

Satisfied? Just about

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Compensation is what attracts most youngsters to a job, yet very few of them are really satisfied with their pay packet.

"If money is your hope to independence, you will never have it. The only real security a man will have in this world is a reserve of knowledge, experience and ability."

— Henry Ford

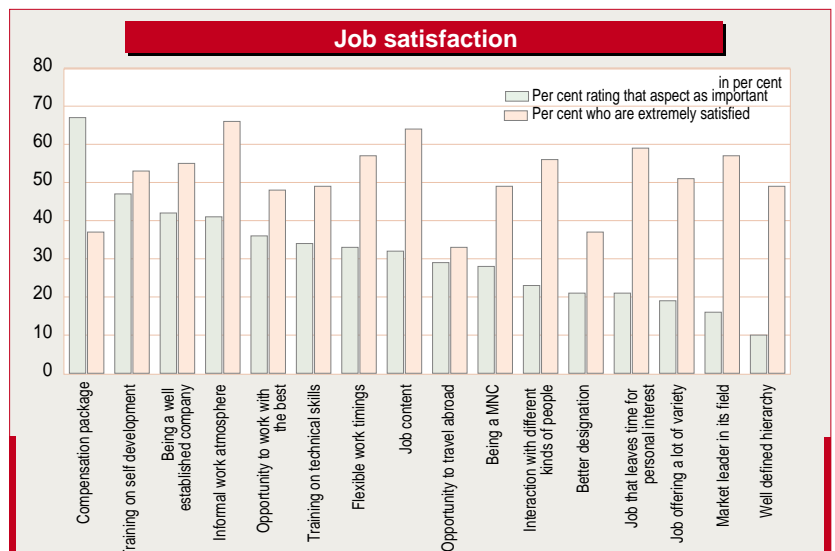
Profound words. But today this logic can very well be applied to an organisation as the definition of capital has shifted from 'machine assets' to 'people assets'. And, more important, people assets can walk out of an organisation on two legs!

And, unsurprisingly, Indian organisations are today feeling the sting. In the 1980s, organisations were used to chugging along at

their own pace, unchallenged by competition, unaffected by job attrition and not fuelled by the desire to excel. The decade of the '90s, however, has seen things being turned on their head. Competition, quality and change have become buzzwords. And, the emphasis is on human resources – the quality of it and how organisations manage and nurture it.

This radical shift has changed a lot of things – professional qualification has become a necessity, faster growth a reality, enormous pay packages a fact. The race to recruit more and more professionals has begun.

But can companies afford to

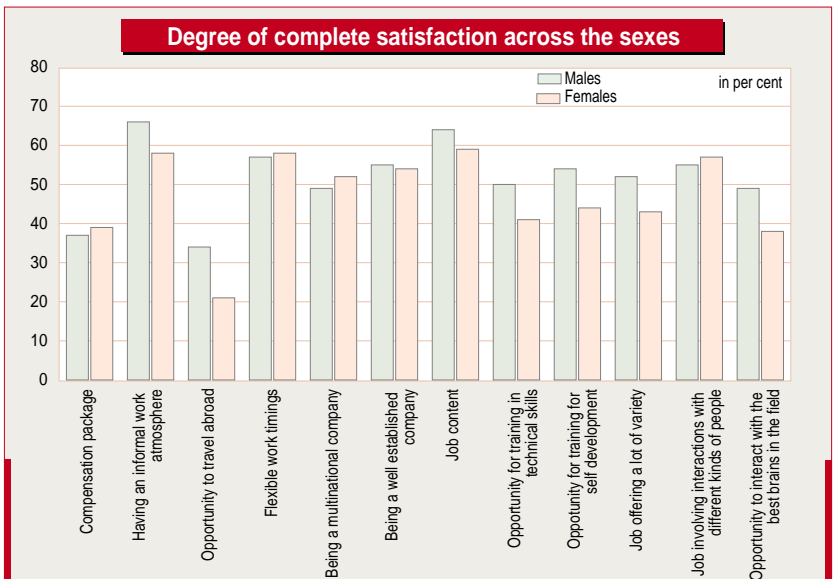
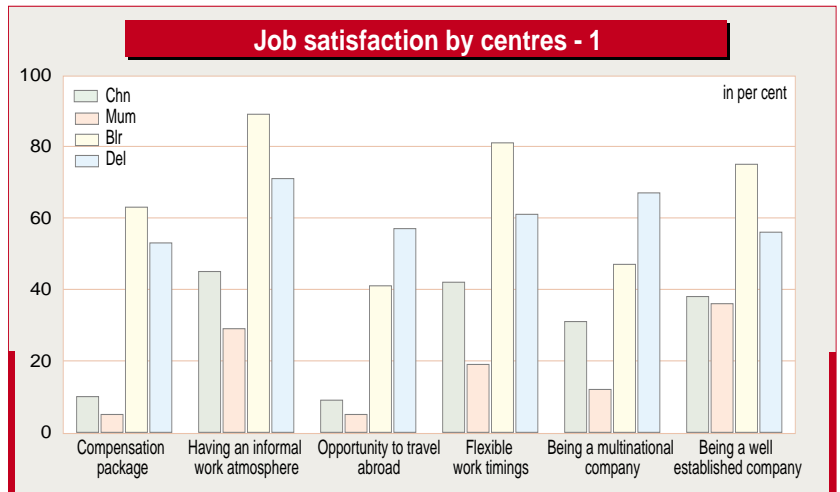


