

# HR Special survey

# Engage The Employee

**Figuring just how much of a worker's heart is in the job**

THE QUEST TO FIND THE BEST WAY TO RETAIN employees has taken HR pundits through concepts such as employee reviews, employee satisfaction and employee delight. The latest idea is employee engagement, a concept that holds that it is the degree to which an employee is emotionally bonded to his organisation and passionate about his work that really matters.

The BW-HR Anxi BlessingWhite Employee Engagement Survey 2008 shows significant differences between what motivates workers in India and what motivates workers in other countries. The term 'employee engagement' represents an alignment of maximum job satisfaction with maximum job contribution. By plotting a given population against these two axes, we identified five distinct employee segments: (a) Fully engaged (b) Almost engaged (c) Honeymooners & hamsters (d) Crash & burn and (e) Disengaged. The global survey shows that 34 per cent of the employees in India are fully engaged and 13 per cent disengaged. As many as 29 per cent are 'almost engaged'.

### Focus On Employee Engagement

**Engagement by industry:** With the exception of the government sector (which has relatively low engagement levels in all countries), some high-tech industries (pharma, biotech) score low whereas some service-focused industries (retail, consumer products) score high.

**Engagement by level:** Our survey shows that people higher up in the organisation experience higher engagement. However, there is a drop in engagement past the vice-president level.

**Engagement by gender:** The survey reveals a large disparity between men and women: Men count 8 per cent more fully engaged and 6 per cent less disengaged than women.

### What Employees Want

**Factors influencing satisfaction:** In the survey, respondents were asked to pick one of eight factors that they believed would most influence their satisfaction at work. Career development opportunities and training (30 per cent), more challenging work (20 per cent), and more opportunities to do what I do best (19 per cent) were the three factors at the top of Indian workers' wish lists, consistent with the top three global demands.

**Factors influencing contribution:** Respondents were asked to pick the single top item

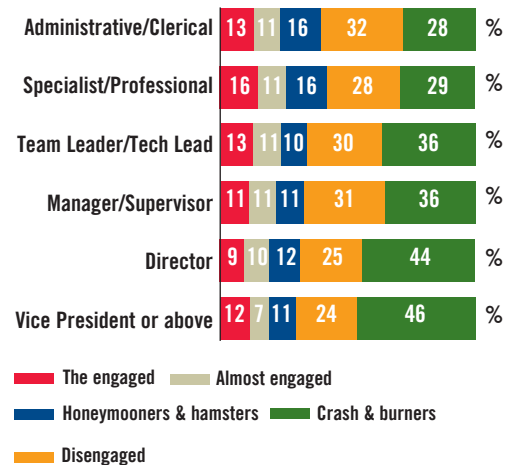
they believed would most influence their contribution at work. Again, the top three items for Indian workers match the top three global requests: Development opportunities and training (26 per cent); regular, specific feedback about how I'm doing (25 per cent); and greater clarity about what the organisation needs me to do and why (22 per cent).

**Retention:** In 2008, HR executives in India continue to struggle with talent management issues, particularly retention. Yet, when asked the question, "Assuming you have a choice, do you plan to remain with your organisation through 2008?", 65.54 per cent said "yes".

Clearly, Indian employees expect opportunity and a chance to partake in the action. But the real test for Indian companies is still to come: can these levels of engagement be sustained in a downturn? Will the employees be ready when market demands change and companies need to react? Building an engaged and loyal workforce today will help weather the challenges of tomorrow.

## Heights Of Engagement

People higher up in the organisation expect- edly show higher levels of engagement as they are closer to the centres of decision making, have more say in the direction of the organisation and presumably were promoted at least partly on the basis of their ability to deliver in tune with the organisation's goals. Another clearly observable pattern is that there is a drop in the level of engagement past the VP level.



## Indians Workers More Satisfied

Taking global figures into account, it can be said that Indian workers are among the most focused and satisfied in the world. Slightly more than a third (34 per cent) of the employees in India are fully engaged while 13 per cent of them are disengaged. The economic growth in India is such that opportunities are aplenty for the respondent population. Therefore, pay and growth opportunities rate highly in their list of expectations.

