving clients from 142 cities in 40 countries worldwide, the company is part of Mercer Inc., a wholly owned subsidiary of Marsh & McLennan Companies, Inc., which lists its stock (ticker symbol: MMC) on the New York, Chicago, Pacific, and London stock exchanges.

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Business writers and editors can reach Mercer consultant Rod Fralicx in St. Louis at 314 588 2507 for additional background and comment. (Note: The foregoing phone number is provided as a convenience to journalists and is not for publication.)

Source: Mercer Human Resource Consulting, 2002 People at Work Survey