recruit and then lose employees without batting an eyelid? "Certainly not. Recruitment is an expensive exercise. Enormous investments are made in terms of time and money to get the right profile and train them. Hence, losing talent is definitely not on," says Nupur Bhargava, General Manager, HR, Pepsi Foods Ltd.

This then begs the question: How serious are companies about retaining people? "I think they are very serious about this. Ultimately, what is going to impact their business is intellectual capital. And this capital is in the head and it goes with the body. So, unless you retain the two, you are really losing out on all the expertise," says Bimal Rath, HR Alliance Director (India), BT (Worldwide) Ltd. Adds HR consultant A.L. Ravikanth: "Retaining people is going to be the key, more than benefits like ESOPs and so on, it's the values that an employer creates, the ambience that he offers, that will help retain people."

In effect, the latest technology, the most efficient information systems, the 'leanest and meanest' organisation structure, is only as good as the people who make up the fabric of the company. So, companies are now making an attempt to tailor packages in an attempt to increase the job satisfaction levels of young executives. Adds Ravikanth, "Factors such as growth, transparency, the level of decision making power and so on affect the degree of job satisfaction for a young executive."

Paradoxically, in this survey, what young executives rate as the most important and critical criteria in selecting a job is also the cause for the lowest level of satisfaction on a whole range of parameters.



Women at work

A study of young executives would not be complete without looking at the emerging face of women in the workplace. Increasingly, with more women joining the workforce, there are indeed many issues relating to working women that are being thrown up. Some organisations are seen to be more progressive with issues relating to policy on women employees. "Employment of the female workforce is not very stable hence organisations are not too comfortable investing in them in these initial years. However, for highly technical operations, this may not hold true," says Rajan Dutta of Escotel.

"I feel that companies need to be more progressive in this area. They need to realise that there are certain gender-related issues like sexual harassment, maternity and working hours," adds Ganesh Shermon of HRM Consulting Group.

However, the other side of the table is that "if women wish to be treated equally with men, they should see that they do not get unduly favoured. If they are seen as an unduly favoured party within the organisation, they stand to lose out on relationships within the organisation," feels Bimal Rath of BT Worldwide.

Rumjhum Chatterjee of Feedback Reach Consultancy

What young executives rate as the most important and critical criteria in selecting a job is also the cause for the lowest level of satisfaction.

Close to 50 per cent of executives said that compensation was the most important factor in selecting a job, while 67 per cent of those employed rated compensation as the most important factor in job satisfaction. However, only a third claim to be extremely satisfied with their current compensation, as the figures show.