Region	Disengaged	Honeymooners & hamsters	Crash & burn	Almost engaged	Fully engaged
India	13%	13%	11%	29%	34%
South AF.	11%	14%	18%	26%	31%
NA	19%	12%	13%	27%	29%
AU NZ	20%	18%	12%	24%	26%
Europe	21%	15%	13%	28%	23%
SEA	21%	9%	18%	31%	22%
China	33%	9%	16%	32%	10%
Other	36%	7%	7%	27%	24%
Grand Total	18%	12%	13%	28%	29%

29%

is the percentage of employees in India who figure in the 'almost engaged' category. It is slightly more than the global average of 28 per cent. China scores the highest on this count, with 32 per cent of its employees falling in the 'almost engaged' category.

18%

is the percentage of complete disengagement among the female working population, compared to 12 per cent among men. The percentage of female employees in the 'crash and burn' category is also slightly more than that of men at 10 per cent. Female workers are thus clearly behind in their levels of engagement.

## Engagement By Gender

The level of engagement seen in terms of gender classification shows some interesting trends. There is a considerable disparity in engagement when it comes to employees of different genders. Eight per cent more men than women are fully engaged. Apart from that, it is also revealed by the findings that as much as 6 per cent less members of the male population are disengaged than members of the female population.

	Fully engaged	Almost engaged	Newlyweds & hamsters	Crash & burn	Disengaged
Female	28%	29%	14%	12%	18%
Male	36%	29%	12%	10%	12%
Grand Total	34%	29%	13%	11%	13%

## Employees Seek More Challenging Assignments

Each person surveyed was asked to pick the single top item that he or she believed would most influence satisfaction at work. Across regions, the Indian working population lists three items as the most important for satisfaction at the workplace. They are, in order of priority: career development opportunities and training, more challenging work and more opportunities to do what the particular employee thinks he or she can perform best at. In this respect, the Indian employee's wishes match the top three global demands.

	Career development opportunities and training	More challenging work	More opportunities to do what I do best	Greater clarity about my own work preferences and career goals	Greater clarity about what the organisation needs me to do – and why	Improved cooperation among my co-workers	More say in how my work gets done	A better relationship with my manager
India	30.03%	20.09%	19.33%	10.74%	7.71%	4.47%	4.04%	3.58%
Grand Total	28.22%	12.24%	23.80%	9.80%	8.28%	7.39%	5.43%	4.82%

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## Opportunities To Develop Are Sought After At All Levels

Career development opportunities are a huge expectation of Indian workers, clearly emerging as the number one request for employees at all levels of engagement. Offering challenging work would build engagement with the 'newlyweds & hamsters' segment, and also help sustain the engagement level of those who are already fully engaged.

	Fully engaged	Almost engaged	Newlyweds & hamsters	Crash & burn	Disengaged	Grand total
Career development opportunities and training	26.25%	27.45%	28.67	32.06%	31.13%	30.03%
More challenging work	15.63%	18.82%	20.33%	16.98%	24.75%	20.09%
More opportunities to do what I do best	20.31%	19.22%	18.00%	19.18%	19.61%	19.33%
Greater clarity about my own work preferences and career goals	10.31%	12.94%	11.67%	11.57%	9.19%	10.74%
Greater clarity about what the organisation needs me to do – and why	13.13%	8.63%	9.67%	6.88%	5.27%	7.71%
Improved cooperation among my co-workers	5.63%	5.88%	4.00%	4.69%	3.55%	4.47%
More say in how my work gets done	5.00%	3.14%	3.67%	4.10%	4.04%	4.04%
A better relationship with my manager	3.75%	3.92%	4.00%	4.54%	2.45%	3.58%
Grand Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

## Would You Remain With Your Employer Through 2008?

When asked, "Assuming you have a choice, do you plan to remain with your organisation through the 2008 year?", the Indian working population was found to be more engaged than the global workforce. The proportion of Indian workers saying they would "probably stay" is lower than the global and is tied not to dissatisfaction at work but to more opportunity in a growing economy. An important revelation is that an employee being fully engaged is less of a guarantee of retention in India.

