

Job Satisfaction

**Why your job isn't
a bowl of cherries**



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Introduction

During the last decade an increased interest of Bulgarian managers to the job satisfaction is observed. This interest is provoked by the understanding, that a higher competitiveness of the newly privatized companies can be achieved through better motivated employees.

This paper analyses differences in attitudes and explores information concerning factors affecting employee job satisfaction and commitment to organization. It is based on the case of one private Bulgarian Textile company. The methodology of Denki Ringo research group (Rengo, 2000) is used to collect the necessary empirical data for the purposes of this analysis. An original questionnaire, designed by the same group is applied for the purposes of the survey.

The level of general job satisfaction among blue- and white-collar workers is studied, their commitment toward organization, job/work perception, attitudes towards working time and wage, their view about who protects their interests and others.

Factors that play significant role in determining it such as, pay, promotion opportunities, relationships and work itself, security of employment and others are examined..

Job satisfaction is considered as a contributor to and predictor of organizational commitment. This research also brings significant information that enriches understanding of situations of working life and union activities in an international comparative perspective.

Methodology

The international research on workers' attitudes toward their job, firm, union and society started in 1982 with an initiative of Denki Roren (Japan Federation of Electric Machine Workers' Unions), whose present name is Denki Rengo (Japanese Electrical, Electronic and Information Union). A survey over workers' minds was conducted in 1984-1985 in nine countries and one region: France, Germany (West), Hungary, Italy, Japan, Poland, Sweden, UK, Yugoslavia (Slovenia) and Hong Kong. This was probably the first international research in the world that was recognised by a trade union in co-operation with experienced labour researches from different countries.

Some of the results proved a validity of existing hypothesis, and other challenged against stereotypical views of workers and industrial relations. For instance data showed that Japanese employees do not have so strong identity with their firm as supposed; job satisfaction by Japanese employees is quite low; dual identity (both with a firm and union) is not particular among Japanese employees but common to East European employees, contrasting to West European ones. The research went through several phases, and at the end of year 2000 seventeen countries were involved in total.

Bulgarian experiment

Denki-Rengo method is applied for the first time in Bulgarian Textile and Dress-making sector in May 2003, particularly in a medium (250 employees) private Bulgarian company - "Hrisoma" Ltd.

For the purposes of Bulgarian experiment the original method was adapted, and the questionnaire was re-designed. It was filled up by all 100 employees, in different departments of the company, at all levels (blue- and white-color workers, including supervisors and middle managers working in the plant), which means nearly 50% of all employees. The respond rate was quite high - 98%.

Results

The analysis of the questionnaire includes six groups of questions that intend to uncover the general perception of workers about:

- Job and work,
- Working time and wage,
- Employment and fluctuation,
- Interest convergence among employee strata and the channel of expressing their views,
- Job satisfaction and organizational identity
- Assessment to union organization and its activities.

I. Job and perception of Work

The research results show that *upward mobility* inside the company is very low (actually it is low for the whole industry). This can be explained with the very nature of work. Those who have been hired as designers, tailors, jointers, technicians or other blue-collar workers have no chance to move at higher position in the hierarchy.

Concerning the *specific job contents* the results are the following. Mono-skilled workers are dominant among blue-collar workers, whereas white-collar employees (managers, administration, supervisors etc.) are multi-skilled workers.

Most of the people (60 %) see one or more *positive aspects in their job*. The degree of *meaning (importance) of work* in life is perceived highly male workers, and those of higher position in the hierarchy. (See table 1).

Table 1.

1. <i>Upward mobility</i>	Very low – specific for this type of industry.	
2. <i>Specific job contents</i>	Blue-collar Mono-skilled	White-collar Multi-skilled
3. <i>Positive and Negative aspects in the job</i>	Positive 60% see positive things (mostly good colleagues and nice atmosphere)	Negative 33% do not see anything good in their work
4. <i>Degree of Importance of work</i>	One of most important things 81% of men employees	Not so important 70% of women
5. <i>Perception of most important factors in the job</i>	68% - salary 18% - nice working atmosphere and colleagues 8% - promotion 6% - education	

- Data is extracted from the questionnaire

II. Working Time and Wage

As illustrated in *Table 2*, the information about the amount of *overtime* is not available, because it is a company secret in Bulgaria. Based on unofficial information, however it was discovered that overtime in such type of companies is not less than 40 hours monthly, in some cases it is even higher. For comparison in Korea it is 37.2 h., Japan 26.5 h., US 20.6 h. per month.

Responds to the question “*Would you work overtime or would you bear more responsibilities, if you were paid better?*” are quite different. Most of the people (83 %), however, answer ‘Yes’. This means that people are ready for promotions, they are eager to take more responsibilities. The drama here lies in the very nature of the industry, where the likelihood for promotions is very low. This leads to increased dissatisfaction among employees.

The last item in this section is *importance of social security*. The answers are quite surprising, because 66 % of the employees (no matter white- or blue-collar) rated social security as *not* so important factor!

Table 2.

1. Amount of overtime	NA	
2. Desire of workers to bear more responsibilities and work overtime, if they are paid accordingly. (Q18, 19)	“Yes” 83 %	“No” Only 4 % (between 50-60 years old).
3. Spending the free time	Families and friends 73 %	Do not have free time 27 %
4. Wage determination	“My wage depends on the quality of my work!” 60 %	“My wage does NOT depend on the quality of my work!” 40 %
5. Degree of importance of Social Security	“Very important” 44 %	“Not important” 66 %

* Data is extracted from the questionnaire

III. Employment and Fluctuation of the staff

Concerning the *fluctuation*, as seen in Table 3., 65 % of the employees work in the factory from the beginning of its creation.