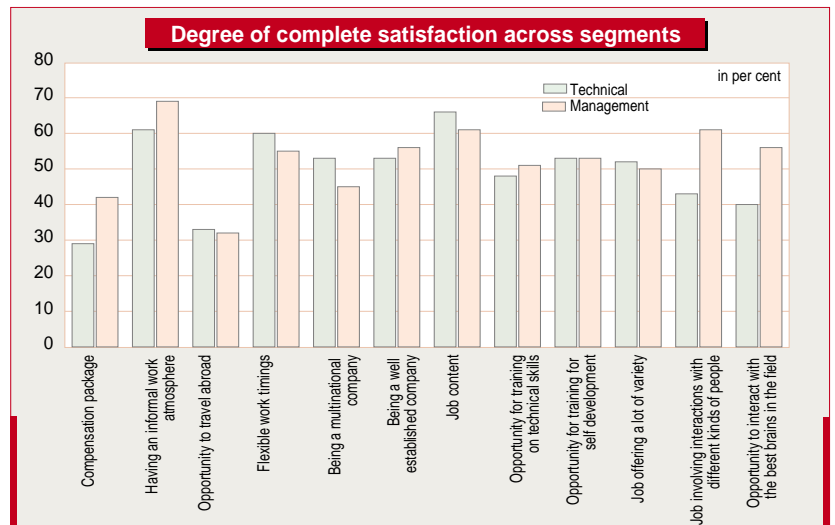
Even in terms of training, both on technical skills and self-development, and a job offering variety, satisfaction levels are low. A matter of concern for corporates who have

a young workforce joining them every year?

Young Turks

Armed with degrees from professional institutes, these 20-22 year-olds storm into organisations with an urge to change and do things real fast. For the organisation, it implies channelising this 'speed' effectively. However, managing aspirations and, of course, attrition, is not an easy task, as organisations have discovered.

These professionals have forced



Services shatters the notion of a 'glass ceiling'. She is, in fact, heading the task force on 'Women Managers in Indian Organisations' at the Confederation of India Industry (CII). "There is, of course, a genuine sociological issue. But even if you set that aside and just take the case of women from professional institutes such as medicine, IIMs or engineering, my study shows that a lot of women are joining these in large numbers. Those that pass out of these are absorbed in the work force, which means that there is a young woman executive out there. But go to the mid-manager level and there is a sudden paucity," she says.

Women either choose to opt out themselves, often placing family before their careers or just try and find solutions that are tailor-made to their concerns, she

feels. Lakshmi Ravikanth, an educational psychologist in Chennai, points out that job satisfaction levels for women would differ from city to city. In Chennai, she says, it would be far lower than in other cities. Gender discrimination is higher because of the conservative attitude towards women in the workplace. However, she adds, the younger organisations would emerge as being more gender friendly.

Indeed, the survey results show that male executives overall seem to exhibit a marginally higher degree of satisfaction on a whole lot of parameters from compensations to job content and jobs offering a lot of variety, as compared to their female counterparts. Perhaps the compromises they may have to make in relation to family may see them not opting for the best fit in a job. ■

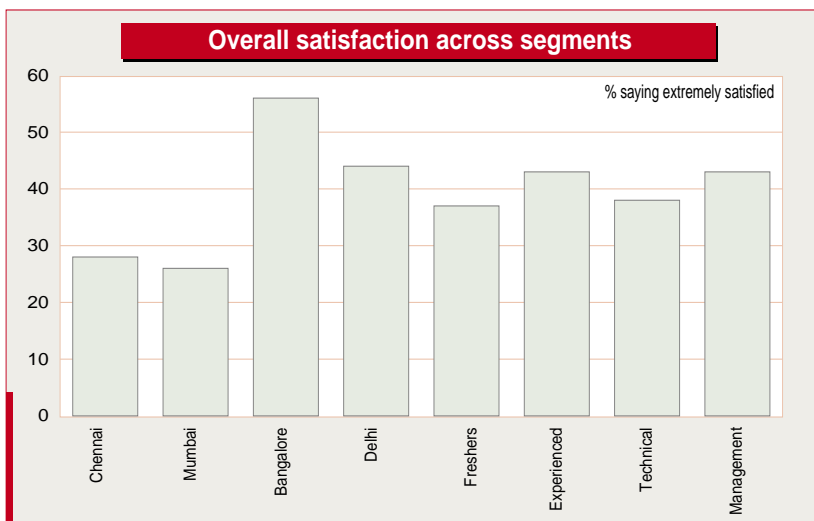
the organisation and, in particular, the human resource department (HR) to take a re-look at the issues of young professionals. "As organisations deal with this issue in their own way, it is important that we understand the challenges and problems of these young executives," says Rajan Dutta, Chief of HR & TQM, Escotel Mobile Communications Ltd.

