why their satisfaction is your gain
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Satisfied employees make for satisfied employers. The following paper will provide you, as an employer of a non-profit organisation, with the evidence and the tools that you need to create a climate within your workplace that fosters job satisfaction.

In this paper we break down the benefits to you and to your employees, we provide examples of the kind of tools you may wish to consider when addressing job satisfaction at World Vision New Zealand and we unravel the “how” of ongoing job satisfaction measurement and application.

Thankfully, job satisfaction is a topic that has historically received a high degree of focus. As a result, personal and corporate catalysts for job satisfaction and the associated methods that facilitate that change have been thoroughly researched, tested and applied. As a result you can be assured that should you take head of the information contained in this paper, your efforts will yield results.

For both employee and employer alike the benefits are both wide-ranging and significant. As an employer, an investment into job satisfaction is a must. Simply put, your employees’ satisfaction truly is your gain.
Job satisfaction is widely considered to be a highly influential emotive state that impacts both employee well-being and organisational health.

Some researchers have preferred to frame job satisfaction in terms of an employee’s pleasurable feelings toward their job, other researchers opt to focus on how an employee objectively views or evaluates their job. The definition employed most frequently would be that of Locke (1976) seen above.

In regards to origins, there is a growing body of evidence that suggests that genetics have a significant role in influencing an employee’s job satisfaction. Specifically speaking, it has been found that an employee’s personality or temperament has an especially influential role.

For example, in regards to dispositional factors, employees who display high levels of positive emotion, such as excitement, alertness and determination are more likely to experience higher levels of job satisfaction whereas those who experience negative emotions such as anger, guilt, fear or nervousness are less likely to experience job satisfaction. This is an important consideration in regards to recruitment and retention.

Overall, for the non-profit, job satisfaction takes on an especially pertinent role, as you will read in the following pages. Outcomes of highest interest include employee retention, an issue of high importance given the very unique combination of heart and skill that is often sought by non-profits, and secondly, financial return, which considering the tight budget WVNZ works to in order to ensure maximum return to service recipients, is likely to be of interest.

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The vast amount of job satisfaction related research indicates that job satisfaction results in beneficial consequences for both employees and organisations alike.

**what’s in it for you**

**Recruitment of better employees.** The development and implementation of appropriate screening techniques would ensure employees with dispositional traits most compatible with job satisfaction are employed. It will also ensure that employees are matched with the role best suited to them thereby increasing the likelihood of job satisfaction.

**Satisfied employees are less likely to quit.** An employee’s job satisfaction has a direct impact on that employee’s intention to quit. Reduced employee turnover undoubtedly impacts the bottom line.

**Satisfied employees perform better.** Many studies have confirmed that there is a meaningful relationship between job satisfaction and job performance. The more satisfied your employees, the more likely they are to perform better within their roles.

**Satisfied employees more likely to ‘go the extra mile’.** They are more likely to be involved in helping behaviours, going ‘above and beyond’ that which is required of them.

**Satisfied employees have lower rates of burnout, absenteeism, lateness, drug use and grievances.** Although these benefits relate to both employee and employer, in the case of the employee these issues have the potential to incur high costs to the organisation, both in times of human resource and the costs associated with lost productivity.

**Reduced costs to the organisation.** Each of the above benefits lead to cost savings for the organisation, a point of high importance for a non-profit like WVNZ.

**what’s in it for your employees**

**Life satisfaction.** Given the amount of time the average fulltime employee spends in the workplace, it is no surprise that job satisfaction impacts on an employee’s overall life satisfaction. Those with higher levels of life satisfaction are said to rate higher on well-being indicators, sleep better, and to express higher levels of job satisfaction. The relationship between job satisfaction and life satisfaction is said to be reciprocal with satisfaction in one area ‘spilling over’ into the other.

**Improved mental and physical well-being.** Employees who experience high job satisfaction are less likely to experience anxiety and depression and more likely to experience positive physical health.