Given a question “*How often have you thought of leaving the firm?*” more than half of respondents answered “Yes, very frequently”, “Yes, often”, “Yes, sometimes”. This actually shows the overall job satisfaction, which is quite low.

Table 3.

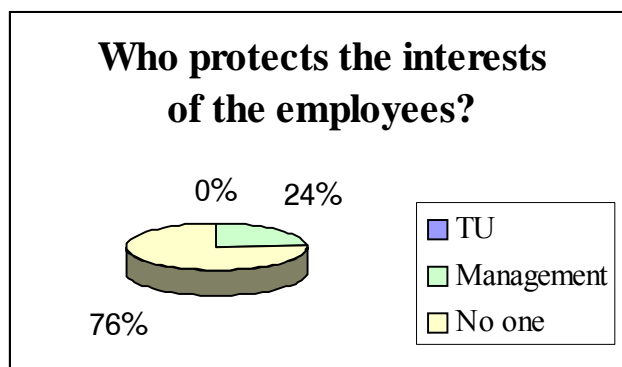
1. <i>How long the employees work in the present company</i>	65 % work from the establishment of the company
2. <i>How often you think of leaving the present company?</i>	62 % “Yes, very frequently”, “Yes, often”, “Yes, sometimes”.

- Data is extracted from the questionnaire

IV. Interest Convergence among Employee Strata and the Channel of Expressing their views

Individual employees state that their interests in the working life are not protected by Trade Unions. As illustrated in *Chart 2.*, nobody believes that Trade Unions represent employee’s interests; 24 % think that it is the management and 76 % think that *NO ONE* does it! Workers feel isolated at their working place, Trade Unions do not exert their most important function, so the need of their existence is under question.

Chart 2.

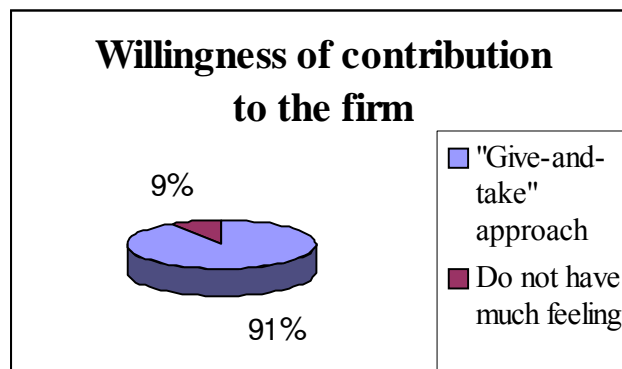


V. Overall job satisfaction and Organizational Identity

Satisfaction with the present working life is important for achieving better results on the employee level and for being competitive on the company level. In the researched company “Hrisoma” Ltd. an items in which satisfaction exceeds dissatisfaction is “Relations with co-workers”, “Relations with immediate boss” and “Interests in work”. In other items such as monthly salary, free time, opportunity for promotion and education and flexibility of work practices workers are dissatisfied rather than satisfied.

Concerning a willingness of contribution to the firm, active and moral attitudes almost all workers (91 %) express passive and calculative attitudes based on the thinking of “give-and-take”. The rest 9 % say, “They do not have much feelings about the company”, these can be seen in Chart 3.

Chart 3.



Main findings and Recommendations

- Many employees think that their views are not reflected in the decision-making. One probable explanation is that there has been *no dialog* between workers and management. Recommendations could be made to introduce the practice of ‘Open Door’ policy, regular meetings, ‘Rap Sessions’ etc.
- Monthly salary, free time, opportunity for promotion and education and flexible work practices cause dissatisfaction rather than satisfaction. In the tailoring department, for example *rotation* practice could be implemented. Promotion opportunities could be increased among the white-collar ones, especially among designers, people who are responsible for quality and control and line managers.

- The high level of isolation at work should be a clear signal for the management – bring managers closer to the ordinary worker. In this case it is necessary to teach line managers to act as *intermediaries* between workers and higher level of management. Regular HR *training* for the managerial staff will help.
- The high level of dissatisfaction is expressed by the fact, that 62 % of workers are thinking to live the company.
- Most of the people (83 %) state that they will prefer working overtime or bearing more responsibilities, if they are paid better. This gives some hopeful prospects, because most of the people are ready to be promoted, which means that they have strong need to prove their qualities, and to realize their potential. This has to be recognized immediately by the management, otherwise these people will be lost for the company.
- In order to increase job satisfaction in the problematic areas individual incentives can be used for example nomination of “*Employee of month*”. He/she can be rewarded, for instance with increase of month salary (for that given month), or additional two days off and etc. Bonuses or other fringe benefits as company meals could also be introduced.
- A *company-car* for the person who is responsible for supplying materials for the work processes (like threads, needles, cloth, soap powders and others) could be provided.
- In order to reward some of the ‘veteran’ workers a *service-related holiday* entitlement scheme could be introduced.

The employees’ welfare and satisfaction should be one of the most important objectives of today’s Human Resource Management. No business can be successful, if its workers have no desire to work, if they are not motivated to contribute to the organizational success and competitiveness.

Managers should not hesitate to use all known techniques and create their own original approaches and techniques for increase of job satisfaction, because it is always worth while.

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