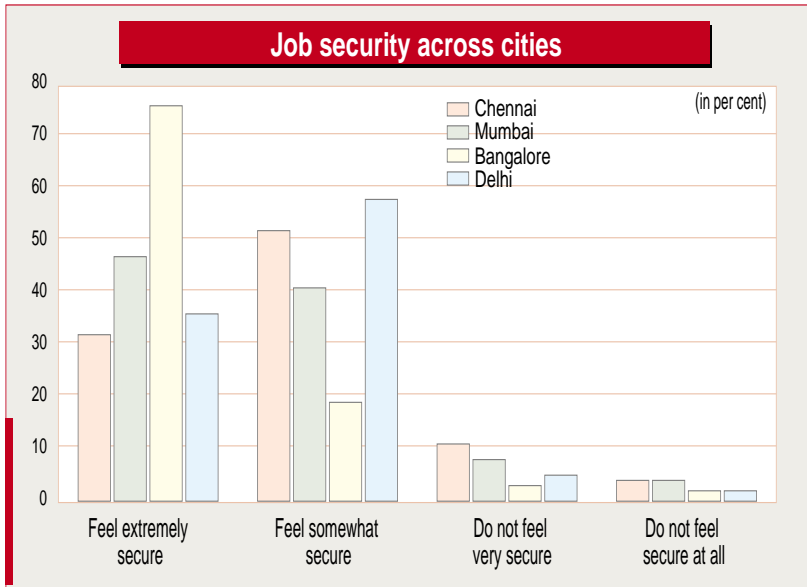
The challenge faced by young professionals varies. However, some key challenges that transcend organisational boundaries are:

Managing aspirations, the job itself, workplace flexibility, transparency and knowledge management.

Perhaps the most important challenge faced by HR/industry heads is the 'aspiration' of young professionals. There are two aspects: One, because of the information boom, people are more aware of global packages and practices. They see a possibility of earning more elsewhere and, therefore, by comparison there is a definite level of dissatisfaction in a lot of young executives.

The challenge for HR managers is matching up to the aspirations of the young, as today they are more aware of global packages and practices.





The level of satisfaction differs from city to city and also across segments.

As the figures show, this level of satisfaction differs from city to city. Satisfaction is higher among executives from Bangalore and Delhi compared to Chennai and Mumbai and is also marginally higher among experienced executives and those in management. Comments Ashok Leyland's Amroliya: "The sharp differences in satisfaction levels on all parameters across cities is surprising, especially the low levels in Mumbai.

One reason could be that the aspiration levels in Chennai and Mumbai are so high that people feel dissatisfied with what they are getting. Some improvement in satisfaction among those with experience is understandable. They are more in tune with the real world, expectations are reduced and acceptance is higher."

Tunnel vision

'After four years you start taking the organisation for granted and vice versa' is a philosophy that seems to be gaining currency with

young executives – a concern which is entirely legitimate.

"Okay, I respect that school of thought. And a lot of companies are actually working to stop that from happening. HR departments are proactive to this and getting into career planning, career counseling and growth. For instance, I can say for sure that this is working in companies such as Marico and Smithkline Beecham," says Chatterjee of Feedback.

This is the reason why companies have started becoming very choosy about the young talent they invest in. "However, it is a fact that young executives often try and span an industry width quickly which would equip them not only in terms of learning experience but also a profile that can fit them neatly into a mid-level manager's position in an organisation," adds Chatterjee.

