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- Free Newsletters
- Set as Home Page
- Add to Favourites
- Recommend Us
- Expat Night
- Expatica T-Shirt
- OTHER SITES**
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Industry Surveys 2005: A Review of the Best (Part I)

Now more than ever industry surveys have become a familiar and important tool for mobility managers. Designed to assist with benchmarking and policy improvements, and to provide a concise and objective snapshot on a range of issues and challenges, Yvonne McNulty reviews nine of the best industry surveys of 2005 in this first of a 3-part series.



On this page:

- [International Survey of Work-Life Balance Policies ORC Worldwide](#)
- [Talent Management Value Imperatives: Strategies for Execution The Conference Board](#)
- [Moving Matters: A Study of How to Help International Transferees Relocate The Interchange Institute for Graebel Movers International](#)

International Survey of Work-Life Balance Policies ORC Worldwide

[↑ TOP OF PAGE](#)

One of the more interesting and emerging hot topics of 2005 is work-life balance for international assignees. To address this need, ORC has released findings of a 3-month study of work-life balance policies in conjunction with the Association for Human Resources Management in International Organisations (AHRMIO) and Industrial Relations Counsellors (IRC).



Moving Matters: women focused more on practical matters than social matters.

The timing of the survey could not be better, with an abundance of academic and practitioner literature already available on the subject. For example, author and speaker Robin Pascoe is due to release her new book *Raising Global Nomads: Parenting Abroad in an On-Demand World*, in October 2006, which is targeted at work-life balance for spouses and parents of third-culture kids (TCK).

Similarly, in 2004 the International Centre of Work and Family (ICWF) was founded as a research centre of the IESE Business School in Barcelona, Spain. In July 2005 the ICWF held its Founding Conference to create a forum for creating vision and building theory for the field. Central themes of the conference included international work-life policies and practices, and work-family conflict and enhancement in expatriates and their families.

Stepping into the field is ORC with its seminal survey of work-life balance policies. "Work-life balance is an area of great concern to many organisations, including AHRMIO," says Siobhan Cummins, Managing Director of ORC, "which is why we agreed to do a joint survey with them."

The purpose of the survey was to establish how HR professionals are juggling the issues of work-life balance, the pressures they feel because of extended working hours and the impact of technology, and the degree to which they are able to manage conflict between competing work and family issues.

"The survey also sought to determine whether work-life balance policies had an impact on helping staff manage their competing priorities between home and work more effectively," says Cummins.

"What we really wanted to know is whether a work-life balance policy helps ease the pressure," she says.

The survey was conducted using ORC's Dynasurv Survey Technology and sent to selected ORC members in Europe and North America, plus members of AHRMIO. With 183 respondents, the sample is consistent with industry standards, but perhaps less so for the typical ORC survey which usually attracts much larger samples, sometimes up to 900 respondents.

Cummins is not alarmed or surprised.

"For special interest topics such as work-life balance we do not always get the same level of response," she says.

What we really wanted to know is whether a work-life balance policy helps ease the pressure.
—Siobhan Cummins, ORC Worldwide

"This was quite targeted as we focused on work-life balance issues for HR managers only. The survey delved into some sensitive areas and it may be that prospective participants did not feel comfortable answering the questions."

"That's why we state in the methodology section that we attracted 279 respondents, but only 183 surveys could be used."

All of these methodological statistics, including the purpose of the survey, can be found on page (ii) of the survey and are listed here to illustrate a few important points.

First, sample size is important when using data from surveys to benchmark or re-design policies. A sample of 30 for a survey is considered statistically representative of the general population at large, so a sample of 183 for

this survey is a good size population from which to make generalisations for policy improvements.

Second, who participates in a survey is critical to the reliability of the findings. In this instance ORC has ensured that only those respondents who would add value to the survey findings—for instance HR Managers—have been invited to participate. It is always good practice to look for these two pieces of information when reading a survey and to critically analyse if the survey meets the 'who and how many' criteria.

One of the most surprising findings was the percentage of female HR managers who agreed to participate in the survey. Sixty percent of the respondents were women which Cummins believes adds a valuable depth of knowledge to the survey findings because women are often the most affected by work-life challenges.

Another interesting, yet probably not surprising, finding was the impact of technology on work-life balance, especially protocols around the use of email. In 85 percent of companies there were no protocols or other procedures in place for answering or dealing with emails, for example, whether email should be answered within a given timeframe. Whilst this may not have a significant impact on a daily basis, concerns emerged when employees took vacation.

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"Nearly seventy percent of respondents did not have anyone to read or answer their email whilst they were on holiday," points out Cummins. "Yet more than forty percent believe it would help relieve pressure on them during this critical time to have someone else do it for them," she says.