	Fully engaged	Almost engaged	Newlyweds & hamsters	Crash & burn	Disengaged	Grand total
No Way, Say						
4.76%						
In India						
No way	17.81%	9.02%	3.00%	1.02%	2.08%	4.76%
Probably stay	49.06%	49.02%	29.67%	28.84%	16.79%	29.70%
Yes, definitely	33.13%	41.96%	67.33%	70.13%	81.13%	65.54%
Figures for Indians (above) and for non-Indians (global figures, without India) below						
No way	21.89%	11.71%	5.57%	3.33%	0.81%	7.83%
Probably	48.51%	50.78%	39.51%	31.02%	14.79%	33.97%
Yes, definitely	29.60%	37.52%	54.92%	65.65%	84.41%	58.20%

## What Influences Employees' Contribution?

In their own words, development opportunities and training influence Indian employees' contribution the most. Notably, relationships with co-workers and managers, while higher than global figures, do not rank the highest on most people's wish list. An important global conclusion drawn is that it is not the quality of relationships that hinders employee engagement, but rather the lack of time invested in clarity and coaching to gain people's engagement.

	Development opportunities and training	Regular, specific feedback about how I'm doing	Greater clarity about what the organisation needs me to do – and why	Better communication with my manager	More resources	A better relationship with my co-workers	A coach or a mentor other than my manager
India	26.28%	25.32%	21.74%	7.41%	7.25%	7.25%	4.76%
Global	20.35%	20.34%	18.54%	6.77%	17.78%	4.81%	11.41%

## Finer Nuances Of Factors Influencing Performance

While we find the same three items — development opportunities and training, regular feedback about how I'm doing and greater clarity about what the organisation needs me to do and why — in the top of each segment's list, one can observe a clear shift from "greater clarity" for those low on the satisfaction scale to "regular, specific feedback" for those higher on the satisfaction scale.

	Disengaged	Crash & burn	Newlyweds & hamsters	Almost engaged	Fully engaged	Grand total
Development opportunities and training	24.69%	27.84%	24.67%	27.23%	26.23%	26.28%
Regular, specific feedback about how I'm doing	14.69%	15.29%	21.33%	29.28%	30.76%	25.32%
Greater clarity about what the organisation needs me to do – and why	31.88%	23.92%	26.67%	18.01%	18.38%	21.74%
Better communication with my manager	7.50%	9.02%	8.00%	6.30%	7.60%	7.41%
A better relationship with my co-workers	9.06%	7.45%	5.67%	8.05%	6.37%	7.25%
More resources	5.31%	9.80%	6.67%	6.73%	7.84%	7.25%
A coach or a mentor other than my manager	6.88%	6.67%	7.00%	4.39%	2.82%	4.76%
Grand Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

## SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Between January and March 2008, BlessingWhite, a global consulting firm based in the US, in partnership with HR Anexi, a leading HR consulting firm based in Mumbai, collected global responses to an online survey. The objective of the study was to analyse worldwide employee engagement trends.

BlessingWhite's global survey results in 2004 and 2006 determined that the majority of employees liked their work but were not necessarily focused on what mattered most to the organisation. Last year's findings suggested that, despite a majority (60 per cent) saying they planned to remain with their employers, a disappointing portion of those employees (21 per cent) was truly engaged.

This year's survey was designed to revisit and build on the themes of past surveys. The survey wanted to explore:

- Will employees stay? Why or why not?
- How do they feel about their organisation and their organisation's direction?
- How do they feel about their jobs?
- What can most improve their satisfaction and performance?
- Are their talents being maximised — and focused on what matters the most?
- What do they think about their relationship with their manager?
- What evidence of employee engagement initiatives do they see at play in their organisations?

HR Anexi's Engagement Survey team sent invites to over 4,500 companies across India. The survey link was e-mailed to individuals representing a cross-section of job functions, job titles, and industries.

It was also posted or distributed through professional networking sites and blogs. Globally, the survey was conducted in the English language, but it was also made available in several other languages, such as Thai, Chinese and Japanese.

The online survey was designed to be completed in less than 10 minutes and consisted of 19 multiple-choice questions and two optional write-ins. Everyone answered the first 16 items. The remaining items differed based on respondents' answers to question 16, which inquired about plans to stay with their employer through the 2008 year.

While the demographic questions were not compulsory, only respondents who provided full demographic details were included in the report.

To round off the employee perspective, 40 interviews were conducted with HR and line leaders. The interviews centred on employee engagement challenges and the best practices of organisations and HR departments — as well as the actions that individual leaders take every day to create engaged teams.

*For the full survey, log on to [www.hranexi.com](http://www.hranexi.com)*