In fact, it's a Catch 22 situation. Young executives flit from job to job as companies themselves prefer well-rounded profiles at senior levels. A person who's adroitly shifted gears across a cross-section of work environments is seen to fit the bill at a senior level, which often propels young executives to turn into 'fast movers', a paradoxical situation which is again a cause of concern at another level.

"Well, there's a case to be made for both. I think what ultimately matters is your quality of experience in those 10-12 years. You could be in 10 different companies in those 10 years but your quality of experience may still be very low. You could be in one company for 10 years and your quality of experience could be very high depending on what is the actual job you've done. In fact, I would be very

worried and would look very closely to evaluate if a person has been in, say, nine jobs in a career of 12 years," says Chatterjee.

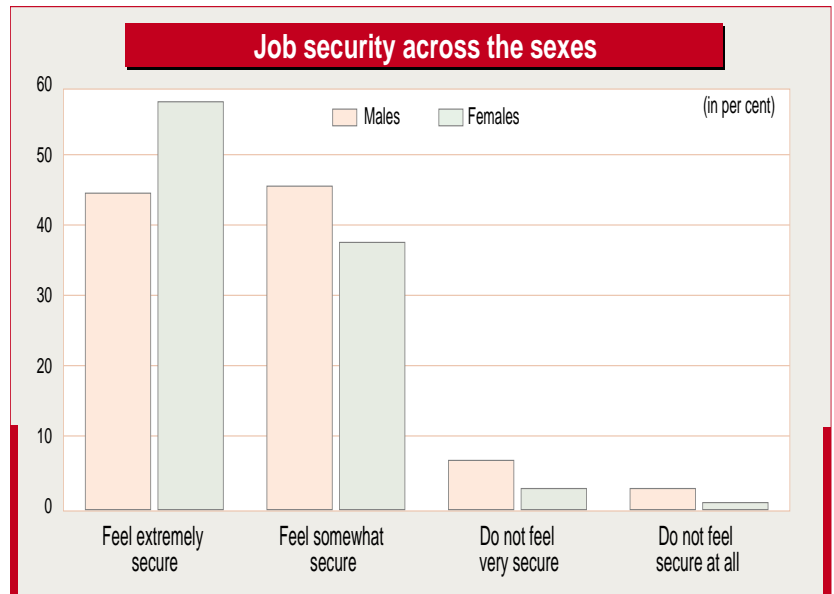
These issues, says Chatterjee, can only be handled if the HR function is aligned directly with business strategy at the top level of organisations. "Only then can this be given a profound solution. Once people are taken on, then everything should work from there on to build lives and careers, to stop stagnation, dissatisfaction and empower the individual and the organisation with a focus and vision in a larger context," she says.

If the young executives have been careful in selecting a progressive company, which has considerable width and presence, then providing opportunities for growth to anyone is not going to be a problem. But, in smaller companies, if the individual is growing faster than the company, then you can give the person only that much opportunity.

Retaining them

Finally, how do organisations design a policy to attract and retain talent. "I think one thing that HR people can do is create an environment which will help people to improve their marketability. Meaning, the person should be able to continuously see some value addition happening. Whether this is through training, or job rotation or through some new assignments. Every person likes to believe that she/he has great potential and utilise this to maximise it," says Pepsi's Nupur Bhargava.

It's normal for the young to move on in life. "Most are at a stage when they not only wish to experiment with different work cultures but also learn from a cross-section of



experiences. Since they have already experienced an organisation/job, they will not go back to it again, even at a higher salary," feels Escotel's Dutta.

However, if young executives express an opinion that they would not like to go back to the same organisation again, then it's a signal for companies to do some introspection. In fact, the survey shows that 25 per cent, or every fourth executive polled, said he/she would not take up the same job again. As Ravikanth points out, very few companies, especially the older ones, are interested in investing in people, they would rather buy than invest. "So, it's a two-way cynicism that sets in." Clearly, the organisation is either falling short somewhere in its vision or is unable to communicate it effectively to the Young Turks. ■

HR consultants point out that companies need to invest in their people if they want to retain them.