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When you, as the employer, recognize the red flags that serve as predictors for declining levels of job satisfaction, you are then well positioned to execute a number of job satisfaction influencing initiatives and interventions.

**recruit**

Employers such as yourself are advised to employ sound selection methods, ensuring that personality related attributes that might signal a propensity toward low job satisfaction are flagged. It is recommended that you employ several assessment methods, such as a combination of behavioural, work sample and ability tests in order to increase the validity of such tests. It is also advised that you ensure that candidates are well matched to jobs best suited to them. Such a match is then likely to positively enhance job satisfaction.

**motivate**

Clearly communicating a motivating vision to employees or keeping employees informed of specific improvements to work conditions can increase employee job satisfaction levels. We recommend that you implement a rolling schedule of such announcements. You might wish to include upcoming career advancement opportunities, improvements to office environment and staff training opportunities. The absence of such communication has the potential to drive dissatisfaction.

**consider**

Keep in mind that cultural influences are likely to frame an employee’s workplace experiences and consequently their job satisfaction. Concepts such as relationship with authority, working autonomously vs. collectively, gender roles and workplace initiative are all likely to differ between cultures. Being cognisant of these differences is highly beneficial for an employer such as World Vision NZ which maintains a highly diverse workforce in addition to being heavily networked with many international World Vision offices.

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Measure: keeping your finger on the pulse

It is highly recommended that, as an employer, you prioritise the measurement of job satisfaction, within your organisation, across time. By doing so, you will ensure that organisational weaknesses and strengths in relation to job satisfaction remain top of mind.

It is recommended that WVNZ use employee attitude surveys to measure job satisfaction in the workplace.

Two employee attitude surveys that come highly recommended are the Job Descriptive Index (JDI) and the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ). Both surveys may be adapted to suit the specific needs of WVNZ. Both provide a more detailed assessment of employee attitudes, an outcome that is immensely helpful for employers such as WVNZ.

A note of importance is that surveys measuring levels of job satisfaction must be sensitive to job satisfaction change over time. Surveys that capture job satisfaction change over time are more likely to capture critical changes in an employee's reported job satisfaction that could predict future likelihood to quit.

Ensure that there is a high level of employee involvement in order to decrease the possibility of unreliable survey data. Considering the size of the WVNZ office, participant numbers should not be an issue, which is an advantage.

Lastly, when interpreting results it is vital to know how the survey results compare to industry and/or country norms. Investing in such benchmarking figures will be of great benefit to WVNZ, Figures for the NFP industry may be somewhat illusive, in that case it is suggested that WVNZ obtain figures from the service based industry in New Zealand followed by country specific figures.

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**apply: putting legs on your findings**

When applied, well-executed surveys can yield great potential for improving employee attitudes, and consequently organisational change. This statement is based on two assumptions, the first being that employee attitudes directly impact employee behavior and secondly that “employee attitudes are important levers of organisational performance”\(^{12}\).

In order for employee attitude surveys to have maximum impact, a clear and committed plan detailing organisational goals and associated actions must be acted upon following the implementation of the surveys. It is recommended that this is done via an established and trained team of human resource advisors to ensure application is fair, consistent and without bias. This may require investing in additional human resource, for a discrete period of time.

Application of results is likely to impact a range of organisational areas. In fact, studies have shown that certain employee workplace based attitudes correlate with customer satisfaction measures\(^ {13}\) and even financial performance measures such as market share\(^ {14}\). Certainly, two areas of importance to a non-profit competing for market share in an increasingly crowded marketplace.

**re-measure: ensuring impact**

Follow up all application with subsequent re-measurement. This step will provide you with an opportunity to re-evaluate organisational efforts to address job satisfaction and, if necessary, to make changes to established goals and action plans.

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In order for a non-profit such as World Vision New Zealand to maintain its position as NZ’s leading INGO, it is imperative that job satisfaction is given time, consideration and resource. Doing so will ensure employee well-being and organisational health are prioritised, leading to critical organisational benefits. Once again, their satisfaction is undoubtedly your gain.
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