

Executive Briefing #5 – Finding Real Work/Life Balance

Focus On The Facts.

Recently the Harvard Business Review reported that highly engaged employees are 22% more productive. This is big news. The problem is very few management teams know how to achieve the status of “highly engaged” with their workforce, especially in shift work environments. What is the cause of low engagement and can management teams positively impact this epidemic? The key is to find out what is eroding morale.

What If We Pay Them More?

The knee-jerk reaction is that if we just give them \$.25, \$.50, or even a dollar more an hour, morale will improve and the problem will be solved. Your employees will gladly take the extra money, but all you will get in return is a brief uptick before the morale drops again. The Core Practice Wage Satisfaction Survey from 2016 showed that 7% of employees were considering leaving their jobs due to pay compared with 27% considering leaving based on a bad shift schedule. It is not about the money.

Maybe They Do Not Like the Job, The Work Itself?

Another intellectually lazy response to low employee engagement is that the job is not very glamorous or exciting. Shift work, whether in manufacturing or any other industry is often thought to be unattractive work. We asked shift workers in a survey delivered to over 100,000 hourly employees. 85% told us that they were either slightly, moderately, or very satisfied with the job they were doing with 40.3% of all respondents saying “very satisfied.”

Is It The Shift Schedules?

When we ask employees about their schedules we start to get a clear and resounding “yes.” They may have mixed emotions about the schedule they were promised; the one that gives them all or most of their weekends off with moderate amounts of overtime. However, as businesses have expanded while focusing heavily on the bottom line, morale-busting practices start to creep in. High levels of overtime or new schedules with regular weekend coverage have changed the landscape for employees looking for some level of quality of life. Working 50, 60, or even 70 hours each week has become commonplace.

Although some employees will gladly work all the overtime you offer, it is certainly not a best practice due to health, safety, productivity, and quality issues. Employees rank predictability as the most important factor when looking at quality of life. Constant changes force them to cancel family activities, miss getting the required amount of rest, as well as lose interest in achieving the business objectives. In this competitive 24x7 world that has evolved, traditional shift schedules are still alive (but not well) in many institutions. By looking at alternatives that provide more days off and greater flexibility, companies can still get the work accomplished but with minimal negative impact on the workforce.

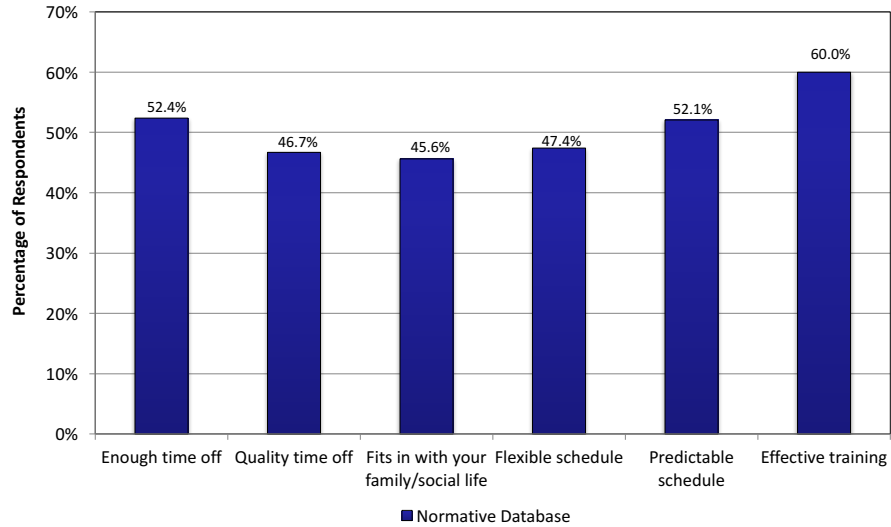
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In the follow chart, the results of several questions are displayed together. We asked employees, yes or no, do you get enough time off, is it quality time off, does it fit into your family and social life, is it predictable, and do you get effective training. The numbers represented are those who responded “yes” to the questions.

Traditional Work Schedules Destroy Work/Life Balance



The Cost of Getting It Wrong

Get the fundamentals right before venturing into other strategic initiatives. If you do not fully understand the needs of the workforce, continuous improvement becomes difficult if not impossible. If you understand where the challenges are, they can be fixed. The right labor strategies can make this a reality. If any of this topic interests you, we can help. To find out how we can actively help your organization navigate the WFM landscape, contact Core Practice at 212-534-0539.

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