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Flexible working emerges as 'trump card' for employers seeking best talent

Vodafone UK study explores employee expectations today

- Flexible working has a bigger impact on job satisfaction than more tangible benefits such as a financial stake in the business, bonus schemes and pensions
- More than 75 per cent of employees say flexible working boosts their job satisfaction and improves work-life balance
- Only one in five employees would seriously consider moving employer over the next 12 months, meaning employers work harder to attract the best talent

UK companies are sharpening their focus on softer workplace benefits to attract and keep the best talent, according to new research, published today by Vodafone UK.

The report, 'Exploring the shift in employee expectations', shows that flexible working is having a major impact on job satisfaction today, and is now considered more important to UK workers than financial benefits such as a stake in the business, perks, bonus schemes and pensions.

The new research, based on interviews with 1,366 senior managers and employees across UK organisations of all sizes, looked into the biggest influences on job satisfaction. It reveals that work-life balance (cited by 28 per cent of respondents) is nearly as important today as basic salary (cited by 30 per cent of respondents).

The study also reveals that only one in five employees is likely to seriously consider moving employer over the next 12 months. This chimes with the latest figures from the Office of National Statistics (ONS), which show that just 2.4 per cent of the UK workforce moved jobs in 2011, compared with twice this number over a decade ago. The stagnation in the talent pool is a problem for British businesses as the majority of employers (eight out of ten) surveyed say that they now have to work harder than ever to attract and keep the best talent.

Flexible working is an expectation, not a perk

As employers battle to hire the best, the study shows that flexible working is emerging as one of the most valuable weapons an employer can have.

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news release



Peter Kelly, Enterprise Director at Vodafone UK, commented: "Flexible working has gone from being a nice-to-have perk to now being at the heart of employees' expectations. British business clearly understands that motivation and job satisfaction are more than about money - work-life balance and feeling supported at work are also vitally important. Finding better ways of working will strengthen an employer's offer to potential new talent but will also enable current employees to find a work-life balance that suits them."

Half of all managers surveyed feel that offering flexible working options makes them a more attractive prospect as a potential employer. Eighty-five per cent of managers believe that employees now expect greater flexibility from the companies they work for. UK business seems to be responding to this expectation. For example, three-fifths of organisations surveyed now equip the majority of employees with the technology to work from wherever they need to. This figure is slightly lower in SMEs (46 per cent), and slightly higher in larger organisations (63 per cent).

Flexible working key to building a better business

The positive impact of new ways of working on organisational performance and the bottom line are also widely understood by managers. Such practices are felt to create a more productive organisation (nearly 6 out of 10 managers cite this as a top five benefit), enable a more flexible workforce (50 per cent) and save costs by reducing office space requirements (54 per cent). When asked to rank the perceived benefits of flexible working to employees, managers put improved employee satisfaction and retention at the top of the list.

Employees are equally positive about the benefits of flexible working. Among employees who are able to work remotely with full access to systems and colleagues, more than three-quarters say it boosts their job satisfaction, and a similar proportion say that it improves their work-life balance.

Peter Kelly continues: "Giving people the ability to work effectively wherever they are is a key element of building a better business. This not only has a positive effect on the bottom line, but also employees' job satisfaction. Companies with the most satisfied workforces have been successful in embracing flexible working and creating an environment where their employees have a better work-life balance."

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Notes to editors:

Vodafone UK commissioned two primary research surveys, which form the first report in the new

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Perspective series of insights. The first report, entitled 'Exploring the shift in employee expectations' is available at vodafone.co.uk/perspectiveresearch

Conducted by Circle Research in October 2011, the first of these canvassed the opinion of 505 senior managers within UK businesses and public sector bodies with 100 or more employees. The second gathered the views of 861 employees working for small (10–99 employees), medium (100–499) and large (500+) organisations. The findings are further complemented with secondary research and statistics, practical case studies and commentary from some of the UK's leading businesses, employment experts including the Chartered Management Institute and Ashridge Business School.

Find out more about how Vodafone is helping businesses at vodafone.co.uk/betterbusiness

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