One respondent said, "All jobs need a back-up, which in my case has been a deterrent to take leave or even justified sick leave. Coming back is such a punishment—especially the emails—that it stresses one to take time off."

One of the more consistent findings was that nearly half of the respondents do have a work-life balance policy in place, either formally or informally. Yet only 35 percent believe that the policy's existence has made a difference to their own work-life balance, compared to nearly 80 percent stating that having the policy in place has made a positive difference to their organisation's performance.

As one respondent stated, "I think part of the issue is driven by the pervasive 24/7 customer service expectation and a culture where 'workaholism' is excused, if not admired."

One of the strengths of the survey is, of course, a summary of next practices for organisations wishing to address their own work-life balance challenges. One critical area that needs improvement is securing senior management's commitment to the work-life balance policy.

"Too few senior leaders role model work-life balance," said another respondent. "Nor do they actively encourage their employees to redress the balance. There are small pockets of excellent leaders, whom we must leverage to maximise the advantages," the respondent continued.

Other next steps include guaranteeing that career advancement will not be jeopardised by employees striving for more work-life balance, and ensuring that work-life policies are not focused solely on female employees with children.

For more information about ORC's work-life balance survey contact Samantha Blackhurst (samantha.blackhurst@orcww.com).

Where to find the survey: www.orcinc.com, directly at www.orcinc.com/surveys/worklife.html.

Cost: USD 200 for clients and non-clients; the majority of ORC's surveys are complimentary to participants.

Published by: ORC Worldwide.

Of interest to: HR managers, compensation and benefits specialists, labour relations managers.

Sample size: 183 respondents.

Talent Management Value Imperatives: Strategies for Execution [↑ TOP OF PAGE](#) **The Conference Board**

Talent management is a hot issue in mobility this year, as evidenced by the number of surveys and research reports currently available on the topic. For this review alone five talent management surveys were sourced from organisations including Manpower, Towers Perrin, and CIPD, and two are included in this review. The first is by The Conference Board, whose report on Talent Management stood out from the rest for one very important reason – it drills more deeply into the essence of what makes integrated talent management truly effective.

"This is an important topic in the HR and organisational development world now," says Lynne Morton, author of the survey and President/Principal of Performance Improvement Solutions, a global consultancy.

"This is evidenced by all the current business literature which places issues of leadership, talent and succession very high on the list of issues of concern to CEOs/top management," says Morton.

"For example, at The Conference Board itself, there was so much interest in the topic that the Talent Management Working Group that drives the research stayed together for a second year, beyond the usual one year appointment," she says.

The report is the second in a two-part series on talent management. It builds on the original talent management survey released in 2004 (Integrated and Integrative Talent Management: A Strategic HR Framework) in which research was conducted via survey and corporate

interviews.

This latest report, released in 2005, is composed entirely of in-depth interviews and includes sections on key findings, prerequisites for building a talent management programme, processes that do and don't work, and how to measure its impact.

One unique feature contained in the report is a one-page summary of the leading authors and researchers in the talent management field, including Huselid and Becker, Ulrich and Smallwood, and Boudreau and Ramstad. An extensive bibliography is listed enabling readers to locate these important articles and books themselves.

In terms of key findings, Morton says there was not one surprising finding that stood out. "A lot of the findings are important," she says. "Including the need for active CEO involvement, strategic alignment, relationship to change management, and that technology isn't helping all that much just yet."

Morton says that technology is "still developing its integrative potential and is only automating discrete, 'siloes' aspects of TM".

She adds that the most consistent finding was probably that organisations that have been doing the work for a relatively long period of time still aren't yet integrating their processes well. "There's lots of room for improvement," she says.

What's important, says Morton, is that integrated talent management is recognised as essential for organisational success. "It impacts at the organisational and individual levels that run in parallel and which can significantly impact the bottom line."

One of the strongest features of the report is the depth of knowledge and information it delivers to the reader. Going beyond mere statistics, the choice of methodology, in this case in-depth interviews, provides unique insights into an issue that is demanding more scientific and quantifiable research.

Indeed, it would be nearly impossible to obtain such valuable data using any other method. So whilst the sample of 22 respondents, plus a focus group of 19 respondents, may at first appear small, one must remember that in-depth interviews by their nature are extremely time consuming and intense which limits the number that can be done. But there-in lies its strength – the results go beyond merely superficial findings. By comparison, similar research using interviews rarely exceeds 25 respondents, so this report is well within acceptable standards.

Another strong feature of the report is the length of time taken to complete it. The two-part series was conducted during a two-year period in which some of the world's largest global organisations contributed their insights and opinions about the topic. The findings therefore present a multi-layered investigation of the real issues and processes required to effectively

implement and manage talent management throughout the organisation.

