

CCH

# Human Resources

A CCH PUBLICATION

# Management Ideas & Trends

## DEBUNKING WORKPLACE MYTHS

### Stress, technology and bosses aren't the enemy

Concerns about the negative effects of a "stressed out" workforce appear to be overstated, according to the findings of a Towers Perrin global study. In fact, 68 percent of those surveyed report being neutral to energized by on-the-job stress. The survey debunks many of the myths surrounding today's workforce.

"The number of employees who indicate a level of comfort and even positive energy in response to work-related stress confirms that challenging work helps employees remain focused and interested throughout their daily routines,

and more eager to contribute," said Max Caldwell, managing principal of the firm's global Workforce Effectiveness practice. "At the same time, our respondents do want more work/life balance, and they are looking to their employers, and especially their managers, to help them achieve that balance in ways that support both their own career aspirations and the company's needs."

#### Technology is not the enemy

One of the ways to achieve balance is through increased use of technology,

which is viewed as a positive factor in the work experience and not as the 24/7 "virtual prison" it's often made out to be.

"The near-ubiquitous presence of cell phones, laptops and personal electronic devices means that employees can now access e-mail, voicemail, calendars, documents and presentations from virtually anywhere, anytime," said Caldwell. "Far from being a problem, the vast majority of our survey respondents (86 percent) feel this is actually helping them achieve some level of balance between their personal and professional lives."

"This positive response not only contradicts the common belief that technology keeps employees chained to their jobs and dominates their time away from the office, but also signals that employees are realistic about the demands of today's global business environment, and they're willing to do what's necessary to achieve work/life balance in a world

*continued on next page*

## INTERNATIONAL HR

### When hiring global managers, focus on flexibility and adaptability

Flexibility and the ability to adapt are the most important keys to effectively managing a global workforce, according to Julie Zinn, executive director of project management and business skills programs at ESI International. "Global managers should also have a strong sense of self-awareness—knowing your own strengths and weaknesses—and an awareness of the cultures and norms of the staff you're managing," said Zinn. "Also needed is a willingness to use new approaches or varied approaches to get to the end result. Global managers need to be creative and not rely on what has worked in the past."

#### Hire a global manager with five key skills

Prior to beginning the search for a global manager, HR must ensure that a clear

message is in place. "The organization's strategic goals and objectives must be clear and, whether it's done by HR or another branch of the business, communicated frequently to employees," said Zinn. "Everyone must be on the same page so that the implementation of a new manager goes as smoothly as possible."

In addition, Zinn said that HR should work to ensure that individual contributor activities are aligned with those goals and objectives that the organization is communicating. "The organization's objectives need to be frequently communicated—along with progress toward those stated objectives—and while that may not be HR's responsibility in every organization, HR would be wise to ensure it is getting done."

*continued on page 60*

## INSIDE

<b>Discrimination</b>	<b>59</b>
Tolerance varies by gender	
<b>International HR</b>	<b>60</b>
Hire flexible global managers	
<b>Global pay practices</b>	<b>60</b>
Extending beyond executive level	



Wolters Kluwer  
Law & Business

## Global pay practices extend beyond the executive level

Although multinational organizations are striving to globalize their compensation practices, less than half have predominantly global programs, according to a Mercer survey. Just 45 percent of participating organizations take an almost exclusively global approach to compensation design while the majority continue to take a local (39 percent) or regional approach (16 percent).

According to Mercer, the development of global compensation programs starts with an overall global compensa-

tion strategy. While the vast majority of responding organizations (84 percent) have established a global compensation strategy for their executive-level employees, much fewer have done the same for other employer groups, continuing to define their compensation strategies at the local or regional level. Slightly more than half of the organizations (53 percent) have specific global compensation strategies in place for their managers while just less than a third (30 percent) have global strategies for professionals and

slightly more than a quarter (26 percent) for sales employees.

"While the majority of global compensation programs are for executives and defined at the corporate level, strategies for other employee groups are often determined regionally or locally," said Darrell Cira, principal with Mercer's human capital consulting business in Philadelphia and global leader of the study. "However, this trend is changing rapidly, especially among U.S. multinationals. As

*continued on next page*

### INTERNATIONAL HR

*continued from front page*

**People need to feel part of a larger force.** Communication is key to making employees feel as though they are part of a larger force. "Especially," said Zinn, "when they may be working in all corners of the world." She encouraged HR to look for a global manager who can make employees feel like they're part of something larger and can help them understand where they're headed. "These are the employees who will be most productive," said Zinn.

"When looking to hire a global manager, HR should look for technical skills," said Zinn. "They are always a given—a candidate for this type of position should not come through the door without demonstrated technical competence." In addition, she said that global managers need five key skills that HR should look for during the hiring phase and encourage once employment is secured:

1. Business acumen;
2. Ability to communicate;
3. Critical thinking skills;
4. Developing others and teamwork; and
5. Technical competence.

### HR's role in supporting a global manager

Just like every employee responds to encouragement in a different way, so too will

managers require individualized support. "It's always up to individual managers to assess their staff and determine what motivates each person," said Zinn. "Similarly, what HR can do to support a global manager will vary by the individual. Usually, each individual needs something a little bit different."

**"HR should offer tools and training that will not only create awareness of what it takes to interact globally, but help people develop the skillset and toolkit required to be successful."**

A global manager will need to be adaptable, according to Zinn, in several areas: communication style, thinking style and business perspective. "The concept of 'business perspective' is made up of strategic, operational, interpersonal and personal objectives," said Zinn. "Too often, managers get stuck in one of these areas and need to be reminded of the other perspectives."

"By first acknowledging that not everyone is like yourself, you open up the door to 'meet people where they are,'" Zinn continued. "For example, HR could encourage global man-

agers to use another's communication style instead of their own so that the employee will truly 'hear' the message or to utilize different thinking styles at different phases of tackling a particular challenge."

#### **Why is flexibility so important?**

Flexibility in managing a global workforce is the result of increasing competitive pressures and global initiatives, which both contribute to the increased complexity of work, cost-cutting efforts, layoffs and business re-combinations. According to Zinn, these factors often create significant changes that ripple through organizations. "Every day is different," she said. "By being adaptable and flexible, you're much more likely to get the end result you're trying to achieve. Even if the organization has a solid plan in place to accomplish something, it's likely the variables will change before it gets fully implemented."

#### **Prepare employees to work in a global environment.**

"I think organizations have a responsibility to prepare their employees to work in a global environment," said Zinn. "HR should offer tools and training that will not only create awareness of what it takes to interact globally, but help people develop the skillset and toolkit required to be successful." □

.....  
**Source:** Interview conducted by CCH, a Wolters Kluwer company, of Julie Zinn, executive director of project management and business skills programs at ESI International; [www.esi-intl.com](http://www.esi-intl.com).