
Technical Affairs

And the Survey Says...

By Mike Aamodt, Associate Editor

In the February edition of the *ACN*, I included a table showing the wide variability in estimates of resume fraud found in 15 surveys. If you recall from the last Technical Affairs Column, the survey estimates ranged from 11% to 67% with a median of 25%. Because survey estimates are used for a variety of needs assessment and planning activities, I thought I would look into the consistency of some other commonly used human resource surveys.

Absenteeism Rates

The most commonly reported surveys on absenteeism are those conducted by BNA and CCH. As shown in Table 1, the rates reported in the two surveys differ tremendously. For example, the conclusion from the CCH data is that absenteeism declined sharply from 1998 to 1999 whereas the conclusion from the BNA data is that absenteeism increased from 1998 to 1999. The BNA figures seem to be fairly stable over the years whereas the CCH figures vary greatly from year to year. Because of the variability across years, it would be wise to compare an organization's absenteeism rate with national rates over several years rather than the rates from only the most recent survey.

Table 1: Absenteeism Rates

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Absenteeism rate (U.S.)									
CCH survey data	2.69	2.80	2.80	2.85	3.25	2.70	2.10	2.20	2.10
BNA data			1.60	1.50	1.60	1.70	1.70	1.70	
Annual cost per employee	\$593	\$662	\$603	\$572	\$757	\$602	\$610	\$755	\$789
Reason for missing work (%)									
Employee illness		45	28	26	20	21	40	32	33
Employee stress		6	11	12	16	19	5	19	12
Personal needs		13	20	22	24	20	20	11	21
Family issues		27	26	26	21	21	21	21	24
Sense of entitlement		9	15	14	19	19	14	9	10
Other (e.g., bad weather)								8	

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Work-Life Programs

There are three commonly cited surveys reporting the percentage of organizations that offer work-life programs: CCH Unscheduled Absenteeism Survey, SHRM Benefits Survey, and the Hewitt and Associates Survey. As shown in Table 2, the surveys can at times produce very different results. For example, in 2002, the CCH survey reported that

26% of organizations have an on-site child care center whereas the SHRM survey reported that only 6% of organizations offer such a benefit. As another example, the SHRM survey indicates that the use of flextime in 2002 was at the highest level in four years whereas the CCH survey indicates flextime is at the lowest level in four years.

Table 2: Percentage of Organizations Offering Work Life Programs

	1999	2000	2001	2002		1999	2000	2001	2002
Child Care Referrals					Job Sharing				
CCH Absenteeism Survey	16	14			CCH Survey		25	33	37
SHRM Benefits Survey	15	17	20	20	SHRM Survey	22	23	26	24
Hewitt and Associates Survey	42	43	43		Hewitt and Associates Survey	28	28	28	
On-Site Child Care					Employee Assistance Program				
CCH Survey	16		26	25	CCH Survey	61	73	57	68
SHRM Survey	6	3	5	6	SHRM Survey	64	68	68	68
Hewitt and Associates Survey		10			Hewitt and Associates Survey	88			
Flexible Scheduling					Telecommuting				
CCH Survey	58	66	63	53	CCH Survey		20	42	47
SHRM Survey	54	52	59	64	SHRM Survey	29	27	38	
Hewitt Associates	57	58	59		Hewitt and Associates Survey	29	30		
Hay Benefits Report		48			Hay Benefits Report		18		
Compressed Work Week					Wellness Programs				
CCH Survey	29	28	42	49	CCH Survey		41	50	54
SHRM Survey	26	28	32	33	SHRM Survey	57	51	53	58
Hewitt and Associates Survey	20	21	21		On-Site Health Services				
					CCH Survey		23	31	36
					SHRM Survey	49	42	38	42

Why the Differences?

Survey differences can be the result of many factors including the size of the sample, characteristics of the organizations responding to the survey, the randomness of the survey method, and the wording of the questions. For example,

- The sample for the Hewitt Associates survey is medium to large organizations whereas the SHRM survey consists of small to large organizations.
- Differences in absenteeism rates could be due to the way absenteeism was measured: percentage of

employee absent in a given period versus the percentage of work time lost.

- Differences in telecommuting rates can be due to phrasing differences (e.g., work at home versus telecommute) or to the inclusion of separate questions for telecommuting part-time versus full-time.

Regardless of the reason for the survey differences, the results discussed here demonstrate that care should be taken when drawing conclusions from survey data. As mentioned previously, considering data from multiple surveys across multiple years would be a wise practice.

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HR Humor

The following was sent by an ACN reader who says this is an actual job application submitted by a 17-year old boy to a McDonald's in Florida. As legend has it, he was hired because of his honesty and humor.

Name: Greg Bulmash

Sex: Not yet. Still waiting for the right person

Desired Position: President or vice-president. But seriously, whatever is available. If I was in a position to be picky, I wouldn't have applied here in the first place.

Desired Salary: \$185,000 a year plus stock options and a Michael Ovitz style severance package. If that's not possible, make me an offer and we can haggle.

Education: Yes.

Last Position Held: Target for middle management hostility.

Salary: Less than I'm worth.

Most Notable Achievement: My incredible collection of stolen pens and post-it notes.

Reason for Leaving: The job sucked.

Hours Available to Work: Any

Preferred Hours: 1:30-3:30 p.m., Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday.

Do you have any special skills? Yes, but they're better suited to a more intimate environment.

May we contact your current employer? If I had one, would I be here?

Do you have any physical conditions that would prohibit you from lifting up to 50 pounds? Of what?

Do you have a car? I think the more appropriate questions here would be, "Do you have a car that runs?"

Have you received any special awards or recognition? I may already be a winner of the Publishers Clearing House Sweepstakes.

Do you smoke? On the job, no. On my breaks, yes.

What would you like to be doing in five years? Living in the Bahamas with a fabulously wealthy dumb sexy blonde super model who thinks I'm the greatest thing since sliced bread. Actually, I'd like to be doing that now.

Sign Here: Aries —ACN

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