Tying it all together, however, is the inclusion of case studies at the end of the report which brings to life how talent management is currently being 'operationalised', and from which the reader can then develop their own best practices. Three organisations are featured including American Express, Pitney Bowes, and Cisco Systems.

At American Express, for example, it is clear that the CEO drives the talent mindset. By spending up to 40 percent of his time on leadership issues, the CEO is going beyond merely "talking the talk" when it comes to truly recognising that "people are the company's greatest strength".

This latest report is composed entirely of in-depth interviews and includes sections on key findings, prerequisites for building a talent management programme, processes that do and don't work, and how to measure its impact.
—Lynne Morton, Performance Improvement Solutions

By holding twice-yearly CEO summits, dining quarterly with top talent and conducting annual chairman-led sessions to discuss talent, the CEO plays a very visible and active role. There is clearly a top-down emphasis on talent, a finding that is consistent with much of what is recommended in the main section of the report.

For more information about the survey contact the author, Lynne Morton (lmorton@pisols.com).

Where to find the survey: www.conference-board.org or call Customer Service at +212 339-0345.

Cost: USD 75 for members, USD 295 for non-members, academic rate USD 75 in hard copy of PDF.

Published by: The Conference Board.

Of interest to: senior leaders/managers/line managers of talent management, HR, or OD.

Sample size: interviews with 22 companies, plus 19 member companies from The Conference Board's 2004 Talent Management Working Group.

Moving Matters: A Study of How to Help International Transferees Relocate [↑ TOP OF PAGE](#)
The Interchange Institute for Graebel Movers International

One of the more interesting surveys this year is published by The Interchange Institute for Graebel Movers International. Moving Matters was conducted throughout 2005 to help Graebel understand those factors that make the relocation process easier and to give feedback about participants own experience using Graebel as a moving company.

Commissioned by Graebel and conducted by The Interchange Institute, a non-profit research organisation that conducts research on the process of intercultural transition, One hundred and four respondents participated in the survey. About half were currently on assignment and half repatriated.

The research posed four main questions including what do people do to feel

settled after an international relocation, and what role does a moving company play in this process? The report is written with non-statisticians in mind using lots of bar graphs and charts, with recommendations for relocation professionals and relocating families also included.

One of the unique strengths of the report is the perspective gained from the respondents themselves (all transferees), largely due to their participation being filtered through a third-party organisation such as The Interchange Institute. Because there was no direct contact with the moving company and confidentiality was assured, the feedback was probably more honest and constructive than it might otherwise have been.

"There were two unexpected findings from the survey", explains Interchange Institute researcher and founder Anne Copeland. "The first was that women appear to be more practical about a move than we originally thought."

"We categorised movers into 'practical' or 'nest-makers', with nest-makers being motivated more by the social connectedness side of things. What we found was that women were more concerned with practical matters than with social matters".

"We were also surprised when so many respondents said they wanted to receive their information about a new country more than a month ahead of time," says Copeland.

"It seems to me that this kind of practical information, when sent prior to a move, usually ends up in a shipping or storage crate and isn't available onsite when it's needed," she says.

Copeland goes on to point out that although she was surprised by these findings, upon reconsideration it actually made a lot of sense.

"What they're really saying is – give it to me way ahead of time. That is, a month or more before I leave. They didn't want the information in the final few weeks before the move but that's when they usually get it – and that's also where the problem seems to lie."

Indeed, one of the most valuable findings from the survey seems to be the continuing problem of effective communication between the transferee and the moving company, a challenge readily acknowledged by Graebel's Vice President of Customer Service and Quality, Lou Kelley.

"The survey made us aware of what we are doing well and what we are not doing so well and how and where we can improve," says Kelley. "Some of the issues are in our realm of responsibility to improve, including important issues that our co-ordinators are forgetting to communicate."

"For example, one of our most important service providers, WorldWatch, was never communicated to our transferees. We have now remedied this."

But it's not just a Graebel problem either. Like most moving companies,

Graebel is only one part of the entire relocation process. To that extent there is also important information in the survey for a sponsoring organisation to be aware of, a fact not lost on Lou Kelley.

"The settling in information we have learned from the survey is what we now share with our clients, so that they can assist their employees early in the move process," says Kelley.

Copeland agrees, stating that a very consistent finding was that those who used the resources offered to them were happier and better adjusted. "They also gave the relocation professional assisting them higher marks for customer service," she says.

Where to find the survey: www.interchangeinstitute.org

Download the survey at: www.interchangeinstitute.org/files/GraebelMovingMattersFinalReportMarch2006.pdf

Cost: Free.

Published by: The Interchange Institute.

Of interest to: Moving companies, destination service providers, relocation professionals.

Sample size: 104 expatriates either currently on assignment or repatriating.

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